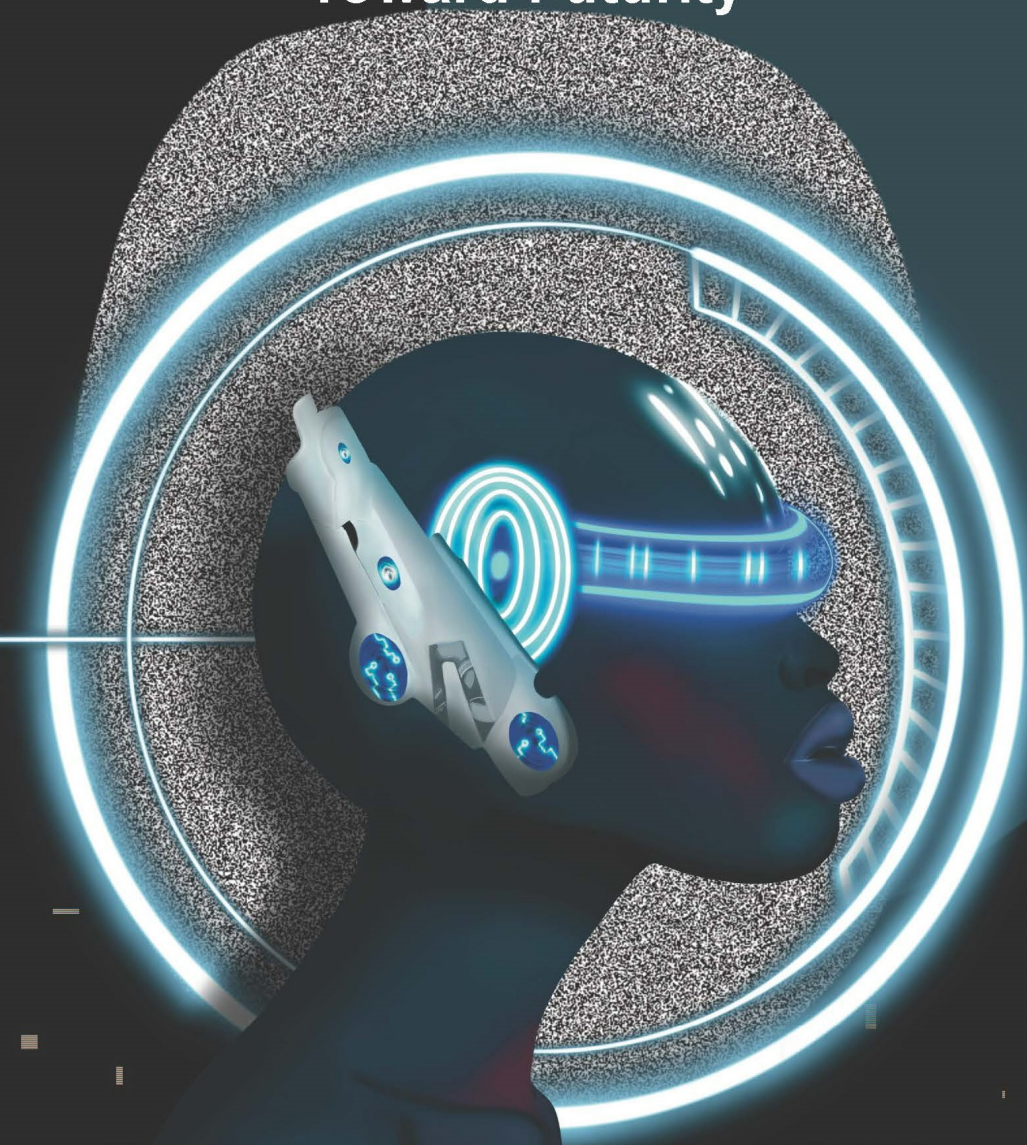# Black Feminist Theorizing Toward Futurity

Edited by Nana Brantuo and Andrea N. Baldwin

Black Feminist Theorizing Toward Futurity

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A Standpoints Volume

NANA AFUA BRANTUO AND ANDREA N. BALDWIN

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Introduction

Black Feminist Theorizing Toward Futurity

NANA AFUA BRANTUO AND ANDREA N. BALDWIN

During the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people globally, particularly those from marginalized communities, including Black and Brown folks, women, immigrant and working poor communities, folks with disabilities, and queer and gender expansive folks, have died. Our communities endured physical, mental, and economic suffering, trauma, and enforced loneliness and isolation as we struggled to keep ourselves safe. We learned throughout the pandemic that the negative impacts of the COVID-19 virus could be easily mapped onto the ways other historical traumas have affected these aforementioned communities, such that the same people dying and suffering from COVID-19 related issues are the same people who have had to grapple with historical injustices. Additionally, the maltreatment of refugees at the southern US border, the disproportionate killing of Black and Brown folks by the state and by state-sanctioned vigilantes, and other unjust and inequitable practices that still plague our society in this second decade of the twenty-first century has caused many, even during a pandemic, to take to the streets to demand justice. But the pushback has been real, as evident with the national move to ban Critical Race Theory (CRT) in schools (Ray and Gibbons 2021); to the recent attempt by the Texas legislature to criminalize parents who seek gender affirming surgery for their transkids (Alfonseca 2022); to the proposed Florida state ban on schools and businesses for "teaching courses and offering training that cause white people to feel 'discomfort' on account of their race" (Allen 2022); to the ongoing restricting of voting rights (Timm 2021); and more.

As we write this introduction, there is a war happening in Europe resulting in the murder of hundreds and the displacement of mil-

lions of Ukrainians and thousands of African, Caribbean, and Indian students who are in the country as international students. In the US, this war has resulted in the skyrocketing of gas prices at a time of rising inflation not seen since the early 1980s (Irwin 2021). The impacts of the war are being felt as Americans are advocating for a raise in the federal minimum wage, affordable housing, health-care, and childcare. In fact, graduate students around the nation, like the ones who have contributed chapters to this volume, have been mounting direct challenges to those with power in the academy demanding a living wage.

What is clear in this moment of global upheaval and resistance is that marginalized and minoritized folks are fed up. They are fed up with still rising housing insecurity, job loss, declining health in the form of long haul COVID, and the spike in domestic violence, just to name a few. They are also fed up with how these issues have gone largely unaddressed by those with power. We, the editors of this volume, are fed up. Having lived through a pandemic and much death and trauma we are both at a point in our intellectual journey where we want our work, scholarship, and theorization to address more of the living and live-making potential of community wher-ever we find it, online or offline. We want to think more about how we can utilize our scholarship in the urgency that it demands to address the predicaments of the now but also how we can use it to pause and think—take time—so that, even while we are engag-ing tools and language to speak and fight back against that which has killed and continues to kill us, we can explore and really come to know the potentiality of how we might use this work not only to help save us in the struggle but to tell us something about living, aliveness (Quashie 2021), and joy.

One of the things that continues to strike and haunt us both us as Black feminists is the number of Black feminist deaths through-out the decades as Black women were doing this intersectional work (Hong 2015). Looking back at the short-lived life of these Black fem-inist stalwarts who had so much more to offer us, the question that gets stuck in our brain is not only how can we reverence, mourn,

and celebrate the legacies of these amazing women, but also how can we also untether this work from struggle and death? As Black women who find affect theory useful to our individual and collective scholarly projects, sometimes this academic work feels so heavy, like it is weighing us down. Recently, Andrea was reading some theoretical works on intersectionality to prepare for a webinar, and she had to stop. The texts she was engaging with were so theoretically heavy that they felt dense and dead, or at least removed from intersectionality's activist nodal points prior to its coining. And yet as she was reading these theoretically dense texts, the folks she kept thinking about whose work greatly influenced intersectionality as a concept weren't one-dimensional scholars. When we think of Nash's (2019) critique of the deadening that happens as intersectionality has been coopted and over theorized, such that there appears to be some creative stagnation on the academic end of things, we would love to see how we can reinvigorate intersectionality and other important Black feminist works so as to insert a sense of aliveness theoretically and conceptually.

As we think about how we dare to try to move forward in communal livity, it is clear a lot of healing, physical and psychic, needs to be done to move us from barely living to being alive in the sense that Kevin Quashie (2021) discusses—aliveness as having an ethical orientation in a world that is unethically oriented. This text in many ways sets us up to walk along that continuous path of ethical orientation. For example, Jariah Strozier's chapter, "A Black Feminist's Critique of the Crooked Room of Medicine (CRoM): An Introduction to Thick Studies," opens up the first section of the text, Black Feminist Social and Institutional Critiques, with a scathing critique of what she calls the Crooked Room of Medicine (CRoM). The CroM, according to Strozier, describes the mental, emotional, and physical struggles Black women face, propagated by stereotypes and false narratives, particularly in medical settings. This room works to erase and oppress Black women, particularly those with bigger bodies, and Strozier demonstrates how the unethical orientation of this room has historically resulted in Black women's suffering while

also sharing her ethically oriented personal narrative as a means of working toward her own healing.

Amilia Evans in chapter two addresses how diversity and inclusion rhetoric has been used by institutions of higher education to improve their image. In her chapter, "A Reimagining of Diversity at Predominantly White Institutions: Institutional Reinscription Using Critical Discourse Analysis and Counterstory," she argues that institutions constructed from ideologies of white supremacy and neoliberalism place institutional language into circulation and from these framings perpetuate white superiority and marginalization of bodies deemed as nonnormative. Evans reimagines diversity from a perspective of Black imagination which, she writes, allows for opportunities of social change beyond the constraints of racism. She builds a critical discourse methodology that analyzes the racialization of institutional language and reinscribes the institution with reimaginings toward reorientation.

In the third and final chapter of the first section, Brianna George addresses how Black women come to bear a unique load of discrimination and stressors related to being marginalized and provides us with three recommendations specific to improving trauma-informed interventions, including a push to (1) increase the representation of Black women as therapists, (2) utilize culturally informed assessments, and (3) acknowledge Black women's experiences in treatment.

Like Jennifer C. Nash, in this text we are invested in a "broad conception of black feminism" (2019, 5). As such, we

> advance a conception of black feminism that is expansive, welcoming anyone with an investment in black women's humanity, intellectual labor, and political visionary work, anyone with an investment in theorizing black genders and sexualities in complex and nuanced ways . . . these varied black feminist scholars can all speak on and for black feminist theory, and as black feminist theorists, even as they make claims from different identity locations. (5)

It is because of this commitment that we have included the scholarship of white women students who use Black feminist theorizing to decenter whiteness in the second section of the text. Amy Ernstes, in her chapter "Where Are the Black Feminist Sociologists? A Textbook Analysis," details how Black feminisms have become important to her teaching. Ernstes does a textbook analysis of introductory sociology texts which poignantly illustrates how whiteness is centered in these texts through the near absence of Black feminisms and Black women sociologists from their pages. Casey Anne Brimmer writes about their own experiences with white feminisms as a queer white disabled person and the ways in which the centering of whiteness in white feminisms left them feeling Other. They write in "Decentering whiteness as the Assumed Norm of Feminisms; or, How Black Feminisms Made Room for Me That 'Feminism' Didn't" about the ways Black queer and feminist works reflected on their own experience with white feminisms. In the final chapter of this section, "'All That You Touch You Change': Black Feminisms and Theatrical Intimacy Direction, On and Offstage," Rachel Nunn writes about and critiques the white centeredness of the emerging field of theatrical intimacy direction. She argues that intimacy direction is already an application of Black feminisms, as a living, evolving praxis that centers the wisdom of the body as truth. However, at this present moment, the theatrical intimacy direction movement is arguably siloed in white feminism, and, beyond the obvious need for more practitioners of color, theatrical intimacy direction should consider what they have in common with theories of Black liberation. She theorizes about what the marriage of Black feminist theorizing and intimacy direction could mean for the theatre industry beyond the stage, in administrative as well as artistic structures.

The authors in the final section of the text all work through several ways in which Black feminists are already contributing to a Black feminist ethical orientation through counter narrative. They delineate and demonstrate how according to Carole Boyce Davies a "politics of location necessarily calls those of us who would participate in the formation of counter-hegemonic practice to identify

the spaces where we begin the process of revision" (1994, 155), whether those places be activist, academy, or celebratory spaces like Carnival. The authors in this final section in fact push themselves in their writing to show us the "life affirming practice . . . [of] a counter-system of valuation in order to resist" (hooks 2005, 42). For example, Leslie Robertson Foncette in her chapter "Syncretism, Picong, and Mas: A Two-Faced Resistance in Trinidad & Tobago Carnival," takes us on a journey of Trinidadian Carnival as a space of resistance and recreation and of celebration. In this chapter, she shares her beautiful photographic documentation of Carnival and her knowledge of the ways in which Carnival counts as a counterspace. Leah Ramnath, in "Cynical (Dis)Positions: Cultivating Cynical Sensibilities," describes the process through which Black women have continually demonstrated their capability of destabilizing historical tropes and stereotypes by occupying and redefining their meaning entirely. She explores the spatial conditions that Black women engage and prompt moments of emerging consciousness through parrhesiatic truth-telling, using Black feminist theory to expand Foucault's conceptualization of parrhesia to locate Black women as contemporary cynics with the ability to overcome biopolitics, disrupt the status quo, and make room for others to become alive. Rounding out the final section of the text is the chapter entitled "Full Participation by Another Name Is This Bridge Called Our Backs" by Andrea N. Baldwin, Letisha Brown, and Nana Brantuo. In this chapter, the authors work to tell the counter narrative of how Black women's emotional and intellectual labor within the academy are simultaneously exploited and devalued in the name of diversity. Using Donna Kate Rushin's "Bridge Poem" to frame their chapter, the authors examine how their existence becomes literal mechanisms/bridges in the effort to make the university appear more equitable. However, in telling their stories they speak back to and critique the institution thereby using the space as a place from where they begin the process of revision.

The final contribution of the text is the poem "Woke, Caribbean Smoke Screen" by Marva Cossy. Cossy, who lives and works in Bar-

bados and who has been Andrea's co-author and dear friend for close to twenty years, wanted to publish this poem to celebrate her friend Andrea in anticipation of her earning tenure at Virginia Tech. Cossy's poem is a poignant example of what we have laid out in this introduction as how Black feminist communities care and celebrate each other.

Of course, the synergy of this text would not have been possible without the amazing cover art by Tykeisha Swan Patrick, who in her cover description states of Geneva, the title of the artist rendering of this beautiful Black woman, "She is an example of why it is so important to be connected to the universe, not in a box of fear." What this text presents is the opposite of being in a box; it is the openings and connections that community makes possible—an ordinary and yet extraordinary accomplishment of Black feminist scholar communities in the midst of a pandemic. It is indeed that move toward ethical orientation that we all need to work toward and reimagine for our futures.

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BLACK FEMINIST SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUES

1. A Black Feminist's Critique of the Crooked Room of Medicine (CRoM)

An Introduction to Thick Studies

JARIAH STROZIER

Introduction

This chapter is a theoretical exploration of the intersections of race, gender, and body size as it pertains to Black women, health, and Black women's encounters with what I describe herein as the *Crooked Room of Medicine* (CRoM).[1] I start by analyzing the racialized, gendered, and fatphobic medical experience turned case study of a seven-year-old Black girl who was initially brought to the Boston Floating Hospital Weight Control Program in 1992 for an assessment (Dietz 1995). My analysis of this case study is then expanded and used to develop a theory that engages and critiques the false deficit narrative of single Black women and their children, food insecurity, and so-called "obesity," known in the medical and nutritional field as the Hunger-Obesity Paradox (furthered translated into the Food-Insecurity-Obesity Paradox [FIOP]).

In 1995, William Dietz, a pediatric nutrition researcher, linked food insecurity and "obesity" to argue that single mothers on food stamps are often food insecure and that this insecurity leads to "obesity" for them and their children. This correlation has since been expanded upon and utilized in nutrition, hunger, obesity, and behavioral health research with researchers arguing that food insecurity and "obesity" are correlated (Dinour, Bergen, and Yeh 2007; Wiig and Smith 2009; Martin and Lippert 2012; Robaina and Martin 2013; Morales and Berkowitz 2016; Cooksey Stowers, et al. 2020).

The impact of applying this paradox to communities and people of color is that this paradox is grounded in deficit thinking which, according to Davis and Museus (2019), "situate[s] people as problems . . . by focusing on fixing people rather than fixing oppressive and disabling systems" (para. 3).

In this chapter, I utilize and build upon Black feminist theoretical frameworks to investigate how a society that is built on racialized and gendered systems has implications for how the large Black female body is interpreted as unhealthy and diseased by social workers and health and medical professionals as well as how that body is then treated within these social and medical settings. I begin by analyzing Black feminist literature which situates the historical foundations of health and medical professions in the United States in a colonial-capitalist structure with its associated racist, classist, patriarchal systems, such that Black women have and will always fall into the category of unhealthy and diseased.

For this work, I develop what I am calling a theory of *thick studies* which is a multiplex, intersectional study and analysis of the complexities of Black womanhood that includes the reclamation of Black femme sexuality from harmful narratives such as the jezebel and welfare queen tropes. Furthermore, my concept of thick studies embraces and celebrates "ghetto" and Trap aesthetics, and the inclusion of African spirituality and Christian/Southern Baptist/AME religions as important aspects of Blackness. I apply this theorization specifically to the medical and health professions. To do so, I build on Melissa Harris-Perry's (2011) crooked room theory on race and gender stereotypes about Black women and the external and internal impacts they have on our mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing. I utilize Beth Ritchie's Violence Matrix about "the tangled web of structural disadvantages, institutionalized racism, gender domination, class exploitation, heteropatriarchy and other forms of oppression that locks the systematic abuse of Black women in place" (Prison Culture 2012, par. 10) to create a theory that reflects how Black women's complex, multi-layered social experiences may have various impacts on our health and wellbeing. I utilize Tressie

McMillan Cottom's work in her recent text *Thick: And Other Essays* (2019) in which she defines thick as, among other things, "a body of politic . . . with contradictions and nuances and humanity and blackness (because blackness is humanity)" (32). I also incorporate Mikki Kendall's *Hood Feminisms* (2020), where she draws attention to the problematic practices of the modern feminist movement's failure to support marginalized women and to integrate issues of race, class, and sexual orientation, to draw attention to and incorporate the discussion of class in relation to the discussion of Black women's knowledge and health. I use these Black feminists' works to engage in, challenge, and build on Black feminisms' seeming lack of interrogation of Black women with bigger bodies, to critique fat studies, and to develop a Black feminist theory that examines the lives of Black thick women. I utilize thick studies to develop a Gender Race Weight Matrix, described in more detail later in this chapter, to map out our experiences.

A brief note about terminology: Throughout this work, I will be putting the words "overweight" and "obesity" in quotations because they have been used in society to connote disease and are perceived to carry stigma for people that are not thin. These words also medicalize human diversity (Wann 2009). The terms "fat" and "fatness" will also be in quotations. The term "fat" is used by many fat-positive scholars and activists to reclaim the word and combat stigma (Wann 2009). However, the fat studies movement has been critiqued for its white-centered perspectives leading to Black and Brown scholars—myself included—feeling excluded and finding it difficult to identify with the movement (Collins 2002). The words "healthy" and "unhealthy" will also be in quotations because the measure of health is a social construct and differs from body to body (Metzl and Kirkland 2010).

Black Feminisms and the Thick Black Woman's Body

In Jennifer Nash's (2019) definition of Black feminisms she states,

> I treat black feminism as a varied project with theoretical, political, activist, intellectual, erotic, ethical, and creative dimensions; black feminisms is multiple, myriad, shifting, and unfolding. To speak of it in the singular is always to reduce its complexity. . . . I treat the word "black" in front of "feminism" not as a marker of identity but as a political category . . . black women as intellectual producers, as creative agents, as political subjects, and as "freedom dreamers" even as the content and counters of those dreams vary. (5)

As Nash (2019) defines Black feminisms, my project is rich and varied, utilizing multiple approaches and layers. I reflexively engage with Black feminist works as I insert my own experience as a Black girl, now woman, who is thick and who has struggled with my own skin-color and body size. I insert my own experience not only as a Black feminist approach and methodology, but as a creative and agentic exercise as a "freedom dreamer" (Nash 2019). I advocate for the freedom for Black women in "bigger" bodies who do not find themselves living stuck in the term "fat" as it is defined and theorized by fat studies scholars and who are also living with the ways in which society stereotypes our Blackness, our thickness (Cottom 2019), and our "unruly" bodies (Shaw 2006), causing us to feel a certain discontent in the way that we exist.

Black feminist scholars have provided a historical analysis about how Black women's bodies have been objectified and oppressed (Harris-Perry 2011; Ritchie 2012; Strings 2019). For example, Black feminist Hortense Spillers (1994) writes about the historic dehumanizing treatment of Black women, how they were and are seen and treated, and the "interiorized violation of body and mind" (68). She discusses the site of the Middle Passage as a process of *ungen-*

dering, where Black bodies were erased of past social gender identities and made into "flesh." She introduces flesh as a way to merge a contemporary focus on the body as a venue of gendered actions and its ghastly commodification under enslavement that lingers in and at multiple levels that define contemporary Black life. Spillers's work provides Black feminists with the grounding to think about how race and gender are imbricated in each other. Hers and the intersectional approach of other Black feminists examining Black women's lived experiences based on socially constructed identity markers including race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and others have been carefully documented (Combahee River Collective 1983; Crenshaw 1990).

However, one under investigated category of Black women's experiences is the way Black women with bigger bodies have had to navigate our colonial and patriarchal societies. To date, the literature on Black "fat" bodies has been largely about the mammification of Black "fat" women's bodies, as big breasted nurturers and asexual property, and how they have never been seen as beautiful or worthy of admiration in society (Collins 1991; Spillers 1994; Harris-Perry 2011). Pulling for example from Andrea Elizabeth Shaw's 2006 work, *The Embodiment of Disobedience: Fat Black Women's Unruly Political Bodies*, Black "fat" women's bodies have always been seen as "unruly," "out of place," and worthy of rejection and dehumanization.

A few Black feminist scholars have theorized at the intersections of gender, race, and weight, including Tressie McMillian Cottom's theorizing in her 2019 book, *Thick: and Other Essays* and Sabrina Strings's (2019) work on the ways race science was historically used to tie "fatness" and Blackness together. Andrea Elizabeth Shaw, however, has also gone more in depth about the intersections of "fatness," Blackness, and the female body in relation to Western aesthetics standards. Shaw defines "fat" in her work as deviance and "unruly" to Western and many postcolonial cultures, used to marginalize large Black women, not only favoring slenderness but whiteness as a highly privileged physical commodity and standard of beauty (2006, 128). She states, "While many scholars working in

literary and cultural studies have written about the body, very few have addressed fatness as a central physiological feature, and even fewer have focused on representations of the fat black woman. This project begins to fill that vacuum with an interdisciplinary approach to assessing the textual and cultural significance of the fat black female body" (128). Cottom (2019), too, writes about desirability, Blackness, and thickness in relation to Western beauty standards. Building on the work of Shaw and Cottom in particular, I add to and develop an interdisciplinary approach to examining the textual and cultural assessment and treatment of larger Black women's bodies including in medical spaces.

Thick Studies

"I hope we build a body politic so thick with nuance and humanity and blackness (because blackness is humanity), that no black woman public intellectual has to fix her feet ever again to walk this world" (Cottom 2019, 32). This quote by Cottom deepened my interest in the term *thick* as a metaphor and to propose an examination of Black "fat" women using a thick lens. Cottom engages in levels of thick analysis and explores how the term "thick" kept showing up for her as a Black woman, not only in terms of her physicality but even in her thinking and writing as an academic. For example, Cottom states, "My writing has a high body count, as the kids say" (27). In stating that her writing has a high body count, Cottom is making a connection not only to the actual word processing count of her writing but also to the ways in which her and other Black women's sexuality has been stigmatized, and in so doing she reclaims the welfare queen and jezebel tropes. According to Patricia Hill Collins (2004), these tropes have been harmful misrepresentations, stereotypes, and generalizations of Black women used to justify their maltreatment and marginalization. These tropes have been used specifically to justify Black women's enslavement, medical abuse, and forced sterilization for government programs, along with countless other cruel acts (Roberts 2014; Washington 2006).

A thick analysis/study therefore acknowledges and celebrates the shifting and unfolding of Black feminine sexual agency in a society that frowns upon and inflicts reproductive and social violence on Black women with a "high body count," that is, Black women who unapologetically reclaim and embrace their sexuality without regard to the negative stereotypes society attaches to their bodies (Roberts 2014; Washington 2006). A thick analysis provides space to examine how Black women historically and contemporarily have rejected the negative connotations associated with tropes applied to Black women and their bodies as well as have reclaimed those tropes for their own use. This includes the welfare queen trope and notions of Black women being dependent on food stamps, wearing long weaves, and engaging in so-called "ghetto" culture (Hannerz 1969); the jezebel trope used to enact violence on Black women who embrace their sexuality (Collins 2004), including those women with bigger bodies. My analysis sees Black culture as rich and thick in the way that Carole Boyce Davies in her 2002 book, *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*, writes about as she quotes Charles Nero to identify aspects of Black culture that are normally seen in a negative light but which should be celebrated—"capping, loud-talking, the dozens, reading, going off, talking smart, sounding, joining (jonesing), dropping lugs, snapping, woofing, styling out, and calling out of one's name" (230). All these ways of reading and engaging with Black culture are thick and often directed at dismantling dominant or pretentious discourses around Black people, our bodies, and our lived experiences.

A thick analysis functions similar to Nash's definition of Black feminisms, shifting, unfolding, and unpacking the notion of living in the complexities of gender and race as well as the analysis of weight. A thick analysis takes a deeper and more complex interrogation of marginalized categorization, particularly when Black women are forced to engage with governmental, medical, and social institutions. It espouses that Black women live deeply complex lives, that they can be and do many things at once—embrace "ghetto" culture, listen to Trap music, have a high body count, be intellectual,

wealthy, spiritual, all at the same time. We can be and do all these things, not fitting into societal boxes, "oozing out" because a thick analysis/study oozes out and embraces complexities.

Black Thick Women's Encounter with the Medical Field

In my work and in the application of what I have outlined above as thick studies, I am interested in examining specifically Black thick women's encounter with medicalized institutions particularly in the US. In 1995, William Dietz published the results of a case study featuring an "obese" seven-year-old African American girl living in a single female-headed household. The child's family consistently did not have adequate resources for food throughout the month. This encounter led to the so-called discovery of the relationship between the rise in "obesity" and the rise in hunger (Dietz 1995). However, "her blood pressure was normal. . . . Aside from her obesity, the remainder of [the African American girl's] physical examination was unremarkable. A urinalysis showed no glucosuria" (766). Glucosuria is glucose in the urine caused by elevated blood glucose levels, most commonly due to untreated diabetes mellitus. Glucose in the urine would have been an important indication of "obesity" to the physician. Medically, diabetes and "obesity" go hand in hand. As Dietz indicated, the young girl was considered medically "obese"; however, her health was "unremarkable." Dietz saw this young Black girl's body as diseased, labeled her body "obese," unruly, and out of control due to his view of "healthy," even though his physical examination showed her body to be unremarkably healthy. What he saw (a young Black "fat"/thick girl whom he knew to be poor) about her spoke louder to him than his own test results; William Dietz's Western Eurocentric view of health saw her Black "fat" body and deemed her diseased.

Not only did he examine her healthy body and deem her "diseased" due to her weight; he made a connection between her

socioeconomic status and her weight, something he defined as the "Hunger-Obesity Paradox," which evolved into the "Food-Insecurity-Obesity Paradox." Dietz defined the paradox:

> Both hunger and obesity occur with an increased frequency among poorer populations in the United States. Because obesity connotes excessive energy intake, and hunger reflects an inadequate food supply, the increased prevalence of obesity and hunger in the same population seems paradoxical. Although a variety of environmental, social, behavioral, or physiologic mechanisms could cause both problems independently, an alternative possibility is that hunger and obesity are causally related. The following case report supports this hypothesis. (1995, 766–67)

This theoretical exploration takes Dietz's (1995) medicalization and pathologization of this young Black girl as its starting point to investigate the consequences of physician bias in these processes. Following Dietz, research such as behavioral health science, nutrition, dietetics, and "obesity" research found that food insecurity and "obesity" continues to be strongly and positively associated with women (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2018; Dietz 1995; Franklin et al. 2012; McIntyre et al. 2003: Dinour, Bergen, and Yeh 2007; Wilde 2007). Low-income, minoritized ethnic populations, and female-headed households exhibit the greatest association for food insecurity and "obesity" (Franklin et al. 2012). According to this theory, most households with these backgrounds are often eligible for food assistance programs; Black female-headed households fall directly into this category (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2016; Dietz 1995; Franklin et al. 2012; McIntyre 2003: Dinour, Bergen, and Yeh 2007; Wilde 2000; Kaiser 2004). Dr. William Dietz served on the 1995 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee and, in 1998, was elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. He is the author of more than 200 publications of scientific literature and the editor of five books. Dietz's theory targets Black single mothers, pathologizing that these households are suffering from a poverty-stricken

path that explains the high rates of "overweight," "obesity," "unhealthiness," and the extreme racial "obesity" disparity among Black women and girls. Furthermore, his theory contributes to scholarship and miseducation in the social science health field, contributing to a legacy of mistrust, misdiagnosis, experimentation, and deviant health pathology of Black girls and women.

I mention the Dietz example and the Hunger-Obesity Paradox to demonstrate how false deficit narratives about Black women and girls regarding "health" are sustained and furthered within medical spaces and "health" and "obesity" literature. This narrative has influenced and impacted the ways in which physicians and medical staff see bigger Black women and girls in relation to "health," but, most importantly, these deficit theories and narratives have harmed and can harm internal debates that Black women may already silently battle as we try to stand up straight in societies' crooked rooms (Harris-Perry 2011) and how we might even see ourselves.

Growing up in the mid-1990s, around the age of seven, I experienced a visit (a few visits) to the doctor's office that will be forever ingrained in my childhood memory. Since I can remember, "weight" has always been a struggle for me. Growing up, it was just my mother and me. Though I know that had to be very difficult for her, I couldn't have imagined it any other way. She worked a lot, so I was often at my grandparents' house (which, at the time, I wasn't always happy about, because I always wanted to be with my mom, but now that I'm older and they are no longer here, I appreciate that time). I always had everything I needed, including food; I don't recall times of food insecurity (if there was, my mom did a great job of hiding it). She made "too much" money for any federal assistance programs, so I never recalled us being on any food assistance.

The clearest memory I have about my weight is in doctor's offices when I was a child. I remember being elementary school age going to regular doctor's office checkups. I was always in the doctor's office for my allergies; however, my weight always seemed to pop up in the topic of discussion during doctor visits. I remember the doctor standing there in a long white coat holding up a black and white chart with

black lines and slopes on it (children's weight chart/BMI calculator child). He would draw a thick blue dot way off the chart way away from the rest of the slopes and lines and look at my mom and look at me and say, "You see this dot right here, this is you, you're way over here, way off the chart." This was years ago, so I do not remember verbatim what was said, but I know his long speech about me being off the chart ended in a physical activity discussion and a "watching what I eat" conversation with my mom. I remember toward the end of those conversations I would be crying. Oftentimes, my mom would be as well. As mentioned, I don't remember the doctor's words verbatim, but what I do remember is how his words made me feel, a feeling that I still struggle with to this day. That was the first time I remember the feeling of being an "Other," not like the rest, "too big," "too much," "something that needed to be fixed, to be like the rest." I mean, of course, some kids my age had mean things to say about my weight here and there, but I mean they were kids, they were my age, what did they know?

But that interaction changed the game for me. I believe from then on out I paid closer attention to negative things that anyone had to say about my weight: classmates, family members, my mom's friends, anyone—this encounter intensified my uncertainties. I mean this was a professional, a doctor, he had to be right, right? I remember my mother scrutinizing me "when I ate too much." I remember being embarrassed to eat around her or anyone. I remember going on a lot of walks and being on "diets" and being restricted from foods at a young age (this may have foreshadowed moments in my adulthood of binge eating on greasy and sugary snacks, then having so much internal guilt to rush to the nearest toilet to throw up every piece of chunked-swirled sugary snack that I just threw down my throat). I remember being teased a lot in elementary and middle school. I grew up in Oxnard, California, and I was often the only Black student, or at most one of two of the Black students, in my classes. Not only was I either the only or one of the only Black students but I was a "fat" dark skinned girl. I also remember being well aware of stereotypes at an early age. I remember making sure I was always "the nice girl," making sure I was always

super nice and smiling. Making sure people saw me as less threatening so I wouldn't be called "Shanaye-naye," or "Aunt Jemima"—associated stereotypes of Black women in the '90s (loud, "ghetto," "too much," "too big"). I was often called those terms anyway.

Anti-Blackness, anti-fatness, and misogynoir were true to my experience growing up in a southern California suburb, which portrays to the world and people living in it, that it is the epitome of health, Baywatch beach bodies, and Hollywood dreams (at least it felt that way in my child's mind).[2] I ran away from California to my HBCU Black Mecca on the East Coast, only to find out as I enter my 30s that California, the place that I felt did not welcome my big Black female body, was named after a "robust" Black woman, Queen Califia.[3]

My lived experience aligns with Dietz's patient, and we are probably around the same age. Black adult women in the US live the legacy of the medical encounter, and this encounter (between Dietz and the young girl) is a poignant example of how Black women have lived their bodies as deemed/labeled as excessive, diseased, "out of control," and "too much" in the US for centuries. Black bodies have historically been pathologized as deviant in "health" and medical fields (Washington 2006; Hogarth 2017; Driggers 2019). This cycle is not only problematic for the mental and physical "health" of the individual but also for any real and true efforts of closing racialized "health" disparity gaps. "Fatness" is not a characteristic of Blackness. Until Blackness and the negative connotations of "fatness" are seen separately, continued stereotypes, ideologies, beliefs, and prejudice will impact our very existence. The issue with Dietz's (1995) paradox is that it operates under and within false deficit misinformed notions of "fatness," Blackness, and stereotypes of government dependence. The paradox further medicalizes and pathologizes Blackness as deviance and "fatness" in Black women as something that needs to be cured or fixed. The false deficit paradox also operates under the false notions and stereotype of the welfare queen by implying that poor Black single mothers on government assistance are part of a legacy of a cycle of insufficient resources to feed their children, and, because of that, this explains high "obesity"

rates of Black women and girls; therefore, because they are "obese" or "overweight," they live a life of further disease and illness. This stereotypical association of "fatness" and Blackness being linked to disease is a false narrative that is believed throughout pockets of society including medical spaces. This association of "fatness" and Blackness has a historical undertone and is extremely problematic and harmful to contemporary Black lives.

Because of racist, sexist science, white supremacy, racism, misogynoir, economic prejudice, and stereotypes, Black women are continually told the message that they are, in general, an "unhealthy" population, more prone to disease, and that their bodies are suffering from a medical condition that they should and need to fix. This burden comes with impact. The purpose of this theoretical exploration is to investigate the gender, race, weight intersecting experiences of Black women as it pertains to medical and social settings. My first recollected intersecting experience of my gender, race, and weight was at the doctor's office of me being othered and "off the charts," then, walking back into society with the same perception of how to see myself. I know that I am not the only Black woman/girl that has felt this way, and so I want to tell our stories.

Feminist and "fat" studies scholar Laura Brown's 1983 article, "Women, Weight, and Power," highlights how living in a "fat"-phobic society creates oppressive treatment, therefore creating a "fat" oppressed identity that perpetuates self-hate and pain. These social ideologies carry extremely negative and harmful effects and impact on individuals living and existing amongst "fat" oppressed identities. Brown (1983) states that, "[t]here are few girls and women of any age or culture raised in white America, who do not have some manifestation of the concerns . . . distortion of body image, a sense of 'out-of-control' in relationship to food, addiction to dieting, binge-ing, or self-starvation. . . . I hesitate, as a feminist, to see it as a form of true internal psychopathology. It is, however, a serious source of pain and self-deprecation for women . . ." (61). Brown's theorizing resonates deeply with my own experiences, which provoke me to want to provide space for those who have been harmed or even

know someone who has been harmed by racially contoured fatphobia.

I am sure my experience is not isolated. For example, Black feminist Sabrina Strings (2015) examined how "the medical and popular discourse about obesity and black women is largely a reproduction of the trope of the diseased black woman that has been used throughout American history" (108). In her 2019 book, *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia*, Strings examines "fatness," Blackness, and the female body. Her research shows that anti-fat attitudes originated not with medical findings, but with Enlightenment-era beliefs that overfeeding and "fatness" were evidence of "savagery," racial inferiority, and justification for slavery. Strings also focuses on one of the most influential images during this time that linked Black femininity, "fatness," and deviance: the image of Saartjie Baartman who was marketed as the "Hottentot" Venus. Baartman was an African woman who was publicly sexually violated and put on display in early nineteenth-century Europe as an example of the genetic differences between Africans and Europeans, specifically those relating to Black women's "deviant sexuality" (Collins 1990; Washington 2006).

In society during that time, Baartman's body epitomized the intersection of femininity, "fatness," and Blackness. Her presence during this time was a symbol of Black femininity that worked to solidify the image of the Hottentot as "fat" (Strings 2019). Baartman's body image also helped to construct "fatness" as intrinsically Black, and as an implicitly off-putting form of feminine embodiment in the European scientific and popular imagination (Strings 2019; Forth 2012; Shaw 2006).[4]

In her 2014 book, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, Dorothy Roberts unmasks the US's repeated abuse of Black women's bodies, from slavery's economic investment in Black women's fertility to government and medical programs that strongarmed thousands of Black women receiving government assistance into being sterilized as late as the 1970s and 1980s. Roberts conveys how the stereotype image of the welfare queen as

a lazy, "fat" Black woman living off of taxpayer's money has been interlaced into white America's view of Black women. She explains how this stereotype has impacted government policies about Black women's reproductive decisions and demonstrates how government plans to alleviate poverty included the medical requirement of birth control implants as guidelines for receiving government assistance.

These experiences mentioned above, including my own, are akin to what Black feminist Melissa Harris-Perry in her book, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America* (2011), refers to Black women experiencing a crooked room. She writes, "African American women are standing in a room skewed by stereo-types that deny their humanity and distort them into ugly caricatures of their true selves. As they struggle to find the upright in this crooked room, they are beset by the emotional, physiological, and political consequences of race and gender shaming. This shaming has tangible, even disastrous consequences" (29). This quote powerfully details the multilayered and complex external and internal battles of Black womanhood, expressing the mental, emotional, and physical harm and repercussions of navigating crooked rooms. I believe physical and mental consequences are clear when we look at Black-white health disparity statistics. Harris-Perry documents various psychological studies of tainted perceptions and decision-making that can arise in these metaphorically unevenly shaped environments, and she then uses them to illuminate the struggles Black women face at the intersection of race and gender stereotypes and the mental and physical struggles that affect our health from these crooked rooms.

Harris-Perry explores the complicated cultural myth of "the strong black woman" and "the angry black woman" exposing the mental and emotional impact that these stereotypes have had on Black women (2011, 215). She states, "Hateful stereotypes are the tools that build the crooked room" (49). She also explores Black women and faith, a layer which is not often discussed regarding "health." In her discussion of faith, Harris-Perry demonstrates how

faith is often a vehicle for Black women to navigate stressful structural circumstances.[5]

The Crooked Room of Medicine (CRoM)

Applying Harris-Perry's theorization of the crooked room to medical institutions and how they operate to cause Black thick women to be so quickly categorized as diseased, I have developed the term the crooked room of medicine (CRoM) to describe the mental, emotional, and physical struggles Black women face at the intersection of race and gender stereotypes/false narratives particularly in medical settings. In the crooked room of medicine and medical settings, Black women have historically suffered and been erased. Stereotypes have historically been the driving force and justification for the treatment of Black women's bodies throughout society. These stereotypes, labeling, and degradation of Black women's bodies were reinforced during the time of Black people's enslavement and have been ingrained into the structure of society. Deborah Gray White (1999) insisted that "African and African American women were not born degraded but rendered so by enslavement" (8). Black feminist Patricia Hill Collins (2000) also demonstrates how Black women historically and contemporarily have had to live and contend with what she calls the matrix of domination, that is, interlocking systems of oppression in terms of race, gender, class, and other social categories. The matrix of domination Collins theorizes is a multidimensional look into experiences of oppression Black women face in four domains: structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal. Building on Collin's work, I am adding the contribution of weight and size to the research and discussion of Black women's health experiences.

For Black women with "bigger" bodies an examination of the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual ramifications of these crooked rooms must also include how "fat" Black women, who live in a gendered, racialized, and fatphobic society, have been oppressed by the medical field even as the field was built on the exploitation of their

bodies. Black people and Black women's bodies have been integral to the success of medicine in the US (Randall 1995; Myles 2013; Byrd and Clayton 2001; Axelsen 1985). Black people and Black women's bodies have been the key sacrificial tool of medical practice and subjectivity (Washington 2006). Take for example the ways in which Marion Simms, hailed as the father of modern-day gynecology, was able to build his career from the experimentation and literal pain and suffering of Black enslaved women. The crooked room of medicine, then, has the impact of silencing patients from their truths, silencing their pain while simultaneously building a career (and continuing false narratives) from such pain, certifying white medicine as truth and "health." These power dynamics are extremely harmful to Black women specifically in these settings.

For example, Dietz's credentialing and positionality in society as a scientist allowed him to pathologize a seven-year-old Black girl's appearance using Western white aesthetics and the misogynoir medical curriculum. He used her body to develop theory and scholarship that would influence the medical field even decades after her examination. Dietz's gendered and racialized observations are common amongst physicians and medical curriculum and conversations, as well as popular culture. This is what Moya Bailey (2016) refers to as misogynoir, or rhetoric that is extremely harmful for Black women's health and livelihoods. Not only did Dietz's medical observation and case study documentation of this Black girl's body further his career; academics and other privileged bodies furthered that documentation as medical behavioral health theory, thereby continuing false notions and racialized and gendered misconceptions of Black women. His study can be seen as negatively contributing to the health of most of all Black women in Western society, from stereotyped misconceptions to medically documented information.

Mikki Kendall, in the chapter "How to Write about Black Women" from her 2020 book *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women That a Movement Forgot*, provides a quick parody or "how to guide" on how Black women are or have been historically and traditionally written about in society. Kendall deserves quoting at length:

First, state your credentials. It's okay to be a woman, but not a Black woman. . . . Make it clear that you are not racist or sexist, you are merely concerned about their plight. What plight? Well, pick one. Or several. Marriage, children, lack of either, too much education, not enough education, welfare, whatever you think will sell. It only matters that you highlight their troublesome natures. Whatever it is, you must be sure to make it clear that they aren't like other women. They are failing to perform in some way that affects the whole of society, even if you can't quite explain how or why their personal lives are public property. Further, rely heavily on the idea of research that shows the problem is a problem. . . . Utilize stereotypes whenever possible, preferably ones that tie into the Mammy, Jezebel, or Sapphire tropes. Describe Black women in ways that play up their sexuality and remove their humanity. After all they are Other. . . . If you are speaking of Black mothers, make it clear that they need guidance, financial support, or salvation. . . . Well, that all depends on whether they work too little and thus are on welfare, or work too much and thus are neglecting their children. . . . Their voices are too loud, too uneducated, or simply too aggressive. They are always angry about something. . . . Write of how you studied them at a safe distance. . . . Contrast them with women of other races. . . . All of it is true because you say it is, and you are the expert in Black women, not any actual Black women. If they are offended by your words, remind them of your credentials and refuse to engage in a conversation with them until they can be less emotional. Point to their tone as a reason to doubt the veracity of their experiences. After all, they are only Black women and thus they know nothing, own nothing, and are worth nothing but what you say they are. (86–88)

Kendall's "how to write about Black women" guide may read as sarcastic and snarky; however, there is truth to her outline, particu-

larly when she points out that credentialing and having a credential makes the one studying or documenting Black women more of an expert than actual Black women themselves (e.g., William Dietz and those that furthered his theory). Kendall points out that when post-slavery philosophy seeks to "uplift the race" by correcting the "bad" traits of poor and working-class Black people, this philosophy conforms to a societal expectation that centers managing the behavior of Black people, largely Black women, and therefore continues to other Black people and Black women as something different and in need of fixing. Using rhetoric such as "falling behind" and "off the charts" to describe Black women describes them as needing to meet a societal standard of so-called normalcy which in fact does not exist.

The CRoM produces conditions that continue to cause Black women to feel bad about themselves and their bodies. This CRoM stems from a history of how Black women have been dehumanized generally and in the medical field, of which people like Dietz and Simms are a part. My theorizing levels a critique at the construction and goings on in this room with the goal of raising awareness about its existence so that Black women can feel better, as well as be treated better, and to advocate for its dismantling. In what follows, I introduce what I am calling the *Gender, Race, Weight Matrix* to demonstrate the ways in which Black women can see themselves and not be beholden to the deficit narrative of the CRoM or any others. In what remains, I also argue for holistic health approaches in the treatment of Black women, espousing the idea that each human being is composed of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions (Lawrence and Weisz 1998; Iqbal 2013). The crooked room and the CRoM affects physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of Black womanhood, as well as produces shame (Harris-Perry 2011) as Black women internalize the narratives of crooked room(s). Therefore, to address this shame, we must have a holistic approach to Black women's health.

