Always Black, Always Woman; An Examination of Black Feminist Activism in Education

by

DaVonna Lynn Graham

Bachelor of Arts, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2008

Master of Business Administration, Point Park University, 2011

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2022

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

This dissertation was presented

by

DaVonna Lynn Graham

It was defended on

November 14, 2022

and approved by

H. Richard Milner IV, Cornelius Vanderbilt Chair of Education and Professor of Education, Department of Teaching and Learning, Vanderbilt University

Lori Delale-O'Connor, Associate Professor & Associate Chair of Department of Educational Foundations, Organization, and Policy, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh

T. Elon Dancy II, Helen S. Faison Endowed Chair in Urban Education and Professor of Education, Center for Urban Education, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh

James Huguley, Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Associate Professor, School of Social Work, University of Pittsburgh

Dissertation Director: Valerie Kinloch, Renée and Richard Goldman Dean of the School of Education, University of Pittsburgh School of Education

Always Black, Always Woman; An Examination of Black Feminist Activism in Education

DaVonna Lynn Graham, PhD

University of Pittsburgh, 2022

This dissertation takes up Black Feminist Theories as they have been operationalized in multiple forms in varying education contexts. The three studies presented include an historical and thematic review of literature on Black Feminist Theories as well as investigations of Black Feminist activism exercised in both a higher education and grass roots organizing contexts. Findings suggest that Black women value and benefit from mentorship and create counter-spaces for Black students and colleagues. Further, Black women have utilized Black Feminist approaches as they navigate and aim to dismantle oppressive education systems. Finally, this research demonstrates the need for Black Feminist Methodologies that center Black women's experiential knowledge, provide for humanizing research practices and elevate the perspectives and revelations of Black women.

Keywords: Black Feminism, Black feminist theory, activism

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Preface

Dedicated to Alvin Leroy Gaines, Jr. and Ruth Mae Gaines

It is most fitting that I begin by first giving praise to my Father for making this pathway for me long before I set about "my plans" to become Dr. DaVonna L. Graham. I am grateful that He chose me and has been faithful throughout this experience. My mother, Linda, deserves my gratitude for every single word of encouragement, every prayer, every hug, and every time she looked after my children to allow me to read, write, and even rest. Mom, I love you and thank you for loving me unconditionally. My deepest appreciation to my husband, Christian. You held it down and made sacrifices with me for six years (plus) and encouraged me to achieve my goals. You placed no pressure on me. You celebrated my wins and comforted me through my struggles. There is no better life partner and husband for me. Thank you, CJ. My mother-in-law, LaVonne, availed herself to my family without question and reminded me often to take breaks and to take care of myself. I appreciate you, Mam-maw.

To my mentors, Rev. Glenn Grayson, Rev. Lee Walls, Uncle Tyrone, and Ms. Tamanika Howze: You have influenced me in ways you cannot imagine. Thank you for allowing God to use you.

Thank you to my children, the greatest parts of me: Cameron, August, and Kaliya. This work is not only for you, but also about you, it is of you, and I hope that I have made each of you proud.

Drop one of Clue's bombs for the Shaderoom! My girls never miss an opportunity to show up for me. You all are moms, wives, entrepreneurs, and phenomenal friends.

My CUE family: Dr. Erika Gold Kestenberg, Dr. Dana Thompson Dorsey, Dr. Adam Alvarez, Dr. Ira Murray, future Dr. Derric Heck, and future Dr. Jawanza Rand. This journey was made better because of you. Special thank you to Dr. Christy McGuire for all of your assistance in getting to the finish line.

Finally, to my committee members, who have guided me, encouraged me, and supported me both personally and professionally through this journey. Dr. Rich Milner, thank you for bringing me onto the CUE team and inviting me to be part of your esteemed research family. You exemplify what it means to lead with integrity and class. Dr. Lori Delale-O'Connor, "auntie Lori" to my children, I see so much of myself in you. Thank you for being the type of advisor to which I aspire. Dean Valerie Kinloch, your personality, your words, and your guidance are poetry. You taught me that Black Girl Magic is cute, but we are Black Girl Brilliance at work. Dr. T. Elon Dancy II, without a doubt, every single conversation that we have had has pushed me to think more deeply, to challenge my assumptions, and to endeavor to create a body of work that reflects such intellect. To each of you, I am blessed and grateful to be part of your academic lineage.

1.0 Introduction

This dissertation, constructed as three articles that are grounded in understandings of Black feminist theories, examines meanings and approaches to Black feminist activism in education. In the first study, I explore individual strategies used by Black women within higher educational contexts who proactively work against acts of racism and injustice in their departments and on their campuses. In the second study, I analyze how Black women educators within K-12 contexts articulate their decisions, motivations, and pedagogical approaches to eliminating educational inequities and injustices, particularly for Black students. In the third and final study, I examine the experiences of Black women who belong to a community-based coalition that is committed to addressing systemic barriers in education for Black children. Their efforts are aimed at dismantling educational oppression in one large, predominantly Black public school district. Collectively, each study is based on qualitative data collected from Black women who live and work in the United States.

These three approaches – (a) a focus on the enactment of individual strategies in study one, (b) a focus on pedagogical approaches in study two, and (c) a focus on systemic barriers in study three – represent particular yet interrelated and interconnected methods for improving the educational and material conditions of Black children and for safeguarding their current and future lives. The reality of Black women fighting for justice (economic, educational, social, racial, etc.) is certainly not novel. Black women have always used various modes (e.g., activism, advocacy, mentorship, policy, fund development) to improve educational experiences and life outcomes for Black children. These outcomes include, among many others, positive racial identity development, healthy lifestyles, and promising post-secondary options.

The three studies presented in this dissertation study individually and collectively contribute to literature on Black feminist activism exercised in different ways. For instance, study one is important because it magnifies the individual (yet historically interconnected) stories of Black women who have found themselves compelled to act on behalf of themselves, their colleagues, and their students when their institutions failed to do so (Siddle-Walker, 2005; Tillman, 2004). Analyzed data in study two highlight the pedagogical and administrative autonomy that Black women in higher education can possess as they aim to eradicate inequities within PWI contexts. Finally, study three provides policymakers, governing boards, and funding sources with insight regarding the collective power that exists within groups of organized and engaged Black women strategizing to dismantle oppressive, racist educational systems. The findings from these studies, I argue, can productively inform the educational and activist-oriented work of Black women and others who are committed to identifying, organizing, and implementing strategies that benefit the educational pursuits of Black students. Additionally, findings from these studies can also benefit educational institutions that seek to affirm, uplift, and advocate for Black women, as the findings provide an insider account to Black women's experiences, particularly as related to racism and discrimination within and beyond educational contexts.

There are three research questions that guide this dissertation. Study one is a review of literature on Black Feminist Theories. Study one responds to the following research question: *How has Black Feminist Theory been defined and articulated over time?* The second study attempts to answer the research question *How do Black women in higher education see themselves as catalysts for educational change?* Finally, study three attends to the research question: *In what ways have Black women engaged in efforts of activism for equity and justice in education*? To address these three research questions, I utilized a Black feminist theoretical approach to frame each of the

studies and to analyze data about Black women's educational and activist-oriented work with identifying, organizing, and implementing strategies for the success of Black people within often racist educational environments.

1.1 Background: Black Feminism in Education

Black women educators have demonstrated political commitment and urgency in their teachings of Black children. Scholarship using Black feminist theories and methodologies have problematized the harmful and often violent ways in which Black women and girls are socialized in educational settings. Henry (1998) studied Black girls' social silencing and alienation. Using hooks' (1989) practice of "coming to voice," Henry (2009) established writing groups with Black girl students that revealed the students' socially ascribed views about Black girlhood and their prescribed comportment and politicized behaviors. Additionally, Mogadime's (2000) research highlighted Black girls' experiences in a school drama program that served as an opportunity for resistance against the white-centric curriculum and pedagogical practices of their school. Mogadime (2000) named the counter-narratives developed by students a "pedagogy of hope" (p. 229), which speaks to the values and promises of Black feminist methodologies and pedagogies that privilege the lives and interests of Black women and girls. Each of these studies not only provides insight into the literature about the reality of subordination experienced by Black women and girls, but they also provide hope for Black futures through liberatory practices.

Of the potentially useful theories and methodologies that have been used to examine the lives of Black women and girls in education, Black Feminism endures and serves as a comprehensive lens given its sociohistorical framing (Lane, 2017). Theorists such as Lane (2017)

have argued that Black women and girls are often forced to contend with degrading images and pedagogies inside of their classrooms. Research on the educational experiences of Black women and girls has been conducted in corrupt and often negatively skewed ways that portray women and girls as argumentative, loud, and otherwise problematic (Crenshaw et al., 2015). Not only are the lived experiences of Black women often misrepresented, but a gap also exists in terms of how Black women students define their identities amid stereotypes of themselves on college campuses (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019). Two major lines of harmful thinking exist regarding the perceptions of Black women students, both of which can have substantial impact on their identities: the superwoman ideal and a sense of invisibility. While Black women students are positioned, at least colloquially, as successful, extant literature contends that individuals in this group are held to unusually high standards when compared to other groups and are associated with the superwoman ideal (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019). The superwoman ideal promotes the expectations of Black women as selfless, hard-working, and strong (West et al., 2016). For example, Patton, Haynes, and Croom (2017) asserted that the narrative of the new model minority paints Black women as a monolithic group of what they call "super women," and discredits their marginalization in education and society more broadly. Black women students as superwomen are seen as having the ability to persist at any cost, even if that cost is their own self-esteem and mental health (Everett & Croom, 2017; Jerald et al., 2017). The idea that Black women are impermeable to vulnerability, the psychological and emotional impact of academic struggles, and direct (and indirect) attacks on their intellect is tremendously harmful to their identities and self-concepts (West et al.,2016; Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Moreover, the superwoman myth may prevent policies and practices that are specifically dedicated to meeting the diverse and nuanced needs of Black women students, particularly in postsecondary contexts (Patton et al., 2017).

Black women have the unique and painful reality of suffering from both a sense of invisibility as well as simultaneous hypervisibility (Haynes et al., 2016). This sort of invisibility/hypervisibility is akin to the concept of intersectionality as Black women may be hypervisible due to their race, while rendered invisible because of their gender. In other words, their needs, expertise, and contributions often remain ignored, while their outsider status creates a sort of fishbowl effect. Franklin (1999) contended that "Invisibility is an inner struggle with feeling that one's talents, abilities, personalities, and worth are not valued or even recognized" (p. 761). Ryland (2013) defined hypervisibility in this way, "scrutiny based on perceived difference, which is usually (mis)interpreted as deviance" (p. 2222). In their auto-ethnographic study with Black woman doctoral students, Hayes et al. (2016) revealed their own deficit thinking about themselves as scholars, as they connected this negative sense of self to the master scripting (Acuff et al., 2012) that normalizes racism on PWI[1] campuses.

Perpetuating the hypervisibility of their existence, Black girls have historically been described as talkative, loud, aggressive, and violent (Crenshaw, et al, 2015; Morris, 2016). In his study of an urban high school's classroom dynamics, Morris (2007) found that white teachers seemed to focus their attention on the social decorum and physical comportment of Black girls rather than on their academic achievement, referring to girls behaving "unladylike," implying a set, prescribed traits expected of and enacted onto young women. Black female students were regarded as "mature," though not a desirable attribute, and more culpable of their teenage indiscretions (Morris, 2007). In many instances, the act of speaking up for oneself, using

[1] Predominantly White Institution describes higher education institutions in which White people account for 50% or more of the student enrollment (Lomotey, 2010).

illustrative body language or overlapping speech are perceived as disrespectful and may result in an office referral or suspension even when these actions are not intended to be harmful (E. Morris, 2007; M. Morris, 2016).

The significance of Black Feminism in education cannot be understated, particularly in reference to the educational, social, and lived experiences of Black women and girls in educational contexts. Deeper examinations into their experiences are needed in order to both reveal, as Haynes, Stewart, and Allen (2016) contend, the painful reality and feelings of invisibility encountered by Black women, and to advocate for more equitable and just practices that center the need for Black Feminism and activism within education. The three studies in this dissertation take up this charge.

1. **Understanding and articulating Black Feminist Theories in waves**

Study one is an historical and thematic review of literature on Black Feminist Theories as they have evolved over time beginning with its divergence from the white feminist movement and continuing through contemporary movements for Black women's equity and justice. Beginning with Black women's self-concept and articulation, findings indicate that present-day Black Feminism is concerned with a necessary sharpening of focus on Black Feminist methodologies. This review spans the period of research conducted beginning with the germinal Black Feminist piece by Anna Julia Cooper in 1898.

2. **Individual approaches to Black feminist activism in higher education contexts**

This dissertation study extends an existing, ongoing inquiry that originated in 2016 on a predominantly white campus of higher education in a large Mid-western U.S. city. Participants in the first phase of the study engaged in one hour-long semi-structured interview focused on their experiences with and understandings of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice within their university context. In this subset of interviews, I listened to the stories of two Black women—one

tenured faculty member, and one executive-level administrator member—as they navigated higher education institutions. In these stories, participants reflected on Ahmed's (2012) study of how institutions talk about and implement diversity in higher education, while diversity is often taken up in ways that maintain the status quo, rather than to seek transformation. Students, faculty, staff, and administrators defined and understood diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in varied ways, and these were often incongruent in relation to the missions, visions, and approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion within their institution. Participants reflected on their identities (gender, sexual orientation, SES, race) and social locations (Richardson, 1998) and the ways that these influence their interactions with the institution as well as members within the institution. Their definitions and understandings of their institutions' DEI efforts were *read* differently depending on their own knowledge and experience with the University's current policies and practices, and overall understanding of institutional racism and systemic oppression. Their readings of diversity, equity and inclusion were the basis upon which they evaluated their institution's efforts to attend to incidents of racism and discrimination toward themselves and/or other People of Color. Black women in educational spaces have historically and contemporarily taken up an activist disposition, wherein they find value and purpose in working toward dismantling systems of educational oppression for Black students (Dixson, 2003; Foster; 1991; Huntzinger, 1995; Perkins, 1993; Smith, 1989). Often simultaneously, Black women educators and those whose work resides in educational contexts have been compelled to respond to racism and other types of discrimination on behalf of themselves as well as their colleagues and students.

The objective of this study is twofold: I intend to (a) gain an understanding of the varied ways Black women strategize effective organizational strategies for more just and equitable change within the educational systems within which minoritized educators, learners,

administrators, and staff work and (b) identify the supports, resources and infrastructures that exist or can be built to sustain Black women in higher education institutions. To do so, I address the research question: How do Black women in higher education see themselves as catalysts for educational change? In so doing, I examine how the three women in this study discuss the ways they have taken tangible steps to enact change within their institutions to improve the conditions for themselves and for colleagues and students of color. While their approaches vary, they each identify methods for influencing and instituting humanizing practices for educational stakeholders. I chose to interview the women in this study because they expressed in a previous study their interest and the necessity to influence their institution's approach or avoidance of race-related concerns.

3. **Systemic approaches to Black feminist activism in a large public school district**

In the third study, I gathered data from Black women who work in various industries (e.g., grant making, education consulting, education research) in the city of Pittsburgh whose lives have intersected based on their motivation for improving public school education for Black children within a predominantly Black public school district. The focal district in this case is a large one comprising 54 schools that educates approximately 23,000 students. In this study, I address the research question: In what ways have Black women engaged in efforts of activism for equity and justice in education? I will examine the efforts and strategies of three Black women who have positioned themselves as activists and advocates for equitable, quality education in the aforementioned school district. Their commitment to dismantling systemic racism and educational inequity united them in a social justice movement to demand better educational conditions for students. The goal of this research is to establish a framework for unifying individuals with shared visions and goals for educational liberation for the purpose of effecting change at systems levels.

I examined the motivations, strategies, triumphs, and challenges of three Black women who have engaged in grassroots community organizing for equity and justice in education for Black students. By forming a coalition of Black women who are engaged in education advocacy efforts and grassroots organizing, the women in this study have collectively established a strategy for demanding equity in a large public school district that serves mostly Black children. The coalition consists of Black women who are school district parents, alumni, former employees, retirees, university professors, and concerned community residents. Members and affiliates of the group state that they are committed to ensuring that all Black children in the surrounding region receive high-quality education. The group is composed of women who are new to education advocacy, while others have been working in grassroots education organizing for decades.

The group, Black Women for a Better Education, was established in May of 2020 and describes itself as having a shared leadership model, which allows for collaborative decision making and strategic planning. On their website, Black Women for a Better Education characterizes their collective as a sisterhood, one akin to the organic relationships that develop between Black women who may not share biological kinship, but who coalesce over similar values. Black Women for a Better Education declared that their work is anti-racist in nature and confronts a politically charged subject such as education. Further, the group acknowledges the risks inherent in publicly speaking out in opposition to the decisions made by a large public school district. In fact, they claim boldly that they will stand firmly against attacks and remain unified in their message of equity and justice for Black children.

I have chosen to examine the experiences of three women who belong to Black Women for a Better Education because they represent a diverse collection of professions, social locations, ages, and personal experiences among others. Each of the women in these studies has individual

aims and individual motivations for acting on behalf of themselves and for Black students. I have identified themes and synergies as well as opportunities for complementary efforts. With this research, I intend to amplify the perspectives, voices, and ideas of Black women through their stories of activism, teaching, mothering, and all manner of "ordinary living" as they relate to education. My research is conducted in transformative ways that uplift the humanities and expertise of all Black women develop and test methodologies in partnership with Black women to be used for and by Black women to study the lives of Black women. Methodologies should establish experience as a criterion of meaning and interrogate and disrupt systems that oppress Black women educators, advocates, and activists for the purpose of co-constructing pathways to liberation for Black people.

1.2 Methodology: Storying as a Methodological Practice

This dissertation is guided by the overarching inquiry into Black women's experiences as advocates and activists in education. I am inspired by the efforts of Black women educators and activists as they work against inequities and inequalities in academic spaces occupied by children of color. In order to gain a deep sense and understanding of their experiences as Black women in academic spaces, which have in many ways been intellectually, emotionally, and physically harmful to them, I will engage in a particular type of literacy-rich practice of listening that represents, for Kinloch and San Pedro (2014), "Projects in Humanization" (PiH). Projects in Humanization are grounded in "the desires for social, political and educational change that can only happen if relationships are forged in light of, and because of, human differences" (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014, p. 28; see also Kinloch, 2015). I centered the importance of centering the

relationships forged between Black women (in this case between each woman in this data set and me) as I analyzed some of the many ways their efforts and stories contribute to advancing an equity agenda for higher education, PK-12 education, and for organizing within and across educational contexts that work with Black people.

In their research, Kinloch and San Pedro (2014) draw on critical Indigenous and humanizing research methodologies (Brayboy et al., 2012; Kovach, 2009) to frame PiH as a process that places the realities and experiences people have with one another as the central focus of human interaction, on the one hand, and of education research, on the other hand. This is the case because PiH offers an intentional framework for sharing stories in ways that allow for nonlinearity, multiplicity, and differences (e.g., various streams of consciousness, diverse perspectives, many voices, a range of stories, vulnerabilities). It also lends itself to the significance of the shifting roles between researcher and participant, teacher and student, and to the (re)positioning of researcher as listener, learner, and advocate. San Pedro and Kinloch (2017) described PiH in this way:

> Performed through the dialogic process of listening and storying (the telling and receiving of stories), PiH does not contend with researcher neutrality. Instead, it values relationship-building between researcher and participant just as much as it values the sharing of stories and the role of critical listening. *PiH,* a philosophical approach to educational research that emphasizes the significance of stories and storytelling, represents "life projects that are collaborative, intentional, and purposeful and that are just as much social as they are political and educational." (p. 390S)

As I engage in such storying, or Projects in Humanization (Kinloch, 2015; Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014; San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017) with participants, I can make meaning from how they

see themselves as advocates and activists *for themselves* and *for Black children*. I seek to demonstrate the value of relationship-building and co-constructing knowledge as a criterion for meaning. As such, using storying as a methodological practice, I have used stories as my primary unit of analysis for this study. Storying is a means of engaging in "humanizing research in ways that privilege the co-construction of knowledge, human agency and voice, diverse perspectives, moments of vulnerability, and acts of listening" (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2004, p. 23). The women in these studies all utilized storying as method and practice to share their experiences, motivations, practices, challenges, and hopes for liberatory Black education. Their stories are reflective of broader societal inequities and injustices (e.g., sociopolitical, sociohistorical, cultural, racial) and their deliberate actions will inform future research, practice and policy.

1.2.1 Statement of Positionality

> The fact that racial politics and indeed racism are pervasive factors in our lives did not allow us, and still does not allow most Black women to, look more deeply into our own experiences, and from that sharing and growing consciousness, to build a politics that will change our lives and inevitably end our oppression.
>
> -The Combahee River Collective, 1977

I am a mother, wife, and daughter. I am a friend, a sister, and a spiritual child of God. I am Black. For as long as I can recall, I have been profoundly and proudly seated in my Blackness. Without a doubt, my Blackness has always been deeply salient, most tangible, most meaningful to me. Perhaps my Blackness was most present as a result of having been *schooled* in predominantly white schools, by almost all white teachers and force-fed a white-washed version of my Black

history. It was maybe the isolation I felt as one of very few Black children and even fewer Black girls that fueled my yearning for Black role models in my classrooms. It seems that even for my mother and her mother that Blackness preceded any other part of their identities. I suppose their exposure to extreme segregation, racial violence, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, desegregation, and bussing was so pervasive, the centrality of womanness would have been fleeting.

I am a Black woman, becoming more deeply rooted in my womanhood. My womanhood was most clearly revealed to me as I entered my thirties. It was at that time that I set about developing myself as an independent, self- and spirit-guided woman who desired to cultivate my own image and belief system. I was unaware, however, until five years ago, that I am indeed a Black feminist. I recognized that my developing consciousness was connected socio-historically to other Black women along my ancestral lineage as well as to my contemporaries and leaned into the beautiful prism of Black women. They show up as mothers, sisters, and daughters and as artists, educators, healers, writers, thinkers, and makers. I see myself reflected in them and I aim to live a life that inspires them to see themselves in me. I endeavor to build a body of work that centralizes and prioritizes the liberation of Black people, which is inextricably tethered to the liberation of Black women. For me, there is no liberation in isolating my Blackness from my womanness. In the ways I approach my work, my story and storying, my experiences, and the ways in which I co-construct knowledge with others, I am at all times Black, at all times woman.

As I engaged in conversational interviews with each of the Black women in this study who openly shared various stories with me, I found myself relating to many of their experiences, lamenting with them over the dehumanizing acts of oppression and racism they felt, and drawn in by them as they expressed their goals and dreams for improving their own and the life outcomes

of Black children. I often thought of the futures of my own children and the Black women in my life as I listened to the sacrifices made and risks taken by the women in these studies. I see myself in these women, though they represent various generations, backgrounds, and careers. Like me, they may or may not have led with *feminist* as one of their identities, each of the women in these studies represent the values and priorities of people who seek and work toward equity and justice for Black women and girls.

