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Creating a Space for the "Outsider Within": A Framework for Black Feminist Anthropology

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Anthropology, ideally, is an intellectual endeavor to provide insight into the nature of the variations on the human condition. Historically, European anthropologists have used it as a tool to justify colonialism, scientific racism, and relentless persecution, while simultaneously exploiting and erasing the lives of oppressed individuals. African-American intellectuals in post-emancipation America sought to combat the negative impact of slavery and subjugation by using ethnography and self-reflection to capture the totality of their experiences in America. Black women represent a greatly influential but almost invisible intellectual source whose multilateral identities and social experiences inform and dictate sociocultural trajectory in the United States and around the world. The goal of this literary analysis is to propose and support a theoretical framework for Black feminist anthropology based on the history, ideologies, and contributions of Black feminist theory to global culture. I have found that Black feminist scholarship is characterized by diverse methodologies and interdisciplinary perspectives that are unconventional to traditional anthropological research. In conclusion, I discuss how Black feminist anthropology has potential transform longstanding beliefs and theories across all subfields of anthropology by setting a new standard of holistic analysis, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and transcultural engagement.

Keywords

anthropology, Black feminism, womanism, frameworks, theory methodology

Disciplines

Anthropology | Sociology | Urban Studies and Planning

CREATING SPACE FOR THE “OUTSIDER WITHIN”:
A FRAMEWORK FOR BLACK FEMINIST ANTHROPOLOGY

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Abstract

Anthropology, ideally, is an intellectual endeavor to provide insight into the nature of the variations on the human condition. Historically, European anthropologists have used it as a tool to justify colonialism, scientific racism, and relentless persecution, while simultaneously exploiting and erasing the lives of oppressed individuals. African-American intellectuals in post-emancipation America sought to combat the negative impact of slavery and subjugation by using ethnography and self-reflection to capture the totality of their experiences in America. Black women represent a greatly influential but almost invisible intellectual source whose multilateral identities and social experiences inform and dictate sociocultural trajectory in the United States and around the world. The goal of this literary analysis is to propose and support a theoretical framework for Black feminist anthropology based on the history, ideologies, and contributions of Black feminist theory to global culture. I have found that Black feminist scholarship is characterized by diverse methodologies and interdisciplinary perspectives that are unconventional to traditional anthropological research. In conclusion, I discuss how Black feminist anthropology has potential transform longstanding beliefs and theories across all subfields of anthropology by setting a new standard of holistic analysis, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and transcultural engagement.

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Introduction

The goal of this project is to highlight the contributions of Black feminist scholars to the overall American identity and the influence the transmission of ideas and cultural productions of Black women globally. and propose the idea that the combination of experience and access to intellectual resources qualify Black feminists, and all Black women, as authoritative figures in the production of Black cultural theory in anthropology. My framework standardizes the characteristics of Black feminist anthropology, showing how the discipline applies theory and live experience to restructure ethnography and praxis. Based on this framework, I expand upon themes across multiple subfields to trace the development, transmission, and evolution of the Black feminism's influence on critical race, gender, and class scholarship in anthropology. In addition, I selected three feminist scholars as case to represent the innovative process of methodology, and how their individual applications of this process to their research legitimized the use of alternative intellectual sources to describe the human condition. Finally, I conclude with a short discussion the expansion of intersectional disciplines and how all scholars can work to center the voices of marginalized populations in recounting and describing their history and culture based on the model of Black feminist anthropology.

Characteristics of Black Feminist Theory

Black feminist study in anthropology stands as a uniquely holistic and intersectional approach to methodological praxis, reflective of Black women's existence in multiple spheres of social reality simultaneously. According to anthropologist Leith Mullings, the interactions of these spheres and the resulting life histories, are a foundational pillar for this research (2000). This calls for methodology that can thoroughly assess and interpret a wide diversity of cultural and social

forms through many modes of presentation. As such, several famous Black artists conducted ethnography through their literature, visual media, and expressive performances, even though these works weren't recognized for their intellectual value until the end of the 20th century (Mullings 2013). Zora Neale Hurston and Katherine Dunham were highly regarded for their original and innovative applications of literature, dance, and other forms of visual discourse to ethnographic research. Though they were widely regarded in artistic spaces and found success as entertainers and cultural informers, they were marginalized in academia due their race and gender (McClaurin 2001). Academic protectionists argued that the use of alternative methodology reduced the quality of knowledge that the research produced (Davila 2006). Regardless, both women conducted anthropological study and ethnography in a variety of ways while emphasizing the symbolic authority and legitimacy of these art forms. Using their respective talents, Hurston and Dunham gave exposure to a transnational Black identity that directly contradicted the popular stereotypes of white anthropologists and initiated major restructuring of how processes of forming ideas and conducting research are approached. Today, Western anthropologists continue to reinforce ethnocentricity and supremacist ideology by presenting caricatures of the sociocultural productions of the "other." In their descriptions of these others, anthropologists often misrepresented the symbolism and ideology of these groups as a result of distorted observations and improper applications of theory (Harrison 2008, Mullings 2000). Black feminists produce "oppositional knowledge" to combat negative theoretical models based on racialized mischaracterizations and exploitation of inequalities (Collins 2016, Mullings 2000). This knowledge dispels myths of inherently problematic communities imbued with pathological afflictions and exposes how institutional systems perpetuate these power dynamics. Oppositional scholarship is honest and reflexive, and incorporates social activism through ethical, responsible

praxis (Mullings 2000, Mullings 2013). Black feminist scholars who participate in oppositional knowledge production emphasize the importance of how interactions within and outside of their communities socialize individuals and affect their quality of life. Caroline Bond Day's work on interracial Black families in the United States set a precedent for a reformed study of miscegenation, considering the social and legal codes during the 18th and early to mid-19th century. Black intellectuals grew in number, each developed unique ideas of "Blackness." Skin color, ethnic heritage, education, and wealth each contributed a unique aspect of what it meant to be Black, and Day's studies on interracial families upended the false narratives of a singular African-American culture and lifestyle while disproving the clichés of poverty, intellect, and socialization that informed anthropological theory pertaining race and ethnography (Day 1932). Her work helped to critically analyze and redefine the various social classifications that manifested and evolved according to sociocultural trends throughout the era. Many pioneering Black women in anthropology emphasize community collaboration and unity to uncover underlying power structures that continue to drive the trajectory of disciplinary theory (Harrison 2008; Mullings 2000; Bolles 2009). They exploit structural, theoretical and ideological flaws in anthropology by working with the subject to deconstruct the naturally polarized power dynamic between subject and researcher (Harrison 2008). Ethnography could be considered the most preferred method of choice for many Black feminists who wish to study variation on the Black woman's condition because of the expositional nature of observation and inquiry. It allows access into coveted traditions, rituals, socialization processes, and intellectual advancements that have disregarded, misinterpreted, or exploited by mainstream academia. Black woman ethnographers possess an exceptional awareness of patterns that recreate structural inequalities that insiders do not experience (Collins 1986). Born out of necessity and innovation, black feminist studies can be

considered a survival strategy that helps Black women around the world negotiate and preserve their experiences and identities. The resulting frameworks syncretize information from a variety of disciplines and knowledge sources and utilize it to provide distinctive criticisms and prescriptions for improvement. Like Black feminist scholarship itself, these concepts are versatile and can inform many disciplines beyond the social sciences and humanities.