The Gender, Race, Weight Matrix and Holistic Approaches to Black Women's Wellbeing

To apply my theorizing of thick studies to an understanding of how Black thick women are oppressed by medical institutions when we try to access care and to our everyday lived realities navigating society and the CRoM, I have created a Gender Race Weight Matrix (see Table 1 below) to map out and highlight the tangled web that large Black women navigate in these spaces. This matrix builds upon Beth Ritchie's Violence Matrix as detailed in her 2012 text *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation*. In *Arrested Justice*, Ritchie examines issues of sexuality, class, age, and criminalization as she examines questions of public policy and gender violence to highlight the extent of physical, sexual, and other forms of violence in the lives of Black women, the various forms it takes, the contexts in which it occurs, and how this violence is at best minimized but frequently ignored. Ritchie maps out these forms of violence against Black women in the form of a charted matrix. I find Ritchie's matrix useful for my own theorizing about Black thick women's encounters with the CRoM for several reasons. First, it provides a detailed analysis of the range, levels, and degree of violence that Black women experience in social spaces and highlights the intertwined and complex web of crooked rooms that Black women navigate as well as the violence done within those rooms. Ritchie's matrix allows her to examine, together and separately, several sites—the intimate household, community, and social sphere—where Black women experience violence. At each level, she specifically focuses on physical assault, sexual assault, and social disenfranchisement. Second, the succinct visual representation of Ritchie's matrix allows me to portray the complexity of the violence done to thick Black women diagrammatically, laying out the distinct complexities of Black women's experiences without diluting them.

Pulling from Ritchie's matrix, I similarly focus on the three levels of intimate household, community, and social/medical sphere. I specifically added the focus of medical spheres to the social level

to indicate the importance of the CRoM and how gender, race, and weight impact how Black women have violent encounters in this space. However, instead of focusing on levels of assaults and violence, as Ritchie does, I examine the chronological experiences of Black women (past, present, and future) in tandem with their experience navigating their identities specific to their gender, race, and weight and their experiences in their own bodies as Black women in social and medical spaces.

In applying the matrix, I argue that Black women may suffer from a higher "obesity" health disparity rate compared to other women in the US due to the impacts of systemic oppression, bias, and unequal treatment (Williams and Sternthal 2010; Anderson and Massey 2001; Oliver and Shapiro 2013; Chinn, Martin, and Redmond 2021), and that the CRoM contributes to creating and exacerbating these health disparities. Weight is a symptom of the stress of navigating social ills for Black women. Considerable research links stress to weight and the stress of racism to weight (Cozier, Wise, Palmer, and Rosenberg 2009; Mwendwa et al. 2011). Moreover, excess and fluctuating weight gain is a symptom of living in a racialized gendered society and not a genetic disposition for Black women. Within the matrix, other circumstances interlock with marginalized experiences and therefore also affect "health" outcomes, such as internalized oppression, self-hate, eating disorders, addictions, and so on.

Table 1: Gender Race Weight Matrix

Level	Past (A)	Present (B)	Future (C)
Intimate Household (parents, guardians, household members, family, grandparents, spouses, intimate partners)	Past experience with gender, race, and weight (GRW) and growing up with immediate family Themes: • Past household and generational habits, beliefs, and ideas of GRW	Current experiences with GRW and how past experiences may have impacted the present Themes: • Current coping habits from past experiences • How the past affects current life • Generational health issues or symptoms	Future actions, attitudes, and goals regarding GRW for you and your intimate household Themes: • Breaking cycles arising from past and generational ways of coping with life (e.g., binge eating) to include more holistic (steering away from the word "healthy") and balanced habits
Community (neighbors, neighborhood, residential, school, friends, classmates, community orgs/spaces, community leaders, authority figures, neighborhood friends, work environment, coworkers)	Past community experiences with GRW Themes: • Past community habits, beliefs, and ideas of GRW, Black woman (girl)hood, and "thick" Black woman (girl)hood	Current community experiences with GRW and how the past may have impacted the present Themes: • A community and/or workspace that affirms Black womanhood	Future actions, attitudes, and goals for your community spaces, friend groups, organizations, and networks with GRW Themes: • Future goals, attitudes, and actions to affirm Black womanhood (living in or moving to spaces that affirm) • Affirm "thick" Black womanhood
Social/Medical Sphere (media, social media, social media networks, public spaces, public agencies, social services / government spaces, medical spaces, urgent cares)	Past interactions and experiences with social and medical spaces with GRW Themes: • Past misunderstandings, stereotypes, and miscommunications with medical or social spaces due to being a "thick" Black woman	Current relationship with social and medical spaces regarding GRW and the past's impact on present Themes: • Misunderstandings, stereotypes, and miscommunications with medical or social spaces due to being a "thick" Black woman	Future action, attitudes, and goals with medical and social spaces regarding GRW Themes: • Goals and plans to seek medical care and social spaces (including social media spaces) that affirm or are knowledgeable of Black womanhood experiences • Holistic health considerations

I contend that this Gender Race Weight Matrix can provide researchers and public health needs assessors the ability to critique the crooked room of medicine, the generational impact of crooked rooms, in not just medical but other social spheres, as well as the ability to examine how crooked rooms collide. Within this matrix, a multitude of circumstances exist. Crooked rooms create and compound health disparities and morph people's experiences, creating

the complicated Gender Race Weight Matrix that I am introducing. The CRoM specifically ignores, harms, pathologizes, and Others non-Western standards of human physicality and diversity, mirroring the greater society's stereotyping and rhetoric of gendered, racialized, and fatphobic notions as it pertains to "health."

The heaviness of past generational racialized trauma, in lieu of contemporary lived experiences for Black women, can cause detriment to the mental psyche. If not actively healed or talked about in a healthy manner, mental unrest will show up in the physical form, therefore causing physical heaviness or illness. When added to the heaviness caused by other daily responsibilities/tasks/routines, the heaviness of this trauma can produce a matrix of circumstances. In my conversation with spiritual healer Robin Friend, she states, "dis-ease turns into disease" (pers. comm.).

"*Weighing in*": Reflections on Thickness, Heaviness, and Healing

What I describe in this chapter as thick studies, including my theorizing of the CRoM and the ways in which I lay out the Gender, Race, Weight Matrix, will (a) allow Black women to see themselves and their own bodies, define their own bodies outside of categories of "obese," "overweight," "fat," and even "thick," and see that aspects of health do not align with a number, category, or percentile; (b) allow Black women to reject labels of disease or pathologization to better advocate for themselves in medical spaces; and (c) allow Black women to provide holistic exploration of health that addresses health on all levels (emotional, mental, physical, spiritual), not just physical Western beauty standards or with regard to how they engage with medical institutions. It is my hope that my theorization will show Black women they don't have to, as Cottom quoted earlier states, fix their feet as an adjustment to "an extreme maladaptation" (2019, 24). This theorizing gives Black thick women permission to embrace all parts of themselves while rejecting social standards,

providing the language that helps them embrace all aspects of themselves as whole. This work also holds out hope for future inclusion of all aspects of feminism, Blackness, and health.

Embracing Thick

Pulling from Cottom's thick theorizing, I employ a thick methodology, that is, an entangled, intersectional, interdisciplinary, layered, and interlocking way of theorizing, and engaging those Black women with a high body count—Black women from all walks of life, ethnicities, cultures, languages, and experiences (Agyemang, Bhopal, and Bruijnzeels 2005). In this work, I am constantly reminded of Nash's (2019) definition of Black feminisms and the "shifting and unfolding" of Black women's experiences. The heterogeneity of Black women's experiences therefore requires an interdisciplinary methodology and multiple ways of theorizing Black women's experiences. By thick, I am referring to when you are in the thick of things and you can't breathe because life is throwing every curve ball possible that it can throw at you. I'm talking about that thick. When life punches you in the stomach and you finally raise up to breathe after being down so long with no breath, but as soon as you raise up a little to catch a little air, life socks you in the stomach again. I'm talking about that thick, that kind of weight. Heaviness. Weight. The type of crooked room thickness that forces Black women to try to fix ourselves in ways that are not even comfortable to us. "Dis-ease turns into disease." The type of thickness that makes Candice Benbow proudly proclaim that "My lemonade has vodka in it" (2017); well, Candice Benbow, my lemonade has Hennessy in it! (Cheers!).

For me, Cottom's recounting of her story in *Thick* isn't just another individual account but another example of the bigger social issue that I'm making efforts to highlight—the detriment of social categorization and comparing bodies and how Black women and girls feel the need to always have to "fix" themselves to fit into a category or crooked room. There is an impossibility to this—a futility.

Cottom also explains how she was born with a slight birth defect in her feet that affects the way she walks. With a lot of training from her mom yelling "fix your feet" and internalized heightened attention, she adapted a habit to "fix her feet." She also applies this analogy to Black women always having to fit into social standards. Cottom explains that fixing her feet was an "extreme maladaptation" (25).

Like Cottom (2019), I engage with the levels of thick and how thick kept showing up for me as a Black woman. Like Cottom, this work started because I kept noticing how my body was showing up in the world in relation to how my body was treated, not just socially but in medical spaces as well. When I am engaging with the word "thick," I am also talking about generational burdens that Black women carry and drag along through life that are not often discussed. Black women face not just social ills, but the actual weight/heaviness and burden that we carry. The type of thick and heavy baggage that Erykah Badu sings about in her 2000 hit "Bag Lady." She was singing about dropping all that weight and heavy baggage.

The type of thick that doesn't fit into a box; it oozes out on the sides. The type of thick you can't breathe in because you're in the in-between of past and present. I can't breathe because I'm in the diaspora and what that means for my body and women who look like me. No matter in what space my Black female body shows up, I can't breathe, be comfortable, or be my true authentic self without being stereotyped or poorly treated due to being in the in-between of what my body represents in the diaspora. Being in the in-between the oppressive historical treatment of "fat" Black women's bodies and contemporary Black maternal death. Being in the in-between of refusing the term "fatness," refusing the label "obesity," and being me, especially in the medical crooked room where I can't "fix" myself because they want to do it for me. I also can't breathe because I'm always telling myself to "fix" myself. Fix how I walk, fix my stomach—hold it in, "not too tight you'll look constipated," fix your hair that might be too much, fix the piercings on your face that might be too much for a Black woman, they may get the wrong idea. "Fix

how you talk. They are going to pay you more attention if you use the right words . . . . Are you sure you used this word right?" Fix my clothes; a "big" girl in "sloppy" clothes, even expensive "sloppy" clothes, is never attractive. Fix my tone— "too loud too loud—stop yelling."

Also, when I am engaging in the word thick, I'm talking about the '90s to contemporary music video thick—the thick that is comfortable and not. The thick that is not "fat" but does not fit in with "thin." The thick that needs to be fixed and shaped. The thick that you have to hold your stomach in *gasps for air* . . . there you go . . . . The thick that you gotta do more sit ups and squats to fit in. The thick that needs to be fixed and reshaped to attempt to fit into spaces. This highlights the internal mental battle conversation that Black women go through when we are and aren't thick (Hughes 2021).

The Embodiment of Heaviness

In addition to physicality, the term thickness can be applied to the embodiment of the thickness of the unseen weight of the heaviness of racialized-gendered contemporary and historical trauma. I recently talked with a Black woman who is an herbal spiritualist healer and reiki practitioner, Robin Friend, who told me that when she says, "I wish you love and light," she is referring to not only light as in light versus dark, but light versus heavy. That stuck with me because I was at a time in my life where I felt so heavy. She states, "We often think of the opposite of light as dark, although an easier concept in terms of energy is light versus heavy. Throughout the human experience we encounter an array of energies that spark emotions. Once we become familiar with our right to choose which energies we want to carry it becomes much easier to distinguish between the light or the heavier loads" (Robin Friend, pers. comm.).

I argue that weight is in part a symptom of social and structural oppression regarding Black women's health. Stress from societal structural oppression can cause weight gain/loss; therefore, weight can be a symptom rather than a genetic racialized gendered identity

or deficit disease (e.g., hypertension, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease) framed as Black health issues. Research shows racism affects stress; therefore, racism is a public health crisis, especially for Black women, and the effects of navigating such space for Black women has been passed down for generations (Afua 2000). Therefore, I also argue that the above matrix details possible circumstances where Black women come to embody (generational) heaviness which can impact their health and weight. The mental ramifications that our foremothers had to endure within colonized spaces more than likely caused traumatic stress that has been passed down from generations to generations. As previously mentioned, stress attacks the body and manifests as disease. Imagine the detriment that enslavement did to the psyche of an enslaved woman, which was then passed down to Black women in the Reconstruction era, then to Black women during Jim Crow, the War on Drugs, and mass incarceration. That is a lot of heaviness. Therefore, trauma has been passed down for generations, becoming intergenerational trauma (Grand and Salberg 2016, 11). What does that do to the physicality of the Black woman's body and the contemporary health of Black women as a collective?

I argue that this trauma becomes heavy emotionally and oftentimes manifests into physical heaviness, i.e., weight—what I argue to be the embodiment of heaviness. Shantrelle P. Lewis's 2021 Netflix documentary, *In Our Mothers' Gardens*, celebrates the strength and resiliency of Black women through the complex relationship between mothers and daughters. The documentary also pays homage to Black maternal ancestors with discussion of generational healing for Black women, as well as Alice Walker's book of the same name. We are the walking experience of our past and present (ancestral past, past hurts, emotions, mental thoughts, and baggage). Many of us are the walking embodiment of heaviness. We are not diseased or unhealthy, and if we are, it is not because we are deviant in socialized eating and other habits, but because our bodies are producing symptoms of existing in a colonized space.

Holism and Healing Not to "Fix Feet"

My project is not about Black women "fixing their feet" but about Black women healing. In Evans, Bell, and Burton's 2017 book, *Black Women's Mental Health: Balancing Strength and Vulnerability*, they expand on the notion of healing and what that means for Black women: "the term healing is purposefully chosen as a component of the model because 'health' cannot occur without it. Health is not something one has or does not have; it is a constantly evolving process. Black women are in a perpetual state of healing from specific experiences of trauma such as abuse and degradation as well as from global experiences of racism, sexism and economic disenfranchisement" (6). I argue for holistic health especially regarding Black women's health. Applied to healthcare, holism is the art and science of caring for a person in a way which considers all aspects of their body, mind, spirituality, and emotional state in relation to "[other] individuals, the environment, or populations, either separately or in various combinations" (Lawrence and Weisz 1998; Iqbal 2013). The idea that each human being is composed of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions is not new. Supported and researched through disciplines ranging from physics to medicine to spiritualism, holism is the belief that a person is composed of several different aspects, and each aspect interrelates with others (Dale 2009). My hope for this theoretical exploration and critique of the CRoM is to make an intervention to sustain Black women at all levels of the matrix and to expand the meaning of health, including to consider spiritual health which is often left out of the considerations of western European medicine.

The knowledge that Black women have is important to this work. *My experience as a Black woman has shown me that navigating through colonized space requires a bundle of resources for the mental psyche alone. I know too well what it feels like to feel heavy and weighed down by burdens and circumstances that feel out of control, and you feel you can't get a hold on so all you can do is stress eat and cry. I know how heavy it feels to be in the "thick" of things and how*

the weight of it takes a toll on your body. I'm too familiar with this heaviness, eating to fill a hole, eating to numb the pain, not knowing that I too was carrying generational heaviness. In doing this work, I have given myself permission to lay it all out there, to dump this heaviness and never have to pick it up or continue to pass it along to the next generation again. I want the same for other Black women. Black feminisms and holistic healing centered in Black feminisms are tools that give Black women their power back, allowing them to feel control in thick, layered, and complex crooked rooms. Love and light (light vs heavy).

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Notes

1. This chapter is dedicated to Ms. Tracy Espinoza and other Black women whose names we may or may not know and who have suffered from the CRoM. We love you all.

2. Moya Bailey (2016) refers to misogynoir as rhetoric that is extremely harmful for Black women's health and livelihoods.

3. Writer and activist of the African Diaspora, Bridgett Boakye in her March 24, 2019 article in Face 2 Face Africa wrote, "You probably didn't know that California was named after a black queen." Montalvo's island of California was named after its Queen, Califia, who is said to have been a beautiful black Moor and pagan. Boakye writes that this island was populated by black women who lived in the way of the Amazons. Boakye references Montalvo's description, who states, "'They had beautiful and robust bodies and were brave and very strong'" (Boakye 2019, para. 3). It was said that Queen Califia captured the imagination of many around the world, especially that of Spanish explorer Hernán Cortés who would come to explore and name the state of California. Historian John William Templeton writes that "'Califia is a part of California history, and she also reinforces the fact that when Cortes named this place California, he had 300 black people with him'" (Boakye 2019, para. 5) Famed African American actress Whoopi Goldberg depicted Queen Califia in the Disneyland Film, Golden Dreams (2001). There is a seven-foot-high panel of Califia with her Amazons at the Mark Hopkins Intercontinental Hotel in San Francisco. There is also another depiction of Califia on the fourth floor in the Senate Rules Committee Hearing Chamber in Sacramento titled, The Naming of California. To be a thick Black woman that grew up in California and not know this history has been wounding on so many levels.

4. Saartjie Baartman is also a well-known example of the exploitation of a Black woman's body; even after her death, Bartmann's genitals were displayed in a Paris museum until the 1970s. Even after her death, her body was not her own and was used for the science of race distinctions.

5. Unfortunately, oftentimes faith is also a crooked room for Black women, pulling from patriarchal forms of Christianity and anti-Blackness (Harris-Perry 2011, 258; see also Tamura Lomax 2016).

2. A Reimagining of Diversity at Predominantly White Institutions

Institutional Reinscription Using Critical Discourse Analysis and Counterstory

AMILIA N. EVANS

Introduction

From affirmative action to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), the relationship between predominantly white institutions (PWIs) and antiracist practices remains a paradox that may not be solvable, but it stands to be understood when reimagining diversity to subvert the effects of systemic racism. In 2001, I attended a PWI for undergraduate studies, and during my matriculation period, in 2003, the institution saw its highest number of Black students up to that time, enrolling 1,243 Black (on-campus) undergraduate students out of 21,294 total undergraduates, or, put another way, 5.83% of the total on-campus undergraduate population. Within that same year, the institution decided to no longer adhere to affirmative action policies (a set of practices to include those with underrepresented identities, such as race, sexuality, gender, creed, and nationality and to reduce discrimination). As the news circulated, I learned that the institution's justification to dismantle affirmative action was that they no longer had a legal obligation to meet diversity requirements (cmaadmin and Black Issues 2003). The state's attorney general indicated to the institution that its diversity policies were unconstitutional. After student and faculty protests, the institution considered that a reread of federal law may reveal an interpretation to sustain existing diversity initiatives (Copsey and McNeill 2003). At twenty

years old, this was my first encounter with affirmative action and the manifestation of institutional racism.

Most importantly, this situation drew my attention to the government's authority over how the institution operates, and later, I learned about the state governor's involvement in appointing the institution's board members (the institution's leadership). At that time, the governing bodies of my undergraduate institution included all white men: the attorney general, state governor, board members, and university president. This hierarchy represents white dominance in the leadership of state educational institutions and poses a complex obstruction in attempts to enact change for the betterment of the marginalized.

I am a first-generation United States (US) citizen, or a second-generation immigrant, as my parents emigrated from Jamaica. Growing up, I mostly heard stories from my mother about her experience growing up in Jamaica pre-independence from Great Britain. There were no discussions about white supremacy or racism, but I understood racial discrimination existed from history lessons in school, social interactions, movies, and media. My parents always advised my siblings and me to focus on opportunities and not dwell on adversities. Therefore, my undergraduate experience is where I acquired a critical understanding of African Americans and other oppressed groups' political struggles in the US. In other words, I did not learn from taking a course but from discussions with Black peers and the institution's response to racism.

Although my parents emigrated from Jamaica, I am not a first-generation college student. My mother earned a bachelor's degree in Computer Science while married and raising children. I am first-generation to obtain employment in my field of study. When my mother decided to raise her four children as a single parent, her urgency with securing any job outweighed finding a position in her disciplinary field. She struggled to gain entry-level employment in her field. There is a history of discrimination against women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and racial and gender discrimination against Black women. In my attempts

to follow in my mother's footsteps, I sought to earn a bachelor's degree in computer engineering to no avail. I encountered strategies used to limit STEM access to bodies characterized as nonnormative (non-white-male) bodies in the field. Subsequently, I found space in language arts as an English major concentrating on professional writing with a minor in Business. I leveraged my bachelor's degree and maintained a successful industry career in technical communication and even worked with many engineers.

Over fifteen years later, I returned to my undergraduate alma mater to pursue a graduate degree only to question what happened, as there was a significant decline in the institution's Black student population. Black undergraduate students on-campus were now 4.38% of the undergraduate population (898 of 20,501). How can an institution reach record numbers of Black students, engage in diversity work for decades, and realize a decline in Black student enrollment? Black students average +/-5% of the undergraduate population per academic calendar year. I recalled the dismal events surrounding affirmative action back in 2003 and tracked the long-term effects of that decision to a steady decrease in Black student enrollment over the years. This decrease was also attributable to the fact that the institutional leadership was predominantly white and to a history of structural racism such as excluding Black students from admittance into the institution and, when accepted, providing limited access to institutional resources. These numbers led me to become interested in the construction and effects of diversity rhetorics within higher education as a rhetorician and activist in rhetoric and writing.

In this chapter, I contend with PWIs as sites of systemic racism and with the ways in which the institution is shaped through diversity language that reifies this racism and diversity language as racialized language. The PWI, in this introduction, decided to reread federal law to reconsider actionable change toward affirmative action. I argue that language as a circulating discourse constructs institutions, and we can reinscribe institutions by first conducting critical research. Focusing on Black women as integral to social

change, this work intends to open a door for future diversity research that centers and amplifies the voices of Black women as diversity practitioners by interrogating how PWIs operationalize diversity language as a language of racism. Diversity language suppresses the visibility and influence of Black women for PWIs' benefit to maintain an appearance that their institution is not racist nor involved in racism (Ahmed 2012). Also, this work theorizes a new research methodology for the rhetoric and writing field. First, I historicize PWIs' relationship with systemic racism to contextualize the ideologies by which institutions operate and their approach to diversity work. Next, I discuss the role of Black women as diversity practitioners and an approach to reimagining diversity. Lastly, I build a critical discourse methodology to reinscribe institutions toward institutional-level change.

Predominantly White Institutions as Historical Sites of Racism

Predominantly white institutions (PWIs) are historically racist and sustain ideals of white supremacy (Patton 2016). With the history of the US using chattel slavery for over two hundred years as the economic backbone of the nation, today, we continue to bear the effects of the African slave trade through systems of white supremacy and neoliberal ideologies, which include capitalism through the mechanism of systemic racism. The capitalist strategy of violence toward and enslavement of Native and African people fortified white institutional and generational wealth. Capitalism benefits and upholds a white heterosexual, patriarchal, and Christian hegemony. Capitalism is sustainable through white ideologies and rationalities that form a racialized Other to maintain power and wealth by exploiting and committing violence toward Black and Native people. A system to degrade and push these populations to the liminal spaces of society leads to marginalization, barring them from building generational wealth. A long-standing strategy to

keep the marginalized oppressed includes inaccessibility to academic institutions. Throughout history and the present day, the same institutions benefit from the knowledge production of Black people and other people of color.

Historically, PWIs are concomitant with ideologies of white supremacy and neoliberalism. These institutions were built by the hands and labor of enslaved people of African origin on lands belonging to Native peoples. Lori D. Patton (2016) discusses the racist history of PWIs, explaining that the slave trade advanced higher education institutions using the same principles of slavery, instantiating a pedagogy of white superiority. Patton (2016) further explains,

> The convergence of race, property, and oppression is intricately linked to the formation of U.S. higher education. Although early institutions faced significant financial struggle, their leaders quickly connected slave trading to institutional viability. Institutions used slavery for capitalistic gain as they strengthened the establishment of their physical campuses. Moreover, institutions, most led by clergy and businessmen, used their connections to secure land from Native peoples through theft and violence. (320)

I posit that PWIs' racist history permeates institutional entities imbuing all elements with racism that encounter the institution, including language produced by or associated with the institution. Thomas Rickert (2013) coins "ambient rhetorics," arguing that all matter is embodied by and embedded in the world, collapsing the binary of human/nonhuman actants as all matter possesses agency to inform the other. Rickert (2013) states, "we are already so engaged with the world, wedded to it through an infinite number of perceptual, discursive, and material assemblages, that rhetorical action can be understood only as working in and through such assemblages" (213). As language, as discursive matter, intersects with PWIs, it becomes embedded in the institution and embodies the framings of white supremacy. With that framing, we must understand that PWIs

are beholden to descriptors and distinctions that they believe benefit them, like *land-grant* and *diverse*. When associated with PWIs, these descriptors also carry dark and violent histories. *Land-grant* is a classification for academic institutions, and *diverse* is an implicit descriptor as institutions claim DEI efforts.

Predominantly White Institutions as Land-Grant Institutions

In 1862, under the Morrill Act, fifty-seven PWI land-grant institutions received "federally-owned" land distributed to each state to build agricultural and commercial industries through education (Croft 2019). The acquisition story about this land is that the federal government acquired Native people's land through treaty, cession, or seizure (Martin 2001), but counterstories describe this land as obtained solely through unratified treaties and theft (Catwhipple 2020). In 1890, the Morrill Act was amended to extend government funds to nineteen Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); in 1994, the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act granted land for twenty-nine Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) (Croft 2019). This extension of government support to HBCUs and TCUs to redress the discriminatory nature of the 1862 act does not negate that the government granted allegedly stolen land and the financial disparity among institutions that still affects Black people and indigenous tribes. Like many other white institutions, PWIs financially flourished for almost two centuries with an institution inscribed from neoliberal interests. In contrast, HBCUs have limited resources, and Black academics at PWIs continue to succumb to racial violence and limited access (Hardy et al. 2019; Johnson-Bailey et al. 2008; Lee 2018; Squire 2017).

Predominantly White Institutions as Diverse Institutions

Across the US, the experience of pervasive racism at PWIs is commonplace for Black students, faculty, and staff. In 2020, the tripartite of the COVID-19 global pandemic, racial injustices against Black people, and white nationalist organizations involved in domestic terrorism moved many to march in the streets of their communities and major cities across the nation (and the world) against racism. George Floyd's murder, in 2020, at the hands of police set ablaze global protests as the prior incessant killings of Black women, men, and children still awaited justice. The protests became an invocation for US corporate entities to publicly post their shared sentiments on websites and social media to demonstrate solidarity and allyship with those fighting for justice. The echoes of #BlackLivesMatter and #SayHerName reverberated throughout social media platforms.

PWIs also posted diversity statements regarding their intolerance toward racism and their goals expressed in diversity plans. With this urgency to post diversity statements, I question PWIs' attempt to present their institution with a vested interest in a DEI-centric campus environment. Social movements that fight against racial inequities internal and external to the institution draw attention to PWIs' inadequate response to incidents that affect their minoritized communities (Cole and Harper 2017; Davis and Harris 2016; Powell 2004). The current state of society demands a paradigm shift for PWIs, marked by ideologies of white supremacy, from their history of racism to an antiracist future.

PWIs claim DEI-conscious campus climates in their diversity messaging; however, marginalized persons' countless experiences with racism communicate that institutions fail to demonstrate antiracist practices. For decades, higher education researchers and scholars have raised concerns about the ensuing racial inequities and oppression within PWIs (Bonner and Evans 2004; De Welde 2017; Gomez et al. 2011; Lee 2018; Milner 2004). PWIs trumpet their land-grant distinction, and in the same way, they use diversity as

an economically beneficial distinction (Ahmed 2012). Diversity programs suggest that PWIs do antiracist work and support marginalized persons' needs. Conversely, historical accounts of racial violence contradict that PWIs support their Black communities and represent neoliberal rationalities and ideologies of white supremacy (Bell 1995).

Higher education researchers raise awareness of the consistent issues with racial and gender inequities at PWIs and strategies to reduce the effects of racial discrimination and stereotypical thinking as methods toward "moving the needle" on institutional change to improve diversity conditions (De Welde 2017; Myers and Finnigan 2018; Patton 2016). Black graduate students experience stereotypes, threats, silencing, alienation, racial tension, and distrust at PWIs (Bonner and Evans 2004; Milner 2004). Also, faculty of color experience isolation and are disproportionately critical contributors to improving diversity (De Welde 2017; Squire 2017; Collins 2000). Even with a plenitude of diversity strategies, racial and gender inequities persist at PWIs, and the reporting of their diversity progress using campus climate surveys, diversity statements, enrollment reports, and diversity initiatives suggest they are meeting diversity goals.

In "Teaching While Black: Witnessing and Countering Disciplinary Whiteness, Racial Violence, and University Race-Management," Carmen Kynard (2015) expresses her teaching experience when she states

> teaching and learning practices under the hubris of diversity that work to actually block true inclusivity by: coding and lumping historically marginalized groups into one single-massed 'other'; removing group identities, cultures, and political needs from view; obscuring racism, homophobia, and sexism; serving the interests of capital; and amassing add-on content to predesigned forms and models. (9)

The concept of diversity depicts PWIs as engaging in diversity work, promoting full access to the institution, and providing a DEI-supportive campus climate, while they are not.

Systemic Racism as An Impediment to Institutional Change

Critical race theory (CRT) helps to contextualize how PWIs respond to racial concerns. Along with other critical race theorists, Derrick Bell developed CRT as a transdisciplinary methodology that exposes systemic racism and other forms of discrimination in institutions. CRT centers those minoritized by race and amplifies marginalized voices for liberation and social change (Allen 2017). CRT includes several core tenets that elucidate how race and power operate within institutions and the function of CRT to expose the nebulousness of racism within these institutions. CRT (1) explains that racism is a permanent installation in all institutional systems rendering racism as systemic; (2) validates the experiences of historically oppressed groups and offers counternarrative as a method and a methodology to express injustices; (3) exposes that claims of equity and colorblindness are methods to conceal the power and privilege of dominant groups; (4) specifies that racism occurs in concert with other forms of oppression—intersectionality; (5) acts as a transdisciplinary methodology that extends traditional methodologies; and (6) explicates interest convergence to describe white institutions' willingness to get involved with racial justice if beneficial; altruism does not motivate PWIs to act (Allen 2017; Bell 1995).

The CRT tenets characterize how institutions perpetuate systemic racism and provide a framework for engaging in an institutional study on diversity discourse regarding the relationships between language, identity, power, and race. CRT helps to decenter dominant narratives and focuses on generative counterdiscourses that draw on concepts from intersectionality and counternarrative (two CRT tenets). For an institutional change, we must engage in social justice research bolstered with CRT concepts that critique institutional practices for PWIs to redress racial inequities that further oppression. Specifically, an institutional critique to engage research on how PWIs' diversity language perpetuates systemic

racism situates us to reimagine diversity not imbued with ideologies of white supremacy or neoliberal rationalities. Herein, I argue that institutional diversity is imagined through a lens of whiteness.

Diversity Imagined Through a Lens of Whiteness

How institutions use language when communicating about diversity within campus communities and with stakeholders conveys a mainstream (white) imagined diversity. Feminist theorist Sara Ahmed deconstructs diversity discourse within institutions and the implications of how our continued use of diversity language is detrimental to the livelihood of marginalized communities. In *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (2012), Ahmed engages in an institutional study that examines how diversity practitioners and institutional leaders participate in diversity discourse. This work frames white imaginings of diversity and the implications of this rampant imagination. Ahmed identifies frequently used keywords, revealing that institutions obtain value from diversity language.

From Ahmed's work, the "language of diversity" emerges as the language of currency to do diversity work. Ahmed argues that the "language of diversity" can be understood from a marketing context in that "diversity has a commercial value and can be used as a way not only of marketing the university but of making the university into a marketplace" (53)—diversity language is used as a resource. In *Toward a New Rhetoric of Difference* (2014), Stephanie Kerschbaum writes that PWIs often address racial diversity by recruiting diverse bodies. Kerschbaum identifies that diversity has "commercial value" for institutions and exposes the inherent racism at PWIs and their neoliberal orientation to profit through increased diversity as a "commodification of diversity." Kerschbaum states that "[b]y using neoliberal discourses to assign value to diversity and by [sic] obscuring the local and contextualized nature of many intergroup and cross-cultural interactions, such diversity discourses make it difficult to identify and alter systemic practices that legitimate

oppression and disenfranchisement" (39). Kerschbaum argues that institutions commodify differences by marking some bodies as diverse. Bodies are commodified by counting the number of persons and categorizing them into racial-ethnic groups.

The "language of diversity" holds a monetary value for institutional leaders working to maintain the institution's reputation as positive. Ahmed finds that institutions demonstrate a commodification of diversity when wielding racialized diversity language that typifies and quantifies some bodies as diverse. Diverse bodies attract students and stakeholders to have a relationship with an institution, which increases institutions' financial gain. In her discussion, Ahmed posits diversity as reparative work. She argues that institutions use diversity to solve race, racism, and inequality.

Ahmed (2012) examines the "relationship between diversity and institutional whiteness" and "when the language of institutional racism becomes institutional language" (16). Ahmed finds that diversity practitioners are responsible for institutionalizing diversity by putting "diversity" into circulation (through text and recruiting other diversity practitioners), revealing that diversity is not the institution's goal. Diversity becomes the institution's goal when embedded in what the institution is already doing. However, practitioners attempt to implement diversity throughout the entire institution's system while experiencing "brick wall[s]." Ahmed argues that even when institutions establish a diversity office, they reinforce that diversity work must occur through entities to implement diversity into an organizational flow. Diversity is not the institution's goal, which indicates that the "language of diversity" is a language of convenience.

Furthermore, Ahmed discusses "institutional whiteness" in that institutions manage an internal and external image; thereby, an association with the term "diversity" portrays their desired appearance. Ahmed (2012) states, "Diversity becomes about changing perceptions of whiteness rather than changing the whiteness of the organizations" (34). Institutions will speak about diversity without discussing racism to disassociate from attributes of racism. How-

ever, some institutions will accept the use of "race" and "racism" when "diversity [becomes] a method of protecting whiteness" (Ahmed 2012, 147); "Antiracism even becomes a discourse of white pride" (Ahmed 2012, 170).

Ahmed is also interested in how "diversity" is mobilized and obtains routine use as an institutional speech act. When key diversity phrases, such as "we are diverse" or "diverse university," are circulated, "diversity" becomes an object of address. Further explaining how diversity language circulates, Ahmed suggests that the "language of diversity" shapes institutions, and phrases become ritualized language attributing value to "diversity" that aligns with the institution's interests. Ahmed (2012) states,

> A community can take shape through the circulation of diversity. Diversity does not refer us to something (a shared object that exists outside of speech) or even necessarily create something that can be shared. But in being spoken, and repeated in different contexts, a world takes shape around diversity. To speak the language of diversity is to participate in the creation of a world. (81)

The "language of diversity" has a role in constructing institutions. Ahmed notes that although "diversity" connotes difference, practitioners express no evidence of pending actions toward change or justice when the university discourse imbues ritualized diversity language. "Diversity becomes positive as it provides a motive for action that is not based [sic] on compliance. It is proactive, rather than reactive" (Ahmed 2012, 68). Diversity brings about a world we want to be a part of—as "a feel-good politics." "Equity" and "inclusion" are also feel-good words about DEI in diversity discourse. At the same time, "inclusion" expresses an inclusion of people and exclusion of others—the privilege of access changes depending on one's identities. Additionally, Ahmed notes that institutions using the word "global" as in "global citizens" and "global reach" increase their marketability.

After analyzing "diversity" and related terms, Ahmed describes

diversity as a "conjuring trick"; diversity holds different meanings for different people when diversity language is in circulation. In "Strategic Inefficiency" (2018), Ahmed states, "A diversity policy can come into existence without coming into use." This "strategic inefficiency" demonstrates "not just the slowness of an uptake but how that slowness is useful and purposeful"; "inefficiency is beneficial insofar as it supports an already existing hierarchy" (para. 17). The "language of diversity" and the hesitancy to carry out diversity efforts indicate that institutions are "saying" more than "doing" diversity for institutional change.

Also, diversity imagined as producing diversity documents (doing paperwork) forms blockages for diversity practitioners, thereby increasing the distance between diversity goals ("saying") and manifesting actionable change ("doing") (Ahmed 2012, 87). Ahmed found that diversity practitioners often write or contribute to language in diversity statements. As statements are sent out in circulation, the language loses the tenacity of change intended by diversity practitioners. Practitioners circumvent blockages using the "language of diversity" as an already familiar language within institutions to invoke new diversity strategies toward change.

Ahmed and Kerschbaum alert us to how institutions imagine diversity as a resource and the racialization of diversity language. Ahmed calls diversity practitioners to continue in diversity work and researchers to share diversity practitioners' adversity stories as a method of resistance and means of data collection.

Black Women as Diversity Practitioners

In my initial research for this work, Black women emerged as prominent university leaders to support institutional diversity. Although Black women share common identities, their experiences with diversity are not universal, and we should account for shifting perspectives on and experiences with PWIs' diversity discourse. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) explains Black women's plight as historically upholding white institutions. Collins historicizes that Black women

as domestic workers suffered economic exploitation and witnessed dominant power structures while laboring in the white household. They suffered internal conflicts on what it meant to be a good woman and mother as constructed by whiteness while deprived of the privileges to embody these roles. Black women worked in white homes without access to the power and privilege exercised within white households—Collins describes Black women in this predicament as "outsiders-within." Similarly, today, Black women hold diversity leadership positions within PWIs and participate in supporting PWIs' image as diverse. Black women, as diversity practitioners, are not afforded the power to make structural changes at a macro-level. Instead, institutions use the face and labor of Black women to support institutional diversity aims (Ahmed 2012).

Furthermore, I move forward in this work as a diversity activist and as an act of resistance against the continued exploitation of Black women's bodies, marked as diverse for PWIs' benefit (Collins 2000; Ahmed 2012). Ahmed states, "bodies of color provide organizations with tools . . . [to turn] action points into outcomes. We become the tools in their kit. We are ticks in the boxes; we tick their boxes . . . our bodies become targets" (Ahmed 2012, 153). In reimagining diversity, we can center and amplify the voices of Black women in diversity positions and contribute to Black women's standpoint on institutional diversity. Rather than navigating the issues of diversity marked as exploited Black women, Black women can bring forth theoretical interventions to diversity research, understanding that Black feminist thought is powerful and always will be.

Black Feminist Lens on Reimagining Diversity

My goal of reimagining diversity is to decenter whiteness and amplify the voices of the multiply-marginalized to create equitable access in all spaces within PWIs. I posit reimagining diversity from Black imagination to move away from the dark past associated with institutions erected from ideologies of white supremacy and neoliberal rationalities. Black imagination is a method for the oppressed

to reconceptualize an existence extricated from systemic racism (the grim interloper) (Collins 2000; Quashie 2012; Kelley 2002). Kevin Quashie (2012) describes imagination "as the capacity to call one's world into being; it is imagining as an act of deliberateness and self-making" (43). For example, Quashie argues for a Black "quiet" resistance through poetics as an expression of Black interiority that "gestures away from caricatures of racial subjectivity that are either racist or intended to counter racism" (21). It is important to note that reimagining diversity is ongoing work with a multiplicity of reimaginings. The needs of Black people change over time while considering the multiplicity of Black identities and experiences in the changing world around us. As racial concerns emerge, Black imagination can make space for the multiply-marginalized within PWIs.

Before reimagining diversity at PWIs, understanding the rhetorical situation surrounding diversity language is necessary. It requires an institution-level research study that implements a critical discourse methodology to challenge racialized language to understand the linkages between language and power within the sociopolitical context. I proffer a critical discourse methodology with transdisciplinary components to use in scholarly research practices for institutional reinscription.

Applied Theory to Research: Building a Critical Discourse Methodology Toward Institutional Reinscription

In this era, as change agents, we must engage in social justice research that critiques institutional practices, bolstered with CRT and rhetorical concepts, to challenge institutions in redressing racial inequities that further oppression. A critical research approach is salient for emergent rhetorical formations to examine the power and language relationship in institutional discourse. In order to realize institutional change, a reinscribing of institutions

from a rhetorical perspective can close the gap toward dismantling the harm caused by racialized language. This complex context requires a critical discourse methodology to reinscribe institutions toward change ethically. I build a critical discourse methodology as an *institutional reinscription* approach that supports institutional research to address systemic racism from the top down so that macro-level issues permeate the institution to micro-level entities.

Institutional reinscription is a critical discourse methodology that builds on institutional critique theory (Porter et al. 2019) to draw attention to social injustices using a CRT lens combining critical discourse analysis (CDA) and counterstory to understand how institutional discourses are racialized within PWIs. *Institutional reinscription* has a complex conceptual framework that draws on identity theories, theories of power relations, and theories on racialized language to analyze relationships between language, power, race, and identities. *Institutional reinscription* considers the present day's social landscape to address critical issues within PWIs by analyzing institutional discourse and expressing institutional reimaginings through counterstory.

In "Institutional Critique: A Rhetorical Methodology for Change," Porter et al. (2000) argues for restructuring the institution through rhetorical action. Porter et al.'s "institutional critique" theory is over twenty years old. In this era of a heightened visibility of social injustices against Black people, institutional critique is due for an extension to meet the historical context. Institutional critique is "rhetorical practice [for] mediating macro-level structures and micro-level actions rooted in a particular space and time" (612). The foregrounding concepts of institutional critique are institutions as rhetorical and material structures. Porter et al. use a predetermined method to restructure the institution through language, stating, "we believe that constructing institutions as local and discursive spaces makes them more visible and dynamic and therefore more changeable" (621). Porter et al. provide a methodology to use institutional critique for macro-level structural issues located at three research study sites for micro-level action: spaces/places, tech-

nologies, and processes. A tactic of institutional critique to conduct an analysis is "boundary interrogation."

For spaces/places as a study site, boundary interrogation helps us characterize those who are marginalized. When engaging technologies as a study site, institutional critique is concerned with who has access to interact with technologies at the micro-level. Within processes (rhetorical systems), "people within an institutional space talk, listen, act, and confront difference" (Porter et al. 2000, 625). An analysis of processes elucidates the tensions between research participants' interpretations of and interactions with processes. However, Porter et al.'s institutional critique does not include an approach for interpreting power relations and dynamics at the three study sites. Institutional critique is a generic framework for examining the institution's material and rhetorical structures. Methods of analysis are necessary to mobilize a critical discourse methodology to interpret rhetorical formations in institutional discourse.

Institutional critique needs methods that account for the implications of how harmful racialized institutional discourse affects those navigating institutional spaces. With institutional critique having a bounded structure and no form of CDA, researchers can unconsciously restructure institutions from a position of whiteness, engendering systemic racism as an ideological underpinning—reinstantiating racism rather than restructuring using an antiracist rhetorical practice for emergent sites of study. An institutional critique that does not draw on critical race theories and social justice concepts means researchers are susceptible to restructuring the institution with ideologies of white supremacy and reifying violence against minoritized people.

From my Black imagination and standpoint on making institutional change, I posit *institutional reinscription*, a critical discourse methodology, foregrounded with a reinvention of institutional critique theory (Porter et al. 2000) to support the scope and magnitude of institutional research. I extend Porter et al.'s institutional critique with a conceptual framework embedded and embodied with CRT and social justice concepts to interpret power relations and dynam-

ics that emerge from the research. A new institutional critique to build a critical discourse methodology supports the researcher in making ethical considerations that reduce concern for how positionality implicates us in inflicting harm on multiply-marginalized persons.

Institutional reinscription implements a critical discourse methodology that includes two methods to bring us from theory to praxis in a research study: (1) CDA and (2) counterstory. CDA is an interdisciplinary approach for textual analysis and, bolstered with theories of rhetoric, applies a rhetoric and writing disciplinary focus to address the rhetorical structures of institutions: theories of identification (Burke 1969; Crenshaw 1990; Kerschbaum 2014; Ratcliffe 2005); social justice theory (Walton et al. 2019); and theories of racialized language (Burrows 2020)—creating a rhetorical CDA (rCDA). Counterstory (Martinez 2020) is the second method paired with rCDA to express reinscribing the institution. Counterstory responds to rCDA outcomes by focusing on how data violence (Hoffmann 2020) and racialized technologies (Benjamin 2019) enact harm.

A Rhetorical Critical Discourse Analysis

Furthermore, CDA "aims to explicate abuses of power promoted by . . . texts, by analyzing linguistic/semiotic details in light of the larger social and political contexts in which those texts circulate" (Huckin et al. 2012, 107). CDA combined with theories of rhetoric—rCDA—functions to analyze multimodal discourse at specified study sites to reveal unknown sites of concern. rCDA provides a social justice framing to engage the language and power relationship in a large corpus of multimodal institutional discourse (the object of study). rCDA is concerned with three relationship areas for analysis: (1) *language and identity* drawing on theories of identification and intersectionality (Burke 1969; Crenshaw 1990; Kerschbaum 2014; Ratcliffe 2005); (2) *language and power* drawing on social justice concepts of positionality, privilege, and power (Walton et al.

2019); and (3) *language and race* drawing on theories of racialized language (Burrows 2020). Although these are outlined as separate relationships to provide a research flow, we can accept them as fluid relationships as objects and sites of study overlap.

Language and Identity Analysis

First, rCDA is interested in who is affected by institutional discourse and in what ways. Kenneth Burke's (1969) identification, Krista Ratcliffe's (2005) rhetorical listening, Kerschbaum's (2014) marking difference, and Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1990) intersectionality allows for researchers to engage in rhetorical attunement with research participants' multiple identities and those harmed through institutional discourse. These theories help consider how participants' differences in identities result in their experiences with institutional discourse and how research participants also inform that discourse. When analyzing institutional discourse, we must also consider the identities of those involved in circulating the discourse.

CRT (Bell 1995; Allen 2017), with Burke's identification theory, characterizes the inscribing of institutions and the power dynamics that inform institutions' racialized discourse. CRT's interest convergence tenet explains that altruism is not the means of persuasion for institutions to support social justice. Instead, an institution's interests will align with a cause as it finds it beneficial. Burke (1969) contemplates motives for persuasion in rhetoric and argues that action is motivated through identification. Burke claims identification occurs through "consubstantiality." In other words, shared interests (commonalities) motivate us to identify with others. Identification suggests a socially constructed other—a binary between identification and disidentification. A negation to identification, disidentification elucidates the white racial frame that informs instituting social constructs and mapping oppressed groups. Dominant groups engaging in disidentification promote harm and violence to those they other. Burke's identification and CRT's interest convergence tenet express that social justice must be a shared

interest among parties connected to an institution for change to happen. Often, the interest sought out by institutions is a financial benefit necessary to persuade institutions to support equity requests by the multiply-marginalized. Burke's identification confirms the permanence of the ideological clash within institutions, aligning with CRT's tenet that attributes racism as systemic. Tensions within institutions on equity will persist as white bodies in dominant leadership positions maintain common interests that uphold ideologies of white supremacy.