2.0 Chapter One. Literature Review of Black Feminist Theories

In this review, I analyzed literature on Black Feminist Theory, which centers the perspectives, experiences, theories, and research done by and with Black womxn[2]. I identified two predominant themes. A fundamental and thematic feature of Black feminist theory is the idea that Black women must be able to speak for themselves, from their own perspectives, and to decide how they will be represented in literature. The second theme within the literature on Black feminist theory is the necessity for critical Black feminist methodologies to be used in the study of Black women's lives and experiences. The methodologies used in research significantly influence the outcomes and implications of all manner of study.

I organized this review into three sections. Beginning with a definition and contextualization of Black Feminist Theory, I extend critiques of the *mainstream* (read: white, Christian, middle class, heterosexual, cisgender) women's movement and present the conditions which necessitated the social construction of Black Feminist Theory. In section two, I provide a chronological review of the evolution of Black Feminism, organized in four waves. Finally, I present selected empirical studies wherein Black Feminist methodologies to interpret findings related to Black women. Literature in this review spans 1892-2022 representing the period leading up to and following the passing of the Nineteenth Constitutional Amendment which ostensibly afforded the right to vote to women but intentionally excluded such a right to Black women. Much

[2] I have chosen to use this particular spelling of womxn (women) as a way to acknowledge the labor, contributions, sacrifices and invisibility of all people who identify as women. Throughout this paper, I will use the term woman as it most accurately represents my own gender identity. See Gourd, A. (2018). "being, fxminist". *Summit to Sadish Sea: Inquiries and Essays, 3*(1). Retrieved from https://cedar.wwu.edu

of the review covers the period of 1960-2022 but does include foundational works such as *A Voice from the South* published by Anna Julia Cooper in 1892 and was re-released in 1988. I conclude the historical analysis by suggesting a fourth and continuing wave. Two questions frame this review: (a) What is Black feminist theory and in what ways has it been conceptualized? and (b) How have Black feminist methodologies been employed to investigate the lives, perspectives and experiences of Black women and girls in education?

2.1 Methods

To organize my review of literature on the historical arc of Black feminist theories and their use in education contexts, I utilized online search databases such as Academic Search Premier and Google Scholar using keywords "Black feminist thought," "Black Feminism," "Black feminist thought in education," and "Black feminist theory in education." To narrow my results, I limited searched to literature published between 1960-2022 as I hypothesized that many articles would have been published leading up to and during the Civil Rights Movement. These key findings led me to searches of womanism, intersectionality, matrices of domination, Black women in education, Black women in the workplace, and hyper visibility/invisibility. My initial search of "Black Feminist Theory" on Google Scholar and Academic Search Premier yielded thousands of articles and other publications. I reduced this search by further limiting articles to a United States context as well as prioritizing works authored by Black women. I included and reviewed 103 abstracts. Of the 103 abstracts, I selected 46 articles to review thoroughly. My inclusion criterion captured articles that utilized Black Feminist Theory, Black Feminist Thought or Womanism as a theoretical framework, those that provided an historical review of the Black Feminist movement

and those that provided a definition and tenets of the theories. I conducted ancestral searches of refereed publications and further reviewed authors who were frequently cited. I also included publications of high frequency authors as they were identified as major contributors to the topic of Black Feminist Theory.

2.2 The Development and Articulations of Black Feminist Thought

To better understand and take meaning from Black women's experiences, perspectives, and dreams about equity, justice, and freedom within PK-12 and postsecondary educational contexts, I engaged Black feminist thought as a theoretical framework throughout. I relied primarily on the scholarship of Patricia Hill Collins (1990a, 1990b, 2000, 2008), Venus Evans-Winters (2011, 2015, 2019), and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991, 1992) and their articulations of developing a Black women's consciousness in my understandings of Black feminist theories. I approached this dissertation from the perspective that Black women's self-defined and self-reflective constructions are indeed what constitutes their own consciousness and that it is that consciousness that informs their approaches to their own liberation. Black feminist thought is an appropriate framework for these studies as it allows for and in fact encourages self-definition and self-reflection. I also utilized Black feminist methodologies that are made for and by Black women, as they provide a model for envisioning the future.

A contrasting epistemology to those regarded as "traditional" Black Feminism, expressed in multiple Black feminist theories and established primarily in the 1970s as a result of the work of the Combahee River Collective, rejects attempts at quantifiable data, objectivity, neutrality, and one single truth. In fact, despite its incessant claims of such, "mainstream" scholarship is not and

has never been objective or neutral. What has been elevated as mainstream or traditional scholarship has certainly always assumed a white, middle class, heteronormative, Christian, cisgender perspective (Cooper, 1988; Kendall, 2020). Black Feminism, as maintained by Evans-Winters (2019), is a "theoretical, methodological, and political discourse steeped in a tradition that centers the voices of Black women's socio-political struggles in a White supremacist capitalist patriarchal imperialist society that privileges Whiteness, maleness and wealth" (p. 18). Her definition is undergirded by Collins' (2000) position that mainstream scholarship is indeed shaped by and for white men and as an appropriate contrast, Black feminist theories reject traditional research done *on* Black women using white middle-class methodological approaches. Black feminist theories instead honor nuance, subjective knowledges, and lived experiences of Black women. Collins (1986), extending the works and ideas of Black feminist scholars (Cooper, 1988, Combahee River Collective, 1977, 1983), coined Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and defined its three main themes: (a) the meaning of self-definition and self-valuation, (b) the interlocking nature of oppression, and (c) the importance of redefining culture. BFT advocates for a self-defined image of Black womanhood, seeks to clarify the lives of Black women, and centralizes the experiences and ideas of Black women (Collins, 1986). Fundamental to its theoretical value is the fact that ideas in BFT were developed by and for Black women. Race and gender combined with other commonalities in perspectives across religion, political leanings, sexual identity, and class among Black women make BFT a useful tool for understanding our culture, our decisions, and our experiences with racism and inequality in a white supremacist society (Collins, 2000). Black women uniquely encounter a reality of discrimination and oppression, a reality that differs greatly from people belonging to other racial and/or gender groups (Collins, 2000). A key component and paramount to its utility, BFT not only provides a lens for theorizing about the oppressions

experienced by Black women, but also a tool for crafting Black futures through resistance, empowerment, and activism.

Four key tenets of Black feminist thought as articulated by Collins (1986) are: (a) acknowledgement of concrete experiences as a criterion of meaning, (b) use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, (c) an ethic of caring, and (d) an ethic of responsibility. Each of these tenets undergirds the core of BFT's focus on self-definition and human connection. Individual experiences expressed dialogically and valued as real and meaningful are at the core of BFT. Whereas identity theories rely on a holistic view, Black feminist thought is distinguished by its intersectional framework (Alinia, 2015), which centers on the vectors at which multiple identities meet.

Black feminist thought is characterized by its interrogation of power dynamics between the oppressed and their oppressors. In what she described as the matrices of domination, Collins (2008) presented four types of power domains under which she contends Black women suffer. Collins (2008) defined the power of *structural oppression* as that which is deeply rooted and embedded in social and institutional structures that purport to serve all people equally, but instead pose a perpetual threat to the livelihood of People of Color. For instance, policies that limit or restrict the voting rights of impoverished or unhoused people by requiring identification or a permanent address serve as disenfranchisement via a legislative structure which claims to be free to all. She also offered what she called a *disciplinary power domain* to describe the ways in which oppression is intentionally maintained, despite challenges to its legitimacy and resistance by People of Color. Disciplinary power might be illustrated in the disproportionate rates of incarceration among Black men and women compared to other racial groups. The third type of power domain Collins (2008) presented is the *interpersonal domain*, which characterizes the

dynamic interactions between oppressed and oppressor. These interactions are often illustrated in the relationship between white women and Black women. Though both groups experience patriarchal oppression, white women often proxy as oppressor toward Black women. The interpersonal domain is also expressed in the hyper-individualist approach to identifying and assessing racist acts. Finally, hegemonic *oppression* captures the embodiment and institutionalization of the dominant group's perspectives within society. For instance, ideologies that act to rationalize systems of oppression are internalized not only by the oppressor, but also by the oppressed and are often regarded as "common sense" practices even when the outcome is deleterious for marginalized groups. For example, while historical propaganda has positioned Black people as subhuman, we have simultaneously been regarded as superhuman, with the ability to withstand inordinate amounts of physical pain and requiring little to no medical care. These damaging perspectives have in many ways morphed into a more socially acceptable perspective of the Black woman as superwoman (Woods-Giscombé, 2010), or the strong Black woman image that has proliferated in the media.

Race, gender, and class are intersecting features, shaping the personal and professional lives of Black women (Crenshaw, 1989). Black feminist theories examine the multiple ways in which sexism, gender identities, class oppression, and racism clash and analyzes the impacts on Black women's lives as a result of such conflict. Black feminist theories use an epistemological foundation that positions lived experiences as its criterion for meaning (Collins, 2000). In other words, Black feminist theories center real, self-defined experiences and viewpoints in place of abstract and scientific measures to lead analysis and ascribe meaning. This concept substantiates the validity of "concrete experiences as a criterion for credibility…when making knowledge claims" (Collins, 2000, p. 276), legitimizing Black women as knowledgeable and credible sources

in and of their own lives. Certainly as Black women we cultivate our own wisdom and articulate our own critical consciousness, which are informed by the ways in which we move through a politicized world. We do so whether or not that consciousness is recognized or accepted (Patterson et. al, 2016a).

Evans-Winters (2019) described Black feminist theory as a "tradition of Black women's intellectual, traditional and community endeavors in the U.S. and across the African Diaspora (p. 12)." BFT for her is a variation of political ideologies and social movements that struggle for gender equity (Evans-Winters, 2011, 2019). Evans-Winters (2019) argued that a Black feminist theory frames: (a) musings about knowledge and knowing, (b) how one interacts with participants throughout the research process, (c) one's understanding of the context where the study takes place, (d) the body of literature reviewed, and (e) interpretation and analysis of data. Evans-Winters' (2019) epistemological stance and methodological approach extends Collins' (1986) tenets of Black feminist theory, particularly with regard to valuing experiential knowledge and upholding an ethic of care and responsibility in the research process. She further emphasized the importance of context and representational aspects of data collection and presentation. Patterson, Howard, and Kinloch (2016a) contend that a Black feminist perspective encourages Black women to engage in self-reflection and self-care, and to embrace our embodied knowledge. This critical reflection, rooted in self-love, centers Black women in every aspect of a bidirectional research process and in the co-construction of knowledge.

Collins (1986) characterized Black feminist thought as consisting of "ideas produced by Black women that clarify a standpoint of and for Black women" (p. S16). It is important to note here that Collins (1986) did not intend to imply that Black feminist thought is captured in a single standpoint for Black women. Further, when Collins (1986) speaks of the "self," she does not

privilege individualism, rather a more collectively defined and cultivated standpoint that strengthens solidarity among the group (Patterson et. al, 2016b). While Collins (1986, 2000, 2008) often speaks of Black women as possessing a unique standpoint in the singular, the totality of her theorizing clearly acknowledges the necessity of multiple standpoints, rather than one monolithic consciousness. Black feminist thought provides a vehicle for articulating independently self-defined perspectives of Black women. Resting on its insistence on self-definition is the notion that no one Black feminist standpoint or scholar is touted as "correct." Foundational in its development and maintenance is the idea that much of Black feminist theories have been shared in an oral tradition of Black mothers, sisters, artists, and educators, with its origins of self-definition being credited to *ordinary* Black women, rather than to the academy. Collins (1986) asserts that the thematic content of thought is inextricably tied to socio-historical contexts and conditions of Black women over time and thus, it catalogs a rich historical account of the lives of Black women in a multitude of different contexts. Group knowledge is referred to by Collins (1986) as a "fundamental paradigmatic shift" (p. 91), wherein theories are developed by drawing on the day-to-day lives of Black women. A distinguishing feature of Black feminist thought is that a collective identity between Black women in America exists and it is rooted in a shared memory and history of Black womanhood within the American context.

Developing a Black woman's consciousness was and is critical in the growth and utility of Black feminist theories. Evans-Winters (2017, 2019) posited that the development of a Black feminist consciousness is curated by: (a) hearing family members' shared stories of struggles and triumphs against racial oppression, (b) participation in one's own first-hand experiences and continued struggle to spiritually and physically survive de facto segregated spaces, (c) experiences with hyper-surveillance in urban schools and neighborhoods, (d) witnessing symbolic lynchings,

(e) militarizing public schools, and (f) being allowed in white spaces for the sole intent of "speaking for the race" at a time when affirmative action initiatives are bring rolled back in education and employment. Evans-Winters (2017, 2019) takes up Black feminist consciousness from a contemporary perspective, calling out the conditions under which Black women live, work, and attempt to thrive in a technologically advanced society. Though certainly not an exhaustive list, Evans-Winters (2017, 2019) has taken into account very tangible and experiential realities of Black women in her interpretation of what is considered in the development of a Black feminist commitment. Evans-Winters' theory of Black Feminism extended and advanced Collins' (1986) germinal contributions as Evans-Winters (2017, 2019) operationalizes the notions of self-definition by providing examples of intergenerational storytelling, particularly between Black women and girls. She also illustrated how intersectional oppression continues to impact the life chances of many Black women. For instance, when Evans-Winters (2017, 2019) references hyper-surveillance in schools, she may be referring to the many adolescent Black girls who have been physically and verbally assaulted within and ultimately displaced from educational spaces. This evaluation is strengthened by Crenshaw, Ocen, and Nanda's (2015) report revealing the troubling violent experiences (such as school resource officers physically attacking Black girls in their classrooms, sexual harassment, and arrests) of Black girls in schools. Each of these and, undoubtedly, many others, come together to serve as a lens through which many Black people, and in this case Black women, view the world. Black Feminisms take up these realities and others in articulating Black women's lived experiences.

2.2.1 The Pressing Need for Black Feminist Methodologies

Black feminist theory demonstrates the necessity for critical Black feminist methodologies to be used in the study of Black women's lives and experiences. The methodologies used in research significantly influence the outcomes and implications of all manner of study. Lewis (1997) asserted that "mainstream" Eurocentric approaches and criterion for validity are entrenched with the values of oppressors. Patterson et al. (2016b) contend that methods and measures established with a white, Eurocentric viewpoint assume (without critique) uneven power relationship between researcher and objectified data sources; a quantifiable, absolute truth; the necessity of rigidity and structure; and the utility of results being most valuable to the field of scholarship rather than those who inform the research. Black feminist methodologies, however, honor embodied knowledges of Black women as they are informed and shaped by the experiences and voices of Black women (Patterson et al., 2016b). Black feminist methodologies are concerned with data collection and the organization of data, critical analyses of results as well as the presentation of findings. As results are shared, Collins (1986) explained that Black feminist theorists present stories both oral and written, value multiple truths, and privilege the perspectives and interests of co-conspirators.

A critical component to Black feminist thought is the idea that its scholars value the development of new theories and methodologies that center Black women's and girls' lives, instead of simply adding race, gender, or class to existing ones (Collins, 1986). It is paramount to note that intersectionality does not simply acknowledge the multiplicity of identities that all people possess simultaneously. Intersectionality specifically attends to the reality that people with multiple marginalized identities have a unique experience as a result of those vectors of oppression

that accompany those identities, methodologies that centralize an intersectional approach that aim to address the outcomes of such realities.

Collins (1989) asserts that studying a Black woman's consciousness is challenged by the reality that the tools used in traditional research, (i.e., research that is conducted by and for the use of white people) cannot and should not be used in the rearticulation of the Black woman's standpoint. Even methodologies[3] ostensibly designed for Black women are done so through the white gaze (Morrison, 1970) and do not capture the tone, style, voice, and perspectives of Black women (Walker, 1983, 2012). Prior to more recent research (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Farinde-Wu & Fitchett, 2018; Lindsay-Dennis & Cummings, 2014), Black women's lives were often depicted in narrow, monolithic ways. Our unique views and experiences were investigated and evaluated using generic, Eurocentric methodological instruments that often result in deficit understandings of our lives. Collins (1989) posited that oppressed groups, particularly Black women, have always needed to develop alternative methods for studying our own consciousness and for this reason, new tools for both investigation and articulation must continue to be developed. New tools would not simply consider Black women's consciousness, they would intentionally center and prioritize them. As a means for furthering the field of Black studies and women's studies, it is necessary that scholars develop and extend theories and methodologies that provide a respectful and loving lens for naming, interpreting, and sharing the stories (Burkhard et al., 2022) of Black women. Methodologies rooted in BFT and Womanism approach the study of Black women and girls' development, psyches, behaviors, social interactions, and the wholeness of Black womanhood through the very lenses of Black women, in their own contexts.

[3] See *Ways with Words* by Shirley Brice Heath (1983) wherein a white woman engaged in an ethnographic study of Black families in a rust-belt city.

Black feminist methodologies provide a lens for seeing the world through a Black woman's eyes. For many decades, Black women have had what scholars would call "insider access" to the intimate lives of white families as domestic employees of both aristocratic and middle-class whites. The "stranger" effect provides insight into the unique perspective of Black women who spend time in the lives and homes of white families (Simmel, 1921). Collins (1986) points to what she calls potential benefits afforded to Black women as a result of their "outsider-within" status, including a particular type of neutrality juxtaposed with a peculiar closeness and access to private thoughts and emotions that might not normally be shared with others. In many ways, Black women experience the outsider-within effect in academic spaces. Although they have been excluded from aspects of the field of education and still occupy only a small percentage of positions, they are also privy to all of the injustices that occur within school structures.

> " …the memoirs of affluent whites often mention their love for their Black "mothers", while accounts of Black domestic workers stress the sense of self-affirmation they experienced at seeing white power demystified-of knowing that it was not the intellect, talent or humanity of their employers that supported their status, but largely just the advantages of racism. (p. S14)"

The "stranger" effect provides insight into the unique perspective of Black women in particular who spend time in the lives and homes of white families (Simmel, 1921). Collins (1986) points to what she calls potential benefits afforded to Black women as a result of their outsider-within status, including a particular type of neutrality juxtaposed with a peculiar closeness and access to private thoughts and emotions that might not normally be shared with others. She is clear, however, not to celebrate this marginality despite its potential affordances. Collins (1986) likens the outsider-within effect to intellectual marginality experienced by Black women academics,

whose proximity to research in the academy allows participation while also providing distance as an opportunity for critique. Black women have endured in their resistance to institutional barriers that have limited their educational access and opportunities. Black women's unique sociological standpoint as an outsider-within is an opportunity for naming and challenging existing marginalizing and oppressive structures.

Collins (1986) likens the outsider-within effect to intellectual marginality experienced by Black women academics, whose proximity to research in the academy allows participation while also providing distance as an opportunity for critique. Black women have endured in their resistance to institutional barriers that have limited their educational access and opportunities. Black women's unique sociological standpoint as outsiders-within is an opportunity for naming and challenging existing marginalizing and oppressive structures. Black Feminism aims to challenge white patriarchy as an institutionalized system of oppression. This challenge does not absolve the role of Black men as perpetrators of heteropatriarchy, but it certainly exists not to vilify Black men individually or collectively. Rather, by exposing the dominating structure of patriarchy, Black Feminisms endeavor to eliminate all forms of patriarchal power and control (Collins, 2000; Walker, 1983). In fact, Collins (1996) explained that Black Feminism is intended as a method for working together with Black men to resist and struggle against systemic oppression in its many forms and therefore, Black Feminism has the potential to uplift the Black community in its entirety. The underlying premise of community uplift is the linkage between individual life outcomes and the life outcomes as a collective people (Collins, 1996; Simien & Clawson, 2004).

2.2.2 Media Mis-representations of Black Women

Popular culture, depicted in all forms of media, is flush with influences of white supremacy and racist tropes (Patterson et al., 2016a) that misrepresent Black women in pejorative and limiting ways. When speaking of Black women, Richardson (2002) argues that media images are highly "decontextualized from their roots in slavery and its legacy of racial rule, and are repackaged by mass media and popular culture, helping to reproduce the hegemonic ideologies and replicate social inequality" (p. 791). Beyond the dehumanizing character of the *mammy, jezebel, and superwoman*[4]*,* Black women's intellect has been delegitimized and we have been regarded as a monolith, representing one unified thought or perspective. An example of this problematic ideology is illustrated during now-President Biden's campaign as the National Democratic Nominee in the 2020 U.S. presidential election. When speaking to media outlet NPR, former Vice President Biden stated, "unlike the African American community with a few notable exceptions, the Latino community is an incredibly diverse community with incredibly different attitudes." An example of Collins' (2008) concept of hegemonic power, this viewpoint, when held by those in positions in power, are especially damaging and restrictive and result in deleterious consequences for Black people. By contrast, Black feminist thought recognizes the commonalities, experiences, and perspectives of Black women living in similar contexts while simultaneously rejecting the suggestion that Black women are or should be regarded as a homogenous group. Like every other

[4] For detailed descriptions of controlling images of Black women, see Collins, "Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images," in *Black Feminist Thought*; Marilyn Yarbrough with Crystal Bennett, "Cassandra and the 'Sistahs': The Peculiar Treatment of African American Women in The Myth of Women as Liars, *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice*; Carolyn M. West, "Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire, and Their Homegirls: Developing an 'Oppositional Gaze' Towards the Images of Black Women," in *Lectures on the Psychology of Women* by Joan C. Chrisler, Carla Golden, and Patricia D. Rozee (McGraw Hill); Gloria Ladson-Billings, "'Who You Callin' Nappy-Headed?' A Critical Race Theory Look at the Construction of Black Women," *Race Ethnicity and Education, 1* (2009), 88 –99.

racial or ethnic group, variations in religion, age, geography, political leanings, sexual orientation, gender identity, class, culture, and other ways of being are all unique lenses through which Black women view, express, and experience life.

Evans-Winters (2017, 2019) takes up Black feminist consciousness from a contemporary perspective, calling out the conditions under which Black women live, work and attempt to thrive in a technologically advanced society. Though certainly not an exhaustive list, Evans-Winters (2017; 2019) has taken into account very tangible and experiential realities of Black women in her interpretation of what is considered in the development of a Black feminist commitment. Evans-Winters' theory of Black Feminism extended and advanced Collins' (1986) germinal contributions as well as Crenshaw, Ocen, and Nanda's (2015) scholarly critiques as she operationalizes the notions of self-definition by providing examples of intergenerational storytelling, particularly between Black women and girls. She also illustrated the ways in which intersectional oppression continues to impact the life chances of Black women. For instance, when Evans-Winters (2017, 2019) references hyper surveillance in schools, she may be referring to the very many adolescent Black girls who have been physically and verbally assaulted and ultimately displaced from their educational spaces. This evaluation is strengthened by Crenshaw, Ocen, and Nanda's (2015) report revealing the troubling violent experiences of Black girls in schools. Each of these and no doubt others, come together to serve as a lens through which Black people, and in this case, Black women view the world. Black Feminisms take up these realities and others in articulating Black women's lived experiences.