Black Feminism in History

Beginning in the 1950s, Feminism was and continues to be a movement advocating for the rights of freedom and autonomy for women while fighting against a patriarchal society that persecutes women based on established stereotypes surrounding gender, sexuality, and sociopolitical participation (Barnett 1993). This and other mainstream women's liberation movements too often ignore the intersection of race, class, and gender that have had compounded impacts on lived experiences of Black women (Collins 1996). While white feminists may have been historically denied access to certain privileges that their male counterparts had, they fundamentally reproduced and reinforced white-other power dynamics through exclusion and discriminatory practices. Additionally, Black women's intellectual contributions to the women's movement were often co-opted or used to support feminist political agendas which deliberately failed to acknowledge the compounded issues Black women faced within and outside of their communities (Barnett 1993). Black women resisted the political pressure to align with white women, but due to the hypervisibility of the dangers of being a Black man in America, women are expected to ignore intersectional issues and assume a role of submissive solidarity (Barnett 1993). In the south, church mothers and other women in the community were leading, organizing, assisting and educating male members throughout the civil rights movement, and, in the case of

Fannie Lou Hamer and Ella Baker, sacrificing their bodies in the name of rights for all oppressed and disenfranchised citizens (Barnett 1993). Black women often assumed the greatest risk and most diverse responsibility throughout these social movements, caring for themselves, their communities, and providing a force for collective feminism and Civil Rights (Mullings 2000). Black women began creating their own organizations dedicated to the politics of Black womanhood and femininity, such as the National Black Feminist Organization, the Alliance of Black Feminists, and the Combahee River Collective during the 1960s and 70s (Collins 1996; Barnett 1993). These women began to redefine and repurpose white feminism by critically analyzing its problematic relationship to Black women's liberation and reconstructing activist frame works to reflect the multidimensionality of the Black woman (Collins 1996). Alice Walker coined the term "womanist" in her prose collection titled *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1984) to define this new model of Black woman liberation. She describes a womanist, overall, as someone who has the upmost love and appreciation for everyone and everything, and who is "committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female" (Walker 1984). It ascribes a love for the self and Blackness, as well as an appreciation for the diversity to unify women of the world in all of their causes. While I do believe that the term "womanism" symbolizes a specialized Diasporic gender study, I agree with Barbara Omolade that "womanism" and "Black feminism" are interchangeable – "both are concerned with struggles against sexism and racism by black women who are themselves part of the black community's efforts to achieve equity and liberty" (Barnett 1993). However, the complete elimination of the word "feminism" to describe Black women's liberation represents a rightfully Black nationalist ideal, while Black feminism represents the intersectionality of reality as conceptualized by black women (Collins 1996). Intersectionality is an overlooked aspect of womanism, often because

critics are preoccupied with the perceived “separation” of Black women. However, amidst oppression, marginalization, and the struggle to fight for their rights quite literally on their own, many Black women’s spaces were created to encourage inclusion and intersectionality (Combahee River Collective 1977). Black feminist movements encourage the discourse of all women in these spaces in addition to serving as a forum to address Black women’s issues. There are movements today such as Black Girls Rock and the natural hair movement that are solely created for Black women to embrace themselves and the aspects of their behavior, physicality, and culture that society hates. Black women have unconsciously begun to apply their own brand of Black feminism to analyze, critique, and change their sociopolitical standing in America, as well as to unite women of color and women of low-socioeconomic status against classism, sexism, racism, and patriarchy. Black feminist research is undoubtedly linked to the pursuance of social justice and engaged anthropologists collaborate with and act as activists at all socioeconomic and political levels to produce and legitimize new paradigms of scholarship (Mullings 2015).

Outsider Within

Gwendolyn Mikell, anthropologist and biographer for Zora Neale Hurston, described how Hurston used anthropology to create and apply a perspective of “double vision” to her studies of Black folk culture using scholarly knowledge and personal experience (1982). Patricia Hill Collins, an African-American sociologist, expanded on this phenomenon and coined the term the “outsider within,” defined as a person who has a “particular knowledge/power relationship, one of gaining knowledge about or if a dominant group without gaining full power accorded to members of that group” (Harrison 2008: p.18). The outsider is named so because they, by nature of gender, ethnicity (in the case of Black women, both) and other factors that relegate them to the margins of society, but they have the privilege of training and status that allows them to occupy and traverse

various spaces and collect insider knowledge and resources (Collins 1986). By using this platform to highlight peripheral scholarship and to address and reform the problematic relationship between minority groups and anthropology, Black feminist scholars effectively advance critical analysis of contemporary social and racial theory (Harrison 2008, Collins 1986, Davila 2006). They are agents of interculturality who are responsible for the active “critical reconstruction” of the process of theory formation (Harrison 2008). Black feminist scholars use these experiences as a legitimate wellspring of knowledge by which to critique anthropological theories and are constantly constructing ethnographies of the self and others based on new discoveries and rapidly evolving interpretations of their collective histories (Harrison 2001). While Black women still work to attain equal visibility, they have performed and developed creative methods of research that have become trademark of Black feminist anthropologists and the content of their ideas have influence on-going dialogues in a variety of sociological specialties (Harrison 2008). Western traditional models of analysis that assume some social hierarchy that standardizes whiteness to maintain a system of dehumanizing racialization by attacking the legitimacy of their cultural of the other (Harrison 2008; McClaurin 1999; Mullings 2013). Black feminism encourages scholars to see from the perspective of the outsider within as a component of their research process and use informed interpretations of these experiences to refine how their research questions are produced and the goals they seek to achieve (Collins 1986; Mullings 2013).

Methodology

Originally, I began this project as an investigation of the impact of Black women’s cultural productions on society in the United States, but the historical implications of these productions led me to realize that the influence of Black women reaches beyond mainstream American trends.