Ratcliffe (2005) and Kerschbaum (2014) argue that Burke fails to discuss differences in identities. Identification without attunement to differences leads to the harmful use of disidentification. In *Rhetorical Listening*, Ratcliffe (2005) argues that Burke's "traditional" identification provides a rhetorical lens that focuses on commonalities (shared interests informed by identity) without much attention to identities. Rhetorical listening requires attunement to identifications and the use of traditional and "postmodern" identification that allows for a dual perspective to "listening." We are often guilty of impervious listening, drawn to commonalities resulting in an unconscious dismissal of difference. Ratcliffe describes disidentification as being "based on faulty identifications [that] demonstrate [sic] why imagination alone is not enough when attempting to understand a person from a different tradition" (62). Ratcliffe (2005) stresses that there are risks in identification where identification wields "symbolic violence" and "risks a blindness to ways of life other than one's own" (59–60). Rhetorical listening is an appropriate methodology in spaces of identification and critique. Through rhetorical listening, we release constraints of binary thinking understanding a both/and in situations concerning positive and negative, commonalities and differences, multiple rhetorical stances (recognition, critique, and accountability), and lived experiences (Ratcliffe 2005, 94–98).

Also concerned with the limitations of Burke's identification, Kerschbaum (2014) examines how institutions' diversity discourse obfuscates difference and wields diversity as a commodity. Ker-

schbaum claims that the current model of diversity subsumes differences. Institutions demonstrate the rhetorical action of identification and disidentification when bodies gain access to the institution but are marked as diverse. Kerschbaum explains that understanding differences instead through relationships leads to ethical diversity practices—marking differences through interactions with people to learn about their identities.

Additionally, Crenshaw's (1990) intersectionality is a pertinent theoretical framing for rCDA to critically understand Ratcliffe's and Kerschbaum's perspectives on identities and differences. Intersectional work (*doing* intersectionality) aims to reimagine how institutions can address multiple forms of discrimination experienced by multiply-marginalized groups according to their identities. Crenshaw describes institutions' avoidance of intersectional work as an "intersectional failure." According to Crenshaw, institutions' intersectional failure extends the time oppressed groups endure various forms of discrimination and stall amendments to equitable change policies. As relations between identities and discriminations emerge in rhetorical work, intersectionality captures an individual's experiences at the junctures to assess the injustices. The plurality of intersecting identities and discriminations is a perspective that makes us aware that experiences with institutional language vary and for us to avoid essentialism, deploy rhetorical listening, and mark differences in rCDA.

Considering the fluidity in rCDA relationships, rCDA necessitates understanding how institutions deploy language in relation to systemic racism and identities. The concepts of identification, differences, and intersectionality (Burke 1969; Crenshaw 1990; Kerschbaum 2014; Ratcliffe 2005) foster ethical research practices and attunement to how violence appears in institutional discourse.

Language and Power Analysis

Secondly, rCDA is interested in why institutional discourse is harmful and its function within the institution. We are in an era with

heightened visibility of injustices against Black people and pressure on PWIs to address social inequities that affect communities associated with members of its institution. A social justice approach is salient in understanding how power relations and dynamics operate in institutional discourse (Walton et al. 2019).

In *Technical Communication After the Social Justice Turn*, Walton et al. (2019) is concerned with how coalitions engage in research using social justice concepts to build a methodological approach. When building coalitions, Walton et al., drawing on Crenshaw's intersectionality, considers individual identities as a multiplicity to honor how our unique perspectives are invaluable in collaborative and generative research. According to Walton et al., we must consider how positionality, privilege, power (3Ps), and oppressions inform the identities and experiences of coalition members. Walton et al. expound on positionality to consider all aspects of identities, even when identities are shared, in relation to the rhetorical situation: relational (ability), historical (period), fluid (sexuality), particular (perspective), situational (context), contradictory (differences in experiences), and intersectional (identities/discriminations) (65). Privilege correlates to the types and extents of unearned advantages and proximity to access—more privileged (centered) versus less privileged (marginalized). Positionality and privilege help us understand the different types and levels of power that one possesses.

Walton et al. present five "faces of oppression," drawing on late scholar Iris Marion Young, as (1) marginalization, (2) cultural imperialism, (3) powerlessness, (4) violence, and (5) exploitation. The faces of oppression and the 3Ps help researchers discuss how discrimination emerges from institutional discourse and provide standard terms for collaborative research. Also, these two ways of approaching social justice contextualize power relations and dynamics and why systemic racism expressed through the discourse affects various bodies in institutions.

Language and Race Analysis

Analyzing language and race in rCDA provides insights into identifying the racialization of institutional discourse. In *Rhetorical Crossover*, Cedric D. Burrows's (2020) race and language theory, "rhetorical crossover," provides insight into how mainstream language stories Black experiences and how these stories map white-imagined experiences and identities onto Black bodies. As a constituent of rCDA, rhetorical crossover helps identify the junctures where stories about Black experiences in institutional discourse intersect with the actual Black experiences of research participants collected by the researcher.

Burrows examines white language practices and how communities are imagined from a white racial frame. He posits that the wielding of white language essentializes Black experiences to white experiences when used to describe Blackness. With rhetorical crossover, we can examine the racialization of multimodal discourses (e.g., texts, speech acts, and data consisting of diversity statements, diversity plans, identity-related statements, and university president and diversity practitioner public conversations).

Burrows (2020) is concerned with how "Black rhetorical presence becomes whitened when it crosses over into white audiences" (16). Burrows explicates the storying of Black experiences through a lens of whiteness: "whitescripting," "whitescaping," and "whitesplaining." This white inscription "alters how social issues connected to African Americans are discussed" as they cross over into the mainstream (Burrows 2020, 99). The use of Black language as "afroscripting," "afroscaping," and "afroplaining" counters white constructed narratives through "simple and direct narratives that echo the needs of the community while also affirming their right to exist in a country that has historically disempowered them" (Burrows 2020, 100).

Burrows stresses that the implication of institutions not learning about African American experiences perpetuates the rhetorical crossover phenomenon. Rhetorical crossover examines how mainstream language silences oppressed groups, how multiple forms of

discrimination exist concerning identities, and how these relationships produce white narratives. With rCDA, rhetorical crossover questions data sources (the stories) in a research study and analyzes the racialization of language emerging from dominant narratives.

Counterstory to Reinscribe Institutions

Counterstory (Martinez 2020) is the second method of *institutional reinscription*, demonstrating the saliency of writing in reinscribing the institution using counterdiscourses to dominant institutional narratives. Counterstory responds to the outcomes (stories) of rCDA and incorporates concepts of data violence (Hoffmann 2020) and racialized technologies (Benjamin 2019) to produce counterstories focused on harmful institutional discourse and modalities (technologies).

Counterstory as Method/ology

In *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory*, Aja Y. Martinez (2020) makes a case for the rhetoric and writing field to use counterstory as a "humanities-informed intervention." Martinez states (2020), "counterstory is a methodology that functions through methods that empower the minoritized through the formation of stories that disrupt the erasures embedded in standardized majoritarian methodologies" (3). Counterstory (as counternarrative) draws on intersectionality as a CRT theoretical underpinning. The benefit of an intersectionality framework in counterstory helps to mitigate a reductive perception that critically addresses injustices unilaterally and subsumes differences among the multiply-marginalized. Counterstory centers and amplifies the multiply-marginalized not accorded through other methods. I proffer contending with positionality as a prerequisite to writing a counterstory for critical research. Walton et al.'s 3Ps is a framework to characterize positionality and mitigate language violence while reinscribing institutions.

Martinez (2020) advocates for using counterstory "as a contribu-

tion of other(ed) perspectives toward ongoing and crucial conversations about dominant ideology and its influences on the institution, society, and the very humanity of people of color" (24). Counterstory resists silencing and erasure from circulating dominant narratives and legitimizes the stories of marginalized persons as counterdiscourse. Also, counterstory has three genres for responding to the rhetorical situation that rCDA discusses: (1) narrated dialogue, (2) allegory/fantasy, and (3) autobiographic reflection. The researcher can select the appropriate counterstory method to express how marginalized persons access institutional structures and the implications of rCDA outcomes.

Data Violence and Racialized Technologies Foci in Institutional Critique Counterstories

Data violence (Hoffmann 2020) and racialized technologies (Benjamin 2019) provide foci for counterstories when translating rCDA data results into compelling stories. Anna Lauren Hoffmann (2020) describes "discursive violence" as "misrepresenting people in ways that reproduce longer standing patterns of oppression and violence" (1). When using counterstory to respond to rCDA, the concept of data violence provides an antiracist lens for interpreting institutional discourse with rCDA results. Hoffmann argues that "discursive violence asks us to focus not only on data science and technologies' harmful outputs but also the broader configurations of histories, institutions, and discourses that not only enable but normalize the potential for violence" (6).

In *Race after Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*, Ruha Benjamin (2019) argues that embedded racism exists in digital technologies, which she coins as the "new Jim code": "the employment of new technologies that reflect and reproduce existing inequities but that are promoted and perceived as more objective or progressive than the discriminatory systems of a previous era" (3). Neoliberal ideologies underpin the construction of our physical society, and, in the same way, these ideologies inform the creation

of technologies. Benjamin dispels the idea of technology as race-neutral, which for this critical discourse methodology means attentiveness when selecting a modality that meets CRT's goal—liberating the oppressed. Hoffmann and Benjamin's data violence and racialized technologies support a responsive counterstory to institutional racialized discourse.

Conclusion

Institutional reinscription uses transdisciplinary perspectives that establish a theoretical scope to undergird the complexities of an institutional research study that challenges systemic racism for institutional change. I build an *institutional reinscription* as a critical discourse methodology interested in how multiply-marginalized communities within institutions experience racial injustices. PWIs are historically imbued with racism and perpetuate racial violence. PWIs operate from a culture of white supremacy and neoliberalism; this culture becomes visible through language in circulating institutional discourse, like diversity language.

Institutional reinscription repurposes institutional critique (Porter et al. 2000) by incorporating critical race theory (CRT) to embed a critical lens for addressing racial injustices. This new *institutional reinscription* situates an institutional research study in a macro-level context. *Institutional reinscription* uses two methods, rCDA and counterstory, to reinscribe institutions toward social and institutional change. rCDA is interested in the relationship between language, power, race, and identities while drawing on theories of rhetoric to understand the rhetorical situation by analyzing multimodal discourse.

After researchers understand the rhetorical situation, reimagining the critical structural issue within the PWI is necessary to avoid blockages as scholar-activists. As language inscribed PWIs from white imaginings, the counteraction of reimagining institutional concerns will invent new ways for the multiply-marginalized to experience equitable and inclusive institutions through perpetual

reimaginings. African Americans have an over two-hundred-year history with white institutions exploiting Black bodies. For example, Black women and other faculty of color are primary laborers in the diversification of PWIs (De Welde 2017). African Americans are historically positioned from their experiences and identities to invent new forms of resistance for the liberation of the oppressed. Black imagination is a methodology that supports reimaginings for equitable access in institutional spaces. Kevin Quashie (2012) writes that imagination provides the "capacity to envision blackness outside of the binary logic of racism, where it is aberrant and inhuman" (43). Black imagination toward reimagining diversity contributes to a counternarrative of Blackness that can circulate through various modalities throughout institutions to create access points for change.

Counterstory, as the second method/ology in *institutional reinscription*, offers an applied functionality to place the outcomes of rCDA into a usable format to share with multiple audiences. Counterstory centers marginalized bodies and stylistically discusses critical issues and reimaginings to mitigate blockages from institutional leadership in antiracist diversity work. I call scholar-activists to take up *institutional reinscription* as a theoretical framework to further critical research that critiques institutional discourse and engages in reinscribing PWIs.

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3. Black Feminist Trauma-Informed Interventions

Centering Black Women Survivors of Violence

BRIANNA GEORGE

Introduction

Throughout American history, Black women have remained at the forefront of social justice efforts and have contributed to progressive change. Black women voted more than any other group in the last two presidential elections. Over 60% of Black women in America work and over 80% of Black women are either the sole or largest earners in their families. Around 22% of Black women over the age of 25 had attained a bachelor's education or a graduate degree in 2014. The number of Black women who are business owners rose by 178% between the years of 2002 and 2012, which is the largest increase when compared to any other group (DuMonthier, Childers, and Milli 2017, 65). Despite supporting their families, communities, and nation, Black women remain undervalued, underappreciated, and underpaid. For example, Black women are underrepresented in political office (e.g., 4.9% of US congresswomen were Black women in January 2021; Higher Heights Leadership Fund 2021) and make significantly low earnings despite their high labor force participation (DuMonthier, Childers, and Milli 2017, 21–22). Additionally, Black women remain disproportionately affected by violence in several forms ranging from individual, interpersonal forms of violence to systemic violence (DuMonthier, Childers, and Milli 2017, 120–21).

The experience of violence can impact the mental health of survivors, contributing to the development of a range of psychopatho-

logical outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Wong, Clark, and Marlotte 2016; Heim and Nemeroff 2001; Meyer 2003; Ouimette, Paige, and Read 2014; Courtois 2004; Solomon 2008). Although a clear link has been established among these experiences of violence and both trauma and mental health problems, Black women remain thwarted from receiving healthcare. In 2014, over 16% of non-elderly Black women did not have health insurance access. Out of the Black women who do receive healthcare, many are misdiagnosed, over-pathologized, and disempowered in treatment (Kawaii-Bogie, Williams, and MacNear 2017, 17).

Previous work has focused on the idea that therapy and treatment for psychopathology has been framed using Eurocentric orientations and are couched in ideas of ableism and white supremacy. Past work has defined this orientation within psychology as the reproduction of "the existing conditions of oppression by failing to challenge the hegemonic views that marginalize groups of people, perpetuate deficit-based ideologies, and continue to disenfranchise the diverse clients and communities" (Goodman et al. 2015, 148). Under these therapy practices, experiences of Black women and other disenfranchised groups are othered and reimagined within the confines of a "normal" dominant, white male perspective. Further work has espoused the idea of decolonizing the discipline, recognizing and acknowledging the "complexity, power, and elusiveness of dominant discourses that influence all of us, individually and systemically, to oppress nondominant groups" (Smith 2015, 32). Through conceptualizing this chapter, I have come to grapple with the use of the term "decolonizing," as it has become metaphorical for ways to improve harmful systems. Although my goal through this paper is to decenter the emphasis of trauma therapy on the white male perspective, I am hesitant to utilize a term which is reserved for work that focuses on settler colonialism including the "repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (Tuck and Yang 2012, 7). As such, I cautiously will utilize the principles of broader decolonial thought to examine the marginalization of Black women through violence

and reimagine the white, male centered norms that permeate society and subsequently trauma therapy.

This chapter uses a Black feminist lens to examine the violence that Black women experience individually, within their communities, and systemically. Specifically, historical and present-day oppression, intimate partner violence (IPV), and the criminalization and killing of Black women following experiences of IPV and violence perpetrated by police. Further, this chapter will discuss the help seeking and coping behaviors of Black women, as well as the shortcomings of widely accepted trauma intervention and assessments. Lastly, recommendations for improving treatment and mental health care for Black women while prioritizing decolonial ideologies will be discussed.

An Overview of The Violence and Oppression Experienced by Black Women

Violence perpetrated against Black women can come in various forms and can be influenced by several intersecting identities. These acts can be traumatic for some women and can contribute to experiences of complex trauma, which can be defined as trauma that occurs repeatedly and cumulatively, over a period of time (Courtois 2004, 86). There are endless stories and accounts of Black women experiencing violence and oppression both through close interpersonal relationships and through more indirect, larger, and systemic strategies which harm them. Previous work focused on the decolonization of trauma therapy has indicated the importance of shifting attention to these interpersonal and longstanding systemic contributors to trauma, thus forming a full picture of the violence Black women experience (Goodman 2015, 59). Such redirection places the onus on the system rather than inaccurately condemning the survivor. I begin this section by outlining the different forms of violence experienced by Black women as examined by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (2017), Beth E. Richie's book

Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation (2012), and Patricia Hill Collins's book *Black Feminist Thought* (2002). This section will also highlight the damaging impacts of this violence on the body and psyche of survivors.

Historical and Present-Day Systemic Oppression as Violence

Patricia Hill Collins outlines the oppression Black women have historically faced in *Black Feminist Thought* (2002). She divides this oppression which lies at the intersection of race, class, and gender into three factions: economic, political, and ideological dimensions of oppression (Collins 2002, 4–5). According to Collins, the oppression created and perpetuated through these factions interact to suppress Black feminist thought and to keep Black women in a subordinate position within society. The economic dimension encompasses several ways that Black women are financially exploited through low pay and free-wage labor. The political dimension captures the disenfranchisement of Black women through political and educational systems which deny Black women opportunities to participate in politics (e.g., voting, running for public office) and to gain an education. The ideological dimension of oppression involves the use of racist and sexist narratives which are used to control the image of Black women in America.

This oppression of Black women in America through these dimensions began during enslavement and currently prevail within modern day society. Although Black women's labor has always been integral to upholding capitalism within America, Black women are often economically exploited. Throughout the period of enslavement, Black women were tasked with either (or both) agricultural and domestic labor, both of which were often marked with emotional, sexual, and physical forms of abuse (DuMonthier, Childers, and Milli 2017, 21; Jones 2013, 259). Currently, Black women continue to make far less than their male counterparts. Specifically, Black women make almost 65% of what white men earn, and their earn-

ings declined by 5% between the years of 2004 and 2014 (DuMonthier, Childers, and Milli 2017, 19).

Through the political dimension of oppression, Black women have had to fight for the right to vote, participate in politics, and educate themselves. In 2018, Black women made up less than 5% of congress, state legislatures, and executive officeholders and 1% of executive officials. As of this writing, no Black woman has ever been elected governor, and only twelve Black women have been elected to executive office (Center for American Women and Politics 2018). While Black women have become one of the most educated groups of women in America (DuMonthier, Childers, and Milli 2017, 69), they have still had to overcome marginalization in the educational setting (e.g., invisible/ignored educational accomplishments) (Chavous and Cogburn 2007, 26).

In terms of the ideological dimension of oppression, negative narratives of Black women are pervasive and commonplace in American society. Collins lists several stereotypic views of Black women as examples (e.g., mammy, jezebel, "welfare mothers"). Through these stereotypes, a controlled, preordained view of the Black woman in America is disseminated through popular culture, whether that be through television, film, or social media platforms. To capture such experiences of compounded racism and sexism in society, Moya Bailey coined the term "misogynoir," operationalizing the negative portrayal of Black women in media (Bailey 2021). These misogynoiristic representations create inaccurate guidelines through which the world views Black women, providing justification for their harm, violence and mistreatment. Collins explains that the integration of these economic, political and ideological dimensions creates a harmful, yet operative and efficient system of oppression which works to bar Black women from becoming included in positions of power or leadership (Collins 2002, 5).

Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Their Criminalization

Presently, IPV is a large mental and physical health issue experienced by almost a third of women aged 18 and above in America (DuMonthier, Childers, and Milli 2017, 120). Specifically, about 36.4% of women in the US reported experiences of intimate partner physical and sexual violence or stalking in 2015 (Smith et al. 2018, 8). These experiences of intimate partner violence also differ across races. Black women, multiracial women and Native American women experience the highest rates of physical violence and psychological aggression perpetrated by an intimate partner. In terms of physical violence and abuse, approximately 51% of Native American and multiracial women and around 41.2% of Black women endure experiences of physical violence in their lifetimes (DuMonthier, Childers, and Milli 2017, 120). Rates of exposure to physical violence in these racial groups fall higher than reports from Latina, Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) and white women, of which 29.7%, 15.3%, and 30.5% report lifetime physical violence, respectively. Additionally, 63.8% of Native American women, 61.1% of multiracial women, and 53.8% of Black women endure experiences of psychological aggression within their lifetime, which is higher than reports of psychological aggression in other racial groups (i.e., 47.2% of white women, 43.9% of Latina women and 29.8% of APIDA women; DuMonthier, Childers, and Milli 2017, 120). Additionally, Black women are 2.5 times more likely to be murdered by a male compared than white women. It is important to recognize that these are only the cases of women who reported their experiences of abuse; inestimable accounts of violence and homicide go under the radar due to erasure by police departments and broader society.

Too often, Black women survivors of these forms of violence are criminalized, such that they are arrested and/or incarcerated following these situations where they experienced violence. There exists a "sexual abuse to prison pipeline" which explains the funnel-

ing of young Black girls that are survivors of IPV into juvenile systems rather than being heard and protected (DuMonthier, Childers, and Milli 2017, 122). Further, mandatory arrest laws also contribute to this criminalization of Black women who are IPV survivors, as well as officers' inability to parse out aggressors and defenders in these situations.

On August 1, 2010, Marissa Alexander was sentenced to a mandatory minimum of 20 years in Florida after firing one warning shot while being attacked by her estranged husband (Gross 2015, 25). Marissa's partner became enraged after violating Marissa's privacy and reading her text messages with her previous husband and co-parent. Her husband at the time threatened Marissa's life and began to attack her, which caused Marissa to fire a warning shot in self-defense. Subsequently, police arrived at her home and arrested her, which resulted in a conviction of three counts of aggravated assault and a 20-year sentence in prison. Despite Marissa acting in self-defense in accordance with the "Stand Your Ground" law, she was denied a new hearing under the newly amended statute (Gross 2015, 25). In January 2015, Marissa, after serving almost four years, was released from prison after accepting a plea deal (Gross 2015, 25).

Marissa's story is just one of many cases where Black women are ignored and are not heard following experiences of abuse and trauma. Marissa's abuse did not start with this single experience; Marissa had contacted police and requested protection from her ex-partner by placing a restraining order prior to this particular incident (Gross 2015, 25). Her story exemplifies the fear associated with reporting and protecting herself, where she explains that she felt stuck between allowing the abuse to continue and potentially losing her life, and defending herself from the abuse and risking criminalization. While there are certain laws which exist that can be utilized to help survivors of IPV (e.g., "Stand Your Ground"), Black women are not often awarded the same opportunities to utilize these laws. In addition, some research and media coverage of incidents similar to Marissa Alexander's often work to mystify these cases by perpetuating a narrative that they are exceptions

to the rule. Black feminist scholar Beth Richie explains in her book *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation* (2012) that viewing these women as outliers happens through several approaches, including the characterization of this violence through mainstream media and the lack of acknowledgement of the complex nature of gender violence.

Police Violence against Black Women

In 2019, Atatiana Jefferson was killed by a Fort Worth, Texas police officer after a neighbor called the police for a welfare check. In March 2020, Breonna Taylor was murdered by police in her own home after police entered her apartment to execute a "no-knock" search warrant. Interpersonal forms of violence are not limited to experiences of IPV. Police violence is yet another form of violence that harms and claims the lives of Black women. Both of these murders outline the carelessness by police and the lack of value for the lives of Black women shown within the police force. These tragic situations are not anomalies. The Institute for Women's Policy Research reported that while media portrayals of police killings are generally focused on male victims, research has shown that incidences of police violence (e.g., stops, frisks, arrests) are identical between Black men and women. Despite only making up around 13% of women in America, Black women comprise 22.6% of all women who are killed by police. Further, the lack of media coverage of Black women who die by police is yet another example of mechanisms through which Black women's lived experiences are erased. For Black women who do survive violent encounters by police, many survivors do not report their experiences causing their stories to remain invisible. Andrea Ritchie also writes of this erasure in her book *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color* (2017), in which she explains that Black women do not often report these experiences out of fear of retaliation by police and a fear that police may not respond to future calls.

Additionally, through a combination of the general lack of access

to care and the poorly constructed infrastructure of the mental health care system for emergency situations, countless Black women have been executed by police after calling for help during a mental health crisis. For example, Michelle Cusseaux was killed by a police officer who was ordered to bring her to a mental health facility. After telling the officer that she did not feel safe or comfortable with letting him into her home, he picked the lock to her door, entered and murdered Michelle after seeing a hammer in her hands. Michelle's story, as well as countless other stories (e.g., Eleanor Bumpurs, Margaret Mitchell, Martha Donald, Brenda Williams, Martina Brown, Stephanie Hicks, Natasha McKenna) are glaring examples of how Black women are harmed through the very systems that supposedly exist to protect those in crisis.

Violence as Complex Trauma

Each of the traumatic experiences outlined above do not happen in a vacuum. For many women, these experiences are not one off and as such create a compounding effect on their mental and physical health. Experiences of such violence and abuse can contribute to complex trauma, which has been heavily linked to negative mental health outcomes in prior literature. For example, prior research has linked complex trauma to depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and PTSD (Wong, Clark, and Marlotte 2016; Solomon 2008; Courtois 2004; Ouimette, Paige, and Read 2014; Heim and Nemeroff 2001). This is consistent with the minority stress theory, which posits that the constant ongoing strain of coping with societal oppression puts disenfranchised populations at risk for negative health consequences and chronic stress (Meyer 2003, 20). Acknowledgement of these complex forms of trauma and violence as part of a larger system is integral to shifting the blame from the individual to a more constructive, accurate placement of responsibility in our current sociopolitical contexts.

Help Seeking and Coping

Despite the fact that Black women experience heightened amounts of violence and trauma which are linked to psychopathology, several systemic barriers exist that prevent Black women from accessing the care that they need. For example, Black women and men have less access to mental health services and are less likely to receive necessary treatment from healthcare providers (DuMonthier, Childers, and Milli 2017, 98). When interviewed about the barriers that they personally experience which prevent them from accessing care, several Black women endorsed that there were not any mental health service locations available in their communities (Ward, Clark, and Heidrich 2009, 11). Additionally, the women noted that the professionals who work at available locations were often culturally incompetent, which increases the risk for misdiagnosis (Ward, Clark, and Heidrich 2009, 20). The National Alliance on Mental Illness terms this "provider bias," a term which describes the discrimination that Black people experience in healthcare. Black people who seek help are likely to receive treatment from providers who misdiagnose a patient's somatic (i.e., bodily) symptoms as physical health conditions rather than the mental health issues themselves. Compounding factors can also work in tandem to impact the availability of services. For example, both the availability and affordability of services can work to decrease service accessibility for Black women from low-income backgrounds. Additionally, stigma plays a large role in the utilization of mental health services. For example, mental health stigma (i.e., negative perceptions of the use of mental health services) can stem from an individual's family, employers, or the community and can prevent an individual from seeking care from mental health systems (Kawaii-Bogie, Williams, and MacNear 2017, 14).

Because of these barriers to mental health care, Black women often engage in interpersonal and informal coping strategies, like utilizing their social support network (e.g., help from friends, family, or community) or seeking help from religious leaders. Black women

also tend to utilize internal coping strategies, such as denial or avoidance of problems and various forms of self-help (e.g., journaling, reading, exercise, volunteering). Additionally, Black women often seek treatment from physical health professionals rather than mental health professionals, perhaps due to more somatic presentations of mental health disorders (Ward, Clark, and Heidrich 2009, 3).

In addition to these structural barriers to care, there are several cultural tropes that exist which may impact the help seeking behavior of Black women survivors of trauma and violence. Often, Black women are seen as the backbones of their families and communities and feel an obligation to continue to support those around them. Beth E. Richie (2012) refers to this as the "Trap of Loyalty," which can be broken into three expectations and cognitions surrounding the role of Black women. First, Richie explains that there exists a notion that Black women are more privileged than Black men. As noted above, Black women are disproportionately exposed to several forms of violence and oppression, ranging from violence in their intimate relationships, communities, and broader systemic contexts. The belief that Black women are more privileged than Black men minimizes this violence and oppression, thus invalidating the experiences of many Black women and furthering harm. Secondly, Richie notes that there is an expectation that Black women are meant to endure their abuse and the violence outlined in the sections above in silence. Oftentimes, Black women feel forced to stay silent through abuse in order to protect those inflicting harm upon them. Further, this expectation results in the insurmountable pressure that Black women often feel to be strong in the face of adversity rather than acknowledging the validity of being vulnerable. This concept of the "Trap of Loyalty" also includes the notion that Black women are expected to buffer their loved ones and families from racism and discrimination. Black women are expected to support the healing of their families and community prior to processing their own experiences of racism. Similar to Richie's second point, this expectation hinges upon the invalidation of the emo-

tional impact of violent events on Black women. Because each of these expectations are so widely accepted and upheld in society, Black women often internalize the responsibility of being an anchor for others while placing their personal needs last, thus impacting the probability that they would perceive their own need for mental healthcare services.

Recommendations

As noted in the sections above, Black women are at a heightened risk of developing mental health difficulties due to the multiple ways they are impacted by violence, trauma, and systemic oppression. Given that Black women experience disproportionate exposure to violence and trauma, and are impacted by the heavy loads of political, economic, and ideological oppression, the following recommendations for mental healthcare providers will promote the healing and liberation of Black women. It should also be noted that although survivors are at risk of developing symptoms that are consistent with a diagnosis of anxiety, depression, and other disorders, the following section will incorporate gold-standard treatments and interventions for PTSD, a widely researched mental health outcome of complex trauma exposure.

Increasing the Representation of Black Women as Therapists

Given the shortcomings and barriers to care outlined above, the first recommendation for healthcare providers and the field of psychology as a whole is to increase the representation of Black women as practicing clinicians. In 2019, the American Psychological Association reported that Black women made up approximately 3% of all practicing psychologists in America. However, prior research has outlined that many individuals from marginalized racial/ethnic communities value the importance of matching their race to the race of their provider (Wintersteen, Mensinger, and Diamond 2005, 406). Researchers report that individuals who see clinicians who are

matched based on race have stronger working alliance and rapport, which has been shown to increase the effectiveness of treatment and retention of clients (Chao, Steffen, and Heiby 2012, 4). A clear gap exists in the availability of Black women within the field of psychology. By increasing the number of Black women in the US psychology workforce, the field can hopefully increase the retention of Black women clients (Wintersteen, Mensinger, and Diamond 2005, 406).

Utilization of Culturally Informed Assessments

Mental healthcare providers need to recognize their role in perpetuating oppression against Black women through misdiagnosis and over-pathologizing. Past work has outlined the importance of diagnosis and the harm of misinterpretation of symptoms due to cultural bias (Kawaii-Bogie, Williams, and MacNear 2017, 14). Misdiagnosis acts as a barrier for Black women to receive the necessary services or treatment, and a failure to accurately diagnose Black women further deprives them of access to quality care.

One suggested way to improve the accuracy of assessment of Black women is to obtain a comprehensive, holistic view of their symptoms including culturally significant experiences and values. Prior research has validated the effectiveness of several assessments which provide comprehensive histories of race-based trauma in Black samples (Williams, et al. 2014, 107). Given that Black people are not a monolith, researchers also note the importance of assessments which account for ethnic identity and religious beliefs of Black clients (Williams, et al. 2014, 107). These religio-cultural factors can largely vary from client to client regardless of racial identity and need to be assessed in order to best capture the client's overall identity.

Acknowledgement and Integration of Black Women's Experiences in Treatment

It is also recommended that mental healthcare providers recognize that treatments based on hegemonic norms and the experiences of white men results in the systemic othering of Black women's perspectives. As previous work aimed to decolonize trauma treatment has expressed, therapists must simultaneously work to help the individual while acknowledging and actively working to grasp the sociopolitical contexts in which the experiences of their clients are situated (Goodman 2015, 64). For example, although Black women disproportionately experience conditions that may lead to the development of PTSD symptoms, there has been little emphasis on intentional research which aims to better understand the outcomes of diverse populations in treatment (Resick, Candice, and Chard 2016, 284). Clinicians must work to more accurately and holistically account for the experiences of many Black women in treatment.

One way that this can be done is through the recognition of race and gender related stressors in PTSD treatment. For example, within Prolonged Exposure, a widely utilized PTSD treatment, clients are exposed to imaginal or in vivo (i.e., real life) experiences which are triggering to decrease their response to these traumatic stimuli. Researchers note that this treatment could be bolstered to more effectively help Black clients who have experienced race related trauma by incorporating these race-based stressful events into exposure exercises (Williams et al. 2014, 108–113). These events can include physical locations or groups of people which they may fear due to prior traumatic experiences. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) is a diagnostic guideline manual which outlines the criteria for each mental health disorder acknowledged by the American Psychiatric Association (2013). Currently, the DSM-5 does not acknowledge racism or race related stress experienced throughout an individual's lifetime as trauma unless it is associated with a specific racist event (Williams et al. 2014, 117). Inclusion of race and gender related stressors in PTSD

treatment when an individual has endured a history of these experiences may help the client heal from stressors that would not otherwise be addressed.

Another way that this recommendation can be upheld is through the recognition of the negative ideologies about Black women which permeate society and cognizance that some Black women may have internalized these generally accepted thoughts and societal expectations. Both Collins (2002) and Bailey (2021) who were mentioned earlier recognize the impact of controlling ideologies of Black women in American society. Further, Richie (2012) maintains that some expectations and ideologies become internalized by Black women and can impact their decision making and prioritization of their needs (e.g., making decisions out of the protection of others rather than themselves). Clinicians should be trained to be aware of and to work to uncover these internalized ideologies and beliefs Black women may hold. For example, many individuals who have experienced trauma may have internalized a "just world" belief, which is characterized by the belief that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. The dismantling of this concept is a major component of Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), which is a widely used treatment for trauma survivors who meet criteria for PTSD. The "just world" belief can be harmful for survivors because traumatic experiences often happen completely independent of whether an individual is a "good person" or not. A major shortcoming of the main emphasis of this phenomenon is that there may be several different ways an individual's intersecting identities may impact their view of the world, beyond the "just world" belief. As outlined above, many Black women internalize beliefs that impact the way that they interpret the world (e.g., the concept of the "Trap of Loyalty"), and which could potentially cause a client to downplay the importance of their symptoms. These internalized societal expectations could translate into trauma treatment where the client may feel the need to uphold these responsibilities in session.

Conclusions

Black women often experience several forms of violence and oppression, which can be detrimental to their mental health. Specifically, Black women disproportionately experience violence in forms that include intimate partner violence and police violence, and oppression through economic, ideological, and political channels. Experience of these forms of violence can contribute to complex trauma, which has been heavily linked to psychopathology. Treatment that does exist for resulting psychopathology does not usually consider the unique intersectional perspectives and experiences of Black women. In order to create more inclusive treatment which considers the important experiences of Black women, three recommendations are offered: (1) increase the representation of Black women as therapists, (2) utilize culturally informed assessments, and (3) acknowledge Black women's experiences in treatment. Through each of these channels of intervention, the mental healthcare field can prioritize the healing of Black women.

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PART II

DECENTERING WHITENESS

4. Where Are the Black Feminist Sociologists?

A Textbook Analysis

AMY M. ERNSTES

Introduction

As a sociologist who recognizes the idea of a value-free sociology as myth, i begin this consideration of Black feminisms and sociology with situating my own relationship to this dynamic—which first started with sociology, then Black feminisms.[1] Sociology as a field engaged me through its concepts of the sociological imagination and public sociology. Previously in the social work field, i was drawn to sociology through the sociological imagination, the foundational lens of the field, as it provides an invaluable lens for better understanding power, oppression, and hierarchies. As the concept of public sociology conveys, the field itself was born from an aim to analyze society for the sake of society and thus in a way that is accessible to and engages with the greater public.

After leaving social work and earning my master's in sociology, i began teaching sociology as an adjunct, and have now been teaching for nearly a decade. While i initially pursued sociology with the goal of attaining a PhD as a means toward meaningful research, i unexpectedly discovered my true(r) passion for teaching sociology. Those concepts—the sociological imagination and public sociology—now ground my teaching. My focus in research is now centered in teaching sociology and liberatory pedagogies.

As i have learned, the experience of teaching is its own teacher. It is through teaching that i learned about Black feminisms. I have always emphasized power, oppression, and hierarchies in my teaching. When i first started teaching Introduction to Sociology (SOC

101) in 2013, i was new to teaching and largely stuck to the textbook and the textbook readings to structure my course and syllabus. The only outside readings i included in that first semester covered the topic of privilege, and white privilege specifically, to include along-side the topics of race and racism. These were readings that had impacted me as an undergraduate student and which i felt were an important supplement to a sociological consideration of race and racism.

After a semester or two of teaching SOC 101, it became clear that white privilege was the topic on my then-syllabus that would bring the most challenges in teaching. Whether in class discussion or in written assignments, in every class i had at least one student (often more) who responded negatively to the topic: sometimes with frustration and disagreement, sometimes with anger and absolute rejection.

Although these responses came in a variety of forms, many came from white students from working class households who struggled with the idea that they had privilege. And as a white person from a working-class household, i get it. As a teacher, i was (and am) motivated to improve how i teach, especially about inequalities and about race and racism. I continue to be interested in best practices for teaching these topics in a way that is valuable and safe for every-one in the room (e.g., when considering a topic like police brutality, maintaining awareness of its potentially triggering nature). In grap-pling with teaching the topics of racism and privilege—and wanting to acknowledge the three-dimensional realities of hierarchies that mean a person can simultaneously experience oppression in one facet of life and privilege in another—this is how i came to learning about Black feminisms through the concept of intersectionality.

Back in 2013, i think i at least vaguely knew of the concept of "intersectionality"—but those experiences in the classroom led me to the pursuit of learning more. First learning about the term in more detail through the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 149), i find her analogy of an intersection in traffic paints a clear picture of the concept:

Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, 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 the 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.

Learning about intersectionality was a lightbulb moment for me. It deepened my own understanding of inequalities in a powerfully three-dimensional way, and i recognized the concept as an incredibly valuable tool in teaching about social inequalities. It gave me language to address frustrations over the concept of privilege through clarifying different facets of oppression—and that a person can belong to both oppressed and privileged groups at the same time. Intersectionality continues to give me improved language and tools to teach (and learn alongside) my students in more meaningful ways about how social hierarchies like race, class, and gender, and also sexuality, disability, citizenship, intersect and interact with each other.

Learning about the concept also led me to learning that while Crenshaw coined the term, there is a long and rich history of Black feminist thought grounded in this three-dimensional lens, of which the Combahee River Collective (1977), Sojourner Truth (see Davis 1983), and Pauli Murray (see Peterson 2019) are just a very few examples. Learning about intersectionality was a jumping off point to my learning about Black feminisms—i use the plural form in recognition for the plurality that Black feminists recognize of the field (Henry 2005, 89–90). Although there is no universal definition for Black feminisms, "the black feminist tradition grows not out of

other movements, but out of the condition of being both black and woman" and it "is a long tradition which resists easy definition and is characterized by its multi-dimensional approach to liberation" (Peterson 2019). Patricia Hill Collins elaborates that "as a critical social theory, Black feminist thought aims to empower African-American women within the context of social injustice sustained by intersecting oppressions," and that "since Black women cannot be fully empowered unless intersecting oppressions themselves are eliminated, Black feminist thought supports broad principles of social justice that transcend US Black women's particular needs" (2000, 25–26).

I have continued to learn about Black feminisms and Black feminisms have continued to enrich my understanding of power and systems of domination as well as my pedagogy (which i will detail more later). The more i learn about Black feminisms, the more i see overlaps with sociology as a field, especially through the foundational concepts of the sociological imagination and public sociology. Yet the more i learn, the more questions i have about the relationship between Black feminisms and sociology.

Now, almost a decade after earning my master's in sociology and teaching my first class in sociology, i have the opportunity here, in this chapter, to investigate these questions in my formal education as a sociologist. I am grateful for the opportunity to pursue these questions here, as a part of a course dedicated to Black feminisms in my second year in a sociology PhD program. Yet, it is disappointing that it has taken me this far into my academic career to have this opportunity. It is disappointing that it has taken this long for the option to take a sociology course dedicated to Black feminisms—and, significantly, as an elective and a course that has only been offered two times in the history of my department. It is disappointing that i only recently learned that a field called "Black feminist sociology" even exists! Learning this was both exciting and frustrating.

When i first learned about Black feminisms, i mistakenly perceived this body of knowledge as separate from but supplemental

to the field of sociology. The more i learn, the more i see that Black feminists and Black feminist sociologists have made important historical and continuing contributions to the field of sociology. Sociology has a responsibility to recognize these vital contributions. These sentiments shaped this chapter and guided me to pursue a limited investigation of Introduction to Sociology textbooks, to consider their coverage of Black feminisms and Black feminists. I present this textbook analysis in the methods section and then turn to the results. First, i want to provide a preface that considers important overlaps between Black feminisms and sociology.

Note: i would like to emphasize a caveat here, that given how much i have yet to learn, my observations here regarding Black feminisms and sociology are certainly neither original nor comprehensive. I am undoubtedly unaware of and have neglected to include voices who have said these things before, and better, and my whiteness limits the extent to which i can understand and appreciate the margins in which it means "to be a part of the whole but outside the main body," from which Black feminist thought has developed (hooks 2015, xiii). So, please let this writing stand only as a reflection of my own journey learning about Black feminisms—with this project itself being a step in that journey. Perhaps it can offer helpful information and ideas to others who are similarly starting to learn about Black feminisms and to anyone with an interest in teaching sociology, pedagogy, and epistemology.

Sociology

I wish to begin with a further in-depth consideration of sociology, specifically through the concepts of the sociological imagination and public sociology. While i hope that this review is helpful for non-sociologists, i think a review of these terms, even for those familiar with them, might provide a helpful frame for the next section of this chapter that considers overlaps between sociology and Black feminisms. These concepts were not only foundational to my

own understanding of and appreciation for sociology, but they are foundational to the field itself.

In this section i will focus on reviewing two pieces: the first chapter of C. Wright Mills's (1959) *The Sociological Imagination*, a text credited with coining the term the "sociological imagination," and Michael Burawoy's 2004 Presidential Address to the American Sociological Association, titled, "For Public Sociology," a popularly referenced piece for that concept. Although sociology's relationship with the concepts behind the sociological imagination predate Mills's description, and the spirit of public sociology has been historically central to the field before Burawoy's address, given the brevity of this review and the popularity of these two pieces, i believe they provide a succinct overview.

The Sociological Imagination

The concept of the sociological imagination is foundational to the field of sociology. It embodies sociology's central focus on critical thought around the reciprocal relationships between society and the individual: how individuals and the groups they form make up society, and how society in turn influences individuals and the groups they form. This dynamic frames how sociologists understand the world. The sociological imagination is a shorthand term used to reference this way of thinking. It is a mindset, a skill, and a practice that requires cultivation.

The phrase comes from C. Wright Mills's book, *The Sociological Imagination*, written in 1959. In chapter one, "The Promise," Mills introduces the two main facets of the sociological imagination: personal troubles and public issues. Mills (1959) writes that "*troubles* occur within the character of the individual and within the range of his or her immediate relations with others; they have to do with oneself and with those limited areas of social life of which one is directly and personally aware" (emphasis added). In contrast, he writes that "*issues* have to do with matters that transcend these local environments of the individual and the range of her inner life,"

and that they "have to do with the organization of many such milieu into the institutions of an historical society as a whole, with the ways in which various milieux overlap and interpenetrate to form the larger structure of social and historical life" (emphasis added) (Mills 1959, 4). Thus, while personal troubles take place in the micro realm of the individual's experience, public issues refer to the macro level of greater patterns and structures in society.

The sociological imagination is the conceptual framing of the ability to recognize these two realms, and the reciprocal relationship between them, within any social phenomenon. Mills (1959) draws a related parallel between biography and history in asserting that "the sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise" (2). With this example he provides another way to think about the relationship between the individual and society and amplifies the necessity of seeing that relationship within the context of history.

His chapter's introduction to the sociological imagination concludes with examples including unemployment, war, and divorce—he uses these examples to demonstrate how the sociological imagination can be used to unpack the dynamics between individual experience and societal influence. For example, while unemployment clearly impacts the lives of individual people who are unemployed, and possibly their families, it is a phenomenon also tied to larger societal phenomena such as economic shifts, laws regarding employment, and access to education, to name a few. As Mills points out, because individuals tend to frame their personal experiences within their immediate contexts, learning to see these broader connections can take practice. Cultivating the ability to see these layers and dynamics within any phenomenon is the sociological imagination and is the groundwork of sociology.

Public Sociology

The concept of public sociology is also crucial to the field and com-

plements the sociological imagination. Where i see the sociological imagination as a "how" of sociology because it distills how sociologists think about the world, i see public sociology as a "why" because it distills the value of thinking about the world through this lens. Although some sociologists may disagree, e.g., those who subscribe to a positivist perspective and/or the myth of a value-free sociology (even though these stances are arguably antithetical to sociology in that the sociological imagination should necessarily highlight the subjective context of knowledge production), i see the concept of public sociology as also foundational to the field.

Although he did not coin the term, Michael Burawoy's 2004 Presidential Address to the American Sociological Association, titled "For Public Sociology," is commonly cited in reference to it. I will use this address to review the concept of public sociology, as well as the importance of sociologists honoring these roots of the field.

Burawoy opens the address with a quote from Walter Benjamin that describes an "angel of history" getting caught in a storm, propelling him into the future, and ultimately revealing the storm to be "what we call progress" (2005, 4). Burawoy asserts that "in its beginning sociology aspired to be such an angel of history, searching for order in the broken fragments of modernity, seeking to salvage the promise of progress" (Burawoy 2005, 5). He points to the work of W.E.B. Du Bois and Jane Addams as examples of sociologists whose work embodies this aim toward positive social change through challenging systems of domination.

In his address, Burawoy contextualizes public sociology as one of four types of sociology: professional, critical, policy, and public. He argues that each facet is needed because they each play an important role for the field. Yet, he expresses concern for sociology's evolution, specifically in the United States, and its potential path towards losing connection to the roots of public sociology, and what this would mean for the future of sociology.

He describes public sociology as sociology that is both accessible to and that engages with the public. In contrast with professional sociology, for example, which is more concerned with communicat-

ing within academic niches, "public sociology brings sociology into a conversation with publics, understood as people who are themselves involved in conversation" (Burawoy 2005, 7). Public sociology is a sociology "in which the sociologist works in close connection with a visible, thick, active, local and often counter public . . . sociologists working with a labor movement, neighborhood associations, communities of faith, immigrant rights groups, human organizations" (Burawoy 2005, 7–8). Burawoy also emphasizes students as a part of this "public" realm, and suggests that for teachers of sociology, we must help students to "turn their private troubles into public issues" and that we do so by "starting from where they are, not from where we are" (2005, 9).

