POST-TRUMP INTERSECTIONS & "POST-RACIAL" REFLECTIONS: BLACK WOMEN, RACISM, SEXISM, & CLASSISM IN THE U.S.

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ABSTRACT

POST-TRUMP INTERSECTIONS & "POST-RACIAL" REFLECTIONS:
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This multi-article dissertation employs life history interviews and qualitative media content analysis to explore the continued oppression of and discrimination against Black women in the U.S., with specific foci of everyday experiences, news media, and popular music in the public sphere. Analysis suggests that the structured and historical relations of patriarchy and racism shape everyday life for many Black women, but affect media representations, and the interpretation of their actions in interpersonal and public spheres. Despite their long-term confrontation with subjugation, Black women, continue to employ strategies to identify, navigate, and resist such oppression.

Each chapter in the project employs a different lens on these experiences. The first focuses on media representations, employing qualitative content analysis of online news articles surrounding the fate of Korryn Gaines and Rekia Boyd -- two Black women who died in encounters with police. Drawing on contributions by Neely (2015), Winfrey-Harris (2015), Harris-Perry (2011), and Hill Collins (2000), this article links media disregard of Black women to their victimization by police. The second article examines Beyoncé Knowles' video album, *Lemonade* in light of enduring Black feminist intellectual and musical traditions. The discussion is informed by Angela Davis' (1998), articulation of Black feminist underpinnings and working-class women's consciousness in blues music. Finally, the third article draws on twenty-one life history interviews conducted by the author with young Black women to illuminate the ways that racism, sexism, and classism impact the everyday lives of Black women

in the contemporary U.S. Conclusions suggest while US society continues to depict and treat Black women in oppressive ways, Black women maintain traditions of resistance, as means of survival, empowerment and collective affirmation.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

INTRODUCTION

Black women in America have always had to wrestle with derogatory assumptions about their character and identity. These assumptions shape the social world that Black women must accommodate or resist in an effort to preserve their authentic selves and to secure recognition as citizens (Harris-Perry 2011: 5).

INTRODUCTION

From the 1970s until roughly 2016, questions circulated about the "colorblindness" or post-raciality of the nation, and its transcendence of racial and gender discrimination as major forms of oppression. However, following the 2016 election, the U.S. witnessed increasing legislative action against women, and numerous recorded instances of outright hatred and xenophobia against racial, ethnic, and religious minority groups. Consequently, with growing infringement on women's rights, witnessing of/vulnerability to police brutality, increasing overt racism, xenophobia, and the institutional inequity, Black women precariously lie at the intersection of very volatile systems of racial, economic, and gender oppression in the U.S. (Crenshaw 1991; Harris-Perry 2011; Winfrey-Harris 2015).

This multi-article dissertation employs life history interviews, qualitative media content analysis, and cultural studies, to illuminate the continued oppression of Black women in the U.S., with specific foci of everyday experiences, news media, and popular music in the public sphere. Throughout the project, I employ a Black feminist theoretical approach, along with an understanding that the particular nature of enslavement, Jim Crow segregation, neoliberalism, and continued institutional racism have precipitated the contemporary racial, social, political, and economic conditions of Black American women, and continue to influence both perceptions and media representations of Black people to this day (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Combahee River Collective [1978] 1982; Davis 1983; Entman and Rojecki 2004; Harvey 2005; Kendi 2016; Hill Collins 2004; Neely 2015; Perry 2011).

In the dissertation, I explain the maintenance of a set of structured social relationships, regarding race and gender, and the power, prestige, and ideological resources that accompany those positions in a neoliberal White-, male-dominated society. Each dissertation article serves as a lens into the ways longstanding structures of oppression manifest real consequences in the lives of Black women – regarding life chances, and the ways others see, discuss, and treat them. The project is not necessarily focused on the maintenance of subordination of Black lives, bodies, and identities in the U.S. through laws alone. But instead, the dissertation focuses on ideas, representations, microaggressions, and subtle attacks on personhood in interactions. Moreover, the dissertation provides windows into the strategies of navigation Black women employ for survival, affirmation of Black identities, and self-preservation.

I centralize the contradictions emergent between problematic racial, class, and gender ideologies, and the lived realities of Black womanhood in the United States today: realities that can include disregard and silencing of experiences with discrimination; problematic media representations; concrete economic vulnerability juxtaposed with illusions of access and equality; witnessing (including digitally witnessing) or being victim to racialized and gendered police brutality; along with increasing legislative action to limit reproductive choices. At the same time, marginalized groups, particularly the one centralized in this dissertation, continue to employ strategies to highlight, navigate, and resist oppression in the society. The articles in the project elucidate these experiences.

ARTICLE ONE: SYMBOLIC FORMS OF RACISM AND SEXISM IN NEWS MEDIA

Neely (2015) asserts that even when Black women are victims of homicide, their deaths are often under-reported by media outlets. Similarly, as noted by Mowatt et al. (2013), Black women are often represented in media in hypervisible and stereotypical fashions, or they are systemically erased and invisible in larger society. In the first section of Article One, I explore news media treatment of two Black women who died in encounters with police: Korryn Gaines and Rekia Boyd. I compare rates of news media coverage of these two women with the coverage of Ramarley Graham and Alton Sterling, Black men killed in police encounters. Additionally, I compare the coverage of these women with that of Justine Ruszczyk, a White woman also killed in a police encounter.

I focus on the overall erasure/invisibility of Black women, (except for in particular, hypervisible, and often stereotypical fashions), as a means of continuing their oppression (Mowatt et al. 2013). I argue that rates of coverage for Black women killed by police will be far lower than those of White women or Black men. Ignoring and erasing their racialized mistreatment by police makes this form of oppression against them invisible. Secondly, rather than the figurative martyrdom and sainthood that often follow young White murder victims, or the apologetic tones taken in stories about White perpetrators, Black women victims' presentations are marked differently (Jiwani and Young 2006; Neely 2015). They are often presented in ways that reference and covertly trigger details about them that make them seem responsible for their deaths (Jiwani and Young 2006; Neely 2015).

In the second section of Article One, I employ a qualitative content analysis of twenty-two online news articles. I argue that victims' characters have been called into question by digital news media sources. Through framing theory, I assert that discussions of their stories include

subtle allusions to rebellious, unruly, and/or threatening Blackness. I argue that, because they are Black women, framing of articles about them will include coded racist and sexist language, activations of stereotypes, and/or other forms of victim demonization.

Additionally, contemporary media – particularly due to technological advances and the accessibility of social media to millions of Americans – function as dialectical spaces. In national news, a number of journalists also critique the disproportionate vulnerability to police violence experienced by Blacks in the U.S. As final goal, the first article highlights this voice, as well. The final category addresses articles which frame Boyd and Gaines as subjects of protest, and/or connected to a larger issue of systemic racism. I interrogate such representations in framing suggestions in the articles. As evinced by the growing tide of protest in the country, these articles illustrate ways media also serve as spaces of contestation of representations, unequal treatment, gender and racial oppression.

ARTICLE TWO: BEYONCÉ'S LEMONADE, BRINGING "WRECK," AND BLACK FEMINIST INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONS

Though I discuss shared oppression, this does not mean that Black women operate, experience life, or engage with their social worlds as a monolith. Instead, diverse individuals often experience collective oppression due to shared membership in minority groups in U.S. society. Further, although Black women are subject to these oppressions, African descendants in the U.S. employ various means to affirm the identities, heritages, and cultures of the African Diaspora (Powell 2002). As another major theme of this project, I address self-informed resistance to intersecting forms of oppression, through media that affirm Black appearances, cultures, identities, complexities, and beauty.

Article Two illustrates ways Black women continue to resist intersecting oppressions, and celebrate the uniqueness of their cultural, racial, ethnic, and gender identities using historically-rooted Black feminist intellectual traditions. The second article in the project draws on Angela Davis' *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* (1999). Davis (1999) unearthed Black feminist underpinnings and working-class women's consciousness in blues women's music. Similarly, I argue that a recent fifty-nine-minute video album, *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016),[1] aligns with enduring Black feminist intellectual and musical traditions. I assert that *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) exemplifies ways Black women employ media and public spaces that often serve to reproduce their oppression. Media and public spaces also serve as vehicles to celebrate their identities as Black women, and to highlight, critique, and resist the oppression and marginalization they experience.

Black feminist scholars, poets, musicians, and writers draw on Black women's experiences to build theory about racism, sexism, and classism in the U.S. and globally. Whether synthesized in scholarship, art, music, poetry, or other forms, Black women's experiences with

discrimination, discussions of oppression, and acts of resistance, speak in contradiction to dominant ideologies about racial and gender groups today. Their works capture the humanness, agency, identity, cultures, ethnicities, and the characteristics that comprise the diverse group, Black women. In the second article, I address ways *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) endeavors at similar goals.

ARTICLE THREE: POST-TRUMP INTERSECTIONS & "POST-RACIAL" REFLECTIONS: BLACK WOMEN, RACISM, SEXISM & CLASSISM IN THE U.S.

Finally, the third article in the dissertation project employs twenty-one semi-structured interviews collected in 2016, and in 2011, with Black women aged eighteen to fifty. In Article Three, I argue that Black women continue to experience daily discrimination, based on their membership in multiple minority groups (Crenshaw 1991). Article Three interrogates this group's experiences navigating persistent, multifaceted, multi-structured oppression in the neoliberal, "post-racial," "post-feminist," U.S

I discuss strategies Black women employ they navigate microaggressions. I address problematic expectations that uniquely shape interactions with those outside their group. I discuss ways they deal with others' overt and subtle acts of daily racism, classism, and sexism. Secondly, with a specific focus on the most recent data set, I address the unique experience of witnessing re-emerging overt forms of racial discrimination. Simultaneously, subtle, institutional, and covert oppression persist, collectively shaping majority and minority group experiences in unique fashions.

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE

The remainder of this article contains an exploration of social, economic, and political shifts beginning in the 1960s that precipitated the present socioeconomic, and overt/post-racial ideological situation. This is to provide an illustration of the social context into which the dissertation articles fit.

Civil Rights Movement to Neoliberalism

As a consequence of prolonged scholarly, activist, and public effort, in the mid-twentieth century the Jim Crow system of racial segregation, which situated "Coloreds" and "Whites" into separate but unequal accommodations, housing, and employment for nearly a century was largely destabilized (Winant 2001). The modern American civil rights, women's rights, and Black power movements, rulings against segregation and discrimination (e.g., *Brown v. Board of Education* 1954), African independence struggles against European colonization, and the passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, 1968 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, all helped to contribute to a breakdown in the traditional systems of racial segregation, and discrimination once coded into American law. As discussed by Winant (2001: 158-159),

> Beginning in the war years and accelerating after 1945, U.S. racial politics underwent a striking metamorphosis. This was the transformation of the U.S. Black population from its thorough subjugation and general relegation to rural peonage in the pre-World War II period to its emergence after the war's end as a largely mobilized and urbanized national community with egalitarian and democratic commitments…. They linked discrimination and racism to the dawning of the Cold War…. questioned the U.S. Cold War rhetoric, with its professions of adherence to democratic values and personal freedom, by documenting numerous instances of attacks on Blacks, racial bigotry and the like.

The increasing post-WWII interaction of global racial networks, non-Whites' international demands for racial equality, post-war political shifts, and post-WWII increases in global

migration all contributed to the shift away from overt, legalized White supremacy (Frederickson 1981; Winant 2001).

Occurring along with these shifts, studies of neoliberalization highlight the transitions of nation-states, including the U.S., away from the welfarism/Keynesianism of the 1960s-1970s to the neoliberal political and economic doctrine of the 1980s (Harvey 2005; Peck and Tickell 2002). As shown by Harvey (2005) and Peck & Tickell (2002), it was at this point that neoliberals took advantage of a public burdened by financial "overregulation," social unrest, and disgust for governmental provision for the "undeserving" poor—all defined as burdens by neoliberals, attributed solely to Keynesianism. The failures of Keynesianism, paired with social unrest created a historical moment and swayed the economic and political climate toward neoliberalism (Peck and Tickell 2002).

To be clear, neoliberalism "seeks to bring all human action to the domain of the market," contending "that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions" (Harvey 2005: 3). According to neoliberal ideology, government intervention in employment, social welfare, and the provision of economic safety nets are unnecessary and interfere with the market (Harvey 2005; Peck and Tickell 2002). The preexisting Keynesianist social and political safety nets are removed; free markets, finance, "equality," and individual freedoms and choice are privileged.

With social safety nets removed, the neoliberal project's intent to regulate inflation and rejuvenate the market regardless of the consequences for jobs, resulted overall in "an awkward mix of low growth and increasing income inequality" (Harvey 2005: 23, 88). As impediments to the implementation of the neoliberal project were removed, the economic inequality it created worsened. According to David Harvey (2005), "redistributive effects and increasing social

inequality have in fact been a persistent feature of neoliberalization" and are "structural to the whole project" (Harvey 2005: 16).

Neoliberal Ideology and Colorblindness

Under the neoliberal political and ideological project, income and wealth are increasingly marked by stark inequity – even more drastically along lines of race and gender. Through the neoliberal lens, people are encouraged to see themselves as active and independent agents, operating within the market and responsible for their own well-being—or lack thereof (Keil 2002: 234). Social and economic stratification are perceived as matters of choice and hard work alone, not structured into the relations of society for centuries. This is a major force helping to mask, dismiss, and cover the consequences of continued oppression, contributing heavily to the emergence of post-racial/post-feminist ideologies (Harvey 2005; Bonilla-Silva 2006).

When individuals are affected by unequal social structures suffer or are unable to attain higher incomes or greater economic or social success, it is their fault, not the fault of the state (Harvey 2005; Peck and Tickell 2002; Keil 2002). This repositions the role of the state and leaves its citizens as sole parties responsible for their economic and social survival regardless of circumstance or larger structures that create unequal life chances. As it pertains to race, shifting the focus of fault from structure to individual coincided with the shift from overt to covert racism; it permeated dominant discourse (re)socializing Americans and reshaping dominant racial ideologies (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Winant 2004; Brown et al. 2003).

Brown et al. (2003), Bonilla Silva (2006) and Winant (2004) characterize the shift towards colorblind racial attitudes as precipitated by a national political turn towards neoliberalism/neoconservatism during the Reagan and Bush administrations. Eduardo Bonilla-

Silva (2006) contends that a new racial ideology has emerged as a consequence of neoliberal/neoconservative[2] ideological dominance and racial changes occurring in the mid-twentieth century.

By the 1980s, discussions of "colorblindness"[3] as an American reality emerged and grew, as the political right took the language of the Civil Rights Movement, and employed the rhetoric of neoliberalism and "race-neutrality" to redact the movement's race-specific reforms (Blauner 1989; Bonilla-Silva 2006; Haney Lopez 2014; Omi and Winant 1986). Winant (2004), provides key insight to the intersection of race with the political shift to neoliberalism. The author highlights neoconservatism's responsibility in the development of colorblind racial policy, with its arguments against any presence of racial difference, and subsequent claims for reverse racism in "racially-targeted" policies like affirmative action (Winant 2004). Similarly, Doane (2015: 15) asserts,

> At the core of colorblindness is the belief that because the Civil Rights Movement was nearly a half-century ago and White attitudes have demonstrably changed, racism in no longer embedded in the U.S. social structure and no longer serves as an obstacle to success. If racial inequality persists, then it is due to actions (or inactions) on the part of minority group members.

According to Bonilla-Silva (2006: 28) this "colorblind racism" entails "abstract liberalism," which "involves using ideas associated with political liberalism (e.g., "equal opportunity" the idea that force should not be used to achieve social policy) and economic liberalism (e.g., choice, individualism) in an *abstract* manner to explain racial matters." Additionally, "cultural racism," attributes racial inequality to cultural pathologies in blacks, e.g., laziness and failure to work hard enough to achieve. Further, the "minimization of racism" ignores race as a significant factor in determining quality of life for racial minorities. (Bonilla-Silva 2006: 28).

Linked to the imposition of neoliberal ideologies, post-racial/post-feminist ideologies encourage members of the public to view individual American accomplishment as separate from structured relations of racial, class, and gender inequality. Consequently, blatantly racialized, classed, and gendered phenomena are viewed as having no such influence anymore. Moreover, policy measures to redress the continued effects of the racialized American system are often labeled reverse racism, without attention to legacies of centuries of enslavement, nearly 100 years of Jim Crow segregation, and persistent differential outcomes for people of color brought about by the intended and unintended effects of the country's institutional policies (e.g., FHA/VA loan policies of the post-WWII era that helped secure wealth for middle class White families).

Postracialism and Black Feminist Theory

Until very recently, scholarly, and public debates have raised questions about whether the U.S. had become "post-racial" and "post-feminist" – finally transcending racial and gender inequity as critical factors to individual opportunity and experience (Bobo 2011; Bonilla-Silva 2006; Cohen 2008; Hollinger 2011; Perry 2011; Wilson 2010; Wise 2009). The historic elections of President Barack Obama – the country's first Black Commander-in-Chief – in 2008 and 2012; post-1965 changes in immigration; and increasing rates of interracial relationships served to complicate dominant understandings of race and racism in the early twenty-first century U.S. (Cose 2009; DiTomaso 2012; Gold 2004; Lee and Bean 2012; Treitler 2013; Waters 1999).

> For many Americans, especially White Americans, the election of Barack Obama marked what they believed to be a major shift in the racial consciousness of the country, *with a colorblind framework predicted as rightfully coming to dominate the racial landscape.* In the wake of the election, commentators and politicians felt empowered to tell Black people and Black youth in particular that it was now time to stop the "whining" because they had no more excuses (Cohen 2011: 200,

emphasis mine).

Similarly, by the 1990s, with women's growing achievements in higher education and employment, a related gendered backlash questioned whether feminism had accomplished its major goals, and become irrelevant (Anderson 2015; McRobbie 2004; McRobbie 2011; Munford and Waters 2014; Coppock et al. 2014). As noted by Anderson (2015: xi), American women's current progress in the realms of education and workplace participation indicate to many members of U.S. society that gender equality is a present reality.

> From this point of view, women, regardless of their race, social class, sexual orientation, or geography, have achieved equality in most meaningful respects. Feminism is now merely a history lesson. In fact, the argument goes, women have been so successful in achieving equality, it is now *men* who are the victims of gender discrimination. These sentiments make up modern misogyny (Anderson 2015: xi)

In similar fashion to post-racialism, Ortner (2014: 545) conceptualizes "post-feminism" as growing disinterest among young women in the title "feminist," or discussions of gender equality in social, political, and economic arenas – as egalitarian gender relations have allegedly already been attained. In this view, feminism is no longer needed; we are "*post-"* feminism in the U.S.

> There is a double entanglement, across the socio-political universe, as feminism is taken into account in order that it can be understood as having passed away. What once may have had some role to play on the historical stage is no longer needed….A sophisticated anti-feminism has become a recurring feature across the landscape of both popular and political culture. It upholds the principles of gender equality, while denigrating the figure of the feminist….Post-feminism registers, time and again, the seeming gains and successes of the second wave of the women's movement, implying that "things have changed," so feminism is now irrelevant (McRobbie 2011: 179-180).

As such, anti-feminist activist groups, such as "Women against Feminism," have gained popularity, denying that women's contemporary experiences are influenced by gender discrimination. In essence, like the U.S. is post-racial, to a large portion of the population, it has also supposedly entered a "post-feminist" era, as well.

Yet, the limited accomplishments of a few are not evidence that the U.S. is "post-racial," "post-feminist" or that race or gender are now insignificant. In fact, during the Obama First Family's occupancy of the White House, none of the Obamas were safe from scrutiny, discrimination, and being associated with longstanding stereotypes about Blackness. President Obama suffered immense disrespect – even from numerous government officials, as well as a 400% increase in death threats, following his ascension to Executive Office (Anderson 2016). Moreover, Winfrey Harris (2015: 79) notes ways that even former First Lady Michelle Obama was subject to media and political framing as a bestial, angry Black woman – subject constantly to anti-Black stereotypes, despite ways her actual appearance and actions spoke constantly to the contrary.

Further, as affirmed by Black feminist theoreticians, Black women's experiences are shaped by intersecting structures of racial, gender, and class oppression (Crenshaw 1991: 1242). Similarly, the concepts "multiple jeopardies" (King 1993) and "matrix of domination" (Hill Collins 2000) are demonstrative of the ways that multiple forces serve to maintain the oppression of Black women simultaneously (Combahee River Collective [1978] 1982; Crenshaw 1991: 1242).

Economically, the neoliberal economic shift of the 1980s gradually situated a greater concentration of the wealth and income into the hands of the richest 1%, eventually producing income and wealth inequality today that is reminiscent of the depression-era in the U.S. (Harvey 2005; Kornbluth 2014; Martinez 2016). This is exceedingly troubling for Black women, who must contend with intersecting structures of racial, class, and gender oppression (Crenshaw 1991). And despite tremendous post-civil rights era economic and educational accomplishments, Black women continue to report incomes lower than White women, and White and Black men;

they earn sixty-two cents for every White male dollar (Morris and Muhammad 2014: 146; U.S. Census 2010).

What does this mean for the supposed post-racial future of America? Contemporarily, intersecting structures of racial, class, and gender oppression continue to shape life, opportunity, and experience for groups in U.S. society, as has been discussed by multiple scholars of Black feminism using different metaphors and theories (Crenshaw 1991; King 1993). However, these structures are masked, reinforced, and perpetuated by post-racial, post-feminist ideologies – worldviews, ways of thinking about, explaining, and understanding racism and sexism, which currently dominate in the U.S. These are ways the public is conditioned to think about race and other types of inequality that justify, support, reinforce and perpetuate extant stratification. Today, these ideologies perpetuate the overall oppression, by justifying inequality through abstract liberalism (Bonilla-Silva 2006), and explanations that demonize the victimized themselves.

Moreover, in tandem with subtle, ideological, and microaggressive forms of oppression, recently, instances of outright discrimination have returned and increased, as there seems to be more rhetorical freedom to be discriminatory following the 2016 election of Donald Trump. What has become apparent following the election is that certain White members of the public feel more at liberty to act on the principles Trump upholds – the outright racial hatred, sexual oppression, class inequity, violence against women and non-Whites which secured his office.

Since the election, people of color, in general, have been increasingly subject to, not only the subtle marginalization that seemed to dominate in the post-civil rights era. There has also been a recent increase in reports of outright discrimination, violence, and directly racialized acts against non-Whites. Ultimately, not even a decade after post-racialism dominated discussions on

U.S. racial attitudes, overtly anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and anti-Black affect presently coincides with anti-woman, anti-poor, anti-immigrant, and anti-Black legislation. Thus, the 2016 election was not a mundane event in the history of the U.S., but instead has implications for the maintenance of racial/ethnic, gender, sexual, and economic inequity in the country. This is particularly true for the ways these forms of oppression manifest in the everyday lives of members of marginalized groups operating in the society.

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[1] Like Davis (1998), the project is not concerned with the artist, controversies surrounding her, or her growing politicization – particularly because the poetry that underlays longer music video scenes was written by Somali-British poet, Warsan Shire. Instead, the project centralizes the

music, images, and poetry, as cultural creations that align with earlier Black feminist intellectual traditions by addressing and celebrating the complexity of Black womanhood and Black women's experiences.

[2] Throughout the paper, I categorize neoconservatism and neoliberalism in a similar fashion to David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005). Here, Harvey argues that these tenets of neoconservatism parallel those of neoliberalism, but in addition, American neoconservatism espouses certain moralistic principles connected to the evangelical church.

[3] The terms "colorblind" and "post-racial" are used interchangeably throughout the project. As race and skin color are often associated with one another, the notion of a society that dismisses the significance of color can also be connected to the notion of a society that ignores race.