Black feminist scholarship is a global endeavor that seeks to create a collective historical account of the experiences of Black women around the world by using multimodal methods to center their voices, which I aimed to reflect in my methodology. I conducted a detailed literary synthesis by compiling historical background data, including case studies of anthropologist featured to draw conclusions and propose my own framework. I systematically analyzed oral histories, rare archives, original manuscripts, and multimedia resources such as photographs and videos produced by Black feminist scholars. For this piece, I conducted a critical analysis of the works of several Black female anthropologists, sociologists, and philosophers to create and generalized format for conducting ethnographic and anthropological studies of non-white male groups. I concentrated my focus on scholars who were born and focused their studies predominantly in the United States. While black intellectual and anthropological study is found all over the world wherever there are African descendent people, and there is a great volume of Black anthropological works that are transnational, focusing on the Caribbean and Latin America and the entire African content. However, there are relatively few canons that analyze and track the historical experience of African-Americans exclusively; most of the most famous or widely cited case studies of Black population are conducted by white anthropologists. In addition, it was no small task to find up-to-date resources that dealt with the specific intersectionality of this topic due to the relatively small pool of Black feminist academics in anthropology and the lack of mainstream visibility of their work. Additionally, I use the term “Black” rather than “African-American” to describe African descendant peoples because I believe that the association with the West excludes many areas of the diaspora.

Framework for Black Feminist Anthropology

As stated, Black feminist scholarship reflects the diversity of the Black woman's experience, while constantly redefining what it means to be both Black and woman on a transnational scale. Based on critical race, gender, political, and sociocultural theories proposed by prominent Black feminist scientists from multiple disciplines, I propose below a holistic, informed, and objective framework based on five themes, which can be applied throughout multiple subfields of anthropology, and hopefully, other social sciences and humanities. I begin with the first theme, *critical analysis of anthropological theory*, because it is here, in theory, that the anthropologist constructs the principles she will use to determine established "facts" and combine these to form her own interpretations of human behavior and ritual, giving her almost total control over how the that population will be presented to a global audience. Anthropology "matters" because theory, methodology, and praxis give scholars the intellectual tools to either expose or perpetuate established power dynamics that drive how the human condition is understood (Mullings 2013). However, those compulsory theories are still implemented universally as foundational texts for beginning anthropologists, and I believe we are all, to some degree, instilled with a sense of bias toward marginalized subjects, especially those who have been repeated victims of caricaturizing and dehumanization based on these paradigms. Critical analysis of the theorization process requires direct confrontation with biases and how they affect the role of the interpreter. Praxis is the way in which people enact their own sociocultural reality and how theory defines or explains their lifestyle. This process forms the basis for all sociocultural interactions and structures within individuals and populations. It is imperative that anthropologists engage in the *holistic reconceptualization of both theory and praxis*, as theory informs praxis application and praxis informs theory modification. It is impossible to create an accurate interpretation of the Black feminist experience that informs scholarship without analyzing how

environmental and institutional effects compound the impacts of demographic intersections (Collins 1986). Black feminist critics contend with both the persistent consequences of the discipline's history as well as the power dynamics of race, gender, class, and social position that govern their experiences regardless of their mainstream success. Along with this "insider" knowledge, Black feminist thought applies these critiques collectively to produce new understandings of human behavior, as well as new methodology for research on its various presentations (Collins 1986; Mullings 2000). Angela Davis wrote that while academy is an important site for sociopolitical discourse on and resistance to racism, sexism, and class, it may not be the most efficient strategy to address and remedy issues of multi-sectional identities (2004). Black feminist academic spaces are inherently multi-social spheres that welcome, embrace, and thrive on *diversity* in method and theory, and legitimize cultural productions as valid resources for expanding the knowledge of human populations. How do we then remedy the established power dynamics that produce hierarchal relationships between subject and researcher? Leith Mullings emphasizes *community collaboration* to inform and contextualize research, particularly ethnography and participant observation (Mullings 2013; Mullings 2015). In addition, this inclusion establishes a relationship of trust and mutual respect between subject and researcher and engages the subject in authoring their own life history. Finally, all anthropological knowledge should be *accessible* and understandable to the public, so that they can participate in conversations about their own lives. This audience is constantly evolving, but they will always be bound to the collective of human experience that is anthropology. As humans continue to experience forms of discrimination based on demographics and social and institutional constructs, anthropology will always have to contend with multiple dialogues about race, gender, and class while simultaneously reconceptualizing anthropological theory to reflect our more integrated society. Anthropology is a

tool that can be adapted to engage multiples publics through an assortment of methods (Mullings 2013). These themes reflect the necessary steps that all sciences, especially those whose conception was rooted in a racialized history, must take to begin to rectify the impact of that history on the lives of thousands of generations worldwide.

Decolonizing Anthropology

Theoretically, anthropology is a discipline that reflects the interests of enlightened thinkers that aim to understand how and why there are anatomical, cultural, social and other differences between human populations (St. Clair Drake 1980). However, beginning in the 18th century and into the 20th century, anthropology was the “discipline of choice” for European businessmen, politicians, and scholars who sought to support and justify transatlantic chattel slavery and post-colonial imperialism. The 19th century was critical for the development of physical and biological anthropology and emerging ideas about racial theory. During this time, disciplines such as eugenics, social Darwinism, anti-miscegenation, and others were created and applied in both academic and nonacademic contexts to “prove” that Africans, Asians, Native Americans, and other non-white, non-European ethnic groups were biologically inferior to white people. Purported by scientists like Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, white physical anthropologists quantified observed physical and aesthetic differences amongst human beings, and made extrapolations about their behaviors, social group organizations, levels of intelligence, and other characteristics. Samuel Morton was a 19th century doctor and scientist who collected and categorized human skulls by race based on size and shape and made extrapolations about supposed racial hierarchies using these measurements. Even in the 20th century, “liberal” anthropologists used environment, rather than biology, to explain how differences in sociocultural development rendered Black populations less sophisticated than white societies. These generalizations went unchecked, and eventually

manifested into scientific fact. European Christian scholars asserted a racialized interpretation of the Curse of Ham to proclaim that Black people, along with their “attributes” of endurance, durability, and malleability, were destined by God to be inferior and perpetually enslaved to whites due to skin color. Mainstream historical anthropologists, white European men, cultivated and justified the supposed racial and moral supremacy of white people by using anthropological methodology to discover “scientific” proof that supported and reproduce these “natural” hierarchical distinctions. European academics established these differences as fact through law, religion and politics, and relied on these facts to guide their “subjective” interpretation of other population’s cultures and standardize whiteness as culturally and biologically superior. It is difficult to be uplifted in a discipline that is perpetually oppressive, and mistreatment and inattention warded off many African-American thinkers who found that their anthropological work was to an extent welcome in other disciplines (St. Clair 1980, McClaurin 2001). Into the 20th century, Black anthropologists who found some success academically found themselves marginalized and overshadowed in these spaces by their white counterparts; often their works were regarded as storytelling and entertainment, rather than creative ethnographies (Bolles XXXX, Aschenbrenner 1999). Their white counterparts began to selectively incorporate the intellectual contributions of a few Black anthropologists in the mid to late-20th century, but quickly denied funding and opportunities when they sought to create narratives that exposed the conditions of Black people who life courses were altered and hindered by the conditions of U.S. society (Aschenbrenner 1999; Mikell 1982).