Yet, he warns that sociology's roots in and responsibility to this public component face a threat. He names academia as a main antagonist. He details that "the original passion for social justice, economic equality, human rights, sustainable environment, political freedom or simply a better world, that drew so many of us to sociology, is challenged into the pursuit of academic credentials" (Burawoy 2005, 5). He laments the role that some academics take in this process: "How often have I heard faculty advise their students to leave public sociology until after tenure—not realizing (or realizing all too well?) that public sociology is what keeps sociological passion alive" (Burawoy 2005, 7–8).

He concludes that the fight for sociology's integrity will not come institutionally—that it must come from the ground up. He explains that "the success of public sociology will not come from above but from below. It will come when public sociology captures the imagination of sociologists, when sociologists recognize public sociology as important in its own right with its own rewards, and when sociologists then carry it forward as a social movement beyond the academy. . . . Our angel of history will then spread her wings and soar above the storm" (2005, 25).

Teaching Sociology and Learning Black Feminisms

In my sociological education, i learned the terms "sociological imagination" and "public sociology" far before learning about Black feminisms or Black feminist sociology. I learned them while earning my masters in sociology, and i assume i would have learned them sooner had i pursued sociology as an undergraduate. These terms have been important to me in distilling my connection with the field, and they are concepts that have also become important to me in teaching sociology. Putting the importance of these concepts into practice through my teaching is in large part what led me to learning about Black feminisms; relatedly, in learning about Black feminist sociology, i clearly see how this realm of sociology embodies these foundational concepts of the field. I will detail this in the following section and conclude with how those experiences yielded the idea for the textbook analysis that takes up the second half of this chapter.

Teaching Sociology

In terms of my orientation to teaching, i know that after the semester is over (and maybe before), students aren't going to remember all the material or concepts we covered, especially in an introductory course with many nonmajors. My personal marker of success in teaching introduction to sociology is if i have helped create a class experience that invites students to find their own excitement for sociology through the sociological imagination as a critical way of thinking about oneself and the world, and through the sentiment of public sociology, showing how the field can (and has) been used in real ways to address real problems.

   I enjoy teaching introductory classes because introducing students to sociology can be an awesome experience. It is exciting when students get excited about learning how to think critically in this way and start using a sociological lens to make sense of

their own worlds. I also find within teaching a gratifying challenge in knowing that there will always be ways to improve my teaching and to create a better experience for students. I emphasize in my introductory courses that "everything is sociological"—an assertion i believe, and one that also means that there will be ever-evolving, newer, more relevant/current/engaging ways to introduce sociology to students. This breadth of sociology provides a broad scope of potential topics and a lot of room for creativity in this endeavor. This is one of the things i love about teaching sociology.

I strive to not only highlight the concepts of the sociological imagination and public sociology as topics in my teaching, i strive to integrate these concepts as practices within my teaching. As Burawoy suggests, putting public sociology into practice through teaching sociology means to start where our students are. For teachers this means utilizing the sociological imagination's ability to address topics relevant to students: topics that are current and relevant to many students (student debt, the current COVID-19 pandemic, etc.) are an engaging way for students to learn about sociology and, in turn, can provide students with a valuable lens to understand their circumstances.

Echoing back to my experience with the social work field's similar mantra to "start where the client is," i think that prioritizing this starting point with students should not only guide class content/topics covered, but that it also asserts the need to recognize the greater context of students' lives, within which being a student in a sociology course is just one of many roles and responsibilities—a reality that sociology, and thus sociologists, should be particularly attuned to. Relatedly, i believe that public sociology's challenge to academic gatekeeping around knowledge, and the implicated challenge to academic hierarchies generally, also implies a demand to treat students with dignity and respect. It should be unbelievable that this bare minimum isn't an intrinsic low bar in teaching, yet i know through experiences of my students and advisees, as well as my own experiences as a student and other students i have been in school with, that it isn't. As just one example among many, it

has been shocking to learn of the difficulties faced by many students with disabilities in getting the accommodations that have been approved by the school itself actually met, due to teacher resistance and even flat-out refusal.

The importance of basic respect and dignity has only been amplified to me in returning to school and (re)experiencing academia as a student myself—especially so in simultaneously experiencing roles as student and as teacher throughout the start and ongoing continuation of a global pandemic. As one example of applying this sentiment to my courses, my current late-work policy grants students an extension on assignment deadlines whenever needed, no questions asked or need for explanation or "proof." (It is telling about norms in academia that, despite this clarification and reminders, students still often feel the need to "justify" their asks with reasons or doctor's notes, etc.) While i recognize the value of deadlines in a course, i also understand what it's like to fall behind in something while juggling life, and i appreciate how meaningful it can be for someone to extend this flexibility and understanding; i've also seen that extending this flexibility does not mean that students will get less out of that work—in my experience, treating students with this respect often means increased engagement with the course.

In terms of incorporating the sociological imagination as a teaching practice, i see this as not only involving the mentioned inclusion of relevant and engaging content, but additionally and relatedly, applying the lens of sociological imagination to the realms of knowledge, learning, and teaching. By this, i mean using the lens of the sociological imagination to recognize the ways that subjective societal and historical ideologies about these realms have shaped their mainstream parameters—and to also use the lens of the sociological imagination to imagine beyond these parameters. This is a challenge in an educational culture steeped in standardized testing and within academic environments that cling to hierarchies and gatekeeping around knowledge. Yet i believe it is a necessary challenge educationally, and sociologically, to undertake.

I believe that incorporating the sociological imagination and pub-

lic sociology as praxis in teaching sociology means extending this challenge of these parameters to students in their own learning. Extending flexibility to students in their own engagement with sociology is central to a supportive (and sociological) educational environment—flexibility that goes beyond the textbook and beyond formulaic assignments, flexibility that allows space for formats like poetry, photography, the arts, and film, and that offers a variety of assignment options that, in my own courses so far, have included playlists, collages, posters, and short video/presentation options such as one that i've called "sociological show and tell" that involves sharing personally meaningful items with the class and breaking them down in sociological ways.

Thus, i see the concepts of the sociological imagination and public sociology as applicable to pedagogy through applying the lens of the sociological imagination to teaching (and thus also learning, education, and knowledge) and relatedly, grounding pedagogy in accessibility, and an ethic of care, in order to put into action the significance of a sociological lens for the health of individuals, families, communities, and societies. Next, i will consider how this orientation, that i might call a "sociologically grounded pedagogy," finds complement in Black feminisms and Black feminist sociology.

Learning about Black Feminisms

My experiences teaching sociology, alongside the perspective of learning as an intrinsic part of teaching, led me to learning about Black feminisms. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, i was introduced to Black feminisms through the concept of intersectionality, a concept i learned about in seeking a way to teach about the three-dimensional realities of oppression. Intersectionality provided me with a concept through which to teach that facets of oppression can intersect—like racism and sexism—as well as classism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia. It transformed the depth of my understanding and teaching of social inequalities.

In first learning about the concept many years ago, i incorporated

it as a supplement to my intro course's week-long consideration of race, racism, and privilege. Now it has become a cornerstone to my teaching about social inequalities, and in my Introduction to Sociology courses i dedicate a week to intersectionality and Black feminist thought. (I am currently using Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor's [2017] "How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective" for some of this history, alongside some short first-person narratives from Anderson's and Collins's [2020] *Race, Class, Gender*.) I have also added an overview of Black feminisms (from the Smithsonian Museum, see Peterson 2019) to the course's consideration of theory, to provide a theoretical framework for the coverage of this concept. In addition to providing a valuable lens to the topics of racism, social inequalities, and theory, Black feminisms has also transformed my intro course's consideration of methods—the ways that sociological research can be done—through challenging ideas about knowledge generally.

A few years ago, a friend (thank you Melissa :)) recommended to me Eve L. Ewing's "The Quality of the Light: Evidence, Truths, and the Odd Practice of the Poet-Sociologist," a chapter in the book, *Black Women's Liberatory Pedagogies* (2018). The chapter challenges the idea of conflict/boundary between sociology and poetry and highlights the inherent overlaps of the two realms. Ewing asks, "What is a poet, and what is poetry that it should be presumed so antithetical to the work of the social scientist?" (198). She opens the chapter with her poem, "Horror Movie Pitch," that centers on Black women's experiences with discrimination and harassment—a poem she describes as allowing her "to venture into a discussion about intersectionality . . . through a somewhat more open-ended, and accessible lens than, say, an essay might" (197). She elaborates that "where the social scientist uses empirics to gather a descriptive understanding of the social world, and uses theory to render these observations into more broadly applicable, abstract connecting threads among social phenomena, the poet uses imagination to extend the social world from the realm of the observable into the

realm of the possible" (199). Thus, she frames poetry and sociology as complementary, even supplementary.

Ewing references Audre Lorde's "Poetry is Not a Luxury" (1984, 36–39) in asserting these connections between sociology and poetry. Ewing highlights Lorde's challenge to white/european ways of thinking about knowledge in her assertion of poetry as a "vital necessity of our existence," and elaborating that "as we come more into touch with our own ancient, noneuropean consciousness of living as a situation to be experienced and interacted with, we learn more and more to cherish our feelings, and to respect those hidden sources of power from where true knowledge, and therefore, lasting action comes" (Lorde 1984, 37). Thus, both pieces are grounded in the assertion of poetry as a valuable, even necessary knowledge—yet in doing so must also challenge western prescriptions about knowledge.

This contextualization of knowledge, as a social phenomenon influenced by the (necessarily subjective) context of its society, exemplifies what it means to think about a phenomenon through the lens of the sociological imagination. Like Mills does in his application of the sociological imagination to phenomena like unemployment, Lorde and Ewing consider the bigger picture of "knowledge" through the same lens, by questioning how societal influences and patterns across history have impacted what we consider to be valid forms of knowledge. Challenging these epistemological boundaries encompasses challenges to boundaries like those perceived between feeling and thought/logic (Lorde 1984), and like those intentionally built in/by academic spaces to gate-keep access to and ability to participate in the creation of knowledge. Thus, these epistemological challenges exemplify not only the sociological imagination in their critical analyses, but also public sociology, in the implied goal of breaking down barriers of accessibility to knowledge, and opportunities to engage in its creation. (See hooks 1994, hooks 2015, and Morgan 1999, for just a few additional examples of the importance of accessibility, and practices of making knowledge accessible, within Black feminist thought.)

I now include those two pieces from Ewing and Lorde early in the semester, in the methods and research section of my intro courses, to introduce these important sociological considerations about knowledge (and thus also learning and education) early on. These pieces have also encouraged me to further think outside of the box regarding how methods are considered in my intro textbook (i currently use Giddens et al.'s *Essentials of Sociology*).

As a result, my coverage of sociological methods now also includes material and examples from the International Visual Sociology Association's website (https://visualsociology.org), which is a fantastic resource with great student examples—of which i am currently assigning the project called "Spiritual Flavors" which includes photography, a short film, and recipes in a project that "pays attention to affective relationships with food, as a vehicle to explore ideas about inheritance, tradition and belief" (Cuch 2020). During my intro course's coverage on class inequalities i now also use the photography of Lewis Hines—whose work i came across through the Zinn Education Project, another great resource—whose photographs helped pass child labor laws in the early 1900s (UMBC Digital Collection).

During the summer of 2020, i am grateful for the opportunity i had to attend "Teaching Justice 2020," a two day zoom seminar provided by Freedom Lifted, for educators wanting to support racial justice in their teaching. The seminar was poignant and energizing, and i came away with excitement for new teaching ideas even amid online teaching in a pandemic. One workshop that stood out to me centered on the use of primary source documents. It was a memorable experience to work in groups with documents that included posters of the Black Panther Party's Ten Point Program and photography spanning from the Birmingham Children's March in 1963 to protests over police brutality in 2020. I have now used this material alongside my SOC 101 course's consideration of social movements and have offered an assignment option involving students finding their own primary sources around a particular topic of their interest.

I appreciate that these examples provide different ways for students to engage with and learn from sociology and that they demonstrate different ways to work with and produce sociology. Working with the breadth of these iterations of sociology has also influenced the variety of assignment options i provide, as i mentioned earlier. This is an ongoing evolution of my teaching (and one that meets an unfortunate challenge in having to balance the aim to provide qualitatively meaningful—e.g., not multiple choice—options against the time constraints of large class sizes). The inclusion of this range of sociological methods is directly connected to the sociological imagination—which would ask WHY poetry and photography can't be seen as valid sources of knowledge—and to public sociology, given that the range of methods provides various opportunities for engagement. Yet it was Black feminist thought that pushed me in those directions.

This is a summary of my relationship to the dynamic between Black feminisms and sociology. Teaching sociology led me to learning about Black feminisms and learning about Black feminisms has in turn taught me, and continues to teach me, how to be a better teacher of sociology.

Applying the Sociological Imagination to Sociology

Now, in taking a step back to see the complete picture of my evolved introduction course, i see that nearly every week of material includes a valuable supplement to the textbook that encourages the exercise of the sociological imagination—and that these supplements often are directly or indirectly related to Black feminist thought. I am proud of how my intro course has evolved, and i owe that in large part to Black feminisms.

In a sociological theory course i took recently, i was excited and a little confused to learn that a field of knowledge called "Black feminist sociology" exists. I am referring to Lengermann and Niebrugge's

([1998] 2007) *The Women Founders: Sociology and Social Theory 1830–1930* and its chapter 5: "Anna Julia Cooper (1858–1964) and Ida B. Wells-Barnett (1862–1931)—The Foundations of Black Feminist Sociology." While i'd come to see inherent connections between these two fields, prior to reading this text, i had no idea that a recognizable field of knowledge that is an integration of both actually exists. I cannot recall Black feminist sociology even being mentioned in any of my formal education up until that point. And i had not previously learned much, if anything, about Anna Julia Cooper or Ida B. Wells-Barnett in a formal sociological context. It was exciting to learn about this field, but also curious—although the lens of Black feminist thought itself provides the analyses of power that contextualizes this omission (see articles by Alexander, Joseph, and Higginbotham in Guy-Sheftall's 1995 anthology for just a few examples of this history in academia).

Lengermann and Niebrugge contextualize that the work of these two Black feminist sociologists "predates or is contemporaneous with the now canonized contributions of white male thinkers like Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, and George Herbert Mead, as well as the contributions of white women sociologists like Addams, Gilman, Marianne Weber, Webb, and the 'Chicago Women'" (2007, 171). As Lengermann and Niebrugge elaborate, their contributions are undeniable: "Cooper and Wells-Barnett construct[ed] a sociological analysis of society as a dynamic of power and difference, a theory as complete and critical as any achieved in American sociology—a radical, non-Marxian conflict theory. . . . Looking at society through the dual lens of race and gender, they come also to class, and help to create a black feminist sociology" (161).

Learning about Black feminist sociology and about Cooper and Wells-Barnett as two foundational contributors to the field led me to reflect more on the near absence of Black feminist sociology from my formal education. As other sociologists have argued, i would challenge that if the field of sociology uses its own sociological lens on itself as a field (as it should), it would have to acknowledge how racism, sexism, and other isms have, and continue to neglect impor-

tant contributors/contributions to the field. I will come back to this sentiment in the discussion portion of this chapter.

For now, i want to mention that my experience has been that when the issue of racism and sexism in sociology is considered, two names tend to commonly come up: Jane Addams and W.E.B. Du Bois. And they should. Their contributions to the field of sociology should be recognized despite the American legacy of sexism and racism that has devalued their work. Burawoy mentions them both in the address on public sociology. The Lengermann and Niebrugge text mentions Addams as a better-known contemporary of Wells-Barnett and Cooper. The textbook i use mentions Du Bois specifically as a "neglected founder" of sociology. Yet, where are the Black feminist sociologists? Especially within an academic context in which i've seen growing sociological significance attached to the concept of intersectionality, why is there not also a growing recognition of the Black feminist founders whose work contributed to the very creation of this concept?

The absence of their names and those of other Black feminists and Black feminist sociologists echoes the Black feminist critique of the historically white-washed concerns of mainstream feminism, as well as the often-neglected consideration of gender and sexism when it comes to race and racism. This trajectory of my own informal and formal education has led me to pursue this curiosity further in this project. As i will detail in the next section, as a means to pursue a concrete measure, i decided to conduct a review of popular introductory sociology textbooks regarding their inclusion of Black feminisms and Black feminist sociologists.

Textbook Analysis

Methods

As one way to obtain a concrete measure of whether and to what extent sociology is acknowledging the contributions of Black femi-

nisms and Black feminist sociologists, i decided to conduct an informal search of popular textbooks used in Introduction to Sociology courses. While it is possible that individuals teaching Introduction to Sociology may include material to supplement their textbooks or may not even use a textbook at all—and in no way am i suggesting that this study is a comprehensive reflection of what is taught in all Introduction to Sociology courses—what is included in the most popular textbooks nonetheless says a great deal about what (and who) the field generally values. While i have noticed a lack of attention to Black feminisms and Black feminist sociology in textbooks i'm familiar with, i was interested to see if this is the case for other Introduction to Sociology textbooks.

First, i had to determine what textbooks to use for this analysis. After some searching, i decided to follow the lead of Liu and Szasz (2019). In their 2019 article from *Teaching Sociology*, these authors constructed a sample of "the 11 bestselling Introduction to Sociology textbooks" (2019, 274). The authors consulted with academic publishers to create the list, noting that although "the sales ranking can be messy due to various gaps, [the list] serves the purpose to give us a general picture of the representative popular texts in our field" (2019, 274). This list has since been used in other content analyses of introductory sociology textbooks (e.g., Oyinlade, Christo, and Finch 2020). I have replicated this list in Table 1 below. In this table, i have listed the full original list and ranking of eleven textbooks (from Lui and Szasz 2019) and have indicated which edition i used in this current analysis.

Table 1: Popular Introduction to Sociology Textbooks

Ranking	Author(s)	Book Title	Version (used in my study)
1	Conley	*You May Ask Yourself: An Introduction to Thinking Like a Sociologist*	16th edition, 2019
2	Manza et al.	*The Sociology Project: Introducing the Sociological Imagination*	N/A
3	Benokraitis	SOC 6	6th edition, 2018
4	Macionis	*Sociology*	17th edition, 2019
5	Ritzer	*Introduction to Sociology*	5th edition, 2019
6	Tischler	*Introduction to Sociology*	N/A
7	Thompson	*Society in Focus: An Introduction to Sociology*	9th edition, 2018
8	Ferris and Stein	*The Real World: An Introduction to Sociology*	7th edition, 2020
9	Henslin	*Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*	14th edition, 2019
10	Schaefer	*Sociology*	14th edition, 2022
11	Giddens et al.	*Introduction to Sociology*	12th edition, 2021

As indicated in Table 1, i did not end up using two of the textbooks from this original list of eleven: the second and the sixth entries, as i was unable to obtain the most recent editions of these book at the time of this study. This left me with nine textbooks from this list. I used these nine to conduct a search of keywords. I used the most current edition of each textbook at the time i conducted this study (in 2021), to best align with current scholarship.

In determining what key words to search for to indicate acknowledgement of Black feminisms and Black feminists, it seemed obvious to include: (1) "Black feminism" and (2) "Black feminist" or "Black feminist sociology." I also included the term (3) "intersectionality"—its inclusion would reflect consideration of a concept rooted in Black feminist thought, and i was curious as to whether texts that considered intersectionality would thus also consider Black feminisms. I also decided to include the names: Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Anna Julia Cooper, given their foundational contributions to Black feminist sociology, and that they were the first names i learned in association with Black feminist sociology. This provided me with five search terms: three topics and two names.

For the sake of comparison, i thought that it could be valuable to include another list of terms and people that would commonly be expected in a textbook introduction to sociology. At the top of that list are the three big names commonly associated with foundational theories of sociology: Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Émile Durkheim. I expected the mention of these euro/white founders more frequently than Wells-Barnett or Cooper, but i was curious to see the comparison. Additionally, given that the names of Jane Addams (a white woman) and W.E.B. Du Bois (a Black man) seem to be popular in discussions of sociology's neglected founders, i included these names as well, for the sake of comparison with Wells-Barnett and Cooper. Lastly, i also included the term "feminism" as a point of comparison for coverage of "Black feminism." Thus, this additional search provided me with six more search terms: one topic and five names—for a total of eleven search terms.

Using the nine books indicated by the furthest right column in Table 1, i utilized the index of each to consider their coverage of these eleven terms. I used the main index at the end of each textbook to look up the subjects and names for seven of the nine textbooks. Two of the textbooks (Henslin's and Schaefer's) contained an index of topics and names, thus i utilized both indexes (using the name index for Wells-Barnett, Cooper, Addams, Du Bois, Marx,

Durkheim, and Weber, and the subject index for intersectionality, Black feminism, Black feminist sociology, and feminism).

My search for a few of these entries included variations. In looking up index entries for Ida B. Wells-Barnett i included variations of her last name (i.e., Wells, Barnett, Wells-Barnett). For Marx, i also included entries in the index under "Marxism" for textbooks which included Marxism instead of or in addition to the name Karl Marx. For "intersectionality" two textbooks lacked an exact entry but included a close variation that i did include in the count (intersectional theory and intersectionalities). One textbook did not include entries for "Black feminism" or "Black feminist sociology," but did have an entry for "Black feminist thought," which was included. In a few texts, slight variations for "feminism" were also present (e.g., "feminist theories").

I first recorded the total number of entries for each name/subject. I counted each entry as each page entry in the index under each name/subject, whether one page or multiple pages (i.e., an entry of page 4 was included as one entry, and an entry of page 10–12 was also included as one entry). I tallied all entries under each search term, including sub-entries (for example, the entry "feminism" and a subentry underneath "and compensation for housework"). I then added a count of how many pages these entries covered—for example, a line of entries such as: 4, 10–12, 20, would be considered 5 pages (although only 3 entries); any repeated page numbers under each entry were only counted once. I felt both measures were important to include, with the number of entries showing the frequency of mentions and the page numbers suggesting the length/depth of those entries. Table 2 presents the overall tally of results. The search results in this table comprise two main columns; after each search term, the first number listed is the total number of entries, and the second number listed is the total number of page numbers represented in those entries. Where entries for intersectionality, Black feminisms, and feminism were slight variations of those terms, this is indicated by the specific entries in parentheses.

Table 2: Summary Results of Textbook Searches

Author(s)	Book Title	Search Results (# of entries total / # of pages represented in entries)					
Conley	*You May Ask Yourself: An Introduction to Thinking Like a Sociologist*	Intersectionality	3	4	Feminism	22	29
		Black Feminism	0	0	Marx	23	29
		Black Feminist Sociology	0	0	Weber	37	39
		Ida B. Wells-Barnett	0	0	Durkheim	34	37
		Anna Julia Cooper	0	0	W.E.B. Du Bois	6	7
					Jane Addams	4	4
Benokraitis	*SOC 6*	Intersectionality	0	0	(Feminist Theories)	28	46
		Black Feminism	0	0	Marx	5	5
		Black Feminist Sociology	0	0	Weber	5	5
		Ida B. Wells-Barnett	0	0	Durkheim	6	6
		Anna Julia Cooper	0	0	W.E.B. Du Bois	1	1
					Jane Addams	0	0
Macionis	*Sociology*	(Intersection Theory)	2	3	Feminism	20	7
		Black Feminism	0	0	Marx	45	28
		Black Feminist Sociology	0	0	Weber	46	29
		Ida B. Wells-Barnett	0	0	Durkheim	9	10
		Anna Julia Cooper	0	0	W.E.B. Du Bois	6	6
					Jane Addams	2	2

Author	Book	Term			Term		
Ritzer	*Introduction to Sociology*	Intersectionality	2	2	Feminism	2	3
		Black Feminism	0	0	Marx	15	19
		Black Feminist Sociology	0	0	Weber	20	22
		Ida B. Wells-Barnett	1	1	Durkheim	10	14
		Anna Julia Cooper	1	1	W.E.B. Du Bois	3	5
					Jane Addams	0	0
Thompson	*Society in Focus: An Introduction to Sociology*	Intersectionality	2	2	Feminism	1	3
		Black Feminism	0	0	Marx	17	17
		(Black Feminist Thought)	1	1	Weber	6	6
		Ida B. Wells-Barnett	0	0	Durkheim	7	7
		Anna Julia Cooper	0	0	W.E.B. Du Bois	2	1
					Jane Addams	2	1
Ferris and Stein	*The Real World: An Introduction to Sociology*	Intersectionality	11	15	Feminism	4	6
		Black Feminism	0	0	Marx	18	12
		Black Feminist Sociology	0	0	Weber	16	14
		Ida B. Wells-Barnett	0	0	Durkheim	9	8
		Anna Julia Cooper	0	0	W.E.B. Du Bois	5	5
					Jane Addams	3	2

Author	Book	Concept			Theorist		
Henslin	*Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*	Intersectionality	0	0	(Feminists/Feminism)	7	5
		Black Feminism	0	0	Marx	10	10
		Black Feminist Sociology	0	0	Weber	11	11
		Ida B. Wells-Barnett	0	0	Durkheim	6	6
		Anna Julia Cooper	0	0	W.E.B. Du Bois	4	5
					Jane Addams	1	1
Schaefer	*Sociology*	(Intersectionalities)	1	1	Feminism	4	5
		Black Feminism	0	0	Marx	20	22
		Black Feminist Sociology	0	0	Weber	21	26
		Ida B. Wells-Barnett	5	4	Durkheim	18	22
		Anna Julia Cooper	0	0	W.E.B. Du Bois	10	10
					Jane Addams	3	3
Giddens et al.	*Introduction to Sociology*	Intersectionality	2	2	(Feminism & Feminist Theory)	13	16
		Black Feminism	1	2	Marx	23	24
		Black Feminist Sociology	0	0	Weber	21	23
		Ida B. Wells-Barnett	0	0	Durkheim	17	15
		Anna Julia Cooper	0	0	W.E.B. Du Bois	1	1
					Jane Addams	0	0

Results

First, i would like to call attention to the pattern of zeros on the table. Second, i would like to break down some specific considerations of these results.

Black Feminism, Wells-Barnett, and Cooper

Recall that the five terms/names used in relation to Black feminisms were: Black feminism, Black feminist sociology, intersectionality, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Anna Julia Cooper. As depicted in Table 2, of the nine textbooks, two had zero entries across all five. An additional three textbooks had entries for only one of the five—with that one being intersectionality in all three cases. Out of the nine, only two had an entry for Black feminism or Black feminist thought. Out of the nine, only two had entries for Wells-Barnett or Cooper. Of those two, one mentions both, and one mentions Wells-Barnett alone. It is notable that the two texts which do mention these women do not overlap with either of the two textbooks that mention Black feminism.

Intersectionality

Out of the nine textbooks, seven included entries on intersectionality. It is noteworthy to see the term have this relative popularity in this sample of introductory sociology textbooks. It is noteworthy to contextualize that of those seven textbooks, only two also had entries for Black feminism/Black feminist thought, meaning that five textbooks that included entries for intersectionality had zero entries for Black feminisms. One text had eleven entries for intersectionality, yet zero entries for Black feminisms.

Du Bois, Addams, & (white) Feminism

Another component of the results that stood out was a comparison between the terms and names on the left side of the table with

those on the right side. In comparing coverage of Wells-Barnett and Cooper with coverage of Du Bois and Addams: while out of the nine textbooks, two referenced Wells-Barnett and only one referenced both Wells-Barnett and Cooper, all nine textbooks referenced Du Bois and six referenced both Du Bois and Addams.

Another comparison that stood out was between entries for feminism and entries for Black feminism. Recall that only two textbooks included reference to Black feminism/Black feminist thought, yet all nine textbooks included entries for feminism. In other words, while all nine sociology texts included coverage of feminism, seven of those neglected to also consider Black feminisms.

Discussion

Where Are the Black Feminist Sociologists?

While my results represent a small sample, they nonetheless convey some clear patterns, and patterns that find a rich and unfortunate dialogue with other literature regarding the relationship between sociology and Black feminisms. As the results show, the question "where are the Black feminist sociologists?" is a valid one for these textbooks. Out of the nine, only two mentioned Wells-Barnett and only one of those also mentioned Anna Julia Cooper. Thus, out of the nine textbooks, only two have entries for either of these foundational Black feminist sociologists.

Some might try to argue that this neglect is because they are not popularly considered as relevant to the field as the widely considered core trio of sociological thinkers: Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, whose names appear in all nine textbooks in this analysis. Yet, all the textbooks do seem to try to recognize foundational contributions beyond these three—as mentioned, all nine textbooks considered W.E.B. Du Bois and six also considered Jane Addams. Although my informal study focused on index entries, and i did not spend time with how terms and names were contextualized in the text, the disparity between these names in the textbooks nonetheless says a lot.

It is significant that all the textbooks considered Du Bois and most considered Addams, given that racism and sexism have prevented acknowledgement of their contributions (historically and also still presently). Sociology *should* recognize their contributions! As mentioned, i would argue that sociology has a *responsibility to itself* as a discipline to do so. Sociology is defined by the sociological imagination, and the use of that lens is grounded in recognizing the greater context and influence of society. Thus, sociology, and sociologists, have a responsibility to acknowledge how the field has been (and continues to be) influenced by racism, sexism, and other systems of domination, and how these systems have led to the disregard of significant contributors (historically and presently). This is not a new observation.

Decades ago, in his 1977 article, "Black Sociologists: A Critical Analysis," Douglas Davidson warns of sociology's neglect of Black sociologists (i use the present tense here, given this is not a past tense issue). He warns of sociology's failure to recognize the contributions of Black sociologists to the field, and he urges sociology to practice self-reflection and to turn its sociological lens on itself as a field. He asserts that "it is impossible, as I see it, to assess critically the impact and influence of Black sociologists without assessing critically the larger society and the politics of the discipline which purports to study that society" (1977, 46). A true sociology, grounded in the sociological imagination, cannot exempt analysis of itself through this lens, when it is that lens through which it defines itself as a uniquely valuable field. Further, while the sociological imagination requires a critical lens to social contexts, sociology's roots in public sociology demand that power, oppression, and social hierarchies be at the front of that analysis. Can a supposed sociology truly claim that title, while neglecting the inherent responsibility to do so?

Thus, it's important to recognize the significance of the textbooks having entries for Du Bois and Addams. This *is* significant. Yet this can also be true alongside the fact that the neglect of Black women sociologists continues to be a problem that needs to be addressed.

(It's also important to recognize that naming alone does not necessitate full/true appreciation; works like Aldon Morris's "The Scholar Denied: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology" in 2015, continue to shed light on Du Bois's neglected contributions.)

Articles like Gloria Jones-Johnson's "The Victim-Bind Dilemma of Black Female Sociologists in Academe" (1988) call out this continued failure and what it means for Black women in sociology specifically. She details how the neglect and devaluation of knowledge produced by Black women in academia (including sociology) has many facets. While it can play out in the pages of a textbook, Jones-Johnson details how it plays out in real life for Black women faculty. She asserts that "sociological knowledge has assumed both a masculine and white perspective" and details that: "sexist, racist, cultural-bound and middle-class assumptions held by faculty result in the omission of the perspective of women of color, biased teaching, limited learning and myopia in sociological pedagogy" (1988, 315). She further calls out sociology in concluding that "stereotypic perceptions of black females in the social sciences in general, and sociology in particular, are tied into the institutional systems of gender, race, and power relations which represent in microcosm, the society at large. They serve to perpetuate racism, sexism, and classism in academia and the larger society" (1988, 320). Thus, she contextualizes sociology's (mis)treatment of Black women sociologists as a microcosm of a larger society still steeped in racism and sexism. Her depiction aligns with Davidson's in that both implicate sociology's failure to take its own lens to itself and to instead uncritically perpetuate these socially constructed hierarchies.

These works represent just two pieces that show a history of racism and sexism being called out in sociology. I have already mentioned several related entries in Guy-Sheftall's (1995) anthology and would like to also mention Gutiérrez y Muhs et al.'s (2012) *Presumed Incompetent* as just one more example that provides an unfortunate wealth of material regarding experiences of racism and sexism faced by women of color in academia. The reality of this problematic con-

text aligns with one that would not value Black feminist thought or the contributions of Black feminists.

Rose Brewer's (1989) "Black Women and Feminist Sociology: The Emerging Perspective," provides an intriguing and critical lens to the specific relationship between sociology and Black feminist thought. She sets this up by providing a review of sociology's evolution as a field through a trajectory of three major critiques the field has internally faced. Although i won't thoroughly review those here, i do want to highlight Brewer's description of "two overarching strands" that have been a theme through these critiques. She identifies the first theme as "a) the conflict between a value-free and a value-engaged perspective," and identifies the second theme as, "b) the conflict between positivism and antipositivism" (1989, 58). The value-free perspective of sociology aligns with the idea that sociology is/can be objective whereas the value-engaged perspective recognizes its subjectivities (subjectivities that, again, influence ideas of "knowledge"—as pointed out by Lorde and Ewing). She describes this first conflict as rooted in the history of the conflict between positivism and antipositivism. She explains the value-engaged perspective as a critical one, and one that recognizes that "so long as conflict of interests exist, knowledge will remain affected and distorted by them" (1989, 58). In this consideration, Brewer even specifies Mills's work on the sociological imagination as a reflection of his "opposition to a value-free perspective" (1989, 58) This critique finds similarities in Davidson's call for sociology's reflexivity.

From these initial roots, Brewer articulates what she calls the most recent and "'the fourth critique' of American sociology in the past twenty-five years." She describes it as one "centered on the 'intersection of race, class, and gender'" (1989, 57). Major themes of this perspective include: "1) ideas highly critical of the positivist tradition," "2) incorporation of macro realities," "3) concern with the interplay between biography and the socio-historical juncture" and, "4) the delineations of intersections, interactions, and interlocks instead of hierarchical dualism" (1989, 67). She describes this "fourth critique" as emerging from Black Feminist thought, and as

the potentially "most transformatory critique" for the field of sociology (1989, 57).

Yet, these characteristics also align with the concepts of the sociological imagination and public sociology. A crux of the sociological imagination is seeing from a bigger picture "macro" perspective (like Brewer's theme #2). As considered earlier, that relationship between biography and history is a prime example of how the sociological imagination understands the world (like Brewer's theme #3). It is aimed toward understanding the complexities of this relationship—not in black and white—but attending to all the multi-faceted layers, including the interconnectedness of social hierarchies—which a public sociology would also be particularly attuned to (like Brewer's theme #4).

From this perspective, the argument can be made that this "fourth critique" sociology is facing, while rooted in Black feminist thought, should also necessarily be heeded and supported given the values intrinsic to the field itself. The overlaps are undeniable. Could it be that sociology's current crisis could also be that juncture at which sociology is forced to decide to either nourish or sever and betray its publicly grounded roots?

If sociology is reflexive, it must recognize its neglected founders. But this must include Black women sociologists like Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Anna Julia Cooper, as well as neglected founders like Du Bois and Addams. If sociology is to practice its own values, it has to call out the mistreatment of Black women (as well as other groups) in academia (see again, Brewer's theme #4). This can't just be an item on a syllabus or a meeting agenda footnote. It must also use that three-dimensional lens to contextualize the greater picture of the academy, and the multitude of related hierarchical layers, including the treatment of adjuncts, graduate students, service workers on campus, etc. A true (and thus truly critical) sociology would acknowledge and amplify the connections between these issues and a public sociology would work to challenge these hierarchies.

Intersectionality without Black Feminists

To add another layer to these considerations, i want to return to another result in my study, concerning intersectionality. As reviewed in the results section, out of the nine textbooks, seven included entries on intersectionality. Recall that, of those seven, only two also had entries on Black feminism/Black feminist thought. As i mentioned, it feels significant that most of the textbooks included coverage of this term and significant that a majority of those don't cover Black feminisms, given that Black feminisms created the concept. Yet, in thinking sociologically to contextualize the world of textbooks as a form of knowledge produced within the academy—this is unsurprising.

Grace Kyungwon Hong's "'The Future of Our Worlds': Black Feminism and the Politics of Knowledge in the University under Globalization" (2008) is one piece that shows why this discrepancy is not surprising. In the article she emphasizes the university's position as an institution within an even larger global economy (similar to points made by Jones-Johnson). Kyungwon Hong elaborates how this positioning intrinsically misaligns the university with Black feminist thought. Yet she also shows how this can be true alongside the university *claiming* to value Black feminist concepts like intersectionality.

Like the chronology of Brewer's timeline of sociology's critiques, Kyungwon Hong considers the development of social analysis (and that of Black feminisms in particular), around the '60s and '70s, and the dynamic between these analyses (and related social movements) and the university. Regarding intersectionality, Kyungwon Hong (2008, 101) emphasizes that:

> While the 1960s and 1970s black feminism's intersectional analytic was, as it is often narrativized, a critique of the sexism within black nationalist movements or of racism within white feminism, we must also understand the larger implications of intersectionality: it was a complete critique of the epistemological formation of the white supremacist

moment of global capital organized around colonial capital-ism.

Thus, in its ability to see the big picture interconnectedness of all forms of oppression, intersectionality was (and is) a lens powerful enough to critique white supremacy and capitalism on a global scale. In connecting back to the works of Lorde and Ewing discussed earlier, Kyungwon Hong is also highlighting how Black feminisms recognize the centrality of the "epistemological foundation," or systems of knowledge, that serve to uphold and perpetuate this system. In other words, analyses critical enough to challenge western claims on knowledge, and relatedly, the very foundation of the western university. Again, as i have stated already, i would argue that this epistemologically grounded reflexivity is also intrinsic to the core of sociology.

Kyungwon Hong elaborates, "the Western European model of the university" was situated in society "as an institution that, as the repository of all validated knowledge, represented Western civilization, and that disseminated through the curriculum its norms as ideals," meaning that "while all universities did not operate similarly, the epistemological structure of Western university education was based on a sense of progress toward a singular and universalizable notion of civilization, represented by a canonical notion of Western culture" (2008, 99). This notion of alignment between progress and a singular, westernized version of culture cannot include Black feminism or Black feminist sociology in its canon, in that "the racial project of Western civilization was always a gendered and sexualized project," (2008, 100) and one that Black feminism is powerfully situated to critique and thus challenge. (See Wynter's [2003] calling out of the inherent and historical racism and sexism of this project, in what she calls "the overrepresentation of man.")

In using our sociological imaginations, we can see how this context of the university in turn influences academic fields like sociology. Or, in Burawoy's terms, we can see professional sociology attempting to suffocate its public roots. Yet, to get back to the

results' discrepancy between intersectionality and Black feminisms, Kyungwon Hong's review also speaks to why, despite the university's rejection of Black feminist values, it can nonetheless benefit from *posturing* as though it values Black feminisms or its concepts, like intersectionality—which is the only thing intersectionality without Black feminisms can be: hollow performance. It can benefit from performing this support so long as it can do so superficially, without any real opportunities for engagement with this body of knowledge; the performance can only go so deep, to ensure that the power of a Black feminist critique can't actually grow legs to stand on (and that the hints of any such developments be cut off at the knees). But why would the university bother pretending at all? Kyungwon Hong (2008, 102) explains such seeming contradictions through the university's response to social movements in the '60s and '70s, which were demanding its transformation:

> I argue that the university's violence toward black feminists is a manifestation of its operations in this new global political economy. . . . As I have argued, the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s rendered untenable the privileging of Western civilization that was the ideological and cultural basis for the earlier, colonial form of globalization. These social movements did so by critiquing Western civilization's foundations in white supremacy. With this critique of white supremacy, the logics of racial management shifted toward the rhetoric and policy of neoliberal multiculturalism, which replaced white supremacy as the dominant logic of contemporary globalization. . . . Accordingly, within the context of the contemporary university where "diversity" is tokenistically but not substantively prioritized, racialized and gendered management currently does not occur solely through the denigration of black feminism and black feminists, but also simultaneously through a form of valorization and fetishization, albeit of a limited and facile type.

In other words, Kyungwon Hong traces the challenges to white

supremacist systems in the 1960s and 1970s as forcing a shift in the western university—one that was addressed in shifting the "logics of racial management" toward a "neoliberal multiculturalism" which performs a response to this critique, *just enough*, to appease *just enough* of the critics, but only *just enough* to maintain a shallowness that impedes possibilities of any real change. Thus, universities that value "diversity and inclusion" in their programming and hires, but that don't address needed structural changes or provide actual institutional supports for students or faculty of color. Thus, textbooks that include intersectionality without Black feminisms. This discrepancy is also considered by Nash's (2019) work that similarly considers, among other issues, how intersectionality has in ways become merely symbolic, and stripped of its significance. Intersectionality is stripped of its power when it becomes only a buzzword, a topic listed on a syllabus, or a bold term in a textbook, severed from its rich history of knowledge—and that is indeed the point.

Concluding Thoughts

In drawing some concluding thoughts on this project, i first want to express gratitude for the opportunity to plan and create it. This project has been an incredible learning experience. This is in part due to the flexibility we have been granted in our projects, as students in a Black feminisms course, to pursue our own engagement with Black feminisms in a way that felt meaningful to us. The freedom to include my own voice here provided me with a personally meaningful and natural entryway into this project that i don't often find in academic spaces. This project has reminded me of the relationship with learning that i strive to create possibilities for, for my own students. The ability to put into narrative my own evolving pedagogy reminds me of why i love teaching. This project has been an opportunity to express my gratitude to the ways that Black feminisms has fostered my growth as a sociologist and teacher of sociology. The opportunity to formulate and organize my thoughts and questions

around the relationship between Black feminisms and sociology has reminded me of what drew me to sociology in the first place.

The results of this study, and the larger discussion around those results, highlights concerns for the field of sociology and its future trajectory. Yet, for me, they also emphasize the importance of continuing to practice the sociological imagination and honoring the sentiments of public sociology—as a sociologist and teacher. They remind of the opportunity to uphold the core values of the field through putting these ideas into practice. That includes honoring the past/current/future contributions of Black feminist sociologists and Black feminisms to the field. That includes emphasizing the importance of related analyses (like that provided by Brewer) for the future of sociology itself. This must also include calling out the neglect/devaluation of knowledge contributed by and discrimination faced by Black feminists and Black women in academia generally.

In concluding this project, it is only clearer to me the extent to which Black feminisms has enriched my development as a teacher and has provided me with invaluable ideas and tools to improve my own teaching and learning. Black feminisms' emphasis on thinking critically, challenging assumptions about knowledge, making space for creativity and art and narrative and stories as knowledge, and appreciating the complex dynamics between the individual and society, are a few aspects that have greatly influenced the ongoing development of my pedagogy.

One of my favorite assignments for my SOC 101 course is one that is currently the semester's final project—and one that is centered in using sociology to challenge standard boundaries of knowledge. It asks students to answer the question, "What does it mean to think sociologically?" in a personally meaningful way, and stresses a preference for the answer to not be provided in a standard academic paper or essay format. I ask students to consider the breadth of the sociological imagination, and the different formats we have seen it take throughout the semester, to encourage their own imagination of possibilities. It is awesome and rewarding to see the projects they

come up with. I have seen music playlists paired with PowerPoint breakdowns of the sociological significance of lyrics. Last semester, i saw a short film set to a musical soundtrack, from the filmed perspective of going through a typical day in that student's life, to highlight the many sociological aspects of our day to day lives that we don't often think about. I have seen students create paintings and collages, write poems, perform songs, draw comic strips about sociology, and beyond. In a recent semester i had a student create an entirely functional "intro to sociology board game" in which using your sociological imagination helped you progress in the game! I love the openness of this assignment because the freedom provides students the space to find excitement in their learning and creating—and this means i also often get to see them, what they like and care about—reflected in the project they choose to pursue. This assignment is just one example of the many facets of my teaching and pedagogy have grown since my first semester teaching nearly ten years ago, many of them influenced by Black feminist thought.

I know that Black feminisms will continue to enrich my development as a sociologist and a teacher. I am grateful for the ways Black feminisms have been significant to that evolution so far, and i know that i have much to learn. I look forward to it. I hope that this small project stands as a testament of my gratitude for the ways that Black feminist thought has helped me to grow and to the hope that one day it won't be necessary to ask: where are the Black feminist sociologists?

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Notes

1. My use of a lower-case first person "i" and capitalization of "Black" are both intentional in decentering whiteness as i engage in reflexivity as a white woman who employs Black feminist theory to theorize systems of oppression which work to benefit me and other white people.

5. Decentering whiteness as the Assumed Norm of Feminisms

or, How Black Feminisms Made Room for Me That "Feminism" Didn't

C. A. BRIMMER

> *If I could take all my parts with me when I go somewhere, and not have to say to one of them, 'No, you stay home tonight, you won't be welcome,' because I'm going to an all-white party where I can be gay, but not Black. Or I'm going to a Black poetry reading, and half the poets are antihomosexual, or thousands of situations where something of what I am cannot come with me. The day all the different parts of me can come along, we would have what I would call a revolution.*
> —Pat Parker, 1999 (*Movement in Black*)

Most of what I know of feminisms has come from women of color, particularly queer Black women who took me under their wings, called me child, and helped, along with my white father and mother, build who I have become. I made my way into these Black women's lives through welcoming, intersectional spaces at conferences and churches that embraced all of the parts of me that wanted to come along.

Black feminisms taught me to bring all of my parts along. Choosing to value lesser known, non-traditional sources—including all of the parts of my own voice and narrative—is rooted in the ways that Black feminisms allow people to bring their whole selves along as the revolution—arguably—becomes increasingly imminent.