ARTICLE ONE:

SYMBOLIC FORMS OF RACISM AND SEXISM IN NEWS MEDIA

ABSTRACT

This project interrogates news media treatment of two Black women killed by police: Rekia Boyd and Korryn Gaines. The article addresses coded framing and silences surrounding these victims of police violence. I focus on the overall erasure/invisibility of Black women, (except for in particular, hypervisible, and often stereotypical fashions), as means of continuing their oppression (Mowatt et al. 2013; Neely 2015). I argue that despite their premature deaths, news coverage and mentions of these individuals in three of the top digitally circulating U.S. news sites will be far lower than these figures for two Black men killed at roughly the same times through police/vigilante intervention (Collins 2000; Harris Perry 2011; Jiwani 2006; Neely 2015). Secondly, I argue that despite their premature deaths, analysis of the subtle framing suggestions in some articles about Gaines and Boyd may demonstrate stereotypical tropes, and subtly racialized and gendered representations of Black women (Collins 2000; Harris Perry 2011; Jiwani 2006; Neely 2015). I analyze ways certain representations of Boyd and Gaines harken back to historical stereotypes and pejorative tropes about Black women (Hill-Collins 2000; Hill-Collins 2004; Harris-Perry 2011). Ultimately, these disparities in coverage speaks to a tendency of media to overlook, erase, disregard, and make invisible the varied manifestations of intersecting oppression in the lives of Black women (Neely 2015).

INTRODUCTION

Mowatt et al. (2013) note when Black women are discussed in media, they are often hypervisible in problematic ways that harken back to historical stereotypes about Black women's oversexuality, attitudinality, rebelliousness, and lack of femininity. Members of this group have historically been inaccurately framed in news, scholarly, and popular discourses as bestial, stronger, less feminine, more capable of withstanding pain, and overall less human than the oppositionally-positioned, normative, unspoken, frail, dependent stereotypical conjurings of "true White womanhood" (Harris-Perry 2011; Winfrey Harris 2015). Further, according to Mowatt et al. (2013), when they are not represented in these fashions, Black women are otherwise systemically erased and invisible in larger society.

Georgetown Law's Center on Poverty and Inequality (Epstein et al. 2017; Finley 2017) found that Black girls are perceived by others to be less innocent than White girls by age five. In line with longstanding stereotypes about Black women's "hardness," "criminality," and/or "toughness," Black girls tend to be punished more severely in schools; treated harshly in interactions with police (Morris and Muhammad 2014). When compared to other girls, Black girls are more likely to experience "negative school, economic, and criminal justice outcomes" (Morris and Muhammad 2014: 141). Further, the suspension rate is higher for Black girls than other races (Morris and Muhammad 2014: 140). They are imprisoned at almost three times the rate of White girls, and represent "fastest growing segment of juvenile justice population in secure confinement" (Morris and Muhammad 2014: 148).

In 2017, videos and accounts of numerous violent attacks by police against Black women, have continued to circulate social media. These include images of frail thirty-eight year-old Katie McCrary being beaten on the ground in Dekalb County, Georgia by a larger male

police officer for more than a minute (Miller 2017). Similarly, nineteen year-old Tatyana Hargrove was punched, attacked by a police dog, and arrested in Bakersfield, California in June (Wang 2017). Police supposedly mistook the five-foot-two-inch 115-pound teenager for a thirty-year-old man, outweighing her by nearly sixty pounds (Wang 2017). Moreover, thirty-year-old Charleena Lyles, a pregnant mother of four, was killed by the same police from whom she sought help after a robbery in Seattle, Washington (Goff and Buchanan 2017).

Recently, instances of White-on-Black police and vigilante violence against unarmed Black victims have captured significant national attention.[1] Yet, much of the media attention has centered Black men. Facing similar types of police violence in marked Black bodies, the police killings of Black women like Charleena Lyles, Tanisha Anderson, Renisha McBride, Rekia Boyd, and Korryn Gaines are also of consequence. Yet, the persistent killings and non-fatal brutal treatment of Black women are largely overlooked by major news media outlets.

Rather than an interrogation of their killings, this article investigates online news media treatment of these women, the framing of their stories, and the erasures, indirect silencing, and lack of media attention to the violence they experienced.[2] In this chapter, I argue that these silences serve to continue Black women's oppressions by masking, erasing and ultimately making invisible the raced and gendered forms of state-sponsored violence (Bonilla Silva 2006; Mowatt et al. 2013; Neely 2015).

That is, the media silences surrounding these women fail to bring attention to the concrete vulnerabilities to police violence they experience *because* they are Black women, while at the same time bringing attention (in some ways) to the systemic violence experienced by Black men. The latter form aligns more directly with the longstanding stereotypical trope of the Black brute, used to justify earlier raced lynching and brutality against Black men as means of

social control. Yet, in failing to discuss, name, or humanize Black women who are victimized by police, certain national news publishers are complicit in erasing racialized police treatment of Black women, as well as the concrete violence and marginalization to which they remain vulnerable.

> This disparity between the remembrance of Boyd and those of the others reflects a popular conception that racial discrimination and violence in America, past and present, are almost exclusively aimed at men: When we talk about lynching, police brutality and mass incarceration, we are almost always talking about African-American men, not women. Being a target of racism is seen as patrilineal, a social and political disadvantage that black fathers unwillingly bequeath to their sons but not their daughters. The result is a dyad of vulnerability and invisibility that most African-American women, including me, learn to navigate at an early age (Tillet 2015).

Consequently, such media erasure results in the invisibility of Black women's vulnerability to police violence.

To this end, I compare rates of coverage of Korryn Gaines' and Rekia Boyd's killings to those of Black men who died at police hands, Ramarley Graham and Alton Sterling. These subjects were selected because Graham's and Sterling's deaths were publicized under similar circumstances (e.g., video streaming), and during the same years of Gaines's and Boyd's deaths.

I investigate the coverage of these individuals by searching their names for articles published in three of the highest circulating digital news sites, *CNN, Fox News Brand,* and *The New York Times Brand.* I argue that despite their premature deaths, news article coverage of these individuals is far lower than these figures for two Black men killed at roughly the same times through police/vigilante intervention (Collins 2000; Harris Perry 2011; Jiwani 2006; Neely 2015).

Similarly, to interrogate the intersection of gender with race, I compare rates of coverage for Boyd and Gaines, two Black women, to digital circulation rates for Justine Ruszczyk's death,

a White woman killed by a Black Somali American police officer. Ultimately, these disparities in coverage speaks to a tendency of media to overlook, erase, disregard, and make invisible the varied manifestations of intersecting oppression in the lives of Black women (Neely 2015). Yet, as is evinced by the disparities in coverage between Black and White women of state-sponsored violence, when White women die at police hands, it is officially time to report on, and resolve the issue (Hill 2016).

To be clear, this article does not attempt to minimize very real threat of violence experienced by Black men. Black men are subject to a unique history of lynching and being viewed through the controlling image of the Black brute, used to justify violence exacted on them as means of social control in the early 1900s and beyond (Bay 2010). Instead, the aim of the article is to highlight the similar, yet unique racialized and gendered victimization to which Black women are vulnerable. To reference my previous example, although it receives scant attention comparably, Black women were also subject to rape and lynching as forms of racial violence in the Jim Crow south.

As a primary goal, the article argues media disregard and erasure of Black women's vulnerability to police violence speaks to the overall tendency to overlook Black women's oppression in the society (Neely 2015). Furthermore, problematic media framing of details surrounding their killings can also guide audiences to believe these victims of police violence are culpable for their deaths.

As a secondary aim, I also address coded framing surrounding these victims of police violence. I argue that despite their premature deaths, analysis of the subtle framing suggestions in some articles about Gaines and Boyd may demonstrate stereotypical tropes, and subtly racialized and gendered representations of Black women (Collins 2000; Harris Perry 2011; Jiwani 2006;

Neely 2015). In application of the concepts of the crooked room (Harris-Perry 2011), and controlling images (Hill Collins 2000; Winfrey Harris 2015; Neely 2015), these articles present Boyd and Gaines in fashions that harken back to historical stereotypes and pejorative tropes about Black women, in order to, even subtly, make them responsible for the violence exacted on them.

Through a directed qualitative content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon 2005) of twenty-two online news articles, I focus on these symbolic and strategic forms of racism and sexism that mark media representations of Boyd and Gaines. I analyze the articles for justifications of victimization through repeated references to the victim's unruliness, vocalness, or attitudinality (Hill Collins 2000; Winfrey Harris 2015). These articles include strategic namings of identity – to suggest pejorative readings of the victim, direct audience readings of her, and/or normalize, naturalize, justify, or make her somehow blameworthy for her death (Collins 2000; Collins 2004; Harris-Perry 2011; Jiwani 2006; Neely 2015).

Finally, contemporary media – particularly due to technological advances and the popularity and accessibility of social media to millions of Americans – function as dialectical spaces. Major news publications included, media serve as contestation of meanings, for critiques of the social status quo, and for unearthing systemic forms of racism and sexism. Media serve as spaces for the reinforcement of social structures, as well as for those structures' destabilization. Within these spaces occur the contestation of racial meanings and their significance (Brown et al. 2012; Campbell et al. 2012; Cole and Jenkins 2012; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Gandy 1996; Gross and D'Ambrosio 2004; Iyengar 1990; Markovitz 2011; Meyers 2004).

Growing access of members of the American public to social media (including Instagram and Facebook Live, SnapChat, and Twitter), and cellphones with video capability, has meant that

individuals can not only capture, but share everyday microaggressions, differential, and obviously racialized treatment online. While racist and sexist ideas about Blacks are reinforced through various media, these media allow also for the unadulterated display of live streamed and videoed police violence against Blacks – as occurred with the deaths of Philando Castile, Eric Garner, and Korryn Gaines. These videos are shared with millions of users, untainted by intentional misremembering or intentionally/unintentionally falsified reports (e.g., the killing of Freddie Gray). Often these recordings facilitate the generation of ire against, and protest of these killings (Hill 2016).

The utility of such social media sites for the capture and dissemination of instances of fatal and non-fatal police violence is becoming clear. The video of Eric Garner's strangling by a New York City police officer generated ire, heavily through circulation online. The murder of Philando Castile, in front of his fiancé and four-year-old daughter, also gained attention after being livestreamed on Facebook. Similarly, Facebook confirmed terminating Korryn Gaines' Facebook Live stream of her attempted arrest, and later police murder; Baltimore City Police requested that Facebook shut down the life feed prior to storming her apartment.

Further, the reaches of White privilege, and the differential treatment Blacks receive become apparent when similar situations are compared by race. That is, the police murders of these armed and unarmed Black victims contrast the slow, deliberate response of authorities to violent murderers like Dylann Roof, James Holmes,[1] or to the armed Oregon Bundy family militia. (Urquhart 2016). After killing nine Black servicegoers at UAME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, targeted by the killer because of their race, Roof was apprehended alive by police. Officers reportedly took Rook to Burger King, prior to booking him on charges. Further,

[1] In 2012, Holmes killed twelve people in an Aurora, Colorado theater.

like Korryn Gaines and Philando Castile, the militia was armed, yet remained in occupation of a federal wildlife refuge on Native American Paiute land for forty-one days. All but one of the seventeen-member group were apprehended alive and members of the militia were later acquitted of trespassing and occupation charges (Urquhart 2016).

In national news, a number of journalists also discuss the deaths of Boyd and Gaines, critiquing the disproportionate vulnerability to police violence experienced by Blacks in the U.S. Often when referenced in connection with Black Lives Matter, or other victims of police violence, Gaines and Boyd are depicted as human, sufferers of unjust actions that should not have occurred.

As a final goal, this article also intends to highlight this voice, as well: articles which frame Boyd and Gaines as subjects of protest, as human victims, and/or, as victims of police violence. I discuss counterframes and representations that connect these women to larger issues of race and gender inequity that precipitated their deaths. I interrogate such representations in framing suggestions in the articles, which, evinced by the growing tide of protest in the country, illustrate ways media also serve as spaces of contestation of representations, unequal treatment, gender and racial oppression.

THEORY AND LITERATURE

Media and Framing

Numerous scholars argue that critical interrogations of mass media's packaging of events and issues, demonstrate that *how* mass media present a message can contain ideas and suggestions that may influence audience reactions (Brown et al. 2012; Campbell et al. 2012; Cole and Jenkins 2012; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Gandy 1996; Gross and D'Ambrosio 2004; Iyengar 1990; Meyers 2004).

> Framing is the process by which media gatekeepers define and construct issues or events...When journalists frame information, they organize the concepts that reside in texts and public discourse and provide the reference points which viewers make sense of issues like crime, natural disasters, and ideological debates. (Cole and Jenkins 2012: 182)

Additionally, the series of connective ideas surrounding the presentation of a media message may incorporate subtle clues, words, and phrases that may suggest the way an audience should see that message (Brown et al. 2012; Campbell et al. 2012; Cole and Jenkins 2012; Entman 2003; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Gandy 1996; Gross and D'Ambrosio 2004; Iyengar 1990; Meyers 2004). Further, these ideas and messages are less likely to encounter resistance and critique when drawing on culturally resonant frames, which "use words and images highly salient in the culture, which is to say *noticeable, understandable, memorable"* (Entman 2003: 417, emphasis in original).

By highlighting some aspects of media stories, framing makes connections amongst the ideas in a message, *"so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation and/or solution*…" (Entman 2003: 417, emphasis in original). For instance, Entman (2003) uses former President Bush's framing of 9/11 as an act of "evil" and "war" to show that elite framing of a topic often tells how the public should see an issue. Further, according to Entman, this filters down to the

public from administration, elites, news organizations (Entman 2003: 419). As responses of audiences are often linked to how issues are framed, it is important to interrogate the latent content, and messages contained within media messages.

According to Reid-Brinkley (2012: 82) framing analysis is also useful to analyzing race in both print and news media. This method enables researchers to trace the themes that are repeatedly drawn on by various media, and presented to readers to make sense of message content (Reid-Brinkley 2012: 82). Further, this method is useful for helping to uncover subtle, perhaps unintended messages in the presentation of media information that may influence larger discourses about race, sex, class, and groups who are multiply privileged and marginalized by these structures of oppression.

With specific regard to race and gender in media representations, framing theorists highlight the frames that often surround media messages with people of color as subjects. Framing theorists note that the ideas surrounding representations of "othered" racial groups are marked by longstanding racial stereotypes and ideologies that were created to justify their position within a racist and sexist social order, and continue to do that discursive work today (Campbell et al. 2012; Cole and Jenkins 2012; Meyers 2004; Jiwani and Young 2006; Reid-Brinkley 2012). These scholars assert that media representations of minority groups often maintain longstanding White/Other and superior/inferior racial dichotomies through the framing of people of color. That is,

> Racism does not consist only of White supremacist ideologies of race, or only of aggressive or overt blatant discriminatory acts, the forms of racism as it is currently understood in informal conversations, in the media, or in much of the social sciences. *Racism involves the everyday, mundane, negative opinions, attitudes, and ideologies and the seemingly subtle acts and conditions of discrimination against minorities, namely those social cognitions, social acts, processes, structures, or institutions that directly or indirectly contribute to the*

> *dominance of the white group and the subordinate position of minorities* (van Dijk 1993: 5, emphasis mine).

I highlight studies of framing theory below. Meyers (2004) applies content analysis to news that covered rape of Black women during the mid-1990s *Freaknik* college student celebration in Atlanta. Overall, Meyers found that Black women were framed in connection to the controlling image of the Jezebel (Hill Collins 2000). Essentially, the rape survivors' oversexuality (manifested in revealing dress, and "suggestive" dancing), were among forces at fault for the brutality they suffered – a semantic move which demonizes victims of violence, assigns survivors responsibility for violence against them (which suggests *they*, rather than the perpetrators, should have prevented it), and links Black women to longstanding tropes that justify, minimize, normalize, or excuse brutality against them (Hill Collins 2000; Meyers 2004).

Campbell et al. (2012) found similar racialized myths in the 1995 coverage of the holiday, reproduced fifteen years later, as January 2009 also marked the inauguration of President Barack Obama, the first Black-identified U.S. president. In like fashion to 1995, the authors found local television news constructs simultaneous and contradictory myths of difference and assimilation. The myth of assimilation asserts that Black people are fully assimilated into the society, and racism has been transcended, as legalized discrimination is no longer a factor in the country. Alongside the myth of assimilation, is the myth of difference, "in which African Americans (as well as other people of color) are routinely cast as *different,* as dangerous, as amoral perpetrators of violent acts" (Campbell et al. 2012: 13).

Even when lived realities contradict dominant framing, and even when journalists are appearing to represent progress, some continue to rely on existing racialized, sexed, and classed themes, making the *framing* of media messages a significant way that racial and gender hierarchies are upheld and reproduced (Campbell et al. 2012; Jiwani and Young 2006; Meyers

2004; Reid-Brinkley 2012).

Reid-Brinkley (2012) analyzes news media representations of youths involved in a non-profit debate education program. The presentations of the participants, including the author, were confined to dominant media frames surrounding Black urban youth, including poverty, familial, dysfunction, and criminal offspring (Reid-Brinkley 2012: 79). Even when these frames contradicted participants' lived realities (as was the case with the author/former program participant), journalists still aimed to connect participants' stories with social deviance, risk of becoming socially deviant, and survival against odds narratives (Reid-Brinkley 2012: 79). News that presented the story scripted the youths in this way, left little space for more complex representations of the participants, better rooted in their lived realities.

In similar fashion, with a specific focus on news, Neely (2015) notes that even when Black women are victims of violence, they are often presented in ways that reference and covertly trigger details about them that make them seem responsible for their deaths. Neely (2015) conducts case studies of White and Black women victims of violence. As compared to White women, Neely (2015) illustrates that Black women are treated differently by police, presented less favorably than White women by news outlets, and discussed in ways that reference and covertly trigger details about them that make them seem responsible for their deaths. This justifies or at least anesthetizes audiences to the violence the victims experienced.

As a final example, Jiwani and Young (2006) conducted frame analyses of 128 articles from *The Vancouver Sun* between 2001 and 2006, centering on violence against women of color (Jiwani and Young 2006: 898). To draw their sample, the authors searched for the terms "missing women" along with location and newspaper publication, and analyzed the articles in terms of dominant frames and counterframes (Jiwani and Young 2006: 902). To be clearer, in

their analysis, Jiwani and Young (2006) note the portrayal of the women contained strategic naming and silences in their presentation (i.e., specifying Aboriginality), semantically marking them as "Other," and situating them outside of boundaries of hegemonic White femininity. According to the authors,

> a frame that recurs throughout the coverage is that of the missing women being mostly Aboriginal, drug-addicted sex-trade workers. Counterframes were also embedded in… prevailing representations that re-enacted gendered, racialized, and class- based understandings of the missing women case (Jiwani and Yougn 2006: 903).

By marking the victims as "other," pejorative, bad, the violence against them seems more justified, and less significant.

> This is of course in stark contrast to how members of the dominant society are portrayed – as reasonable, law-abiding, rational, and above all, benevolent…What needs to be emphasized is the interlocking nature of these representations. Just as the 'good' woman is contrasted with the 'bad' woman, so the racialized body is contrasted with the dominant, White body. (Jiwani and Young 2006: 898-902)

By strategically naming race, by subtly drawing on coded themes that link people of color to longstanding stereotypes of oversexuality, social deviance, and violence, by journalistic constraints that confine news to soundbites, and brief episodes, rather than those who address the larger sociohistorical context that contributes to black/white inequality (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Iyengar 1990; Davis and Gandy 1999; Entman and Rojecki 2000; Jiwani 2006; Jiwani and Young 2006; Reid-Brinkley 2012).

According to Jiwani (2006: 14), this provides an example of framing racial difference situate nonwhites, and racial "others" as distinct from the norm, and separate from the normalized majority, via "the categorization of racism as something other than what it is….and the conversion of racial difference into categories that demonize, trivialize, compartmentalize,

exoticize, erase, or contain that difference in ways that suit the interests of a dominant, hegemonic power."

Discourse

Ultimately, framing theorists note that specific types of framing can influence entire *discourses,* or ways of connecting language to non-language symbols, in order to give those symbols social meaning, to recognize identities, and to assign power and privilege to specific groups based on the recognition of those identities (Gee 1999: 13). Gee (1999) notes that it is not just connecting the language to the symbol, but the symbol must be *recognized* (consciously or unconsciously) by audiences as being connected to a specific identity within the discourse.

According to discourse scholars, the society is constrained by structures of race, class and gender oppression that are partially upheld by work the common-sense-making media does in presenting people of color and Whites in ways that bespeak and normalize the racial and gender stratification of society. Media representations of people of color are constrained by power relationships that have historically influenced the development and presentations of media images, particularly regarding people of African descent in the U.S. Consequently, packages of ideas that surround the presentation of media messages about or including women of color may be connected to longstanding racial stereotypes and ideologies that were created to justify their position within a racist and sexist social order, and continue to do that discursive work today (Meyers 2004; Jiwani 2006; Jiwani and Young 2006; Van Dijk 1993).

These theorists highlight 1) historical structures of racism, sexism, and classism that have continued to influence options for representation of nonwhite, nonmale groups, especially women of color; 2) the ownership of institutions of cultural production by a predominately

White, wealthy class of men (Semmes 1992); 3) strategic naming and silences that may harken to historical and stereotypical tropes, and reinforce the normalcy, universal nature of whiteness and maleness, alongside the othering, abnormality, and naming of difference, (e.g., nonwhiteness, youth, "urbannness") (Jiwani and Young 2006; Jiwani 2006: 4; Reid-Brinkley 2012). The way this normalization reinforces and reproduces White supremacy is by distorting its presence and making whiteness the unnamed universal. Further, these scholars unearth the semantic moves that frequently, though now subtly, mark women and people of color as problematic, different, other, and subordinate (Entman and Rojecki 2000; Davis and Gandy 1999; Meyers 2006; Reid-Brinkley 2012; Semmes 1993; Gandy 1996; Van Dijk 1993).

The strengths of this approach are in its ability to capture historically problematic representations of nonwhite groups, their connections to the maintenance of racial, gender, and class inequality through media representations. Additionally, the hegemonic approach does capture the disproportionate representation in ownership of modes of cultural production by White male elites, and the historical use of media, by those elites, to secure their positions at the type of a racially and sexually stratified social hierarchy.

Gender, Silencing, "Symbolic Annihilation"

Shifting to gender marginalization in media, Tuchman (1997: 12) addresses the marginality and underrepresentation of women in media, noting that

> the very underrepresentation of women, including their stereotypic portrayal, may symbolically capture the position of women in American society – their real lack of power. It bespeaks their "symbolic annihilation" by the media…just as representation in the media signifies social existence, so too underrepresentation and (by extension) trivialization and condemnation indicate symbolic annihilation.

Lazar (2005) and Tuchman (1997) highlight similar processes, and provide feminist contributions critical discourse theory. Lazar (2005: 1) addresses the increasingly subtle nature of gendered power relationships and their production, reproduction, and resistance through text and talk. Further, Lazar identifies concrete manifestations of these subtle hegemonic relationships in work and political life. Lazar's (2005: 19) "marked inclusion" critiques the "benevolent inclusion of critical and/or feminist discourse studies from non-Western geographical regions in international for a, but marked as 'other' instead of mainstreamed."

This project also rests heavily on Black feminist theoretical traditions. Commonalities among Black feminist theorists of intersectionality also include approach to structures of race, class, and gender oppression as intersecting/interlocking, mutually-reinforced social structures (Combahee River Collective [1978] 1982; Crenshaw 1991: 1242; Hill Collins 1998: 204). They experience membership in a racial minority differently than Black men, who have access to the privilege of gender majority status. Similarly, White women have access to many privileges of being a part of the dominant racial group in the society, though they are members of a gender minority (Crenshaw 1991: 1252).