2.2.3 Womanism as a Complementary theory/Womanism as a Departure

Introduced by Alice Walker (1983), Womanism is a response to the sociohistorically negative connotation of the term "feminist." Feminists and Feminism have centered white women and their needs to the exclusion and detriment of Black women so much so that Black women have refused to be associated with such a movement. Walker (1983) lamented that the word "feminist," even when used to describe Black women, fails to celebrate the beautiful prism of Black women and womanhood, encompassing all social locations, sexual identities and orientations, intellects, talents, and interests. She instead opted for the term "womanism," which considers Black women from a holistic perspective, including our genealogical lineage, herstories, sexualities, spiritualities, and other subjectivities. For Walker (1983), a womanist is a woman

> who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. (p. 45)

Like Black Feminism, Walker's (2012) depiction of womanism is intentionally focused on the uplift of both men and women and acknowledges the many foundational contributions of lesbian women. She continued,

> womanist, from *womanish*. (Opp. of girlish, i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, 'You acting womanish', i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior. (p. 45

It seems that for Walker, womanism encompassed a Feminism within which intergenerational Black culture was unapologetically embedded. Even further, Walker's

illustration of womanism seems to envision Black joy, Black futures, and Blackness, which is a (potentially temporary) departure from the centering of oppression and instead a focus on liberation and life in the absence of oppression.

The ideas of intergenerational learning and sharing as well as the witnessing of Black joy posited by Walker (2012) are reflected in Evans-Winters' (2019) commentary on the shortcomings of Black Feminism. Evans-Winters (2019) suggested that even the phrasing "Black Feminism" has been commodified, commercialized, and watered down in a way that it no longer carries with it a threat to dominant discourses. In other words, Black Feminism has become the "mainstream speak" so much so that it has lost its bite and therefore does not serve to challenge hegemonic social and political structures.

In contrast to both Walker (2012) and Evans-Winters (2019), who identified and defined differences between Black Feminism and Womanism, Thomas (2004) defines both Black feminist and Womanist theories complimentarily as "culturally based perspectives that take into account the contextual and interactive effects of herstory culture, race, class, gender, and other forms of oppression" (p. 289). Thomas' expression of womanism reads similarly to Lindsay-Dennis' (2015) definition as she considers the two together. Lindsay-Dennis acknowledges the marked differences and theoretical stances, while making the case for understanding them as useful to one another as they both prioritize the study of Black women's psyche and social experiences. These collaboratively provide a tool for contextualizing Black women and girlhood.

While scholars have varied in their perspectives on the overlaps and distinctions between Black Feminism and Womanism (Banks-Wallace, 2000; Collins, 2000; Lindsay-Dennis, 2015), some have even suggested that the two be used interchangeably. Womanism, however, has been defined as a distinct concept with specific goals and methods that are not unlike, but are also not

identical to Black Feminism. Those goals are closely tied to spirituality and mutual aid. According to Phillips and McCaskill (2000), like Black Feminism, Womanism necessitates that one speaks from their own unique experiential perspective. Lindsay-Dennis (2015) adds, "Womanism is a social change methodology that stems from the everyday experiences of Black women and their modes of solving practical problems" (p. 510). It is important to take note of the practicality embedded in this definition. The "everyday" nature of womanism, like Black feminist theory, makes it easily accessible in its functionality, useful to all women, not just a selected "scholarly" few. Like Black feminist thoughts' oral traditions, womanism emphasizes the importance of intergenerational relationships, particularly other mothering as a means for exchanging strategies and for learning to tap into intuition for survival and growth (Lindsay-Dennis, 2015). Womanism encourages socialization of Black women and girls into aspects of spirituality, humanity, self-help and communal interactions. As culturally based frameworks, both BFT and Womanism consider and attempt to interpret Black women and girls' experiences contextually, by examining the intersections of race, class, gender, and culture.

Womanism captures and attempts to understand the more mundane facets of the lives of Black women. This perspective is supportive of Collins' (1986) view that Black Feminism is rooted in the minds of ordinary women and does not necessarily find its genesis in the technical facets of scientific research. The two approaches when used in tandem provide useful lenses through which Black women might examine, name, resist and celebrate their own lives in the ways they choose. Both Womanism and Black Feminism promote women using their voices to speak on their own behalf. Table 1 provides a brief illustration of the convergent and varying features of both BFT and Womanism.

Table 1. Overview of Black Feminist Theory and Womanism

	Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000)	**Womanism** (Phillips, 2006)
Purpose	Empowerment self-definition	Social change Activism Ending all forms of oppression
Guiding premise	African American women share the common experience of being Black in a society that denigrates women of African descent	Black womanhood serves as the origin point for a speaking position that feely and autonomously addresses any topic or problem
Characteristic	Lived experience as a criterion of meaning Use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims Ethic of caring Ethic of personal accountability	Anti-oppressionist Vernacular Non-ideological Communitarian Spiritualized
Values	Everyday intellectuals Lived experiences Within group diversity Outsider within status Communal mothering	Everyday experiences and problem solving Dialogue Cultural harmony Self-help and mutual aid Arbitration and meditation Spirituality Motherhood Healing

2.2.4 When the (White) Women's Movement was Not Enough

Historically and contemporarily, many Black women have inextricably tied the "mainstream" feminist movement to the often-exclusionary social movements of middle class American white women, which has not taken up the concerns of racial justice alongside those of women's rights. The central feature of Black Feminism is the struggle against the manifold modes of domination aimed toward Black women (Salazar Perez & Williams, 2014). Taylor (1998) marks distinct historical periods in the evolution of the feminist movement. She contends that the first period, or *wave*, of Black Feminism is a direct result of the abolitionist movement, which saw the passing of the Nineteenth Constitutional Amendment in 1920 and yet is credited to the efforts of white suffragists. One of the most significant areas of divergence between Black and white women was during the suffrage movement and the ultimate passing of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, wherein Black women organized and galvanized other women toward women's right to vote. Not unlike the North, southerners in particular utilized savage tactics, violence, and intimidation in order to block women – Black women for certain – from securing voting rights. "The so-called cornerstone of this 'Southern Civilization' was white supremacy, and the determination of white southerners to restore and then preserve it-and defend the state sovereignty thought necessary to protect white supremacy" (Spruill Wheeler, 1993, p. 4). Black women suffragists faced formidable discrimination from whites committed to the preservation of a white nation. The opposition came from both the North and South, and Black women were alienated from suffrage collectives, both out of worry that Black women would dampen the seriousness of their efforts as well as their shared belief that Black women were simply not deserving of such a right (Spruill Wheeler, 1993). No matter the number of supporters or the sophistication of their organizing efforts, Black women did not possess the political power to lead a national movement. Despite intentional barriers by

white women who refused to work with Black women, and through organizations such as the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Black women carried a strong voice in the mainstream suffrage movement. Distinguished suffragists Ida Wells Barnett, Margaret Murray Washington, and Mary Church Terrell understood the necessity of access to voting as a means for improving their own lives and for the betterment of their communities and thus prioritized justice for Black women (Spruill Wheeler, 1993).

Black Feminism was developed as a necessary divergence from the feminist movement, which marginalized women of color among other identity markers (hooks, 1989; Lorde, 1984). Rich (1978) characterized the feminist movement as a representation of white solipsism, or the reliance on a lens of whiteness to see the world. The feminist movement's sole focus on gender and often glaring omission of race, sexual orientation, class, and social location made it nearly impossible for Black women to find themselves within the movement (Collins, 2000). On human and civil rights concerns, political stances, and other issues of quality of life, Black women consistently found themselves at odds with the priorities and objectives of the *mainstream* feminist movement, which was led by and centered on the lives and needs of white women. White civic groups refused to advocate politically on behalf of Black women. One strong example is illustrated by their widespread refusal to join the large-scale social movement to free activist Angela Davis and to organize against the persecution of Davis. Davis was facing felony charges related to her guns being used in a courtroom takeover in which four people were killed (Aptheker, 1975). The armed takeover was staged as a political defense of Black Nationalist groups in response to reports of egregious abuse of prisoners (Aptheker, 1975).

Black women of the Combahee River Collective – Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith, Demita Frazier, Audre Lorde, and Cheryl Clark – were rejected by white feminist organizations like the

National Women's Political Caucus and the National Organization of Women (NOW), and were branded in some cases as a threat to their movement. When Shirley Chisolm found herself struggling to secure political footing and support for her 1972 campaign for the President of the United States, it became clear that Black women, while active in diverse aspects of social life, were not however a recognized or organized political group. Continually disenfranchised, Black women were compelled to develop their own praxis of race and gender in order to address issues specific to Black women. Black feminists began writing their own political and social agenda that was not only women-centered, but also anti-racist and resulted in the founding of The National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) in 1973 in New York. Established by 30 Black women, the NBFO found its roots and influences in the movements for Black liberation including the Black Panther Party and Black Nationalists, though its organizers aimed to develop a political objective that was anti-sexist. Again, it is at this nexus of sexual politics and anti-racism that Black feminists began to articulate their own standpoint that was informed by the lives, interests, and liberation of Black women. At no time historically had the unique concerns of Black women been prioritized by any movement (Combahee River Collective, 1974; Taylor, 2017). Not only were Black feminists of the time concerned with accessing the economic and social freedoms they were deprived of, but also emphasized their value as human beings and that all the things for which they were fighting were core to their humanity. Further, Black feminists believed that these freedoms should not be sought simply as peripheral to their counterparts (white women; Black men), but because they too were human and were entitled to such (Combahee River Collective, 1974; Taylor, 2017).

Named for Harriet Tubman's 1853 raid on the Combahee River that freed 750 enslaved people, The Combahee River Collective was a group of self-described Black feminists who came

together in 1974 to begin, "defining and clarifying our politics, while at the same time doing political work within our group and in coalition with other progressive organizations and movements." (Combahee River Collective, 1974, p. 210). This movement was led primarily by lesbian women, and from their perspective, political action on behalf of all women of color was a necessary step in their resistance against intersectional oppression. The first to utilize the phrase "identity politics," the Collective was "actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking" (Combahee River Collective, 1974, p. 210). The Combahee River Collective rejected the notion of gender separation, which was widely promoted by white feminist groups. In fact, the Collective found it essential to develop solidarity with Black men to organize against all forms of oppression faced by both Black men and women (Combahee River Collective, 1974; Taylor, 2017).

2.2.5 Either Black or Woman

The second wave of Feminism is marked primarily by the argument of race versus gender when considering the priorities and efficiency of activists of the time period. Taylor (1998) called on the common characterization that race is inherently gendered male; reflecting on the reality that rights for Blacks most often meant rights for Black men, while rarely if at all, considering those of Black women. The gender divide amongst Black people was driven by the fear, real or feigned, that Black women in leadership positions advocating for women's freedoms was ultimately a betrayal to their race. A response to the dire need for political education and engagement, the (NBFO) worked to combat racism in the women's movement and sexism in the Black Panther Movement (Taylor, 1998). Beal (2008) contended that during the Black Power movement, Black

men had asserted and exerted power over Black women, characterizing their relationship dismally. She describes Black women as "slaves of slaves" (Beal, 2008). Beal further claims that Black women have been unprotected, used, and even scapegoated by Black men in their assessment of civil rights in America. The strain in the relationship between Black men and women has been regarded in a one-sided manner, as resentment on the part of Black women toward Black men. There is a pervasive argument that Black men's strength is dependent on the weakness of Black women. This dichotomous either/or analysis is detrimental to Black liberation as a whole and distracts *us* from the actual source of our oppression, which continues to be white supremacy and racism. Arguably even more concerning is that the Afrocentric ideals that challenged racism against Blacks were damagingly conservative in response to the sexism that existed within the Black community and its organized political groups (Taylor, 1998).

Black women faced severe marginalization from many directions. There were, in fact, "rap sessions" hosted by the white women's liberation movement for the purpose of measuring the worthiness of Black women to be included in their feminist conferences. Now that Black women had established their own political standpoint and consciousness that reflected their goals for liberation, they no longer found it prudent to negotiate for inclusion within the feminist movement of white women. Standing firmly in such independence, groups required that white women who claimed to find value in collaborating and conspiring with Black women needed to demonstrate their commitment to equality and, at the very least, demonstrate that they were not racist (Combahee River Collective, 1974; U. Taylor, 1998; K-Y. Taylor 2017).

Black women also faced so many competing issues, and the NBFO struggled to maintain traction and focus while NOW ramped up its presence and recognition. When unable to reconcile the goals and realities of both the white women's liberation movement and that of the NBFO, many

Black women turned from Feminism altogether, believing it was the fantasy of their white counterparts (U. Taylor, 1998; K-Y. Taylor 2017). An image circulating the internet depicting a pair of white women sitting gleefully in a carriage pulled by Black women is a jarring elucidation of the reality of white Feminism in contrast with so-called Black Feminism, particularly within the workforce. In other words, while Feminism afforded to white women certain luxuries, it might have given to Black women the "opportunity" to work for white women, or the beneficiaries of Feminism. Black women, especially Black mothers, rarely had the privilege of choice, especially the choice to not to work outside the home, as they are often the majority economic contributor in their households. Today Black women make up 78% of the labor force (Banks, 2019), and in middle class households Black women continue to be significant contributors to their household incomes (Beal, 2008), even though they still earn 21% less than white women (Banks, 2019). The ideal of Feminism to many Black women was that liberation was a costly privilege that they just could not afford. Black women at that time did not have the freedom to allow Feminism to whisk them from their homemaking, child rearing, and full-time employment responsibilities. Beyond the working class, the women's liberation movement certainly did not consider, let alone center, the concerns of poor Black women (Taylor, 1998).

Second wave Feminism is notably connected to the Civil Rights Movement, namely the implementation of Titles VII[5] and IX[6] passed with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which offered

[5] *Title VII prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin*

[6] The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) enforces, among other statutes, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX protects people from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance. Title IX states: No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

protections from discrimination on the basis of race and gender respectively (US Department of Education, 2021; US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2021). Another source of feminist resentment on the part of Black women is the unintended outcomes of affirmative action legislation, which was crafted to address the systemic racism and sexism that persisted following the Voting Rights and Civil Rights Acts. Research has demonstrated however that educated white women have benefited from affirmative action at greater rates than any other group (Taylor, 1998; Wise, 1998) and as such have co-opted the fruits of Black women's labor.

2.2.6 Oppression Existing at the Vectors of Multiple Identities

Black Feminism in its third wave is distinguished by consciousness-raising efforts on the part of Black women *for* Black women. Taylor (1998) characterizes the third wave of Feminism as a period of endarkenment[7] (Dillard, 2000, 2010) as a period when a significant number of Black women began to identify and define a feminist standpoint, which she argued provided a vehicle for developing empowerment and agency. The new feminist perspective of Black women encompassed a range of concerns including the economic, political, health, and social realities of Black people. This viewpoint was much more expansive than that of traditional white Feminism of the time.

Captured within the third wave is the concept of the interlocking nature of oppression. Intersectionality as a concept had not been seriously considered in "mainstream" theorizing prior to its application in Black feminist thought (Carathasis, 2014). More recently, as a "traveling

[7] Dillard (2000) described endarkened feminist epistemology as reality when viewed through a global Black feminist thought perspective and too offers specifically a context wherein descendants of Africa.

theory," intersectionality can be located in literature including over 100 peer reviewed articles on the topic of higher education alone (Harris & Patton, 2019). While the term "intersectionality" was coined by women of the Combahee River Collective, it was not until Black feminist and legal scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw further complicated historical interpretations of intersectionality in discrimination law that the theory origins in Black Feminism gained recognition (Carathasis, 2014). Crenshaw's efforts drew attention to the reality that within the legal doctrines that center women, it is implied that the subject is white. Similarly, when addressing concerns of race, the needs and interests of Black men are implied. Scholars identified Black women's experiences as multiply oppressed people as "double jeopardy" or "interlocking oppressions" (Beal, 1970; Combahee River Collective, 1974). In her germinal work, *A Voice from the South*, Black feminist scholar Anna Julia Cooper (1892/1988) grappled with what she coined, "the concomitant condition of being both woman and Black". She posited that society must challenge the "woman question" and the "race problem," which was a novel approach to both feminist and racial justice interpretations. The overlap of anti-racist and feminist theoretical interpretations has origins in the 1980s and is credited to the scholarly contributions of Black and Latinx women, particularly those who identified as lesbian (Carathasis, 2014).

As articulated by Crenshaw (1991), intersectionality is defined in three ways. Crenshaw offered that *structural intersectionality* describes the particularity with which Black women experience oppression in markedly different than ways experienced by white women. For example, while a white woman may experience sexism in her workplace, a Black woman is more likely to experience racialized sexism, which may be rooted in dehumanizing stereotypes of Black women. So, a Black women may be marginalized at the nexus of racism and sexism. Crenshaw also describes *political intersectionality* as the tendency for the outcomes of feminist and racial justice

legislation to consistently minimize, dismiss, and ignore Black women's concerns. Black women have been limited in their legal recourse, and courts have required that cases be categorized on the basis of either gender or race discrimination. Lastly, *representational intersectionality* calls attention to the images, stereotypes, and narratives of Black women that pervade media, literature, education, and so on. Crenshaw asserted that even the critiques of these negative representations compound the racist tropes themselves and are used to further oppress Black women. For instance, Black women are characterized as loud, inconsiderate, and angry when they resist the racist and sexist labels placed upon them.

Intersectionality as a theoretical approach has been employed to address a pervasive debate amongst Black people, an argument that weighs the salience of racial consciousness compared to that of gender consciousness (Guy-Sheftall, 1995). Across the span of socio-historical periods, some forms of oppression seem to have varied in terms of dominance. For Black feminists however, a shared perspective that has persisted is that rather than ranking the importance of one over the other, a more accurate examination of Black women's lives lies in the study of both identities simultaneously at the intersection of these vectors of oppression. Simultaneity of identities is key, as acts and structures of oppression occur simultaneously and the dissociation of them is often both impossible and deleterious. Intersectionality is neither the multiplicative factor nor the sum of one's identities. It does not polarize one aspect of identity in relation to another. Intersectionality may be better understood using the analogy of a prism, where not only do identities cross and overlap at various points, but they are also enacted and experienced in myriad ways depending on the context, or from whichever angle you view the prism. Black Feminism necessarily prioritizes the simultaneity of both race consciousness and gender consciousness as a means for understanding, resisting, and eliminating all oppression (Simien & Clawson, 2004).

Critiques of intersectionality or what have been deemed "the intersectionality wars" (Nash, 2017, p. 117) have included arguments centered on its origination, history, politics, and efficacy as a viable framework. Relevant to the current discussion, debates have even questioned intersectionality's connection to Black Feminism and to Black women in general (Harris & Patton, 2019). Additionally, critics challenge whether intersectionality is indeed an analytical instrument, theory or heuristic tool (Harris & Patton, 2019). Not only are there questions about who can use intersectionality (Alexander-Floyd, 2012; Bilge, 2013; Collins & Bilge, 2016), there is on-going debate about with whom the theory should be used. While some scholars (Carbado, 2013; Crenshaw, 2011) suggested that it could be applied to diverse populations, Alexander-Floyd (2012) asserted that intersectionality should be used for Black women exclusively as it was theorized by Black women (Combahee River Collective, 1974; Crenshaw, 2011). Harris and Patton (2019) posited that the conflict surrounding intersectionality is in fact serving to *undo* the theory itself. They define the undoing as the use of intersectionality in ways that "depoliticize and whiten the theory" (Harris & Patton, 2019, p. 349). They call on the grounding tenets of the theory, "an analytical lens and political tool for fostering a radical social justice agenda" (Bilge, 2013, p. 407) and argued that objectivity and generalizability weaken its utility and potential for radical change (Harris & Patton, 2019). Crenshaw (2011) instead urged scholars to examine the ways in which intersectionality has been employed in research and to use its history as a guide. On the debate of for whom intersectionality was designed, Harris and Patton (2019) maintained that intersectionality "has origins both inside and outside of the academy, but always in women of color Feminisms" (p. 350). Moreover, intersectionality gave a name to "a pre-existing theoretical and political commitment" (Nash, 2008, p. 3), meaning that the analysis of intersecting identities is not

a novel concept, though it has not always been *done* in ways that have been edifying to Black women.

2.2.7 Race and Gender and Class

Attempted examinations of oppressive social conditions rather historically or present-day are often shortsighted as they lack any investigation of the intersections of multiply marginalized identities (Collins, 2008; Crenshaw, 1991; Dill et al., 2007). Crenshaw (2011) is a leader in the contemporary "Say Her Name" movement which aims to call out the erasure of Black women and trans people in the discussion of police brutality and police murders. Subtle shifts in language from "unarmed Black men" and "African American men" to "unarmed Black men and women" and "African American people" is one attempt at recognizing how the lives and loss of Black women are so frequently overlooked and ignored by the media and society. Black Feminist theory necessarily centers on the intersections of race, gender, and class as they relate to the criminal (in)justice system. An intersectional perspective would examine the nuanced and unique experiences of Black women as they are herded through the criminal (in)justice system and especially as they are aggressed upon and even murdered while in the custody of law enforcement.

Intersectional theory acknowledges that "modes of inequality, such as race, class, and gender, can combine in ways that alter the meaning and effects of one another" (Morris, 2007, p. 2), especially when taken individually. For instance, a white woman is far less likely to experience physical violence or unnecessary use of force when confronted by law enforcement than a Black woman for the same alleged crime, suggesting that race does play a role, to the detriment of Black women (Carathasis, 2014; Goodwin, 2020). A white woman is also less likely to be convicted and more likely to receive a lesser sentence for the same offenses as a Black woman (Hagler, 2016).

In her postulation of structural intersectionality, Crenshaw (1991) uses an example of Black women seeking safety and support in homeless shelters. She calls attention to the frequency with which Black women are hampered by extreme poverty, underemployment, and childcare, and how those conditions are often attributed to structural discrimination along the lines of gender *and* class. Crenshaw says racial oppression further exacerbates a Black woman's likelihood of securing adequate and safe housing and employment that would allow them to improve their circumstances. Whereas white women facing a similar need for shelter who may not encounter such discrimination may transcend their temporary status with greater ease, or at the very least not face the limitations produced by racial prejudice. Therefore, in order to be effective, systems designed to support women must consider all aspects of their identities, especially race.

Profoundly contrary to the intentions of intersectionality as a theoretical frame, many researchers have individually measured gender and race as variables in order to evaluate the interaction of the two (Gay & Tate, 1998). One might consider the damage of racism while not analyzing the impact of gender when evaluating safeguards and remedies to discrimination. This problematic approach assumes that one is either woman or Black and does not acknowledge that it is at the intersection of identities where discrimination occurs. Black Feminism aims not to measure, but to understand the nuanced and dynamic realities of oppression at the convergence of multiply marginalized identities. Without investigating the intersections of oppression, a measurement of high levels of both racial and gender identity (taken separately) may erroneously suggest that Black women experience emotionally secure and socially fulfilled lives writ large. While it is certainly possible for Black women to hone in on their Blackness in particular or on their womanhood specifically, to ignore the nuanced types of oppression that lie within the intersections of race, gender, and other identities is an affront to the realities of the marginalization

they often face. Wallace (1995) keenly captured the limitations inherent in conventional theories and methods lacking an intersectional approach,

> We exist as women who are Black who are feminists, each stranded for the moment, working independently because there is not yet an environment in this society remotely congenial to our struggle-because, being on the bottom, we would have to do what no one else has done: we would have to fight the world. (pp. 6-7)

Moreover, Black women's lives have been historically constrained in such a way (in Black male-dominated households, working in white male-dominated environments) that almost necessitated a singular, targeted, or singularly stranded fight, rather than an intersectional or woven one.