In this chapter, I attempt a small version of what Pat Parker called in the above quote, "a revolution." I do this by engaging with Black feminist praxis learned through my moms and through my mentor, Dr. Andrea Baldwin, who not only allowed me to bring my full autistic and ADHD self into the classroom but also encouraged me to do so in class and in the writing of this chapter. You will find that the way this chapter is written follows a non-linear path—sometimes several paths woven together—of time, knowledge, understanding. There are junctions at which I may seem to jump from one subject to another. *Ultimately, this is part of bringing my neurodivergent mind into the room, onto the page, as I have been encouraged to write how I think rather than conform my differences to a cookie-cutter mold of academia.* This chapter about decentering whiteness in feminism by naming white feminisms as white also seeks to decenter neurotypicality, abledness, cisgender identity, and heterosexuality, and so, while I am white, it is written through the praxis of Black feminisms and Black feminist theories that invite and encourage people to bring their full selves into the spaces they inhabit.

I Was Recruited

Prior to meeting the aforementioned women who changed my high school junior life, I had been surrounded by whiteness for most of my corporeal and pallid existence. Just like how the first wave of (white) feminism called for women's suffrage, but all of the women were white, my location in time and space (at best) missed key realities of Black and Brown women. That is not to say that Black women were not also suffragists, but it is to say that the first wave of "feminists" were led by privileged white women who, like their husbands, fathers, and brothers before them, privileged the people whose (most recent) ancestry matched their own pallid skin. I grew up in a primarily white town with a primarily white school system and had at most two non-white teachers in my K-12 education. Until late high school, I was a quiet person who could go days without speaking to someone my age. I would learn at twenty-nine that I

am, and therefore was, autistic. I can remember wanting more representation of LGBTQ+ folks and wishing for Christians who did not try to force you to "pray the gay away" and/or stop taking the medications prescribed by medical doctors because "God heals all for those who repent." Prior to when my adoptive moms came into my life, I just imagined there weren't that many Black lesbians and queer folks in my area—if I thought about the topic at all.

I played softball as a kid, but that didn't last long into teenagerhood as an injury from fourth grade and increasing weight made the game increasingly painful and less enjoyable. I was artistic, wrote poetry, fiction stories, and even an unpublished editorial or two about things that angered me. I was not socially aware, nor caught up on popular culture because I was listening to and watching '60s to mid-'90s music and TV with the adults I interacted with. I had mental health issues that were disabling, such as anxiety, panic attacks, depression, and I alternated between not eating for days and binging on any food items I could get my hands on. I was fat, spatially unaware, constantly off-balance, and exceptionally uncoordinated.

Early on, I didn't know what to think about race; I leaned toward agreeing with my family that we lived in a "post-racial" time. Then the 9/11 attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center happened; there was no mistaking the racism I saw growing from that day, nor the racism and islamophobia I participated in without understanding. I heard of Sikhs and women in hijabs having their head coverings torn off, my parents and their siblings spoke of jihad as though it called for violence toward the United States and its citizens. I was taught that the Muslim child in my fourth-grade class was to be bullied; I saw more than one group of students jump him—I never intervened. Retrospectively, I know that not intervening was participating in racism, and I know I avoided the student rather than befriend him. I knew what was happening was wrong and unethical, but I didn't have the words to explain why nor the social capital to intervene without becoming a target myself. Jump to 2008, where I would start to learn terms like racism, islamopho-

bia, cisheterosexism. I would learn of people's experiences happening now, and everything I had been taught about how far past racism the US had come went out the window. I could not unlearn. I could not go back to sleep.

During high school in Western Massachusetts from 2006–2010, I was involved in queer spaces and activities. I organized the Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA) and watched it grow even after I graduated that year. I had attended LGBTQ+ youth and young-adult-focused conferences and area pride proms that affirmed those whose schools were not always the havens for difference, diversity, and learning they should have been.

I also learned about intergenerational coalitions, tools for event organizing, and facilitating difficult conversations with people who both were and were not ready for them. I saw joy in community at NoHo Pride and at the discrete reunion of the Hideaway lesbian bar, the bar where I also learned older lesbians had rituals to mark community, survival, and mourning. I met trans activists who pushed the boundaries of cissexist beliefs—they existed and were people of faith, they existed and had friends and loving family. These trans activists did not recruit me to be trans; they only taught me I could be, and should be allowed to be, myself. The adults in those spaces looked like me. They were cisgender women and men who were lesbians or gay, depending on the individual chosen vernacular. They were also white, and although we all brought that whiteness with us, we never acknowledged that we were bringing our whiteness with us; no one had ever told us to leave it behind. Just like we never openly or widely acknowledged the people missing from the spaces we created, we simultaneously and exaggeratedly both hyperfocused on and ignored BIPOC folks who occasionally showed up.

I do not recall openly transphobic behaviors in these queer spaces I frequented. However, I recognized a fetishization of drag performers early in my wandering through a peripheral queer world hidden around the centered cisheteronormative one in which my family raised me to exist. Many of the queer adults in the communities I had access to were anti-Christian, having dealt with religious

trauma. At the same time, many of the Christian adults in the faith communities I participated in were, at best, apathetic to LGBTQ+ folks and, at worst, explicitly antagonistic and openly anti-LGBTQ+. For the adults in the latter group, "queer" was not a term of empowerment. It was very clearly a slur flung with vitriol and disgust.

Neither group seemed particularly anti-Black to high-school me as I was barely learning about race at the time. Most of the people in both spaces were white. I cannot recall specific ministries for the anti-LGBTQ+ church to reach out to potential Black members, nor do I remember specific efforts to advertise to communities of color by the LGBTQ+ organizations I interacted with—although the youth and young-adult-focused LGBTQ+ organizations seemed to do a better job of inviting people of color than the anti-queer church did.

Despite being able to enter some queer spaces and knowing some queer adults, even if they were closeted, the primary queer role models I had were found on television. I would stay up late to watch MTV's Logo channel that aired the lesbian comedians whose specials made me look toward a better future as well as the Equality Riders, whose trip around the country to challenge religious-based colleges with anti-LGBTQ+ practices was documented in the film *Equality U* (2008). Also keeping me awake was my mostly unfettered access to library books about people like me by authors I loved. Most of those books prioritized white characters as protagonists and even the gay plots fit a level of cisheteronormativity, but something felt better than nothing. One of the authors I frequently read, Cheryl Rainfield, commented on her work to say that she wrote the books and the characters that she needed as a young person and couldn't find (About Me, para. 12). Authors like Rainfield, Julie Anne Peters, Mayra Lazara Dole, Nancy Garden, and Sara Ryan made it so I wanted less for characters like me.

I did not have a lot of money for the newest technology or fashionable clothes, nor did I clearly understand what was considered "fashionable" for people in my age group at the time. For many reasons, likely including being the weird kid and the "girl in the

rainbow cape," I did not have a lot of friends. The few friends my own age that I did have were often hesitant to be seen with me at school or in public, and while they learned to see many of my quirks and oddities as endearing, our peers did not pursue that knowledge. I felt alone much of the time. Those feelings of loneliness and exclusion were a significant part of why I was drawn to the anti-LGBTQ+ and cis-heterosexist Assemblies of God Church. I was awkward, mentally ill, and dealing with an unconventional and complicated housing and custody situation that led to a Wednesday night non-custodial-parent visitation turning into not seeing my mother for months in ninth grade because she was struggling with my (being out about my) sexuality. As I butted heads with multiple family members over my queerness which no one vocally said they tolerated, never mind accepted, affirmed, or embraced, I increased my advocacy and organizing work at school regarding gender, sexuality, disability, and bullying. For various reasons, I did not have consistent access to much-needed mental health care for my anxiety, panic attacks, depression, and what was diagnosed in my mid-twenties as pre-menstrual dysphoric disorder and being bipolar—complete with suicidal ideation and self-harm.

Packing for New Direction(s)

Before I weave the paths which I somehow took simultaneously further together for you, perhaps now is the time to explain that I do not think in a linear fashion. The paths to my understandings of feminisms and the lines of this narrative may blend together at one moment and be ripped apart in the following ten. I will do my best to give you time markers and directional signs at which you can rest a moment before what still feels like a whirlwind to me continues on the page. I could have written in a single line of thought where everything in the spatial temporality follows in chronological order and aligns neatly. To do so, however, would not be the praxis of the Black feminisms I've come to understand. If this was written in the temporal and spatial linearities of straight, cisgender,

and abled academia, it would instead leave parts of me behind to appease the need for what is commonly the default, and that would be some white-ass and FARTy "feminism" that Black feminisms have helped me move along from.

In high school, I did not know if I was a feminist. The feminists I knew were older feminists who claimed feminist as an identity and did not engage in intergenerational social justice or advocacy work with young folks like me who were often lucky to be invited to events or to participate in campaigns, never mind help develop and organize them. In the early 2000s, Western Massachusetts teens who were queer, POC, disabled, and/or otherwise different became feminists that were never solidly recruited to the movement by the generations of feminists before them/us. They used the internet to learn about feminist beliefs and practices but had few to no feminist role models to engage with in person or to help them engage tools to implement feminist praxis into everyday life.

Above I mentioned the activities I participated in with my high school GSA. One of these was the area college's Queer Straight Alliance (GSA) High School Conference which took place annually in March. The advisor for the college group organizing the event was a plus-size Black woman named Ron'na, who fed energy into the conference and offered information about the college's events that welcomed off-campus community members. She put the resources in our hands to join events like the largest area pride parade and the pride proms at both the college and community-organized events. She and I would see each other in passing at events for several years before a conversation in the parking lot of the local hockey team's pride night connected us. This was a two-hour conversation with our then partners on topics ranging from college to family to coming out, and a public acknowledgement of our true selves passed between us. At the point of this parking lot conversation, I was a senior in high school, living with my biological mother and just trying to figure out what was next in my life. It turned out that this mom, Ron'na, lived two blocks away, and she gave me her number so we could be in clearer communication. It would be a spell of time

before we unofficially adopted each other, and that limbo of time in-between knowing each other and becoming family is where I'll leave my story with her, for now.

My other adoptive moms came from an even less expected place—the church, sort of. During the GSA conference at the college during the spring of my junior year of high school, my would-be mom told me about a day-after-pride prom for LGBTQ+ and ally youth in our area. It was held at a hotel about twenty minutes from my home and so several students from the GSA carpooled to the entrance. These events, like many queer events, had resource tables lining the hallway of the dance room. The local Planned Parenthood representatives offered the typical safe-sex spiels and reminders to get tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. I remember that a second group advertised college scholarships, but it was the last table in the hall, right across from the bathroom and just beyond the last open door to the dance room, that caught my attention.

A masculine presenting, middle-aged Black person with a black shirt and a clergy collar sat there, and he smiled at me. I raised my brows as I read his signage which said the name of a church and how everyone was welcome. I returned the smile awkwardly and walked most of the way into the dance to accompany my friends before turning around, going directly up to him and saying, "Are you try-ing to say you can be gay and Christian?" He responded, "Yes, if you want to be." I laughed and walked away, not for the last time that night. The process repeated, and I kept saying it is not true, that it can't be possible, while he refuted me gently. This could not be pos-sible, and I kept asking him why he was lying—then again walking away from him, frustrated and confused, and worrying because this was not what I had been taught.

The previous fall, I had been attending a primarily white Assem-blies of God church that had recruited me online. They accepted my whiteness; they tended to overlook my lack of funds for the tithing plate as I was a high schooler whose guardians only very reluctantly allowed them to come to church. Because of this reluctance, my

parents were not going to give pocket money for me to tithe. But if I had money, I was more than gently coaxed into putting it into the plate they passed around the sanctuary rather than buying food to replace the meals I missed at home by being there. Church members often provided transportation to and from services and activities under the belief that it was an act of their ministry to keep me going to church so I could move away from sin.

Perhaps it doesn't sound like a bad place, really. At times, it even felt like a community. However, they also pushed me to "turn away" from my path of homosexuality and said if I prayed very hard and repented of my sins, the god of their understanding would take away my mental illness and help me stay not-gay even if I was not straight. They pushed me to feminize my behaviors, speaking voice, and clothes in order to follow some supposedly capital-g-god-given rule of women submitting to and not leading their husbands, fathers, or brothers astray through immodest dress and behaviors.

I was living a double life—not gay at church and very queer at school, where I advocated as the president of the GSA to make school safer for all students regardless of sexuality, gender, or ability. In Audre Lorde's words, I was trying very hard to dismantle the master's house with the master's tools (1981). Where the church argued that they pushed me out of their love for me, I argued that all I had ever done was love too. When they quoted the King James Version of the Bible, I read parts of my New International Version back at them. I did not have Clobber Passages memorized to return to them; I am not sure there are Clobber Passages for cisheterosexual folks who hate more than love and hide behind a motto of "love the sinner, hate the sin." What I did have, however, was, "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13). Perhaps it was toxic positivity; perhaps I had hoped that I could fix with love whatever hurt these folks experienced that made them believe I would be better off dead than any kind of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

I tried to fight back with their holy book, even as I found it

less holy and more distressing, with each conversation pushing me on what the senior pastor's wife called "the gay issue." So, I kept secrets and hid who I was. I prayed every day for my own peace and the church leaders' understanding that being gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, queer was just as much of god as their cisheteronormativity. My actions and advocacy with the GSA would result in the church asking me to leave, saying, "we're concerned about your motives and feel the need to protect other children from you." As they continued talking at me, they explained how I must have been faking my tears at the altar and my efforts to help others. I became angrier and angrier. I had been trying to be straight for them, for a god I was not sure would love me anyway because they said that god lets bad things happen to people who sin, and I was told my sins would be punished. At the same time, I knew in my heart that I couldn't change who I was. Looking back, I felt like one day; if only I could change, I could maybe have a community that I had never really known.

In truth, though, they recruited me online, and all I ever did was say that, yes, even LGBTQ+ people are beloved children of God. Somehow, reading the same Bible, we all walked away with different messages. The Assemblies of God church pushed me away with the notion that their understanding of god was right, and he—always "he"—was adamantly against my love, gender expression, and general queerness, including my strong dislike of men telling me what to do, despite never "acting on my inclinations or sinful thoughts."

I walked away, reminding myself how they wanted to pay for me to go to conversion camp in Texas. Even as I let the feminisms my moms taught me sink in, I kept putting myself in harm's way, thinking that changing one mind, one heart, would be worth it. Every time I went back to that church, I left with my heart-soul hurting, and my moms set aside their judgments, helped me to pick up the pieces, and reconstructed me with love. I walked away and into a community that was radically inclusive. The pastor at the pride prom had given me his card, and I had kept it somehow in a place I could actually find it. Six months after we had met, I emailed him

and asked if he still believed God could love me because I did not forget what he said even as I was bombarded with messages of hate by others. Arrangements were made for me to get a ride to the monthly service that this pastor and his colleagues called Recovering the Promise Ministries (RTP). It was there that I met two more women who would become my moms, Charla and Theresa. They took me under their wings and taught me that the god of my understanding did not hate me in the way the god of the Assemblies of God church supposedly did.

Before joining RTP, I had no clear recollection of queer, woman, or queer-woman pastors in any denomination. The Assemblies of God church that accused me of recruiting children actively set women apart, and not in a good way. Women were denied roles in leadership outside of worship team singers, nursery attendants, greeters, and women and girls' ministries. For these women, submission to their husbands or other close male relatives was required. Any contact of a romantic or sexual nature outside of marriage was shameful. Being fat was shameful. It was, after all, a church that asked parents of a disabled autistic child to take the child and leave service and which actively told many people that their identities, illnesses, and injuries would be healed if only we turned away from our sin as they quoted: "Narrow is the path to the kingdom of heaven" and "Wives submit to your husbands" at us.

Recovering the Promise Ministries actively challenged every last part of the doctrine that set our differences apart while still recognizing each congregant as whole humans with intersectional lives. RTP was officially affiliated with The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM) but in the beginning, they used the majestic, if old, building of a United Church of Christ congregation. Pastor Charla, the mom I call(ed) Preacher, was a student at an eastern Massachusetts theological seminary, along with the minister from prom, who had co-founded RTP as a radically inclusive community of Christ followers. Both RTP and TFAM were organizations primarily composed of people of color. The TFAM website states that they are a "multi-denominational group of primarily African American Christ-

ian leaders and laity representing churches and faith-based organizations from the USA, Africa, and Mexico" and that the "overriding purpose of The Fellowship is to support religious leaders and laity in moving toward a theology of radical inclusivity which, by its very nature, requires an equally radical social ministry reaching to the furthest margins of society to serve all in need without prejudice or discrimination" (2018). The meeting point of Black queer faiths and radical inclusivity showed me intersectional Black feminisms in action.

Both the TFAM and RTP missions openly affirmed my queer, neurodivergent, physically disabled, tattooed, trans, fat, mentally ill self. Room was already made for me when I first attended, and not a closet. It was a room where all of my parts could come along—even the ones that did not believe like Preacher, her wife, and her colleagues did. I struggled with the double standard belief that even if my god loved them as members of the LGBTQ+ community, that same god could never love me because I was a part of that same community. Thus, it became that my experience with these groups—both of which were founded in progressive thinking and developed out of Black and Queer feminisms and a higher power of radically inclusive love—that taught me not all "feminisms" are exclusive of marginalized identities without the power and (social) capital to make change.

Riding the Waves

I was raised in a way that "dominant," "normative," and "privileged" identities were the default or assumed. The history classes I took at my western Massachusetts public school had shown me the ways that white men, in particular heterosexual and cisgender white men, were understood as the norm. I was eighteen and a first year in college when I was introduced to Howard Zinn, and while I knew queer histories and people were "deviant" from those "dominant" and "privileged" identities, I began to further realize that it was

my job to investigate power, privilege, and oppression related to grounds other than minoritized sexual and gender statuses.

Since the 1970s, feminists of many varying identities have said that the personal is political. In February of 1982, the Black lesbian woman, poet, scholar, and activist Audre Lorde told us that there are no single-issue struggles because we do not lead single issue lives. Black feminisms showed me Lorde's words to be true and the many ways I learned I could bring all of my parts along to both have—and possibly create—a revolution. The second wave of (white) feminism focused on the sexual liberation of repressed white women, white women's right to work, and their right to equal pay. Black feminist women also continued on with an intersectional approach to feminism that allowed them to bring both their Blackness and womanness with them when the civil rights and feminist movements of the '60s and '70s let them down. For some Black feminists, even their lesbian identities were allowed to join the fray as Black lesbian feminism also grew out of this time. The third wave of (white) feminism led to the recognition of gender as a social construct with certain attributes and items being male, certain attributes and items being female, and some being associated with both sides of the binary. White feminists and the dominant patriarchal power structure all worked to maintain a rigid understanding of a binaristic gender construct even as gay, lesbian, queer, and trans liberation movements further challenged the notion of binary altogether. In the meantime, Black feminists were again situated at the edge of womanhood and at the edge of Blackness, where womanhood separated them in other ways.

The fourth wave of (white) feminism began around 2012 and focused on sexual harassment/violence, rape culture, and body shaming/body positivity targeted primarily toward white women and girls. Black feminists of the fourth wave era were, and are, still separated from the benefits of white feminisms; many fight oppression and violence on multiple fronts as some combination of Black woman, mother, sibling, working class, queer, and other facets of identity linked inherently to systems of oppression including inter-

nalized oppression. As this wave of (white) feminists pursue an end to the violences of sexual harassment/abuse, rape culture, intimate partner violence, and body shaming, there are other violences that need to be addressed. In 1978, Lorde's "Power" was published in a collection of her poetry. In that poem she says: "The difference between poetry and rhetoric/is being ready to kill/yourself/instead of your children" (Lorde 1978).

For Lorde, the poetry is choosing the future that is your children and rhetoric is choosing yourself. After more than forty years, Lorde's poem still rings true for Black feminist movements that recognize "we do not live single issue lives" (Black Past 2012) It rings true as Black mothers must still teach their Black children to be careful around those sworn to "serve and protect." It rings true as trans people live on business and government timelines fighting for "hormonal and surgical interventions [that] can be lifesaving" to be covered while also not being able to trust first responders when the violence turns against us, so we try to help ourselves (Bennett 2018; Trans Lifeline 2020). It is possible, however, that the dominant act of violence all along has been to make us choose between ourselves as the present and our children as the future.

These violences are often why so many of us still try to leave some of our parts at home. To use my own life as an example: the LGBTQ+ person who goes to church pretending to be straight or cisgender to avoid damnation; the neurodivergent person who exhausts themselves working in excess to think and write in a neurotypically linear way. The fat person or the person with scars who hides those features because shame comes from all sides, including inside—when the violence comes from within.

To internalize the systems of oppression which keep us marginalized is violence, as is leaving any of our parts at home is a violence because instilling fear or shame is violence. Lorde said "I have not been able to touch the destruction/within me./But unless I learn to use/the difference between poetry and rhetoric/my power too will run corrupt as poisonous mold" (TFAM 2018). To be the perpetrator of violences that choke ourselves out—to have taken in so many

-isms that we become increasingly willing to martyr ourselves for poetry, for the future, is not unheard of.

As Lorde wrote and published the poem she titled "Power," Black people of all genders and ages—men, women, nonbinary and trans folks, from newborns to centenarians—were facing historic, open, and documented violence by government officials and enforcers. That has not changed. If anything, acts of violence by the state and privileged racists are more heavily documented than ever before and violence—recorded or not—has led to the #BlackLivesMatter movement and continued a decades-long series of protests and uprisings against systemic racism. Meanwhile, Black and Brown women and people, queer and disabled women and people, women and people from across the stratified system of marginalization and oppression, still work despite environmental racism, institutional racism, continued unfair pay practices, and further decreased access to resources necessary for thriving.

Understandings of spatial and temporal markers have always been annotated by one identity category or another. White feminists marked the time span as they fought for their suffrage by race, and they'd eventually label the time frame as the first wave of (white) feminism, as discussed above. Much like the twists in the paths of this paper, queer and straight time and space as well moved in and out of touch, sometimes running parallel, sometimes one falling behind as they were stuck in time of cisheterosexism, and sometimes one would run over the other with seemingly no fears, tears, apologies, or regrets. Through the competing narratives and histories which always seemed to leave something or someone behind if not out, crips started to fight in ways most ableds did not think we were capable of.

The privileged often think time just *is*; they exclaim how they have "nothing but time," or how things will move on their schedules. Perhaps this is because they have the power and privilege of controlling time for themselves. We know that marginalized people have their entire lives rearranged by -isms that push or hold us back in time and place. Temporal points of reference are built around

events relevant to dominant identities like white, cisheteronormative, and abled identities. Feminist time—as organized in the wave metaphor—is no exception. It too is based on these markers of power and privilege. Recognizing these temporal disturbances becomes vital to understanding who had time enough to bring all of their parts along to the "feminist revolution."

Cooper tells us about the racialized political nature of time, saying "for if it had a race, it would be white. White people own time" (2016) And it's true, white people do own time, just like white "feminists" determined the wave structure of feminist time—but it goes deeper than that. Time is not merely how history is recorded, skipping over less flattering moments at the leisure of white and otherwise empowered peoples. Even the ideas of when time began are altered by the creation of race and whiteness through the creation of Blackness. According to Cooper, "We treat time as though is it timeless, as though it has always been this way, as though it doesn't have a political history bound up with the plunder of indigenous lands, the genocide of indigenous people and the stealing of Africans from their homeland" (2016) People in power erase time in the narratives of violence they do not speak against and the time they do not acknowledge as being temporally vital to the development of a racist culture.

People with power accuse the marginalized of stealing time when focus is drawn to the identities they (help) oppress. "When is white history month?" "Why do the gays get a parade?" "Why are we waiting for the disabled person? They'll catch up." Drawing focus to our absence from the everyday, from the mainstream and not "elective" content, challenges their dominance. By taking time to recognize all of our parts, we push back against erasure.

We push back in protests that block roadways, delay business openings, and stall production lines—protests that interrupt the dominant everyday narratives of the privileged and empowered, rerouting and rescheduling their lives push back against willful ignorance of our fights for equity and to bring all of our parts along. Changing the plans of the powerful changes history by making it

harder to bar the oppressed from records of the world. For example, as HIV rapidly spread among gay men in the United States, and Congress took their time to debate and interview witnesses regarding healthcare and interventions for impacted parties, the group ACT UP acted on a strong desire to interrupt procedure. In the process of protesting to save lives, ACT UP "came to be known as an activist group that employed disruptive, unruly, and often highly performative modes of protest in public spaces" (Brouwer 2013, 170–71). Many methods of protest—like sit-ins, die-ins, and unscheduled marches that block roadways in order to demand attention to the persistent need for justice and change—reroute the lives of individual and organizational targets in both spatial and temporal ways. The difference is that rerouting is, most often, temporary.

Mills argues that the life expectancy of Black people "has been diminished by these temporal deprivations, we can then say that the time *they would have had* has been removed" (2014, 28). By taking their time to grant rights to oppressed peoples, the life expectancies of those peoples are shortened. They are shortened by the broad spectrum of discriminatory acts we face and by the health effects of stress caused by fighting those discriminations. The lives of the marginalized are shortened in the ongoing fights for rights and to be seen as human. Life expectancies of the multiply marginalized are shortened in the writing of histories that ignore our births and deaths and which refuse to acknowledge the decreased time in-between the dates on our headstones—if we get a headstone at all. They are shortened by our mental, spiritual, and physical deaths. Being oppressed is passive murder by comorbidities that takes marginalized lives too soon. In many ways—regardless of whether we are actively killed or not—the oppressed cannot fully live while unable to bring all of our parts with us when we go somewhere. In this system of power imbalances and institutional -isms, these deaths are violence. Even our homes are sites where all of our parts cannot always come along.

Time and space are not only white; they are straight—and cisgender, though that topic is its own to be addressed. In his discussion

of queer futurities, Muñoz states that "Straight time tells us that there is no future but the here and now of our everyday life. The only futurity promised is that of reproductive majoritarian heterosexuality" (2019, 22). In other words, one task addressed by straight time is marking lives with the heteronormative stepping stones of reproduction. Even these stepping stones make assumptions about the racialized (white), medicalized/ableized (typicalized reproductive development/not reproductively sterile and able-bodiedness), classed, and gendered/sexed (cisgender and non-intersex) understandings of bodies.

Straight time assumes reproduction as an inevitability, as the rhetoric Lorde references in "Power." The complication is, however, that for a number of both chosen and imposed reasons, not everyone will follow or exist in "straight" time. I'm reproductively sterile, for a reason imposed on me by my hormonal health and safety; however, it was also a choice I made as a nonbinary-trans person to ease gender dysphoria instead of continuing to try medications that failed to stop menstruation. By virtue of my reproductive sterility due to gender and health, then, I am already outside of straight time. Add to that a literal deviance from straightness, as I do not partner with people who can impregnate me. This positionality in queer time sets me apart. It often reminds me of the parts I sometimes cannot bring with me when I go places, but, usually, all of my parts can stay with me when I stay home. I say usually because as I wrote this chapter during the tail end of the COVID-19 semester that was Spring 2021, there was a knock on my front door that reminded me even the safest of places cannot guarantee our safety.

I had just finished writing about how my moms taught me that all of my parts could come along when I was with them when an unexpected knock on my door interrupted my train of thought. When I opened that door I saw a shorter white male, receding hairline, just longer than scruffy facial hair, no mask, and a book and papers in his hand. His purpose was to share information on his church and online ministry. The short version of this story is that I asked if LGBTQ+ folks were welcome twice. The first time, he did not hear

me. The second time, he referenced the King James translation of the Bible in his hand which told me what I needed to know, so I began to back into my house to hear him say, "Jesus died for your sins." It would have been, not a long time ago, that I would have backed down, let him spill his hate, internalized it and believed that god hated me. That particular day I refused to let it go. "I know Jesus died for my sins. But who I love is not a sin." And the argument ensued where he assured me that it was, and I told him, "No. Because god is love. God loves love. Above all these is love." I pulled a deep breath through my nose, "You need to take your flyer back and go." He tried to say something else, and he barely got a syllable out as I again said, "No." I looked at him, pushed my door open farther and said, "You need to go. You need to get off my porch and go."

As he told me he'd pray for me, my anger raged harder, farther, higher; but I stepped backward into my house instead of forward to chase him out. I stepped into the place all my parts should always be allowed to be brought along. I worked to remember that it wasn't true, that the god of my understanding does not hate people for love because that god is of love, is love. I raged and wrote a Facebook post, I texted a friend, I made a six-TikTok series and at the end reminded people that god is of love. But in all of that ranting, there were parts of me I felt that I had to leave behind.

On Facebook, I left out how I panicked when I noticed that he wasn't wearing a mask because COVID-19 exists and my lungs and immune system are weak. In my text to my friend, I left out that my self-worth and mental health made me doubt I was worthy of my god's or anyone else's love as a nonbinary queer person. And in the TikTok videos, I left out how my first response was anger because, as an autistic, I have always been shamed for not controlling my emotions. All of me wanted to chase him out in hate with the hate he was spreading. Once upon a time, my anger would have won. But that day, I told others they are loved.

New Destinations and Revolutionary New

Understandings

In outlining the (white) feminist wave metaphor I realized a great deal about white feminisms, Black feminisms, the spatiotemporal nature of feminisms, and how Black feminisms made room in time and space for me to bring all of my parts along, at least most of the time. The lack of an intersectional approach to feminism by white feminist "leaders" meant that the target these waves were supposed to crash over rarely, if ever, included Black or Brown women or other marginalized and oppressed peoples.

I understand feminism to be advocacy for gender equity in all of the ways gender is understood, including through lenses of race, class, ability, education, faith, sexual or romantic orientations, and more. Yet, in my experiences of white feminisms, they never engaged all of me in conversations about, or advocacy for, spaces for gender equity. Meanwhile, Black feminisms made room for multiply marginalized people like me to bring all of our parts into the temporal and spatial fields of the fight for gender equity and liberation. They do not ask us to be only part of ourselves and even hope for all of our parts to be in the room.

In the same ways that all the women became/are white, feminisms are understood as being white by default and distinctions are drawn specifically to highlight "Black feminisms." Even in gender and feminist studies programs, we take classes in "feminist theories" and in "Black feminist theories." The former is a core course, and the latter is almost always an elective; in other words, it is optional, as if leaving some identities out of our studies about—and the fight for—gender equity is acceptable or encouraged.

Black feminists taught me that feminism means bringing all of my parts along; it means recognizing my whiteness and privilege along with the parts I sometimes try to hide altogether. My moms—Ron'na, Theresa, and Preacher—are Black women who believe in equity across all identities, even as they navigate white-as-default feminisms and the precarity of those (white) feminisms overrunning other kinds of feminisms. As waves of (white) feminism progressed

linearly across time, other paths toward gender equity traveled by Black and Brown, LGBTQ+, disabled, poor, and food-and-housing-insecure folks conjoined, diverged, hit potholes and detours, ran, backtracked, and rose and fell to come to a temporal-spatial reality that makes room for whole persons of marginalized identities, theories and praxes, experiences, and understandings.

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6. "All That You Touch You Change"

Black Feminisms and Theatrical Intimacy Direction, On and Offstage

RACHEL NUNN

People of color have earned the right to be investigated, celebrated, and protected on stage through proper time and research into what makes us behave, act, and react the way we do in intimate situations.
—Ann James, Founder of Intimacy Coordinators of Color

When I first learned about the craft of theatrical intimacy direction circa 2017, I wondered "how have I gone so long without this?" I think back to my first onstage kiss. I was twenty, a college freshman, and was scripted to passionately kiss a fellow actress in a sexually charged scene. I bumbled my way through direction like "be sexier," or "act like you want it," direction that assumed that I was comfortable drawing on personal experience (and that I had experience on which to draw). Direction like this also assumed that the director and I had shared definitions of "sexy" or what it looks like to "want it," when we almost certainly didn't. In contrast, the first time I worked with an intimacy director, she listened to the director explain what he wanted from the scene and then worked with my scene partner and me to translate that into a series of choreographed movements, consulting with me along the way about what was feeling right and encouraging me to voice my boundaries. This took the awkwardness of playing "sexy" (whatever that means) out of the equation and allowed me the freedom to approach the scene from a character-driven place instead. Through intimacy direction practices, I felt empowered to listen to my own body in ways I never had before. I felt like I had the tools to investigate my own needs

and advocate for myself in rooms where my well-being might not be centered.

I am a white, cisgender actress, and while I have undoubtedly been in rehearsal rooms that did not center my well-being, I am aware that the oppression I have experienced still bears the privilege of whiteness. While intimacy direction is an inherently anti-oppressive practice, the field is currently in the process of asking "whose oppression are we centering?" and more specifically, "why are intimacy directors primarily white women? Whose oppression is being de-prioritized because of this?" As intimacy director Kaja Dunn observes: "If we're talking about consent, and if we're talking about empowerment, then at the center of that discussion should be people of color" (Fairfield 2019, 82). The ideas of Black feminist thinkers show up repeatedly in intimacy direction's principles, suggesting that intimacy direction is already an application of Black feminisms, and that the input of Black women is essential to intimacy direction's continued evolution. This chapter puts theatrical intimacy direction in conversation with the liberatory theories of Black feminist thinkers—Audre Lorde, Hortense Spillers, Brittany Cooper, and others—to further explore the complexities of telling intimate stories onstage with Black women's bodies and to join the argument for more Black women's leadership in intimacy direction. I also suggest how a Black feminist intimacy direction could be a tool for dismantling white patriarchal modes of oppression at the structural level of white American theatre organizations. By observing the values of intimacy direction through a Black feminist lens, I argue that a set of anti-oppression values emerge, which have the potential to extend to both the onstage and offstage spaces of the American theatre.

This chapter's title draws from one of the canon's preeminent Black feminist visionaries: Octavia Butler. In her Afrofuturist novel *The Parable of the Sower*, she writes "all that you touch you change; all that you change changes you" (Butler 2000, 11). I discuss relationships with both touch and change through intimacy direction in this chapter; intimacy direction offers an opportunity to change how we

tell stories through touch and might even offer broader opportunities to change the American theatre landscape—the microcosm to the macrocosm. "All that you change changes you" reflects how both intimacy direction and Black feminisms are rooted in praxis; as American theatre-makers work to diversify and change the field of intimacy direction, incorporating a Black feminist lens, my most sincere hope is that we will be changed by it.

An Overview of Intimacy Direction

Intimacy direction is "the codified system for choreographing and performing scenes of intimacy on stage [intimacy could refer to kissing, simulated sexual intercourse, other sexual acts, or even abuse/violence that is sexual in nature]. This unique method allows for the creation of specific and repeatable choreography that effectively realizes the director's vision while prioritizing the safety and confidence of all those involved in the production" (Intimacy Directors and Coordinators, 2021). Intimacy directors self-identify as actor advocates; they bring tools and language into the rehearsal room that allow actors to self-advocate. Intimacy director Cara Rawlings agrees that an important goal of intimacy direction is "to disrupt power structures and center actors' personal agency, physical autonomy, choice and voice in creating the images and stories they are performing." It is a practice that centers embodied knowledge, decentralizes power, and resists oppression. As I will explore throughout this chapter, anti-oppression practices would do well to look to Black feminist theorists, who have been thinking through oppression and its opposites for centuries.

Setting the Stage: Notes on This Chapter

In this chapter, I am looking specifically at intimacy direction practiced in the US, acknowledging that there is a robust practice co-evolving overseas as well. I am specifying in this way so as to examine America's own unique racial trauma and history with racial

slavery and the harmful tropes that are specific to African American womanhood. I use the term "woman" throughout this chapter to broadly refer to persons who identify as women, assigned at birth or otherwise. I acknowledge that there are specific harms that non-binary, trans, or gender fluid Black actors undergo that intimacy direction may help address and honor the need for additional research that zeroes in on this topic. I also use the terms "actor" and "actress" throughout, with "actress" referring to woman-identifying actors, and "actor" standing in as a gender-inclusive term rather than referring only to actors who identify as men. I am also looking primarily at intimacy direction for stage, rather than intimacy coordination, its TV and film twin. However, I pull quotes and ideas that span both disciplines, acknowledging that while there are key differences the underlying values are the same.

While I am detailing what this chapter does *not* focus on, I also invoke the expansive nature of Black feminisms and the Combahee River Collective's notion that "if Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression" (1983, para 19). Intimacy direction is a liberatory and empowering practice, and I argue that its application to any group of oppressed persons has implications for other oppressed groups.

Intimacy Direction and the MeToo Movement

Prior to the introduction of intimacy direction in the mainstream, there were no standard codified procedures for handling the staging of intimacy (kissing, simulated sexual intercourse, sexual abuse/violence, and more) in mainstream American theatre practice, often meaning that actors were told to "go figure it out," or were expected to draw from their own personal experience and assumptions. Intimacy director Tonia Sina, who laid the groundwork for intimacy direction in her work at Virginia Commonwealth University in the mid-2000s, describes the problems she saw with this: "I have been in situations in which . . . the director blocked a very intimate

situation in front of the entire cast, and even more situations in which directors completely avoided any kind of open communication about a scene's sexual content. These situations led to actors' discomfort and misunderstandings" (Sina 2006, 1). In 2016, Intimacy Directors International (IDI), a nonprofit dedicated to promoting this work, was founded by Sina along with stage movement and fight directors Alicia Rodis and Siobhan Richardson (the organization later became Intimacy Directors and Coordinators, or IDC). Although foundational work by Sina and others was being documented as early as 2006, intimacy direction gained visibility in the mainstream around 2017 in the wake of the Harvey Weinstein scandal (Twohey 2017) and actress Alyssa Milano's revival of the phrase "Me, too" as a Twitter hashtag (Charles 2018). #MeToo drew attention to the ways in which intimacy direction is not just about choreography but is about empowering actors to be experts in their own instruments—their bodies. Many intimacy directors categorize themselves, first and foremost, as actor advocates. Intimacy director Sarah Lozoff states, "By creating room for artists to have agency and voice, without fear of punitive action, we are shifting power dynamics in rehearsal halls, and across the theatre landscape" (Ceesay 2019). Furthermore, IDC defines an intimacy director as "a highly interdisciplinary rehearsal room advocate. They are trained rigorously, and act as advocates not just for sexually charged moments of choreography, but also mental health needs and in situations of power dynamics in the room" (Intimacy Directors and Coordinators 2021).

It is critical when examining the evolution of intimacy direction to look at the MeToo movement—in particular, the resurgence that brought down Harvey Weinstein. The MeToo movement was founded in 2006 by a Black woman—survivor and activist Tarana Burke. The website for the movement (www.metoomvmt.org) describes the movement and the MeToo community as "advocates determined to interrupt sexual violence wherever it happens" (2020). Several writers have observed how the MeToo movement became co-opted by white feminists following actress Alyssa

Milano's 2017 hashtag that rocked the entertainment world. In an article on Medium, Thalia Charles writes that "in a movement where pain is universally felt [the MeToo movement], some people's pain is more equal than other people's pain. Frankly, when it comes to the visibility and acknowledgment of pain, women of color will constantly be discredited, ignored, and persecuted" (Charles 2018). Along with others, Charles points out that we have sidelined the exploitation of Black women in MeToo spaces—in spite of the movement being engendered by a Black woman—and contributed to a long history of de-prioritizing and dehumanizing Black women. Charles says:

> Burke and other women of color's exile to the backdrop of [the MeToo movement] is emblematic of second, third, and even fourth wave feminism, where upper-class white women were always the symbols of power within the movement, wielding racism and classism to achieve their ultimate goal of equality with their white male counterparts. The #MeToo movement, as well as the macroscopic feminist campaign, has become whitewashed. (2020)

With a cohort of primarily white women intimacy directors, IDC has the potential to fall into this whitewashed feminist campaign Charles describes. The whiteness of the field has been noted before, but 2020 brought a particularly loud call-to-action in the American theatre. June 2020 saw the publication of an open letter by a decentralized collective of theatre-makers of color, calling themselves We See You White American Theatre. The open letter, framed in the form of strongly worded demands, outlined a list of practices for theatres to adopt if they wanted to work toward an antiracist future for the industry. Of particular note, the letter demands mandatory hiring of intimacy directors for every show, full disclosure of who these intimacy directors are prior to rehearsals ("so that we [actors of color] can avoid subjecting ourselves to working with potentially harmful collaborators"), and "mandatory BIPOC Training" for all intimacy directors (We See You White American Theatre 2020). This

points to the need not just for more widespread use of intimacy directors, but of the need for more culturally competent ones with specific anti-racism training. It is notable that the open letter does not go into detail about what this "BIPOC training" should look like, which speaks to the lack of a widely acknowledged pedagogy around how Blackness intersects with intimacy direction. How could this kind of pedagogy develop when intimacy direction has largely been helmed by white women thus far?

Ann James, whom I quoted at this chapter's outset, is the founder of an organization called Intimacy Coordinators of Color, whose mission is to "support and promote decolonized intimacy education and inclusive hiring practices in the entertainment industry" (Intimacy Directors of Color 2021). James, who is currently pursuing America's first MFA in Performance Pedagogy with an emphasis in Intimacy Direction for People of Color, is one of the theatremakers tackling the question of intimacy direction for persons of color. She compels us to look closely at how intimacy direction is failing to serve some of the constituents it most needs to protect: "In order for actors of color to be protected in this new field [intimacy direction], the systems currently in place need to be reconstructed. We need a new code of ethics on how stories will be told when it comes to people of color and intimacy on stage" (James 2020). Empowering Black actors in rehearsal rooms and intimacy direction are clearly linked, pointing to intimacy direction's potential to diffuse harmful power dynamics in rehearsal and performance spaces.

Developing this "new code of ethics" that James describes must necessarily involve the voices of theatre-makers of color, but currently the field is overwhelmingly white. So why are there disproportionately few intimacy directors of color? The obvious answer to this is the oft-observed whiteness of the American theatre at large. Part and parcel of this problem, as observed by current intimacy directors, is the issue of pipelines. When many white intimacy directors are at the forefront of the field, they pull new talent from their (often homogenous) networks. As James observes, "There is an unfortunate aroma of gatekeeping [in intimacy direction circles].

I have heard certified instructors say they just 'don't know where to look for people of color to train' or that there 'just isn't enough work to go around'" (James 2020). There is a clear connection here to Audre Lorde's observation about academic feminist circles: "why weren't other women of Color found to participate in this conference? Why were two phone calls to me considered a consultation? The answer to these questions is often 'we did not know who to ask,' but that is the same evasion of responsibility . . . that keeps Black women's work out of [academic discourse]" (Lorde 1984a, 113). The "we didn't know anyone who was qualified" argument has effectively kept Black women out of critical decision-making circles for decades.

Over the last year, however, observations about intimacy direction's natural overlap with anti-racist work have been percolating into the broader field of theatrical practice. Theatrical Intimacy Education (TIE), an organization that is working on intimacy direction primarily from a pedagogical standpoint, held a meeting in August 2020 to "gather invited scholars to collaborate on a cross-disciplinary, long-term strategy for developing anti-racist intimacy pedagogy." They called this new initiative The EDIII—or the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Intimacy Initiative. TIE gave the following statement, indicating their awareness of intimacy direction's whiteness:

> TIE's purpose in developing The EDIII is to change who is in the room for conversations about theatrical intimacy . . . by centering the racist, colonialist power structures that prop up inequity in our field. TIE aims to teach an anti-racist intimacy pedagogy to ALL artists for a culturally competent, counter traumatic rehearsal space or classroom and to develop long-term partnerships of value to artists and scholars of color.

A summit launching this initiative had originally been announced in September of 2019 for a March 2020 meeting, but the COVID-19 pandemic caused a delay until August 2020 (Theatrical Intimacy

Education 2020). As of this writing the work of the EDIII is still in its infancy, but these important conversations are being had, and the field seems to be on the precipice of a sea change.

Now that I have outlined the spaces where anti-racist ideals are intersecting with intimacy direction, the purpose of this writing is primarily to turn toward the voices of Black feminist writers and theorists outside of theatre. This writing aims to honor the fact that the principles of intimacy direction are already deeply tied to Black feminist aesthetics is several key ways: intimacy direction as a decentralization of power, intimacy direction as a living and anti-intellectualized praxis that centers the wisdom of the body as truth, and intimacy direction as a tool to explore sensuality as divorced from sexualization. I do return to theatre pedagogy briefly to invoke DeFrantz's and Gonzalez's anthology 2014 *Black Performance Theory*. I use their framework to explore what performing arts-specific theorists have to say about the key tenets of intimacy direction as they are in conversation with Black performance aesthetics.

Black Stage Performance and Black Feminist Intimacy Direction as Wake Work

Before diving in, I want to articulate how I am thinking about a Black feminist intimacy direction practice in terms of Christina Sharpe's "wake work." Wake work is work that takes care with Black histories, reading the incomplete and trauma-ridden archives against the grain and "imagining otherwise" through Black annotation/redaction, and other faculties of the imagination to "aspirate" the Black body (Sharpe 2016). Sharpe defines wake work as "a mode of inhabiting and rupturing this episteme [the incomplete and trauma-ridden archive] with our known lived and un/imaginable lives. With that analytic we might imagine otherwise from what we know now in the wake of slavery" (18–22). The archive Sharpe is referring to is Saidiya Hartman's conception of an archive of harm and erasure beginning with the reductive descriptions of Black persons in slaver's ship logs.

As Hartman says in her essay "Venus in Two Acts," "The libidinal investment in violence is everywhere apparent. . . . What has been said and what can be said about Venus [one such woman erased by the archive] takes for granted the traffic between fact, fantasy, desire, and violence" (Hartman 2008, 5). Hartman introduces the idea of *critical fabulation*, which suggests that we reject the limitations of what the archive gives us and imagine our way into more expansive histories for Venus—a concept that laid the groundwork for Sharpe's "aspiration" (Hartman 11). As a literal act of putting breath and words in the mouths of actors/characters and imagining lives, telling Black stories through stage performance should certainly be a site of wake work. Furthermore, I argue that a Black feminist intimacy direction enables this. As Sharpe says,

> I want to think "the wake" as a problem of and for thought. I want to think "care" as a problem for thought. I want to think care in the wake as a problem of thinking of and for Black non/being in the world. [Wake work] insists and performs that thinking needs care . . . and that thinking and care need to stay in the wake. (5)

Intimacy direction is a practice that centers care, and that enables actors to go to risky and perhaps painful places because it establishes a codified method to approach sensitive performance material. I believe that a Black feminist-informed intimacy direction enables wake work to take place onstage in meaningful ways by centering the needs and safety of the actor in the present moment, as opposed to harming or retraumatizing the actor in the bodily telling of sensitive stories. In this way, intimacy direction may be likened to the performance equivalent of Sharpe's imperative to "write *care*-fully" about Black lives, acknowledging that we are living in the ongoing event of slavery's wake (176). Hartman also recognizes the potential for retraumatization implicit in looking into the "open casket" of Black archives: "Do the possibilities outweigh the dangers of looking (again)?" (Hartman 2008, 4). As a trauma-informed practice that is developed to aid in the telling of sensitive stories without

incurring trauma on the actor, intimacy direction has enormous potential to help actors re-open metaphorical caskets with care—care both for themselves and the material. Sharpe's "aspiration" and Hartman's "critical fabulation" set the stage as I parse the antiblack environment and trauma-ridden archives of the white American theatre that makes Black feminist intimacy direction a necessity.