A number of Black feminist and other feminist researchers have advanced new metaphors and lenses to address the silencing, dismissal, and disregard that Black women navigate, often reinforced and perpetuated in media. Interstices, for instance, interrogates symbolic representations of Black women, highlighting intentional discursive silences that foster feelings of non-belonging, marginalization, and invisibility for members of the group (Spillers 1984; Lorde 2007; Harris-Perry 2011; Mowatt et al. 2015; Winfrey Harris 2015). Such silences may symbolically overlook Black women, negate their belonging in certain spaces, and minimize existence as complex beings. Similarly, Harris-Perry (2011) developed the concept of the

crooked room, to describe the constant struggle against a longstanding history of racial and gender stereotypes with which Black women must contend.

> When they confront race and gender stereotypes, Black women are standing in a crooked room, and they have to figure out which way is up. Bombarded with warped images of their humanity, some Black women tilt and bend themselves to fit the distortion….To understand why Black women's public actions and political strategies sometimes seem tilted in ways that accommodate the degrading stereotypes about them, it is important to appreciate the structural constraints that influence their behavior. It can be hard to stand up straight in a crooked room (Harris-Perry 2011: 29).

Other researchers help illustrate the ways "standing in a crooked room" becomes especially difficult, when Black women are represented in media. Specifically, regarding news stories, the overt identification of marginalized racial, gender, or sexual characteristics to ensure an individual's or group's classification as non-White, non-male, non-heterosexual, non-mainstream – that is, other – alongside the failure to name powerful, privileged groups, thereby mainstreaming, and universalizing, the latter identities as normal, and their perspectives as representative of the taken-for-granted knowledge of the society.

Consequently, when popular culture repeatedly omits Black women, or draws on controlling images of Black womanhood, the larger consequence is the reproduction of Black women's oppression. The erasure, invisibility, and marked representations of Black women victims of police violence contributes to their symbolic annihilation (Mowatt et al. 2013; Tuchman 1997). However, not only are women marginalized and symbolically annihilated in media, but race, gender, and class oppression are mutually constructed. Black women, trying to stand in a crooked room, experience various types of symbolic annihilation simultaneously. And with that symbolic annihilation, they are erased, and their oppressions, particularly their vulnerability to state-sponsored violence, are largely invisible in mass media. This critical feminist discourse conceptual tool can be expanded and applied with Black feminist theory.

METHODS

Methods – Coverage

Each individual's name was used as a search term in three of the most highly-circulating digital news sites in the U.S.: *The CNN Network, Fox News Digital Network,* and *The New York Times Brand*.[3] These were selected for the availability of verification resources for rates of coverage, including search engines for the publication sites themselves, as well as Google's News Search Engine, which was used to compare numbers.

I included articles published from the date of death to November 18, 2017. I excluded videos and articles that did not actually mention subjects' full names in the article content. Searches were conducted for exact hits on individual names (e.g., "Korryn Gaines") specifically mentioned within the titles and/or written content of articles.

1. Rekia Boyd – Black woman, 22, unarmed, killed 21-Mar-12 by off-duty police officer in Chicago, IL
2. Korryn Gaines – Black woman, 23, armed, killed 1-Aug-16 by police barricaded in home in Baltimore, MD – videos of police entry
3. Ramarley Graham – Black man, 18, unarmed, killed 2-Feb-12 by police in home without warrant in New York, NY
4. Alton Sterling – Black man, unarmed, 37, shot point blank 5-Jul-16 by police in Baton Rouge, LA selling CDs– video of shooting
5. Justine Ruszczyk – White woman, 40, unarmed, killed in front of home by Minneapolis, MN police on 17-Jul-17

Methods – Framing Content

Table 1: Framing Articles

Article Groups	**Number of Articles Included in Framing Section of Study**
Rekia Boyd	#1 – 11
Korryn Gaines	#12-22
N =22	

The second section employs directed qualitative content analysis. Quantitative approaches to content analysis rest upon identifying trends in the frequency of terms, phrases, descriptors, used in articles, television shows, and other forms of media content. Contrarily, qualitative content analysis is instead concerned with the description of latent, or hidden content contained within various forms of communication (Schreier 2014: 173). That is, while quantitative approaches to content analysis focus on *how many times* particular words might be used in a news article, qualitative approaches focus, instead, on the *hidden meaning* of words and phrases used in that article.

According to Berg and Lune (2012: 352), through directed content analysis, researchers immerse themselves in raw data, in search of analytic codes and categories derived from existing theories. "Working in a concept-driven way means basing the categories on previous knowledge: a theory, prior research, everyday knowledge, logic, or an interview guide" (Schreier 2014: 176). Specifically, framing theory, discourse theory, and the concept of the "crooked room" have informed the approach to the data, as well.

Each population of articles was gathered and given a number. Then, a total of twenty-two articles were selected from the group. As this is a secondary aim of the article, such a sample size is appropriate. This is especially true for a study involving qualitative content analysis, as qualitative approaches, in general, employ small sample sizes in order to deeply interrogate the data and provide rich detail about its contents (Berg and Lune 2012). As this approach is focused on providing rich detail of the latent content found in news, a small sample is appropriate.[4]

I thoroughly analyzed content pieces (words, sentences, and paragraphs) for connections to existing theory discussed above; to provide rich detail about the themes uncovered in the

analysis. This provides a lens into ways the subjects were framed, discussed, and presented to national audiences.

Data analysis began with the development of a coding frame, wherein I detailed the main, concept-based categories and of study, which were developed from theories and knowledge discussed above (Berg and Lune 2012; Harris-Perry 2011; Hill Collins 2000; Schreier 2014). Subcategories were also generated from themes found in the data (Schreier 2014: 176). Concepts and themes that emerged in the data were compared to one another for similarities, and categorized according to their commonality.

FINDINGS

Comparing Rates of Coverage – Gender

Table 2: Online News Coverage of Black Women Killed by Police

	Rekia Boyd	**Korryn Gaines[5]**	**Total Article Coverage of Black Women**
Date of Death	21-Mar-12	1-Aug-16	
News Date Coverage End	17-Nov-17 (5 Years)	17-Nov-17 (1+ Year)	
CNN (Source: CNN.COM)	7	6	**13**
The New York Times Brand (NYTIMES.COM)	25	13	**38**
Fox News Digital Network (Foxnews.com)	7	14	**21**
Total Number of Articles Published	**39 Boyd**	**33 Gaines**	**72 Boyd & Gaines**

Table 3: Online News Coverage of Black Men Killed by Police

	Ramarley Graham	**Alton Sterling**	**Total Article Coverage of Black Men**
Date of Death	2-Feb-12	5-Jul-16	
News Date Coverage End	17-Nov-17 (5 Years)	17-Nov-17 (1+ Year)	
CNN (Source: CNN.COM)	6	173	**179**
The New York Times Brand (NYTIMES.COM)	54	122	**176**
Fox News Digital Network (Foxnews.com)	13	151	**164**
Total Number of Articles Published	**73 Graham**	**446 Sterling**	**519 Graham & Sterling**

First, I compared rates of coverage of Black men and women who were victims of police violence. Focusing on national audiences provides a lens into levels of national attention to each

death, as compared to the police-related deaths of two Black men, Ramarley Graham and Alton Sterling. This was done to illustrate that, as compared to Black men killed by police under similar circumstances, Black women are often ignored, overlooked, and dismissed as victims of racialized state-sponsored violence although they are vulnerable to it (Hill 2016).

Across three of the major digital news sites, there were obvious disparities in the number of articles published online for Korryn Gaines and Rekia Boyd, as compared to Alton Sterling and Ramarley Graham. Between 2012 and 2017, *CNN, The New York Times Brand,* and *Fox News,* published thirty-nine articles on the killing of Rekia Boyd, and accompanying adjudication. Ramarley Graham, an eighteen-year-old killed by New York Police, received a total of seventy-three article hits over the course of the same five years. Similarly, in 2017, these publishers issued thirty-three articles on the death of Korryn Gaines. The same year, Alton Sterling was discussed in roughly 519 articles.

I expected to find significant national coverage of Gaines, as police both killed her, and injured her five-year-old son in failing to nonviolently deescalate their interaction. Put simply, police shooting a five-year-old child did not garner significant attention or sympathy. Black children's ages do not negate the disposability of their lives because of their color. In 2010, the killing of seven-year-old Ayanna Jones during a Detroit Police raid, along with the 2014 murder of twelve-year-old Tamir Rice, killed by Cleveland Police while playing with a toy gun in a park, both serve as evidence of the overt disposability of young Black lives in the U.S.

To continue, prior to her murder, Gaines allegedly threatened police with her gun. This is likely why Facebook granted The Baltimore Police Department's request deactivated her attempt at live streaming the police and counter and her later death. And moreso, it is perhaps why national news sites have failed to adequately cover her police-related murder. Police encounters

with armed Whites have illustrated ability to deescalate volatile encounters, though Gaines was not extended the same liberty.

Moreover, as shown by the rates of coverage in news, Black women's deaths generated far less media response than those of Black men. Updates, information, and discussions about the experiences of Graham and Sterling collectively far exceeded those of Boyd and Gaines, largely because of the number of articles on Sterling. This is not to say that Black men's deaths should receive less attention. Neither Black men nor Black women should suffer such violence and vulnerability as they often do in this society. However, it is also to say that the silencing, disregard, or lack of attention to these killings serves to erase, and thereby make invisible, the atrocity and systemic nature of these crimes. Even when Black women died under similar conditions, and during similar time periods, they were still not given similar attention to Black men by news media.

Comparing Rates of Coverage – Race

Table 4: Online News Coverage of White Woman Killed by Police

Justine Ruszczyk/Damond		**Total Article Coverage of White Woman**
Date of Death	17-Jul-17	
News Date Coverage End	17-Nov-17 (4 Months)	
CNN (Source: CNN.COM)	28[6]	**28**
The New York Times Brand (NYTIMES.COM)	21 / 5	**26**
Fox News Digital Network (Foxnews.com)	21	**21**
Total Number of Articles Published	**75 Damond Alone**	

Further, in the four months following death of a White Australian woman, Justine Ruszczy, the former received more coverage than both Gaines and Boyd in the years that followed their deaths. Ruszczy was discussed in seventy-five articles by *CNN, Fox News, and The New York Times*. This, in four months, is more coverage than Gaines and Boyd combined, year and five years following their deaths, respectively.

Such a finding is not surprising, as Neely (2015) and Jiwani and Young (2006) highlighted similar results in their comparisons of coverage of White and Black women victims of violence.

Framing Content

Two major themes resonated throughout the articles that specifically mentioned Rekia Boyd's and Korryn Gaines' names: culpability, and protest. The first, culpability, highlights ways the wording in the articles situated a specific party or parties as responsible for the killings. For instance, repeatedly highlighting and/or omitting events that led to the deaths, or invoking imagery of earlier unrelated deviant behavior, serve as examples of this. The second, protest, discusses ways Boyd's and Gaines' names are linked to protests across the country in response to police killings.

Culpability (Boyd)

Often when Boyd was given focused attention, it was often to provide brief snippets about the nature or status of the case against her killer. For Boyd, in these discussions, culpability is a major theme. Collectively, the articles mentioned Boyd's age, twenty-two, and that she was unarmed when she was killed.

On the whole, *Fox News* referenced or included quotes to illustrate the officer's poor decision making. Admitting some wrongdoing on the officer's part illustrates a move towards a fair approach towards the articles, at least on the surface. However, highlighting the state's failure to prove the officer's recklessness; vaguely noting "discipline" against the officer as opposed to specifying his termination; and including his affirmation that he fired his gun after feeling threatened, are all discursive moves that shift the framing of the article to justify his actions. *Fox News* articles repeatedly invoked these discursive moves.

Similarly, centering the officer's fear, feelings of threat, and assertion that a gun was present are discursive moves that reinforce just actions of self-defense on the part of a fearful public servant. This does not situate blame on Boyd outright, particularly because she was unarmed. But it does shift some of the article's blame for Boyd's death away from the officer, almost framing it as a faultless accident or mistake.

Other articles by *The New York Times* and *CNN* specify the officer's later termination. In some, the dismissal of charges is framed as faulty legal work on behalf of the prosecutor, including a judge's note that the offender should have been charged with murder. For instance, "Illinois: Board Says Police Officer Who Killed Woman Should Be Fired" *(The New York Times* 2015) states,

> Officer Servin, who was off-duty, struck Rekia Boyd, 22, in the head when he fired into a group of people because he said he believed one of them had a gun. No gun was found. Involuntary manslaughter charges against Officer Servin were dismissed by Judge Dennis J. Porter of Cook County Circuit Court, who ruled the officer was improperly charged and hinted that he should have been charged with murder. The city in 2013 settled a lawsuit with the Boyd family for $4.5 million.

The active literary voice employed in the article indicates directly that Servin committed the acts that led to Boyd's death. Further, these articles specifically and repeatedly included terms to affirm the officer's actions and poor decision making. Such frames include claims he

saw a gun, but only a cell phone was recovered from the scene. Additionally, the author's reference to the judge's allusion to murder as a more appropriate charge for Servin further indicates the culpability of the officer. These articles, which were the bulk of the sample, aimed to highlight the wrongdoing of Boyd's killer.

Culpability (Gaines)

A distinction between the framing of Gaines and Boyd is also clear. Regarding culpability and Gaines, the results were complex. Often, it was noted that officers fired first. But undoubtedly, Gaines was heavily framed as responsible for her death. To begin, she is framed as unstable and uncompliant.

> [Gaines] was originally pulled over for driving without a license plate. In place of a tag, she had a cardboard sign with a handwritten message warning government officials not to compromise her right to travel, he said (McLaughlin et al. 2016).

The warrant being served by police was connected to driving with a "free traveler" plate, which is highlighted by a number of articles, regardless of publisher. In "Woman Killed in Standoff with Baltimore County Police was Live-Streaming," the authors call the tag a "warning" to police (McLaughlin et al. 2016).

As implied by many authors, Gaines endangered herself and her children by engaging police while they were in the apartment. One article speculates that Gaines coached her son to say that police were there to kill them – a discursive move that further devalues Gaines' parental decision-making.

> In the other video, Gaines talks to the boy, who gives *halting* answers, *which raises the possibility the boy might have been coached*. Gaines is heard asking the boy what the police are trying to do. He answers, "They're trying to kill us" (McLaughlin et al. 2016, emphasis mine).

Moreover, sentiments of "threat" felt by police are more heavily articulated in discussions of Gaines than Boyd. For instance, violence against police are centralized in *Fox News* (2016) article, "Chief Won't Identify Officer Who Shot Woman in Barricade."

> Citing an "unprecedented number" of threats against his department, Baltimore County's police chief says he will not identify the officer who fatally shot a woman after an hourslong standoff at her apartment. A department news release on Thursday says Jim Johnson also cited the recent killings of police officers in Dallas and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, as a factor in his decision. Police say 23-year-old Korryn Gaines was fatally shot Monday in her Randallstown apartment when she pointed a shotgun directly at an officer. Gaines' 5-year-old son, who was in the apartment, was injured (*Fox News* 2016).

It is either implied or directly stated that she coached her son's responses to police. Further, it is repeatedly mentioned that she had her son while holding a shotgun, and engaging police. In one of the final sentences of the previous section, the author highlights that Gaines was fatally shot after pointing a shotgun *directly* at an officer.

These are clear examples of problematic framing; culpability for Gaines' death is placed on the victim throughout the sample. Gaines' obvious resistance to the existing rules of social order exemplify the unending unruliness of Black women. To many journalists, Gaines' death was not truly a question of officers' inability to quell a volatile situation. Nor was it a question of the distinction in fashions police tend to engage Whites and Blacks in those vulnerable situations. Instead, in the framing of most articles, Gaines was completely at fault as she engaged in a seven-hour standoff with the five-year-old child in the house; she is the one who pointed the gun at the police.

Only one article included a reference to Gaines saying she would come out of her apartment if police put down their guns and backed away from her door. This was among very slim minority of articles that seemed to lay blame on the officers for the civilian death.

Protest

Gaines and Boyd were most frequently mentioned in reference to other Black victims of state-sponsored violence (Hill 2016). For instance, growing public frustrations with these deaths are addressed in the articles that mention Rekia Boyd, specifically protests in Chicago in 2015, targeting both her killer's acquittal and the police killing of 17-year-old LaQuan McDonald. *CNN* article, "Marchers Supporting Baltimore Protests Take to the Streets across U.S." (Ellis 2015) notes,

> In Chicago, hundreds of protesters marched Tuesday from police headquarters at 35th and Michigan through the Southside, CNN affiliate WGN reported. Police made one arrest, for reckless conduct. WGN said protesters spoke about police violence and the death of Rekia Boyd, who was killed by an off-duty officer in 2012. That officer was acquitted last week. The group plans to gather Wednesday night at the DePaul Law School.

In like fashion, these articles mentioned Boyd and Gaines secondarily. Their names are among a list that Blacks and supporters of Black lives are apt to say, as their cases are especially well-known, or the outcomes especially egregious.

A very limited number address the invariably raced nature of their deaths. Aware of the historical institutional oppressions that have contributed to contemporary levels of state-sponsored violence against Blacks, these articles provide assessments of the treatment of Black victims of such violence, and often authors' perspectives on their own vulnerability in Black bodies.

However, also common among the articles that link protest and the loss of Black lives at police hands, were framings of angry protesters throwing things at police vehicles, people blocking traffic, circling police vehicles, and public officials quickly wrapping investigations up. These articles (primarily with the exception of *Fox News)* like protests to anger about the deaths,

and the larger issue of police violence against Black people. Yet, some also frame protesters slightly problematically, as well.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

What I expected to find at the outset of the project was the maintenance of subordination through an abundance of problematic representations of Black women. I expected to find significantly high levels of coded framing in the representations of Black women victims of violence. Those were my initial areas of foci at the outset of this project.

Instead, the most starling finding I encountered was disregard. I found erasure. I found invisibility. I found silences – the lack of representation, the lack of discussion, and a lack of attention to Black women who died in connection to interactions with police under similar conditions to Black men.

Other scholars have investigated the media treatment of Black women and women of color who are victims of violence (Jiwani and Young 2006; Neely 2015). This article is unique as other studies have not compared rates of coverage for Black women to that of Black men, in order to access their erasure and invisibility in that fashion.

Ultimately, there are a number of reasons these women's deaths are heavily overlooked. One major impetus for the erasure and subsequent invisibly of these women's is because they do not resonate well with the violent black man trope that helped to justify lynching at the turn of the 20th century, and continues to accomplish the same discursive work today.

One other major reason Black women's deaths are not covered because Black women's suffering in the country tends to be overlooked, silenced, minimized, and disregarded. As noted by Mowatt et al. (2013), Tuchman (1997), and others, their underrepresentation is hegemonic, and symbolic of a larger lack of power within systems of marginalization in the country. That a mother was killed by police in front of her child, and that those police injured that five-year-old

during the altercation, resonated less with media outlets and the American public than the fact that she brandished a weapon, and barricaded herself in her apartment against police.

There is also a significant distinction between the framing of Gaines and Boyd. Boyd is often framed as another Black woman killed by police. Typically, she is not framed as culpable, though the officer's actions are justified by the wording in some articles. Contrarily, Gaines is obviously framed as being fully at fault for her death. She is implicitly discussed as a bad mother, for involving her children in the volatile situation. As noted above, in only a limited number of the articles is it noted that officers might have employed other tactics, particularly given the presence of children. In this way, the results also show the tendency to frame Black women who have engaged police, as Korryn Gaines, as responsible for their killings. This is especially true if their behaviors, in any way, align with controlling images and stereotypes that presume Black women's over-aggressiveness.

Otherwise, when Boyd and Gaines are discussed, often, their names have become taglines. Taglines that need to be mentioned, of course. But taglines, nonetheless. They are not always discussed as humans, as people whose families will miss them. They are typically discussed as one of a collection of people killed by police, parts in the complex puzzles of cases that are investigated or not, pursued to some form of vindication (e.g., Renisha McBride) or not. People whose families may receive settlements, and that, in some way, is supposed to compensate for the immense loss and immeasurable psychological trauma inflicted on them at the killing of their loved ones.

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[1] In 2012, Jordan Davis, an unarmed teenager, was murdered by a White gas station patron over an altercation regarding loud music (Alvarez 2012). In early August 2014, Eric Garner was also killed by an illegal chokehold from a New York City police office, stemming from a dispute over the sale of illegal cigarettes (Fitzgerald 2014). He was unarmed. That same month, a recent high school graduate, 18 year-old Michael Brown, was also killed by police in Ferguson, Missouri (*Associated Press* and *Huffington Post* 2014). He was also unarmed. Similarly, Ezell Ford was murdered by police on August 13, after an altercation with the LAPD during an "investigative stop" (Sieczkowski 2014). The list continues. Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Ramarley Graham, Amadou Diallo, Sean Bell, Akai Gurley, twelve-year-old Tamir Rice, killed by Chicago police while playing with a toy gun in the park (Davis and Quah 2015).

[2] As she sought help for a late-night car accident, Theodore Wafer shot Renisha McBride in the face, killing her on his porch because he claimed to have felt threatened (Berman 2014). One of the subjects of this article, Rekia Boyd, was killed by Dante Servin, an off-duty Chicago police officer. Late on the evening of March 21, 2012, Boyd was attending a social event with friends. After ordering the group Boyd was with to quiet down, Servin fired into the crowd. One of Servin's bullets hit Boyd in the head, and she died two days later from her injuries. Over one year later, Servin was charged, and acquitted of involuntary manslaughter (Hutcherson and Burnside 2015). Three years later, Servin was fired (*Chicago Sun Times* 2016). Servin, similarly, justified his actions through allegations of feeling threatened. The second subject, Korryn Gaines, was murdered in her apartment by Baltimore Police in front of her five-year-old son. Gaines was shot, after brandishing a legal shotgun, as police executed an arrest warrant at her apartment for a traffic violation (Knezevich and Rector 2016).

[3] These publishers were also selected due to the availability of resources. These sites permitted the use of their own search engines, along with multiple other sources, including Google News and MSU Libraries to confirm publication rates. However, in the "Content" section, articles from *USA Today* were also included. Because *USA Today's* search engine does not allow users to limit results to articles alone, given the availability of time and resources, it was nearly impossible to confirm all results for larger returns (e.g., Alton Sterling), were of the same type of content (e.g., articles alone).

[4] Other studies employing qualitative content analysis have also drawn similar sample sizes (Martin et al. 2014).

[5] Searches included both "Korryn Gaines" and "Korryn Shandawn Gaines." *CNN* was the only source to include Gaines' middle name in their stories.

[6] All 13 CNN stories that were "hits" for "Justine Damond" also contained "Justine Ruszczyk" in the content. All would have been "hits" in the original search of "Justine Ruszczyk." However, Fox News exclusively referred to "Justine Damond" – the name the victim would have chosen had she lived until her wedding. New York Times articles referred to "Justine Damond" in most of the articles, and Justine Ruszczyk in a select few.