Caroline Bond Day

In resistance to these damaging narratives supported by centuries of pseudoscientific arguments and ethnocentricity and the exclusion of minorities from their own histories, Black

intellectuals in the early 20th century sought to “vindicate” African-Americans through intense and unbiased study that emphasized the intelligence, creativity, and *respectability* of African-Americans to legitimize their humanity (St. Clair Drake 1980). Today, Black anthropologists are working to undo generational psychological trauma incited by anthropological and ethnographic “science” by inserting themselves and their research into the center of academic spaces. Driven by her own passion to reform and reframe Black lives in the United States, and influenced by the works of W.E.B. DuBois, Caroline Bond Day produced one of the first known African-American anthropological ethnographies and set the precedent for the diverse and unorthodox methodology that is today a staple characteristic of African-American anthropology (St. Clair Drake 1980; Curwood 2001). Born to a mixed raced family, Caroline Bond Day took pride in her Negro, European, and Indian heritage collectively; however, she was greatly affected by the treatment and status of Black people in America, and even more horrified at the rhetoric of physical anthropologists at the time. In addition to myths of biological separation, mental deficiency and moral decadence, Day wrestled with how white academics made striking overgeneralizations about the state of Black people, especially the Black family, in America (Curwood 2001). Day believed that mulattos and mixed-race families faced an interesting conundrum, existing in hypervisibility and invisibility simultaneously. Anti-miscegenation laws, and phenomena such as “passing,” in which lighter skinned Black people could pass as European and live in a social caste as whites, and the “one drop rule,” which state that any person with even a modicum of Black ancestry is Black, limited mixed people and families in the sociocultural and political spaces that they could occupy even relative to their status as people of color. After receiving her master’s degree in anthropology from Radcliffe University in 1930, Day, with the patronage of her Harvard University mentor Earnest Hooten, set out to disprove the established biological notions of race in

her thesis study *A Study of Some Negro-White Families in the United States* (Curwood 2001). Her study was quite insightful and yielded what should have been overwhelmingly convincing evidence that there was no biological or physical difference so great that it impacted the intellectual or physical abilities of mixed race people or made them inherently inferior to whites (Day 1932). However, her unorthodox methodology, not her subject matter, was the topic conversation amongst her academic peers. Day conducted a direct and immersive method of both ethnography and material archiving unheard of at the time, especially considering the financial and supportive limitations that Black scientists faced when attempting to conduct their research. She went directly into the homes of her subjects, documenting skin color, collecting physical measurements of the head and facial features, as well as taking hair samples; Day was even known to approach individuals from the street and measure them then and there (Day 1932) (Curwood 2001). In addition to the individuals themselves, she also collected photographs, family heirlooms, demographic information such as their education and income, and stories of experiences of “passing” and other forms of racial oppression. She eventually amassed over 300 family histories and over 400 pictures (Day 1932). Day’s work highlighted the importance of ethnography as a primary methodological tool for Black academics who’s works reflected a vindicationist stance toward Black studies. In an iconic display of irony, Caroline Bond Day immersed herself in what may have been at the time the most racist subfield of anthropology and used the trainings and theories she was taught to conduct her research and disprove those very theories. *A Study* introduced self-reflective ethnography, in which she, the investigator, was also the subject, a woman conceived by a mixed-race couple living on the peripheries of society. Her methodology was criticized and widely panned by her peers, and the value of the results of her project was overshadowed by her white peers who questioned the legitimacy of her work (St. Clair Drake

1980). In addition, Day stressed the importance of selecting “respectable” families whose images, experiences, and physical normalcy would be instrumental in rebranding the image of Black people in America post-emancipation. Like DuBois, she endorsed notions of the “New Negro” and found herself as a member of the “Talented Tenth” of African-Americans who were *obligated* to “fix” the race (Curwood 2001). Though well-intentioned, Day’s emphasis on the selection of model families exemplified how white supremacist ideology in a hyper-racialized society impacted even the way that Black people viewed themselves and wanted to be seen. However, by highlighting the prevalence of mixed-race people and families as well as the fact that they are not biologically or socioculturally inferior to whites, Day added a new dynamic to the ongoing debates on race theory which are slowly rendering biological notions of race null and void. Caroline Bond Day employed a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to field work, proving that it is the inherent nature of Black women’s multifaceted sociocultural existence to default to ingenuity to achieve an insightful and unbiased understanding of their own human condition.

The Post-Racial Myth

Racial formation is the process by which racial categories are created, enacted, evolved, and dissolved based on contextual historical conditions of standardized whiteness (Mullings 2015). Traditionally, this process has been conducted under the assumption of race as a biological fact, but decolonized anthropology requires critical engagement with the impact of how these sociocultural based categories create hierarchy that compound the impact of institutionally oppressive environments on the behaviors and expressions of populations (Smedley 2007). Race, gender, class, morality, ethics, and cultural ritual are all expressed uniquely in different environmental contexts; Patricia Hill Collins believes that the interaction between context and

theory is a constant singular process that reflects the rapid changes in how theory is “done” (1986). Specifically, for Black women, the resulting identity produced due to these interactions is symbolic of a unique history, struggle, and resistance; to understand the how institutional disadvantages shape these interactions, one must analyze the subject experience holistically rather than by fragmented characteristics (Collins 1986). Post-colonial anthropological theorists have constructed many paradigms to engage critical race theory concerning the implications of racial identity on the quality of life, but more expansion is needed in creating a discipline that moves away from a structurally Western trend of generalizing entire societies and their cultures based rigidly binary interpretations of demographic and physiological factors (Mullings 2015). These assumptions of economic and sociocultural inferiority ignore the consequences these policies have had on the historical trajectories of oppressed populations and have problematized the idea of race when confronted with racial inequality. This task is trouble for white people and confronting the implications of their privileges aggravates their hierarchal security (Davila 2006). In response, modern “liberal” theorists have evolved a characteristic of post racial ideology, which touts the belief that race is no longer a factor measuring the differences in racial populations between economic, political, social and cultural status (Mullings 2000). Because anthropology has historically been characterized by the popularity trends of its’ subdisciplines, post-racial scholars believe that racial discourse and its implications are an object of trend, rather than a defining point of identity and socialization. (Davila 2006). “Colorblindness” is a post-integration phenomenon that (white) post-racial theorists and advocates prescribe as a step toward remedying racialized tension. By simply “not seeing” (read: disregarding, ignoring) the color of a (non-white) person’s skin, the “colorblind” remain comfortable by establishing the standard for the nonexistence of race and maintaining structures that minimize the impact of racial history. They have the freedom to

dismiss concerns of racial injustice as “paranoia” (Thomas and Clarke 2013). In their article “The Divided mind of Black America: race, ideology and politics in the post-Civil Rights era,” Manning Marable and Leith Mullings discuss “post-Black politics,” which, like post-racialism, encourages Black people to adopt a neutral, integrationist (seemingly assimilationist) perspective on race relations in the United States (1994). The silencing of oppressed voices perpetuates deliberate, authoritative ignorance that represents a history of institutional exclusion and denies the oppressed sociopolitical agency in identity and cultural formation process (Harrison 2008). Forecasts in demographic shifts predict that “the aggregate minority population is expected to become the majority in 2042,” and these new social makeups will produce new (and possibly revitalize old or obsolete) concerns about how race and origin is addressed in anthropology (Mullings 2013).