Intersectionality has been key to understanding the perspectives, experiences, and lives of Black women especially regarding those of Black men. Throughout the history of Feminism, Black women have been urged to choose their race over their gender, as if such a task was even possible. Even so, if one were able to minimize the effects of one form of oppression, she would still be exposed to the dehumanization of the other.

> In all their lives in America ... black women have felt between the loyalties that bind them to race on one hand, and sex on the other. Choosing one or the other, of course, means taking sides against the self, yet they have almost always chosen race over the other: a sacrifice of their self-hood as women and of full humanity, in favour of the race. (McKay, 1992, pp. 277–278, quoted in Collins, 2009, p. 132)

The realization that (white) Feminism was not only insufficient for Black women, but was also exclusionary to them, necessitates the study and uplift of Black feminist consciousness. Like the women's movement intentionally and strategically excluded Black women, the striving for

civil rights for Black people most often centered on rights for Black men, to the exclusion of Black women. Sojourner Truth lamented, "there is a great stir about colored men getting their rights, and not colored women theirs, you see the colored men will be the masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as before" (6:238). In fact, this forecast is not so far off. Much of the language of Black Nationalist groups positioned Black women as less intelligent, ill-equipped to make wise decisions, and categorically denounced the very notion of equality for the sexes (Combahee River Collective, 1974). This sort of propaganda was employed in a false argument against dividing the fight for Black power. For the Combahee River Collective, Black women's freedom would necessitate the freedom of all oppressed groups because that would require a dismantling of racism and sexism, thus ensuring liberation for all. This of course presupposes that Black women be freed of all systems of oppression, not only political but all sources of power that have dominated their lives.

Viewing the marginalization of Black women as interlocking systems of oppression is foundational in Black feminist thought because it focuses on the interactions between oppressions, rather than prioritizing one form and subsequently ignoring another. Collins (1986) provided that dichotomous oppositional difference is the problematic approach of categorizing people in harmfully contrasting ways. Think: Black/white, male/female, old/young. These categories serve to maintain conflict rather than positioning them as complementary to one another. Collins (2006) rejects an either/or approach in favor of both/and thinking which considers both individual and group perspectives and posits that identities are much less static than hegemonic ideologies would suggest.

Intersectionality as a theoretical framework has been taken up far beyond academia and women's studies and applied in discussions of human rights. Carathasis (2014) contended that

while intersectionality in its contemporary form originated in Black feminist thought, it has been taken up and obscured within the fields of feminist theory and women's studies. Crenshaw (2017) has drawn attention to the ways in which the concept has been misunderstood, co-opted, and often misused as a means for inaction. Crenshaw (2017) said, "intersectionality can get used as a blanket term to mean, 'Well, it's complicated.' Sometimes, 'It's complicated' is an excuse not to do anything" (Columbia Law School, 2017). Carathasis (2014) asserts that Crenshaw's interrogation of intersectionality as it were, led to its popular use in various academic and social discourse, ironically muddying the definition that was intended. In fact, intersectionality has been used and misused suggesting that the term broadly describes oppression, without particularity to vectors upon which oppression occurs. Crenshaw (2017) described her explication of intersectionality as such, "I was simply looking at the way all of these systems of oppression overlap" (Guidroz & Berger, 2010, p. 149). She continued by emphasizing the fact that acknowledging overlapping systems of oppression is in direct response to political rhetoric that claims that the overlaps do not exist at all, ultimately negating the experiences of people who do exist within the intersections themselves. Crenshaw (2017) elaborates on her metaphor:

> Consider an analogy to traffic in an interaction, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an interaction, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in an intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination [...] But it is not always easy to reconstruct an accident: Sometimes the skid marks and the injuries simply indicate that they occurred simultaneously, frustrating efforts to determine which driver caused the harm. (p. 149)

Crenshaw's (2017) vivid description of her analogy illustrated that harm experienced at the center of an intersection is not easily attributed to one cause or another, which potentially fuels skepticism on the part of onlookers. Further complicating the notion of intersectionality is the multiplicity of identity. For instance, how does one know if harm caused to them is a result of not only sex or race discrimination which are arguably phenotypical, or if the oppression is a result of sexual orientation, political leaning, social location, or economic class? The U.S. legal system is plagued with dichotomous descriptors and mutually exclusive categories, which do not easily allow for nuance.

Crenshaw (1991) critiqued identity politics as she asserted that it tends to ignore within group differences and thus failing to acknowledge the unique differences in the ways in which, for instance, Black women experience domestic violence, sex discrimination, or LGBTQIA+ discrimination. Crenshaw stated that because identity markers like gender, race, social location, and sexual orientation are so closely associated with marginalization, those engaged in liberation work should aim to delegitimize these categories altogether. There is, however, support for shifting hegemonic power from negative narratives associated with social categories to allow that power to be utilized in liberatory movements that celebrate inter- and intragroup differences.

Black women have been victimized not only with physical, sexual, and mental violence throughout enslavement and beyond, but we are continually dehumanized through public racist, sexist and stereotypical constructions of our being. Literature examining Black women's dehumanization using Black feminist theories has described some of their resistance strategies that were employed. Hine (1989) reviewed the notion of a 'culture of dissemblance' and a 'cult of secrecy' as a means for combatting sexual violence during the Great Migration (p. 915). Black women attempted to cultivate a sense of privacy, even obscurity related to their private lives,

emotions, and thoughts (Nash, 2020). This desired invisibility, an attempt at self-preservation, is known as dissemblance. Nash (2020) likens dissemblance to the concept, "If you can't be free, be a mystery" (Rita Dove, 1991, p. 64). What Collins (1990b) and others (Harris-Perry, 2011) called "controlling images" (mammies, jezebels, superwoman; Collins 1990b) are racist and sexist caricatures of Black women that were intended to position Black women in harmful one-dimensional objects in relation to white people.

Hine (1989) argued that the self-imposed enigmas created by Black women of the time, in fact served to maintain such stereotypes. In other words, the desired secrecy allowed room for speculation, projection, and mimicry. Higginbotham (1993) later introduced "politics of respectability" as a theory for articulating Black women's self-definition and moreover Black women's attempts at delegitimizing racist and sexist tropes used to subordinate them. Nash (2020) contends, "As a strategy of self- presentation, respectability was always both pedagogical and performative, a construction of an ethical platform from which to wage political work and a public-facing insistence on the humanity of black life" (p. 522). Of course, contemporarily, both dissemblance and respectability politics have been critically interrogated, and their viability as Black feminist theories tested (Hine, 1989; Nash, 2020). While both dissemblance and respectability politics endure as useful tools for understanding the strategies and behaviors of Black women, the impetus behind both; the physical and otherwise comportment of Black women's subjectivities for the consumption of white people must continue to be troubled.

2.2.8 Fourth and Current Wave

In her analysis of the lifespan of Black Feminism, Brittany Cooper (2015) questioned whether despite its historical significance, cultural value and interdisciplinary contributions, the

theory can look toward a future. She critiqued the detractors who have maintained a "culture of justification" lodged at Black Feminisms and its theorists, stating, "the study of Black women's lives, histories, literature, cultural production and theory is sufficiently academic, and sufficiently 'rigorous' to merit academic resources" (Cooper, 2015, p. 7). Cooper likens such an argument to that of the academic process of knowledge production, wherein one must disprove previous knowledge in order to be regarded as rigorous, meaningful scholarship. Therefore, Black Feminist theorists are then required to prove their worth by offering something new even though what little has already been theorized about Black women is often incorrect, insufficient, and invalidating. Along that line of thinking, a critical inquiry posed by Black feminist theorists and extended by Cooper (2015, 2018) is whether Black Feminism needs its own metaphysics. Specifically, Cooper (2015) posited, "If Black women do not accept Western philosophy's white male understand-ing of reality (metaphysics), then how does Black feminist theory ever articulate its own metaphysics? And does it need to?" (p. 11). Cooper interrogated the plausibility for Black women and Black feminist theorists to accept and take up social constructionist views of gender and racial identity where those same approaches delegitimize Blackness and Black womanness. Evans-Winters (2019) illustrates such a paradox as "lions dancing with hunters," as attempts to define our own consciousness requires a decolonizing of language, perspective and institutions that serve to validate our intellectual prowess (p. 13). Without decolonization, Evans-Winters (2019) assures that Black women will continually compromise our humanity and liberation and our social, political, and economic advancements will be negotiated through Eurocentric power structures.

Cooper (2015) offered, even contemporarily for Black women, the refrain of unity within race and gender categories is not afforded to them. In other words, they are not always acknowledged and included in discussions of the needs, desires, and aspirations of women or even

of Black people. A Black feminist theory of race and anti-racism acknowledges the social construction of race and the anti-Black argument for ignoring its existing and the damaging ways in which it has been weaponized (Cooper, 2015, 2018).

In its current wave, Black Feminism continues to confront racism perpetuated by the white women's movement; while it pushes an argument that once white women achieve a sufficient level of equality, they will open doors for all *other* women (Kendall, 2020). Kendall (2020) established her argument against what she would call pseudo-solidarity claims advanced by the mainstream women's movement with her #solidarityisforwhitewomen tag. The white feminist movement has not and does not fight alongside Black women, nor does it advocate for Black women's concerns. The objectives of the mainstream movement in fact remain silent and continually exclude Black women, regardless of its claim to be for "all women." So, indeed, while white women criticized Kendall's stance, the solidarity for which women purport to be fighting, has never included Black women (2020). Even among them, solidarity for white women seems fleeting. That fact was certainly evident in the 2016 presidential election where 52% of white women voted for Donald Trump (Bump, 2018; see Figure 1) and another large contingent of white women donned pink pussy hats at a women's march symbolizing their rejection of the new administration. One would be hard pressed to find many Black faces in the sea of pink hat wearers who's protests still centered white women and white women's concerns. Further exemplifying the vast divide, Black women overwhelmingly supported Hillary Clinton, representing 94% of their votes (Dastagir, 2017).

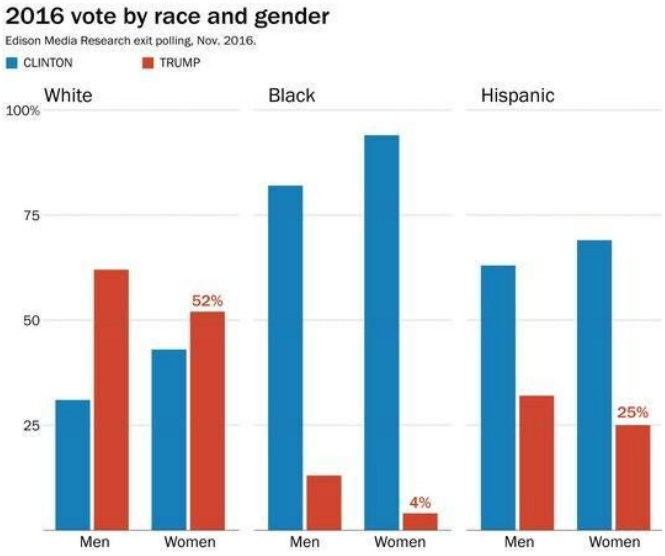

Figure 1. 2016 Votes by Race and Gender

2.2.9 Black Women in Education

Black women and girls experience concurrent invisibility and hypervisibility, particularly in academic spaces and that Black women educators have expressed a sense of political commitment and urgency in their teaching of Black children. Scholarship using Black feminist theories and methodologies have problematized the harmful and often violent ways in which Black women and girls are socialized in educational settings. Henry (1998) studied Black girls' social silencing and alienation. Using hooks (1989) practice of "coming to voice," Henry (2009) established writing groups with Black girl students which revealed the students' socially ascribed views about Black girlhood and their prescribed comportment and politicized behaviors. Mogadime's (2000) research highlighted Black girls' experiences in a school drama program which served as an opportunity for resistance against the white-centric curriculum and pedagogical practices of their school. Mogadime (2000) named the counter-narratives developed by students a

"pedagogy of hope" (p. 229), which speaks to the value and promise of Black feminist methodologies and pedagogies that privilege the lives and interests of Black women and girls. Each of these studies not only provide insight into the literature the reality of subordination experienced by Black women and girls, but they also provide hope for Black futures through liberatory practices.

Of the potentially useful theories and methodologies that have been used to examine the lives of Black women and girls in education, Black Feminism endures and serves as a comprehensive lens given his sociohistorical framing (Lane, 2017). Theorists find that Black women and girls are often forced to contend with degrading images and pedagogies in their classrooms (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019). Research on the educational experiences of Black women and girls has been conducted in corrupt and often negatively skewed ways (Crenshaw et al., 2015). Not only are the lived experiences of Black women often misrepresented, but a gap also exists in terms of how Black women students define their identities amid stereotypes of themselves on college campuses (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019). Two major lines of thinking exist regarding the perceptions of Black women students, both of which can have substantial impact on their identities. While Black women students are positioned, at least colloquially, as successful, extant literature contends that individuals in this group are held to unusually high standards when compared to other groups and are associated with the superwoman ideal (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019). The superwoman ideal promotes the expectations of Black women as selfless, hard-working, and strong (West et al., 2016). For example, Patton, Haynes, and Croom (2017) assert that the narrative of the new model minority paints Black women as a monolithic group of what they call "super women," and discredits their marginalization in education and society more broadly. Black women students as superwomen are seen as having the ability to persist at any cost,

even if that cost is their own self-esteem and mental health (Everett & Croom, 2017; Jerald et al, 2017). The idea that Black women are impermeable to vulnerability, the psychological and emotional impact of academic struggles, and direct (and indirect) attacks on their intellect is tremendously harmful to their identities and self-concepts (West et al.,2016; Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Moreover, the superwoman myth may prevent policies and practices that are specifically dedicated to meeting the diverse needs of Black women students, particularly in postsecondary contexts (Patton et al, 2017).

Black women have the unique reality of suffering from both a sense of invisibility as well as simultaneous hypervisibility (Haynes et al., 2016). This sort of invisibility/hypervisibility is akin to the concept of intersectionality as Black women may be hypervisible due to their race, while rendered invisible because of their gender. In other words, their needs, expertise, and contributions often remain ignored, while their outsider status creates a sort of fishbowl effect. Franklin (1999) contends, "Invisibility is an inner struggle with feeling that one's talents, abilities, personalities, and worth are not valued or even recognized" (p. 761). Ryland (2013) defined hypervisibility in this way, "scrutiny based on perceived difference, which is usually (mis)interpreted as deviance" (p. 2222). In their auto-ethnographic study with Black woman doctoral students, Haynes et al. (2016) revealed their own deficit thinking about themselves as scholars, as they connected this negative sense of self to the master scripting (Acuff et al., 2012) that normalizes racism on PWI campuses.

Perpetuating the hypervisibility of their existence, Black girls have historically been described as talkative, loud, aggressive, and violent (Crenshaw, 2015; Morris, 2016). In his study of an urban high school's classroom dynamics, Morris (2007) found that White teachers seemed to focus their attention on the social decorum and physical comportment of Black girls rather than

their academic achievement, referring to girls behaving "unladylike," implying a set, prescribed trait expected of young women. Black female students were regarded as "mature," though not a desirable attribute, and more culpable of their teenage indiscretions (Morris, 2007). In many instances, the act of speaking up for oneself, using illustrative body language or overlapping speech are perceived as disrespectful and may result in an office referral or suspension even when these actions are not intended to be harmful (E. Morris, 2007; M. Morris, 2016).

Research has demonstrated that Black girls are six times as likely as their White female peers to be suspended for very similar behaviors (Crenshaw, 2015). In other words, the often-innocuous actions of Black female students may be interpreted as "disrespectful" or "aggressive," while those of their white peers are regarded as playful. Further, Black girls receive harsher sentences in the juvenile justice system when compared to any other subgroup of girls. These data demonstrate the necessity for intersectional theorizing and problem solving. Though Black boys experience exclusionary practices at the highest rate of all groups, the relative rate of suspension between Black boys and white boys is half that of Black girls and white girls (Crenshaw, 2015). Crenshaw elucidated in her 2015 report, "The existing research, data, and public policy debates often fail to address the degree to which girls face risks that are both similar to and different from those faced by boys" (p. 11). In fact, the gulf in research on Black girls is startling. Only 48 peer reviewed articles focusing on Black women's educational experiences were published between 1991 and 2012 (Patton et al., 2016). In contrast to Black boys, Black girls are often regarded as "the new model minority" (Kaba, 2008) because they are faring better than Black boys (Patton et al., 2016). Even with evidence of discipline disparity (Crenshaw, 2015; Morris, 2016), few studies exist which explore the long-term outcomes of the Black girl "push out" effect. Regarding reform efforts and others that have focused on the improvement of student performance and behavior (in

contrast with concerns of student experience), very few have centered Black girls. Like research surrounding gaps between Black men and Black women, studies that purport to examine experiences of Black children often focus on Black boys. Those that focus on girls carry an assumption of whiteness (Evans-Winters, 2011; Muhammad & Dixson, 2008). Even more troubling, when Black girls are indeed the focus, they tend to be examined in comparison to white girls, wherein white girls are positioned as the standard.

2.2.10 Black Women Educators

Black women educators have historically and contemporarily taken a stance toward equity and justice in their classrooms and in relation to their white colleagues. Black women educators report a "political commitment" and responsibility for the Black community writ large (Dixson, 2003, p. 292). This political responsibility has historically been rooted in the efforts toward racial uplift (Dixson, 2003; Foster; 1991; Huntzinger, 1995; Perkins, 1993; Smith, 1989). Black educators, for instance, have served as advocates for Black students faced with disparate disciplinary action, overidentification of Black children for special education, inequitable access to advanced classes and resources (Dixson, 2003). On a more micro scale, Black women teachers struggle against racist subordination forced on Black children. They speak on behalf of children and their families amongst administrators and school board leaders (Dixson, 2003). Black women have continually worked to disrupt the deficit and harmful narratives about Black children that are perpetuated throughout in-school discourses as well as on macro levels such as standardized testing. Both culturally relevant pedagogy (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995) and politically relevant pedagogy (Beuboeuf-Lafontant, 1999) consider a political understanding of "schooling" (p. 705) and that culturally relevant pedagogies are influenced by such individual politics. Dixson

(2003) suggests each of these are extensions of Black feminist perspectives enacted by Black women educators. Using an intersectional approach, Dixson (2003) examined the pedagogies of two Black women elementary teachers. She found that these women demonstrated both implicit (and inherent) and overt political leanings in their teaching and expressed an awareness of the ways in which gender, class and race informed their lives and their teaching practices (Dixson, 2003).

Lane (2017) found promise with the use of a Black feminist perspective in educational contexts, offering that although educational injustices enacted upon Black girls persists and mirror societal inequities, a Black feminist standpoint also lends itself toward future thinking and developing liberatory practices and humanizing educational environments. Studies featuring Black feminist pedagogies highlight the potential and illustrate empowering instructional practices (Henry, 1998, 2009; hooks, 1989; Mogadime, 2000).

2.3 Implications and Conclusion

Kohli (2012) proposed that Black women educators should engage in critical reflection, develop race-conscious practices, and facilitate dialogue which addresses deficit notions of People of Color and centers asset-based representations that lead to healing and transformation. This concept and practice is often called "race talk," (Sue, 2013), a process in which educators (in this case) engage in an exchange of listening and storying to build relationships and co-construct knowledge. Black women educators can utilize race talk to interrogate systems of oppression that exist at all levels of the educational process. Race talk can also be useful to help students express themselves and afford Black students opportunities to talk through their feelings and experiences with racism. When educators engage in critical race talk with students, they can create an

environment that is validating and responsive to the needs of students. Race talk as a dialogic practice can help students and educators interrogate interlocking systems of oppression and collectively problem solve to minimize its impact on our daily lives. I propose a race talk that is critical in nature. Critical race talk is purposeful, equitable, proactive, continuous, and at its core, it is humanizing and loving. Critical race talk extends beyond conversations that center race but tend to exist peripheral to "more appropriate" or "safe" conversations. Critical race talk focuses specifically on acknowledging and interrogating racism and oppression and in essence is used for the purpose of transforming the material conditions of Black people.

Black women educators throughout history have adopted an activist disposition in their pedagogies and practices, aiming to affect the educational and life outcomes of Black children (Dixson, 2003). Researchers have even considered this type of political activity a type of Black feminist activism (Dixson, 2003).

Future research should center on (a) amplifying the perspectives, voices, and ideas of Black women through storying, art, teaching, mothering, spirituality, and all manner of "ordinary living"; (b) be conducted in transformative ways that uplift the humanities and expertise of all Black women; (c) develop and test methodologies in partnership with Black women. Methodologies should establish experience as a criterion of meaning and research should focus on examining culturally relevant practices and supports around Black women educators, interrogating and disrupting systems that oppress Black educators and students, and co-constructing pathways for liberation for Black people.

In my review of literature on Black Feminist Theories, I presented a historical exploration of BFT in four waves beginning with its divergence from the white feminist movement. The second wave was marked by the debate of race versus gender, which led to Black women leading

consciousness-raising efforts in the third wave. I proposed that we are currently experiencing the fourth wave of Black Feminism, which appears to be grappling with methodologies for examining our lives and telling our stories in the ways that we choose. Black Feminism is its fourth wave is concerned with activism, liberation, and living in the future its mothers manifested.

3.0 Chapter Two. Finding Allies and Making Space: Individual Approaches to Black Feminist Activism in Higher Education

This study on individual approaches to Black feminist activism in higher education derives from a longitudinal, qualitative-based study of diversity, equity, and inclusion with university faculty, staff, and students at a large, public, research university in the midwestern region of the United States. Data in this study were gathered as part of a larger research team that included a university administrative leader, staff members, and graduate students who sought ways to better center diversity, equity, and inclusion (and, by extension, justice) within a university context. In particular, this research examines how students, faculty, staff, and administrators at a research one (R1), historically white institution (HWI) understand issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their academic, personal, professional, and community lives. The goal of this specific dissertation study was to understand how three Black women in higher education settings think and talk about their experiences of inequity and discrimination and their reflections of their institution's response (or lack of response) to incidents of racism and systemic injustice. This study addresses the research question: *How do Black women in higher education see themselves as catalysts for educational change?*

3.1 Methods

In the larger study from which this dissertation article derives, we utilized a single case study design to examine how faculty, students, and staff at one institution in the Midwest define

diversity, equity, and inclusion, and what diversity, equity, and inclusion look like in the day-to-day practices of the university. We chose a single-site case study methodology because it allows us to understand the phenomenon of a diversifying higher educational landscape across contexts (Yin, 2009). The study site is a large, research-intensive, public university in an urban area in the Midwest and is classified by The Carnegie Foundation as a doctoral granting institution. This university is an HWI, enrolling more white students and employing more white faculty and staff than People of Color. For this analysis of a subset of data from the larger, ongoing study, I focused on the experiences and perspectives of Black women working and studying in various capacities at this university.