ARTICLE TWO:

BEYONCÉ'S *LEMONADE*, BRINGING "WRECK," AND BLACK FEMINIST INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, I employ Black feminist theory to highlight ways Black women continue to employ music and other cultural forms to celebrate their identities as Black women, and to discuss, critique, and resist the oppression and marginalization they experience contemporarily. *Lemonade's* (Knowles-Carter 2016) song lyrics and imagery celebrate African Diasporal cultures; highlight the beauty of the varying shades and colors of African-descended women; and even affirm diverse Black U.S. religious and food traditions. As opposed to the one-dimensional and often stereotypical representations of Black women circulated through popular media, *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) articulates themes of complicated love relationships, women's independence, multifaceted Blackness and Black women's beauty, motherhood, and multi-generational Black families. Additionally, the album was released at a time when Black bodies are tremendously vulnerable to police violence; when Black women's beauty and personhood continues to experience subtle denigration in public and private spaces. Indeed, this article argues that through the inclusion and visibility of its content, *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) works to articulate symbolic resistance to contemporary forms of racial and gender oppression experienced by Blacks in the U.S. I employ content analysis and cultural studies to illustrate ways *Lemonade* is a part of a larger tradition of employing public spaces to articulate Black women's unique experiences with intersecting oppressions in contemporary society (Pough 2004).

> *The interpreters of black diasporal cultures not only assume control of the language and subject of the discourse, but they, along with the creators and practitioners of black diasporal arts, must operate from an a priori position of cultural wholeness, conscious historicity, and inherent and unapologetic humanity. (Powell 2002: 22)*

INTRODUCTION

In this article, I illustrate ways Black women maintain Black feminist intellectual, cultural, artistic, and in particular, musical traditions through analysis of Beyoncé Knowles-Carter's video album, *Lemonade* (2016).[1] From the use of oration and public spaces, to the employment of stardom and popular music, Black women continue to employ these vehicles to celebrate their identities as Black women; to articulate, critique, and resist the oppression they experience in a society marked by overt and subtle forms of racial, gender, and economic inequity.

Lemonade's (Knowles-Carter 2016) song lyrics and imagery celebrate African Diasporal cultures; highlight the beauty of the varying shades and colors of African-descended women; and even affirm diverse Black U.S. religious and food traditions. As opposed to the one-dimensional and often stereotypical representations of Black women circulated through popular media, *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) articulates themes of complicated love relationships, women's independence, multifaceted Blackness and Black women's beauty, motherhood, and multi-generational Black families.

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articulate symbolic resistance to contemporary forms of racial and gender oppression experienced by Blacks in the U.S.

For instance, the album's images and content also highlight a critique of racialized police violence. *Lemonade's* "Formation,"

> has references to Black Lives Matter and Katrina that are clear; it includes an image of Beyoncé on top of a sinking police car, walls strewn with "Stop Shooting Us" graffiti, and a young African American boy in a hoodie dancing in front of police officers (Zaru 2016).

Additionally, Knowles' National Football League Superbowl 50 halftime performance of this song contained costumes and dance with nods to the militant Black Panther Party. The Panthers championed resistance to White supremacy, and promoted armed self-defense for Blacks in the mid-twentieth century (Joseph 2006; Ogbar 2005). Indeed, throughout *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016), allusions to militant and vocal critiques of racism are clear. The songs, videos, and performances of *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) serve as highly-visible critiques of a racially unequal social structure, as well as the racialized violence to which Black bodies are subject.

I begin with examples that typify contemporary subtle types of marginalization and oppression to which Black women are subject. I continue with an exploration of foundations Black feminist intellectual, musical, and cultural traditions. My aim is to discuss a selection of musical and oratory Black feminist thought, to help illustrate connections between early Black feminist thinkers and contemporary writers, musicians, and artists – to situate the contemporary in the canon alongside the historical. To this end, I also briefly note Black use of public spaces to resist marginalization through shifting discourses with presence, visibility, and challenges to racist stereotypes and gender norms (Davis 1999).

Methodologically, I employ cultural studies and content analysis of lyrics, poetry, stylistic, and visual choices included in *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016). I explore ways this

particular musical and visual work serves to humanize Black women; centralizes Black lives, cultures, and experiences; and militantly bucks racial and gender oppression. Using methodological frameworks based in qualitative content analysis, I employ audio and visual analysis of selected vignettes from the album. Further, I use Davis' *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* (Davis 1999) to focus on the musical and artistic content of *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016), rather than centralizing the political and social leanings of the artist. My concern is with the piece of material and the messages about Black womanhood held in its content.

BACKGROUND

Subtle and Overt Attacks on Black Women in the U.S.

Crunk Feminist Collective originator, Brittney C. Cooper, highlights the discursive world of hip hop and popular culture occupied by Black women – one in which

> … bitch trumps beautiful, ho trumps human, and gold-digger trumps golden. #EveryDamnTime. A world, incidentally, in which Beyoncé's ass provides the inspiration for a group of Australian scientists looking to name a new species of insect with a golden posterior. They call it the "Beyoncé Fly"….The legacy of Saartjie Baartman lives. In this world, the global desirability of a Black girl's ass excuses her allegedly less desirable dark complexion, full lips, and kinky hair….This is a world where disrespectability politics reign, a world where Black women's bodies and lives become the load-bearing wall in the house that race built, a world where the tacit disrespect of Black women is as American as apple pie, as global as Nike…In this world, Black women have moved from "fly girls to bitches and hoes" and back again to just, well, flies. Insects. Pests. (Cooper et al. 2017: 183)

Similarly, Angela Helm (2017) of *The Root*, an online newspaper on contemporary issues in Black America, writes "All over the world, black girls have their bodies, words and, increasingly, hair policed by those who have no clue." This section provides examples of the subtle forms of destabilization, critique, attack, and challenges to their personhoods, and appearances, experienced by Black women in the U.S. contemporarily.

In 2011, *Psychology Today* published an article about women's attractiveness by Satoshi Kanazawa of the London School of Economics (Lyubansky 2011). Aside from the misogyny inherent in the aims of the article, in it, the author wished to prove that Black women were the least physically attractive amongst races of women. The author cited Black women's supposedly higher levels of testosterone as culpable for their lowly position of desirability. In actuality, such pseudoscientific claims are reminiscent of biological justifications for racial difference, in their early configurations, aimed at explaining nature, evolution, and the history of species (Bernasconi and Lott 2000: 13).

To continue, in 2017, "Black Women Are Trash" tee-shirts became available for purchase on Teespring, a digital line that allows users to create their own shirts (Greaves 2017). The shirts were created in response to a similar shirt stating "Men Are Trash." The advertisements circulated via social media, along with the creator's, attempts to get non-Black women to purchase the shirts (Greaves 2017). Uniquely, the creator of the shirts is a Black man[2], indicative of the intra-racial sexism to which Black women are often subject. Ultimately, once Teespring received backlash, the company was forced to remove the item from sale (Greaves 2017).

Additionally, during a recent "Dogs and Cats" themed episode of French television show, *Quotidien*, actress Alice Belaïdi informed the host she named her dog "Jill" because the animal so closely resembled Black American soul singer, Jill Scott. To illustrate, producers showed a split screen of Scott's childhood photo, a cover for her *Beautifully Human* album – and the actress's dog. This was to lend credence to the actress's claims that the pug and Scott have the same nose (Blavity 2017).

In another instance, "Good Day DC" a morning news show on the Washington D.C. area's *Fox 5* channel, featured a segment on the world's "Most Desirable Face" (Workneh 2016).

> The findings come from Dr. Julian De Silva, a cosmetic surgeon at the Centre for Advanced Facial Cosmetic and Plastic Surgery in London, who for 10 years has reportedly kept track of the female celebrities nearly 1,000 clients have said they most want to emulate. As a result, Silva and his team say they have discovered the nine most desired facial features, which include Kate Middleton's "mathematically perfect" nose, Miley Cyrus' forehead, Angelina Jolie's cheeks and Reese Witherspoon's skin. And surprise! None of the features represented reflect those of black stars. (Workneh 2016)

The report implies that the most aesthetically pleasing women globally, the most beautiful, resemble White women, and align with Eurocentric standards of beauty.

This is further evidence that Eurocentric standards of beauty are privileged and normalized in every virtually aspect of society. From infancy, children's books innocuously circulate images of *Snow White* (Disney 2003), blonde-haired blue-eyed *Goldilocks* (Brett 2002) and *Cinderella* (Disney and Dias 2005). These are means of indirectly socializing children to abide by "golden rules" of appropriate treatment of others. Similar socialization occurs via these mediums towards the standardization, and centralization of Whiteness, White images, White appearances as the unspoken norm (Van Dijk 1993).[3]

To continue, throughout the U.S., Black girls and women have been punished for wearing braid extensions, Afros, and other styles rooted in African cultures, that Black women employ to protect their hair from the damage of chemical treatment.[4] Recently, in Massachusetts, twin middle-schoolers Deanna and Mya Cook "had been kicked off school sports teams, banished from prom and received hours of detention for refusing to change their professionally braided hair" (Mettler 2017). And currently, Jenesis Johnson in Florida faces a choice between keeping her Afro, or being expelled from her senior year of high school (Helm 2017). Her hair, according to the school, is among the untidy, un-clean, faddish, and/or extreme styles prohibited by the student handbook (Helm 2017).

Furthermore, in September 2016, the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals decided to allow employers to dismiss employees for wearing dreadlocks (Finley 2016).[5] Although the court affirmed hairstyles to be linked to race, the changeability of Black hair in its unchemically-treated state is not a concept the court understood. Though I do not imply Black people should choose one style or another, I am highlighting the presence of legislation against Black hair, that permits discrimination against overtly representing African heritage in one's appearance.

What is the crux of the issue I describe? Such beliefs, acts, are indicative of, and help continue the destabilization of Black women's natural appearances and personhood, particularly if they overtly resemble or represent Africanness. Yet, this anti-Black-woman-affect is rooted in an earlier history of racism.

For instance, Francois Bernier aimed to establish "a major division of humanity displaying a distinctive combination of physical traits transmitted through lines of descent" (Bernier [1684] 2000: viii). While describing the various races of women (which, itself, reeks of sexist objectification), the beauty of White women, is so immense and well known that Bernier finds no reason to discuss it deeply in his essay (Bernier [1684] 2000: 3). He notes, however, that he has encountered a few Africans whose appearance is appreciable – those who lack the "squat nose and fat lips" that mark most other members of the group (Bernier [1684] 2000: 3). Later, philosopher, Immanuel Kant, reproduces this Eurocentric and problematic analysis in explaining the division of races. Kant links the body's response to the heat Africa's continental climate to the development of "oily" Black skin, and situates the blood's response to the heat as a cause for why "all Negros stink" (Kant [1777] 2000: 17). Further, Africa's abundant natural resources also explain why Negroes are "lazy, ignorant, and dawdling" (Kant [1777] 2000: 17).

Ultimately, these acts against Black women and their personhood are less severe than the enslavement and disenfranchisement characteristic of earlier Black oppression in the U.S. Yet, these stand as representative of the residue of structured racial hatred, perpetrated and continued on symbolic levels. These examples only serve as a window into the continued manifestations of the unequal treatment Black women experience in the U.S., and the constantly oppressive ideas about their humanity and personhood that confine discursive worlds they are forced to occupy.

Bringing "Wreck," Contemporary Celebrities, & Artistic Acts of Resistance

As noted by Cooper et al. (2017: 170), "The lives of women and femmes of color are summarily hard in these twenty-first-century streets. We need music, culture, art, and politics that speaks to all of it." Currently, marginalized groups continue longstanding traditions of employing music, art, scholarship, journalism, popular, and now social media to synthesize contemporary Black consciousnesses, to resist this oppression, to highlight discrimination and microaggressions, and to publicize instances of police brutality.

For example, in 2017, director and comedian, Jordan Peele, released the immensely successful horror film, *Get Out* (Peele 2017). In fact, the $250 billion grossing film led to the actor's later induction into The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (Ali 2017; Mohr 2017).

> *Get Out* speaks in several voices on several themes. It subverts the horror genre itself — which has the well-documented habit of killing off black characters first. It comments on the re-emergence of white supremacy at the highest levels of American politics. It lampoons the easy listening racism that so often lies behind the liberal smile in the "postracial" United States. And it probes the systematic devaluation of black life that killed people like Trayvon Martin, Walter Scott, Tamir Rice and Eric Garner. The film is a disquisition on the continuing impact of slavery in American life. Among other things, it argues that present-day race relations are heavily determined by the myths that were created to justify enslavement — particularly the notion that black people were never fully human. (Staples 2017)

Following the police-perpetrated choking death of Eric Garner in 2014 over loose cigarette sales, NBA player, Derrick Rose wore a black tee shirt with the words "I CAN'T BREATHE" across his chest in white. LeBron James and Deron Williams also later wore similar protest shirts during their nationally-televised games (Cacciola 2014).[6] Similarly, former San Francisco 49'ers player, Colin Kaepernick, encountered both fame and hatred during his protests of police brutality. At the start of games, during the playing of the national anthem, Kaepernick knelt, later stating,

> I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color…To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder. (Wyche 2016)

Currently, Kaepernick lingers in free agency, a contract for the 2017-2018 season left uncertain – many teams are clearly rebuffed by his willingness to enact this form of resistance, which also speaks to the economic risk of publically addressing racism for these figures.

In similar fashion, Black women continue to employ the same media, literature, lectures, and art that reinforce their oppression through stereotypical representations, as vehicles for the celebration of their identities as Black women – for their personhood to be displayed on a global scale, in a world that continues to deny their humanity. "There have always been Black women activists….who had a shared awareness of how their sexual identity combined with their racial identity to make their whole life situation and the focus of their political struggle unique" (Combahee River Collective [1978] 1982: 14).

Examples from the U.S. antebellum era include activist speeches and slave narratives, such as the work of Sojourner Truth ([1851; 1867] 1995), who critiqued the notion that her Blackness precluded humanness and womanhood. Similarly, Harriet Jacobs' memoir ([1861] 2003), discussed raced experiences with bondage, agency, and resistance, placing them alongside gendered themes of sexual oppression, rape, and (other)motherhood. These serve as ways Black women have also used media to *bring wreck,* or to use discourses to "disrupt dominant masculine discourses, break into the public sphere, and in some way impact or influence the United States imaginary" (Pough 2004: 12). That is,

> Bringing wreck, for Black participants in the public sphere historically, has meant reshaping the public gaze in such a way as to be recognized as human beings – as functioning and worthwhile members of society – and no tot be shut out of or pushed away from the public sphere. (Pough 2004: 17)

Similarly, in 2016, singer Solange Knowles released "Don't Touch My Hair," (Knowles 2016), a bold anthem reinforcing Black women's ownership of their hair, bodies, and beauty from her #1 Billboard 200 charting album, *Seat at the Table.* The entire album addresses race, including excerpts from Knowles' parents, addressing experiences with segregation, and their aims at reinforcing the value of Blackness to their daughters. The example of interest to this article, *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016), a recent visual album by her sister, popular artist, Beyoncé, accomplishes similar goals, as will be discussed below.[7]

These instances speak to the reach and capacity of varied forms of challenging inequity and communicating feminist consciousness. In particular, the global visibility of celebrities, pop stars, and artists means that they are one force influencing many members of the public, particularly youth, who gravitate towards popular culture in forming their identities. It also means that their voices are highly visible to broad audiences, allowing them to both publically ignore, or publically challenge, the problems they see.

THEORY AND LITERATURE

Black Feminisms

Black women have articulated experiences navigating multiple and simultaneous structures of oppression – as Blacks in a White-dominated, and women in a male-dominated society – since the time of their enslavement (Combahee River Collective [1978] 1982; Davis 1981; hooks 2015; Truth [1851; 1867] 1995). According to Patricia Hill Collins (2000: 4),

> the convergence of race, class and gender oppression characteristic of U.S. slavery shaped all subsequent relationships that women of African descent had within Black American families and communities, with employers and among one another. It also created the political context for Black women's intellectual work.

Black women, as producers of knowledge about these experiences, have historically and do continue to articulate both antisexist consciousnesses and critical perspectives on race, sexuality, gender, and class. To do so, they have employed oral traditions, music, literature, essays, and following greater access to the academy in the mid-20th century, academic scholarship (Cooper [1892] 1995; Cade 1970; Hull, Scott and Smith 1982; Smith 1983; Lorde 1984; Guy-Sheftall 1995; James, Foster, and Guy-Shelftall 2009). Of this, Pough (2004: 42) writes the "cipher is in constant motion, created throughout U.S. history whenever Black women – whether expressing themselves through writing, public oratory, music, or club activities – come together to discuss issues of importance to themselves and the Black community."

Black feminist oratory, scholarly, and musical productions serve to validate collective experiential knowledge of Black American women, as well as methods by which this knowledge is produced and expressed (Cooper et al 2017; Davis 1999; Hill Collins 2000: 251; hooks 2015; Pough 2004). Further, the productions, methods, and later theorizing about them are all a part of the longstanding Black feminist intellectual, musical, and cultural tradition.

> As an historically oppressed group, U.S. Black women have produced social thought designed to opposed oppression. Not only does the form assumed by this thought diverge from standard academic theory – it can take the form of poetry, music, essays and the like – but the *purpose* of Black women's collective thought is distinctly different. Social theories emerging from and/or on behalf of historically oppressed groups aim to find ways to escape from, survive in, and/or opposed prevailing social and economic injustice (Hill Collins 2000: 9).

Black feminists legitimate intellectual production that is often marginalized by the academic community, though it is valued by the subjects to, and about which it speaks. Pough (2004: 35) argues that given Blacks' history in the country, the use of subaltern counterpublic spheres have been necessary components of Black political activism – these are "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, so as to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities and needs" (Pough 2004: 35). Consequently, Black women's articulations of their lived experiences – whether synthesized in literature and music, or empirical social science research – are similarly validated and centralized within Black feminist thought.

By highlighting knowledge and expression of Black women's experiences that are valued by members of the group themselves, Black feminist theorists classify intellectuals previously excluded from positions of academic authority as a part of this tradition for their struggle for the liberation of Black women, and the explication and representation of their experiences. That is, Blues singers, poets, autobiographers, storytellers and orators are situated among Black feminist intellectuals (Hill Collins 2000: 15-16; hooks 2015; Davis 1999). Black feminist thought urges the centralization of the value systems, interpretations, and knowledge-validation processes of its subjects of study (Hill Collins 2000; hooks 2015; Davis 1999).

That is, in connection with Smith and Hill Collins, Stone Mediatore (2007: 59-61), critiques the valorization of "objectivity" and empiricism as the standards for knowledge claims

in the social sciences. To paraphrase Stone-Mediatore (2007: 59), when we treat empirical data, not as one type of knowledge, but as the hallmark of objectivity, we favor perspectives of those who more often have their concerns documented in data and their worldviews institutionalized in the frameworks that structure data. That is, these authors find it problematic to privilege empirical data as the only means by which knowledge claims may be validated. Consequently, Black feminist theorists heavily critique and/or reject the notion of objectivity, arguing that it has been shaped by the ways of truth-validation employed by white males at the exclusion of other perspectives and ways of knowing (Hill Collins 1986).

Black feminist thought incorporates the means by which Black women, and members of Black culture in general, ascertain truths (Hill Collins 2000: 256). What is required to substantiate knowledge about Black women to Black women are *experience, accountability, dialogue and advocacy,* not necessarily a detached, objectified view of a "subject" from without (Hill Collins 2000: 258). Using lived experiences as criteria for meaning, acknowledges the value of wisdom gained about racial and gender oppression from simply living through it; The knowledge of the wise and experienced that is valued within traditional Black cultures (Hill Collins 2000: 256).

Black Feminist Thinkers & Musicians

Though specific discussions and subjects discussed differ with time period, foundational aspects of contemporary Black feminist theory, addressed by activists and speakers such as Anna Julia Cooper in the nineteenth century, articulate a clear "understanding about the difficulties facing them because of their race and gender" (Guy-Sheftall 1995: 24). These women thought, wrote and lectured about Black women's lives during social movements for the abolition of

slavery, and women's and Black suffrage. Moreover, their orations, literature and music provided foundations for a longer history of Black feminist thought that articulates the unique experiences navigating racism and sexism for Black women today.

Sojourner Truth employed orations and public speeches to highlight the horrors of Black enslavement, to address to White audiences the particular gendered oppressions Black women faced as enslaved people, and to distinguish White female abolitionists' racial privilege from Black women's lived experiences (Truth [1867] 1995: 37). One of the most well-known speakers to correlate oppressions of race and gender, Guy-Sheftall (1995: 35) situates Sojourner Truth as "the person most responsible during the nineteenth century for linking abolition and women's rights, and demonstrating the reality of Black women's race and gender identities." As stated by Truth ([1867] 1995: 37-38),

> I suppose I am about the only colored woman that goes about to speak for the rights of the colored woman. I want to keep the thing stirring, now that the ice is broken.…You men know that you get as much again as women when you write, or for what you do. When we get our rights, we shall not have to come to you for money…You have been having our right so long, you think, like a slaveholder, that you own us….Now colored men have a right to vote; and what I want is to have colored women have the right to vote. There ought to be equal rights more than ever, since colored people have got their freedom.

Here, Truth addressed Black male abolitionists' silences surrounding women's suffrage. Similarly, the orator discussed the unique forms of economic oppression many free Black women faced via their relegation to domestic and service work (Truth [1867] 1995: 37).

As another example, the author of the first book-length Black feminist text, Anna Julia Cooper also addresses the multiple "problems and questions" faced by Black women in connection with their racial and gender identities. Cooper ([1892] 1995: 43-45) affirms that Black women faced both a race problem and a woman question, "and is as yet an unknown or unacknowledged factor in both." Cooper also addresses the generative power of racial difference

and conflict, as a force in understanding racial problems, and the source of America's diversity (Fernheimer 2007).

Moreover, Black women faced gendered marginalization and silencing efforts by Black men, as well. Maria Stewart was "the first African American woman to speak in public about women's rights, particularly the plight of the 'daughters of Africa'" (Guy-Sheftall 1995: 25). Like other Black feminist theorists, Stewart ([1832] 1995: 31) critiques the domestic work to which many free Black women were confined. She highlights the racial and gender discrimination that limited economic opportunities outside of that field, advocating Black women gain independence through the attainment of education, and pursuit of stronger economic opportunities (Stewart [1832] 1995: 27-29). Stewart's experience, however, exemplifies the gendered oppression Black women encountered when advocating for gender rights within Black struggles. Due to Stewart's violation of conventional gender roles, and outspokenness about gender inequality, her lecturing career was prematurely cut short; she was censured by Black clergymen into silence (Guy-Sheftall 1995: 25).

And these were the particular interlocking struggles against the racism and sexism patterning the social relations during these women's lives. This discussion could continue, but for want of space, these examples provide a brief illustration of early syntheses of Black feminist thought – the sources from which contemporary Black feminists and their productions draw history (Guy Sheftall 1995; Davis 1983; Davis 1990; Waters and Conaway 2007). With particular regard to the cultural medium discussed in this article, music, Black women in the 20th and 21st centuries have continued these musical and artistic traditions, addressing their temporally located experiences as Black women.

> In the 1910s and '20s, for example, blues singers like Gertrude "Ma" Rainey and Bessie Smith had crossover appeal among black and white consumers of "race

> records." *They sang about issues of importance to black women – men who mistreated them, the pleasures of good sex, and the challenges that working-class African American migrants from the rural South faced in the urban North.* (Feldstein 2013: 16, emphasis mine).

Further, Davis (1999) highlights the Black feminist and working-class consciousness in the music of Blues women. Early 20th century blues women addressed specific issues particular to Black women's collective experiences as a marginalized racial and gender group in the U.S.

> Live blues performances, as well as the widely distributed recordings of the 1920s, facilitated among black working-class women recognition of the social sources of ideas and experiences they encountered in their own lives. But this music accomplished much more. It permitted the women's blues community – performances and audiences alike – to engage aesthetically with ideas and experiences that were not accessible to them in real life. The imaginary was as important to the women's blues community and to its challenges to male dominance as real life experiences. (Davis 1999: 66)

For the women of the blues age, the genre gifted them with a means to express tendencies towards self-reliance and feminism when the mainstream culture endeavored to confine them to domesticity and dependence on men (Davis 1999). Though the women did not label themselves "Black feminists," Davis (1999, xi) highlights feminist underpinnings present in their music "through fissures of patriarchal discourses," including Smith's and Rainey's mockery of mainstream ideology surrounding women's roles.