Social Activism and Transformative Praxis

Marable and Mullings pose a highly debated question for Africanist scholars: “What is the social responsibility of the African-American intelligentsia?” (1994). Anthropology informs the global collective of various human conditions, and a focal point of conducting informed and holistic research is to expose power imbalances that perpetuate structures of oppression (Mullings 2000). Racial, political, gender, and other social movements impacted anthropology in the mid-20th century by reclaiming space for marginalized groups to implant themselves in the larger academic conversation, restructuring the discipline to upheave power dynamics between the “West and the rest” and incorporate active struggles for equality (Mullings 2013). These revolutionary movements highlighted the structural problems with how race is conceptualized and applied in anthropology, particularly the processes by which white anthropologists authorize themselves cultural knowledge produces and consumers of non-white populations. Scholars must apply a

collaborative and multidisciplinary approach to uproot the deep structure of white supremacy that is embedded in the relationship between knowledge and power (Mullings 2015). This process involves deconstruction and intense scrutiny of who produces and consumes this knowledge and the purpose of this knowledge in regard to social justice and structural inequality. According to Patricia Hill Collins, the intellectual productions that exploit these power imbalances make up “oppositional knowledge,” which, rather than conforming to trends in mainstream academia due to visibility or pressure, instead lays the foundation for new knowledge paradigms by adopting a radical critique of race relations in the United States and beyond (2016). For many Black women in the Westernized world, they have had to navigate social spaces by conforming to certain expectations of behavior as a means of self-protection and preservation, while simultaneously working to dispose of these stereotypes (Collins 1986, Davis 2004). Black feminist activism finds itself in a unique space between intellectual academic experiences and multicultural community engagements, creating an environment in which these productions connect with lived realities and ethnography to shape the struggle for social resistance against stereotypes and dominant representations of Black women’s lives (Collins 2016, Mullings 1996). Transformative research involves critical analysis of theory and praxis, incorporates subjects in the observation and interpretations of their own languages, rituals, and socio-historical realities and while providing space for everyday people to act as their own agents of change locally and globally (Mullings 2000, McClaurin 1999).

Globalization, Capitalism, and the Commodification of Blackness

Globalization is the process of mobilization and circulation of economic, political, and sociocultural capital around the world, driven by complex power dynamics between Westernized and non-Westernized countries (Mullings 2005). These processes are indebted with a host of

racialized consequences limit the autonomous participation of marginalized groups and regenerate discriminatory hierarchies (Mullings 2015; Thomas and Clarke 2013). Globalization is not a new phenomenon and has been impacting the Caribbean before the recognition of the term in the United States (Boyles 2009). Its development has outpaced the expansion of reformed anthropological theory regarding gender, race, class, and interactions thereof, allowing a dominant minority to reproduce patterns of imperialist engagement and exploitation (Bolles 2009). According to cultural anthropologist Deborah A. Thomas, globalization has created and perpetuated income disparities between groups, racial and cultural hierarchies, and has compounded the negative impacts of capitalism on the socioeconomic standings of oppressed groups (2002). Only recently have scholars begun to consider the relationship between globalization and notions of gender, race, class, and identity formation beyond categorization. However, Mullings and Thomas both agree that globalization produces conditions that inspire transnational resistance against social hierarchies and create opportunities to modify how modern scholars approach traditional and modern conceptualizations of race and culture (2004; 2002). This resistance to racism draws upon nationalism, racialization, pan-Africanism, and other Black liberation ideologies to mount anti-colonial struggles throughout the African diaspora to produce worldwide transformations in politics and culture (Harrison 2008; Mullings 2004; Bolles 2009). Global apartheid was defined as: “an international system of minority rule whose attributes include: differential access to basic human rights; wealth and power structured by race and place; structural racism global economic processes, political institutions and cultural assumptions; and the international practice of double standards that assume inferior rights to be appropriate for certain ‘others’, defined by location, origin, race or gender” by Booker and Minter (Name XXXX). Globalism is often accompanied by post-racial theory to minimize the “divisiveness” of race, preventing confrontation through silence

and dismissal (Thomas and Clarke 2013). Promoting justice for human rights is an intellectual endeavor and results in disciplinary transformations that move anthropology toward away from imperialist theory toward new conceptualizations of cultural boundaries (Mullings 2004). An object or idea becomes a commodity when some individual or group of individuals ascribes an abstract value to an object so that it can be profited from in economic exchange systems. Capitalism and privatization of markets during colonial imperialism made the Black body an object and its cultural, labor, and economic productions commodities for trade to build these world markets (Marable and Mullings 1994). The Black body has been used as global currency for centuries, and racist and supremacist ideology developed out of necessity to preserve world-wide white socioeconomic and political structures that rationalized violent dispossession, displacement, and subjugation of property and rights (Mullings 2004). Dynamics of oppression are reproduced in modern theory by institutionalized exploitation, resulting in new forms of and spaces for marginalized oppression. These developments, now implicated on a global scale, are result in unemployment and debt, privatization of public services, and increases in incarceration which hinder resistances to these structural inequalities (Mullings 2004; Thomas and Clarke 2013). Today, statistics reflect the imbalanced effects of structural racism: the 2013 U.S Census writes that there is a persistent gap socioeconomic levels of black and white people, which is impacted further by national economic crises and restrict the ability of Black people transcend their standing (Mullings 2015; Mikell 1982). According to Faye V. Harrison, these structural adjustment policies reproduce gender, race, and class calamities and place black women at an intersectional disadvantage as their perceived skills did not match their perceived production values (2008). However, Deborah Thomas and M. Kamari Clark acknowledge that this suppression leads black

women to resist traditional notions of status as prescribed by traditional anthropology, and I believe this environment creates possibilities of autonomous economic participation (2013).