Intimacy Direction and Audre Lorde's Erotic

Audre Lorde's work has become somewhat synonymous with Black feminist self-empowerment and the dismantling of white patriarchal structures—so it stands to reason that her theories would have a place alongside an emergent practice like Black feminist intimacy direction. While reading through her essays in *Sister Outsider* I found myself nodding emphatically and saying, "yes! That's exactly what intimacy direction is doing for our field!" Lorde's statement that "as women, we have come to distrust that power which rises from our deepest and nonrational knowledge" could have been written for an intimacy direction manifesto (Lorde 1984b, 53). I had the opportunity this semester to practice some basic intimacy direction exercises with Cara Rawlings, an IDC-certified intimacy director and faculty member at Virginia Tech. One of the first exercises we did was around giving consent. We stood facing a partner and practiced asking for and giving (or declining) consent for certain exchanges of touch. "May I put my left hand on your right elbow?" I asked my partner, to which she might say "yes," "no," or give a conditional answer; for example, "yes, but only if you don't squeeze." We practiced another game where we stood in a circle and requested permission to change places with someone else around the circle. The person being asked was encouraged to practice dissent sometimes, and the person asking was encouraged to "breathe and pivot" when this happened—not dwelling on the dissent, but instead accepting it without question and moving on to asking another person. We were practicing listening to our "deepest and nonra-

tional knowledge," and practiced the dissent that is often trained out of women and girls at a young age. Particularly (as I know from my own experience in rehearsal rooms) young actresses are taught that we will be labeled as difficult or demanding if we set physical boundaries. At its best, intimacy direction can be a vehicle for Lorde's erotic as "an assertion of the lifeforce of women," empowering actresses to be in control of their experiences onstage (1984b, 55).

Lorde's discussion of the erotic versus the pornographic in *Uses of the Erotic* is echoed by a phrase from Tonia Sina's thesis, which is widely credited as laying the foundations of intimacy direction: "It is important to realize that there is a difference between sexuality and sensuality, and that sensuality is the more interesting of the two." Sina's thesis documents her early forays into a codified pedagogy for teaching intimacy, drawing from her experience teaching stage combat. She was working with young actors in an undergraduate training program and was constantly witnessing young people with limited sexual experience being asked to perform wildly sexual acts onstage. She describes how young actors, once having trained with her in codified methods of performing sexual intimacy, actually became "sexier" in their roles, more confident in themselves and their bodies (something that I have already noted was true for me). Sina notes that her practice—what evolved into intimacy direction—helped provide language and context to de-pornographize onstage sexual acts and get at what is actually interesting about a scene: "the energy—physical, emotional, spiritual, mental—that exists between the actors" (2006, 2).

Intimacy direction empowers actors to tell stories that require sexual choreography onstage by empowering them to feel confident in their bodily safety, and therefore to focus on the mental and emotional aspect of what being "sexy" looks and feels like. Set choreography for the physical movements of intimacy allows actors to feel safe and focus on the acting objectives in the scene, rather than worrying about where to put their hands. This state of work pro-

moted by intimacy direction could be likened to Lorde's definition of the erotic, as distinct from the pornographic:

> We have often turned away from the exploration and consideration of the erotic as a source of power and information, confusing it with its opposite, the pornographic. . . . When we look the other way from our experience, erotic or otherwise, we use rather than share the feelings of those others who participate in the experience with us. And use without consent of the used is abuse. (Lorde 1984b, 54)

Conversely, when we are in touch with our erotic through the empowerment of intimacy direction work, we can share with fellow actors rather than using them. I had the chance to practice an intimacy direction exercise created by Tonia Sina called "instant chemistry" that aims to do just that. The title of the exercise is a response to that nebulous thing directors always want their actors to find, but rarely know how to ask for: chemistry. In the past, "finding chemistry" as actors has sometimes meant actors developing off-stage relationships; what looks like "chemistry" between characters onstage actually becomes (sometimes harmful) relationships between real people (Campanella 2006). "We're asking people to kiss, to touch mucous membranes together . . . on a purely biological level, the body starts to think it's real," Rawlings observed. She guided a fellow actor and I through the exercise, asking us to stand approximately six feet apart, facing each other, not touching, and simply make eye contact. Guided by a series of prompts from Rawlings, the other actor and I visualized each other at multiple stages of life—the other actor's first time riding a bike, sixteenth birthday, first love, first heartbreak, and so forth. The "first heartbreak" prompt came approximately ten minutes into the exercise, and at this point tears started in my eyes, and I could feel my breathing change; I was able to tap into a deep connection with this other character, although physically connected by nothing more than our eyes. This exercise debunks the myth that chemistry onstage must be created through sexual tension, real or simulated. Rather, chem-

istry can be created between characters through the acknowledgement and exploration of the other person's inner life, or what Lorde might call their erotic.

Intimacy direction connects to the erotic in two distinct ways: first, it applies to finding nonsexual, mental/emotional chemistry with another character; second, it enables actors' physical and emotional security. It is telling that when I first discussed the topic of this chapter with my non-theatre-focused colleagues someone brought up Saturday Night Live's skit about intimacy coordinators (the film and TV version of an intimacy director). In the sketch, two skeevy guys are brought in as the intimacy directors, bringing unwashed modesty garments (clothing that covers genitalia during nude scenes) and some raunchy and uneducated ideas about what the scene requires (Saturday Night Live 2021). The joke works because it capitalizes on what most people think about when they think about choreographed theatrical intimacy: porn. However, the state of work promoted by intimacy direction can be likened much more to Lorde's erotic: a state of feeling empowered to tell stories of physical intimacy because (1) one feels emotionally safe, able to tap into a mental and emotional chemistry rather than one tied to physical bodies, and (2) one feels physically safe, protected by technique that centers the knowledge of the body as truth, and establishes pathways for exiting harmful moments without judgement. In the next section I will dig deeper into the second point and particularly those exit strategies.

"Knowledge, deeply born": Intimacy Direction as an Affirmation of Embodied Knowledge

Intimacy direction intentionally disperses power dynamics in a room, giving actors tools and sanctioned processes to dissent if something feels wrong. Of note is the "feeling" part of that statement; intimacy direction equips actors with processes wherein they do not have to explain or justify their discomfort. In my intimacy

direction practice last semester, we established "exit strategies," an agreed-upon gesture that signals, "I need a minute." An actor could then leave the active scene or the room temporarily with no explanation; a thumbs-up as they left would signal that they just needed a breather and would be back, but if an actor failed to give a thumbs-up the intimacy director might follow after them to see what resources they could offer. Lorde observes that "the considered phrase 'it feels right to me' acknowledges the strength of the erotic into a true knowledge, for what that means is the first and most powerful guiding light toward any understanding . . . knowledge, deeply born" (1984b, 56). Through intimacy practices, Lorde's vision of the erotic can emerge in the rehearsal room because intimacy direction trusts the "deeply born" knowledge of the body without the need for an intellectual defense. This automatically empowers the most likely to be oppressed in a room, because when we place radical trust on that "powerful guiding light" of the erotic, no voice in the room is invalid. I think it is no accident that Lorde uses a stage analogy when talking about the opposite of a life in touch with the erotic: "Recognizing the power of the erotic within our lives can give us the energy to pursue genuine change within our world, rather than merely settling for a shift of characters in the same weary drama" (59). I think intimacy directors would agree: an intimate exchange onstage without the erotic charge enabled by actors feeling safe and empowered would indeed be weary.

"The symbol-making body": Intimacy Direction as a Living Praxis

Praxis and embodied knowledge have a long history in Black feminist theorizations, and the link between embodied knowledge and Black performance has similarly been noted. DeFrantz and Gonzalez (2014), in their book *Black Performance Theory* state that "The gift of performance theory is its distinct attention and indebtedness to the sensory . . . performance theory honors and heightens the grav-

itas of the senses as gateways to the symbol-making body; its sonics, and its existential truths wrapped in art and purpose" (viii). The authors invoke the work of Amiri Baraka and his 1964 essay *The Revolutionary Theatre*, noting that "[Baraka] . . . opened possibilities for defining black performance as process rather than product" (4). This idea of process rather than product has a long tradition in Black feminist work, from the Combahee River Collective's intertwined practice and theorizing (1983) to bell hooks's imperative to practice Black feminisms through teaching (2012). Intimacy direction has a place alongside these theories of praxis, largely through this quality of centering the body as the ultimate authority. Every body will be different, will respond differently, and consent may change from day to day; intimacy direction is built to help performers stay in touch with their own and each other's fluctuating states of being, and to navigate consent as a fluid and revocable concept.

DeFrantz and Gonzalez invoke performance scholar E. Patrick Johnson's work in his essay *Black Performance Studies: Genealogies, Politics, Futures.* They quote Johnson's observation that "black performance has not always been recognized as a site of theorization in the academy," and that "blackness offers a way to rethink performance theory by forcing it to ground itself in praxis, especially within the context of a white supremacist, patriarchal . . . society" (DeFrantz and Gonzalez 2014, 8–9). The concept of grounding in praxis becomes especially important when one considers that many prominent Western acting methods—those developed by Sanford Meisner, Lee Strasburg, and Konstantin Stanislavsky, for example—were engendered by white men. It is inevitable that such methods will leave out certain truths about Black women's bodies that Black actresses must discover through other means. DeFrantz and Gonzalez posit that "The ability to improvise, to think on your feet, is rooted in intuition: gut feeling, muscle memory, the hunch. To feel something is to know it" (184). While all acting methods deal in some way with accessing parts of the body and mind, intimacy direction focuses on listening to and learning from the body rather than compelling the body to do things. Intimacy direction follows the

logic described by DeFrantz and Gonzalez that "theory is not limited to academic or intellectual inquiries. Theories develop through evaluative processes initiated by artists in the moment in which they assess what 'works' about a performance" (7). A practice that empowers actors not just to make intellectual decisions about their performance, but to explore and give voice to decisions that come from their bodies is a practice that, intentionally or not, draws on Black feminisms. Based as it is around tools that equip the actor to listen deeply to their body, intimacy direction offers, potentially, a highly accessible new tool to join the canon of performance theories, creating a holistic and empowering praxis for unlocking the erotic in theatre performance.

"White-girl tears": Intimacy Direction and White Women's Bodies

Brittney Cooper's discussion of "white-girl tears" in her book *Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower* (2018) was a paradigm shift for me as I thought about MeToo and the rise of a largely white feminist-led intimacy direction practice. Cooper describes how "there's a whole political infrastructure designed to protect the sanctity of white women's fears and tears" (177) and how this sanctity of white women's safety goes back to politics that have harmed Black men and have left Black women's safety out of the equation. Referring to the way white women in the antebellum South would sometimes cry rape when caught in consensual sexual relations with Black men, Cooper notes "these white women's tears proved deadly for Black men and black communities . . . in a world where telling a white woman 'no' could lead to as many consequences as telling her 'yes,' surely the social conditions were not ripe for any Black body to freely consent . . ." (178). By looking at how racial politics and white women's tears have wielded power throughout history, it becomes evident how a theatre praxis that is all about enabling consent cannot be helmed just by white women

if Black actors are to be protected as well—and this awareness is surfacing among white intimacy directors. Intimacy director Emily Snyder observes that "since the first pedagogy and best practices of intimacy were created by . . . predominantly white women dealing with the boundaries and needs prevalent among them, even the ways of thinking about and approaching intimacy require further diversification" (Snyder 2020).

"White-girl tears," according to Cooper, have also been used to distract from and devalue the safety of Black women. "Disregard for the bodily autonomy of Black women grew in direct proportion to the social valuation of white femininity," she notes, "after the Civil War white men used white femininity as an excuse to terrorize newly freed [Black] men and women through lynching and rape" (179). This supremacy of white women's safety can be traced back through a long lineage of erasing Black women's abuse, including the co-optation of the MeToo movement. Lest we forget, intimacy direction was not catapulted into the mainstream when Tarana Burke first said "me, too" in 2006; it was not until a white woman, actress Alyssa Milano, revived the phrase in 2017 in the service of protecting white women in the entertainment industry that intimacy direction gained visibility. Invoking Cooper's phrase here is not an attempt to devalue the importance of white actresses' safety in entertainment, but rather to examine whose safety might be being overlooked in the process. As a white woman—helmed movement that has seen immense growth in the wake of Milano's "white-girl tears," intimacy direction needs to take a critical look at who it is protecting, and why. As Thalia Charles indicates in her discussion of the MeToo movement, we need a more expansive view of what sexual abuse victims look like: "[if we define] 'sexual violence victim' or 'sexual violence survivor' as an affluent, attractive, typically heterosexual and cisgendered, white female, then all the survivors who exist outside this oppressive box do not get the proper recognition of their trauma" (Charles 2018). For a practice like intimacy direction that is trauma-informed and trauma-aware, it is important to have an awareness of the way white feminism has historically been too

narrow in its conception of whose trauma deserves acknowledgement and care.

"Plundered, marketed, disposed of": Intimacy Direction and Re-humanizing Black Women's Bodies

Linked to the devaluing of Black women's safety is the conception of Black women as lascivious, subhuman, ungendered and enfleshed beings. Scholars from Cooper to Hortense Spillers to Tamura Lomax and beyond have remarked on "Black women's bodies . . . as hypersexual and excessively vulgar" (Cooper 2018, 177)—a stereotype that should certainly be considered as we talk about portraying Black women's intimacy onstage. In her book *Jezebel Unhinged: Loosing the Female Body in Religion and Culture*, Tamura Lomax invokes Spillers's conception of "pornotroping," in which the Black body is reduced to enfleshed appearance, and its sexuality (not sensuality) is both pathologized and fixated upon: For her argument, Lomax defines pornotroping as "the categorical radiographic seeing of black people in a culture of simultaneous anti- and phobic- blackness" (46).

Lomax talks about "Jezebelian discourse," which is certainly part of James's imperative to study why Black people (in this instance, Black women) behave in certain ways sexually. Lomax uses the image of Jezebel from the Bible to discuss how the Black church—and broadly, Black culture—has pathologized Black women's bodies and sexuality, pointing to the fact that it is the attempt to claim bodily autonomy that demonizes Jezebel: "the details of Jezebel's death note the defeat of the woman who dares to claim autonomy over her own body, beliefs, desires, presentation, politics, and legacy" (91). This reads like the inverse of Lorde's conception of the erotic and the inverse of the bodily empowerment that intimacy work tries to create. This Biblical Jezebelian discourse of the Black church extends into a broader societal pathologizing

of Black women's sexuality through what Lomax calls the "ho-dom narrative": "The metanarrative on whoredom/ho-dom/promiscuity is a sexist social construct . . . aim[ing] to limit, regulate, and redefine black women's and girl's sexuality as threatening and impure . . . as booty (pun intended) to be plundered, marketed, and disposed of" (51). The only other option available to Black women through the false dichotomy of "ho discourse" is the "mammy, a fat . . . asexual, supermothering . . . figure" (48). These are not expansive options for a Black woman's sexuality, and as Lomax notes, these tropes are produced and reproduced in many ways throughout our culture, including (I would add) in our theatrical canon. How can a Black actress hope to feel in touch with her Lordeian erotic in a sexually charged role with so many metanarratives about her sexuality in the room? How might a Black feminist intimacy direction make space for Black actresses to play out Black sexuality in an expansive and stereotype-defying way onstage? By unpacking Lomax's and Cooper's analyses on the complexities of Black women's bodies—particularly as they are compared to and pitted against white women's bodies—we see how an intimacy direction developed through a white feminist lens is likely to fail Black actresses.

Intimacy Direction, Enfleshed Narratives of Black Women, and Complexities of Consent

There are not only cultural stereotypes around Black women's bodies that enter rehearsal rooms, but significant sexual violence and trauma in the histories of Black women's physical bodies. Intimacy director Francesca Betancourt observes that "intimacy direction is not therapy, but there's no such thing as not bringing your trauma into the room" (Snyder 2020); intimacy direction is at its core a trauma-aware pedagogy; in the case of Black women's bodies in rehearsal rooms, this trauma includes not only any direct personal trauma that actors may be carrying, but also historical racial trauma. If we want to engage in wake work on our stages, it is important to

acknowledge the history of "seared, divided, ripped-apart . . . riveted to the ship's hole, fallen, or 'escaped'" Black bodies in slavery (Spillers 1987, 67). In parsing the difference between the erotic and the pornographic, the sensual and the sexual, we must acknowledge the ways Black women in slavery and its afterlives (Hartman 2008) were/are reduced to flesh and stripped of the perceived capability for "inner life" that defines intimacy direction work (Quashie 2012). To return to Sina's quote: "It is important to realize that there is a difference between sexuality and sensuality, and that sensuality is the more interesting of the two." Intimacy direction is a rejection of the pornographic and physical, the strictly enfleshed approach, and instead attempts to create conditions wherein actors can explore the inner life of a character engaged in intimacy as sensuality.

An important part of embracing sensuality versus sexuality, or the erotic versus the pornographic, is the opportunity for consent—an important pillar of intimacy direction. Many Black feminist scholars have pointed to the complexities of consent in enslaved women's relationships with their white masters, and the rape and sexual violence that therefore occurred. "What do we call the liaisons between the enslaved and their masters?" asks Hortense Spillers in a 2016 lecture at Barnard College. In this lecture she parses the term intimacy, and questions whether intimacy can exist in a situation where consent is not possible. She traces the legacy of *partus sequitur ventrem*, the legal doctrine that deemed a child born to an enslaved mother as also enslaved, regardless of paternity. By engaging in intimacy direction work, a practice that is all about giving, receiving, or declining consent, theatre-makers are prioritizing consent and diffusion of power in the rehearsal room. This, I argue, is Black feminist intimacy direction as wake work: acknowledging and devoting, as Ann James says, "proper time and research" to Black women's histories with intimacy, touch, and sexuality.

A Black Feminist Intimacy Direction Lens, Offstage

Thus far I have discussed what a Black feminist lens on intimacy direction may have to offer the field of performance, and some considerations of how intimacy direction, as a praxis of care and consent, can help us live in the wake when telling stories involving Black women's bodies onstage. While I have responded to Ann James's call and begun to suggest, via the voices of Black feminist theorists "what makes [Black people] behave, act, and react the way [they] do in intimate situations," I also acknowledge that this chapter is not an attempt to define what Black feminist intimacy direction should look like in practice. Such an evolution of intimacy direction can and should only be born out of the work and input of Black theatremakers. Instead, I hope for this writing to draw from the scholarly canon of Black feminist theorizing to add to the imperative for more Black women's voices in the developmental circles of intimacy direction.

I now turn to imagining what a Black feminist intimacy direction lens may have to offer the wider field of the white American theatre, *offstage*. I invoke director Emily Snyder's observation that intimacy direction is a field that may be "poised to consider the dual questions of physical needs and systemic reformation" that the white American theatre is reckoning with (Snyder 2020). The events of June 2020 have spurred our field toward a massive shift in how we think about the implicit racism in our administrative structures, our hiring practices, our rehearsal schedules, and more. We See You White American Theatre's thirty page Demands cover practices from working conditions and hiring to compensation to mandatory training for theatre staff, to donor relations, to press considerations, and beyond (BIPOC Demands 2020). I will not go into detail here on what is wrong with the white American theatre at its structural level; the Demands lay this out in clear detail, and it is not my purpose here to investigate or challenge their position. The white American theatre is reckoning—or not—with racism at every level, artistically, administratively, and beyond; but undoubtedly the call

for change is here, and it is urgent. Intimacy direction is already reshaping consensual rehearsal and performance spaces, shifting power dynamics in favor of those who are at risk of being oppressed. I argue that a Black feminist lens on intimacy direction could help "inhabit and rupture" (Sharpe 2016) these harmful systems by centering Black women's voices, consent, care, and embodied knowledge.

As the American theatre attempts to reimagine spaces with equity, diversity, and inclusion in mind, we are realizing how quickly those words can become hollow. Prioritizing the hiring of more racially diverse theatre-makers at every level of our organizations should certainly happen, but as Ann James observes, "rushing to place people of color in leadership positions with limited research into what it means to lead an organization in an anti-racist direction will not promote lasting systemic change" (James 2020). James's quote brings to mind Audre Lorde's famous words: "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (Lorde 1984a, 112). We need to reimagine the American theatre's administrative spaces in ways that move beyond benchmarks, diversity audits, and empty platitudes that stand in for opportunities to make structural change. We need to "think care" into the structures of our theatres (Sharpe 2016, 5). We need to think expansively, generously, holistically, and lovingly; and I argue that the white American theatre needs to turn to and embrace the long legacy of Black feminist discourse in order to do this.

Some major players in the white American theatre are already taking up the mantle. Baltimore Center Stage made theatre headlines in August 2020 when Artistic Director Stephanie Ybarra outlined the ways the theatre was responding to the Demands. This included scaling back from a six-day work week to a five-day week and modifying punishing tech week schedules, among other changes. Ybarra references the Demands in an interview with *American Theatre* magazine, affirming that "the inequities and unhealthy

practices built into the theatrical status quo disproportionately affect and exclude artists of color." This article references several other major theatres thinking about similar changes, and in the months elapsed since August more theatres have joined in. Change is possible when we can think expansively and holistically beyond the models that have been set for so long that we forget who the master is and what his tools are. "The [D]emands really lit a fire under us," Ybarra observes. "We asked ourselves, 'Why can't we just call this policy?' And we didn't have a good answer for why we couldn't do that" (Pierce 2020). By tapping into the kind of expansive, consent-centric mindset that intimacy direction—particularly when paired with Black feminist thinking—can promote, we begin to undo these assumptions of inescapable oppression.

Intimacy directors are already thinking along these lines and are beginning to parse a distinction within the field between the literal choreographing of a kiss or a sexual act and consent-based rooms; "many artists have grown increasingly interested in creating consent-based sets and rehearsal rooms," Snyder observes. "As artists and companies re-examine the failures of their infrastructures and unconscious biases, the lessons learned and challenges so far within the field of intimacy direction may be of particular value." Snyder goes on to note that creating consent-based rooms "includes formulating language for theatre professionals to use regarding boundaries . . . and methods for actors to advocate for themselves" (Snyder 2020). These quotes demonstrate recognition that the theatre is an inherently vulnerable space where power dynamics have the opportunity to run rampant. Whether the stakes are staging a kiss, or negotiating a contract, the principles of intimacy direction can serve as a framework to resist oppression and create consent-based interactions in the American theatre.

To demonstrate how Black feminist thought ties into this, I will once again invoke the Combahee River Collective's theory that Black women's liberation liberates all (1983). "In recognition of Black Women as the originators of the philosophy of intersectionality and origins of the MeToo movement, centering the voices of Black

Women has been integral to this work," writes intimacy director Kaja Dunn of the EDIII summit (Theatrical Intimacy Education 2020). Any work that seeks to defy oppression would do well to incorporate the philosophies of the most oppressed, who have been theorizing about (and practicing) their liberation for centuries. Black feminisms are care-centric, praxis-based, power-diffusing, and center embodied knowing. As the work of the EDIII summit proceeds it will be interesting to see what happens when more people of color—and specifically Black women—are at the helm of developing intimacy practices. Through the EDIII, Theatrical Intimacy Education (TIE) has pledged to donate 100 hours of no-cost service to HBCUs, majority-non-white theatre training programs, and professional Latinx, Asian American, Middle Eastern, Indigenous, and Black Theatres, with the intent to "build relationships in communities that are under-represented or under-supported in intimacy work" (The Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Intimacy Initiative 2020). I hope that as we begin to diversify these intimacy direction spaces that we remember we are not creating from scratch. Black feminists have been writing and speaking for centuries about care-centric praxis, embodied knowledge, and the de-pornographication of Black women's bodies. Black women have suffered oppressions in slavery and its afterlives and have theorized about anti-oppressive ways of being for centuries. We need Black women in the room to theorize toward the future of intimacy direction—and this includes the writings of the Black feminist canon, outside as well as inside the field of theatre and performance studies. By bringing both the ongoing work of Black intimacy directors and the work of Black feminist theorists into these rooms, I believe the field can evolve toward a Black feminist intimacy direction that better serves the future of the American theatre—both on and offstage.

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PART III

BLACK FEMINIST COUNTER NARRATIVES

7. Syncretism, Picong, and Mas

A Two-Faced Resistance in Trinidad & Tobago Carnival

LESLIE ROBERTSON FONCETTE

Mas: Palimpsest of Black Survival

In 2020, I began developing the work that would become *Syncretism, Picong and Mas: A Two-Faced Resistance*, a photo exhibit that examines forms of resistance in Trinidad and Tobago Carnival.[1] This culminated in its inaugural showing at the Biennial Student Juried Exhibit at Perspective Art Gallery at Virginia Tech in autumn of 2021. In the midst of a pandemic, I reflected on the collective loss that we were dealing with as a global society—loss of ways of life, a sense of safety and security, the ability to travel freely (for some), and, more profoundly, of earnings that would catapult many into economic ruin and loss of life due to COVID-19. Suffering and lacking the resources or power to ameliorate the condition is certainly not universal, and for a tiny minority, billionaires mostly, things have gotten better in the pandemic (Peterson-Withorn 2021). There are parallels between the influenza pandemic of 1918 and the COVID-19 pandemic of today, such as the widening of massive inequality gaps between workers and the wealthy in the 1920s and the present day.

The pandemic has forced all of us to do things we don't enjoy, has pushed us into spaces, caused us to retreat, to shapeshift, to adjust to the physical, social, and emotional forces that are occurring globally. Since March 2020, many have reckoned with varying levels of discomfort, uncertainty, isolation, suffering. The global response to the pandemic re-inscribes a distant but familiar memory of a century ago onto contemporary geographies with more advanced sci-

ence and the digital age, with perhaps only human nature remaining constant. In a similar vein, oppressed peoples reimagine their future, cultural traditions, and faith evolving, but still as a palimpsest of collective survival.

Imagine what enslavement must have been like for African people who endured the nightmare of the Middle Passage. Over twelve million African people were enslaved in the transatlantic slave trade between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries in the Americas, at least 1.5 million of whom died en route (Manning 1992). After being kidnapped and tortured, forcefully removed from their homeland, family, community, and freedom, they arrived to a space that was pregnant with violence. Africans in the Americas existed in a geographic space that was notoriously harsh. From as early as age four, enslaved boys and girls worked the fields on hog gangs, attending to livestock, or in perilous domestic duties, where they were subject to physical abuse (Reddock 1985). During harvest time, enslaved people worked as many as twenty hours per day, with women working alongside men with the same expectations of productivity. A shortened lifespan due to the harsh physical and psychological conditions, malnourishment and diseases meant that long life was not necessarily guaranteed. Scholars of slavery in the Caribbean note how Europeans were obsessed with race and racial classification and the sexual proclivities of the people they enslaved. Gender did not matter when it came to working people to their deaths, but it mattered as did erroneous and odd notions about different ethnic groups when orchestrating the breeding of humans like livestock (Reddock 1985; Turner 2017).

There certainly is a master narrative that Africans enslaved in the Americas accepted their fate. This could not be further from the truth. Africans everywhere resisted. The Haitian revolution was unique in its scale of success, but not its form. Historians have discovered at least two hundred fifty rebellions by enslaved people in the Caribbean and the act of maroonage—establishing a maroon society in inaccessible, harsh terrain and defending it—was important to resisting slavery. But overt violence was not the only form

of resistance. Suicide, abortion, infanticide, passively withholding labor, property destruction, and poisoning were all strategies to end the nightmare that was slavery. In 1800, Governor Picton of Trinidad introduced the "Slave Code" that gave French enslavers who heavily populated the island, free reign in forcefully disciplining the people they enslaved. So strong was the threat of poisoning and the use of spirituality to cause the death or demise of someone that Obeah was specifically outlawed in these codes, as well as other forms of rebellion or resistance (Carmichael 1961, cited in Liverpool 2001).[2] Acts of aggression were not the only methods used. In fact, we know from our praxis today that resistance took shape in the form of religious, spiritual, and cultural rituals, in the continuation and passing down of healing and nutritional practices and through expressions of joy (Figure 1). Africans were intentional in recreating home spaces amidst violence and dehumanization, and when they could not escape physically, they were fugitives in their minds. Whenever they could, Africans fashioned a home life outside the confines of the plantation engaged in spiritual and cultural rituals and enjoyment. Carnival was one such escape.

Figure 1: Women masqueraders crossing the stage at Queen's Park Savannah, Port-of-Spain in Ronnie and Caro McIntosh's presentation entitled, "Mystery of the Cascadura," on Carnival Tuesday, 2013

Carnival as an Indicator of Social Change

In his important work, *Rituals of Power and Rebellion* (2001), histo-

rian and calypsonian Hollis Liverpool notes that the shifts in Carnival coincided with important historical events or transitions in Caribbean and global history. Emancipation as heralded by the Slave Emancipation Act of 1833, the 1860s, the turn of the twentieth century, the period between the Great Depression and World War II, and the late 1960s all saw important legislative and social changes that would effect change in the manifestation of the festival and the types of costumes that have become the archetypes of Carnival today. After emancipation, Africans celebrated with the traditions they had always found ways to uphold—with drumming and dancing. Therefore, the earliest Carnival celebrations occurred in many islands around Emancipation Day in August, although similar types of celebrations occurred at Christmas and New Year and possibly during the pre-Lenten season. Even though during slavery, the British government had restricted and banned many different forms of musical instruments, types of singing, and dancing, Africans enslaved in Trinidad and Tobago made their own literal and figurative escapes and did so in very innovative ways.

Ask the average (non-Afrocentric) middle class Trinbagonian about Carnival and they may tell you, "We inherited it from the French."[3] This attribution perhaps an error borne out of ignorance inscribed in postcolonial education, or refusal—a reluctance to engage with African identity and origins. Denying Africans direct access to their languages and cultures while promoting the idea of British and European superiority in every aspect of civilization were key tools of colonialism. Indeed, a diverse mixture of Europeans occupied the island, resulting in Spanish, French, English and Portuguese customs and language permeating the colonial space (Williams 1984). The French settlers "probably introduced" Carnival celebrations where they and Spanish settlers imbibed and engaged in bacchanalian merriment during their pre-Lenten masquerade balls, an excess to prepare for the alleged asceticism of Lent (Brereton 1979, 23). Meanwhile, outside the regular and intense surveillance of plantation owners, Africans plotted, recreated their own worlds, and played.

Liverpool in *Rituals* (2001, x), contextualizes the evolution of Carnival as

> a complex nature of relationships between oppressed lower class and an elite; an elite who aimed at protecting elite economic and social interests; between an emerging African middle class and an African lower working class; between Africans bent on keeping their traditions and Indian indentees who looked down on such tradition; between Whites proud of their European ancestry and Free Coloreds who assimilated many European customs; between a society that was rich in creativity and one that looked down on the creativity that involved lower class elements.

This sense of dueling forces or opposing frames through which Carnival is understood, interpreted, and internalized by the people in its midst is articulated in the form of mas—performance and costuming—and the public discourse about the political, economic, and social aspects of Carnival. It is in this context that Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago evolved. The dichotomous objectives, intentions, and preoccupations are the context by which we must understand the intentions, strategies, and technologies of resistance that bring us to where we are today. How did Africans escape the plantations, the brutality of enslavement and of the recurring trauma of displacement and kidnapping? To where did they escape? And where in the future did they go?

Syncretism, Picong, and Mas

I argue here that syncretism, picong, and mas, which I shall explain later, are three elements that are critical to the organization of resistance: the rhetoric, performance, and action embedded in the ritual of Carnival, particularly Trinidad Carnival. These elements serve as the technologies that define how Africans understood the power structures in pre- and post-emancipation Trinidad and how

they articulated their agency publicly to their community and surreptitiously to those who oppressed them and occupied the status quo. Africans maintained many elements of the traditions from their homelands on the continent (Elder, 1988; Liverpool, 2001). Syncretism, picong, and mas thus became the modes by which they survived, and their culture was projected into the future.

Syncretism

> Syncretism:
>
> 1 : the combination of different forms of belief or practice.
>
> 2 : the fusion of two or more originally different inflectional forms.
>
> —Merriam-Webster, 2022

There is a belief that Trinidad Carnival was simply Africans appropriating European culture. In Trinidad and Tobago, the festival culminates the two days before Ash Wednesday, the start of the Christian Lenten season, and many colonizers held masquerade balls in the Catholic tradition of feasting before Lent. Several countries or territories, particularly those with large Roman Catholic populations, celebrate Carnival according to that calendar, including Venetian Carnival in Italy; Mardi Gras in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA; Carnaval de Laza in the province of Galicia, Spain; and Karneval, Fasching, and Fastnacht in Germany. In these countries, celebrations are directly attributed to celebrations of excess on Shrove Tuesday preceding the start of the Lenten season of fasting. Similarly, in Latin America and the Caribbean, Brazil is most notable for its massive Carnival celebrations in Rio de Janeiro and Bahia. However, in the countries where Africans were enslaved, there were numerous festivals that one could argue take the form and spirit of Carnival celebrations. Enslaved Africans combined European, African, and French Creole elements and created a unique African Creole culture with specific rituals and traditions for celebrations

such as emancipation and the end of harvest. For example, there were end of harvest or "Crop Over" festivals in Barbados and similar festivals in Trinidad, St. Vincent, and Jamaica as early as the seventeenth century (Beckles 2006), with similar pre-Lenten celebrations in all of these islands as well as Dominica, Curacao, and Grenada. The Nine Mornings Festival of St. Vincent is a celebration that is believed to have grown out of Roman Catholics returning home from a Christmastime novena (a period of nine days of early-morning prayer for the dead and mass) and evolved into nine days of celebration and performances beginning at 4:00 AM (the start time of *jouvert* in Trinidad and Tobago Carnival).[4] The Vincentian festival contains all the signatures of West African celebratory traditions—street processions (originally believed to have sprung up as people were making merriment on their way home from Catholic mass), musical accompaniment of goatskin drums, flutes, and eventually street dances and masquerades. Interestingly, among the many purposes of novena, they have been traditionally held for the dead, which is another example of how Africans syncretized ancestral remembrance and veneration in the colonial Caribbean. In the Bahamas, the Junkanoo festival has always occurred at Christmastime and also included many symbols and signatures of West African festivals. These include the Junkanoo masquerade, a costume made of striped paper and masks similar to *egúngún*, *Èkìtì*, and *Ẹpa* masquerades in Ikun, Nigeria (Rea 2019), drumming, and dance (Sands 1991). The retention of African traditions occurred despite suppression, and Carnival was one such tradition—a combination of cultural and religious festivals common in their ancestral homelands.

Many practices and artifacts connect to African ancestral practices; for example, the throwing of powder in sailor mas conjures up, in my mind, images of the disbursal of *efun* in traditional African spiritual ceremonies.[5] Masks were outlawed in Trinidad and Tobago Carnival, yet Carnival headpieces bore resemblance to ceremonial masks made by the Yoruba (Elder 1988). Revelry served as remembrance, evident in iconic Carnival characters ubiquitous not only in Trinidad and Tobago but throughout the Caribbean. The *moko*

jumbie (Figure 2)—an ancestral mas portrayed on stilts—remains prevalent in almost every Caribbean Carnival (Bennett, Phillips, and Moore 2009). Known as *Chakaba* or *Nyon Kwoya* in Guinea, or *Agere* in some parts of Nigeria, to this day they are an integral part of West African ceremonies and festivals wherever large groups of people from the African Diaspora reside. Tradition has it that these spirits are high above the common man because they represent the connection with our ancestors and their height gives them access to that spiritual world. The word *moko* is believed to mean healer, and *jumbie*, in many countries in the anglophone Caribbean, is a term used for spirits or otherworldly beings.

Figure 2: Moko Jumbie, Shynel Brizan, Trinidad & Tobago Queen of Carnival 2019 in her portrayal: "Mariella, Shadow of Consciousness"

Devils (Figure 3) and *jab jab*—said to represent all that was evil in society, including the evil of the slave trade, plantation owners, and the hypocrisy of oppressors—are ubiquitous in Carnival and prominent among traditional mas in Trinidad and Tobago. As part of the

portrayal, the devil carries a tin can, large biscuit tin, or a bag on a stick and demands money from you like the church does at Sunday worship. The mas challenges all the people in society you applaud and respect, "who is really the devil? Me, or that hypocrite over there?" The traditional refrain, though not always articulated but instead whistled or beaten out on drums made from recycled tins, is, "Pay de devil (jab jab). Pay de devil (jab jab)."

Figure 3: Jerron Pierre, a member of Paramin Blue Devils, breathing fire at the Canboulay Riots Reenactment, Piccadilly Greens, East Port-of-Spain, Carnival 2018.

The *jab molassie*, a traditional Carnival character, was originally created by the destruction of plantation property—molasses. Their coverings in oil and tar in a petroleum rich, postcolonial nation perhaps symbolize a wastage and affront not to the colonial state but to its postcolonial, yet still colonized, subjects. As such, traditional costumes also served as a form of resistance to cultural and religious suppression, a means to disguise the language of ridicule and con-

tempt of the ruling classes, and a means of experiencing joy, play, and abandon.

Picong

A noun, used to describe a public exchange of teasing, banter, or even insults, typically in a light-hearted manner, intended to belittle using comedy. Picong is a rhetorical device, but it is applied to not only the language of Carnival; it appears in extempo, kaiso (calypso), or modernized in contemporary soca, such as Machel Montano's song "Dr. Mash Up" (2019). Picong is the basis of Midnight Robber rhetoric. It is the signifying in Dame Lorraine (Figure 4)—a mas(querade) intended to ridicule the colonizers in their beautiful gowns, with all their airs and graces, at their masquerade balls. The Baby Doll, a masquerade protesting sexual assault and abandonment, is a serious mas where narratives of pain are disguised in the language of picong to ridicule errant men, as the sailor mas—simultaneously an assertion of the right to revel and a critique of the occupiers—and the Pierrot Grenade, known for his sharp tongue and uncompromising stance, make space for the elements of subversive rage.[6] European customs were considered within the "*diametre*," thus the opposite of the *jamette* Carnival (Figure 5); however, the Africans who worked sugar plantations thought little of their interior customs. They lived the violence of enslavement and indentureship; they saw the paradoxes.

Figure 4: Mrs. Tracey Sankar–Charleau (in white) with her children (left to right) sons Jude and Joshua Charleau, and daughter, Nathaniel Charleau from Crick Crack Traditional Folklore Mas as Dames Lorraines. The Dame Lorraine is intended to mock the aristocracy, usually played by a man, dressed in finery with umbrella and gloves (but a nurse maid's hat), with exaggerated backside and bosom.

Figure 5: Jouvert revelers covered in white paint as part of 3Canal's jouvert presentation, "Zingaytalala" claim space on the Queens Park Savannah stage, a venue typically associated with "pretty mas"—the less contentious and respectable form of mas. Jouvert is the jamette Carnival.

Mas

Mas is the word used to describe the costume tradition of Trinidad and Tobago Carnival. Assumed to be derived from the term masquerade, mas is also about masking—a West African tradition included in many ceremonies and rituals, where individuals in intricately decorated costumes adorn themselves with masks, typically hiding their identities, to parade. Mas in the Trinbagonian tradition involves adorning in costume, either of old clothing and rags to form "ole (old) mas" that is social and political commentary, intended to provoke fear, discomfort, to disrupt the status quo, or beautifully decorated costumes that are valued for their aesthetics but may also send a message. Mas is active; therefore, the act of wearing a costume and dancing across a stage or on the streets for Carnival is referred to as playing mas in Trinidad and Tobago (not jumping or marching). Mas is also colloquially used to refer to disorder, chaos,

dysfunction—of systems and individuals. To say someone is playing mas is to say they are disrupting order, undermining the status quo, or disorganized or not making sense. For Africans, then, the use of mas was a means of defining language on their own terms and connecting to ancestral traditions. The performance of mas was a means of enacting practices that were deeply rooted in ancestral heritage with meanings that were relevant to struggles in enslavement and colonial society. Often when outsiders view the elaborate, sometimes heavy, forms of adornment worn by masqueraders, they ask about how they can withstand the constraints, particularly for such long periods of time and in the heat of the Caribbean dry season. But mas is a form of garreting (McKittrick 2014), a confinement or physical sacrifice, a ritualistic and intentional form of exertion that asserts a right to joy, a right to take up space and to be remembered. Just like Linda Brent, a fugitive from enslavement and whose act of resistance Katherine McKittrick chronicles in *Demonic Grounds* (2006), mas involves some physical exertion, a suffering, to remember and thus avoid further suffering for self and family.

The sacred nature of Carnival as a performance ritual of resistance and joy epitomizes an assertion of agency in the midst of oppression. Many practices and artifacts of Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago and the rest of the so-called "West Indies" connect to ancestral ritual practices. Europeans were extremely suspicious of Africans' religious and healing practices. They carried to the "West Indies" all of the offensive stereotypes of the dark continent they would subsequently ravage or claim for mineral and agricultural wealth after kidnapping more than a million of its people (Lovejoy 1989). To survive and maintain a sense of groundedness, and to simply live, Africans engaged in the calculated practice of syncretism. Most of us commonly hear of this practice in the context of African traditional religions such as Santeria and orisha where Roman Catholic saints would be merged with the orishas as a means of continuing to worship in ways that The Church would sanction. Syncretism also existed for the arts. For instance, African martial arts, such as *kalenda*, were similar to the *capoeira* of Brazil in ways

that emphasized the celebratory aspects, the drumming, dancing, and singing, rather than the lethal art of stick fighting.[7] Similarly, Africans employed lyricism through the use of musical forms like *carisos*—songs with erotic themes typically sung by women, and, later, when *kalenda* songs were banned, by men—for enjoyment, acts of bravado, or to critique and warn of brutal overseers and slave masters. These musical forms, along with the employment of whatever tone and percussive instruments could be fashioned from available materials in the absence of traditional instruments indigenous to the African continent, would eventually give us the calypsos and soca of contemporary Carnival.

The technologies of dance and mas are no longer integrated solely into Carnival, but the broader Black culture of Trinidad and Tobago, where they echo the complex ancestral dances to honor the orishas of the Yoruba, Mokos, Kongos, Asantes, Coromantees, and other West African groups that were forcibly brought to Trinidad (Elder 1988). The masking traditions, both ceremonial and quotidian, were integral to West African culture (e.g., *egungun* and the practice of adorning in mud, molasses, oil, or paint, and *gelede*—a festival with men wearing women's masks and clothing to honor women's role in society). The songs they used were celebratory, but they also applied a language of resistance through the use of picong—a humorous, sarcastic rhetorical device to insult or ridicule an opponent or abuser in ways that might only be understood by an in-group.

Revelry thus served as both remembrance and a form of resistance. There is a belief that Trinidad Carnival was simply Africans appropriating European culture, as it culminates the two days before Ash Wednesday, the start of the Christian Lenten season, and many colonizers held masquerade balls in the Catholic tradition of feasting before Lent. The retention of African traditions occurred in spite of suppression, and Carnival was one such tradition—a combination of cultural and religious festivals common in their ancestral homelands. When drumming was outlawed in 1868, Africans used various shapes, eventually finding that a systematic method of dent-

ing tins gave a distinctive sound. By the 1940s, this practice evolved from paint tins and biscuit tins into the use of oil drums supplied by the American and British oil companies present in the colony. Today, Trinidad and Tobago Carnival has large steel orchestras with at least seven different modes of scale and the only instrument known to be invented in the twentieth century (Figure 6).

Figure 6: *Woman pannist from Renegades playing the cello pan at the National Panorama Finals competition, Carnival 2019.*

The Two Faces of Resistance

Many aspects of Trinidad and Tobago Carnival articulate two opposing sides—two faces. There was, and still is, the Carnival of the elites, and there is the *jamette* Carnival. *Jamette* is a creole word derived from the French *diametre*, a term used to describe those beyond the boundaries of polite society. *Jamettes*—gangsters, prostitutes, stickmen, and all those who formed the poor and disadvantaged in post-emancipation society—were never intended to have

or evidence power. *Jamettes* created worlds in the interstices of colonial society; they created places in the shadows, such as the barrack yards and hills. African musical forms such as songs and drumming, the *Canboulay* (*Kambulé*), a nighttime procession with torchlights or flambeau with large groups of masked men (National Carnival Commission, n.d.) were elements repeatedly subjected to police restrictions and hostility by the elites (Brereton 1979). In fact, the head of the police force's efforts to violently suppress *Canboulay* led to the *Canboulay* riots of 1881 and the deaths of many people. The response was so extreme that the then governor suspended anti-Carnival ordinances permitting a Carnival of the people (Liverpool 2001). Similarly, the characters and narratives of those deemed the "underclass" are the reason traditional mas characters exist as an essential aspect of Carnival today. The *jab molassie*, as described above, epitomizes the use of mas as subversive rage; it is a masquerade that calls out an influential colonial institution—the Church—while engaging in performance or play. Revelers would cover themselves in molasses and play devil, terrorizing people in the streets and demanding money. These coverings eventually changed to oil and tar, which is ironic in a petroleum rich, postcolonial nation. Perhaps today they symbolize a wastage and affront not to the colonial state, but to its postcolonial, yet still colonized, subjects. Similarly, other Carnival characters were defiant statements against the status quo, audaciously signaling a contempt for the violence and inequality Africans experienced at the hands of British colonial powers. The Baby Doll, for example, is a statement on gender inequality and sexual violence against enslaved women by white men in the post-emancipation era. The Dame Lorraine (Figure 4), a masquerade of fancy dress with exaggerated bosom and buttocks, serves to mock the colonial elites dressed in frilly gowns at masquerade balls while Africans lived impoverished in the yards and barracks. The Bookman, casting judgment by writing names of those who would go to hell in his book, and musical forms such as kaiso, extempo, and soca that speak truth to power and defy respectability and gender politics—these are all strategies of resistance.