> The popular song formulas of the period demanded saccharine and idealized nonsexual depictions of heterosexual love relationships. Those aspects of lived love relationships that were not compatible with the dominant, etherealized ideology of love – such as extramarital relationships, domestic violence, and the ephemerality of many sexual partnerships – were largely banished from the established popular musical culture. Yet these very themes pervade the blues. What is even more striking is the fact that initially the professional performers of this music – the most widely heard individual purveyors of the blues – were women. (Davis 1999: 3-4)

In particular, blues songs and performances provided broader audiences with commentary on happenings in Black life. As evinced by blues music, the personal experiences addressed in the

songs are framed by larger sociopolitical structure of the segregated, agrarian, Jim Crow Southern U.S. in the 1920s (e.g., agricultural work/sharecropping, economic strife, racism and lynching) (Davis 1999).

For instance, in "Bo-Weevil Blues" (Davis 1999: 267), a song written by Rainey and recorded by Smith, the latter sings,

> Hey, bo-weevil, don't sing them blues no more
> Hey bo-weevil, don't sing them blues no more
> Bo-weevils here, bo-wheevils everywhere you go.

The boll weevil infestation of the early 20th century devastated cotton-related agriculture throughout the south (Lange et al. 2008). These references to the boll weevil beetle, which kills cotton plants, are a clear connection to the agricultural work dominant during and just prior to the blues women's performances in the 1920s and 1930s. Moreover, the abundance of the boll weevil, and corresponding destruction of one of the major agricultural bases of the South, cotton, are also connected to changes in population connected to the Great Migrations (Davis 1999; Lange et al. 2008).

Blues women address mistreatment, infidelity, and economic instability connected to living in a society of legalized discrimination in employment. Though they also clearly address the economic oppression associated with being segregated into the society's least lucrative jobs, Rainey and Smith highlight working and having access to some level of financial independence in their songs. Such independence is a rejection of traditional gender roles that mandated male breadwinning-households (Davis 1999).

Blues women also pushed boundaries in the themes and topics of their songs, particularly with regard to gender roles, sex and infidelity. Regarding sex and infidelity, Smith's recording "Kitchen Man" is laden with sexual innuendo; the song is rife with food-informed sexual

metaphors of sausage meat, clams, jelly roll, and hams (Davis 1999: 305). In "Big Boy Blues" (Davis 1999: 201), Rainey sings about extramarital relationships.

> There's two things I can't understand/
> There's two things I can't understand/
> Why these married women crazy 'bout the back door man.

Similarly, in "Shave 'Em Dry," Rainey states (Davis 1999: 242),

> Come here, daddy, lay in my arms/
> When your wife comes, tell her I don't mean no harm/

That is, the blues women sang about infidelity, complicated love and relationships. Yet, they did so in ways that pushed the boundaries of acceptability, and also challenged traditional gender norms of women's chastity, purity, and frailty (Davis 1999).

The willingness to defend oneself, or end problematic relationship is also a theme discussed in blues women's music. Rainey's "Cellbound Blues" (Davis 1999: 210) is an example of this.

> I walked in my room the other night/
> My man walked in and begin to fight/…
> When he did that, hit me 'cross my head/
> First shot I fired, my man fell dead/

Though they address domestic abuse, mistreatment and infidelity, which also was considered problematic at the time, in many songs like this, blues women do not appear to be passive recipients of this treatment.

To continue, Davis (1999: 181) gives attention to Billie Holiday's 1939 recording, noting that "her performance of 'Strange Fruit' firmly established her as a pivotal figure in a new tendency in black musical culture that directly addressed issues of racial injustice." That is, New Negro soldiers returned from WWII too conscious of the possibilities of greater freedoms experienced while serving throughout Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. The lyrics employ the

symbol of fruit hanging from poplar trees, in similar fashion to Black bodies that were lynched by whites as a means of social control and racialized terrorism directed at growing Black communities and wealth.

> Southern trees bear a strange fruit /
> Blood on the leaves, blood at the root /
> Black bodies swinging in the Southern breeze /
> Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees/ (Davis 1999: 181)

Ultimately, this section provides examples of Black women employing public spaces to articulate lived experiences, and also address racism, sexism, and forms of oppression. Though the blues women did not necessarily see themselves as political, their recordings illustrate a particular consciousness informed by their positions as members of groups who face intersecting oppressions. Obviously, for want of space and time, these are simply a few instances. At the same time, they are noted to show ways Black women have performed, spoken, talked, preached, sung, and written, in ways that bring attention to these experiences, while also using their visibility to reify the humanness of Black people, note the complexity of Black life, and to bring attention to the unique nature of the oppression existing during their times.

METHODS

Within the field of sociology, this article employs the methodology of cultural studies, along with the analytical approach of content analysis.

> To study culture historically, then, involves the identification of some cultural patterns or artifacts, either material or symbolic. These may be traced as to their origins, their consequences, their creation and incorporation into unfolding, contingent interaction, and other aspects that involve temporally emergent qualities (Hall 1990: 19-21).

In particular, I highlight symbols present in the imagery, visual, and lyrical content of *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016). In the project, I also unearth the meaning of symbols tied to people and cultures of African descent, and the global African Diaspora that are present throughout *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016). In the analysis of culture, Hall (1990: 21-22) affirms that

> Culture may be latent, and difficult to bring to light. But often culture obtains an explicit character over time through the repetitive actions of those who enact, display, or use it. Under these conditions, the possibility of tracking culture historically differs little from the possibility of tracking "social structure."

As its major analytical tool, this project employs directed qualitative media content analysis. The focus of this approach is to uncover the latent meaning held in the content of various forms of media communication. Directed content analysis develops themes and categories that are informed by existing theory, exploring other major trends and subcategories that emerge in the analysis (Fields 1988; Schrier 2014). This type of qualitative content analysis may be applied to visual and auditory materials (e.g., television, films, music, and print and digital images), as well as text (e.g., song lyrics and poetry) (Fields 1988).

Rather than a verbatim retelling of the album's contents, in the following section, I employ textual and visual content analysis. For the textual analysis, I interrogate the text of the song lyrics and poetry, with units of analysis ranging from one line to a multi-line stanza. With each camera shot/shift standing as a unit of analysis, I also investigate salient themes in the

visual and stylistic choices employed throughout *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016). Visual analysis will focus on the meaning and significance of costumes, hair, and scenery choices, focusing heavily on the cultural significance of the symbols therein.[8]

FINDINGS

Lemonade (Knowles-Carter 2016) is comprised of three-to-seven-minute music video vignettes that correspond with audio tracks from the album. Each full music video is preceded by a shorter, interim video, roughly one to two minutes. During the interim videos, scenes Beyoncé recites poems by Somali-British poet, Warsan Shire. Knowles-Carter's voice quotes Shire in the background, as scenes shift to different locations on the large southern property where much of the video is set, and the football field of Levi's Stadium, where the artist performed for Superbowl 50. Prior to the start of the shorter interim videos, single-word italicized themes flash across the center of the screen in white, vanishing after a few moments. The themes describe the sentiment of the upcoming song and/or poem.

Analysis of Lemonade's lyrical and visual contents illustrates four major themes:

1) Affirmative References to African Diasporal Populations and Cultures;
2) Black Women's Anger and Strength;
3) Women's Independence and Agency;
4) Institutional Racial Oppression and Police Brutality.

The first theme centers on ways the lyrics, poetry, and stylistic choices, (in terms of hairstyles, costuming, and scenery), make reference to African Diasporal cultures in the U.S., Caribbean, Latin America, and the African content.

Secondly, *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) shows that Black women experience the same range of emotions as many other humans, thereby debunking stereotypes regarding Black women's anger and supposedly organic overabundance of strength. That is, often, Black women report hiding justified anger, exhaustion, and other emotions for fear of being viewed through lenses of stereotypes, particularly that of the "angry Black woman" (Hill-Collins 2000; Beaubouf-Lafontant 2009; Winfrey Harris 2015). Yet, rather than shying away from the concept

of the angry Black woman for fear of reinforcing longstanding stereotypes, the range of emotions she experiences in the album includes anger.

The third theme addresses independency and agency. *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) contains references to female economic independence, bucking traditional gender stereotypes of female dependence on male provision in heterosexual relationships. With the final theme, I discuss references to police brutality and contemporary forms of oppression. Images of Mothers of Slain Sons, police cars sinking in flood waters referent to Hurricane Katrina, are images and meanings discussed in this category.

Lemonade and Daughters of the Dust: Affirmative References to African Diasporal Populations and Cultures

While *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) fits squarely within a larger Black feminist intellectual and musical tradition, it also fits within a larger Black Diasporal cultural tradition as well. It references cultural retentions, including music, food, body adornment, dance, and religions that both voluntary and involuntary African immigrants to the U.S. have brought to the country, and melded with Native American and European cultures (Thompson 1984).[9] Such influences obviously appear throughout the visual art, costumes, body paint, hair braiding, and dance employed in *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) and live performances of the album's songs.

Moreover, much of the imagery parallels that of Julie Dash's (1991) *Daughters of the Dust*. The stylistic choices are significant, as they are overt stretches to align *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) with the earlier film.

> The core narrative in *Daughters of the Dust* (Dash 1991) concerned a large, turn-of-the-century black family, living on one of the isolated Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina, and struggling with the decision by several of its members to migrate to the mainland and eventually north. (Powell 2002: 217)

The film centers on a matriarch's attempts to maintain her family's Gullah cultural heritage, one which is uniquely rife with African cultural and linguistic retentions due to the isolated nature of the enslaved Africans on the South Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands. In *Daughters of the Dust* (Dash 1991), the progeny of enslaved Africans reckons with preserving their cultural heritage and pursuing economic survival in a growing industrial economy at the start of the 20th century.

Further, akin to *Daughters of the Dust* (Dash 1991), the bulk of *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) is set on a large, water-adjacent, plot of land in the south. Foliage covers the area, with fields of high grass, and small wooden cabins similar to those occupied by enslaved

populations in the antebellum era. The property is blanketed with willow trees, with branches both shading the dusty-brown ground and covering the sky. The background is a ground-level black-and-white shot of a small wooden shack or outhouse with the roots and bulky trunk of an enormous tree in the foreground.

Moreover, beyond the setting, the interplay of the metaphysical, humans, and nature are present throughout *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016), in similar fashion to *Daughters of the Dust* (Dash 1991).

> Interestingly, there was a visual subtext running through *Daughters of the Dust* that came through more strongly. This dealt with black modes of self-presentations and metaphysical perspectives on the natural environment, articulated from a black feminist perspective that had not before encountered in such scale in film. (Powell 2002: 218)

In *Daughters of the Dust* (Dash 1991), the protagonist communicates with the spirit world through nature. In fact, throughout the film, there is a tension between the imposition of Euro-American Christianity from without, and the maintenance of African-influenced religious practices through and after generations of enslavement.

Rather than a monotheistic approach, the mosaic-like characteristics of the religions of the African Diaspora are represented in the imagery and lyrical content of *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016). These include references to Christianity, baptism, blood, water, the Nation of Islam's Fruit of Islam, Yoruba religious practices and deities, as well as the creole culture of New Orleans, Louisiana.

For instance, in a moment-long shot in the video for "Formation" a suit-clad preacher leads an active Black Christian worship service, complete with congregational participation in the form of hand-clapping, foot-stomping, and hand-waiving.

Additionally, in "Love You Like I Love You," donning a flowing yellow dress, bright gold bangles and earrings, Beyoncé emerges through the doors of a large building, an enormous wave of water gushing through the doorway as she enters. She is dressed to represent Oshun, the Yoruba goddess of love, water, fertility, sexuality (Thompson 1984).

> The Yoruba, black Africa's largest population, creators of one of the premier cultures in the world. The Yoruba believe themselves descended from goddesses and gods, from an ancient spiritual capital, Ile-Ile. They show their special concern for the properties of right living through their worship of major goddesses and gods, each essentially a unique manifestation of *àshe,* the power-to-make-things-happen, a key to futurity and self-realization in Yoruba terms (Thompson 1984, xv).

This is an overt reference to both African religious practices and the diversity of religions amongst African descendants in the U.S. birthed in the territories of the New World during the era of African enslavement, and more recently, during the immigration waves of the 20th century (Thompson 1984; Berlin 2010).

Hair/Colorism

Uniquely, the imagery of *Daughters of the Dust* (Dash 1991) contains a beautifully-represented variety of Black skin tones, and natural/protective hair styles, including dreadlocks. Like *Daughters of the Dust* (Dash 1991)*, Lemonade's* (Knowles-Carter 2016) imagery also bucks colorism by centering Black models of all skin tones with varying styles and textures of hair, naturally-textured curls, Afros, straight styles, and braids.

For instance, "Sorry Not Sorry," contains costuming references to the body painting practices of the Nuba society of East Africa (Powell 2002: 196-197). Beyoncé, with long, blondish-back individual plaits, is surrounded on a schoolbus by her professional dancers. Wearing Chuck Taylor sneakers, riding a school bus, and braided hair are symbols that connect

with Black American girlhood. The dancers' brown bodies are covered in white paint that darts diagonally, creating a skin-layer of criss-crossing brown-and-white angles.

Further, in the first two lines of "Formation," Beyoncé notes the Southern Black American and Creole roots from which her family derives.

> My daddy Alabama/ Mama Louisiana/
> You mix that Negro with that Creole make a Texas 'Bama/
> I like my baby's hair with baby hair and Afros/
> I like my Negro's nose with Jackson 5 nostrils/

In the next two lines, she expresses appreciation of physical features of African descendants' usually derided wide noses. And in response to critics who mocked her toddling daughter, Blue Ivy, for wearing her hair freely, she affirms love of the child's natural hair through the reference to "baby hair and Afros."

As litigation exists in 2017 that permits discrimination against typically Black hairstyles, that *Lemonade* showcases the diversity of Black hair is important. In centering Black models and dancers of various shades, hair textures, and colors, the images in the video capture the rainbows of Blackness that occupy Black lives, rather than symbolically reinforcing Eurocentric standards of beauty by centering models with only the latter features. This stylistic choice also resists trends in popular music videos (particularly in Hip-Hop and R&B) to center darker shades nearer to blue and indigo far less than lighter ones.

It is empowering for Black women to see that the range of their hair textures and styles are not only acceptable, professional, and wonderful – they are all these things without the automatic equation of Blackness with deficiency. The aforementioned lyrics and the images that populate the albums videos affirm Afros, and the braids, straightened hair, and curly twists – styles that Black women may choose or not. But this move affirms that Black women can choose any and be beautiful.

Moreover, the aforementioned references serve as outright linkages to African and African Diasporal cultures. They illustrate, also, that Black Americans derive identities from rich heritages connected to the African continent and the African Diaspora. As these cultures and heritages have been heavily ignored or denigrated, such broadly visible affirmations of African Diasporal cultures are indeed significant. Given the increasing and persistent vulnerability of Black bodies to subtle and institutional racism, police violence, and various forms of oppression, the reinforcement of valid African cultural traits is paramount.

Anger

Like many other albums of the contemporary rhythm and blues genre, *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) centers on a love relationship, specifically the experience of encountering a partner's infidelity. In the opening scenes, Beyoncé recites the following lines from Shire's "Intuition" poem.

> You remind me of my father, a magician/
> Able to exist in two places at once/
> In the tradition of men in my blood/
> You come home at 3AM and lie to me/

Throughout the album there are discussions of hurt, justified anger, healing, reciprocity, and recompense. Though these elements are the focus of the album, the way they are discussed is rife with symbols, messages, and meaning. Rather than a focus on the manifest content alone, this section elucidates meaning unearthed through analysis of the lyrics, images, and poetry throughout the video album.

Among its major themes, *Lemonade* contributes to Black women allowing themselves to be and feel in public spaces – not just to be represented by others, through essentialized lenses of stereotype. *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) shows Black women as human, brokenhearted,

vulnerable, healed, powerful, independent, lovers, mothers, daughters, sisters – able to be angry, broken, and recover, without concern for the invisible weight of stereotypes (Harris Perry 2011).

That is, in various media (from news and television to captioned pictures on social media, called "memes"), Black women encounter linkages to longstanding stereotypes, such as "the Angry Black Woman" that diminish valid feelings of anger, exhaustion, and emotion by justifying them as part of Black women's unending rage, and not consequences of centuries of exploitation and oppression in the American social system (Beaubouf-Lafontant 2009; Cooper et al. 2017). Black women are often framed as constantly attitudinal, oversexed, excessively aggressive – individuals who fail to fit the problematic *cult of true womanhood*, which embodies silence, docility, and fragility once expected of the idealized middle-class White woman (Cooper et al. 2017; hooks 2015; Winfrey-Harris 2015). They are viewed as those who are simply strong enough to handle the many burdens of the world, and serve as its bosom, too (Beaubouf-Lafontant 2009; Harris-Perry 2011).

Two major stereotypes with which Black women are often forced to contend include the angry Black woman, and the strong Black woman (Beaubouf-Lafontant 2009). *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) pushes against both, and does so in different fashions.

With regard to the angry Black woman, *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) displays an individual's just anger at being betrayed by a lover. Instead of shying away from the idea of Black women being angry, as they are often problematically framed as being so, *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) embraces the anger as another aspect of human emotion and feeling. Through such a display, the project helps humanize Black women by displaying the complex layers of emotion they experience as human beings. For instance, the lyrics in "Don't Hurt Yourself," she asserts,

Who the fuck do you think I is?
You ain't married to no average bitch, boy

Similarly, "Love You Like I Love You," questions the state of the relationship post-infidelity, finding evidence of a partner being romantically unfaithful, and experiencing justified frustration at having one's trust broken.

How did it come down to this?/ Scrolling through your call list/
I don't wanna lose my pride/ but I'mma fuck me up a bitch….
What's worse, lookin' jealous or crazy? Jealous or crazy?/
Or like being walked all over lately, walked all over lately
I'd rather be crazy/

Another striking example of anger emerges during the video representation of the song. Beyoncé, dressed as Oshun, walks down a busy sidewalk, people with all shades of black, brown, Afros, fades, and braids sitting outside at storefront tables. Black children dance and play in the summer street.

As she walks the street, Beyoncé smiles happily, as she swings her bat from side to side, swishing it through the flowing yellow ruffles of her dress. Then she smashes the bat, on it written "Hot Sauce," into cars, shattering windows, denting roofs, and dinging doors parked alongside. She later drives a monster truck over a row of empty cars, bouncing gladly along the way.

The maintenance of the smile is important. As she exorcises her anger on inanimate objects, there is something in her comfort with her anger. She is unafraid of being characterized as an angry Black woman – her anger is justified. And she otherwise does not care to be restricted by politics of respectability and good behavior often employed by Blacks to avoid the stereotypes that inaccurately characterize the group. She is at liberty to feel. She has been hurt. And she is releasing the anger and hurt any human might feel during a broken relationship. She

is rejecting the stereotype of the angry Black woman through her display of being a human who is upset at being betrayed.

Further, the costuming is of significance. In this scene, Beyoncé is dressed to represent Oshun, the Yoruba goddess of love, water, fertility, sexuality (Thompson 2002). And as the goddess of love has been wronged, there must be recompense. She is using Ashe, the religion's power to make things happen, to take that recompense, and to respond to the violation of love with justified angry emotion (Thompson 2002). The inclusion of this symbol is further affirmative reference to the diversity of Black Diasporal religious practices.

As noted above, Black women have been problematically associated with stereotypically being too assertive, too aggressive, and too angry. Consequently, as noted by Beaubouf-Lafontant (2009), Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) and others, some Black women discuss silencing themselves, hiding feelings of justified anger at being mistreated, which can result in greater stress and larger health issues later. And so, in *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016), Beyoncé's open display of anger is important.

Strength

With regard to the strong Black woman, Beaubouf-Lafontant (2009) does not characterize "strength," as an honorable and organic toughness held by Black women, drawn from legacies of perseverance against slavery, segregation and racial and gender inequality. Instead, the author exposes the physical and emotional damage exacted on Black women's bodies through their attempts to, and external expectations that they meet the lofty requirements of strong, Black womanhood (Beaubouf-Lafontant 2009).

That is, the notion of strength, by appearing to accurately represent Black women's reality, masks the inequality and mistreatment the group experiences in a society plagued with racial, gender- and class-based inequality (Beaubouf-Lafontant 2009: 2). Forcing Black women to be *strong* "during slavery, segregation, or contemporary institutional racism and intra-racial sexism is to maintain a reassuring conviction that personal actions and agency trump all manner of social abuses." (Beaubouf-Lafontant 2009: 3). In this regard, the requirements of "strength" ultimately sustain the socially stratified status quo, while wreaking havoc on the minds and bodies of Black women (Beaubouf-Lafontant 2009: 1).

Lemonade (Knowles-Carter 2016) destabilizes the idea that Black women are inherently and necessarily "strong" in its illustration of love, loss, betrayal, hurt, vulnerability, pain, and reconciliation. For instance, in "Love Drought" (Knowles-Carter 2016) articulates love-related pain.

> Are you aware you're my lifeline, are you tryna kill me?/
> If I wasn't me, would you still feel me?/
> Like on my worst day? Or am I not thirsty, enough?/

Another example emerges in the song "Sandcastles."

> Pictures snatched out the frame/
> Bitch, I scratched out your name and your face/
> What is it about you that I can't erase, baby?/
> When every promise don't work out that way/

Stylistically, this is one of the most visually simplistic moments of the album. Beyoncé, sits on the floor, singing behind a small keyboard, microphone, and what appears to be simple recording equipment. Her sadness is evident – there are tears visible on her face as she sings and plays. Additionally, her voice strains singing these, the most emotional parts of the song, obviously holding back weeping through vocalization.

At the end of "Sandcastles," Beyoncé chooses to reconnect with partner, Jay-Z. What is made clear throughout the album, however, is that this choice was hers. In the "Forgiveness" poem, she reads, "Baptize me ... now that reconciliation is possible/ If we're gonna heal, let it be glorious" (Knowles-Carter 2016).

Initially, his entry is alluded to, as the audience sees only shadows of his face. This is followed by images of the couple embracing, clips of videos from their wedding, and the two parents playing with daughter, Blue Ivy. Though the album began with his just anger at his indiscretions, healing, recovery, and restoration are major themes that conclude the video. Counter to the strong Black superwoman subspecies, this video illustrates that Black women are human; feel; can be hurt; can have complicated love relationships; can choose to forgive or not forgive; and can recover – much like the other humans operating in the world.

While the notion of Black women's inherent strength is challenged by representations of Black women feeling, personal strength is also required to recover from these experiences, and to heal, as is illustrated at the end of the song. I am not arguing that Beyoncé is embodying weakness, quite the contrary. She is simply showing the multiple layers of human experience, and further, that Black women are fully human.

Independence and Agency

Other salient themes, wholly characteristic of Beyoncé's later career, include economic independence and agency. In particular, traditional gender roles that dictate men occupy positions as breadwinners are challenged throughout *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016). In "Don't Hurt Yourself," Knowles-Carter sings,

> And keep your money, I got my own/
> Keep a bigger smile on my face being alone/

Bad motherfucker, God complex/
Motivate your ass, call me Malcolm X.

Similarly, the lyrics of "Formation" articulate a similar sentiment.

When he fuck me good, I take his ass to Red Lobster/
If he hit it right, I might take him on a ride in my chopper/
Might take him to the mall/
Let him buy some J's/
Let him shop-ah/….
He just might be a Black Bill Gates in the making/
I just might be a Black Bill Gates in the making.