Black Experience

Globally, Black people struggle with the concept of identity: who is Black, who is Africa, who is African-American, what do these terms mean and who has the authority to identify as such? As previously stated, traditional anthropology limits the input of populations in the descriptions of their own social histories due to limitations imposed by the structure of research methodology and categorization based on racialized science (Smedley 2006). Operating with the assumption of race as biologically, and therefore socio-politically, authentic, overarching racial discourse inherently reproduce old ideologies with new names (Mullings 2015). According to Frank Snowden, a scholar of Black classics and history, there is no evidence of any civilizations that delineated social hierarchy based on physical attributes or behaviors, and these concepts only appear with the rise of Western domination (Smedley 2007). Black women are fighting against a negative cultural identity that is reinforced in the mainstream while attempting create a collective narrative history based on scattered and limited information. There are many ways to be a black woman and even more ways in which Black womanhood is enacted. It is difficult to formulate one's identity in a historical sociocultural context marred by pervasive stereotypes that constrict the ways in which Black woman could "properly" express themselves and their identities in society. Patricia Hill Collins asks several important questions regarding the formation of this identity, including how various experiences of Black women around the world benefit from Black American feminist scholarship and who makes up the audience to which this scholarship is presented (2016). There is no one Black community, and the dynamic of separation within the diaspora must be reformed

through processes of identity formation and global collectivism. No one standard of Blackness is dominant, and Faye Harrison emphasizes universal Black experiences that connect the diaspora and consider all representations of Blackness, including various forms of creolization and multiracial inclusion when discussing racialization, nationalism, and identity formation (2008). Research methodology should also be appropriated formulated so that it reflects the diversity of experiences by adapting standardized methods to be contextually compatible (McClaurin 1999).

Katherine Dunham

Cultural, biological, physical, and other anthropologies are specialized subfields that each entail a unique variation on human origin theory, ethnography, material culture, and other methods of research. A central question for Black anthropologists in the early 20th century was “How can blacks survive and express themselves as individuals and as a group in a society where they are only one tenth of the population, powerless, and subjected to an especially virulent kind of racism?” Black anthropologists had to insert their theoretical productions into the conversation on whatever platform was accessible and contextually applicable and as such, African-American subfield as a discipline thrives on distinct and creative approaches. During the Harlem Renaissance, the rise in creation and popularity of African-American art (music, theater, literature, visual arts, performance arts, etc.) from the surge of the interest, appreciation and acceptance of African heritage within the Black community (St. Claire Drake 1980; Kraut 2003). Many Black people in America in the 1920s and forward began to reject assimilationist culture and notions of respectability in favor of reclamation and repatriation to the motherland. This art was more than just entertainment, it is a collective of folk histories of Black people all over the country, who’s stories are expressed, not just recounted, through song and dance, poems and novels; the collectors and exhibitors take care to ensure that voices of the storytellers are preserved and presented in

genuine form to their audience. By presenting these Black vernacular art forms in the new world, African-oriented traditions and rituals persist despite erasure and caricaturizing, allowing scholars to develop new methods of interpretation and identity production (Kraut 2003). Katherine Dunham was a pioneer in the use of modern and contemporary art forms to contribute yet another level of understanding of the Black experience to American-Anthropology through visual performance visceral, emotional expressions of anthropology (Mike 1999). As a young child growing up on the south side of Chicago, Dunham was immersed in the world of expressive arts by family members in the city's underground Black theatre scene (Aschenbrenner 1999). As a young adult, she followed in the footsteps of her older brother, coming under the tutelage of George Herbert Mead and Robert Redfield, the later of whom sparked her interest in repatriation and the appreciation of the symbolism of African art and religion, especially latent traditions in Haitian vodou and Caribbean dance (Aschenbrenner 1999). Dunham traveled across the Caribbean in the 1930s, studying the significance of the dance styles of different countries such as Haiti and Trinidad (Aschenbrenner 1999). In her first published account of her fieldwork, *Journey to Accompong*, Dunham detailed her experience in Accompong, a maroon society located in the mountains of Jamaica (1946). Later, in her autoethnography *Island Possessed*, Dunham tells of how she was initiated into Haitian vodun religion through re-socialization and ritual during her trips to Haiti (1969). She placed herself at the mercy of her subjects regarding her access to their ritual and cultural knowledge and had the upmost respect for the intimacy and importance of these practices to her subjects. She gained their trust by immersing herself in their lifestyle, and eventually fully assumed the role as a participant in the culture, accepted by her subjects and other Haitians and followers of vodun. She was praised by colleagues, students, mentors and fans alike for her ability to empathize with (and immerse herself in) the conditions of her subjects, no matter how poor,

destitute, or downtrodden she found them. In 1939, she founded the Katherine Dunham Dance Company, trained African-American youth and adults in the style of African dance, and put on plays and performances based on her research and ethnographical works (Aschenbrenner, 1999). She captivated audiences through the sheer emotionality of her pieces, and Joyce Aschenbrenner notes that psychiatrists would send their patients to her shows as a form of therapy, exemplifying the pure rehabilitation power of arts and symbolic expression (1999). Productions such as *Caribbean Rhapsody* (1950) and “Negro Dance Evening” (1937) traced the development of the global Black condition over time by exhibiting and integrating diasporic dance forms based on Dunham’s field work in the U.S. and the Caribbean and her methods of centering Black performance (Kraut 2003). Throughout the history of their presence in the country, African-Americans were considered mentally inferior to whites both intellectually and artistically, and as such, Black artistic productions and performances were only understood in the context of entertainment and enjoyment for white people. However, Katherine Dunham, used African dance performance to conduct ethnography and perform social activism. Her Africanist perspective helped the quest to change the perceptions of Black people in America by commanding respect for the sociocultural history her performances exemplified. Unfortunately, Dunham did experience discrimination in the field, as many “important” scholars of the day felt that her work held more entertainment than intellectual value. Whites in the media exploited her performances, by appropriating her choreography and reproducing a white-washed, commodified, and barely recognizable production. However, she earned several prestigious awards for her contributions toward a multi-modal anthropology, including grants from the Rosenwald Fund and the Guggenheim Foundation, a National Medal of Arts, and honorary degrees (Aschenbrenner 1999). As a first-hand witness to the Great Migration of Black southerners to industrial northern and

Western cities, along with her experience with studying Blackness transnationally, Dunham synthesized all these experiences in her techniques and research methodology to publicly display of the symbolism and legitimacy of dance, and subsequently art as whole, as a form of anthropological expression. She used the symbolism embedded in African art to illustrate the sociocultural contexts in which African art, values, and culture have transformed and manifested in African-American culture. The volume of Black art, then, serves as the anthropological canon for African-Americans, and Dunham's work utilizes art as a lens through which to document and critically analyze the experiences of African-American people as a social population and Blackness as a way of life.