3.1.1 Data Sources

Data collection commenced in 2016 and are the outcome of in-depth, semi-structured one-on-one interviews collected with Black women faculty, administrators, students, and staff. Data collection is ongoing, with follow-up interviews being conducted with a subgroup of the larger sample of 120 participants. For the purposes of this study, I engaged in follow-up interviews in 2022 with two Black women participants from the original data set, including one executive-level administrator and one tenured faculty member. Using phenomenological interviewing as the primary research method, I engaged in in-depth, explorative interviews in order to gain a deep understanding of participants' perceptions of reality and the nature or meaning of their everyday lives (Patton, 2002). Each participant also completed a brief demographic survey in advance of our meeting. Interviews took place virtually via Zoom and were recorded and transcribed. The total sample for the larger research study is diverse along lines of race/ethnicity, sex/gender, sexual

orientation, and position within the university; however, participants for this study were selected as they each identify as Black women.

3.1.2 Data Analysis

Our research team met weekly for one hour over the period of one year to review, code, and analyze 42 interviews that were each approximately 45-55 minutes in length. We developed a coding structure and refined our codes using multiple rounds of review to ensure inter-rater reliability. Following the open coding of interviews, we discussed common themes and developed and defined shared terminology. Beginning with a review of the initial collection of interview transcripts from the two women in my subset, I utilized a similar analytic structure to interpret the data gathered in each of the follow up interviews. These audio-recorded interviews were transcribed into text and read in their entirety while I kept analytic memos and impressions of the data (Creswell, 2013). I engaged in consecutive rounds of open and axial coding, including in vivo and process coding and developed a code book to categorize and identify themes and related ideas (Saldaña, 2016).

3.2 Background Literature

Black women continue to experience harmful racially motivated micro- and macroaggressions and discrimination in PK-20 educational contexts. Particularly in higher education contexts, Black women who have resisted the school-to-prison pipeline (Crenshaw et al., 2015) and have been pushed out of their schools (Morris, 2016) find themselves both invisible

(Patton & Ward, 2016) and hypervisible in PWIs. Unfortunately, these realities draw attention to the need for research, methodologies, and practices that affirm and center Black women's experiences as students, faculty, staff, and administrators on higher education campuses.

Dubbed the "new model minority" because of their ability to resist and persist, research contends that Black women have become one of the most academically successful minoritized subgroups despite the many barriers they have faced due to their race and gender identities (Kaba, 2008). The problematic model minority discussion suggests that Black women – a group once educationally, economically, and socially marginalized – has, in the face of various obstacles, risen and achieved prosperity, admiration, and even emulation. The model minority characterization is often bestowed as a sort of compliment by non-Blacks and deleteriously overlooks the systemic racism and sexism facing Black women. Patton et al. (2017) assert that the narrative of the new model minority paints Black women as a monolithic group of "super women," and discredits their marginalization in education and society more broadly. This line of thinking has become a point of contention amongst various scholars, as the notion suggests a stance that Black women have successfully overcome all odds and are in fact, better for it. Further, this analysis by Patton et al. (2017) concludes that this narrative may very well prevent policies and practices that are specifically dedicated to meeting the diverse needs of Black women students in postsecondary contexts.

The lived experiences of Black women on PWI campuses are of pressing concern as these contexts often serve as distal environments where feelings of alienation and isolation abound (Robertson, et al., 2005; Robertson & Dundes 2017). The idea that Black women are impermeable to vulnerability ignores the psychological and emotional impact of academic struggles, and

microaggressive attacks on their intellect is harmful to their identities and self-concepts (Allen et al., 2013).

The Black women in this study found the need for themselves, their colleagues, and their students to create counter-spaces for their mental and physical wellbeing. Counter-spaces are a viable response to the often culturally incongruent environment of PWIs. Solórzano et al. (2000) explain, "counter-spaces serve as sites where deficit notions of People of Color can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established and maintained" (p. 70). These spaces are often necessary sites of refuge not created or sanctioned by universities but designed for and by People of Color. Especially for the women in this study, having the opportunity to coalesce with other Black women and Black students and to exchange stories of academic and social struggles is a valuable asset and may mean the difference between persisting and leaving a university campus (Dortch, 2016). The Black women in this study created counter-spaces within Black student organizations, offices that provide services to Students of Color and intangible supports for Black faculty and staff.

This research brings to the fore the necessity of anti-racist practices rooted in social justice and humanizing approaches in educational research and practice for Black women. Creating such environments and research methods is important for institutions of higher education as the pursuit of justice, equity, and inclusion remains a key mechanism for cultivating a more just society.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

I utilized Critical Race Feminism (CRF) as the theoretical lens in this study (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Wing, 1997). CRF is a feminist approach and lens through which to understand

Critical Race Theory (CRT). As one of many outgrowths of CRT, CRF relies on Critical Race Theory's tenets or principles including challenging gender essentialism: "the notion that a unitary, 'essential' women's experience can be isolated and described independently of race, class orientation, and other realities of experience" (Harris, 1990, p. 585). CRF is a practice-based theory (Berry, 2010) which, like CRT, also uses storytelling and emphasizes intersectionality and the multidimensional identities of Women of Color. As a response to their marginalized existence on their PWI campuses, I utilized CRF to center the lives and experiences of Black women who inform this study. As is revealed in their stories, CRF offers greater insight into how the endemic nature of racism, sexism, classism, and other systems of oppression distinctly and disproportionately impact Black women on PWI campuses (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Patton & Ward, 2016).

Critical Race Feminism provided a useful lens to understand the manifold intersecting points of marginality that impact the lived experiences of Black women as outsiders within. The Black women in this study called on their unique standpoints and realities as they reflected on the ways in which they "showed up" in their classrooms and departments. Indeed, "the situational identities that are attached to specific histories of social injustice" (Collins, 1999, p. 120) and the multiplicative interaction between race, gender, context, and identity construction are inextricably linked.

3.4 Findings

After reviewing and analyzing interviews across phases one and two of this study, I identified two recurring themes across the data set. The Black women in this study (a) served as

mentors and sought mentoring relationships for themselves. They worked to improve the conditions and culture of their departments and classrooms. The women sought opportunities to advocate for themselves and for students, staff, and faculty of color and to create counter-spaces that were designed for their needs and interests. They also (b) referenced the complex and murky process of navigating through university systems as a student, faculty, and executive-level administrator. These processes included tenure and promotion, grieving racial microaggressions, and seeking academic support for students. The women in this study assessed their power and influence in their roles as faculty and administrator and carefully and intentionally leveraged that influence for the benefit of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) students, faculty, and staff. They sought out allies for themselves while also serving as such for others. They were innovative as they found ways to improve the systems that they too struggled to traverse. These themes were most salient and highlight the unique experiences of Black women working and studying at PWIs.

Dr. Malinda Ward is a Black woman and tenured professor at a private, federally chartered university designated for the deaf and hard of hearing located in a densely populated northeastern state. She is bilingual, speaking both English and American Sign Language fluently. At the time of our interviews, Dr. Ward was entering her third year as a professor of deaf and hard of hearing students. She offered her frustration with being either the only Black woman or one of very few Black women in her classrooms and in her department when she attended and worked at the midwestern university that serves as site for this study. She often found herself as the "spokesperson for all things racism." Although she resisted the pressure to represent all Black people and People of Color, Dr. Ward saw a need to advocate for herself and Black students.

In her current role as a faculty member on a campus where American Sign Language is the first language, Dr. Ward articulated her understanding of inclusion as

> being mindful and open to all, and aware that there are so many things in people, in places, in parts that are needed to run our country and to not exclude anyone or privilege anyone above the other, and to be able to understand and have an opinion and a voice, but recognize that there are others that need to be also included in the conversation.

This perspective was particularly salient as Dr. Ward spoke of her advocacy for Black deaf students who faced discrimination and alienation in their courses by faculty and their peers.

When asked about solutions to concerns of isolation and injustice, Dr. Ward offered,

> I need more diverse faculty. We have very few—I think you can count them on your hand—when it comes to women of color, People of Color, in our college, period. So, what are you doing, what are the recruitment efforts for People of Color? What are the incentives to be here? What are you doing to build a network of community support for this type of personnel?

Each of the pointed questions that Dr. Ward put forward became central in our conversations about her experience as a Black woman on a PWI campus.

Ms. Kimberly Jones has worked at her university for over 20 years and in at least two different positions of leadership. She currently works as the Chief Administrative Officer for her department. In this role, Ms. Jones manages major financial transactions, writes departmental policies, and helps to establish financial initiatives that influence the strategic direction of the college. When I asked if she believed her race played a role in the ways that others viewed and interacted with her, Ms. Jones stated, “I am approachable. Even though they see me as a Black woman, they see me as safe. I’m often the only one in the room.”

3.4.1 Theme I: Black Women and Mentorship

Both Dr. Ward and Ms. Jones were acutely aware that their social position as Black women was a salient part of their identities. In fact, they expressed the idea that not only was race a primary factor on their campuses, being a *Black woman* influenced how others – students, admin, and other faculty – received them. As one of only five Black women in leadership in her college, Ms. Jones said of her efforts to mentor junior faculty and prospective students, "When I walk into a room, I look around to find the first Brown person I see." Kimberly said she knows she's "done her part" when she can advocate for the hiring of Black faculty and promotion of others to administrative positions. Ms. Jones used her access and influence to identify spaces for BIPOC students to convene safely and to create lines of communication that allow minoritized faculty to access leadership in more equitable ways.

After graduating from her midwestern university and joining the faculty of her current institution, Dr. Ward said she felt welcomed and supported by her colleagues to do meaningful research and to teach students from racially, ethnically, and geographically diverse backgrounds. She was often consulted for her expertise and was invited to speak in important departmental convenings. Dr. Watson soon built relationships with Black deaf students who confided in her the harmful microaggressions they witnessed and experienced in their classrooms, specifically focused on their use of "Black Sign Language." Students shared with Dr. Ward the rejection they felt from professors and peers as they used racially charged language to critique their performance in class. As these reports of racism and alienation continued, Dr. Ward shared that she felt compelled to address the students' charges with her faculty colleagues. Receiving unsatisfying responses, she then took their concerns to department administrators. When her reports still resulted in little to no meaningful action, Dr. Ward established a group, or counter space dedicated

to BIPOC students to provide academic, social, and emotional support as they navigated their PWI. Dr. Ward's efforts to construct such a counter-space are reflective of Black women throughout historical contexts who created pathways and safe spaces for themselves and others.

Dr. Ward faced backlash for her advocacy of BIPOC students. She shared a story of the vitriolic response she experienced from students and colleagues regarding her presentation of her research of the marginalization of Black Deaf Sign Language and its users. While it appeared to her that the work was well received, the derogatory criticism demonstrated otherwise. Dr. Ward counted 75 inflammatory, potentially damaging "reply-all" emails from students and faculty stating that she "had no business talking about this," "who do you think you are?" and even, "this should have been presented by a white deaf person." Dr. Ward called these comments "bold" and "angry" and suggested that the senders felt that there would be no recourse for their statements. It was this exchange that led her to feel that not only was her research not respected, but that as a Black woman, she was simply a "diversity count." Her courage to speak up was received as audacious and illuminated her position as an outsider. Dr. Ward was presumed incompetent (Smith, 2000). In other words, her needs, expertise, and contributions were ignored until they were seen as threatening to the status quo. She was subsequently placed in a proverbial fishbowl, on display for open appraisal. Dr. Ward was stereotypically portrayed as intimidating, angry, unintelligent, and ill-equipped to put forth quality research. Her experience is a dismal representation of the lives of many other Black women cast as outsiders within spaces reserved for white people. Smith (2000) contends,

> For many Black academics, race is a personal and theoretical reality. We live with racism daily. We study, research, and write about it in order to understand why it continues to exist and how we can survive and excel in spite of it. (p. 120)

From this experience, Dr. Ward said she learned to "find [her] allies." She initially sought the support of the department chair, who she said left her unprotected and "raw." Receiving no meaningful response or recourse, she took her concern to the small contingent of Black Deaf faculty where she said she received the tangible support and allyship that came in the form of letters to her department in her defense. Dr. Ward's reflections were revealing of her outsider-within status. While she initially felt welcomed in a predominantly white space, her feelings of belonging quickly faded when she resisted and condemned the racism by which she and her students were victimized. Dr. Ward's actions of simultaneously mentoring Black students while seeking allyship and mentoring herself are both important and revealing. Especially for Black women, the necessity of such mentoring is captured by Davar (1998) who writes, "Lack of mentoring is one of the biggest barriers to advancement. You don't climb to the top-you are coached, counseled, pushed and supported" (p. 42). Dr. Ward's storying of her experiences contemporaneously demonstrated the limitations of identifying mentorship and allyship. In fact, being a part of a very small set of Black faculty, she found herself counseling virtually all of the Black students in her department. At the same time, because of the limited number of Black leaders, she too struggled to identify adequate support and advice as she continued to navigate race-related incidents. Mentoring is not only important for career sustainability and advancement, it is also necessary for social and psychological safety and integration into spaces that can be otherwise detrimental to Black women. Whereas mentoring could help reduce the harmful impact set forth by the interactions of racism and gender discrimination, Black women are often prevented from both providing and receiving such necessary guidance (Smith, 2000).

3.4.2 Theme II: Navigating the PWI While Black and Woman

Ms. Jones shared that although she has worked in university finance for well over a decade, and even operated at an interim capacity in her current role, she experienced what she called racial discrimination and unnecessary "red tape" as she was marginally considered for the position. Like Dr. Ward, Kimberly says the resistance and challenges placed before her "opened her eyes" to the reality that her race and gender seemed to present barriers to career advancement. Ms. Jones was required to provide excessive documentation and evidence in support of her capabilities for the new senior administrative position. Because of her extended time working within the university, Ms. Jones was painfully aware that the requests she was subjected to were abnormal and appeared to target just her. She says this experience showed her "how the system was set up," especially for her as a Black woman who was well qualified to perform the duties of the job. Because she believed that there were no viable channels toward resolution available to her within her department or in the university at large, Kimberly sought resolve at an independent state-governing body in order to address the discrimination she faced within the university. Ms. Jones shared that having the knowledge of how to traverse complicated university systems was rare and uncommon amongst many Black students, faculty, and even administrative staff, who are in fact more likely to face challenges rooted in racism and discrimination (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Patton & Ward, 2016; Smith, 2000).

When I asked what made her push for an elevated position within a system that had harmed her, Ms. Jones offered, "I saw a pattern with certain individuals. I had to separate the individuals from the people who were doing the right thing." With this reflection, Ms. Jones seems to be suggesting that systems are made up of people, and that it is people and their willingness or refusal to act in humanizing ways that defines the ways that we are able to access and thrive within the

system. She explained, “It is my goal to impact all things in diversity.” In other words, by Ms. Jones achieving a higher-powered career, she would be better positioned to advocate for Black people and People of Color. Kimberly’s comments about being seen as “safe” seem to play into respectability politics, suggesting that she may believe this sort of comportment is necessary in order for her to ascend and succeed professionally. The confining nature of the academy may have pushed Ms. Jones to believe that she could transcend her identity as a Black woman and instead be an equal player alongside her white peers. Despite her accusations of race-based discrimination, Ms. Jones still seemed to sing the university’s praises, stating that she saw promise in the efforts of the new dean (who identifies as a Black man) and believed that “things are changing.”

Insofar as Dr. Ward is concerned, she spoke about the incidents of blatant racism that seemed to follow her vocal and visible support of BIPOC students. She said she was forced to “take off the rose-colored glasses.” Dr. Ward was frustrated by the responses of her colleagues and administrators, which she felt were disingenuous and appeared to be convenient opportunities of interest convergence rather than efforts toward healing the blatant racism experienced by BIPOC students. For instance, pseudo-attempts at repair or reconciliation were offered with derision and were inconsistent. As a result, Dr. Ward believed that she, as a Black woman, ultimately became the safe space for BIPOC students and as such was thrust into a position of “spokesperson for all things racism.” When she attempted to find real, actionable solutions for herself and students, she says she found no clear pathway for not only grieving her experience, but options for reducing the likelihood of repeated incidents seemed dubious.

3.5 Implications

Dr. Ward stated that from this experience she learned that allyship was most important, particularly for faculty of color in historically white institutions. Because her allies were other Faculty of Color and relationships that she had to forge on her own, her stories suggest that increasing the number of Faculty and Administrators of Color would not only create the type of community that Dr. Ward worked to cultivate on her own, but could also help to inform policies, practices, and norms within the department's and institution's climate.

Structural systemic oppression, racism, sexism, and the interaction of the three impact the lives and realities of Black women on predominantly white campuses of higher education. Black women are expected to mentor all Black students and act – as Dr. Ward references – as "the spokesperson for all things racism." They bear the weight of the discrimination and microaggressions experienced by their peers and colleagues and are denied the valuable mentoring that might help alleviate such pressures. PWIs must address the systems and practices that target Black faculty, staff, students, and administrators and eliminate the systems that perpetuate racist and sexist ideals, which disproportionately affect Black women. As Ms. Jones referenced, PWI leaders must also call out the individual leaders who seek to isolate and violate Black women and leave them powerless by creating policies and practices that are harmful. Universities should adopt and implement an anti-racist standpoint and establish practices that lend themselves toward healing. One method of doing so is to hire and properly support Black women faculty, students, and staff. Support should include system-level initiatives to increase ethnically diverse faculty, staff, and administrators, particularly mental health and student affairs personnel. Black women academics and administrative leadership are often sources of academic, social, and emotional

support. These are resources that tend to increase a sense of belonging for Black and other People of Color.

In Ms. Jones's case, being alienated from a seat at the leadership table suggested that she was incompetent and unskilled at fulfilling the duties of a position that she already filled in the interim. For Dr. Ward, her false sense of belonging was tested and revealed when she spoke truth to power on not only her own behalf but for the benefit of Black students. This study demonstrates the necessity of research centered on Black women and their perspectives, experiences, dreams, and goals. PWIs should consider and consult Black women in the design of institutional policies and practices as they reside at the intersection of two deleteriously marginalized groups. When Black women are included and their needs are centered in decision-making, PWIs might realize actual healing and improve the professional and personal outcomes for all, especially for Black women.

3.6 Future Research and Conclusion

While research shows a need for recruitment of Black faculty, incidents like the ones Dr. Ward offered are likely to contribute to attrition of Faculty of Color. Future research should ask: What can institutions do to heal the wounds of racism experienced by faculty and staff? What can administrators do to eliminate systems of inequity that exist within their departments? How can faculty be educated and held accountable for damaging racist acts? As Critical Race Feminism advances (Berry, 2010; Smith, 2000; Wing, 1997), neither the individual Black women in this study nor Black women as a group should be considered monolithic. We represent a wide and beautiful spectrum of beliefs, backgrounds, cultures, identities, aspirations, and viewpoints. As

PWIs evaluate their efforts to improve conditions for Black women, they should reject the notion that one unified perspective is or should be representative of all Black women. In order to resist such a temptation, PWIs can amplify the voices, the research, and the leadership of Black women. They should work to recruit and retain Black women from diverse backgrounds and life experiences while also providing opportunities for them to share their stories in authentic and humanizing ways. Those in positions of leadership and all levels of power are urged to unpack and "sit with" those stories and work with Black women to dismantle the systems and call out the individuals who have maintained the status quo. The women in this study found ways to mentor and be mentored. They navigated convoluted university systems and endeavored to make them more inclusive and, eventually and hopefully, more equitable, for themselves and others.

4.0 Chapter Three. Grassroots Activism: The End Result of Justice is Freedom

4.1 Introduction

In this study, I investigated the motivations and strategies of three Black women who have participated in individual and collective efforts toward improving and sustaining quality via equity in education for Black children. While they do not all consider themselves as such, they each have in many ways positioned themselves as activists and advocates in one large predominantly Black public school district. The women in this study work and volunteer in diverse professional settings, some within the field of education and others in related industries. Their commitment to dismantling systemic racism and educational inequity united them in a social justice movement to demand better educational conditions for students. The goal of this research is to establish a framework for unifying individuals with shared visions and goals for educational liberation for the purpose of effecting change at systems levels. To focus on this goal, this study takes as its research question the following: *In what ways have Black women engaged in efforts of activism for equity and justice in education?*

4.2 Literature Review

Black women educators throughout history have adopted an activist disposition in their pedagogies and practices, aiming to affect the educational and life outcomes of Black children (Dixson, 2003). Lane (2017) found promise with the use of a Black feminist perspective in

educational contexts, offering that although educational injustices enacted upon Black students persist and mirror societal inequities, a Black feminist standpoint also encourages future thinking and developing liberatory practices and humanizing educational environments. Studies featuring Black feminist pedagogies highlight this potential and illustrate empowering instructional practices (hooks, 1989; Mogadime, 2000).

If Black feminist theories provide tools for understanding our lives, Black feminist activism might be regarded as the "so what" that would likely follow. Unlike other forms of social justice activism, Black feminist activism centers Black women's resistance and struggles for liberation, while dually serving as a conceptual framework for exposing matrices of domination (Collins, 2008). The most promising feature of a Black feminist perspective is the belief that conditions can be improved, and empowerment realized. Collins (2006) offered the notion that our current realities are not static and are subject to change when acted upon collectively. When we are galvanized into action, we are bound only by our imaginations. Collins (2006) extended this idea when she proposed that we might "change results from human agency" (p. 292). Human agency should be paired with critical self-reflection. In fact, that self-reflection should consider the ways in which individuals and groups contribute to the maintenance of social inequities (Alinia, 2015). Alinia called attention to the interconnectedness of groups, even those described in categorically different ways. Alinia posited, "...because of the complexity of the relationships between domination and resistance, even in cases where there is a big gap between groups' positions, coalitions may be necessary around some issues but not others" (p. 2339). By establishing group solidarity, collective resistance against oppressive forces can be bolstered. Black feminist activism allows for solidarity among Black women, leading toward collective resistance (Patterson, et. al,

2016b). Black feminist activism also provides an opportunity not only for rejecting pejorative and incorrect narratives, it also lends itself to re-storying *by* Black women *for* Black women.

Black women in education throughout history have adopted activist dispositions in their pedagogies and practices, aiming to affect the educational and life outcomes of Black children (Dixson, 2003). In this study, I hoped to uncover the myriad ways in which Black women engage in Black feminist activism through collective action.

4.3 Methods

I engaged in phenomenological interviewing which Seidman (2013) describes as open-ended, anthropologic, and conversational in nature. Seidman outlines four themes including "Lived experience as the foundation of 'phenomena'" (p. 17) where he contended that as living beings our experiences flow from one to another in an uninterrupted stream, though it is only when one critically reflects and reconstructs those disparate elements of experience that they become phenomena. Within the phenomenological interviewing process and continual reflection of reconstituted experiences, the researcher and participant can exchange ideas and perspectives and to create meaning. Seidman (2013) called this making the "was" as close as possible to what "is." The lens through which the women in this study see themselves, the world around them, as well as how the world *reads* them are all heavily influenced by their racial and gender identities among others they may possess. Their *reading or* meaning making of their reconstituted experiences may carry with them deeper interpretations about who they are, their purpose, and what they mean for their spheres of influence.

Seidman (2013) offered that phenomenological interviewing is achieved by conducting three distinctly focused interviews. I engaged in three 45- to 60-minute interviews with each participant with the purpose of establishing rapport, context, and reflection, and leading to meaning making. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using a virtual transcription service. To triangulate data, I reviewed historical documents, websites, and published articles related to the coalitions' political stance on local and regional concerns of equity and justice for Black students.