A number of symbols emerge from these particular lyrics, and have unique significance in Black cultures. For instance, her economic status is alluded to in references to Red Lobster, a somewhat costly restaurant, and buying a partner Jordan-brand sneakers, a status symbol in Black American cultures, typically retailing at $200/pair. Similarly, having disposable shopping funds; taking someone else on a shopping spree or for a ride in *her* helicopter. Independently, she has the means to procure these status symbols; to decide what to do with her money; and to splurge on a partner, if desired.

Moreover, Knowles-Carter references Bill Gates, the billionaire behind the success of Microsoft. Obviously, with the popularity of Jay-Z's album sales, his procurement of the Brooklyn Nets basketball franchise, his growing economic status may be common knowledge. At the same time, not only might her partner be a Black Bill Gates in the making, bucking the statuses assigned to him via systems of racial oppression in the country. But also, and more importantly, she is just as capable of occupying that economic space as well. Such a move bucks gender roles of dependence on male economic provision, as well.

Institutional Oppression

The continued vulnerability to which Black bodies are subject at the hands of institutional oppression and police are addressed in *Lemonade,* as well. The "Forward" interlude is comprised of images of mothers and family members of slain victims of police violence. This is a direct statement. As the camera flashes to each woman or girl, they sit silently in a large chair, in the setting reminiscent of *Daughters of the Dust* (Dash 1991). The mothers and family members hold pictures of the slain Black men, women and children, while a male voice hauntingly sings "Forward" in the background. In one brief shot, a single tear rolls down Leslie McFadden's,[10] face. She shakes her head, purses her lips, and wipes it away. Her pain is evident.

As another example, in "Formation," a small Black boy dances alone, yet emphatically in black hooded sweatshirt in front of armed police. The latter are wearing helmets, holding shields, guns, and riot gear. At one point, the boy stops dancing and opens his arms. The police then put their hands up. This is a second obvious reference to racialized police killings, particularly the murder of Trayvon Martin, killed by a neighborhood watch vigilante in 2012 at seventeen, wearing a hooded sweatshirt.

To continue, with familial ties that reach New Orleans, Alabama, and Texas, the impact of Hurricane Katrina is an important discussion in the album, as well. Not only was Hurricane Katrina devastating to life and property throughout the Gulf Coast (Dyson 2007). The interplay of race, class, and government idleness, allowed for Katrina's disproportionately devastating impact on the impoverished Black communities of New Orleans (Dyson 2007.) For five days after Katrina's destruction, the poorest citizens of the Gulf Coast were left with little to no aid, to wallow in the summer heat in hunger, toxic water, and soggy filth (Dyson 2007).

The “Formation” music video opens, panning to various neighborhoods in New Orleans. The scenery resembles that of the lower wards of New Orleans, with small, closely-built row houses in the background. In one brief shot, police lights flash in bright blues and reds, as Black children ride their bikes down an unnamed New Orleans street in the night. Later in “Formation,” Beyoncé stands atop a sinking police squad car, with the houses seemingly also submerged, in the rising water. By the end of the video, both Beyoncé and the squad car are fully submerged in Katrina-like flood waters.

With these and similar images, the album critiques the intersecting economic and raced oppressions surrounding government response to Hurricane Katrina. These symbols highlight the disregard for poor Blacks evinced by the failed government response to Katrina, and continued slow rebuilding of areas devastated by the storm. Further, with the inclusion of references to Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and other victims of police violence, the critiques offered by the symbolism in the *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) video album clearly target present manifestations of racial oppression to which Black bodies are subject.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

Like earlier works of Black feminist artistry, *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) synthesizes a particular type of Black consciousness, rooted in Black women's experiences. In this article, I aimed to highlight the major themes emergent in *Lemonade* to illustrate connections to other Black feminist intellectual, scholarly, and musical works, for its aims to capture Black women's experiences living, being, hurting, healing, loving, being human, and also resisting, challenging, and addressing our lived oppression to global audiences.

Lemonade does contain overt feminist messages and linkages to Black Diasporal religions, cultural, and artistic traditions. At the same time, it is not without its flaws nor above critique. First, it is both unfortunate and telling that musical forms, such as Hip-Hop, and R&B, employed to synthesize Black women's experiences, also package and sell these commodities along with Black women's pain (Rose 2008).

Throughout *Lemonade,* Warsan Shire's poetry calls out the repeated devaluation, depreciation, overwork, exploitation, abuse and intra-racial gender oppression experienced by Black women. There is a particular focus on injury caused to Black women by Black men, who are shaped in their own ways by patriarchal and hegemonic structures. However, other writers and scholars have argued that abuse via infidelity should be challenged rather than equated to reconcilable love. In 2014, when Knowles-Carter sampled a portion of Chimamanda Adichie's TED talk on feminism, the latter made sure to mention the discontinuities between Beyoncé's type of feminism and her own (Driscoll 2016). Similarly, as noted by renown Black feminist theorist, bell hooks (2016),

> Even though Beyoncé and her creative collaborators daringly offer multidimensional images of black female life, much of the album stays within a conventional stereotypical framework, where the black woman is always a victim.

Despite the celebrations of their beauty and wholeness throughout the video album, Black women's pain is yet again packaged and sold as a musical commodity in *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016). This is pain many Black women experience in abusive relationships, as evinced by the disproportionate rates of intimate partner violence and abuse against Black women, as compared to women of other races (Morris and Muhammad 2014; Winfrey Harris 2015). Why must Black women, even when they are presented beautifully, also remain framed going through, and/or overcoming pain? Even when old narratives are broken, old tropes of recycling and selling Black women's pain also permeate *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016).

hooks (2016) notes that the video album is also complicit in, and reinforces problematic sexist elements, including the commodification and objectification of women's bodies, namely that of the artist, to boost album sales. Much of Knowles' career has been propelled by the connection between her vocal strengths; alignment with Eurocentric standards of physical attractiveness (e.g., blond, straight hair) to be marketable across races; the use of/focus on her physical attributes (e.g., Destiny Child's 2004 hit, "Bootyliscious"); and continued reinforcement of the narrative of Black women in perpetually broken relationships – staying with partners who mistreat them due to the lack of available and bachelors for eligible Black women.

Moreover, notwithstanding the diversity of images of Black womanhood, the models, dancers, and virtually all images of Black womanhood (aside from interviews) are fairly svelte and slim-figured. Although the album contains its revolutionary elements, it is also constrained by adherence to dominant beauty norms in terms of body size and ability. That is, the video album contains a diversity of images of Black womanhood. However, it fails to do the same for the full diversity of Black women's bodies. Physically, the dancers and majority of the images

feature models that are fairly fit, slim, and not of body types that are visibly overweight or disabled.

Nonetheless, *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) is important because it provides a highly visible rejection of longstanding stereotypes, problematic depictions, and racialized framings that strip the humanness from Black women, and prohibit them from being and being recognized as their full selves. To this end, *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) accomplishes a number of goals. Songs and images included in *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016) discuss the distinctive inequities many Blacks in the U.S. encounter and witness contemporarily (e.g., police brutality). The video album also features Black women actors, models, and dancers who vary in shade from cream to coffee. Further, the varied stylistic choices in terms of hair are significant, highlighting the diversity of Black beauty, and hair textures. Moreover, *Lemonade* is overflowing with visual references to African cultures, Black American food traditions (e.g., the double entendre, "Hot Sauce in my bag") – often, traditions that, in public, have been hidden behind napkins and closed purses, for the desire to adhere to politics of respectability.

As shown in the introduction, in contemporary American society, Black women are subject to racialized attacks on their personhood, appearances, and beings. In media, they are often discussed pejoratively, and their humanity minimized or erased. However, Black Americans, both in the public sphere, and in everyday lives, use their agency, power, to navigate these forms of oppression, to resist dehumanization and erasure, and to expose and give voice to their experiences.

Lemonade (Knowles-Carter 2016) is an example of Black women artists, writers, and thinkers continuing their boldness in talking about what they do, see, and experience in Black female bodies operating in the country. The video album is an instance of artists and celebrities

affirming Black personhood on a global scale. Further, it is also an example of bringing "wreck," as noted by Pough (2004): when Black women employ public spaces to challenge historical processes of racial and gender subordination and dehumanization.

This does not mean that the cultural and artistic productions that link Black life and address the myriad of experiences should or will be perfect. Blues women's music addressed themes that were taboo at the time, including same-gender-loving relationships, infidelity, domestic abuse, and female economic independence. Perhaps the album is indeed imperfect. Still, it possesses overt messages of positive, beautiful aspects of Black culture and womanhood. Like similar works, it is flawed, but it is also connected to and produced within the structures that make a resounding cry of Black women's beauty necessary right now.

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[1] Here, my concern is not necessarily with an artist and her growing politicization. I am not arguing that Beyoncé is or is not a Black feminist. Nor, am I overtly situating the mantle of feminism or Black feminism on the shoulders of this artist through her work. Instead, I am highlighting the symbolically Black feminist work that *Lemonade* and similar pieces accomplish through their centralization of Black women, discussions of impediments of racism and sexism, affirmations of Black women's beauty, and Black motherhood.

[2] Race is solely noted to highlight the fact that Black women are not safe from hatred – regardless of the identity of the source.

[3] In fact, such a paucity of Black children's book characters exists, books that center Black children, such as *Penny and the Magic Puffballs* (Williams and Goshay 2013)*, Jaden Toussaint* (Dumas and Muravski 2015), *Nelson Beats the Odds* (Sidney et al. 2015), *Big Hair Don't Care* (Swain-Bates and Bair 2013), *Chocolate Me!* (Diggs and Evans 2015) and *Mixed Me!* continue to grow in popularity. Eager audiences wish to see themselves, their hair, their appearances, represented in the images of their children's dreaming and conscious worlds.

[4] This is not to say that Black women should choose one style or another to reinforce or establish their Blackness. But it is to say that they should not be confined solely to styles that literally may destroy their hair, in order to appear more respectable, and more acceptable in predominately White society.

[5] The movie, *Good Hair* (Stilson 2010), contained a scene wherein an aluminum Coca-Cola can was dissolved in the same chemical contained in the perms used to straighten Black women's hair. Though I do not imply Black women should choose one style or another, I am highlighting the presence of legislation that permits discrimination against making Black hair choices that are overtly connected to African heritage, and for some, that are a healthier option. It is evidence of continued anti-Black affect (Lee and Bean 2012), and administrative infringement on the rights of Black women, people of color, and other vulnerable groups in the society.

[6] These were the final words of Mr. Garner, a father and grandfather, who was killed by a member of the New York Police, using an illegal chokehold over the sale of loose cigarettes.

[7] *Lemonade* also reached #1 on the Billboards, allowing the Knowles sisters, Beyoncé and Solange, to set another record for siblings whose albums reached #1 simultaneously.

[8] Although vocal and audio analysis are not significantly employed here, I note that *Lemonade* is unique in that it spans a series of genres, including country – a musical in which Black Americans have been scarcely represented. In fact, the remix of "Daddy Lessons" featured popular country stars, The Dixie Chicks. Though Beyoncé was nominated for a Country Music Award, fears of reprisal from the seemingly all-White, heavily conservative audience against Beyoncé, someone who had called out the abuses of police on Black bodies, cancelled the performance before it began. Though I do not employ much audio analysis, this would be a good area for additional research, as it also shows the diversity of music and influences that Black women enjoy, employ, and sing – it is another example of *Lemonade* showing that Black women are not monolithic.

[9] Specifically, Thompson links the Kongo, Yoruba, Ejagham and Mande civilizations to Blacks in Haiti, Cuba, and other parts of the New World. Brazil, especially, provides an interesting case study in the amalgamation of novel articles of faith (e.g., Yoruba deities and Roman Catholic Saints) and ancestral philosophies. For instance, Thompson (1984, 77). finds that modern Blacks of Rio de Janeiro link the Catholic Virgin Mary to Yemáya, Yoruba goddess of the sea, as the two spiritual relics "share qualities of sacred love, faith and purity." A point of alignment, however, between Thompson (1984) and Mintz and Price (1998) occurs in their discussions of New World Blacks and religious orientations. Both argue that Africans in the Americas absorbed

and readjusted the novel religions to accommodate preexisting traditional ones. This is clear in the content of *Lemonade.*

[10] Leslie McFadden is the mother of Michael Brown, Jr. Eighteen-year-old Brown was unarmed when he was shot by police officer, Darren Wilson, in Ferguson, Missouri.

ARTICLE THREE:

POST-TRUMP INTERSECTIONS & "POST-RACIAL" REFLECTIONS: BLACK WOMEN, RACISM, SEXISM & CLASSISM IN THE U.S.

ABSTRACT

Instances of overt racial violence, discrimination, and verbal attacks circulate via news and social media, affirming growing levels of xenophobia, anti-immigrantism, and non-White hatred in the country. The growing visibility of racially discriminatory attitudes and attacks on minorities; tax plans that entrench wealth for the richest in the country; along with anti-woman legislation, collectively have unique consequences for groups vulnerable to multiple intersecting forms of oppression. This project centers on Black women, whose raced experiences are uniquely colored by gender, ethnicity, class, ability, and sexuality. In this chapter, I employ a total of twenty-one semi-structured interviews with Black American women aged 22-50 drawn in 2011 and 2016. I centralize vulnerabilities to which Black women see themselves being subject to illustrate ways covert and outright racism, economic oppression, and sexism intersect to remain factors in their everyday lives. I also highlight Black women's strategies of navigation, and responses to new media that are affirmative of Black appearances and identities.

INTRODUCTION

Presently, obvious and covert unequal treatment for marginalized racial, ethnic, and gender groups is sanctioned by law, and justified rhetorically by the nation's elected officials. Instances of overt racialized violence, and discrimination circulate news and social media, in affirmation of growing levels of xenophobia and non-White hatred in the country. In tandem, covert racial and gender oppression, and growing economic inequality, both heavily ascendant after the neoliberal economic and political shift of the 1980s, persists simultaneously.

Further, in the U.S., Black people are subject to particular vulnerabilities, as members of a racial minority, that are uniquely shaped by class, sexuality, ability, body, and gender (Crenshaw 1991). In this chapter, I employ a total of twenty-one semi-structured interviews with Black American women aged 22-50 drawn in 2011 and 2016. Like Crenshaw (1991), I argue that Black women are subject to, and yet contend with intersecting structures of oppression.[1] However, the weight of navigating U.S. society as a potentially non-wealthy, a woman, non-heterosexual, and/or a Black woman – has made the manifestations of these intersections in everyday life even more of a concern under the present oppressive administration.

In the chapter, I illustrate ways covert and outright racism, economic oppression, and sexism intersect to remain factors in Black women's everyday lives, as a multiply-oppressed group in a White supremacist, patriarchal society. I engage six interviews collected in 2016, along with fifteen interviews collected during my M.A. studies in 2011.

Investigating earlier interview data drawn from Black women prior to the 2012 election, and just after the 2016 election, helps demonstrate continuities and differences in perspectives on Black women's lives during the sociopolitical changes occurring during this short period

between the Obama and Trump administrations. I also highlight continuities in experiences with racism and sexism, that have remained present regardless of the U.S. Executive Official.

Moreover, a burgeoning natural hair movement and the growing media visibility of affirmative representations of Black adults and children, has begun to emerge more significantly on television. The popularity of Black-led, or –centered shows like*, Scandal* (2012)*, Insecure* (2016)*,* and *How to Get Away with Murder* (2015) serve as evidence of this. Similarly, music by Black artists, like *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016), *DAMN!* (Lamar 2017) and *Seat at the Table* (Knowles 2016) affirm Black beauty, Black womanhood, and critique racialized police brutality. I discuss reactions to the increasing visibility of Black women of varied colors and hair textures on television and social media.

In all, I engage data rooted in lived experiences contending with oppression in a society which that oppression appears to be growing. I also address strategies of resistance and navigation – both those that they employ, and those that the participants witness in media.

Many of these themes are discussed from the perspectives of Black women below. What follows is an exploration of primarily middle class Black women's views and experiences. Participants discuss perspectives on the Obama and Trump administrations. Interviewees address daily sufferings with microaggressions, including negations, destabilizations, disproportionately high levels of scrutiny, and other subtle, minute, tiny, often deniable forms of oppression. Their interviews provide lenses into emotional and professional weight of being perceived through the lens of marked raced and gendered bodies. Participants also note ways they reject and resist these oppressions, and connect/disconnect from media that affirm/deny their humanity.

Ultimately, this project is not to stand as the universal synthesis of Black women's consciousness. Instead, Black women, their voices, and their experiences, are varied. Subject to

time, and financial constraints, I focus on accessing and synthesizing a specific consciousness drawn primarily from middle-class women, whose occupations range from engineers and artists, to students, office workers, and professors.

BACKGROUND

Black Women in Trump's America

Just nine years ago, the election of President Barack Obama propelled questions about whether the U.S. had transcended its racially oppressive history through the election of a political centrist of African descent. At the same time, during the Obama Presidency, the number of hate groups in the U.S. increased dramatically, in response to the symbolism of a Black man in Executive Office (Morris and Muhammad 2014). While the Obama presidency continues to erroneously stand as a marker of American racial transcendence, during the Obama First Family's occupancy of the White House, none of the Obamas were safe from being associated with longstanding stereotypes about Blackness, scrutiny, discrimination, and unequal treatment based on identity.[2]

The premature celebrations of racial transcendence in 2008 and 2012 were followed shortly thereafter by the election of Donald Trump to the U.S. Presidency in 2016. The latter was accomplished by riding a tide of racialized and gendered political backlash to the prior administration. Ironically, Trump had earlier propelled race-based "birther" charges questioning President Obama's country of origin, and the legitimacy of his presidency.

Trump, a real estate billionaire and TV personality, was able to attain the nation's highest office by using coded and direct language to play on xenophobic, anti-immigrant fears of some Americans who are witnessing as racial minority groups expand in population, and immigrant groups from Mexico, Latin America, The Caribbean, African and Asian countries continue to culturally, politically, racially, and ethnically diversify the nation (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Gold 2004; Lee and Bean 2012; Treitler 2013). Contrary to beliefs that racial transcendence had been reached in the 1970s (Blauner 1989), or even by the first decade of the 2000s, an overtly racist,

sexist, classist attitudinal tide has reemerged in the society. Videos and news stories shared, labeled “viral” for the extension of their visibility to millions on social media, circulate and publicize acts of overt racism against Blacks, Latinos, Muslims, and other racial, ethnic, and religious minority groups.[3]

As examples, a couple from Georgia received a collective thirty-five-year sentence for terrorizing an eight-year-old Black child’s birthday party with Confederate flags, racial slurs, threats, and guns. Following the Muslim Ban, in January 2017, two Texas mosque were burned down. Both events occurred within two weeks of the Islamic Center of Eastside in Belleview, Washington suffering a similar fate (Samaha and Ansari 2017). Further, “in May [2017], two men on a Portland train were stabbed to death trying to stop a White supremacist's anti-Muslim tirade against two teenagers” (Dastagir 2017). And in August 2017, 22-year-old Heather Heyer was killed, and dozens others injured, after they were run over by a neo-Nazi terrorist driver while protesting a White supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.[4]

Indeed, the U.S. President is even facing suit for inciting violence at campaign rallies.

> Kashiya Nwanguma, Molly Shah and Henry Brousseau attended the March 1, 2016, Louisville rally for the purpose of "peacefully protesting Trump," the ruling says. Nwanguma was carrying a sign with Trump's head on a pig's body, according to multiple news reports. At some point during his remarks at the Kentucky International Convention Center, the ruling states, the candidate said, "Get 'em out of here." Matthew Heimbach, who was representing the White Nationalist Traditionalist Workers Party, and Alvin Bamberger attacked the protesters, according to the ruling. Nwanguma, Shah and Brousseau accuse Heimbach and Bamberger of assault and battery. They further level charges of incitement to riot, negligence, gross negligence and recklessness against the Trump campaign. (McLaughlin 2017)

By the fall of 2017, in the midst of a climate of racialized terror and police brutality, Donald Trump later encouraged the use of additional force during police arrests (Blake 2017). This,

despite the deaths of Tamir Rice, Freddie Gray, Korryn Gaines, Sandra Bland, and other Black members of the society whose encounters with police resulted in their deaths.

Alongside increasing outright discrimination, forms of subtle oppression characteristic of the post-civil-rights era also persist. As evinced by the recent issuance of several Executive Orders, legislative moves towards social and political regression – in civil and human rights surrounding race, class, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, and gender – have already begun. That is, Donald Trump's legislative beginnings deny citizenship based on nationality and religion[5]; repeat violent histories of violating U.S./Native American treaties to advance U.S. economic interests (in this case, oil pipelines)[6]; and limit sexual assault protections for students, and reproductive options for women.

In January 2017, a directive known as the "Muslim Ban," was issued by the President, barring immigration from Iraq, Iran, Yemen, Somalia, Syria, Libya, and Sudan – Muslim countries – for at least ninety days (Diamond 2017). The aim of the measure was to prevent "radical Islamic terrorists" from entry into the U.S. (Diamond 2017). Another executive order was issued in preparation for the building of a wall between Mexico and the U.S. to impede immigration (Davis 2017). And in September 2017, Trump announced his plan to repeal President Obama's Deferred Action for Child Arrivals (DACA) order. DACA "protects undocumented immigrants brought to the US as children from deportation and allows them the ability to work and study" (Kopan 2017).

Further, in January 2017, a rash of legislation was introduced to limit reproductive choices, especially for low income women (Levintova 2017). A Republican-directed Congress and Executive Office have begun targeting funding of Planned Parenthood, an organization that provides cancer screenings and other services to women without regard for ability to pay.

Additionally, a recent executive order prevents U.S. funding from providing family planning services internationally, and reinstates the Mexico City Gag Order. This mandate prohibits clinics who provide women's health services from discussing abortion options with patients (Redden 2017). This, only a few days in office, and marked by the irony of a room of White men signing legislation to determine the fate of women's bodies (Terkel 2017). Further, newly-appointed Secretary of Education, Betsy Devos, plans to remove Title IX protections for sexual assault reporting at colleges and universities (Bolger and Brodsky 2017).

> To an invitation-only audience at George Mason University, closed to the students who protested her expected announcement outside, [DeVos] declared that the Obama administration had gone too far, protecting student survivors to the detriment of the accused. The Education Department, she indicated, will reverse course through a technical process called "notice-and-comment." If that sounds innocuous, it's not. Rather, it's a signal that the Trump administration will make way for what is nothing less than an all-out attack on survivors. (Bolger and Brodsky 2017)

Economically, Trump has also enticed millions of poor, working, and middle class White Americans to vote against their best economic interests, in aligning with a campaign to dismantle America's only major system of publically subsidized healthcare, without an adequate replacement (Kaplan 2017). Bills aimed at repealing the Affordable Care Act are under presently debate, some of which have included such deep cuts to Medicaid funding, and by extension, services to seniors and those unable to afford medical care.

Ultimately, not even a decade after post-racialism dominated discussions on U.S. racial attitudes, overtly anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and anti-Black affect presently coincides with anti-woman, anti-poor, anti-immigrant, and anti-Black legislation. Thus, the 2016 election was not a mundane event in the history of the U.S., but instead has implications for the maintenance of racial/ethnic, gender, sexual, and economic inequity in the country. This is particularly true for

the ways these forms of oppression manifest in the everyday lives of members of marginalized groups operating in the society.

Given a president that verbally champions violence against bodies of color, and moves legislatively to disenfranchise minority groups, it is no wonder that instances of racial violence reported by news and circulated in social media videos have increased. It is no wonder many members of marginalized groups feel unsafe, and as though they are increasingly subject to vulnerabilities in racialized interactions, as well as in policy moves.