Identity Formation through Cultural and Intellectual Production

In 2017, Nielsen Holdings, a widely known data and information measurement company, published a report titled "African-American Women: Our Science, Her Magic" as part of their Diverse Intelligence Series (Nielsen 2017). The findings of the report concluded that Black women in the United States of America are "trendsetters," whose opinions and ideas about education, fashion, clothing, branding, and more place them at the forefront of the creation and trajectory of American culture based on spending and shopping habits, and social, visual, and other forms of media (Nielsen 2017). Cumulatively, Black women have comprised of one the least socioeconomically and politically disadvantaged groups in the Westernized world while, ironically, the consumption of their cultural productions has expanded globally (Harrison 2008). According to Patricia Hill Collins, the concept and traits that typify culture are created and expanded out of material and environmental conditions, which manifest as music, dance, religion, and politics (1986). She also reiterates that there is no singular Black woman culture that informs cultural trends, but a collective of stories and different experiences of similar themes like socialization and

consciousness worldwide (Collins 1986). Identity, as often defined, is the experience of coming to understand oneself in the context of the world one lives in based on real life experiences that one has had. Cultural aspects such as race, gender, religion, values, and lifestyles are characteristics that people use to establish their identity based on this context. Black women's histories in traditional anthropology have been observed and recorded without the contributions of Black women, and almost always reproduce race, class, and gender dynamics that reinforce disparaging stereotypes about behavior and socialization. and compound the negative impacts of their position in Western social hierarchies (Mullings 2000; Mullings 2016). Black feminist scholarship establishes culture as a tool of political resistance through which Black women reclaim possession of their bodily autonomy and rewrite their histories based on experienced realities throughout the African Diaspora, as well as modified thought process that analyzes the effects interaction of condition and theory on their life trajectories (Mullings 2000; Harrison 2008; Collins 1986). Due to their position as academic insiders who have been influenced by outside histories, Black feminist anthropologists have privileged perspectives that promote an informed objectivity that emphasized silenced voices (Collins 1986; Harrison 2008).

Zora Neale Hurston

Zora Neale Hurston is considered one of the most influential African-American writers in the history of literature in the United States. Highly regarded for her style of writing and storytelling, her captivating novels, poems, and other works are lauded for providing critical insight into the lives of African-Americans, especially Black feminists, in 20th century America (Bolles 2001). However, it was only until the 21st century when she was recognized for her contributions to ethnographic methodology and refining the art of prose in anthropology; many do not even know that she, under the tutelage of Franz Boas, she received her bachelors' degree in

Anthropology from Barnard in 1928 and helped him apply the “four-field” subdiscipline theory. (Barnard 2009). While her classmates, the likes of Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and others, gained prominence in the field, including funding, publications as contributors to this idea as well as their own works, Neale Hurston found herself at the mercies of an intellectual academy that disregarded her qualifications and contributions to cultural anthropology, and eventually was forced to turn to the world of entertainment for her works to be acknowledge. Academic marginalization is a vitriolic characteristic that rises post-emancipation, as African American intellectuals began to question the nature of their existence in their newly found but heavily restricted liberty. As African-American scholarship began to evolve and become mainstream, Black intellectuals sought to study and explain their own histories and tell their own stories about their lives to combat exploitative stereotypes associated with anthropological study. There were little to no efforts by predominantly white institutions (PWIs) to recruit or support Black students in anthropology departments, and with the rise of historically black institutions and universities, students were encouraged to go into “useful” fields, such as law, social work, political science, sociology, and economics, the only spaces where they would have any opportunity to deal directly with theoretical anthropology in academic discourse. (St. Clair Drake 1980). Even today, minority anthropologists found themselves teaching outside of anthropology in order to insert a sliver of diversity into these conversations (Davila 2006). Black anthropologists who found themselves with access to these spaces of privilege where almost always alienated by their peer in publishing, research funding, and networking opportunities. Egyptology, popularized by African-American sociologist Martin R. Delaney, became one of the first steps of Black participation in the discipline (St. Clair Drake 1980). Ideas of repatriation and going “Back to Africa” encouraged Black scholars to discover the foundational basis for African-American values through traditional African values,

as well as using these discoveries to emphasize the legitimacy of Black socioeconomic structures and cultural productions (St. Clair Drake 1980, Mullins 2000). These “Africanist” anthropologists were not acknowledged by their white counterparts, who believed that there was no way possible for Black people to conduct objective studies thoroughly due to intellectual limitations, instead chose to idealize their romantic racist versions of Black life, one’s that they themselves wrote based on that fit the overarching narrative of African-Americans at that time. Zora Neale Hurston, outcast and limited in recognition as an anthropologist, used instead her talents of writing and entertaining to tell the stories of the people whose lives she documented (McClaurin 1999). Her novel, *Mules and Men*, was a collection of folkloric stories from Black families living in small rural towns in both Louisiana and her native state of Florida (Hurston 1935). She observed and interviewed her subjects in detail about their way of life and experiences as Black people in the rural South just coming into emancipation (Hurston 1935). Though published as narrative prose, this ethnographic work documented numerous spiritual, religious, social, and cultural aspects of African-American life, doing so by engaging in her subjects directly as well as applying her knowledge as an anthropologist as well as her own life history, one very much the same as her subjects. She emphasized how poor, Black, rural exercised resilience against their conditions through adaptation and cultural creativity across multiple spheres (Harrison 2001). The goal of ethnography is to make meaning of the symbols, rituals, place, space, and time in which a society occurs and to convey that meaning as accurately as possible with regard to the audience as well as the culture that is being observed. Historically, ethnography has reflected the viewpoints and interests of the individual observing the population and drawing up the narrative. When people who are in positions of power conduct research on oppressed people, then they are studying a pseudohistorical identity that has been made up by themselves and other people. There is a long

history of Black people conducting oral and literary ethnographies, but due to unconventionality of their methods, their works were often ignored by European academic circles (McClaurin 2001). Zora Neale Hurston's research is a flawless synergy of both science and literature, revealing the sociocultural reality of Black people in an authentic and accessible manner. Regardless of the constraints intellectual hegemonies and invalidation of legitimacy, she chronicled this reality using her access to anthropological methodology and her lived experience of as Black woman whose life was shaped by these very conditions (Mullings 2013). Her literary expressions were ethnographies that helped to establish visibility of the folk culture of Black people in early 20th century United States society.