4.3.1 Data Sources

I utilized data in the form of mission statements, videos, public statements, and published white papers from the coalition's social media and web pages. Participants were included if they identify as a Black woman, are a member of the Black Women for a Better Education coalition, and signed the initial open demand letter authored by leaders of the group (see Appendix A).

Through my participation in membership meetings was both as a concerned resident and advocate as well as an observer, I identified three Black women members of the coalition who appeared to serve in leadership capacities. They were each invited and agreed to participate in this interview study. I provide a brief profile of each participant below. For the purposes of anonymity, I have assigned them pseudonyms.

4.3.1.1 Angel

Angel is a 35-year-old Black mother, wife, entrepreneur, and educational professional. She is a Pittsburgh native and resident who attended Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS). Angel previously worked as an executive within the PPS central office and has worked as an education consultant for several years. Angel was laid off from her position for what she believes was retaliation because

of her reprimand of the district. She said that for fear of being dismissed as simply a disgruntled ex-employee, she was reluctant to take public action. It was PPS' poor handling of remote learning that compelled Angel to act. She says that a collective action approach evolved organically rather than as an intended outcome of calling together a few friends to reflect and respond to what they were seeing in real time.

Angel received designation as gifted and talented in elementary school and recalls that this and her mother's leadership prepared her to excel academically and socially in school. She is acutely aware that many students struggle to progress not only because they and their families are unaware that such navigation is necessary, but they are also ill-equipped to traverse an education system where barriers exist both seen and unseen.

4.3.1.2 Marsha

Marsha is a 60-year-old Black mother and wife who owns a consulting firm that primarily serves state-level education initiatives that regulate public school funding. Marsha has volunteered on committees established to improve education quality in Pittsburgh and states that she has been an active advocate for school transformation for over twenty years. Marsha spoke of her own education in idyllic ways. Although she would have been a witness to the discrimination that Black students faced at the onset of the bussing initiative, Marsha remembered very few structural barriers in her experience. She referenced the more recent school choice debates stating that this was of little concern for her family as their neighborhood school was poised to provide great quality to all students. Marsha even said her parents trusted the education system of the time and that for her, racism was not an ever-present worry. It's the stark contrast of structural barriers such as school funding patterns, inexperienced teachers in low-income neighborhoods, lack of advanced courses, and school closures that have thrust her into activism today.

4.3.1.3 Terri

Terri is a 50-year-old Black mother who works in the local philanthropic arena and specifically funds education-related initiatives. In fact, much of Terri's career history is rooted in youth-serving institutions such as advocacy centers and social work. She grew up in Pittsburgh and attended what she described as high performing public schools. She said, "I like to use my elementary school experience as sort of an example of what can happen when, you know, low-income Black kids are given a high-quality education." Terri's barometer of high-quality education was measured by having a Black male principal who remained in the position for the entire time she attended the school. Terri's principal even held a PhD, which she stated was a significant motivator for attaining such a degree herself. She spoke fondly of her experiences with her principal, remembering the high expectations that he had for all students, teachers, and staff. Terri boasted high marks and recognition of the school by state standardized assessments, and she calls on these as other indicators of "what is possible" when students are provided quality education. Often overlooked, the school was always clean, the food was good, and being Black was celebrated rather than viewed as something to be mitigated. It was the positive reinforcement of her racial identity that Terri believes prepared her for the racial attacks she was sure to receive as she grew up, especially in middle school, where she faced direct and indirect racism from teachers and classmates. She shared a story of when she celebrated an academic award that she received and the doubt she faced from a teacher who claimed that Terri lied about the accomplishment. She says her first clear example of a Black woman standing up to racism was when her mother came to the school to sternly address her teacher and the microaggressions she enacted onto Terri. Terri said of this incident, "to be able to come home, to know that if something doesn't feel right, you have an advocate." For Terri, this and other encounters, "just has carried me and lit a fire in me that I

continue to [and why] I stay in education." Terri's children are students in the Pittsburgh Public school district, and she states that she has always been heavily aware of school (lack of) performance for Black children. Terri says this fact is what motivates her to advocate on behalf of Black children.

4.3.2 Data Analysis

My primary unit of analysis was the stories shared with me by the women in the study. I employed grounded theory, first reviewing interviews by listening to recordings, and reading transcripts while engaging in pre-coding larger passages and significant quotes. In the second round, I applied sets of preliminary codes to the full data set (Saldaña, 2013). I then categorized relevant ideas and concepts using an *a priori* coding scheme and identified themes. Throughout the coding process, I maintained an analytic memo documenting my research activities and decision-making processes. Using analytic memo jottings (Saldaña, 2013), I began to extract meaning and interpret the data. I engaged in a process of member checking throughout, wherein I shared brief excerpts of my analysis with participants to check for clarity and understanding.

Black Women for a Better Education is described on their websites follows:

> We are a coalition of Black women, parents, current and retired educators, and concerned community members committed to ensuring that all Black children in the Southwestern Pennsylvania region receive the high-quality education they deserve. Our coalition is diverse; some of us are new to educational advocacy, while others have been championing these causes for decades. We engage stakeholders across multiple school districts in the region but focus much of our work on Pittsburgh Public Schools, the second largest school district in the state with the largest concentration of Black students in the Southwestern PA

region. Our goal is to dismantle systems that perpetuate racism and oppression in and around our schools. (https://www.blackwomen4abettereducation.com)

The group was initiated by text messages exchanged between a small circle of "30-something" Black women who were acutely attuned and critical to the Pittsburgh Public Schools' response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Particularly exasperated by the Pittsburgh Public Schools' poor management of the transition to remote learning and an investigation by the Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission, this group of women began to meet and strategize beginning in May of 2020. By engaging in informal organizing efforts, the group evolved from 3-4 women to 10-15 in weeks. A major concern of the newly formed group was to reject the contract renewal of then-Superintendent Anthony Hamlet. The women authored a demand letter that outlined the shortcomings of the former superintendent and members of the school board of directors; they received the support of 61 signatories on their open letter. Further, the alliance elevated a teacher-initiated petition signed by 2,600 educators and community members aimed also toward the removal of Superintendent Hamlet.

Black Women for a Better Education then launched a political action committee that endorsed a slate of Black candidates for five open district seats and were successful in three of the races. One can surmise that the three candidates were successful because of the organizing activities of Black Women for Better Education. Soon thereafter, the Pittsburgh Public School board and the general public were bombarded with accusations of ethics violations against the superintendent, who ultimately resigned on October 21, 2021. The coalition continued organizing toward determining expectations for the transition of district leadership.

Black Women for a Better Education states that they are committed to "ensuring that Black children in this region receive the high-quality education they deserve." The group describes its

leadership model as shared, wherein every member serves as an equal participant in strategizing and decision-making. Specifically, the group prioritizes a collective model, influenced by the efforts of Black women's organizing coalitions before them. Their website states, "We operate as a united front, in alignment with the sisterhood that runs deep with Black women." Their goals are accomplished through collective work including:

- **Learning Institutes:** Our ongoing series of virtual, interactive sessions feature education advocates, scholars, and elected officials, and are designed to prepare Black women and co-conspirators to become education thought leaders and run for office.
- **White Papers:** Our publications are fact-based, rich with data, and unapologetic. We write about the history of education in the region, make policy recommendations, and issue calls to action to leaders who can influence the trajectory of Black children in our communities.
- **Political Action Committee:** Our PAC endorses and financially supports candidates who are willing to speak boldly about education issues and include them in their platforms.

These are the stories of three Black women who took risks for Black children. I believe that they are exemplars of Black feminist education praxis. While they do not explicitly call themselves feminists, or even activists, they most certainly exemplify feminist theory in action and have approached education advocacy from a Black woman's perspective.

4.4 Findings

The three women in this study articulated three distinct ways in which they engage, whether knowingly or not, in forms of activism for the improvement of the educational outcomes of Black children in the city of Pittsburgh. Through their efforts, they demonstrated a commitment to take

personal and professional risks in order to accomplish their collective goals. Through our conversations, I identified two themes related to how these women evaluate and critique public schooling in Pittsburgh and utilize Black feminist perspectives with their activist dispositions.

4.4.1.1 Schooling Without Education

Each of the women I spoke with lamented the reality that for Black children attending schools in Pittsburgh, education was not guaranteed. For them, the standard had not nearly met that of "quality" education; the standard fell far below any education. Both Terri and Angel referenced the concept of "schooling," or what has been regarded as a cultural process, rather than an educational endeavor. Because of – and in an effort to maintain – a unequal power relations, schooling is fundamentally and necessarily a different process than education, as it is intended to socialize marginalized groups in ways that keep them in subordinate positions (Shujaa, 1993). Terri and Angel argued that Black students in PPS are being "schooled" and even scammed into believing that they are being offered a quality education, but that the outcome of dismal results (i.e., standardized test scores) are in fact a product of Black students' poor performance, poor living conditions, and general intellectual inferiority. Shujaa (1993) considered differing cultural orientations between and among systems (schools) and consumers (students and families) the greatest contributing factor to the gulf between schooling and education. These cultural differences make systems, in this case, schools, resistant to transformation. Instead of engaging in what Shujaa (1993) defined as education, or the "process of transmitting from generation to the next knowledge of the values, aesthetics, spiritual beliefs and all things that give a particular cultural orientation its uniqueness" (p. 330), many of our Black students are experiencing the results of a faulty educational system. To use the words of Shujaa (1993), "a cultural group without this transmission

will cease to exist," and this might be an unfortunate reality if Black students and their families continue to rely on the current PPS system for quality education.

For Terri, the institution of schooling, particularly in the Pittsburgh region, is in fact harmful to Black children. She believes that school leaders position Black children as a "problem to be solved" and that this perspective relegates Black children to the lowest academic ranks indefinitely. This viewpoint also perpetuates the very low expectations that many white teachers, administrators, and researchers have for Black children and their families. Terri is firm in her belief, however, that schools and schooling are intended as a mechanism to protect white supremacy and specifically white women. She further contends that if schools really "worked" for Black students, then white people would dismantle it.

Because of Black students' experiences of being *schooled* in public education, Marsha's efforts toward school improvement have centered on training parents and caregivers to navigate the system in order to increase the chances of their children receiving quality instruction, access to valuable resources, advanced courses, and preparation for postsecondary options. Marsha trains parents to leverage Title I funds that can be used to narrow opportunity gaps for Black children. Through her school partnerships, Marsha supports teachers and administrators in developing culturally competent modes of engaging with families and community members. She has also served for several years on a committee that was formed as a result of a conciliation agreement between the School District of Pittsburgh and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. The agreement required the district to establish an oversight panel that would be charged with evaluating the district's progress toward increasing equity for Black and low-income students. Marsha compared her own experiences in the same district and was adamant that such parent involvement was not a prerequisite to ensuring that Black students would receive the education

that they deserve. Speaking of the types of advocacies she now deems necessary, Marsha says that parents often must "bang on tables," give public testimony at school board meetings, send letters, go to the media, and rely on other tactics before they can expect a substantive response from school officials. Marsha helps families navigate this "squeaky wheel gets the oil" type of system. This type of obligatory self-advocacy, for Angel and Terri, was "doing school."

While she is adamant in her stance that school systems must train students to develop the skills necessary to think critically, challenge power dynamics, and to learn the "truth," Terri acknowledges that schools, because of their origins in imperialism, patriarchy, and white supremacy, have not and will not ever truly provide racial or ethnic pride, equity, justice, and/or freedom to Black people. Terri asserted that parents, community members, and anyone who cares about children should demand that public schools provide a safe environment where Black students are engaged in an education that compels them to think deeply and solve the problems facing their communities.

Terri continued with her view that "teaching is not a helping profession, it is a learning profession." She explained that even if schools took up the popular community schools' model, which focuses heavily on placing health and social services in school buildings, students would still be no more likely to receive a quality education. Terri rejected the idea that schools are a safe place for children to "grab a sandwich and play a game of basketball" because this way of thinking exists primarily in Black and low-income environments and breeds low social and academic expectations for Black children.

4.4.1.2 What Makes an Activist?

Though these women represent generations separated by at least twenty years, they each called on their Black women influences as contributors to their current commitments to education

for Black children. They each spoke fondly of their mothers who held education in such a high regard and modeled the style of leadership that "only a Black woman could." In fact, Terri smiled when she thought about the lineage of Black women activists in all manner of social justice movements. She reflected, "Black women are consistently on the right side of history." This speaks to the ordinary, mundane nature of their entrées into Black feminist collective work. The women even told stories of their fathers who similarly worked or volunteered in movements for the civil rights of Black people. Their families' prioritization of quality education was made evident in their school choices, many of which placed the women in schools outside of the neighborhood feeder patterns with the hopes of ensuring an education free of racist micro- and macro-aggressions.

Angel told stories of her mother's experiences as a Black woman educator who boldly and adamantly demanded quality education for Black children within the district she worked, where her daughters also attended school. Angel said she always felt that she had a "seat at the table" because of the model her mother provided for her. She did also acknowledge that to some degree, her relatively positive educational and professional experiences were likely influenced by her mother's position as a teacher. We agreed that this sort of social network, however, is a problematic indicator of the necessary navigation through a system that inequitably serves children who lack such social capital. Angel's activism is strengthened by her mother's example and has led her to stand as a surrogate for children who lack the social capital that is required.

Each of the women hesitated when speaking on whether they saw themselves as activists, no less, Black *feminist* activists. Angel called herself a "dissenter" to the Pittsburgh Public School district's way of operating, which she critiqued as harmful to Black children. She often spoke up against what she viewed as problematic reforms, inequitable funding structures, and unaccountable

school and board leadership. Because she occupied a "position of influence," Angel feels strongly that her public condemnations were directly related to her ultimate lay off. While she did not regard herself an activist, Angel was able to describe in detail her strategic organizing using grassroots efforts such as phone banking, house parties, petitions, and political action toward demanding better-quality education for Black children.

When she told stories of the opposition the group faced, she drew on hers and the experiences of her mother and of other Black women and Black women educators who motivated her to take both personal and professional risks that threatened her reputation and ability to earn a living in a region where the school district's annual budget (reflective of its size) surpasses that of the city in which it sits. Angel shared that the coalition received negative feedback insinuating that there must have been covert support and guidance from white politicians and corporations, suggesting that a group of Black women were incapable of defining their own terms and crafting their own voice on behalf of their own children and others. Angel said she was personally confronted by individuals who professionally hold the title of "activist" and was criticized for not following an unspoken protocol or as she said sarcastically, "kissing the ring." Angel found it laughable that Black women would be expected to ask permission to do the work of fighting for Black children. Further, she contended that if the "activists" are prioritizing adults over children, then someone had to decide to put children first.

Angel, Terri, and Marsha all expressed their frustration with such an intimation that came even from Black men who condemned them for attempting to unseat a Black man from such a high-ranking position. This type of resistance is not unprecedented as interracial conflict between Black men and women is an historical reality for Black women who have organized and demanded equal civil rights. Angel further lamented the unwarranted suspicion that is placed on Black women

stating, “There is a big double standard about what Black women can do or say in this city.” Oversight of Black women’s actions and opinions by white people and some Black men is likely what seemed to spark the idea that Black women should never publicly disapprove of a Black man, especially one who holds a coveted top-level position.

Marsha said of the work she does, “This is a calling. It is why I was placed on this earth. It began to safeguard my children. This is service to others. It’s spiritual for me.” Marsha’s words of protection, first her own children and then the desire to ensure that all Black children received such defense, has been a theme amongst Black women throughout history who have served as “other mothers” (Mogadime, 2000) both in classrooms and in communities. They likely did not call themselves activists either but found it necessary to advocate for Black children to receive the very best education within and outside of schools that often marginalized them and damaged their racial identities. Marsha has volunteered on several commissions and committees intended to improve public education but evaluated them as subpar and ultimately a waste of her time.

Terri, too, was reluctant to take on the title of activist. She told stories about her mother’s way of advocating for quality education and for protecting her as a child from harmful comments and low expectations cast upon her by white teachers and administrators. She said her advocacy is informed by “our [Black women] experience, the way we are socialized. It makes us fall on humanity. We have a way of seeing the world and examining systems in a way that is different.” She continued,

> [As Black women], we are the caretakers of those who have had it the hardest. We have historically not been protected; we have not been affirmed. We have a sensibility that is different. Ours comes from mothering, sistering and daughtering as Black women.

She says that it is her experiences, rather than training and titles, that positioned and prepared her for this work. Terri's sentiments reveal what she believes locates her at the intersection of social justice activism for Black children's education.

4.5 Discussion

The women in this study demonstrated that activism does not always require specific training, titles, and large pots of money to accomplish goals. Their collective work is one representation of a Black feminist-education praxis. Whether or not they called it so, they operated from a Black feminist-collective action perspective in at least four ways. Much of their work is reflective of Venus Evans-Winters' (2019) articulation of a Black feminist consciousness. Four particular points led to this conclusion: First, they each spoke of a need that they individually felt compelled to act on. It was of high importance that they operated from a collaborative front as to never isolate one person that could be targeted or personally attacked. Even when pushed by critics and the media to identify a leader or of the coalition, the women refused and instead maintained solidarity. This resistance was vital as they traversed de facto segregated space of public education in an Appalachian rustbelt city[8] with a history of racial, ethnic, and economic stratification. Second, they found opportunities to accomplish their goals by identifying shared interests between the group and school board members. For example, Black Women for a Better Education advocated for reducing reliance on the Pittsburgh Police to intervene in school incidents involving Black children. This shift would decrease the number of negative interactions that Black students

[8] An indicator of economic decline and limited racial diversity

had with police while also reducing the incidents of negative media coverage of the district, thereby demilitarizing public schools which is a critical component to the development of a Black feminist consciousness (Evans-Winters, 2017, 2019). (c) Because of their view that the teaching profession served to protect and promote the needs of white women, Black Women for a Better Education took up a race and gender praxis which valued and elevated the self-defined (Collins, 2008) perspectives of Black women while centering Black children in their efforts. Their approach to Black Feminism is as Evans-Winters (2019) described, "a theoretical, methodological, and political discourse steeped in a tradition that centers the voices of Black women's socio-political struggles in a White supremacist capitalist patriarchal imperialist society that privileges Whiteness, maleness and wealth" (p. 18). (d) Because of their unique social location and intersectional identities, the women in this study approached the work of education advocacy *as* Black women. For them, it was the historic resistance to institutional barriers of both race and gender that Black women struggled against that positioned them as outsiders within a system that allows them to name and challenge structures that limit access to quality, dignity, and humanity in education.

Angel, Terri, and Marsha found synergy among other Black women who knew something had to be done and decided that they could indeed be the change that they knew Black children deserved. The women rejected the low expectations that they believed were pervasive in the school district and found it necessary that children and families know how to "do school," or to navigate a system that intentionally "schooled" Black children rather than educating them. They drew on their individual and collective networks to develop resources to help parents better understand and traverse the highly political landscape of public schooling in Pittsburgh. Through their networking and community education, the coalition built political power and was able to elect three of five

endorsed candidates with the goal of leveraging influence that would shift funding, staffing, infrastructure, and other priorities in equitable ways.

Terri asserted that there must be a "fundamental change in the way we *do school*." She said that these changes are actions, not rhetoric, and that justice is in fact a verb. For Terri, "the end result of justice is freedom" and in order to achieve freedom as a way of life, we must *do* something. The women reflected what they have done and what they continue to do, not as an obligation, but as a natural response to witnessing children in need of an advocate. They talked about the

When I asked each of the women to consider the ways in which their activism was sustainable, they spoke of the next generation of Black women who they mentor, train, and support in order to maintain momentum in the movement toward quality education for Black children. They stressed the value of caring for themselves deeply, protecting and defending one another, and taking time for rest. As mothers, wives, daughters, caregivers, professionals, and volunteers, the women were careful to consider their individual identities, where they were not required to be something for someone else. Both Terri and Angel vacillated between resentment and a sense of accomplishment when white "allies" seemed to rely on Black women to bear the burden of advocacy and activism while also positioning themselves as the leaders of the movement. While they believed that they were uniquely primed because of their intersectional perspectives to take on the fight, they were also aggrieved at the idea that if they did not place themselves at risk, many of the problems facing Black children would never be addressed.

4.6 Implications and Conclusion

These findings can inform research on parent and community engagement, grassroots organizing for education, Black women educators and intersectional activism, and white allyship. People who care about the life outcomes of Black children and the conditions of Black communities might consider the ways and reasons that Black women have continually been the vanguards of movements that humanize Black people. As a group that has historically and contemporarily been attacked based on both race and gender, we might strategize in ways that protect Black women's bodies, mental health, and careers while we also elevate their voices and perspectives. Moreover, Black women deserve to be respected, appreciated, and compensated for their contributions to and sacrifices in the struggle toward freedom.

Like women in the early years of the Black feminist movement, Black women in this study faced marginalization and threats to their careers. Also similar to their predecessors, the women in Black Women for a Better Education established their own political standpoint and consciousness that reflected their goals for liberation. As such, they no longer found it advantageous to negotiate for inclusion amongst white-led organizations claiming to advocate for *all* children.

5.0 Chapter Four. Black Feminist Theory in Practice

5.1 Black Feminist Praxis

In this dissertation, I conducted three studies, beginning with a review of the literature on Black women's standpoint, or Black feminist thought, and two studies depicting Black Feminism in action, or Black feminist praxis. Black feminist theories seek to examine the stories, experiences, perspectives, goals, and vulnerabilities of Black women throughout history and into the present as we envision the future. Research has shown, as have the women in these studies, that Black women have continually worked to disrupt the deficit and harmful narratives about Black children that are perpetuated throughout in-school and out-of-school contexts (Henry, 1998, 2009; White et al., 2019; San Pedro & Kinloch, 2014). These dehumanizing discourses pervade the media and erroneously influence policies that are also detrimental to Black children (White et al., 2019). Lane (2017) found promise with the use of a Black feminist perspective in educational contexts, offering that although educational injustices enacted upon Black children mirror societal inequities, a Black feminist standpoint can encourage future thinking and can develop liberatory practices and humanizing educational environments. Studies featuring Black feminist pedagogies highlight the potential of while also illustrating empowering, equitable instructional practices (Henry, 1998, 2009; hooks, 1989; Mogadime, 2000).

The women in the studies presented throughout this dissertation represent examples of Black feminist theories in education practice. Each of the women made connections between their own educational recollections, their mentoring relationships, their hopes and ambitions, and how they communicate their purpose in the field of education in relation to Black people. The findings

can inform research on parent and community engagement, grassroots organizing for education, Black women educators and intersectional activism, and also white allyship. People who care about the life outcomes of Black students and the conditions of Black communities might consider the ways and reasons that Black women have continually been the vanguards of movements that aim to emancipate Black people. As a group that has historically and contemporarily been attacked based on both race and gender, we might strategize in ways that protect Black women's bodies, mental health, and careers while we also elevate their voices, identities, and perspectives. Moreover, Black women deserve to be respected, appreciated, listened to, followed, and compensated for their contributions and sacrifices in the struggle toward freedom for Black people and, hence, for all people.