Furthermore, the present administration's directives illustrate the relevance of intersectional approaches to inequality; to the maintenance of oppression; and to the manifestations of oppressions in the everyday lives of marginalized groups. That is, not only are overt and active hatred factors in the lives of marginalized groups existing within racially, sexually, economically, and gender-oppressive regimes. The aforementioned legislation disproportionately affects vulnerable groups in the society, doing so in compounded fashions for those whose racial, gender, and/or class minority status is complicated by membership in additional minority groups. Investigating the lives of those whose experiences are shaped by intersecting structures that support multiple forms of oppression can be paramount to supporting these groups, and destabilizing the persistent and Herculean inequities with which they contend.

THEORY AND LITERATURE

Neoliberal Post-Racialism – A Precursor to Trump

Yet, to comprehend the contemporary social, political, and economic context into which Black women are situated, and to understand the backlash with which they currently contend, this section highlights structural changes in the U.S. beginning in the 1960s that have helped precipitate the current situation.

During the mid-1960s and early 1970s, the gains of the modern civil rights movement included the elimination of the legalized system of "Jim Crow" racism (Omi and Winant 1989; Winant 2001; Bonilla-Silva 2010). Within this system, "segregation was legal and racial classification determined where one sat or drank or worked or lived or went to school" (Brown et al. 2003: 3). Violation of this system, or simply being non-White in this system, could precipitate legal penalty and/or violence. The passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 guaranteed non-Whites voting rights, protection under the law, access to public accommodation/employment and aspects of citizenship. Consequently, Jim Crow social order of overt legal discrimination was largely dismantled (Brown et al. 2003).

Further, these sociopolitical transitions also preceded major changes in the global political and economic arena. By the 1980s, the political and economic ideology of Keynesianism, wherein social good was connected to social welfare and safety nets, was replaced by the neoliberal project (Harvey 2007: 3; Martinez 2016). The implementation of neoliberalism in the 1980s precipitated the removal of social welfare programs, in tandem with a growing concentration of the global wealth amongst the top-earning 1% of the population.

> Monetarism [emphasized by neoliberalism] arose as a response to socialism and to Keynesian economics, which had difficulties addressing the problems of stagnation and inflation, or the stagflation that occurred in the early 1970s….Government is solely involved in the maintenance of the conditions for

> the accumulation of capital, including a strong military, while emphasizing limited social programs and government services to the citizenry…. Limited government is promoted through privatization of government services and through deregulation of the economy. Liberalization of the market, it is argued, allows individuals to be free from the restraints of market regulations, which is the cornerstone of neoliberalism (Martinez 2016: 14-16).

This also served as a major backlash to the gains of the Civil Rights Movement. That is, the implementation of neoliberalism generated significant economic inequality in the society. Further, the neoliberal ideological project shifted public understandings of the relationship between the individual and the social and economic structure of society (Harvey 2007; Martinez 2016). This shift in thinking influenced thinking on race, as well, precipitating the emergence of early colorblind and later post-racial ideologies (Brown et al. 2003; Bonilla-Silva 2010; Martinez 2016).

The discursive work of neoliberalism within colorblindness asserts if minorities engaged in greater amounts of personal responsibility, they too would have social and economic advancements similar to their White counterparts, even though this is a misnomer (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Brown et al. 2003).

> With regard to racial domination and oppression, it is assumed that racism no longer exists and that all individuals are free to pursue their own well-being. There is even speculation of having entered a post-racial period, a view based mostly on the election of President Obama. In recent years, the emphasis has been on promoting color-blind approaches that circumvent intergroup issues. Indeed, from the neoliberal perspective, groups do not exist; they do not have an objective existence, only individuals exist. Thus, within the neoliberal framework, structural inequalities also are assumed to not exist. Supposedly, we live in an open society in which structural barriers such as institutional racism do not exist (Martinez 2016: 16-17).

The assertion of meritocracy creates normative assumptions and narratives that posit groups with lower socioeconomic statuses are ill equipped and have pathological cultures that lead to their failures both economically and socially (Harvey 2007; Bonilla-Silva 2010). That is,

neoliberal ideology assumes that the creation/exacerbation of inequality is neither inherent in the neoliberal project nor worsened by the loss of social welfare protections; each individual is presumed to encounter the same types of impediments, and therefore, to have equal opportunity to succeed or fail (Harvey 2007; Martinez 2016).

> By separating inequalities from the structural features of society and assigning them to the private sphere, the issue of racism itself is removed from the public sphere. The displacement of racism from the public sphere diminishes the spaces of public discourses in which its elimination can be framed and discussed. The result is the intensification of racial oppression both by making it invisible and by muting resistance by the oppressed (Martinez 2016: 18).

For example, Ronald Reagan, the major implementer of neoliberalism in the U.S., employed the symbolically raced and gendered image of the 'welfare queen." Her fictionalized and inflated abuses of social welfare represented those of the larger "undeserving" Black poor. Supposedly the owner of a taxpayer-funded pink Cadillac, the image was used to secure support for the rolling back of the race-targeted policies of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, along with welfare state policies of the Great Society, which ensured a social safety net for Americans below the poverty line (Neubeck and Cazenave 2001). Further, this pejorative image helped reinforce stereotypes about Black women's as problematic mothers, dependent on, and exploiting the social welfare system.

Similarly, then-Candidate Trump employed an "us/them" rhetoric that galvanized racialized nationalism against the threat of immigrants – who supposedly posed threats to jobs, Christianity, safety from terrorism, and the reach of the U.S. (Haney Lopez 2014). His aims to "Make America Great Again" include removal and restriction of those historically framed as "other," and "undeserving." And in similar fashion to earlier political backlashes against the political, social, and economic dismantling of White supremacy, Trump later employed this rhetoric, to progress racially, economically, sexually, and ethnically oppressive legislation.

Black Feminisms

In all, Black American women are subject particular oppressions in U.S. society that have been counted and recounted by Black feminist scholars innumerable (Beaubouf-Lafontant 2009; Cooper et al. 2017; Crenshaw 1991; Foster et al. 2009; Guy-Sheftall 1995; Harris-Perry 2011; Hill Collins 2000; Hull et al. 1982; Lorde 2007; Winfrey Harris 2015). This project rests centrally Black feminist theoretical traditions, employing Crenshaw's (1991) approach, intersectionality.

Commonalities among Black feminist theorists of intersectionality also include approach to structures of race, class, and gender oppression as intersecting/interlocking, mutually-reinforced social structures (Combahee River Collective [1978] 1982; Crenshaw 1991, 1242; Hill Collins 1998: 204). That is, women of color's experiences are typically the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism, not a homogenized women's or black experience alone (Crenshaw 1991: 1242). Their race often causes them to experience gender differently than White women; their gender causes them to experience race differently than Black men (Crenshaw 1991: 1252).

In particular, Black women in the U.S. are yet subject to consequences of legacies of enslavement; institutionalized segregation and discrimination; negative stereotypes and racial attitudes; victim-blaming for racial disparities; disproportionate levels of vulnerability to police and vigilante violence; material inequities in wealth and health; discrimination and segregation in housing; and an abundance of symbolically coded media presentations that often draw on stereotypical images of Blackness (Cooper et al. 2017; Harris 2015; Harris-Perry 2011; Hill Collins 2000; Jones and Shorter-Gooden 2003; Lee and Bean 2012; Massey and Denton 1994; Neely 2015). Black women's oppression as members of their own minority outgroup (Combahee

River Collective [1978] 1995; Lorde 2007) connects ways they are treated, and the reading of their actions by others on a daily basis – the stereotypes that have been used to maintain their oppression, that as noted by Harris-Perry (2011), shape the "crooked room" in which they constantly try to stand straight.

For instance, the continued effects of the institutional inequity serve as persistent economic impediments to many Black women's progress, their success, and their feelings of wholeness on the job and in personal spaces. A study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that Black women are

> working more and getting less in return across all areas of American life. Black women voted at higher rates than any other group in 2008 and 2012 (and in 2014, more than any other group except White men and women)—but they remain drastically underrepresented in both state and national politics. The share of Black women with a college degree has increased by almost 24 percent since the early 2000s, but they graduated with more debt and worse prospects than White students. And Black women participate in the workforce at higher rates than other women, yet they're among the most likely to live in poverty, second only to indigenous women (Caplan-Bricker and Goldber 2017).

According to Holmes and Frye (2016), the existing gender wage gap that records women earning at significantly lower rates than men for similar work is further exacerbated by race.

> Over a lifetime, the cumulative effect of the wage gap for African American women is astronomical: For women overall, the average lifetime wage gap, as measured over a 40-year career, is $430,480. For African American women, the average lifetime wage gap is more than double that, totaling $877,480. (Holmes and Frye 2016)

Yet, this is not necessarily a just consequence solely of existing discrimination (Caplan-Bricker and Goldber 2017; White 2017). These are consequences of neoliberalism, and earlier economic oppression of Blacks, which collectively have financial consequences for Black/White wealth and earning gaps today.

> In part, this is because Black women have remained trapped in the worst-paying sectors of the economy—caretaking and service jobs—while White women have

> ascended to better-compensated professions. This is no coincidence, as Alicia Garza, a co-founder of the Black Lives Matter movement and the special projects director at the NDWA, writes in the forward to the report. "Without Black women's labor inside of white households, white women would not have been able to break (some) of the barriers of sexism that relegated the value of women's contributions to the sphere of the home," she writes. "The result is a racialized economy where Black women are losing ground." (Caplan-Bricker and Goldber 2017)

To continue, with a specific focus on Black women, Beaubouf-Lafontant (2009), Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003), Winfrey-Harris (2015), Harris-Perry (2011), Cooper et al. (2017) and other Black feminist scholars have addressed the ways Black women navigate, resist, and challenge racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and other forms of inequality in media, public spaces, and their everyday lives. Harris-Perry (2011) conceptualizes Black women trying to stand in the "crooked room" of longstanding stereotypes that diminish personhood. Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) highlight ways Black women "shift," police, silence, and restrict themselves to avoid judgment, or alignment with stereotypes about their strength, attitudinally, womanhood, and femininity. Further, Winfrey-Harris (2015) aims to challenge and reverse dominant beliefs that associate Black women with pathology and brokenness – highlighting Black women's beauty, intellectual prowess, and rejecting the respectability politics that cause Black people to overpolice their own behaviors for fear of reinforcing existing stereotypes about the group.

> In an effort to shake the weight of society's biased expectations, some black women hold their tongues when they are justified in raging, deny their sexuality when they should be making love with abandon, give all their energy and care to others while they get sicker, hate African features instead of loving black skin, broad noses, and kinks. And they make decisions not based on their particular needs and wants but to circumvent what society thinks of them (Winfrey Harris 2015: 9)

Winfrey Harris' (2015) participants discuss hiding feelings of justified anger for fear of being classified (and subsequently dismissed) as angry Black women by family members, work

peers, and in other interpersonal contacts. “Black women *do* get angry. Everyone does. But the angry black woman stereotype denies them their warranted rage” (Winfrey Harris 2015: 81). In many instances, Winfrey Harris (2015: 82) argues that Black women are not *allowed* to feel, as others’ expectations are confined to this stereotype – to the point that many Black women go to extents of rejecting and silencing their own valid emotion in order to avoid being framed as such.

Table 5: Interview Participants

Name	Age	Data Set		Name	Age	Data Set
Desiree	37	2016		Lilly	22	2011
Niara	32	2016		Rochelle	20	2011
Traci	35	2016		Yvette	19	2011
Aliyah	49	2016		Trisha	22	2011
Candace	32	2016		Ashley	19	2011
Toni	31	2016		Arianna	22	2011
Antoinette	41	2011		Erika	33	2011
Jackie	22	2011		Shante	45	2011
Teresa	26	2011		Lisa	50	2011
Brooklyn	26	2011		Tiana	23	2011
Victoria	48	2011				

Convenience and snowball sampling were employed heavily, through volunteers from professional/personal contacts, student organizations, religious/community groups, all gathered throughout Eastern and Midwestern U.S. Included participants are women of African ancestry who self-identify as cisgender Black women, including those identify as African-American, as well as those who embody trans-national (e.g., Grenadian, Jamaican) and multi-racial (mixed-raced and multi-raced) identities.[7]

The first set of interviews was collected in person, as a result of my Master's Thesis data collection efforts in 2011. The first set of interviewees (2011) varied in age from 18-50. The second set of interviews were collected in the same areas, but were collected digitally via Skype and phone. Interviewees in the second set of interviews ranged in age from 31-49.

Interviews were recorded. Following the interviews, the recordings were transcribed. Following transcription, interview data were coded by line and by paragraph for themes that emerge across interviews. Each group of interview provided its own data set analyzed separately for the presence of themes and theories in the interviews. Further, data were analyzed for its adherence to or divergence from the theories that shaped the project at its outset.

In the interviews, I sought very detailed information from participants about how racism, sexism, and class discrimination impact their home, work, and personal lives daily. Each of the women offered a unique perspective on the experience, weight, struggles and joys of Black womanhood in the contemporary U.S. Numerous themes emerged in the coding of data, though I centralize three major themes below:

1) Intersecting Racial, Class, and Gender Oppressions
2) Stereotypes, Microaggressions, Strategies of Navigation
3) Post-Trump Developments – 2016 Data

The most prominent theme in the data is the women's understandings of intersecting systems of racial, gender, and class oppression.[8] Findings illustrate that daily instances of racial discrimination and gender subordination are often constant. These often take the form of microaggressions, subtle dismissals, covert attacks by students, coworkers, and acquaintances, on their personhood, capability, credibility, and humanity, alongside linkages to longstanding stereotypes that denigrate their beauty because of its Africanness.

Further, some participants noted their or their families' contention with sustained economic inequity (e.g., failing schools, food deserts), in neighborhoods that are particularly marked by systemic racial oppression (i.e., as consequences of the continued racial segregation of the U.S. despite the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, as noted by Massey and Denton

1993). This illustrates not only the intersection of structures of racial and gender oppression affect Black women's lives, but introduces, also, the intersection of class inequality.

And supporting these patterned relations in the society are also ideas and stereotypes that help justify minority group positions, or otherwise perpetuate their marginalization in the society. Often, these ideas are circulated through various media, accepted by outsiders as at least partial truths, and used to inform interactions with minorities with whom they typically have limited or no interaction. As a second theme, I highlight ways the women see others' stereotype-informed expectations of their behavior shaping interactions. I also address Black women's strategies of navigation, as they provide for themselves and their families, maintain senses of self, humanity, and aim to reject stereotypes that often shape how others view them.

Finally, the 2016 data brought forth more significant discussions of overt racism and gender-related vulnerability, following the election of Donald Trump. To be clear, the 2011 interviews did highlight the presence of overt and covert forms of discrimination in the everyday lives of the participants. 2011 participants confirmed an overall sentiment of some degree of racial progress since the 1960s, though skepticism about achieved racial transcendence abounded. 2011 participants discussed things being "better today" than earlier years, highlighting the symbolic nature of the progress that achieving an Obama presidency twice would require. At the same time, 2011 participants limited their optimism about post-racialism to just that, framing the achievement of racial transcendence in the U.S. as a utopian goal.

2016 participants, however, discussed feelings of vulnerability, in a much stronger fashion than 2011 participants. Although 2011 and 2016 participants discussed experiences with varied forms of discrimination, 2016 participants highlight greater sentiments of economic

vulnerability to political change in the country; increased witnessing of racialized violence; and also a stronger visibility of pro-Black-woman creations on social media and television.

Findings: Intersecting Structures of Racial, Class, and Gender Oppression

In this section, I address the participants' discussions of institutional discrimination, excess scrutiny, and microaggressions. Often these are the invisible types of oppression that have material consequences for the ways Black women navigate their everyday lives. That is, participants discussed subtle attacks, microaggressions and differential treatment, often based on class, race, and gender. Others address the institutional racism and economic oppression that continues to manifest in their everyday lives.

Findings: Institutional Racism and Economic Oppression

A number of participants highlighted the economic effects of institutional racism in their everyday lives. A number of participants discussed professional accomplishment or ambition, juxtaposed with economic vulnerability from the student loan-debts that funded their education. Some discussed the deleterious effects of economic oppression; the crack epidemic of the 1980s (Kitwana 2003); and ways the growing prison industrial complex has funneled family, friends, and loved ones into incarceration (Alexander 2012).

Candace[9], a working mother in her 30s living in a large, predominately Black, urban area, reflected on the raced nature of the class oppression in her community. Candace lives in a food desert with failing schools. She expressed anger at the ways race and class intersect to limit opportunities and life chances in her predominately Black community.

> Candace (2016): But I think race is still gonna be a factor. And I think it's definitely still a factor in how our society is run. And how it was developed. And

> so you find institutional racism, or racism in how we live, what we have access to, the food we have access to, the fact that our men are in and out of prisons. So even if I can say I've never had an overt instance of racism, or that someone has never discriminated against me directly to my face, I LIVE all of the racism that I will ever need in my lifetime. Being stuck in this community where you don't get enough resources. Where our kids go to schools that are underfunded and failing schools. Where I have to figure out how to move, where to move, where I can live so my kids can get a proper education. Long as that's still going on, racism is still a big factor that I'll have to contend with. Whether or not I'll always have to, I'm not sure. But as long as this country is broken and run the way it's run, it always gonna be what we have to deal with.

Referencing the "broken" country, and the "way it's run," Candace (2016) addresses the lack of resources in her community as the extended effects of intersecting racial and class oppression that manifest in her everyday life.

In similar fashion, Toni (2016), another working mother in her 30s, noted

> This is why my neighborhood is all Black and you look around and you see forty year olds walking around with a walker. And I remember going to a larger White area and buying lettuce and my son being like, "Oh, they're selling little trees!" Because the lettuce in our neighborhood doesn't *look* like that! Like I think that's racism *too*! I don't know how to put what kind, but it is! They don't bring good things to our neighborhood.

That is, Toni (2016) endures a lack of fresh food so severe that her son was completely unfamiliar with the unique varieties of fresh lettuce carried at more expensive grocery stores like Whole Foods. To those with the economic and health-related privilege of easy access to healthy foods, it may seem unfathomable a child finding lettuce unrecognizable. Though fresh foods are necessary for healthy development, the lack to which Toni (2016) speaks is not uncommon in other food deserts lacking easy access to fresh groceries throughout the U.S., many of which are in predominately Black and poor areas. This speaks further to the extended effects of institutional racism and economic oppression on Black lives. For some, continued racial segregation remains a major factor that directly shapes their economic life chances.

Findings: Intersecting Oppressions – Subtle Discrimination and Microaggressions

In 2011, participants cited the presence of a new type of racism. It is, what Lisa labeled, "an undercover racism that's very much still alive and kicking." Further, the subtleties of this type of racism allow racist incidents to be overlooked, or "brushed under the rug," as stated by Rochelle. In their critiques of the notion that we are a colorblind, equal, or post-racial society, the women identified specific sites of racial inequity that they have either witnessed or encountered themselves.

Both women in 2011 and women in 2016 address experiencing both covert and overt discrimination. This includes subtle attacks, excess scrutiny, problematic media representations that often shape how Black women are perceived by others, and differential treatment – all of which is leveled against them because of the membership in their racial and gender group.

> Desiree (2016): College was my wide awakening because it was DAILY. It was day in day out. This is my life now. And to me, it was a real dose of reality.

Other respondents also expressed the additive nature of vulnerability to racial and gender discrimination and marginalization, as well as the need to work harder (read: be stronger) to fight it. Most confirmed those to be constant features. As noted by Arianna (2011),

> To be a Black woman is an experience that could only be made more difficult if I was LGBT identified. Or non-Christian. In every other sort of discourse and experience, being a Black woman is difficult. Because you're not only disadvantaged because of your race, but also your gender. And within social groups, you're ostracized by your Black male counterparts because of gender.

Similarly, although sometimes the impetus for discrimination is very clear, often, they are unable to distinguish if the microaggression or differential treatment of the day, moment, or hour was leveled because the recipient was Black, a woman, or both.

Further, for participants working in fields that are White- and/or male-dominated, covert acts of discrimination were salient themes. In this instance, Traci (2016) discusses that white

male students level strategic attacks against her authority and capability, often doing so when her superior is nearby.

> Traci (2016): But white male students have been giving me the worst problems each semester. Literally being challenged in front of the Dean over little stuff in class when he comes to visit. And I'm like, this is not that deep of a thing, but you're gonna try to show your backside in front of the Dean that's in my class right now? Really?

Similarly, a number of women noted that they are figuratively "under the spotlight" when performing professionally.[10] Their actions are scrutinized more intensely than their peers, with a far smaller margin for error. Further, because supervisors and bosses expect Black female deficiency, some women address ways their work is subject to additional scrutiny that their White and male peers do not suffer (Joseph and Hirschfield 2011).

> Lisa (2011): Then when you're at work, if you and someone else are doing the same level of work, it's not gonna be acceptable. You always have to do more. My whole history says that they'll get a better rating than I am, so I've got to excel to get the same rating that they do. My work was always criticized more. Same level of work, you get rated lower. Your work product is criticized more. You don't get the promotions others get. But the sense of having to achieve at higher levels. Because there was this feeling that you have to do well, because you represent the 2% that's here and most of that was self-imposed at that point.

These expectations tend to shape their interactions with others, and projections from others about their behavior. Further, after being trained via surroundings and experience, often Black women internalize the knowledge that their work must be twice as good to be considered half as adequate.

> Traci (2016): I feel at times you need to prove yourself, or be the supernegro, or play the role that other people could probably get away with just being whatever, but you have to make sure you're top. You're on it. Or else you'll be penalized for not being that supernegro.

Further, many women address being saddled with additional work, at home and on the job, as they are expected to do it, or because no one else will, despite the need. Moreover, to navigate these expectations and scrutiny, some women over-perform, take on additional work,

and consistently push to exceed expectations. They know that a different set of scrutiny and rules applies to their performances at work and in other spaces.

As another instance, Candace (2016) discussed the automatic assumptions of expertise and authority and that accompany the mere presence of white co-workers. She contrasted assumptions that mark her and other Black women's experiences on the job. She noted repeated instances of customers assuming Whites were management and Blacks entry-level, though the opposite was true.

Findings: Shifting/"The Mask"

As a strategy of navigation, some women discussed what Jones and Shorter Gooden (2003) call "shifting" and Harlem Renaissance poet, Paul Lawrence Dunbar called "wearing the mask." Participants discussed sexual harassment, bullying, and the additional work women were expected to do at work in professional and home spaces.

> "We wear the mask that grins and lies, /
> It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,
> This debt we pay to human guile;
> With torn and bleeding hearts we smile…" (Dunbar [1895] 2009: 173)

Most operate, challenge, and even "put on the mask" of feigned pleasantness or indifference, using that mask as an armor against the daily sting of microaggressions. They employ strategies as means of self-protection. A major instance of shifting in 2011 came from Victoria, who dealt with constant raced and gendered microaggressions, differential treatment and scrutiny working in the male dominated field of engineering. She spoke specifically about feeling like she was under a microscope, and having to "limit" who she is at work.

> Victoria (2011): In order to fit in, I have to be less than who I am. I can't be my total self. I can't respond the way I would normally respond, or react the way I'd normally react. So, because I can't be all of me, they don't get 100%. They're not

> gonna get the best of me because they've put you into these little boxes. They already have their preconceived ideas about who you are as a Black woman. And because of that, you're always conscious of it. So, you play down the great person you can be. You're always trying to maneuver – I better not say that. I shouldn't do this. I won't motion like this. Gotta watch my facial expressions. You're constantly doing that stuff when you really could be thinking about the issue at hand and trying to solve the problem. And you do it because you're always outnumbered, and it's always about their level of comfortability. The more comfortable they are with you, the higher your pay check will be. For the most part, you're the only Black woman in the room. They already think you're an angry Black woman. And so, everything that you say offends everybody. You're conscious of that all the time. You're second-guessing what you're gonna say. Instead of saying what you need to say because it's a good idea.