Conclusion

Carnival is an explosion of culture. With rules, customs, social mores, and trends, it is organized chaos but also an intentional return, an embodiment of Sankofa—the adinkra symbol that counsels it is acceptable to go back and get what you lost. Mas is play, and a strenuous but joyful escape. It is deeply rooted in people's determination to enact their given right to agency and a voice, and to do so while embodying pleasure. As sexual and reproductive rights activists and Black feminists, Jasmine Walker and Amber Phillips (2017, 04:33) assert, "Black joy is birthed from our rage as well as our joy." Carnival reflects joy and rage, darkness and light, it reflects even the pieces we don't want to see. Not every Trinbagonian participates in Carnival or even agrees that it should occur. Particularly when crime or murder rates preoccupy the body politic, some segments of the society argue that Carnival should be cancelled. Additionally, every year, large groups of religious conservatives flee the suburbs and urban centers to go camping at river or beach facilities.

Increasingly, as the middle class of this high income, fossil fuel rich nation becomes attuned to the tastes and customs of US American culture, people "fly out" because they're not really into Carnival; they peruse the skimpier fashions of US celebrities for inspiration for "Monday wear."[8] But these signifiers of class status and religiosity are not actually new, as Carnival has always been a site of race and class segmentation and entanglement of the elite and the people outside the *diametre* (Liverpool 2001; Edmonson 2003). Carnival in its two-facedness represents affirmative ritual and defiance. It is a thesis on whether the "ungovernable" can govern themselves (Edmonson 2003), and those who engage answer that question do so defiantly in ways that do not adhere to the politics of respectability. Because mas is also wake work. Wake work is undisciplined and deep thinking; according to Christina Sharpe, it "requires new modes and methods of research and teaching; new ways of entering and leaving the archives of slavery, of undoing" racial violence (Sharpe 2016, 13; Hartman 2008). The methodological practices

Sharpe is writing about and the types of care she argues should be crucial to the work we do within and for our communities includes the work of mas. Each year, Trinbagonians resurrect the ancestral gestures, methods, motifs, and signifiers. The ancestors are never forgotten, but Carnival is a time when a concerted energy goes into invoking their presence. It is a period to reclaim the accounts of suffering and forcefully signal, on behalf of those who perished or survived the Middle Passage and those who suffered enslavement and indentureship on the plantations, that we are still here. Everything repeats itself. Carnival is present, it is the hardship of the past, and Carnival is the future.

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Notes

1. In this chapter I use Trinidad and Tobago to refer to the nation, Trinidad when speaking specifically of the island of Trinidad, and Tobago to when speaking specifically about the island of Tobago. Similarly, the adjectives Trinidadian or Tobagonian describe people from those respective islands and Trinbagonian describes the populace collectively. An earlier abbreviated version of this chapter appears in the November 2022 volume of *Community Change*.

2. Obeah is a term used to describe witchcraft or sorcery intended to help the practitioner or whomever has asked for assistance, or to punish wrongdoers. The term is sometimes considered derogatory and would often be conflated with all African ritual or religious practices, but particularly those connected to orisha practice or Shango worship in Trinidad and Tobago.

3. Under Spanish rule in 1783, the Cedula of Population brought many enslavers from French governed islands to Trinidad, giving them land based on the number of enslaved Africans they brought with them. It was one of the Spanish colony's attempts to adequately populate the island. For this reason, many Trinidadians (more so than Tobagonians), including my great-grandparents, spoke a French-based patois as well as English until the early twentieth century.

4. *Jouvert* or *jouvay* is the pre-dawn ritual that opens carnival in Trinidad and Tobago. It is a portmanteau of the words *jour* and *overt*, French words that mean day and to open respectively. It is said that people would go from house to house saying that day was breaking, which meant that Africans could legally engage in Carnival celebrations. Replete with mud, paint, and oil devils, folklore and traditional characters, and artistic protest, *jouvert* is the *jamette* Carnival, a celebration of the subjugated classes. For instance, a traditional character known as the *pis en lit* was traditionally played by men. The *pis en lit*, meaning "bedwetter," was a disgusting mas where masqueraders would fling liquid into the crowds and/or demand money while clad in a nightgown that could be stained with what is to be considered menstrual blood and carrying around a used chamber pot. J*ouvert* embodies social and political commentary, as well as the use of satire, fear, and disruptive behavior to mock and upset the status quo.

5. Sailor mas is ubiquitous in Trinidad and Tobago Carnival. It was first seen in 1881, following the presence of British war ships intended to stoke fear in response to the riots that year. An unprecedented visit by the US Atlantic fleet in 1907 (Liverpool 2001) and subsequent occupation of a marine base on the northwest coast of Trinidad from 1940 under the Destroyers for

Bases agreement led to a heavy presence of sailors and social and economic disruption for working class people. Sailor mas was always portrayed as "drunk and disorderly," the statement being that sailors increased the sex trade and made nuisances of themselves. Modern costumes range from the simplest to the very ornate "fancy" sailor. The basic costume typically consists of a beret with the name of the ship on the rim of the beret, a slim-fitting short sleeve bow-necked striped jersey, or jacket with epaulets and other insignia, and signature bell-bottomed pants, with black or white shoes. The fancy sailor costume is made from elaborate, colorful fabric, and the masquerader carries an ornate headpiece and backpack with a large design above the head, often made from paper-mâché and wire. Sailors also typically carry a bottle of baby powder that they disperse wherever they pass, but especially directed at onlookers.

6. The Pierrot Grenade is a satirical character derived from the Italian and French pantomime character, the Pierrot. Pierrot Grenade is a finely dressed character and deeply learned scholar, but unlike the Pierrot, his attire is bright and colorful and made from strips of cloth. His speech and performance articulate a supreme jester in Trinidad and Tobago Carnival while he struts about reveling in displaying his knowledge and ability to spell any word. He carries a whip and used to wear a wire mask, but now the head covering is a stretchy satin balaclava that coordinates with the costume and the face paint.

7. The *kalenda* is a martial art that employs African forms and stick fighting in the Caribbean. The deadly nature of the practice was often disguised with the use of *kalenda* songs and dance movements to minimize the appearance of a threat to European settlers (Liverpool, 2001).

8. Adults parade on the streets on Carnival Monday and Carnival Tuesday. Traditionally, they would wear the same costume on both days, leaving elements such as standards and headpieces off on Monday for the full splendor on Tuesday. Around the end of the 1990s or the beginning of the 2000s, as masqueraders wore less and less and the bands became more visually unappealing, some bandleaders started offering a printed t-shirt option. This evolved further into women obtaining specially designed or embellished swimsuits, bodysuits, and dance wear at their own expense to wear during the Monday parades. These are often inspired by the latest celebrity and music video fashions.

8. Cynical (Dis)Positions

Cultivating Cynical Sensibilities

LEAH RAMNATH

I'm painting my picture, and I'm seeing me, pushing my daughter's coffin downtown and I'm feeling invisible. I'm envisioning crowds of people to the side of me, lots of chaos going on and the other side of me, I'm really feeling like I should do something. I'm feeling confused. I'm feeling less than and, once again, invisible. I'm wondering, "why can't these people over here see me and feel my pain?"
—Frances Garrett, 2015 (2:54:42)

In the excerpt above taken from a speech given at a justice to end gendered violence conference themed Bodies of Revolution (2015), Frances Garrett, a #SayHerName advocate and representative, was retelling what she imagined when given the task to think about "images that keep us up at night." A panelist next to Frances rubs her back as she tells us she was at the parole suitability hearing of the person responsible for her son's death in California when her daughter, Michelle Cusseaux, was murdered by a police officer in Arizona on August 14, 2014. She differentiates between the circumstances surrounding her son and daughter's tragic deaths saying, her son was, unfortunately, at the wrong place at the wrong time whereas Michelle was made "guilty of being home" (2015, 2:59:10). In the speech, Frances assesses public institutions as being internally informed to be unjust, to care and identify humanity/humanness in some people and not others. Furthermore, Frances identifies Black women as being overlooked by society entirely, especially those with mental health issues, and therefore not granted the same rights and benefits as full citizens. However, Frances's living experience mirrors her daughter's experience in the moments before Michelle was murdered *and* in Michelle's death; despite Frances's

protests demanding justice for Michelle, she feels unheard, unseen, and prematurely dismissed. Michelle tried to explain her fear of being shot by a police officer to the police officer who showed up to her apartment tasked with taking her to her mental health provider facility. Her fear and pain *failed to appear* to him as legitimate, so the supervising police officer who was called to deescalate the situation found it reasonable to pick the lock to her apartment and shoot Michelle (Hendley 2015). In death, Michelle fails to appear within juridical institutions as a serious case of injustice meant to be taken seriously, perhaps because her death occurred a few days after Michael Brown's—why was Michelle's death eclipsed by Michael Brown's? In an attempt to garner attention, to make Michelle appear, with the support of family and local civil rights activists, Frances pushed an empty coffin from downtown Phoenix to city hall. She put her/their death on display to confront her city's failure to simply *see* her/them—as full citizens, as human. As we have read, what keeps Frances up at night is feeling invisible—her emotions, reality, and truth are made to be unrecognizable. Why is it that Frances's confrontational display of truth is recognized by some and not others? How can/should we interpret this moment where Frances tarries to make Black female lives and deaths visible?

Black women are excluded as critical social subjects in academic studies, (re)arranged adjacent to "normal" subjects (cis-hetero-white-male) as abnormal/peripheral/powerless. Black women live in the shadows of institutionally defined and perpetuated tropes such as the mammy, jezebel, and welfare queen, and when they refute these tropes, they are maligned by societal institutions. They are recharacterized/reinscribed as cynical, irrational, out of place, and assigned as their own generators of oppression by the very act of locating and naming oppressive actors. Moreover, these discourses naturalize Black women as lacking interiority (Lorde 1984; Quashie 2012; Morgan 2015); they are inscribed as hypersexual, instinctually reactive, and always located in an animal-like juxtaposition (Collins 2009). Black women have continually demonstrated their capability of destabilizing these tropes and stereotypes by

refusing and redefining their meaning entirely; however, their refusal goes un/misrecognized, their bodies illegible (Beale 1971; Walker 1974; hooks 1984; McKittrick 2006; Richie 2012; Morgan 2015; Cooper 2018; Evans-Winters 2019).

According to Richie, in the United States, this misrecognition of Black women is a central feature of modern neoliberal institutions (2012). In this context of misrecognition, Black women are not recognized as full citizens and therefore denied the "privileges of citizenship" which include: "legal protection, guaranteed access to public services, safeguarded rights, and a set of economic benefits that maintain their secure status" (139). Furthermore, in critical analyses, academic scholars risk reinforcing traditional, naturalizing logic placing emphasis on rigid political designations of citizenship; the idea of citizenship designates who can be heard, whose truth matters, and overall, who belongs in this society (Collins 2000; Richie 2012). In 1983, Foucault in his analysis and discussion of parrhesia, which is a disruptive kind of truth-telling that confronts the status-quo, argued that citizens of a nation must return to an authentic type of political truth-telling in order to confront institutional and systemic injustice. While instructive for understanding Black women's concerted effort to confront the State by expression of their trauma as testimony, as their truth, in his argument, Foucault neglects to address how race, gender, and other discourses of power undermine Black women as citizens capable of the parrhesia he advocates.

In this work, I take issue with Foucault's negation and argue that there is no element of care, or crumbs of precarity, in Foucault's methodology. Instead of taking seriously the actual violence these discourses dispense that contribute to Black women's authentic parrhesiatic utterances, Foucault "operates within a logic that cannot apprehend suffering" (Sharpe 2016, 29). He refuses to register trauma as a legitimate driver of disruptive truth, and, furthermore, he does not recognize how truths of this nature constitute self-authoring that is borne from the care of self and others. Additionally, Foucault, in his analysis grounded in the Greek tragedy *Ion*, states

though he sympathizes with the trauma and violence the main female character, Creusa, is subject to, he cannot recognize her to have the capacity of true parrhesia because she was not a legitimate citizen of the State. However, the plot of *Ion* relies on Creusa's increasing levels of pain and anguish—she is reduced to a narrative device that drives the plot forward; and, to this end, Foucault completely redacts her from his analysis on the basis of citizenship. Creusa is reduced into a redaction, and it is this logic that is recapitulated onto Black women in contemporary society. Such that issues of ongoing collective trauma, denial of personhood, freedom, justice, and more remain unconfronted/undisturbed when Black women are redacted from discussions of truths that construct and frame our lived realities.

In this chapter, I explore how and under what spatial conditions Black women engage and prompt moments of emerging consciousness through parrhesiatic truth-telling. I begin my work by proposing and expanding on how Black feminist theory revitalizes Foucault's conceptualization of parrhesia, provides a methodological turn in mythological analyses, and locates Black women as contemporary cynics with the ability to overcome biopolitics, disrupt the status quo, and make room for others to become alive. I begin by critiquing, reanalyzing, and proposing a methodological turn from Foucault's analysis of parrhesia in Euripides' myth *Ion*. I analyze the story of Creusa from her perspective, how she cultivates cynical sensibilities, and read Creusa as the Black body. I apply a Black feminist theoretical framework to revitalize Foucault's conceptual discussion of parrhesia and his denotation of the cynic as the perfect parrhesiatic subject to locate Black women as contemporary cynics. Throughout this chapter, I argue Black women both embody and redefine the role of the cynic while being simultaneously reinscribed as cynical because of their opposition to hegemonic, authoritative Truths.[1]

Brief on Methodology

Foucault's conceptualization of parrhesia is central to grounding my analysis; however, I must give attention to the ways he reproduces a capitalist, patriarchal gaze. The problem with Foucault's dialectic is that he domesticates women, limits women's parrhesiatic potential only to private moments of truth-telling, and, although he describes parrhesia on a kind of unbound continuum, he forecloses a spectrum of possibility by designating the ancient Grecian Cynics as the perfect instruments of parrhesia (Johnson 2017; Maxwell 2019). I aim to critique through Foucault's parrhesia using a Black feminist framework in order to revitalize parrhesia and cynical subjects. Furthermore, I draw largely from the work of Christina Sharpe, Patricia Hill Collins, and Katherine McKittrick to read Creusa as the Black body and articulate how Black women have cultivated cynical sensibilities attributed to what I argue defines them as contemporary cynics.

I schematically analyze *Ion*, the same Greek play Foucault focuses on, modeling after Christina Sharpe's framework from *In the Wake* to follow how one of the main characters, Creusa, exemplifies cynical dispositions leading her to perform and embody parrhesiatic truth-telling in the wake of sexual violence (2016). Throughout, I also carefully consider Creusa's silences and redactions in both the play and Foucault's analysis. I read an asterisk following Creusa's name (Creusa*) throughout the play and analysis, and I work to understand Creusa, how she felt and what could have pushed her to confess her truths (Sharpe 2016). Sharpe uses the asterisk "as a wild card" that "holds the place open for thinking . . . as a means to mark the ways the slave and the Black occupy . . . the 'position of the unthought'" (2016, 30). Furthermore, Sharpe states "the asterisk speaks to a range of configurations of Black being" (2016, 30). In other words, I use the asterisk as a means of holding open the possibility, and creating space, for interpreting Creusa through "multiple meanings of that abjection through inhabitation . . . through living them in and as consciousness" (2016, 33). I spend some time focus-

ing on how Creusa* illuminates the problem of citizenship. Reading Creusa* allows for a critical reading of citizenship reflecting on how Black women have used their knowledge of how society works to survive and, to an extent, through her redaction, construct a platform for public confession/confrontational truth-telling.

In *Black Feminist Thought*, Collins analyzes the socio-spatial conditions in which Black women's consciousnesses may safely emerge; Black women who are in safe community with other Black women share intimate knowledge for everyday survival and make/provide a safe, familiar space where their emerging consciousnesses can be affirmed and nurtured (2009, 107). Safe spaces like these can look like: the hair salon, the kitchen table, the garden, the hallway, the stoop, etc. And though these spaces are understood as commonplace, they become an important point of reference to which Black women can look back to inform how they negotiate their identities in other, more hostile spaces, including but not limited to their workplace or state institutions like classrooms, courtrooms, or prisons. McKittrick's analytical framework in *Demonic Grounds* helps to understand the complexities of this body-space/place connection and why it matters regarding emerging consciousness (2006). I draw on McKittrick's examples of "re-narration," "the last place they thought of," "sites of memory," and other concepts to analyze Creusa's cave as a paradoxical space that produces the means toward articulating a different form of life altogether (2006). These concepts render Creusa visible and articulate her as a cynical subject, capable of legitimate parrhesiatic truth-telling.

Reading Creusa*

In this section I review and critique Foucault's analysis of parrhesia in the Greek myth *Ion*. It is necessary to understand the cultural, ethical, moral, political, and social implications of using Greek myths as a point of reference without giving significant attention to the ways in which it comes to frame/define issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and others. Ahmed critiques, ". . . the model of

the good life within classical Greek philosophy was based on an exclusive concept of life: only some had the life that enables one to achieve a good life, a life that involved self-ownership . . .” (2010, 13). Foucault demonstrates, through his negation of Creusa's role in establishing Ion's citizenship, what bell hooks has described as “an empowering nihilism, a moment of positivity through the production and structuring of affective relations” (1990). Furthermore, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak would argue his analysis of the myth as pervasive nostalgia and looking to a mythical past risks interpretive slippage of past, present, and future subjects (1988). Foucault's analysis is valuable but, in what follows, I consider these critiques and place significant emphasis on the application of a Black feminist framework to re-analyze the myth from Creusa's perspective and then read Creusa as the Black body.

Schematic Review of Ion

Ion begins with a romanticized retelling of the god Apollo raping Creusa when she was a child; she became pregnant, abandoned her son, Ion, in the cave where she was raped by Apollo, and lived much of her life in guilt from the shame of her rape and because she believes Ion was killed. She does not know Ion was taken from the cave and raised in Apollo's temple as a servant to Apollo; also, Ion does not know he is Apollo's son. It is important to note Apollo withholds the whole truth and manages to evade any responsibility throughout the play. After some time, Creusa is given to Xuthus, a foreigner to Athens, as his wife by her father and they later find out she cannot get pregnant. This is troubling to their family because it is up to Creusa to continue the Athenian bloodline by birthing an heir. Both Creusa and Xuthus go to Apollo's temple to see an oracle about their heir problem; Creusa and Xuthus find themselves separated, and at once the oracle proposes to Xuthus that he take Ion as his own son at the same time Creusa is talking to Ion about her rape. Throughout the second and third act of the play, Creusa speaks her truth to people around her who operate as gatekeepers guarding

the longevity of the Athenian, and by extension Delphian, government. Creusa is told in many iterations that Apollo is incapable of committing sexual violence and therefore her rape was impossible. The only allies Creusa has are her servants (the chorus), and even they give her half-truths, misinformation, about what was going on with Xuthus, Ion, and other actors in the play. In her final confession, she is sitting on Apollo's throne to evade being killed by Ion and tells Ion the whole truth about her rape; Ion then seeks confirmation from Apollo himself but is instead confronted by Athena who confirms Creusa's truth and proceeds to endow him with prophetic blessings of his bright and promised/ing future.

Parrhesia & Citizenship

I felt that, as a citizen, as an individual who had information, that it was my obligation when approached to come forward, and I did that.
—Anita Hill, 2013

Foucault's parrhesia is proposed as having the potential to overcome biopolitics; parrhesia as cultivating an alternative way of life, resisting societal requirements of assimilation and subjugation. In these lectures, I believe Foucault is asking the question: "can the body exist outside of the field of power?" In *The Government of Self and Others*, Foucault re-introduces the ancient Greek concept of parrhesia, describing it as the practice of radical truth-telling that is spoken in opposition to those in authority (1983). Parrhesia "refers to the type of relationship *between* the speaker and what he says," Foucault continues, "for *in* parrhesia, the speaker makes it manifestly clear and obvious that what he says is his own opinion" (Foucault 1983). His use of "in" and "between" locates a conceptual space; parrhesia is located in relation to the speaker, the one who *uses* parrhesia. Parrhesia has a spatial potentiality. A transformative space opens up when the truth is spoken by the parrhesiast. Parrhesia is interruptive; parrhesia ruptures. According to Foucault, there are four main criteria one adheres to in parrhesia: the parrhesi-

ast must have the courage to tell the truth, there must be an element of risk when the truth is being spoken, the truth-teller binds themselves to their truth, and this truth must bind them to others (1983). The first two characteristics pertain to truth while the second two become about authenticity and the care of others. Parrhesia, however, is anchored to a traditional, naturalizing logic placing emphasis on rigid political designations of citizenship; the idea of citizenship designates who can be heard, whose truth matters, and, overall, who belongs in this society.

Citizenship is foundational to moving the plot forward in *Ion* and, furthermore, is a central theme in the play. Foucault's analysis of *Ion* depicts a citizenship that is both racialized and gendered and we still experience these same issues in contemporary contexts. Athenian citizenship is determined through the mother's bloodline. If a birth mother is from Athens, then her children are natural citizens of Athens as well. Moreover, immigrants, whether they relocate to Athens un/willingly, remain in a powerless position of slave-like servitude to the State; their words must only edify the polis. So, too, immigrants are affectively associated as strangers, aliens, not-from-here, and out of place (Ahmed 2010). C. Riley Snorton would argue this criterion is another iteration of social re/production similar to *partus sequitur ventrem*—"[t]he association between being black and having a black mother" which "was critical to maintaining the biopolitical ordering of slavery" (2019, 13). Foucault names Ion, who is unaware that he is the son of Apollo and Creusa, as the central parrhesiast. Ion must find out who his mother is to determine whether he is a legitimate citizen of Athens to be able to participate politically as part of the demos. Now, the issue here is that Ion's conception and birth is predicated on Apollo raping Creusa when she was a child. Creusa's rape then becomes a necessary means of Ion's legitimacy.

Creusa confers subjecthood onto her son, Ion, and this sets up a precarious paradox within the discourse of citizenship. How is the State in this context reading Creusa's body? *They don't read Creusa*, but they do Ion; Creusa is subject to the pornography of pain in

Foucault's reading in that the transgression of the woman's body is only read through a political discourse placing sole emphasis on the development of the male project. Note that Creusa *is* an Athenian princess, the daughter of Erechtheus, yet her citizenship is negated and therefore her right to parrhesia. For Creusa, her citizenship does not grant her rights to participate in the polis, however she is given the duty to reproduce the demos; citizenship requires the ongoing objectification and mechanization of some bodies—in our contemporary context, it is Black women's bodies. However, this play opens up the complexity of parrhesia in which Creusa/Black women are capable of occupying/rupturing *the space between* citizenship and the demonic grounds they are relegated to (McKittrick 2006). Creusa is "defiantly public" and embodies "sexual dissidence" by telling the truth about her rape thereby calling out how the political obsession with the "'dead citizenship' of heterosexuality" continues to inflict violence (Muñoz 2009, 49). Creusa lives in the historical present, the aftermath of sexual trauma so her citizenship is also temporally complicated; Saidiya Hartman is able to articulate this complexity and its contemporary implications: "[B]eing a stranger concerns not only matters of familiarity, belonging, and exclusion but as well involves a particular relation to the past. If the past is another country, then I am its citizen" (2008).

(Re)centering Creusa

Sometimes it seem like to tell the truth today is to run the risk of being killed. But if I fall, I'll fall five feet four inches forward in the fight for freedom.
I'm not backing off.
—Fannie Lou Hamer (in Parker Brooks and Houck, 2013)

Risk: Guilt & Shame

Foucault turns to the line drawn between Ion's parrhesia and Creusa's parrhesia. One primary distinction is that Creusa declares her truth with passion. According to Euripides, the author of *Ion*, to truly be a parrhesiast, one must perform their truth without passion, without emotion (Foucault 1983). But, how can one have courage and speak with knowledge of the risk of death without passion? Foucault claims Ion's being located in Delphi, outside of Athens, allowed him an objective, sober perspective. His subjectivity as an outsider, an immigrant/foreigner/alien positioned him in a place of political powerlessness. These factors contributed to a matrix of acceptability for his confrontational truth, his speaking truth to power. Ion becomes an Athenian citizen with the right to engage politically upon Creusa's confession of her rape. Creusa, too, is paradoxically positioned as an outsider within. Her within-ness facilitates her failure to appear as a parrhesiast in Foucault's analysis; she is an Athenian citizen, therefore located within power, and to be a parrhesiast one must be dislocated outside of power, without power. Foucault reconstructs a parrhesia that does not register/recognize the violence inflicted upon Creusa as exhibiting powerlessness.

However, Creusa *does* adhere to the criteria he describes as characteristic to parrhesia. In Creusa's confession to her mentor, she identifies her risk: shame. It was shame that kept her silent; she became increasingly overwhelmed towards the climax of *Ion* and this is what pushed her to overcome "the barrier of shame" (Foucault 1983, 137). Let us consider the temporality of her shame for a moment. She is first exposed to shame when she was a child; she continuously lived with the shame of not only her rape by a god whom she knows will never face punishment but also shame from the supposed death of the child she birthed and shame from not being able to birth another child. There is not a time where Creusa is not feeling shame; her parrhesiatic *and* cynical sensibilities began to be cultivated as a child. One is cynical if they con-

front naturalized discourses that have authored their subordination (Foucault 1983; Ahmed 2010). She had the potential to enter into a parrhesiatic utterance given her injustice by Apollo had she chosen to confront her own shame. However, observing how her lifelong mentor received her confession, we could see how her expectations were not born from paranoia or hysteria but by her experience with Athenian society. Her mentor says, "where is the child? At least you are no longer barren!" in response to her confessing and confiding about her rape (Foucault 1983, 137). His concern was wrapped up in the reproduction of the nuclear family, dutiful wife, and the duty of the female laboring body. He continues to ask her a series of questions about where the rape and the birth of her son happened and says, "your look fills me with pity" (Foucault 1983, 137). I would have a pitiful look, too, if someone tried to verify whether my sexual trauma was legitimate at the same moment I was confessing about my sexual trauma. Her continued alienation drives her to continue to confess her truth, to be a killjoy; the affective economy around alienation/alien/stranger is in opposition to the idea of what it means to be a citizen, and this is why Foucault could not deem Creusa as a legitimate parrhesiast (Ahmed 2004; 2010). So, then, who is *this* parrhesia for if it does not lead to holding political actors and institutions accountable?

Creusa's confession was not enough for Ion, despite the Pythia, high priestess of Delphi and Oracle of Apollo, bringing physical evidence proving she is his mother (Foucault 1983, 142). He wants confirmation of this truth from Apollo himself; this communicates that Creusa's truth is not worth a whole truth—there must be confirmation from the unjust god himself. However, even when Ion approaches Delphi, it is not Apollo who tells the truth but Athena. Athena speaks to Ion's future success as heir to Athens and gives him advice about how to navigate the situation of him having two fathers now. Apollo refused to speak the full truth, yet it is imperative to Ion that he sought Apollo's truth, though is satisfied with Athena's truth (Foucault 1983, 144). A risk of entering into parrhesia is to risk not being believed, have your truth diminished, or have

your truth co-opted to re-establish the same traditional social order, reproducing the "dead citizenship of heterosexuality" (Muñoz 2009, 49).

Creusa: Becoming Mother

> "When you gone to get married? You need to have some babies. It'll settle you."
> "I don't want to make somebody else. I want to make myself."
> —Toni Morrison, 1973 (Sula, 181)

Creusa is pressured and framed into becoming mother by the gender, sexual, and racial politics narrating her hypersexualization, adultification, and criminalization as the perpetrator of her own rape (Collins 2009; Ritchie 2012; Lomax 2018). Creusa's "marginalization" illustrates an "experiential geography that highlights ideological confinement and the peripheral place of black gendered bodies" (McKittrick 2006, 55). She exists within the margins, "inhabiting the 'crevices of power'" (McKittrick 2006, xxviii). I read Creusa's cave*, and reflecting back on Frances Garrett pushing an empty coffin* representing Michelle Cusseaux and other Black women, as a site of memory where the remains of her trauma generate her cynical sensibilities that eventually enabled her to enter into parrhesia (McKittrick 2006). Creusa was a child in a field, picking flowers in the daylight before she was coerced into a dark cave and raped by Apollo. Apollo hid her pregnancy because of Creusa's fear of punishment from her father; she did not look physically pregnant. Also, by Apollo, she was able to painlessly birth her child, Ion, in the same cave where she was raped. Although she does not experience the pain of childbirth, she continues to experience the emotional pain (trauma) of her rape. Apollo and his actions represent the State, the capabilities of state power, and, to some degree, the violent processes of erasure as a means of state self-edification. Continuing the unfolding of the play, Creusa abandons Ion in the same cave, later revisiting the site out of guilt to find he was gone, assum-

ing he was killed by vultures. Her life is marked by the increasing weight of guilt, grief, and anger. Alice Walker beautifully articulates how continued subjugation in these ways works to erode our will and courage, too weary to speak out, forced to vacate our bodies and be reduced to emptied caves (vaginas and wombs):

> They forced their minds to desert their bodies and their striving spirits sought to rise, like frail whirlwinds from the hard red clay. And when those frail whirlwinds fell, in scattered particles, upon the ground, no one mourned. Instead, men lit candles to celebrate the emptiness that remained, as people do who enter a beautiful but vacant space to resurrect a God. (1983, 232)

Creusa's inability to get pregnant, due to the infertility of her husband, led to a compounding excess of these emotions which drove/enabled her to confess her truth *three times*. For Creusa, with every parrhesiatic utterance, she was bound closer to her truth whereby at the end of the play she fully speaks the truth. She revisits the cave in memory, bringing the sexual violence that has underwritten her life's disposition into the present; she is hollowed out, she *caves in* under the weight of her confessions. She first gives a fabricated confession of her rape to Ion, before she had the knowledge that he was the child she birthed, saying Apollo raped her sister. Ion told Creusa her sister must be lying because only man, not a god, was capable of rape. He continues to explain that even if he did rape her sister, Creusa is *not permitted* to speak this truth at Apollo's temple because it would injure his character. This exchange exemplifies several issues concerning suppressive violence that works to smother women's will to consciousness: confessions of rape, and other truths, are confronted with doubt if their public emergence has the potential to rupture the image of powerful men. Again, Creusa kept the whole truth to herself because she expects social and cultural shame/guilt, so she chose to adhere to a future of an aesthetic ideal, the assigned image of the happy wife. She occupies a "depressive position," tolerating loss and guilt, submitting her

sense of self to a series of repetitions (e.g., reproducing the polis, becoming the good, happy mother) (Muñoz 2006). Creusa when she is made to appear is "motionless on the outside. But inside?" (Collins 2009, 108).

Cynical Sensibilities: Acts of Refusal

> *My silences had not protected me.*
> *Your silence will not protect you.*
> —Audre Lorde, 1980 (13)

Naming the ancient Grecian Cynics as "the first manifestations of philosophical 'heroism,' one to follow and imitate if one desires to live a true, genuinely sovereign life," is a limiting misnomer (Hull 2018). Peter Johnson has described the Cynic as walking on a line between: "commonplace yet scandalous, familiar yet strange, ordinary yet unacceptable" (2017). The figure of the Cynic, however, foreclosed parrhesia to those who do not emulate a masculine and militant stature. Cynicism, when embodied or enacted, could fracture assumptions, make the invisible visible, and disrupt socially constructed spaces inhabited by normalizing dialogue. Furthermore, cynicism is an embodied culture of courage to tell the truth in the face of or in opposition to authority. Creusa is an exemplary cynic in this regard and, moreover, she even transcends the ordering of the classical/traditional/orthodox/normative cynic. Creusa* reinvigorates the cynic.

Creusa is speaking a different genre of parrhesia; she articulates a pathway out of the traditional understanding and characteristics of parrhesia premised on citizenship. She builds a bridge and makes room for parrhesia as a discourse of possibility for those not traditionally masculinist or militant. Creusa enters into parrhesia in a different register, as "the mirror projection of what we call the pragmatics of discourse" (Foucault 1983, 68). She evokes emotions and secondary associations that move "within and then outward toward" the reader, too (Ahmed 2004, 117). The play narrates Creusa embodying parrhesia in which the rupturing effect directed toward

dominating discourses is predicated on an eruption of feelings/emotions. Her truth does not edify the order of the gods or the government of Athens; her truth confronts/interrupts/disturbs Delphian and Athenian traditions. Her truth troubles the spatiotemporality of parrhesia in the same way her use of parrhesia troubles the idea that one must be a citizen to embody parrhesia. Creusa's confessions are acts of refusal: refusal of enduring silence, pain, subjugation, and objectification—refusal of a limiting conceptualization of parrhesia.

She fractures the continuity of the discourses that have shaped the social geography she was once relegated. Her personal experience/knowledge of the truth of who Apollo is what begins to cultivate her cynical sensibilities. We can read her "visionary pragmatism" between scenes because she had to learn "how to survive the sexual politics of intersecting oppressions" in order to reach the moment when she binds herself to her truth; she is "rejecting and transcending these same power relations"—recall her final confession, where she knew sitting on Apollo's throne would save her life (Collins 2009, 199). Furthermore, her entrance into parrhesia enables "the transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation" (Lorde 1977). It is "in between" scenes, the crevices of power, where we can and must interpret silence and imagine Creusa's internal dialogue meditating on her experiences and the reality foisted upon her. Creusa is made to disappear by the end of *Ion* and her absence is read as a happy ending because Ion is made a citizen and guaranteed a future. However, I read Creusa's final silencing, her disappearance, in a continuum, a "refusal of a certain kind of finitude" (Muñoz 2009, 65). Creusa's emerging consciousness is obscured in this narrative, but she *is* still alive, but now within another form of life (dis)located into a different space and time. Similar to Creusa, Frances Garrett refuses "a certain kind of finitude" as she emerges from a silenced position/social positionality, asserting she *is* conscious.

Cynical (Dis)Positions

You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world.
And you have to do it all the time.
—Angela Davis, 2014

A capitalist, patriarchal gaze and interpretation of *Ion* shows up thoroughly as a cornerstone in our society today; we see identical reliance on the idea of citizenship and also how women are elided in the contemporary US politics and public engagement. State institutions (e.g., law and legal institutions, social welfare institutions, department of health) continue to project the nefarious legacy of a silenced Creusa particularly onto Black women. Black women who are US citizens are sutured to a historically compounded identity rendering them non-subjects, non-citizens. They are subject to literal and metaphorical dismemberment, experiencing corporeal and social death as they have been mutually associated as fearful objects (Hartman 2008). However, we see women like Mamie Till, Fannie Lou Hamer, Angela Davis, Anita Hill, Audre Lorde, Bernice King, Frances Garrett, Charlene Carruthers, and many others entering into parrhesia in their refusal to be silenced. I propose a "cave logic" emerges as a technology of the self in which Black women are able to cultivate cynical sensibilities and develop another genre of parrhesia. Black women are able to demonstrate parrhesia via cynicism as a primary tool for social cohesion towards institutional reform and personal liberation through the care of others. "And it was the concern and caring of all those women," says Lorde, "which gave me strength and enabled me to scrutinize the essentials of my living" (1977). For Lorde, cynicism looks like scrutinizing institutions and state actors who should bear the responsibility of *enabling* her to live in this society. The truth informed through the care of others serves as a translation of Lorde's inherent value and humanity; she affirms herself and affirms others of this truth.

Creusa's cave becomes a heterotopic meeting place for this emerging collective consciousness. The cave is respatialized in the

everyday through places like the hair salon, the stoop, the hallway, and the kitchen table. Black women are able to engage in conceptual place-making through memory/memorialization/memorial. This cave logic acts as a node or a point of reference to perform within different discourses of truth. Although these true discourses are assumed to be logical and justifiable, within cave logic we come to find they are pervasive to particular bodies. When Black women come together, reassembling the memorial space, they *are* able to speak back to these true discourses, giving testimony to their experiences and how these normative truths are actually illogical injustices. The kitchen table, for example, becomes a confessional and has the potential to bring us back to Creusa's cave; although the logic of true discourses appears collapsible with truth when they are performed in the moment, these same truths may cave in under the weight of confessions/testimonies.[2] For Frances Garrett, she confronts these true discourses by pushing the empty coffin/cave into view, simultaneously obstructing and revealing the violence necessary to uphold society as it has been. Let us consider discourses around gender, specifically the discourses that inform the female identity; to be female one must be able to have children, embody docility, have female physical attributes/reproductive organs. Femaleness is collapsible with discourses informing what is a woman, too. Furthermore, religio-eurocentric discourses around purity-whiteness come to determine desirability. These discourses collapse into a genre of "woman" that defines some and produces "others." We see the truth effects of these discourses in this excerpt from Alice Walker:

> The blacker woman, when not preparing the whiter woman for sex, marriage, or romance, simply raped. Put to work in the fields. Stuck in the kitchen . . . But never desired or romantically loved, because she does not care for "aesthetic" suffering . . . she lets you know she hates your guts, goes for your balls with her knees, and calls you the slime-covered creep you are until you knock her out. (1983, 330)

"Black black women" are, overall, portrayed as cynical; they do not desire what they should desire, but they do not desire what is desirable because this truth is not true for them (Walker 1983; Ahmed 2010). These women have experiential knowledge of systemic violence which enables a cynical genre informing what it means to be a woman who, out of necessity, "goes for [the] balls with her knees." These women are rationally responding to abuse, but their actions register/are recognized as cynical within contemporary normative truth regimes. This aligns with the identity of the killjoy; Black black women, in this case, are associated with disrupting joyful orientations (Ahmed, 2010). However, I am not suggesting a reclamation of cynical subjectivities, but a reinvigoration of the cynic as such; Black women broaden the spectrum of possibility as they embody cynical (dis)positions casting a pragmatic vision of what meaningful citizenship could and should be/entail. The knowledge of violence, injury, and death acts in the interest of ensuring the longevity/liveability of their lives, is a cynical strategy which evokes the past for present safety towards a guaranteed future. The woman Walker describes is cynical because she does not desire "aesthetic suffering" and because she is cynical, she expects to be punished/"knocked out" (1983, 330). This expectation is cynical foresight—knowledge and wisdom that should be taken seriously as social critique in need of follow up from the varying social institutions. Walker's mother's cynical sensibility allows her to identify and name who authors/censors/controls/perpetuates hegemonic, authoritative Truths and, furthermore, explain why and how these truth regimes are protected/preserved:

> "Well, I doubt if you can ever get the *true* missing parts of anything away from the white folks," my mother says softly, so as not to offend the waitress who is mopping up a nearby table; "they've sat on the truth so long by now they've mashed the life out of it." (Walker 1983, 49)

She vocalizes her cynical articulation but is mindful of the truth supporting the cave infrastructure composed of the revered "lit

candles" celebrating the emptiness within the cave and the resurrected God decorating its emptiness; she does not want to disturb/interrupt because she does not want to "offend" in the expectation/risk of punishment (Walker 1983, 232). Furthermore, in this example, she begins to illustrate the risk of parrhesia in everyday life; the risk of "offending" is, perhaps, being subject to a kind of democratic dismemberment, where Black women are not recognized as members of society primarily through the negation of the privileges of citizenship—in other words, dis-membered.

Michelle Cusseax's mother stated, "whenever police face unarmed Black women their first response might be 'fear'" (Garrett 2020). Michelle was recognized in pieces (dismembered): eyes, a mouth, and hands, not as human, but as an accumulation of violent objects "too alien to comprehend" (Wynter 1984; Kelly et al. 2020). Black women's bodies are spatially projected onto demonic grounds and so too are seen as walking fragments/embodiments of the demonic; they are socially located within landscapes of fear associating them as irrational and chaotic in need of discipline to become obedient subject-objects (McKittrick 2006). Frances Garrett pushed an empty coffin, symbolically representing her daughter's body, through the streets of Phoenix to her city hall as an act of refusal, demanding the city, and to a larger extent the nation, to acknowledge Michelle's humanity and initiate an investigation. Pushing Michelle's coffin to city hall has the potential to register as cynical because she refused to accept the failure of the justice system as it was; she caved in and emerged into consciousness. This emergent consciousness looks like political participation through advocation, grounded in experience with and a cynical recognition of the ongoing failure of social institutions to facilitate equitable treatment of all citizens. Garrett became an integral part of the Say Her Name campaign and every year they hold the Say Her Name Ceremony of Remembrance in part because Black women "just haven't registered in the same way" as Black men, and so they "raise awareness by insisting that we say their names because if we can say their names we can know more about their stories" (Crenshaw 2020). These ceremonies are one

space where Black women's consciousness emerges; this is a collective process of caving in.

Those who are no longer physically present are made present, re-membered, through the mirror projection that is parrhesia, their names are spatialized through the lips and utterance of the truth of their undeniable humanity. Saying her name binds one to themselves affirming their own humanity and is bound to others, affirming the humanity of others. Black women both embody and redefine the role of the cynic while being simultaneously reinscribed as cynical because of their opposition to hegemonic, authoritative Truths. In the wake of the continued criminalization of the black body, many Black women are embodying cynical sensibilities and defining a contemporary parrhesiatic moment.

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Notes

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2. Dr. Andrea Baldwin made this connection and articulated it as a process of collapsibility.

9. Full Participation by Another Name Is This Bridge Called Our Backs

ANDREA N. BALDWIN; LETISHA ENGRACIA CARDOSO BROWN; AND NANA AFUA BRANTUO

Introduction

Find another connection to the rest of the world
Find something else to make you legitimate
Find some other way to be political and hip
I will not be the bridge to your womanhood
Your manhood
Your human-ness

—Donna Kate Rushin, 1981. The Bridge Poem. In *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color, second edition* (xxi–xxii)

Recognizing and understanding the means by which higher education spaces have been created and sustained in the United States (US), it is intentionally and purposely that the title of this chapter pulls from Cherríe Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa's *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981). The first piece in the anthology comes from poet Donna Kate Rushin, who in *The Bridge Poem* captures the struggles that Black and Brown women face as they are pushed to be cultural brokers across racial, ethnic, religious, and gender groups, while rejecting the means in which the world works to use their backs as bridges to understanding and to humanity. It is with similar intentions, grounded in the theory and praxis of Black feminism, that we complicate and chal-

lenge the notion of full participation as a framework used to engender equity at higher education institutions (HEIs) in the US.

This chapter therefore is a Black feminist analysis of nationwide conversation and initiatives centered on diversity and inclusion in higher education spaces. Herein we analyze and problematize the diversity discourse in US HEIs, with a specific focus on the full participation model at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). More specifically, we examine how Black and Brown women's emotional and intellectual labor within the academy are simultaneously exploited and devalued in the name of diversity. We examine how our existence/bodies/backs become literal mechanisms/bridges in the effort to make the university appear more equitable, because to the university we "*already* embody diversity by providing an institution of whiteness with color" (Ahmed 2012, 4). We, Black women, become overrepresented in this type of service to these institutions (Harley 2008). However, because diversity work is less valued by these institutions, to be the ones charged with this work also means "to inhabit institutional spaces that are also less valued" (Ahmed 2012, 4).

A History of HEIs as Oppressive Spaces for Black and Brown People

To accomplish the tasks we set out above, it is critical to identify the history of higher education in the US in relation to the systematized discrimination, exclusion, and social reproduction that continues to negatively impact students, staff, and faculty who are members of marginalized and minoritized groups. Universities in the US historically have been built upon the backs of the marginalized and the minoritized such that oppression and discrimination are deeply embedded within the hard and soft infrastructure, thoroughly intertwined within the processes of colonization (Wilder 2013, 1) and neoliberal capitalist accumulation.

As such, throughout modern history, the university has operated

as a site of reproduction, struggle, and resistance. Students and faculty from marginalized groups occupying and restructuring these spaces address the micro- and macro-level needs of those who have historically been excluded and pushed out, with a clear understanding of the potential for societal change that can come from these spaces. In her reflection on the university as a revolutionary space, Brantuo (2016) provides a concise overview of the ways in which higher education spaces have the potential for change. She writes,

> [o]ne need only reference the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the rise of Black and Chicana feminisms in the 1960s, the anti-Vietnam War movement of the 1960s, the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s that coincided with second-wave feminism, The Black Power, Asian American, and Chicano movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the rise of the Nuyorican Movement and the Young Lords in the 1960s and 1970s, and the anti-apartheid movement throughout U.S. campuses in the 1970s and 1980s as just a handful of examples of the potential of the university of operating as a space in which students can meet, organize, and actively challenge the status quo. Beyond space and place of knowledge acquisition, the university is currently being charged with the duty of serving as a space of institutional and societal change. (para. 2)

Yet as sites of struggle, the overall structure of US HEIs still remain oppressive today. For example, Ferguson (2012) states that "there is a whole school of so-called critical thought and art that despite its oppositional rhetoric, is entirely integrated within the space of consensus" (17). This integration however is unequal, and, as Bradley wrote in 1982,

> [a]s a result of rallies we got courses in 'black literature' and 'black history' and a special black adviser for black students, and a black cultural center . . . a rotting white-washed house on . . . the nether edge of campus . . . reachable . . . by way of

> a scramble up a muddy bank. . . . And all those new courses did was exempt the departments from the unsettling necessity of altering existing ones. (69)

In essence, the incorporation of these oppositional subjects did not alter the Eurocentric nature of the academy. One of the reasons is, as a "sacred space," the university could only admit those who they deemed to be exceptional from the previously excluded group. According to Weheliye (2014), granting only a few exceptions access feeds into a narrative of scarcity, where those with minoritized and marginalized identities are made to compete for resources which in turn leads to the reinforcement of them as "not-quite-human" (13–14). This state of affairs is evident today as we see the Janus-faced call for increased campus diversity at the same time that state and other funding is decreasing, resulting in campus restructuring and ultimately leading to cuts in programming, courses, faculty, and staffing positions (including the adjunctification of the faculty positions) that benefit minoritized and marginalized students. The result of these cuts is the academic suffering of students as the university "paradoxically, grants them access to inclusion and equality" (Weheliye 2014, 75).