5.2 Critical Race Talk Between Black Women

In this dissertation, I engaged in three studies centered on Black women, their experiences working in varying education contexts, and some of the theoretical lenses through which research has studied the lives of Black women. In my review of literature on Black Feminist Theories, I presented a historical exploration of BFT in four waves beginning with its divergence from the white feminist movement. The second wave was marked by the debate of race versus gender, which led to Black women leading consciousness-raising efforts in the third wave. The growing body of research by Black women (Burkard, et al, 2021; Cooper, 2015; 2018) on their realities, subjectivities, goals, resistances, and struggles toward justice suggests to me that Black women have developed and continue to hone their self-defined standpoints for how to survive and thrive (Burkard, et al, 2021; Farinde-Wu, et al, 2021). Research also suggests (Cooper, 2015; 2018) that

we are currently experiencing the fourth wave of Black Feminism, which appears to be grappling with methodologies for examining our Black lives and telling our stories in the ways that we choose. As demonstrated in the studies in this dissertation and as articulated by the Black women who shared with me their time and vulnerabilities, Black Feminism in its fourth wave is centered on activism, liberation, and living in the future that our Black mothers and forebearers already manifested for us.

In essence, the stories and storying interviews in these studies serve as a form of race talk, wherein two Black women (the individual participants and me) share thoughtful and very personal exchanges about race, racism, discrimination, and disrupting oppressive systems. Race talk is similar to the Critical Race Theory (CRT) tenet of "counter-storytelling" [(Delgado & Stefancic, 2000) as it allows a deliberate response as a "counter-story" (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Milner, 2008; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) to a "master narrative" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Storytelling is a concept that allows a response to a master narrative, or "white talk," which depicts historical and cultural themes of racial progress of a fair and just society of equal access and opportunity, of meritocracy and colorblindness (Bell, 2003; Pollock, 2004).

I propose a race talk that is critical, or intentional in nature. Critical race talk is purposeful, equitable, proactive, continuous, and at its core, it is humanizing and loving. Critical race talk extends beyond conversations that center race but tend to exist peripheral to "more appropriate" or "safe" conversations. Critical race talk focuses specifically on acknowledging and interrogating racism and oppression and in essence is used for the purpose of transforming the material conditions of Black people.

Additionally, critical race talk is a public, discursive attempt to make sense of "complex meanings that surround the concept of race" (Taylor, 2013, p. 5). As a Black woman, I was unable to and would not have attempted to approach these studies objectively, but rather situated my own experiences and perspectives as they related to those of the women featured in this dissertation. Through their stories, we co-constructed our understandings of Black liberation and educational transformation by engaging in critical and informed race talk as a form of storying. Critical race talk as counter-storytelling allows People of Color, in this case Black women in each study, to confront the master scripting legitimized by schools and education systems (Kinloch, 2015; Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014). Kohli (2012) proposed that Black women educators should engage in critical reflection, develop race-conscious practices, and facilitate dialogue which addresses deficit notions of People of Color and centers asset-based representations that lead to healing and transformation. We took part in an intimate process of listening, reflecting, and sharing, a dialogic exchange of stories that can effect change (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014). Bennett and Detzner (1997) postulated that storytelling, "allows the researcher to investigate the constructed meanings [of consumers] in the present but as they relate to the past" (p.121). Rooney, Lawlor, and Rohan (2016) advanced that stories allow the speaker to reference the past with a view toward the future.

In the second study in this dissertation titled, *Individual Approaches to Black Feminist Activism in Higher Education*, I examined individual strategies that Black women employed in higher education contexts both proactively and in response to incidents of racism and injustice in their departments and on their campuses. As Critical Race Feminism advances, neither the Black women in this study nor Black women as a group should be considered monolithic. We represent a wide and beautiful spectrum of beliefs, backgrounds, cultures, aspirations, and viewpoints. As PWIs evaluate their efforts to improve conditions for Black women, they should reject the notion

that one unified perspective is or should be representative of all Black women. In order to resist such a temptation, PWIs can amplify the voices, the research, and the leadership of Black women. They should work to recruit and retain Black women from diverse backgrounds and with diverse identities, providing opportunities for them to share their stories in authentic and humanizing ways. Those in positions of leadership and all levels of power are urged to unpack and "sit with" those stories and work with as well as listen to Black women to dismantle systems and call out individuals who have maintained the status quo.

The Black women in these studies operationalized Black Feminism in multiple ways. They found ways to mentor and to be mentored. They created systems of support by designing counter-spaces on PWI campuses, within racially charged departments, and in surrounding communities and neighborhoods, particularly as those communities and neighborhoods are inherently connected to public schools. For instance, having the opportunity to coalesce with other Black women and exchange stories of academic and social struggles and resilience has been an invaluable asset to Black women in higher education contexts (Dortch, 2016; Allen-Handy, et al 2021). Counter-spaces can be created within Black student organizations, within offices that provide services to students of color, with Black fraternities and sororities, and in academic and social affinity groups (Baber, 2012; Allen-Handy, et al, 2021). The participants in these studies navigated convoluted university systems and endeavored to make them right and responsible for themselves and other People of Color. While research shows a need for recruitment of Black faculty, incidents like the ones witnessed and endured by the participants throughout this dissertation study are likely to contribute to attrition of faculty of color.

In the third study titled, *Grassroots Activism; The End Result of Justice is Freedom,* I studied the experiences of Black women who belong to a coalition aimed at addressing systemic

barriers in education for Black children. Their efforts are aimed toward dismantling educational oppression in one large, predominantly Black public school district. The notion of Black women fighting for social justice is certainly not novel. These approaches: individual, pedagogical, and systemic provide particular yet related and interconnected methods for improving the material conditions of Black children in the context of education as well as in their current and future lives. Black women have used varied modes of activism, advocacy, policy work, fund development, and other sources of support in their efforts to improve educational experiences and life outcomes for Black children. These outcomes include positive racial identity development, healthy lifestyles, and promising post-secondary options.

5.2.1.1 Black Feminist Methodological Practices

Black feminist methodologies honor embodied knowledges of Black women as they are informed and shaped by the experiences and voices of Black women (Patterson, et., al, 2016). Black feminist methodologies are concerned with data collection and the organization of data, critical analyses of results, as well as the presentation of findings. As results are shared, Collins (1986) explained that Black feminist theorists present stories – oral and written – that value multiple truths and privilege the perspectives and interests of co-conspirators. Throughout this dissertation and in each of these studies, I employed Evans-Winters' (2019) approach to a Black feminist methodology which advances the following:

> (a) *Musings about knowledge and knowing*. This is demonstrated in the ways that I centered the stories of Black women in the studies. As they shared their memories, they reflected on how they felt in those moments and how their perspectives may have changed or been informed by layered and complex evaluations of certain encounters.

(b) *How one interacts with participants throughout the research process*. The content of our discussions was sensitive and intimate in nature. Spending time with participants for several hours over multiple encounters allowed us to build rapport. I encouraged participants to lead our conversation by asking open-ended questions and allowing them to speak for as much or as little as they wished. We entertained tangential ideas that felt organic and timely.

(3) *One's understanding of the context where the study takes place*. Study context was critical in each of the interviews that I conducted. For instance, physical context played a role for a participant as she sat in a semi-public space within her university department as she spoke with me. She shared her apprehensions and committed to greater transparency in our subsequent calls. Especially for Black women who intend to resist systems of oppression, context matters. Anonymity, trust, and emotional safety contribute to their ability and willingness to be vulnerable and open.

(d) *The body of literature reviewed*. Much of the literature that I reviewed was of research developed by Black women. The range of Black women scholars was intergenerational and spanned geographies.

(e) *Interpretation and analysis of data*. I engaged in the process of member checking with informants which allowed them to further reflect on our conversations, provide feedback and make clarification where necessary. This part of the analytic process is invaluable as Black deserve the privilege of speaking for themselves and determining how they are represented in research.

5.2.2 Future Research

Continuing investigation should center on several critical practices. First, amplify the perspectives, voices, and ideas of Black women through storying, art, teaching, mothering, spirituality, and all manner of "ordinary living." Research should be conducted in transformative ways that uplift the humanities and expertise of all Black women. Second, develop and test methodologies in partnership with Black women to be used for and by Black women to study the lives of Black women and girls. Methodologies should establish experience as a criterion of meaning. Finally, research should also focus on examining culturally relevant practices and supports around Black women educators, interrogating and disrupting systems that oppress Black educators and students and co-constructing pathways for liberation for Black people. Informed by these studies, future research should ask: What can institutions do to heal the wounds of racism experienced by faculty and staff? What can administrators do to eliminate systems of inequity that exist within their departments? How can faculty be educated and held accountable for damaging racist acts?

Collectively, the above future directions and questions along with findings from this dissertation study allow me to re-enter educational and community spaces listening more closely to the voices and perspectives of Black women. In so doing, I am even more equipped to reimagine the purposes and promises of education–within predominantly white institutions of higher education and in public school systems–for Black people in ways that center our sociohistorical realities and daily interactions with racism, discrimination, and other forms of oppressive. Thus, the value of employing and embodying Black Feminist theories and methodologies to center Black women, Black realities, and Black ways of surviving and thriving and to think deeply about how to answer research questions about how Black women in higher education see themselves as

catalysts for educational change, what pedagogical approaches Black women educators employed for educational transformation for Black students, and how Black women engage in efforts of activism for equity and justice in education.

Appendix A Black Women for a Better Education Open Letter

Black Women for a Better Education

PPS Board of Directors
Room 239, Administration Building
341 S. Bellefield Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

June 1, 2020

Re: Contract Renewal for Superintendent Anthony Hamlet

Dear PPS Board of Directors:

Please find attached a letter from a coalition of Black women who are affiliated with PPS as parents, alumni, former employees, retirees, partners, and concerned community members. We meet regularly with the intent of ensuring that Black children in this region receive the consistent high-quality education they both deserve and need. **To that end, after careful thought, we have outlined in the letter an argument against renewing the contract of Superintendent Anthony Hamlet.** As the letter is quite detailed, we offer a summary below.

Grounds for not renewing the 5-year contract of Superintendent Anthony Hamlet

1. Organizational Leadership
    1. Excessive loss of talented, veteran team members with institutional knowledge
    2. High turnover of the leadership team
    3. Failure to become a “transformational leader”
    4. Long delays in or failure to fill critical staff positions
2. Financial Management
    1. Excessive spending on extraneous central office staff, high-paid consultants, and on educational technology contracts
    2. Approximately $25,000 per month for out-of-town professional development with questionable returns on investment
    3. Unauthorized trip to Cuba at taxpayers’ expense with minimal accountability for the action from the board
    4. No-bid contracts for clients of a company for which he is a paid consultant
3. COVID-19 Crisis Management

1. Students lost weeks of instruction as the district scrambled to develop a learning plan
2. Students with disabilities did not receive instruction for close to two months, violating IEPs and 504 plans
3. Low resolution, low instruction printed learning packets distributed to families who had to find ways to pick them up
4. Inequitable distribution of technology, widening the district access and opportunity gap
5. Ineffective leadership and communication on the district's plans during the COVID-19 pandemic

4. Instructional Excellence & Safe and Healthy School Environments
    1. Test scores remain stagnant at best
    2. The achievement gap between Black and White students remains broad
    3. Access to and success in AP courses for Black children is limited
    4. Expulsion rates for Black children are in the top 10 in the Commonwealth
    5. Black students' high referral rate to the police
    6. Equity plan devoid of meaningful metrics
5. Professionalism
    1. Dr. Hamlet has a reputation for being aloof and inaccessible
    2. History of cancelling important meetings or sending surrogates to key meetings
    3. Public rift with government leaders and dissatisfaction with his performance by the philanthropic sector
    4. Questionable qualifications and past performance

Sincerely,

Black Women for a Better Education

<u>Attachments:</u>
Expanded letter
Full signature page
Supportive footnotes

PPS Board of Directors
Room 239, Administration Building
341 S. Bellefield Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

June 1, 2020

Dear PPS Board of Directors,

We are a group of Black women PPS parents, alumni, former employees, retirees, and concerned community members committed to ensuring that all Black children in this region receive the high-quality education they deserve. **We are writing to urge you to vote against renewing Superintendent Anthony Hamlet's contract. We are in serious times and we need a real leader for this region.** We believe that Dr. Hamlet has not led the district successfully in the areas of: organizational leadership, financial management, providing safe and healthy school environments, and instructional excellence.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP: Dr. Hamlet is not an effective organizational leader. Given the multitude of retirements at the executive level shortly after Dr. Hamlet's arrival, he was tasked with rebuilding nearly his entire leadership team. While this should have been an exciting opportunity to bring in the best and brightest local and national talent, it has been a revolving door as the majority of Dr. Hamlet's hires have left either abruptly or under nefarious circumstances (e.g., Chief of Human Resources Milton Walters[1] and Pittsburgh Perry Principal James Cooper[2]). At his hiring, Dr. Hamlet was touted as a "transformational leader" and he committed to creating an Office of School Transformation to support the schools with the lowest achievement.[3] However, it took Dr. Hamlet two years to find a leader for this office,[4] and Dr. Lynett Hookfin resigned after one year despite agreeing to a three-year contract.[5] Additionally, under his leadership, the stability of the district has continued to deteriorate. Veteran staff have resigned or their positions have not been renewed, including staff brought to the district by Dr. Hamlet from outside of the region. Most notable are: Deputy Superintendent Anthony Anderson (3 years), Chief Academic Officer Seema Ramji (8 months), Chief Information Officer Scott Gutowski (5 years in this role), Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services Melissa Friez (1 year in this role), and Executive Director of Literacy Kendra Wester (3 years). To date many of these critical roles, including Deputy Superintendent and Chief Information Officer, have not been filled with new hires.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT: While COVID-19 has put the district at risk of facing a large budget shortfall,[6] Dr. Hamlet's financial management prior to the pandemic has been questionable at best. His excessive spending on extraneous central office staff, high-paid consultants, $14 million in educational technology contracts,[7] and nearly $25,000 a month expenses on out-of-town "professional development" opportunities has crippled the district. There has been little to no return on investment for educators and students.[8] The investigation into Dr. Hamlet and his staff's unauthorized trip to Cuba came at the taxpayers' expense and resulted in little to no accountability requested of him by members of this

board, which is an unacceptable response to such an egregious violation.[9] This, along with the conflict of interest created by Dr. Hamlet receiving pay for consulting with a company whose clients received no-bid contracts with the district, should have resulted in his immediate termination.[10]

COVID-19 CRISIS MANAGEMENT: Dr. Hamlet's lack of leadership and transparency during the pandemic has left students and their families feeling frustrated. The district's transition to remote learning was unsatisfactory. At a minimum, students lost nearly three weeks of instruction and after eight weeks, students with disabilities are still without specially designed instruction, which is required by their IEPs and 504 plans.[11] In comparison, neighboring districts with 1:1 access to technology were able to begin right away.[12] After spending weeks administering a technology needs assessment survey, PPS provided families with low-resolution printed packets that families were responsible for retrieving from schools.[13] To make matters worse, an inequitable privacy policy was administered whereby CAPA and Sci-Tech students received video-enabled devices and other PPS students received technology with video access disabled.[14] This type of behavior furthers an already widening access and opportunity gap that persists in the district. When asked specific questions about remote learning and the response to COVID-19 in several virtual forums, including those hosted by The Forbes Funds and the Pittsburgh Black Elected Officials Coalition, Dr. Hamlet's circumlocution and vagueness about future plans left viewers even more disappointed than before.[15]

INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE & SAFE AND HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS: The discriminatory practices against Black students in PPS began long before Dr. Hamlet arrived, and we are not the first group of Black people to bring light to these issues. The complaint brought against the district in 1992 by the Advocates for African-American Students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools was finally acknowledged in 2006 when a Conciliation Agreement was established between the Advocates and the district.[16] The Equity Advisory Panel (EAP), established as part of this agreement, continues to be placated with empty promises by the district.[17] Fourteen years later, no real progress has been made. PSSA test scores have remained stagnant, while Keystone test scores have declined. While there have been minimal academic gains, the gap between Black and White student performance persists and achievement for all students leaves much to be desired.[18] The Gender Equity Commission (GEC) report outlined a number of metrics on which Black children continue to disproportionately underperform compared to their White (and sometimes AMLON) counterparts, including access to and passing of AP courses and tests, enrollment in eighth grade algebra, enrollment in gifted and talented programs, and grade retention rates.[19] Despite passing a K-2 suspension ban that has resulted in an overall decline in suspensions, Black children, especially those with exceptionalities, are still suspended at disproportionate rates.[20] The GEC report also stated that Black students are suspended from school and arrested at school at higher rates than White students, and that Black students are referred to the police more often than in 95% of other districts (with Black girls being referred to the police more than in 99% of similar cities).[21] To "illustrate the District's commitment to moving beyond compliance with the MOU to demonstrate its commitment to achieving true equity," PPS released an equity implementation plan in 2019, *On Track to Equity*, but the plan is devoid of any real metrics and reads more like a list of aspirations.[22]

PROFESSIONALISM: Dr. Hamlet's arrival to Pittsburgh was mired in scandal. He was recommended by a search consultant who admittedly did not vet him (and who was not properly vetted himself) after a non-transparent selection process.[23] A review of Dr. Hamlet's credentials revealed instances of plagiarism, inaccuracies in his employment history, and inflation of his contribution to student outcomes.[24] Though Dr. Hamlet was "cleared" of wrongdoing in a rushed investigation at the expense of the taxpayers,[25] by then, many of us (including two board members who voted to rescind his contract) had lost confidence that Dr. Hamlet was the right person for the job.[26]

Despite Dr. Hamlet's rocky start, many community, foundation, and government leaders calling for his removal were still willing to collaborate (some of whom have signed this letter). However, at nearly every turn, Dr. Hamlet has been evasive, operating the district like an island and further ostracizing the community to the detriment of Pittsburgh children. His public rift with the Mayor and his tendency to cancel meetings (or send subordinates in his place) with key stakeholders who have offered their support has been nothing short of embarrassing.[27] Even when Dr. Hamlet addresses or interacts with the public, his answers seem rehearsed, often circumvent real issues and concerns, and are filled with nonsensical education jargon.

As PPS school board directors, it is time for you to admit that Dr. Hamlet's tenure has been an abject failure and to allow his contract to expire at the end of the 2020-21 school year. Our students and families deserve a superintendent who is competent, honest, innovative, and not the center of continuous negative press. We do not take lightly the implications of Black women asking a school board with a Black president to not renew the contract of a Black superintendent of a school district with majority Black students. We are aware of the optics, however, we demand better for our Black children. We have had enough and our children deserve better. If this democratically elected school board is not courageous enough to do what is right, we will make our discontent known at the ballot box during election time.

Sincerely,

Black Women for a Better Education

Deirdra Bullock, PPS Alumna, PPS Parent, District 1
Tamera Gaines, PPS Parent, District 1
C. Howard, PPS Alumna, District 1
Ashley McClain, PPS Parent and Alumna, District 1
Brandi McNeill, PPS Parent and Alumna, District 1
Danielle Poole, PPS Alumna, District 1
E. Speaks, Retired PPS Employee, District 1
Dorie Taylor, PPS Parent, District 1
University of Pittsburgh Faculty Member, District 1
Former PPS Parent, District 1
Darlise Kearney, Community Member, District 2
T. Matthews, Mentor to 2 PPS Students, Public Health Professional, Concerned Citizen, District 2

Dr. Cheryl Hall-Russell, President & Chief Cultural Consultant, BW3, District 2
Amber Thompson, District 2
PPS Alumna, PPS Community Partner, District 2
Kathi Elliott, Concerned Community Member, District 3
C.C. Robinson, Concerned Community Member, District 3
R. Robinson, Concerned Citizen, Education Advocate, District 3
T. Taloute, Concerned Community Member, District 3
R. DeVaughn, Concerned Community Member, District 5
T. Reed, Parent, District 5
Marilyn Whitelock, Concerned Community Member, District 6
Khamil Scantling, Parent and Business Owner, District 7
Olivia Bennett, Allegheny County Council Member, District 8
Tieisha Collins, PPS Alumna, District 8
J. Harris, Parent, District 8
Kimmil Harris, District 8
Maxine Lewis, Community Member, District 8
Allyce Pinchback-Johnson, Former PPS Employee, PPS Alumna, Parent, District 8
La'Fay Pinchback, Retired PPS Teacher of 38 Years, District 8
S. Reed, Concerned Community Member, District 8
M. Reifman, PPS Parent, PPS Alumna, District 8
Cheryl Ruffin, PPS Alumna, District 8
J. Ruffin, Concerned Community Member, District 8
Maria T. Searcy, PPS EAP and Consultant, Pennsylvania Department of Education, District 8
J. Shealey, PPS Parent, District 8
Alecia Dawn Young, PPS Alumna, Concerned Community Member, District 8
Concerned Community Member, District 8
Cynthia Mendoza, Founder, Brown Mamas, LLC and Homeschooling Parent, District 9
Amanda Neatrour, Parent and Concerned Citizen, District 9
Geraldine Rowe, PPS Alumna District 9
LaTrenda Sherrill, Parent and Concerned Citizen, District 9
School of Education Faculty Member, Duquesne University
S. Jeffrey, Higher Education Professional, Concerned Citizen
S. Bolden, PPS Partner and Concerned Citizen
K. Johnson, PPS Alumna
Lakita Bullock, PPS Alumna
C.S., Juvenile Defense Attorney and Child Advocate, Active PA Bar License
C. Tyler, PPS Alumna and Former PPS Employee
Brandi Fisher, President, Alliance for Police Accountability
Amber McNeal, PPS Parent
J. Shirriel, PPS Alumna, Parent and Concerned Citizen
Evelyn King, Retired PPS School Administrator
Audra Chisom, Former PPS Parent
C. Rue, PPS Parent
PPS Out-of School-Time Partner (Citywide)
D. Arrington, Former Employee of 20 Years, Former PPS Parent, PPS Alumna
Nia Arrington, Youth Power Collective and PPS Alumna

Amanda Wilson
Michelle Walker
Gretchen Generett

Footnotes

[1]https://www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2018/03/27/Pittsburgh-Public-Schools-human-resources-chief-Milton-Walters-suspended-fired-district-policy/stories/201803260105
[2]https://www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2018/05/10/Pittsburgh-Perry-Traditional-Academy-principal-suspension-leave-James-Cooper-Anthony-Hamlet/stories/201805090209
[3]https://www.wesa.fm/post/pittsburgh-public-schools-tap-florida-educator-top-job#stream/0
[4]https://www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2018/06/21/Pittsburgh-Public-Schools-Anthony-Hamlet-board-hires-Office-of-Transformation/stories/201806210137
[5]https://go.boarddocs.com/pa/pghboe/Board.nsf/files/BEDUS37D6433/$file/Human%20Resources%20Report%20No.%204857%20-%20July%2024%2C%202019.pdf
[6]https://www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2020/05/12/Pittsburgh-Public-Schools-board-district-budget-revenue-projections-coronavirus/stories/202005120151
[7]https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2019/05/16/pittsburgh-public-schools-tech-contracts/
[8]https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2019/08/27/kdka-investigates-gets-action-superintendent-hamlet/
[9]https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2019/10/16/anthony-hamlet-reprimanded-by-school-board/
[10]https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2019/07/10/anthony-hamlet-being-paid-as-consultant-for-erdi
[11]https://www.publicsource.org/black-moms-like-me-will-not-be-patient-with-pittsburgh-public-schools-we-need-to-demand-more/
[12]https://www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2020/04/05/remote-learning-schools-prepared-shutdown-Pittsburgh-Western-PA-school-districts/stories/202004010125
[13]https://www.pghschools.org/Page/5377
[14]https://www.wesa.fm/post/city-school-district-disabled-cameras-student-issued-computers-because-privacy-concerns#stream/0
[15]https://www.facebook.com/PittsburghPublicSchools/videos/232088091540293/
[16]https://www.pghschools.org/equity
[17]https://newpittsburghcourier.com/2020/02/25/2020-vision-the-decade-for-true-equity-in-pittsburgh-public-schools/
[18]https://www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2019/09/03/Pittsburgh-Public-Schools-test-scores-student-achievement-board-Anthony-Hamlet-PSSA/stories/201909030153
[19,21]https://www.socialwork.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/publication-images/pittsburghs_inequality_across_gender_and_race_09_18_19.pdf
[20]https://triblive.com/local/pittsburgh-allegheny/activists-call-on-pittsburgh-public-schools-to-extend-suspension-ban-up-to-5th-grade/
[22]https://www.pghschools.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=1416&dataid=14599&FileName=PPS%20Equity%20Report%202019%20NOV%2021%20-%20Final%20with%20Bib.pdf

[23]https://www.wesa.fm/post/pittsburgh-schools-groups-pull-support-call-new-superintendent-search#stream/0
[24]https://www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2016/06/03/Discrepancies-on-resume-of-new-Pittsburgh-schools-superintendent-come-to-light/stories/201606030177
[25]https://archive.triblive.com/news/resume-check-in-pittsburgh-superintendent-search-broke-spending-limit/
[26]https://www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2016/06/29/Pittsburgh-Public-Schools-board-votes-to-keep-Anthony-Hamlet-as-superintendent/stories/201606290220
[27]https://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2018/02/02/bill-Peduto-harsh-words-Pittsburgh-superintendent-anthony-hamlet-pittsburgh-public-schools-strike-vote/stories/201802020157

Bibliography

Acuff, J. B., Hirak, B., & Nangah, M. (2012). Dismantling a master narrative: Using culturally responsive pedagogy to teach the history of art education. *Art Education*, *65*(5), 6-10.