Issues of Authority

As centuries have progressed, whites have begun to take an interest in Black culture and art for purposes of sociopolitical and economic gain, and in attempt to oppress African-Americans using ill-informed ideations of their lives and experience. Even though Black women have found themselves rising in status as sociocultural trendsetters, there is a question of whether this upward trend will reflect in academia as well, as Black women fight to be outside of the margin and to be acknowledged as a legitimate contributor to sociocultural and political life (Nielson 2017). With the rise of the love for blackness, but the continued discrimination and marginalization against Black people, there has been a precedent of commodification and exploitation that has been rampant in music, movies, TVs, and fashion produced by Black people (Harrison 2008). In a form of convoluted social dominance, it seems the minority culture is becoming the majority culture while the minority *people* are being erased from the cultural cannon. Hair in general, for black women, is one of the most important cultural aspects in terms of identifying the self. Especially in

hair and fashion, braids, Bantu knots, dreadlocks and other styles are all physical manifestations of a symbolic connection to an ancestral sociocultural history. One of the most pressing issues concerning Black women's hair and hairstyles is the use and profit of them by white celebrities and people who otherwise would not interact with the Black community. Black women's hair has often been criticized as "nappy," "unruly," "unprofessional," and even "ghetto." Whether it be twists, locks, an afro or even a bald head, Black women have been and continue to be held to extraordinary standards of Eurocentric white beauty. In 2015, Amandla Stenberg, an upcoming African-American actress, publicly addressed Kylie Jenner, a socialite and member of the infamous Kardashian family, for sporting cornrows in an Instagram photo. Stenberg, who is a black-identifying biracial teen, released a video entitled "Don't Cash Crop my Cornrows," in which she addresses the misappropriation of popular African American fashions by (wealthy and/or famous) white people, particularly white women and white people in hip-hop culture (Stenberg 2015). Kylie Jenner, a member of the Kardashian family, is infamous, like her sisters, for fetishizing Black men and profiting from Black, what they term "urban," culture (Stenberg 2015). This ideology is problematic for a plethora of reasons, but the most pressing is indeed the fact that Blackness is socially more acceptable on white women than on Black women, a truly complex form of cultural appropriation, marginalization, exploitation, and erasure. This is the danger of unbridled globalism and post-racialism that seeks to obscure any sort of cultural origin: it risks misuse and erasure of those whose sociocultural histories and identities which lie within those original cultures, providing an illusion of inclusion based on invisibility (Collins 1996; Davila 2006). The idea of exchange comes with the assumption that the two parties participating in the exchange are equal, and that a balance of sociopolitical (and eventually economic) power exists within the relationship. This is not always the case, especially when observing groups and

countries that are still attempting to break away from the legacy of imperialism and their colonizers. Notions of cultural interaction are rooted in the observation of power dynamics between populations; as a result, these “exchanges” over time have been widely unpredictable, uneven, and contradictory, that has resulted in clashes of ownership and value. Technically, if there is no explicitly or legally defined ownership of something, it cannot be stolen. Patricia Hill Collins claims that, while Black women should be centered in the discourse of Black feminist history, they do not own the cultural productions associated with their life histories (2016). However, in the context of culture, theft and appropriation are used almost hand in hand. Culture can be, if not stolen, taken, misused for personal gain, devalued, and profited from in ways that the intellectual originators could not. I would agree with Faye Harrison that authority rest with the observer that can produce the most accurate and politically informed interpretation of a population’s culture (2008). In addition, I believe that, to a degree, the academy owes Black women the recognition of legitimate authorities in their own sociocultural productions to resist and rectify multifaceted oppression that is rooted in stereotypical images based on the academy’s legacy of biased interpretations of their behavior and experiences (Collins 1986; 2016). Many Western anthropologists claimed that black intellectuals could not remain objective and self-critical in their ethnography and therefore were not credible, fearing that their work could potentially disrupt institutional power dynamics that upheld popular images of Black culture (Mikell 1982). However, Black feminist anthropologists combatted these beliefs by learning to trust their own sociocultural experiences as legitimate and integrating this knowledge with their objective research methodology to produce an accurate depiction of their dynamic collective culture (Mikell 1982, Harrison 2001).

Conclusion

Anthropology has evolved to a unique discipline that is holistic in its concern for the human condition; Black feminist anthropologists exploit this characteristic, employing diverse methodology to “set the story straight” and create an inclusive space for Black people in anthropology (Bolles 2013). Historically, anthropology was at best unavailable and un lucrative for Black intellectuals, and at worst the enemy and the purported of the condition of African-American lives. Western anthropologists excluded Black scholars from their academic spaces, believing that they could not be objective when conducting ethnography and other studies on black subjects due to their social conditions (St. Clair Drake 1980; McClaurin 2001). After emancipation, the rediscovery of rich cultural origins from the African diaspora prompted a call for Black scholars to examine how those origins and subsequent experiences of transatlantic slavery manifested into the present culture, For Black women, there few established spaces where they work to address and deal with the social and political issues that they faced. Womanism was created out of necessity due to fundamental sociopolitical differences between the existences of Black and white women, and Black feminism introduced a framework for describing and understanding the impacts of race, class and gender on Black women (Walker 1984; McClaurin 2001). In the post-colonial, increasingly transnational world that exists today, interaction amongst and between different social groups will lead to inevitable cross-cultural interactions as well. This willingness to understand social forms that are unfamiliar or foreign sets the precedent for productive dialogue and effective methodology concerning the ebb and flow of culture. Today, scholars recognized that race should be studied as a sociocultural reality that is perpetuated by economic and political disadvantages (Smedley 2007). However, post-racial theory masks neoliberal forms of racism by employing concepts of “racial color blindness” to erase the impact of racialized history (Mullings 2013). I

believe that the goal holistic anthropological praxis is to compile knowledge from anywhere in the world which can be used to expand and improve our understanding of development of human beings, their societies, and cultures. The West should no longer be established as the status quo by which other countries should ascribe, and other anthropologies should be centered as authorities on the human experience; when we study Darwin, Boaz, and Geertz in depth, we should also be studying Day, Hurston and Dunham right alongside them. Ignoring these women's work runs completely contrary to the mission of anthropology. Rectifying the centuries of racism and supremacy embedded into the thread of anthropology requires more than simple acknowledgement from colleagues, superiors, and students. Critical restructuring of race theory in anthropology directly combats the development of the field as a one that justifies institutionalized intellectual supremacist ideology. To do so, the discipline must create space for the sociocultural histories that have been silenced and distorted due to racism and imperialism. There is not an agreement amongst all Black scholars on how the discipline should be developed and how the methodology should be approached, due to the variety, experiences, and disciplinary training. Caroline Bond Day adhered to a standard of respectability purported by the African-American academic leaders in the early 19th and 20th centuries. For her studies, she selected only families that represented the "best" image of Black people; wealth – middle class at least – educated, and most closely resembling white society (Day 1932). She had an undeniably assimilationist view of racial relations and believed that full integration would vindicate and validate the culture and variety of Black families and lives in the United States. Zora Neale Hurston advocated for African-American folk ethnographies that recounted the history and traditions of Black people throughout slavery and segregation. Katherine Dunham was a transnational ethnographer who incorporated music, dance, traditional religion, and other cultural aspects in the Caribbean and Africa to produce a global black identity. Regardless

of approach, each anthropologist transcended an academic space that constantly questioned their intellectual ability, as well as the complex burden of multifaceted oppression that Black feminist scholars face, to decolonize and reconstruct a discipline inclusive of a holistic narrative of Black experience.

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