It is important to note here that, while this essay specifically focuses on diversity initiatives at PWIs and the burden these initiatives are for Black and Brown women, the history of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) also points to a similar issue with diversity. The role of HBCUs is to offer educational opportunities for African Americans (Allen and Jewel, 2002; Holmes, Land, and Hinton-Hudson 2007). These institutions provided Black students with access to crucial social resources and supportive networks and community and fostered a sense of pride and determination to succeed (Brown and Davis 2001; Robnett 1997). However, according to Esnard and Cobb-Roberts (2018), for Black women there was and is the existence of gender-based hierarchy at these institutions similar to what exists at PWIs, patterned after a global social construct that devalues Black women (Allen et al. 1989; Ben-

jamin 1997; Bonner 2001; Myers 2002). In this environment, "Black women occupy spaces where they are regarded and often treated as second class. In both contexts [PWI and HBCU] therefore, albeit to varying degrees" (Esnard and Cobb-Roberts 2018, 371), Black women find themselves in very oppressive circumstances.

The implementation of inclusion and equity strategies on campuses nationwide by individual institutions, therefore, is part of a larger systematic capitalist functioning in our postmodern societies where the workings of racism, sexism, and other isms on university campuses are pervasive and ubiquitous. Programs such as full participation or other equality and recognition programs based on narrow inclusion frameworks both hinder opportunities for real racial progress and create conditions for the further perpetuation of inequality. According to Weheliye (2014), "[i]f demanding recognition and inclusion remains at the center of minority politics, it will lead only to a delimited notion of personhood as property politics . . . allowing for the continued existence of hierarchical differences between full humans" (81).

In addition, since the incidents of racial unrest at schools like Mizzou and Yale in 2015, universities and colleges across the nation, especially those with large athletics programs, have been trying to avoid occurrences of protest stemming from racial injustice on their campuses (Seltzer 2018). This remedial work points to something even more insidious happening than not doing the work at all—rather to the espousing and implementation of equity frameworks on campuses across the US used to prop up whiteness. This work engages in gathering what Ahmed (2012) refers to as "'perception data,' that is, data that is collected by organizations about how they are perceived by external communities" (34), and using this data to improve and inform their diversity work which "becomes about generating the 'right image' and correcting the wrong one" (34). According to Ahmed, therefore, diversity "becomes about *changing perceptions of whiteness rather than changing the whiteness of organizations*. Changing perceptions of whiteness can be

how an institution can reproduce whiteness, as that which exists but is no longer perceived" (34).

As such, the motive behind these initiatives can produce intrinsically flawed results that signal success in doing the work of diversity—such as statistics of increased enrollment, recruitment, and retention of students that fill their diversity quota—while also using the labor (sometimes unpaid and unrewarded) of contingent faculty who have to fight for very little resources. As Brittney Cooper (2017), referencing the work of Fannie Barrier Williams in the late nineteenth century, states, "the great irony of the American system was that Americans' deeply held disdain for inequality was outmatched only by their deep disdain for those who are unequal" (44). These may seem like harsh words today as it relates to academia, but the sentiment is much the same as these institutions according to Blackmore and Sachs (2003) can be described as "the performative university" that is focusing "on measurable and marketable consumer satisfaction" (141) rather than on a true commitment to equity.

In this vein, a number of campuses across the US (Yale, Dartmouth, University of Michigan, Connecticut College, etc.) have advanced the concept of full participation as theorized by Susan Sturm (2010) as part of their diversity and inclusion initiatives. Full participation advances that campuses are both in and of the community, participating in reciprocal, mutually beneficial partnerships between campus and community. However, because of the wide berth which full participation allows for institutions to implement their full participation strategies, full participation as it is articulated runs the risk of re-inscribing and further complicating hierarchical systems of oppression in higher education. The implementation of full participation also runs the risk of further oppressing Black and Brown people, usually located at the lower rungs of the academic hierarchy (as non-tenured, visiting, and adjunct faculty, staff, and students). These Black and Brown people wield very little power as compared to their white counterparts but are usually called upon to educate and guide the campus and white

people at large about oppression (Ahmed 2012). In most cases, Black and Brown people, including students, are constructively (to infer the legal use of the term meaning that, while this work is not a part of their official job functions, the conduct of their employer is such that it is) enrolled in these inclusion initiatives to take on more, usually unpaid or for no credit, work of assisting institutional change because they lack institutional power and cannot afford to refuse to be involved. In fact, because these initiatives are intended to, in theory, improve the experience of the marginalized and minoritized on campus, they are expected to be at least grateful that the institutions are working toward change. It also means that those who disagree with implementation of a full participation model as decided upon by the higher university administration—mostly male and mostly white—might appear ungrateful and not invested in equity, inclusion, and diversity. Full participation, therefore, also runs the risk of enforcing a tokenist system where the marginalized are placed under intense scrutiny and those who are in agreement with a full participation model are held up as the token and the voice of reason. Black and Brown people are already hyper visible and simultaneously invisible (Harlow 2003). Those who disagree and try to express their reservations will tend to stand out as the unreasonable voices and subsequently silenced and made more invisible. What is even more frightening is that in the long term, if this program fails, its failure could work to perpetuate stereotypes of Black and Brown people who have launched critiques, with supporters stating that the program was doomed from the start because of a lack of goodwill/support/competence of the community.

In the remainder of this chapter, we will show the inherent drawbacks to full participation. The ideology behind full participation is to create a strategy of shared governance and accountability in an institutional system where decisions about those who lack power are made by those who wield power. We will highlight how full participation as a method of shared governance at institutions of higher learning can result in equity and inclusion strategies that are ill-equipped to deal with the issues of racial injustice in the acad-

emy; the exploitation of labor of Black and Brown people working in usually contingent positions; and finally, the perpetuation of the racist capitalism inherent in the academy. We argue herein that full participation will ultimately end up like other inclusion initiatives using the backs of Black and Brown people as bridges. We refuse full participation as part and parcel of the master's tools and instead espouse that we pay attention to the work in *This Bridge* (1981) which admonishes us to ground our politics in our identities, to talk back and demand justice, and to engage in initiatives based in a profound love and care for ourselves.

This Bridge Called My Back: Whiteness, Racial Competency and Nationwide Attempts at Addressing Diversity

This Bridge Called My Back (1981) is the seminal anthology edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa centered on the experiences of Black and Brown women, emphasizing their multiple identities and challenging white feminists who ignored the very real impacts of racial difference. *This Bridge* linked women's issues with issues of race, class, and sexuality and has had a tremendous impact upon academia and activist-based coalitions. The text "offered a rich and diverse account of the experience and analyses of women of color; with its collective ethos, its politics of rage and regeneration, and its mix of poetry, critique, fiction and testimony, it challenged the boundaries of feminist and academic discourse" (Love 2003, para. 2). More importantly, the text provided Black and Brown women with an "easily accessible discourse, plain speaking . . . voicing a difference in the flesh, not a disembodied subjectivity but a subject location, a political and personal positioning" (Calderón 2003, 296). *This Bridge* gave feminists and Black and Brown women within and outside of academia a voice to talk back to their oppressors and even those whose actions, while well intentioned, were deserving of our critique. It stated, this is the richness of who we are, and this is

our politics. The anthology gave them contributions such as Audre Lorde's much cited "The Master's Tools" in which she states,

> [t]hose of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who are poor, who are lesbian, who are black, who are older, know that *survival is not an academic skill.* It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those other identified as outside the structures, in order to define and seek a world in which we can flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. *For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.* (95)

In *This Bridge*, Anzaldúa warns Black and Brown women not "*to be a bridge, to be a fucking crossroads for goddess' sake*" (206), and the Combahee River Collective explained to them that "the most profound and potentially radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression" (212). The text taught Black and Brown women that when surviving in academia one must always be vigilant. Understanding the roots of imperialism, colonialism, racism, and misogyny in major institutions including the academy, it taught Black and Brown women to be wary of calls for justice and equity even from those among them who appeared to be the most critical and supportive of the plight of Black and Brown people.

Unfortunately, since *This Bridge* was first published in 1981, its relevance to Black and Brown people/women in academia has never been more apparent. Today the workings of racism have become ever more complex, nebulous, and even more pervasive. Racism is now cloaked in the language of equity and inclusion, shrouded in policies that have been designed to root out racial bigotry of the past and which are lauded as progressive and bridge building. As Black and Brown women navigate these institutions and the institutions' new racially progressive speak, they must be ever vigilant, grounded in and building on the foundational works that have

guided them for decades. This vigilance reveals how ideas and policies of neutrality and meritocracy perpetuate racial oppression and covertly and systematically disadvantage Black and Brown people by avoiding the issue of race (Villalpando and Delgado Bernal 2002). It highlights how curricula and pedagogies of whiteness are normalized, rendering the experiences of women and Black and Brown people as other (Perlow, Bethea, and Wheeler 2014) through an offering of specialized "diversity course components" and departments which focus on the history, cultures, and experiences of women and Black and Brown people as elective worthy, further propagating marginalization and absenting them from the mainstream curriculum while seeming to include them (Alexander and Mohanty 2010).

Black and Brown people in the academy experience deep inequities that stem from underrepresentation and pervasive structural biases in higher education (Trinidad 2014) which are defined and dictated by whites who are privileged as the purveyors of knowledge and rationality (Stanley 2006). As those in positions of power talk about equity and inclusion, Black and Brown people are confined to a set of roles already laid out for them by others, roles which forces them into academic margins where their very existence in these spaces result in ongoing daily racial microaggressions (Perlow, Bethea, and Wheeler 2014), usually invisible to others, but clearly communicated to them and other Black and Brown people, in hostile and insulting ways (Sue et al. 2007). They communicate that as Black and Brown people, their "bodies are imagined politically, historically, and conceptually circumscribed as being out of place" (Harley 2008, 23) and result in racial battle fatigue (Shavers, Butler, and Moore 2014). Unfortunately, this is the climate Black and Brown folks have to endure at institutions of higher education across the nation. It is clear that even so-called cultural competency trainings end up drawing on the increased intellectual and emotional labor of Black and Brown people, and they end up running into walls (Ahmed 2018).

Therefore, according to Ahmed (2012), "[h]aving an institutional

aim to make diversity a goal can . . . be a sign that diversity is *not* an institutional goal" (23) but rather a tool used to camouflage the maintenance of the status quo. Nevertheless, there is an argument being made that there is a need to educate students in a campus climate that is reflective of the lived diversity within society—both nationally and globally (Chen 2017). Bearing this argument in mind, adequately addressing issues related to diversity on college campuses becomes paramount, if it is to be "considered a transformative tool that . . . contribute[s] to the betterment of society" (Chen 2017, 17). Thus, a lack of diversity or inept diversity initiatives could function to limit the educational experiences of students and furthermore compromise a chance to achieve real change (Chen 2017). University campuses, then, must be invested in change on campuses, specifically in initiatives that are geared toward bringing in marginalized and minoritized scholars. However, the questions remain: what does real diversity look like, who does it encompass, and how is it achieved? All care must be taken to ensure that diversity is not "treated as a superficial overlay that does not disrupt any comfort zones" (Anzaldúa and Keating 2010, 205).

By creating offices of diversity and inclusion on college campuses across the nation, there is a move toward a more active approach to advancing diversity at the institutional level. Yet we must, as Ahmed (2012) notes, ". . . stay surprised by this" (27). We should be surprised that in this neoliberal era, often marked by colorblindness and notions of postraciality, that such spaces remain necessary. We must also remember that such spaces tend to be based on "conditional hospitality"—conditional hospitality being that one is welcome so long as one gives something in return (Ahmed 2012, 43). To that end, Black and Brown people "are welcomed *on condition* they return that hospitality by integrating into a common organizational culture, or by 'being' diverse, and allowing institutions to celebrate their diversity" (Ahmed 2012, 43). In such spaces, "[o]ur talk about whiteness is read as a sign of . . . failing to be grateful for the hospitality we have received by virtue of our arrival. This very structural position of being the guest, or the stranger, the one who receives

hospitality, allows an act of inclusion to maintain the form of exclusion" (Ahmed 2012, 43). As such, Black and Brown bodies operate in these spaces under the context of conditional hospitality, which limits how they can be critical of the spaces in which they exist. Criticism then becomes viewed as a sign of ingratitude rather than a symbol of real diversity. Black and Brown peoples' ability to be critical of the spaces in which they operate is one of the ways that real diversity can be achieved. However, it is necessary not to get too caught up in the name of diversity for diversity's sake, as "diversity . . . the sign of inclusion makes the signs of exclusion disappear" (Ahmed 2012, 65). That is to say, having a few Black and Brown bodies (or women) in a space, especially in positions of power, can hinder others from recognizing the ways in which other marginalized and minoritized groups are excluded in the space as a whole. For instance, having a brochure that features predominantly Black and Brown students for the sake of highlighting supposed diversity can obscure the reality experienced by Black and Brown students on a university campus.

Some institutions across the nation, as mentioned above, have been trying to address issues of racial inequities on their campus. In general, the responses to calls for addressing diversity in higher education have looked very similar across the board and include campus diversity officers and diversity strategic plans, just to name a few. Some of these initiatives are coercively implemented due to national visibility caused by on-campus uprisings and protests. For example, students in South Orange, New Jersey staged a sit-in at Seton Hall University "over what some students say is discrimination on campus, a lack of diversity and a lack of inclusion" (Kim 2018, para 1). Students noted that they felt as though their voices were not being heard, and so protest was a mechanism through which they could change that. Students felt that issues around race and racism on campus continually went unaddressed by the administration, and that the problems were institutional and thus needed to be addressed at the institutional level (Kim 2018). Student protests are one means of pushing for real change on university campuses

across the nation with respect to issues of racial diversity, and they have manifested in numerous ways with varying levels of success.

   One of the newer initiatives which seek to place diversity in a broader frame of equity and inclusion is full participation. In the remainder of this chapter, we will focus on the language, architecture, and implementation of full participation. There are examples of full participation projects at Yale (2015) with the objective of understanding the dynamics and decisions affecting participation and diversity; building the capacity of the institution in collaboration with others in the community to discuss and engage those dynamics; identify areas where the institution in collaboration with stakeholders in the community could usefully explore and undertake change; and provide concrete opportunities for constructive discussion about these issues both within the institution and between the institution and interested members of the community. Similar projects exist at other institutions like Connecticut College, with the objective of creating an inclusive classroom (Connecticut College 2015).

Dissecting and Complicating Full participation—Intention vs. Impact

Full participation is "an affirmative value focused on creating institutions that enable people, whatever their identity, background, or institutional position, to enter, thrive, realize their capabilities, engage meaningfully in institutional life, and contribute to the flourishing of others." (Sturm 2010). According to Sturm et al. (2011), full participation "covers the continuum of decisions and practices affecting who joins institutions, how people receive support for their activities, whether they feel respected and valued, how work is conducted, and what kinds of activities count as important work" (3). For Sturm et al., there is a gap between intention and practice at institutions of higher learning (7). For example, according to Sturm et al., the stated missions of these institutions are at odds with the

institutions' overall culture and architecture. In addition, the current language of diversity and inclusion does not adequately express what they refer to as the "more robust goal of creating 'conditions so that people of all races, genders, religions, sexual orientations, abilities, and backgrounds can realize their capabilities as they understand them and participate fully'" (Sturm et al. 2011, 4) at HEIs. They suggest engaging in collaboration that is reciprocal and developing narratives that communicate values across difference. The best approach to doing so is what Sturm et al. refer to as an "architectural approach." This approach results in "redesigned structures, policies, practices, and cultures that link inclusion, engagement, and success" (7). It will bring together three different aspects of the public mission of higher education institutions, first

> building pathways to social and economic citizenship for diverse publics through education, particularly for students from communities that have not been afforded access or enabled to succeed. Second, it involves connecting the knowledge resources of the academy with the pressing and complex problems facing multiple communities. Finally, it involves building the capacity and commitment of diverse leadership equipped to tackle these social problems. (6)

While full participation as a diversity and inclusion initiative seems like a step in the right direction toward achieving real diversity on campuses across the nation, we find that there are elements of this initiative that are worthy of critique.

Clifford Geertz in a 1995 interview with *New York Times* writer David Berreby stated "[y]ou want to change things, you don't start by proclaiming that you possess the truth. That's not very helpful" (para.15). This quote is important because it points us to a postmodernist understanding of the relativity of truth and instability of absolute truth claims. Therefore, in critiquing full participation, we take issue with the truth claim that "missions of these institutions are at odds with the institutions' overall culture and architecture." The basis of our argument in this paper is that because the foun-

dations of institutions of higher education are in racist, capitalist structures, one has to dig deeper to uncover that, while prima facie the mission and the culture of these institutions appear at odds, there might be more to this than meets the eye. As mentioned earlier, while we believe that not all diversity and inclusion initiatives are mal intended by individual institutions, we must be careful of allowing individual intention and attention to mission statements to eclipse our analysis of core systemic issues. To say that the missions of these institutions are at odds with their culture is to read the mission of individual institution without taking into consideration the larger design of the global neoliberal capitalist system on which these institutions stand. We argue here that this assertion cannot be taken as a given or as truth. Therefore, to implement a program aimed at building diverse leadership capacity by starting with an analysis that does not account for institutions whose (stated) mission, while at odds with their culture and architecture, are still tied culturally, ideologically, and practically to the fundamentals of a capitalist mission and vision, is flawed. Any type of diversity or inclusion initiatives must be foundationally sound and to be so they must be committed to deeper, broader, and multiple understandings of the inner workings of capitalism within HEIs.

Secondly, while the intent of the full participation model appears to be prima facie noble, we argue that the impacts may not be, and in actuality, there appears to be an insidiousness to its packaging. Full participation is characterized as focused on equity and diversity with a goal of creating broader and deeper change with regard to institutional "values, priorities, and patterns that cut across . . . programs, departments, and initiatives" (Sturm et al. 2011, 5). We argue that those who have traditionally been engaging in "diversity work" will continue to be taxed—and even more so—to operationalize the full participation project at these institutions and that this will become more of an expectation with little to no reward. "If diversity and equity work is less valued by organizations than other kinds of work, then the commitment to some staff [and faculty] to diversity might reproduce their place as 'beneath' other staff

[and faculty] within the hierarchies of organizations" (Ahmed 2012, 135). Below we outline several ways in which full participation will ensure this result, including the invoking of false choices, espousing an architectural approach without underscoring the importance of the for-profit capitalist foundations of these institutions, ignoring who are in the positions of power at these institutions, and hence overemphasizing the promise of collaboration and community.

The Concept of Choice Is Flawed

Fundamentally, full participation is flawed because it starts from the concept of collaboration and choice within higher education. For example, Sturm et al. (2011) state that the "value system of an institution . . . profoundly shape how faculty members spend their time and how they are rewarded for those choices" (5). This statement, while very poignant, assumes that in this value system all faculty members can make choices. As Black women faculty—two of whom are junior and contingent—the authors of this paper do not get to have choices. Even in situations that are presented as choices, there is an implicit understanding for example that junior faculty do not get to say no occasionally or at all to a chair or director. As Black women and junior faculty, we are asked to do tasks more often than not related to some type of equity and diversity service work which is currently not valued by these same institutions when it comes to tenure and promotion. There is a trove of scholarship by Black and Brown women about this issue (Diamond 1993; Evans and Cokley 2008; Mawhinney 2011; Meyer and Warren-Gordon 2013; Shollen et al. 2008; Holmes 1999). In addition, taking into consideration the current hierarchical structure in academia where the hiring of contingent faculty is on the rise (Flaherty 2017; Hurlburt and McGarrah 2016), contingent faculty, the majority of whom are Black and Brown, with no job security, little to no benefits and who are at the margins of the academy, do not have the luxury to refuse requests for service. Academics do not willfully choose to work in these conditions; they are forced to do so. Understanding the precariousness

of these job situations and with the trend continuing to move more and more toward a contingent-based workforce, how can there be a system based on reward for choices?

Spaces Were Not Built for Us—Corporate Model

As mentioned above, not only were these institutions built by and for white male elites; as the institutions began opening up to others, there have been cuts to government support of these institutions which have subsequently become dependent on neoliberal market-based regimes. According to Giroux, universities have become "annexed by defense, corporate, and national security interests, [and] critical scholarship is replaced by research for either weapons technology or commercial profits" (2006, 68). As these institutions continue to lose government funding, they have to find innovative ways to attract (unconditional) donors as well as raise tuition. A survey of small liberal arts colleges shows that tuition in 2019 at some of these colleges are upward to $70,000 a year.

As such not only is the cost of education beyond the reach of many working-class Black and Brown folks, but this state of affairs has resulted in academic capitalism (Deem 2001). In its current state, faculty within higher education are forced to reconfigure their academic work to fit competitive market activities and engage in commercialized behaviors as education shifts away from being a public good to being seen as a tradable commodity (Esnard and Cobb-Roberts 2018, 49). This new system continues to exacerbate the situation in which Black and Brown women find themselves having to adopt models that are not conducive to their methods of teaching (Levin 2006; Washburn 2005), doing research, and serving their communities. The adoption of teaching evaluations, impact factor for journals, and other metrics forces them to quantify and evaluate the worth of their work based on more hard market goals that causes them to compete against each other rather than work together (Denzin and Giardina 2017), creating a system based on self-interest and the well-being of the institutions (Ball 2012, 2015).

These commercialized systems also mean that institutions seek to generate revenue through finding ways to commercialize research and teaching (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004). Faculty working on issues of race, class, and gender find it hard to be competitive for research funding as these areas are not considered particularly valuable in monetary terms. These positions are also more subject to being cut, filled by contingent faculty or the token person who takes on all the work in these areas and pick up the slack for the diversity work that needs to be done. This no doubt exacerbates institutional inequities along discipline, gender, and racial lines (Duggan 2004; Marable 2001) and is evident in the growing number of contingent faculty and staff who are overworked, underpaid, work in poor conditions, and have little to no job security (Baldwin and Chronister 2001; Bourdieu 1998; Giroux, 2005; McLaren 2005; Rhoades and Slaughter 2004). The inequities are also visible in the cuts in spending on the programs that would assist in ensuring real diversity and the expectation that Black and Brown women will pick up the slack by serving on diversity committees, assisting and mentoring "diverse" students, and engaging in emotional labor (Meyer and Warren-Gordon 2013; Shollen et al. 2008). Hirshfield and Joseph (2012) posit for instance that "faculty members shoulder any labour-physical, mental or emotional-due to their membership in a historically marginalised group within their department or university, beyond that which is expected of other faculty members in the same setting" (214). This situation intensifies in PWIs where Black and Brown women faculty lack a critical mass to deal with the weight of attending to diversity issues in higher education (Allen et al. 2000; Gregory 2001; Thomas and Hollenshead 2001; Turner 2002) which must be seen as a form of implicit discrimination (Hirshfield and Joseph 2012; Joseph and Hirshfield 2011; Zamani 2003). These translate into Black women being treated as tokens where they are "overextended, undervalued, unappreciated, and just knowing that you are the 'negro in residence' (that you will be asked to serve and represent the 'color factor' in yet another capacity" (Harley 2008, 21).

When Black and Brown women are recruited specifically to fill diversity positions, they themselves become the mark of diversity excusing the university from having to make any additional commitments. In many of these cases, there is an absence of rules, policies and procedures governing how the individual should proceed, this lack of rules not only results in a burden to that person but "has dire consequences for the professional trajectories of women of color, broadly speaking" (Esnard and Cobb-Roberts 2018, 72), as Black and Brown women are continuously penalized for their ties and potential interest in the representation of diversification within the academy. Many scholars therefore speak to the related tensions of moving beyond the talk of diversity and the collective effects of cultural taxation on their ability to access the necessary time needed to meet the requirements for tenure and promotion (Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, and Galindo 2009).

In addition, this corporatization also does not allow those who are placed in these extenuating positions to have a say in or influence decisions that directly impact them negatively (Levin 2006; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004). Finally, HEIs, which are managed through a network of corporate logics, severely inhibit academic freedom and the autonomy to develop new and maybe controversial ideas that don't align with market valued research (Mendoza 2007). This includes work on race and racism where scholars who engage in this type of work and who may be critical of academic institutions themselves are heavily policed.

The above ensures that the work that is considered as constituting the real production of knowledge remains increasingly in the hands of those who traditionally were seen to do this work: whites and males. According to Esnard and Cobb-Roberts (2018), this is a form of epistemological racism in the academy which results in the invisibility of Black and Brown women, especially those who work on issues of race and racism and/or racial micro-aggressions (Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2001). Not only is their work devalued but they also become isolated (Cobb-Roberts and Agosto 2011). The reality is that Black and Brown women have had to subvert their

gender, ethnic, or racial identities to fulfill unrealistic expectations that are more consistent with those of their white colleagues (Aguirre 2000; Thomas and Hollenshead 2001). Today, therefore, Black and Brown women in academia are more likely to question their academic worth or legitimacy compared to their white counterparts (Thomas and Hollenshead 2001) as they continue to work in spaces that are not only unwelcoming but unsafe.

Architecture—Who Is Making the Decisions vs Who Is Doing the Work of Building

The pressing questions regarding designing a new architecture using full participation are: Who is making the decisions about the new architectural designs? Are they the same people who have traditionally been in a position of power at these institutions—read: white and male? If so, how are these new institutional "buildings" expected to be different from previous ones? Does the new architecture include a redesign of the research, teaching, service hierarchy on which tenure and promotion is based? If not, where does service as a necessary wing of the new buildings feature and who are the ones left to tend to that wing? Will this wing be included in the center of the new structure, or will it remain on the periphery of campus?

Until there is a concerted effort to amplify and to hear the voices of those who work with students, those who are already on the margins of the academy, to reward the labor of those who work with and mentor Black and Brown students, those who build communities to make Black and Brown students feel less like imposters and more like they belong on these campuses, then nothing will change. Until the academy is willing to work on learning how to really engage students in a process of healing, then nothing will change. Until the hierarchy of research, teaching, and service commitments that tethers those trying to advance to the top of the academic structure to decisions in the best interest of their careers—and privileges those able to guard their time for research, even when service could

be more impactful to community building—changes, nothing will change.

When we examine the three concepts that full participation is tasked with bringing together, we see that they are flawed, because they start from a position of doing and not from how do we get those who have not traditionally been decision makers and designers involved in this process in a way that they are not saddled with the work while others make the decisions about the work that needs to be done. If we take Sturm et al.'s approach, then won't the same people who are leading the university system as it is currently—in its unjust inequitable state—be the ones "building pathways to social and economic citizenship for diverse publics through education . . . connecting the knowledge resources of the academy . . . [and choosing and] building the capacity and commitment of diverse leadership equipped to tackle these social problems" (2011, 7)?

This issue of who is making the decisions when it comes to full participation become even more pressing, as Sturm et al. in the section of their paper on "Taking and Architectural Approach to Full Participation" state, "[t]hose who lead and teach and shape institutions of higher education have the ability to make choices, determine commitments, and enact strategies that address change in organizational structures and cultures to achieve full participation for the next generation of students and faculty" (11). What is the incentive for those who lead and teach to make changes? The answer, in our opinion, is none. According to Audre Lorde, quoted earlier, "*the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but will never enable us to bring about genuine change*" (1981, 99). It is even more absurd when one is requesting the master to redesign his own "architecture."

Stating that those who lead and teach have the ability to make choices has already excluded those who are support staff at institutions of higher education who interact with and take care of students and have their own valuable knowledge about how the institution functions. More often than not, support staff are major-

ity women and majority Black and Brown people. To exclude them implies that they are not envisioned as architects to full participation. In their look at an institutional approach to mindfulness, Sturm et al. lay out the how, who, what, where, and when of the architectural approach to full participation. For the who, they state "who are the 'organizational catalysts' and drivers of change, and how can the institution facilitate their connection to each other and provide support for their work to advance full participation? Who needs to be at the table in order for the values of full participation to be realized?" (11). These are very interesting questions; hopefully those implementing a full participation approach to diversity and inclusion will see the value in involving those voices not normally heard.

Collaboration, Community, and Co-optation

Sturm et al. (2011) state that institutions of higher education need the "kind of transformation [which] involves the co-creation of spaces, relationships, and practices that support movement toward full participation" (12). They state that full participation is animated by "a shared vision, guided by institutional mindfulness, and sustained by an ongoing collaboration among leaders at many levels of the institution and community" (12). However, we ask, when we speak of collaboration, what do we really mean, since those with power in the room in these collaborative processes are not usually Black and Brown people, women, or those without tenure? Since those not in the room are usually adjuncts, visitors, staff, students, and the community, what do we really mean when we talk about collaboration?

   In fact, who gets to choose who are leaders? Who gets to choose who collaborates? Those with institutional power get to choose who should be the ones in charge of making the decision or recommendations. Those chosen get to choose with whom they will collaborate, what decisions and processes are the ones they will undertake, who will undertake this work and whether and how they will be rewarded. Once the decisions are made in this shared process, the

work of equity and inclusion or full participation is usually left to those who were not involved in the collaboration process.

This reminds us of the critique of the Black and Brown women contributors to *This Bridge* who stood up to and challenged the boundaries of feminist and academic discourse at the time based on a myth of sisterhood. The concept of sisterhood erased the concerns of Black and Brown women from feminism in an effort to find manufactured commonalities that could bring all women together as feminist to fully participate in feminism collaboration. What the women in *This Bridge* (1981) emphasized was that this sisterhood was a myth created by white women who were visible within the feminist movement—that these connections were "fragile, at best" (25). We recognize the inequity of collaboration espoused by Sturm; it is a myth of shared governance. However, according to Anzaldúa, "[s]haring the pie is not going to work. I had a bite of it once and it almost poisoned me. With mutations of the virus such as these, one cannot isolate the virus and treat it. The whole organism is poisoned" (208).

In addition, the initiatives such as full participation tend to utilize the language of Black and Brown people, specifically of Black feminists, as a way to talk back to us in the spirit of "collaboration." For example, in the Yale full participation initiative (2015) they speak of

> a multi-level systems approach [which] enables a 'both/and' move to address how members of particular identity fare, and of how change initiatives need to be framed more broadly than a focus on identities found to be the sources of inequality, but those categories of identity must remain an important part of the inquiry if there is any hope of advancing marginalized groups. In this approach, these identities are *both* the focus of the culture-change initiative *and* are not the overarching focus; instead, the culture as a whole and how members with different identities and backgrounds experience it is the overarching focus. (23)

The concept of "[v]iewing the world through a both/and conceptual

lens of the simultaneity of race, class, and gender oppression and of the need for a humanist vision of community creat[ing] new possibilities" (Collins 1990, 221) was espoused by Black feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins in *Black Feminist Thought* originally published in 1990. Co-opting the language of Black and Brown people is nothing new. However, it continues to not only be patronizing but deeply dishonest and has real life negative consequences for Black and Brown women in the academy (Nash 2019). Once co-opted, this language is then twisted to further the white academic agenda of developing "community" and for the good of "humanity" when Black and Brown people are themselves being treated as non-human (Wynter 1994; Sharpe 2016; Nash 2019). In a time of #BlackLivesMatter where Black folks are being executed in the streets by state-sanctioned officials, when Black students enrolled at institutions of higher education can go to sleep in a common area and have the cops called on them for looking out of place (Mzezewa 2018), when Black and Brown faculty are being fired for defending safe spaces for Black students (Schmidt 2017), our understanding of community cannot be spurious. Using the language and intellectual labor of these same people to prop up these same institutions when these institutions sit by and do nothing or are complicit in the dehumanization of Black and Brown folks is nothing but dishonesty. The reality that Black and Brown folks at the margins in academia face excludes them from full participation. In fact, in this case, and according to Ahmed (2012), "solutions to problems are the problems given new form" (143).

Beyond the Full Participation Framework

The bridge I must be
Is the bridge to my own power
I must translate
My own fears
Mediate
My own weaknesses

I must be the bridge to nowhere
But my true self
and then
I will be useful
—Rushin, 1981 (xxii)

To many in power at institutions of higher education, diversity is "often imagined as a form of repair, a way of mending or fixing histories of being broken. Indeed, diversity enters institutional discourse as a language of reparations; as a way of imagining that those who are divided can work together; as a way of assuming that 'to get along' is to right a wrong" (Ahmed 2012, 164). However, it is apparent that the full participation framework, and, for that matter, any diversity frameworks that do not fully account for and critique the neoliberal capitalist structure of the academy, are at best inadequate and at worst dishonest. There appears to be little to no goodwill for effecting real and substantial change toward a more equitable academic institutional structure, division of labor, and sharing of rewards. In fact, PWIs, according to Stewart (2017), "engage [in] a politics of appeasement instead of a true liberal education . . . [and] [t]he greatest strength of an institution lies in its ability to persevere over time, with its most fundamental modus operandi challenged but unchanged" (para. 5).

We cannot continue to underestimate PWI "university leaders . . . who wanted their colleges and universities out of unflattering public spotlight" (Stewart 2017, para. 7). Full participation is just one of the appeasement methods that have historically been used by these institutions. As such, we must be conscious of the past and not simply be satisfied with empty gestures such as "hiring chief diversity officers . . . increase[ing] financial aid . . . cluster hires for faculty of color and investing in diversity programming. . . . Those efforts seek to quiet the protesters, trustees and donors . . . all the while creating little systemic or transformative change on the campus" (Stewart 2017, para. 9). These types of inclusion initiatives should "be read as a technology of governance . . . making strangers into subjects,

those who in being included are also willing to consent to the terms of inclusion . . . submit to and agree with the task of reproducing" (Ahmed 2012, 163) business as normal such that to "be included can thus be a way of sustaining and reproducing a politics of exclusion . . . a way of being made increasingly subject to . . . violence" (Ahmed, 2012, 163–64).

Such is unsustainable for Black women academics. The question then is, if not this, then what? Can we even imagine a framework that does not just see its constituents purely in capitalistic terms as workers or consumers and encourage the peddling of reductionist jargon and rhetoric, falsely advertising to Black and Brown people to trust that they are inclusive, socially responsible and despite the incurring of debt will lead to their emancipation? Can we imagine institutions built on power operating outside of this realm, in essence ceding power? If not, how do those who are oppressed by the current structure proceed? How do we resist? And

> [i]s resistance to power internal to power, a torsional re-presentation of power's *own* complex identity? From where does power originate and how can we hope to change things if we are mired in its internal machinery? Does it go without saying that power's machinations describe the complexity of human self-involvement, which would then mean that there *is* an outside, a before power? (Kirby 2015, 105)

and hence maybe an after power which can help us transcend a posture of resistance to one of just being able to be?

Here we suggest that to go beyond these diversity and inclusion frameworks like full participation, we need to get beyond the "politics of appeasement." According to Steward (2018), one of the "first step[s] . . . is to make equity and justice the yardstick by which leaders measure progress instead of merely diversity and inclusion" (Diversity and Inclusion vs. Equity and Social Justice section, para. 14). How do we do this? Tierney (2006) calls on faculty to let their voice be heard and similar to the last stanzas of *The Bridge Poem*, Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) articulate a need for academics to

"consider their own participation in this process and begin to articulate new, viable, alternative, paths . . . to pursue" (57). This is of course easier said than done, and so the need for solidarity is crucial. There is great strength in numbers, as Black women faculty as their true selves, as Rushin (1981) writes, can become useful by sharing their stories of oppression, rejecting the pressure to "fit in" to environments which seeks to destroy them, and drawing attention to the relevance of counter narratives as they attempt to represent Black scholars (Fries-Britt and Kelly 2005). This type of solidarity creates safe spaces for Black and Brown women, spaces where others can offer advice, advocate, protect, and provide the courage to say no to being manipulated and overworked or to engaging in work that is not valued or rewarded by these institutions. As Audre Lorde wrote (1981), "Without community, there is no liberation" (99). For those few Black and Brown women who hold positions of power in these institutions, there is a need to support their sisters in the struggle so they can become a bridge to each other. They cannot remain neutral on issues of trauma and suffering of other Black and Brown women. Oftentimes, Black and Brown women remain neutral because it is a matter of survival in a system that they know and have experienced to be brutal. However, they cannot remain neutral, for in the long run neutrality will destroy them, because "[d]espite knowing otherwise, [they] are often disciplined into thinking through and along lines that reinscribe [their] own annihilation, reinforcing and reproducing what Sylvia Wynter has called our 'narratively condemned status'" (Sharpe 2016, 13).

HEIs throughout the United States are microcosms of the pervasive systemic oppression that forms the foundation of US society. Built on seized, indigenous land, and many built by enslaved Africans with revenue gained from chattel slavery systems of exploited labor, HEIs remain deeply committed to white supremacy and hegemony by way of gatekeeping. Entering such spaces with multiple, intersecting identities present and pronounced comes with a considerable amount of deliberation, weighing the possible losses, gains, and inevitable compromises that come with entering the labyrinth

that is the academy. The prospect of and choice to enter, as well as the commitment to remaining on this tumultuous academic terrain, means that as Black women we oscillate between states of hopefulness and weariness. Investing in one's own mental health through care has been an important dimension to resistance cum liberation, whether it be through a personal self-care regimen or in community with other Black and Brown women. According to Rushin (1981), "[t]he bridge [we] must be [i]s the bridge to [our] own power" (xxii). As such, all of us, all Black and Brown women in academia, must become undisciplined if we are to be liberated. The work we do requires new modes and methods, "new ways of entering and leaving . . . of undoing the 'racial calculus and . . . political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago' (Hartman 2008, 6) and that live into the present" (Sharpe 2016, 13).

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CODA

10. Woke, Caribbean Smoke Screen

MARVA COSSY

Wish these societal prescriptions didn't grip me, so

Plugging me into must-do-this, can't-do-that

Binding me tight in gendered forced roles

Ignoring my screams, thrashing my dreams

Waking, I asked, is woke only smoke?

Yoked, so harshly by societal constructs

Cleaning, child-rearing; cooking men's delights

What the hell, they say, is women's rights

Ignore her screams, thrash her dreams

Waking, woke. Woke's only smoke!

Degrees in hand, professional status top brand

But where does the Caribbean woman stand

Political opponents mock her childlessness

Downgrade her international applause

Womanhood, not jealousy, the cause

To rule, to rise, *she must be man, she must be bisexual*

she must be homosexual or trans

Waking, woke! I declare woke as merely smoke.

Loosen me, join me, come advocate,

Unstrap, unseal this nuisance fate

For reconstructing's a must,

Smashing MAN-made rules to dust

Women doing more than echoing screams

Women truly, truly living their dreams

Awaken, Awoke! Proving woke goes beyond smoke!

11. Geneva

TYKEISHA SWAN PATRICK

Digital Painting (2021)

This piece represents my desire to expand outside what home has painted as standard. Here, I felt the importance of expressing this reality, the reality to which I may have never had access. It seems there are a lot of lost connections that would help us all live in an in-synced world. She is the first of her kind, leading by example. She is an example of why it is so important to be connected to the universe, not in a box of fear. With this big awakening comes responsibility—to help connect those that have remained lost. Though I wonder, will anyone listen?

The name Geneva really just came to mind, but learning about the root of the name's meaning really brought it all together.

Geneva is a Germanic female given name and means "juniper tree." My roots as a Black woman of German descent draws her to me.

When I looked into what a juniper tree symbolizes, it's said to be strength, wisdom, usefulness, and beauty. They can survive harsh, bare climates, growing and surviving with very little water.

She looks like a Geneva to me.

About the Contributors

Andrea N. Baldwin

Andrea N. Baldwin is an Associate professor of Gender and Ethnic Studies in the School for Cultural and Social Transformation at the University of Utah. She is an attorney-at-law who also holds a master's degree in International Trade Policy and a PhD in Gender and Development Studies. She has several publications, including her recently published book monograph *A Decolonial Black Feminist Theory of Reading and Shade: Feeling the University* (Routledge, 2022), and the first co-edited volume of *Standpoints: Black Feminist Knowledges* (Virginia Tech Publishing, 2019). Dr. Baldwin was born and raised on the small Caribbean island-state of Barbados and considers herself an all-around Caribbean woman and loves everything coconut and soca.

Nana Brantuo

Nana Afua Yeboaa Brantuo, PhD, is an interdisciplinary social scientist, policy analyst, mixed methods researcher, and writer with a decade's worth of experience across the federal government, nonprofit, philanthropy, and K-20 education sectors. She is founder of Diaspora Praxis, LLC, a research consultancy focused on demographic, socioeconomic, and political analysis at the local, state, national, and international levels. Her work focuses on socioeconomic mobility and immobility, migration policy, education policy, Black feminist policy analysis and advocacy, and diaspora community politics, activism, and advocacy.

Casey Anne Brimmer

Casey Anne Brimmer (they/them pronouns), is a nonbinary, queer, autistic, multiply disabled, and first-generation doctoral student in

the ASPECT program at Virginia Tech. Casey Anne studies gender, sexuality, and disability through an intersectional framework of feminist, queer, and crip theories. In addition to their BA in Ethnic & Gender Studies from Westfield State University, Casey Anne holds two MA degrees from the University of Northern Iowa in Women's and Gender Studies and in Communication Studies. They also use a range of media to create art and readings which attempt to raise gender, sexuality, and disability at the intersection of these with other topics like faith, class, and culture. Mx. Brimmer's website, www.cabrimmer.com, has more information about their other academic and creative endeavors.

Dr. Letisha Engracia Cardoso Brown

Dr. Letisha Engracia Cardoso Brown is an Assistant Professor of sociology and Black feminist scholar at the University of Cincinnati. Her work focuses on issues of social inequality via the study of race and racism, gender, and sexuality, within social institutions including sport, and higher education. Her research has been published in journals such as *Race and Social Problems*, the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, and *Social Forces*. Her public scholarship can be found at https://firstandpen.com/author/letisha-brown/.

Amy M. Ernstes

Amy M. Ernstes is a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology at Virginia Tech, a lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), and an academic advisor with the College of Arts and Sciences at UNCG. She received her Bachelor of Science in Social Work and Master of Social Work from Loyola University Chicago and Master of Arts in Sociology from UNCG. Her research interests include teaching sociology, liberatory pedagogies, social inequalities, race and racism, and feminist theory.

Amilia N. Evans

Amilia N. Evans is a Rhetoric and Writing doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech. She earned an MA in Technical Communication from Texas Tech University and a BA in English (Professional Writing), with a minor in Business, from Virginia Tech. She is a subject matter expert in technical and professional communication, rhetorician, othermother, and daughter. Amilia has over fifteen years' industry experience in supporting and managing proposals for federal and state government contractor bids. Her academic research interests are in technical and professional communication, African American rhetorics, intercultural communication, and Black feminisms. Amilia's dissertation research focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) rhetorics within predominantly white institutions, aims to amplify Black women's voices, and contributes toward Black methodologies.

Leslie Robertson Foncette

Leslie Robertson Foncette is a Trinidadian-American sociologist whose work focuses on gender inequality and development, agency, and resistance strategies in the Caribbean. She is also a trained bilingual psychotherapist with international experience and holds an MS in Clinical Psychology, a graduate certificate in Women's and Gender Studies, and a PhD in Sociology. Dr. Foncette has been a photographer documenting cultural festivals and rituals, particularly Black life in the Diaspora and Trinidad and Tobago Carnival, integrating the visual lens with a sociocultural exploration of traditions and resistance to oppression. She has forthcoming publications on school violence in Trinidad and Tobago, the psychosocial impacts of interfacing with institutions of power, and the sexual agency of adolescent girls.

Brianna George

Brianna George received her bachelor's degree in psychology from

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in 2018. She joined Dr. Russell T. Jones's Stress and Coping Lab within the Department of Psychology at Virginia Tech as a doctoral student in 2019 after completing a research fellowship in an NIH-funded post-baccalaureate research program at VCU. Broadly, Brianna's research interests surround interpersonal trauma. Specifically, Brianna seeks to (1) examine how minority related stressors and discrimination impact post-trauma trajectories of Black women and other marginalized populations and to (2) understand mechanisms by which interpersonal trauma is linked to psychiatric outcomes. Ultimately, Brianna aims to disseminate research that explores and prioritizes racial trauma and advocates for Black healing.

Rachel Nunn

Rachel Nunn is a theatremaker and visual artist with a background in performance, directing, and arts administration. She received bachelor's degrees in Theatre and English from William Peace University, where her thesis centered on reclaiming feminist narratives within the militant patriarchy of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. She is working toward an MFA in Theatre with a focus on Arts Leadership, with which she wants to help lead the nonprofit theatre field toward a more whole-person approach to resourcing the performing arts. She is interested in exploring models of artist support that break down power dynamics ingrained in the white heteropatriarchy, empowering marginalized artists to center their unique expertises.

Leah Ramnath

Leah Ramnath is a PhD student of the Alliance of Social, Political, Ethical, and Cultural Thought (ASPECT) at Virginia Tech. Her work broadly focuses on issues of identity as it relates to agency through a Black feminist theoretical framework. Her long-term academic goal is to center the intellectual and theoretical rigor Black and

Brown folks have always contributed in the everyday via lived reality, that is within/without/beyond the general academe. Leah centers Black and Brown feminisms, emphasizing a critical framework that thoroughly interrogates and challenges the uncritical acceptance of over-intellectualized concepts around governmentality, biopolitics, and dimensions of sociospatial analysis.

Jariah Strozier

Jariah Strozier is a Professor at Virginia Polytechnic and State University in the department of Sociology and is a Certified Health Education Specialist. She has worked with and advocated for vulnerable populations and communities in relation to public health concerns and social justice issues as well as worked for the Center for Public Health Practice and Research at Virginia Tech on various projects addressing population health concerns in the community. Her research centers on Black feminisms, medical sociology, health education, and public health, examining intersections of gender, race, and weight. Her contribution to Black feminisms and medical sociology is coining the terms "Crooked Room of Medicine" (CRoM), thick studies, the Gender Race Weight Matrix, and the embodiment of (generational) heaviness.