Adichie, C. (2003). *Purple hibiscus*. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

Ahmed, S. (2012). *On being included*. Duke University Press.

Alexander-Floyd, N. (2012). Disappearing acts: Reclaiming intersectionality in the social sciences in a post-Black feminist era. *Feminist Formations, 24*(1), 1-25. https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2012.0003

Alinia, M. (2015). On Black feminist thought: Thinking oppression and resistance through intersectional paradigm. *Ethic and Racial Studies*, *38*(13), 2334-2340. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2015.1058492

Allen, A., Scott, L. M., & Lewis, C. W. (2013). Racial microaggressions and African American and Hispanic students in urban schools: A call for culturally affirming education. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning*, *3*(2), 117-129.

Aptheker, B. (1975). *The morning breaks: The trial of Angela Davis*. Cornell University Press.

Banks, N. (2019). Black women's labor market history reveals deep-seated race and gender discrimination. *Economic Policy Institute*. https://www.epi.org/blog/black-womens-labor-market-history-reveals-deep-seated-race-and-gender-discrimination/

Banks-Wallace, J. (2000). Womanist ways of knowing: Theoretical considerations for research with African American women. *Advance Nursing Science, 22*(3), 33-45. https://doi.org/10.1097/00012272-200003000-00004

Berger, M., & Guidroz, K. (2009). *The intersectional approach: Transforming the academy*. The University of North Carolina Press.

Beal, F. M. (1970). Double jeopardy: To be Black and female. In T. C. Bambara (Ed.), *The Black woman: An anthology* (pp. 109-122). Signet.

Beal, F. M. (2008). Double jeopardy: To be Black and female. *Meridians*, *8*(2), 166-176.

Beauboeuf–Lafontant, T. (1999). A Movement against and beyond boundaries: 1 "Politically Relevant Teaching" among African American Teachers. *Teachers College Record*, *100*(4), 702-723.

Berger, M. T., & Guidroz, K. (Eds.). (2010). *The intersectional approach: Transforming the academy through race, class, and gender*. University of North Carolina Press.

Berry, T. (2010). Engaged pedagogy and critical race feminism. *Educational Foundations*, *24*(3-4), 19.

Bilge, S. (2013). INTERSECTIONALITY UNDONE: Saving intersectionality from feminist intersectionality studies. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race, 10*(2), 405-424. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X13000283

Brayboy, B. M., Gough, H. R., Leonard, B., Roehl, R. F., & Solyom, J. A. (2012). Reclaiming scholarship: Critical Indigenous research methodologies. *Qualitative Research: An Introduction to Methods and Designs*, 423-450.

Bump, P. (2018, March 10). Trump celebrates winning 52 percent of women in 2016 which is only how he did among whites. *The Washington Post.* https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2018/03/10/trump-celebrates-winning-52-percent-of-women-in-2016-which-is-only-how-he-did-among-whites/

Burkhard, T., Kinloch, V., Graham, D., & Yarborough, K.-A. (2022). "I basically just walked out": Race talk and the experiences of Black women educators in U.S. educational settings. In C. D. Gist & T. J. Bristol (Eds.), *Handbook of research on Teachers of Color and Indigenous teachers* (pp. 557–568). American Educational Research Association. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2xqngb9.46

Carbado, D. W. (2013). Colorblind intersectionality. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *38*(4), 811-845.

Case, K. (1997). African American other mothering in the urban elementary school. *The Urban Review, 29*(1), 25-39. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024645710209

Collins, P. H. (1986). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of Black feminist thought. *Social Problems, 33*(6), s14-s32. https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.1986.33.6.03a00020

Collins, P. H. (1990a). Black feminist thought in the matrix of domination. In P. H. Collins (Ed.), *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and politics of empowerment* (pp. 221-238). Unwin Hyman.

Collins, P. H. (1990b). Controlling images and Black women's oppression. In P. H. Collins (Ed.), *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (pp. 266–273). Unwin Hyman.

Collins, P. H. (1996). What's in a name: Womanism, Black Feminism and beyond. *Black Scholar 26*(1), 9–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.1996.11430765

Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought; Knowledge, consciousness and the politics of empowerment* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Collins, P. H. (2008). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Collins, P. H., & Bilge, S. (2020). *Intersectionality* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.

Columbia Law School. (2017). *Kimberlé Crenshaw on intersectionality, more than two decades later*. https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later

Combahee River Collective. (1977). *A Black Feminist Statement'* (pp. 210-218). Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press.

Combahee River Collective. (1983). The Combahee River Collective statement. In B. Smith (Ed.), *Home girls: A Black feminist anthology* (pp. 264-274). Kitchen Table Press.

Cooper, A. J. (1892/1988). *A voice from the South*. Oxford University Press.

Cooper, B. C. (2015). Love no limit: Towards a Black feminist future (in theory). *The Black Scholar*, *45*(4), 7-21.

Cooper, B. (2018). *Eloquent rage: A Black feminist discovers her superpower*. St. Martin's Press.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1*(8), 139-167.

Crenshaw, K. (1991) Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(6), 1241–1299. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039

Crenshaw, K. (1992). Whose story is it anyway? Feminist and antiracist appropriations of Anita Hill. In T. Morrison (Ed.), *Race-ing justice, en-gendering power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the construction of social reality* (pp. 402-440). Pantheon.

Crenshaw, K., Ocen, P., & Nanda, J. (2015). *Black girls matter: Pushed out, overpoliced, and underprotected*. African American Policy Forum and Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies. https://doi.org/10.5406/blacwomegendfami.5.2.0066

Cummings, L. & Lindsay-Dennis, L. (2011). Mentors' reflections on developing a culturally responsive mentoring initiative for urban African American girls. *Black Women, Gender, and Families, 5*(2), 66-92.

Dasatagir, A. E. (2018, January 25). Why this women's march photo is such a big deal. *USA Today*. https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2017/01/25/angela-peoples-womens-march-washington-viral-photo/97062400/

Dill, B. T., McLaughlin, A. E., & Nieves, A. D. (2007). Future directions of feminist research: Intersectionality. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis* (pp. 629–638). Sage.

Dillard, C. B. (2000). The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen: Examining an endarkened feminist epistemology in educational research and leadership.

International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 13(6), 661–681. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390050211565

Dillard, C. B. (2010). This is our moment (so) yes we can. *Qualitative Inquiry and Human Rights*, 173.

Dixson, A. (2003). "Let's do this!" Black women teachers' politics and pedagogy. *Urban Education*, *38*(2), 217-235.

Dortch, D. (2016). The strength from within: A phenomenological study examining the academic self-efficacy of African American women in doctoral studies. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *85*(3), 350-364.

Evans-Winters, V. E. (2011). *Teaching Black girls: Resiliency in urban classrooms* (2nd ed.). Peter Lang.

Evans-Winters, V. E. (2015). Black Feminism in qualitative education research: A mosaic for interpreting race, class, and gender in education. In V. E. Evans-Winters & B. L. Love (Eds.), *Black Feminism in education: Black women speak back, up, and out* (pp. 129–142). Peter Lang.

Evans-Winters, V. E. (2019). *Black Feminism in qualitative inquiry: A mosaic for writing our daughter's body*. Routledge.

Evans-Winters, V. E., & Esposito, J. (2010). Other people's daughters: Critical race feminism and Black girls' education. *Educational Foundations, 24*(Winter/Spring), 11–24.

Evans-Winters, V. E., & Love, B. L. (2015). Introduction. In V. E. Evans-Winters & B. L. Love (Eds.), *Black Feminism in education: Black women speak back, up, and out* (pp. 1-6). Peter Lang.

Everett, K. D., Croom, N. N., Patton, L. D., & Croom, N. N. (2017). From discourse to practice: Making discourses about Black undergraduate womyn visible in higher education journals and student affairs practice. In L. D. Patton & N. N. Croom (Eds.) *Critical perspectives on Black women and college success* (pp. 75-87). Routledge.

Farinde-Wu, A. & Fitchett, P. (2018). Searching for satisfaction: Black female teachers' workplace climate and job satisfaction. *Urban Education 53*(1), 86-112.

Foster, M. (1991). Constancy, connectedness, and constraints in the lives of African-American teachers. *NWSA journal*, *3*(2), 233-261.

Franklin, A. J. (1999). Invisibility syndrome and racial identity development in psychotherapy and counseling African American men. *The Counseling Psychologist, 27*(6), 761–793. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000099276002

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, practice research, and practice*. Teachers College Press.

Gay, C. & Tate, K. (2003). Doubly bound: The impact of gender and race on the politics of Black women. *Political Psychology, 19*(1), 169-184. https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00098

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* Aldine.

Goodwin, M. (2020, July 20). The new Jane Crow: Women's mass incarceration. *Just Security*. https://www.justsecurity.org/71509/the-new-jane-crow-womens-mass-incarceration/

Guy-Sheftall, B. (1995). *Words of fire*. New Press.

Guy-Sheftall, B. (2009). Black feminist studies: The case of Anna Julia Cooper. *African American Review, 43*(1), 11-15.

Hagler, J. (2016, March 16). 6 things you should know about Women of Color and the criminal justice system. *The Center for American Progress*. https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/criminal-justice/news/2016/03/16/133438/6-things-you-should-know-about-women-of-color-and-the-criminal-justice-system/

Harris, J., & Patton, D. (2019). Un/doing intersectionality through higher education research. *The Journal of Higher Education, 90*(3), 347-372.

Harris-Perry, M. (2011). *Sister citizen: Shame, stereotypes, and Black women in America*. Yale University Press.

Haynes C., Stewart S., Allen E. (2016). Three paths, one struggle: Black women and girls battling invisibility in U.S. classrooms. *Journal of Negro Education, 85*(3), 380–391. https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.85.3.0380

Henry, A. (1998). "Invisible" and "womanish": Black girls negotiating their lives in an African-centered school in the USA. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *1*(2), 151–170.

Henry, A. (2009). "Speaking up" and "speaking out": Examining "voice" in a reading/writing program with adolescent African Caribbean girls. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *30*(2), 233–252.

Higginbotham, E. B. (1992). African-American women's history and the metalanguage of race. *Signs, 17*(2), 251–274.

Higginbotham, E. B. (1993). *Righteous discontent: The women's movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920*. Harvard University Press.

Hine, D. C. (1989). Rape and the inner lives of Black women in the Middle West: Preliminary thoughts on the culture of dissemblance. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 14*(4), 912–20.

Hine, D. C. (1998). *A shining thread of hope: The history of Black women in America*. Broadway Books.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. Routledge.

hooks, b. (1989). *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking Black*. South End Press.

hooks, b. (2000). *All about love: New visions*. William Morrow & Co.

Huntzinger, V. M. M. (1995). *Portraits in Black and White: A micro and macro view of Southern teachers before and after the Civil War*. Pre-Conference Draft.

Ihle, E. L. (1986). *Black girls and women in elementary education: A history of Black women's education in the South, 1865-present* (non-classroom guide UD 025 515-516). James Madison University.

Jerald, M. C., Cole, E. R., Ward, L. M., & Avery, L. R. (2017). Controlling images: How awareness of group stereotypes affects Black women's well-being. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 64*(5), 487–499. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000233

Kaba, A. J. (2008). Race, gender and progress: Are Black American women the new model minority? *Journal of African American Studies 12*, 309–335. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-008-9043-8

Kendall, M. (2020). *Hood feminism: Notes from the women that a movement forgot*. Penguin Random House.

King, M. (1973). The politics of sexual stereotypes. *Black Scholar, 4*(6-7),12-23. https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.1973.11760854

Kinloch, V. (2015). Critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership as Projects in Humanization (PiH). *Education Review, 4*(3), 29-35.

Kinloch, V., Burkhard, T., & Graham, D. (2019). Storying youth lives: Centering equity in teaching and teacher education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *33*(1), 66-79.

Kinloch, V., Penn, C., & Burkhard, T. (2020). Black lives matter: Storying, identities, and counternarratives. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *52*(4), 382–405. https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X20966372

Kohli, R. (2012). Racial pedagogy of the oppressed: Critical interracial dialogue for Teachers of Color. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 45*(1), 181-196.

Kovach, M. (2015). Emerging from the margins: Indigenous methodologies. *Research as resistance: Revisiting critical, Indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches*, *2*, 43-64.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, *32*(3), 465-491.

Lane, M. (2017) Reclaiming our queendom: Black feminist pedagogy and the identity formation of African American girls. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 50*(1), 13-24, https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2016.1259025

Lewis, G. (2020). Once more with my sistren: Black feminism and the challenge of object use. *Feminist Review*, *126*(1), 1-18.

Lindsay-Dennis, L. (2015). Black feminist-Womanist research paradigm: Toward a culturally relevant research model focused on African American girls. *Journal of Black Studies, 46*(5), 506-520.

Lomotey, K. (2010). Predominantly white institutions. In *Encyclopedia of African American education* (Vol. 1, pp. 524-526). SAGE Publications. https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412971966.n193

Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider*. Crossing Press.

Love, B. L. (2012). *Hip hop's li'l sistas speak: Negotiating hip hop identities and politics in the new South*. Peter Lang.

Love, B. L., & Evans-Winters, V. E. (2015). Why we matter: An Interview with Dr. Cynthia Dillard (Nana Mansa II of Mpeasem, Ghana, West Africa). In V. E. Evans-Winters & B. L. Love (Eds.), *Black Feminism in education: Black women speak back, up, and out* (pp. 201–209). Peter Lang.

Lowenberg, B. J., & Bogin, R. (Eds.). (1976). *Black women in nineteenth-century life*. Pennsylvania State University.

Mogadime, D. (2000). Black girls/Black women-centered texts and Black teachers as othermothers. *Journal of the Association for the Research on Mothering*, *2*(2), 222–233.

Morris, E. W. (2007). "Ladies" or "loudies": Perceptions and experiences of Black girls in classrooms. *Youth & Society*, *38*, 490-515.

Morris, M. W. (2012). *Race, gender, and the school-to-prison pipeline: Expanding our discussion to include Black girls*. African American Policy Forum.

Morris, M. W. (2016). *Pushed out: The criminalization of Black girls in school*. The New Press.

Morrison, T. (1970). *The bluest eye*. Penguin Random House.

Mowatt, R., French B., & Malebranche, D. (2013). Black/Female/Body hypervisibility and invisibility: A Black feminist augmentation of feminist leisure research. *Journal of Leisure Research, 45*(5), 644-660.

Muhammad, C. G., & Dixson, A. D. (2008). Black females in high school: A statistical educational profile. *The Negro Educational Review*, *59*(3–4), 163–180.

Nash, J. C. (2008). Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Theory, 89*, 1-15.

Nash, J. C. (2011). Practicing love: Black Feminism, love-politics, and post-intersectionality. *Meridians*, *11*(2), 1-24.

Nash, J. C. (2017). Intersectionality and its discontents. *American Quarterly*, *69*(1), 117-129.

Nyachae, T. (2016). Complicated contradictions amid Black Feminism and millennial Black women teachers creating curriculum for Black girls. *Gender and Education, 28*(6), 786-806, https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1221896

Patterson, A., Howard, A., & Kinloch, V. (2016a). Black Feminism and critical media literacy: Moving from the margin to the center. *Meridians*, *15*(1), 40-64.

Patterson, A., Kinloch, V., Burkhard, T., Randall. R., & Howard, A. (2016b). Black feminist thought as methodology: Examining intergenerational lived experiences of Black women. *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research*, *5*(3), 55-57.

Patton, L. D., Crenshaw, K., Hayne, C., & Watson, T. (2016). Why we can't wait: (Re)examining the opportunities and challenges for Black women and girls in education. *The Journal of Negro Education, 85*(3), 194. https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.85.3.0194

Patton, L. D., Haynes, C., & Croom, N. N. (2017). Centering the diverse experiences of Black women undergraduates. *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education, 10*(2),141-143, https://doi.org/10.1080/19407882.2017.1331627

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative Social Work*, *1*(3), 261-283.

Perkins, L. M. (1980). *Black women and the philosophy of "race uplift" prior to emancipation* (Working paper). Radcliffe College.

Perkins, L. M. (1993). The role of education in the development of Black feminist thought. *History of Education*, *22*(3), 265-275.

Phillips, L. (2006). *The womanist reader: The first quarter century of womanist thought*. Routledge.

Price-Dennis, D., & Muhammad, G. E. (Eds.). (2021). *Black girls' literacies: Transforming lives and literacy practices*. Routledge.

Prison Policy Initiative (2019, May 14). *Policing women: Race and gender disparities in police stops, searches, and use of force*. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2019/05/14/policingwomen/

Rich, A. (1978). Disloyal to civilization: Feminism, racism, gynepobia. In A. Rich (Ed.), *On lies, secrets, and silence: Selected prose 1966-1978.* Norton.

Richardson, G. E. (2002). The metatheory of resilience and resiliency. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *58*(3), 307-321.

Richardson, L. (1998). The politics of location: Where am I now? *Qualitative Inquiry*, *4*(1), 41-48.

Ryland, M. (2013, August 8). Hypervisibility: How scrutiny and surveillance make you watched, but not seen [Tumblr blog]. *The Body is not an Apology*. http://thebodyisnotanapology.tumblr.com/post/57763238146/hypervisibility-how-scrutiny-and-surveillance

Salazar Perez, M., & Williams, E. (2014). Black feminist activism: Theory as generating collective resistance. *Multicultural Perspectives*, *16*(3), 125-132. https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2014.922883

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed). Sage.

San Pedro, T., & Kinloch, V. (2017). Toward projects in humanization: Research on co-creating and sustaining dialogic relationships. *American Educational Research Journal*, *54*(1_suppl), 373S-394S. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216671210

Shujaa, M. J. (1993). Education and schooling: You can have one without the other. *Urban Education*, *27*(4), 328-351.

Simien, E., & Clawson, R. (2004). The intersection of race and gender: A examination of Black feminist consciousness, race consciousness and policy attitudes. *Social Science Quarterly*, *85*(3), 793–810. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2004.00245.x

Simmel, G. (1921). The sociological significance of the "stranger". In R. E. Park and E. W. Burgess (Eds.), *Introduction to the science of sociology* (pp. 322-27). University of Chicago Press.

Smith, E. M. J. (1989). Black racial identity development: Issues and concerns. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *17*(2), 277–288. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000089172007

Smith, W. M. C. (Ed.). (1989). *Black education: A quest for equity and excellence*. Transaction.

Smith, J. W., Smith, W. J., & Markham, S. E. (2000). Diversity issues in mentoring academic faculty. *Journal of Career Development*, *26*(4), 251-262.

Solórzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro education*, 60-73.

Spruill Wheeler, M. (1993). *New women of the South*. Oxford University Press.

Taylor, K-Y. (2017). *How we get free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*. Haymarket Books.

Taylor, U. Y. (1998). Making waves: The theory and practice of Black Feminism. *The Black Scholar, 28*(2), 18-28, https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.1998.11430912

The Combahee River Collective. (2014). A Black feminist statement. *Women's Studies Quarterly, 42*(3/4), 271-280. https://doi.org/10.1353/wsq.2014.0052

The United States Department of Justice. (2021). *Laws enforced by employment litigation section*. https://www.justice.gov/crt/laws-enforced-employment-litigation-section

Thomas, V. G. (2004). The psychology of Black women: Studying women's lives in context. *Journal of Black Psychology, 30*, 286-306.

U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (2021). *Title IX and sex discrimination*. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html

Walker, A. (1983). *In search of our mother's gardens: Womanist prose*. Harcourt Brace Jovanich.

Walker, A. (2012). Womanist. *Buddhist-Christian Studies, 32*, 45. https://doi.org/10.1353/bcs.2012.0008

Wallace, M. (1995). Anger in isolation: A Black feminist's search for sisterhood. In Beverly Guy-Sheftal (Ed.), *Words of fire: An anthology of African American feminist thought*. The New Press.

West, L., Donovan, R., Daniel, A. (2016) The price of strength: Black college women's perspectives on the strong Black woman stereotype, *Women & Therapy*, *39*(3-4), 390-412, https://doi.org/10.1080/02703149.2016.1116871

Wing, A. K. (Ed.). (1997). *Critical race feminism: A reader*. NYU Press.

Winkle-Wagner, R., Kelly, B., Ludeke, C., & Reavis, T. (2019). Authentically me: Examining expectations that are placed upon Black women in college. *American Educational Research Journal, 56*(2). 407-443. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831218798326

Winn, M. (2011). *Girl time*. Teachers College Press

Wise, T. (1998). Is sisterhood conditional? White women and the rollback of Affirmative Action. *NWSA Journal, 10*(3), 1-26. https://doi.org/10.2979%2Fnws.1998.10.3.1

Woods-Giscombé, C. L. (2010). Superwoman schema: African American women's views on stress, strength, and health. *Qualitative Health Research, 20*(5), 668-683. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732310361892

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (Vol. 5). Sage.