Feeling outnumbered scrutinized, and assessed through the lens of stereotypes, the participants reported overperforming, working to make sure their work is consistently perfect. [11] Though their White peers are not subject to similar critique, subtle attacks on their credibility and authority are often leveled against them as means of discrimination. And often, they employ layers of protection on the job, in particular, to sustain their livelihoods, and navigate the discriminatory acts they often experience in predominately White spaces.

These women are aware of the fact that there are problematic expectations that shape the ways others see them and interact with them. Further, they are aware that these images are often far from the realities of their lives. Some respond by overworking. Others choose to live in racial enclaves, as means of escape from everyday forms of racism. Though some who make this choice wind up subject to severe levels of institutional oppression discussed above. And moreover, as discussed in the next section, some "shift" (Jones and Shorter-Gooden 2003) or "wear the mask" (Dunbar [1895] 2009).

Findings: Post-Obama vs. Post-Trump Developments – 2011 vs. 2016 Data

As compared to the 2016 interviews, the 2011 data illustrated an optimism associated with the symbolic gains of the Obama administrations. Although the participants rejected the idea that the election had structurally changed the United States, or shifted positions for the majority of Blacks in the society, the fact that the U.S. could elect a Black president represented possibility and change – at least at a symbolic level – regarding possibilities for Black lives in the U.S. Prior to 2008, Americans never witnessed Blacks represent the country as the First Family. By 2016, many small children had only known the U.S. to have had a Black President during their lifetimes.

Nonetheless, the 2011 participants characterized a colorblind/"post-racial society as a utopia; a far-off, perfect world, but one that we cannot hope to reach in this lifetime. Brooklyn humorously likened post-racialism to a promised land; one that we will not reach while alive. She linked post-racialism to the dream of "flying cars," and joked that she would have to "see Jesus" before it became real. Further, Tiana (2011) noted,

> It's a utopia. It's something we're striving to get to. And I'm not trying to be pessimistic, but people are saying we're there now? Hell naw. But when you say post-racial society, I think of heaven. *Like, damn, I gotta die to see a post-racial society.* I'm gonna hafta straight up see Peter, Paul, God, and be like whatup. Like, when you walk through the gates, there will be this waterfall that washes away all your preconceived notions about race, and people, and it won't be no color.

In all, the interviews show that covert discrimination and institutional racism have gone nowhere. Yet, an increasing tide of outright hatred is made clear by distinctions in the 2011 and 2016 interview results. While both sets of women reference outright attacks of racism, earlier interviews discuss this as declining, less common, though still occurring. 2016 interviews, that is, highlight and increase witnessing of Black bodies being vulnerable to, and taken by state-sponsored, and/or police violence (Hill 2016). The 2016 interviews also highlight vulnerabilities

experienced by other groups, and the sentiment that it is only a matter of time before Black women are similarly at risk. In fact, many note, that they ARE at risk as women.

Additionally, the 2016 participants highlight stronger sentiments of economic vulnerability associated with the new administration. Candace (2016) highlighted a feeling of "uncertainty." Similarly, Toni (2016) stated,

> I have noticed some differences. As far as the atmosphere where I live, I live in a predominately Black neighborhood. The area where I live, it causes there an anxiety. When I hear people talk, they talk about the unknown. We don't know what's gonna happen with our job or our healthcare. I hear a lot of unknowns. There was even a white girl in one of my classes and she was crying. How she was talking, she's just overwhelmed by the thought of the things that could happen.

Though many participants were current and future professionals, and some had access to economic stability through their employment, they also recognize the precariousness of that position; for many, Black net worth is so drastically limited by existing student loan debt, as is the case for many Black professionals. In short, the 2016 interviews express a growing fear and anxiety as associated with the presidency and its position towards oppressed groups.

Findings: New Media, and the "Natural Hair Movement"

In framing the positive aspects of being a Black woman, Victoria (2011) stated,

> To be a Black woman is wonderful! I like being a Black woman. I celebrate my Blackness! And I wouldn't change it! If I could change today – if somebody said, if you could be White today, I wouldn't change. There's richness in my Blackness. There's something that's unique about me and my ideas. And I believe that we're the key. I'm not gon' change this. I'm happy being Black.

Similarly, Lilly (2011) beamed as she talked about the many strong Black women she knows. She discussed their "flavor," and also noted that her Black womanhood provides strength to, "handle [her] business." Tiana (2011) linked Black womanhood to "an extreme will to live

against all odds." In other words, as Black women, these women have an expectation that their strength, whether drawn from struggling against legacies of oppression, and/or family and friends, is a source of pride and motivation in their lives (Beaubouf-Lafontant).[12]

The accessibility of social media sites, such as Facebook, with live streaming capabilities, mean that minority groups have taken to online and media spaces to disseminate information. As noted by Van Dijk (1993), media spaces and other spaces where news, intellectual productions, and other cultural creations have historically been spaces dominated by the most powerful groups in the society (i.e., wealthy, White men). Yet, many minority groups employ these vehicles that once disproportionality (and do continue in that direction) to positively represent their identities. And in similar fashion to other historical examples, media spaces are used as means to critique and destabilize the structures that oppress them – In small ways, like representing the diversity of Black hair in media, and in broader ways, like circulating microaggressions, unjust police stops, and acts of overt aggression via Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

2016 interviewees noted the continued circulation of recorded instances of police violence as both evidence of persistence racial oppression, and increasing overt attacks of discrimination. Moreover, the circulation of these videos is seen by some as resistance. They are means Blacks are using to put their unequal treatment into a space that is visible to the masses. In similar fashion to the ways Mrs. Mamie Till-Bradley used media to publicize the atrocious murder of her fifteen-year-old son, Emmitt Till; or ways media were used to highlight nonviolently marching children being attacked by police dogs and fire hoses in the 1960s, multiple participants see the highlighting of these atrocities as a way of using media to confront oppression.

Additionally, 2016 interviewees report an increased witnessing of a diversity of images of Blackness on TV and online as another means of resistance to White supremacy. This is not to say these images are perfect, or that the problematic representations addressed above lack their continued weight and effect. However, they address actors like Viola Davis and Taraji P. Henson, and memorable moments on TV that serve to legitimize Black people, accomplishments, hair, appearances, and lives. The participants note the increasing presence of directors like Eva Duverney and Shonda Rhimes; they also highlight the growing accessibility of online hair tutorials that allow Black women to make at home the products upon which the collective spends millions (Morris and Muhammad 2014).

> Niara (2016): Like some of the TV shows that star Black women, and some of the characters are probably a little problematic for me and my taste, but they're there. And you see that they're getting recognition for those roles, which is fine. I think there's definitely some positive inroads that we're making. Both in real life and on TV. In film. Some of the coolest things are just seeing Black women in positions of power, or positions of being able to create content. Like, Insecure, that show was cool. And Shonda Rhimes' stuff, *Scandal, How to Get Away with Murder*. I didn't know that she was the writer for *Grey's Anatomy* until *Scandal* and *How to Get Away with Murder* got popular. So it's like, this woman, she IS ABC. So that's cool.

Especially in 2016, the interviewees also highlight the burgeoning presence of Black women represented in media in ways that affirm positive Blackness. In all, the interviewees note the beauty of the variety of skin tones and hair textures in Black life, now being represented on television and in media. When asked about *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016), Traci (2016) noted,

> It's tapping into our ancestry, the different values that we've had instilled in us that are overlooked and not viewed as pearls of wisdom. And really uniting them together and saying we have a collective fabric that's beautiful, strong and deep. And it comes in many different flavors.
>
> And all the emotions that she went through is what we all go through and we all experience. And it's okay because this is a part of life. Winter and summer

> seasons. They will come and go. And ultimately, stay beautiful and strong and keep it moving. Because this is a part of process.
>
> It's about redemption, forgiving, allowing us to heal in proper spaces. So she took it from all the elements. It was almost like, metaphorically or metaphysically – working from the ground nature to the spiritual nature and taking it up. That's what it meant for me.
>
> The whole Twitter thing. The democratized, or lack of democratized media, we're finding different ways to subvert that, and find our own voices, via social media. Whether it be hair, or social activism. We are using this technology to connect and unite. So that's a beautiful thing when it works in a beautiful way.

Similarly, participants highlight a growing "Natural Hair Movement," that has increased the available images of Black hair, and accessible methods and products for styling Black hair, that were not as readily available even two decades ago. Given that the Black hair industry is worth millions, the presence of such resources is both personally affirmative and economically useful to many Black women (Morris and Muhammad 2014).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I assert that the structured and historical relations of patriarchy and racism continue to shape everyday life for many Black women, and the reading of their actions in interpersonal and public spheres. In line with earlier investigations of Black women's lives (Jones and Shorter Gooden 2003; Beaubouf-Lafontant 2009), this chapter discusses ways many continue to shift, bend, twist, and contort themselves to accommodate maintaining their senses of humanity despite the subtle and overt oppressions they constantly experience. I address ways members of this group navigate, resist, and continue to affirm their personhood despite continuous messages that work to destabilize, devalue, and destroy their humanity. I attend to the agency of individuals, the multiplicity of transnational Black identities, understandings of Black womanhood, and everyday strategies of negotiation, resistance, rejection, and adaptation to discrimination, marginalization, and microagressions (Delgado and Stefanic 2012).

Women in 2011 articulate similar experiences, even despite presidencies that have questioned the continued significance of race, and the latter 2016 election, which has centered race as a divisive force in the voting population. However, 2016 participants discussed increasing feelings of vulnerability and witnessing and/or experiencing verbal attacks, overt racial violence, and/or racial profiling/police brutality. 2016 interviewees confirmed the persistence of covert racism and sexism manifesting in their everyday lives through treatment by others interpersonally, in similar fashion to 2011 participants.

But as some are first- and second-generation Americans from Jamaica or Panama, and others are in already precarious economic positions as compared to other professionals by race, the politicoeconomic uncertainty brought about by the Trump administration is a cause for their expressed concern. This is a unique finding in the 2016 interviews exclusively – feelings of

vulnerability associated with operating in an oppressive society in a raced and gendered body, that are heightened in the midst of a political backlash against anything non-wealthy, non-White, and non-male. Ultimately, these interviews offer a lens into the weight of continued oppression in Black women's everyday lives; ways this oppression continues to manifest consequences; and uniquely, with 2016, a growing sentiment of insecurity about the unknown changes occurring in the political realm that may affect them.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – ARTICLE THREE

General – Personal Experience

1. Age? Gender?

2. How do you identify yourself racially?

3. How does your racial identity shape the way you understand yourself, who you are?

4. Tell about where you grew up.
   (a) What kind of neighborhood was it?
   (b) What were the racial demographics of the area?
   (c) What kinds friends did you have? And what did they look like? Exposure to other races? Your own race?

5. What were your parents like? What was the makeup of your family? Income levels?

6. Where was your family from? Like your grandparents, were they from the U.S. If so, whereabouts? What impact do you think that had on you and your understandings of the way race operates in this society?

7. How did the women in your life shape how you understood yourself as a Black woman, and what it means to be a Black woman?

Navigating Racism and Sexism

8. Can you recall moments in your life when your race had a significant impact on you? Why or why not?
   (a) Were you encouraged/discouraged from doing certain things because of your race and gender?
      i. Acceptable hair,
      ii. Acceptable mates
      iii. Appearance, clothing, speech?
   (b) How did your family makeup impact your experiences?
      i. Two-parent, two-income home?
      ii. Parents' economic status?
      iii. Siblings?
   (c) What about (a & b) presently?
   (d) What is that like? Give specific examples.

a. What about outside of your family? How often were you made aware of your race and gender in social situations? (e.g., work, family, class, interactions with fellow students and teachers).

b. What about times you may have been mistreated/treated differently than others because of your race? Gender?

c. What about achievement? Job prospects? Opportunities? Future generations? Are you expected to do more/less by peers/teachers/employers because of your RCG?

2) As a Black woman, do you feel like you've ever been made to choose between your race and your gender in terms of what's important to you, or do you see them as inextricable?

3) What does it mean to be a Black woman in America today?
   a. How might the experience of being a Black woman differ from that of Black men?
   b. Nonwhite?
   c. White male?
   d. White female?

4) What is the experience of being a Black woman in corporate America/college?

   a. Are there many people of your RCG working/studying in your field? What is that experience like?

   b. Are Black women subject to additional scrutiny in everyday life? What obstacles do Black women have to face in everyday life because of their racial and gender identities?

   c. How do you discuss those experiences with someone outside of your particular group who might not believe that differential treatment is a serious problem?

5) How are Black women represented in media? Are Black women subject to additional scrutiny when represented in media? How do you know?
6) Black women's beauty? What is happening today? What do you see in media? Skin color/colorism?

7) A lot of discussion has occurred about Beyonce's Lemonade and Solange's *Seat At the Table,* their discussions of racism and Black womanhood. If those albums meant anything to you, can you speak to that?

<u>Race Today</u>

1. How do you view race relations in the U.S. today?

2. How would you define racism? Do you believe it still exists?

3. Do you believe everyone has an equal chance of succeeding economically, professionally and socially in the U.S.?
   (a) What factors, beyond an individual's control, might influence his/her success? Race? Gender? Class?

4. Who/what is at fault for the presence/absence of such success?

5. If you were to randomly sample and survey the U.S. population, do you think we would find that they're people overly sensitive, not sensitive enough, or about right on their feelings about race and how it affects people of color?

6. How does racism affect your everyday life? How do you deal with those acts against you? What do they make you feel? Give examples?

7. In what ways has sexism affected your everyday life? Do you experience acts of sexism in your everyday life? How do you deal with those acts against you? What do they make you feel?

Black Women in Trump's America

8. What did the election of President Trump mean to you? What does it mean to Black Americans? Black women?

9. In what ways have race and racism changed since the last presidential election? What are your perspectives on the 2016 election? How did it make you feel? About the future of the US?

10. Transition from Obama to Trump Presidencies affecting women and people of color?

11. How would you characterize the U.S.'s racial progress over the past fifty years?

12. What is a post-racial society?
    (a) How do you define it?
    (b) What characteristics does/doesn't it have?

13. If we define a post-racial society as one wherein race doesn't have a significant impact on the lives or life-chances of individuals, have we come to the point where post-racialism is a reality in the U.S.?
    (a) Why/Why not? Give specific examples.

14. How close is the US to realizing that goal?

15. How do you think other members of the public (nonwoman, nonblack) understand racism and race relations?

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[1] That is, often the economic subordination experienced by these participants (e.g., food deserts) is complicated or directly influenced by other factors, such as race (e.g., food deserts in predominately Black, poor neighborhoods).

[2] President Obama suffered immense disrespect – even from numerous elected and sworn officials, as well as a 400% increase in death threats, following his ascension to Executive Office (Anderson 2016). Winfrey Harris (2015, 79) notes ways that even former First Lady Michelle Obama was subject to media and political framing as a bestial, angry Black woman – subject constantly to anti-Black stereotypes, despite ways her actual appearance and actions spoke constantly to the contrary.

[3] "In June, a White man in a Chicago Starbucks was filmed calling a Black man a slave, and a White woman in a New Jersey Sears was videotaped making bigoted comments against a family she believed was Indian (they were not)" (Dastagir 2017). Similarly, a 7-11 clerk was caught on video questioning a patron's "papers," asking if he was "here legally," and asserting that he should "speak English" (Gonzalez 2017). Similarly, in May 2017, a White woman in a Reston, Virginia Trader Joe's victimized a Muslim shopper, stating "'I wish they didn't let you in the country'" (*The Washington Post* 2017). That same month, a White Walmart shopper in Arkansas verbally attacked a Latina woman and a Black woman. The first woman, she told to "go back to Mexico," later calling the second woman, who had tried to confront her, the N-word (Herreria 2017). Further, also in May 2017, NBA basketball star, LeBron James' house was spray-painted with the word "NIGGER" in black letters (Bonesteel 2017).

[4] Following Heather Heyer's death, images of the smiling, young woman circulated media, effectively triggering the pity of the nation for her untimely and undeserved death. This is especially true as the images implied the insane and inexplicable tragedy of a young White woman who died fighting a raced war from which White privilege allows many to disengage. The subsequent public outrage caused Heyer's cousin, Diana Ratcliff (2017) to inquire, "Why is it that the death of a white woman at the hands of a white supremacist group has finally gotten the attention of white folk? Why have we been turning our heads the other way for so long? How many black families, Latino families, Asian families, Native-American families before us have been left broken from this ugly vein of hatred in our country? Too many. And to my non-white brothers and sisters, I am so sorry that many of us weren't paying attention before Charlottesville."

[5] Later in 2017, the Trump administration ended a two-decade-long tradition of holding a White House Eid dinner to close the Muslim Ramadan month of religious fasting (Hansler 2017).

[6] For instance, the current president has lent government support to building the Dakota Access pipeline, which dissects, and may contaminate water sources on treaty-protected Standing Rock Sioux tribal lands (Jones et al 2017).

[7] Although transgender women were not included in the initial samples, this is because I worked with the available participants who volunteered for inclusion in the study. As I continue to collect

data in the future, I hope to further expand the sample to include transgender women.

[8] At the same time, Black women are not a monolith. It is given that the life experience of Michelle Obama might differ greatly from that of a fast-food worker in Philadelphia. That is, Black women's experiences differ greatly – both from one another and from those who are not as vulnerable to the types of marginalization we experience. Our experiences are marked different by varying levels of social capital and economic privilege.

[9] Participants' names have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

[10] In terms of the consequences of notions of representativeness, scholarly literature asserts that these individuals often encounter "cultural taxation" (Padilla 1994; Joseph and Hirschfield 2011). Drawing from the example of academe, Amado Padilla (1994) notes that faculty of color are required to negotiate added burdens and barriers in connection to their respective races. Professionals who are culturally taxed are given more work than their White counterparts and may receive more critical scrutiny from professional superiors (Padilla 1994). According to Padilla (1994), this is because they are presumed to be better "racially suited" to perform in certain capacities or are the first "diversity" representatives of their race within those professional spaces. Further, Joseph and Hirshfield (2011) find that faculty of color are subject to claims that they were hired as affirmative action "tokens," and therefore are unqualified for their positions. Consequently, many of these individuals feel forced outperform White counterparts to receive comparable credit, to prove that they are qualified i.e., not "diversity hires," and to avoid unfair scrutiny. These are all stressors to which their White fellows are not subject to the same degree.

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[12] For a detailed discussion of Black women and the many facets of their "strength," see Tamara Beaubouf-Lafontant's (2009) *Behind the Mask of the Strong Black Woman: Voice and the Embodiment of a Costly Performance.*

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Scholars of race have investigated post-racialism and colorblind racial attitudes, and continue to expand this field. Yet, Black feminist thought urges that the conditions for Black women's lives are generated from their position as Black women in a simultaneously patriarchal and racially stratified society. In all, this dissertation is presented as a lens into the continued structures of oppression with which Black women contend; ways these structures affect their life chances, everyday lives, and the ways they are presented to others; and ways the ideologies used to support these structures indeed to contribute to the perpetuation of oppression. Further, the project provides lenses into the ways Black women navigate, maintain humanity, reject, and resist, in an era when overt racism begins to reemerge, and the consequences of institutional racism persist.

In the first article, I address the ways news media serve to reinforce the oppression of Black women, using the example of the erasure and invisibility of racialized and gendered police violence against them. In the second article, I discuss the ways Black women employ public spaces to challenge these intersecting structures of oppression, using the example of Beyoncé Knowles-Carter's video album, *Lemonade* (2016). The final article interrogates ways everyday discrimination affects Black women's lives, along with the means they employ to respond to, and navigate racial, gender, and class inequity.

Ultimately, from publicized instances of Black women and girls being penalized at work and school for hairstyles; to presidential support for racialized violence against Black bodies; to the infringement on reproductive rights of women; and Republican tax plans intended to provide tax cuts for billionaires while shifting billions away from Medicaid and Medicare – it is clear that racism, sexism, and classism continue to intersect and affect experiences, life chances, for

minority groups in the U.S. The dissertation is further proof that intersectional approaches maintain their utility in uncovering the myriad of ways inequality is structured into the social relations of the country, and continues to uniquely affect groups subject to multiple forms of oppression.

Alongside this, the project elucidates ways Black women navigate, maintain humanity, reject, and resist, in an era when overt racism begins to reemerge, denials of inequality persist, and the consequences of institutional racial, gender, and economic oppression also remain. That is, along with forms of oppression, I became intrigued by the responses of everyday people (who often employed Facebook Live and other forms of social media to record and publicize acts of racism), as well as celebrities (e.g., Beyoncé), their growing politicization, and the unique artistic and cultural materials they produced in resistance to oppression. In all, this project is a result of my investigations in these areas.

Chapter One explores media treatment of victims of police violence, Rekia Boyd and Korryn Gaines, to unearth the continuing subtle oppression of Black women in news media. The findings for Chapter One illustrate a disparity in rates of coverage between Black women and Black men victims of police violence. Further, to highlight the intersection of race, I address Justine Ruszczyk, a white Minneapolis woman, killed by a Black Somali police officer. In the months after her death in July 2017, she received more coverage than either Boyd or Gaines had in the year(s) following their killings.

To situate this article amongst other research, Chapter One provided an exploration of an earlier study conducted by Neely (2015). Neely found a similar disparity in coverage of White and Black women who suffer murder, (reinforced by the findings on disparities in coverage between Boyd, Gaines, and Ruszczyk). This article supports the earlier study, uncovering similar

media disregard for Black women victims of police violence, as compared to Black men. Even when they have died under similar circumstances and their deaths/altercations with police similarly available online, there is still a dramatic lack of coverage for Black women as compared to Black men.

A distinction between the framing of Gaines and Boyd is also clear. Results also show the tendency to frame Black women who have engaged police, as Korryn Gaines, as responsible for their killings. This is especially true if their behaviors, in any way, align with controlling images and stereotypes that presume Black women's over-aggressiveness.

Collectively, however, less attention is brought to Gaines' and Boyd's deaths, in part, because Black women's oppression is overlooked and disregarded and this society. Further, they are not discussed because they fail to fit the stereotypical trope of the Black brute, centuries old, and yet used to justify the continued jailing and killing of Black men (Alexander 2012). Still, because stereotypes and tropes surrounding Black women have employed their "strength" and "bestiality" to support their oppression, journalists and members of the public may overlook this form of inequality. In their own ways, stereotypical tropes of Black womanhood may make this violence against them less than news.

Chapter Two explores ways Black women continue intellectual and musical traditions to highlight the oppressions they experience, and to disrupt dominant discourses. Like Davis' (1999) analysis of Blues women's lyrics, the cinematic and lyrical contents of Beyoncé's video album, *Lemonade* (Knowles-Carter 2016), affirm Black Diasporal cultures from the U.S., Africa and the Caribbean, along with the diversity of Black women's hair and appearances. Through selection of love songs, videos, and poetry, *Lemonade* affirms that Black women, like other

humans, experience a range of emotions, not just those informed by "angry" or "strong" Black woman tropes.

The final chapter in the dissertation addresses the ways intersecting oppressions continue to affect Black women's everyday lives. Chapter Three centers on Black women and their discussions of their everyday dealings with racism and sexism as a members of marginalized groups in U.S. society. Using twenty-two semi-structured interviews drawn in 2011 and 2016, I discussed continued manifestations of racism, sexism, and classism in covert forms, including microaggressions; subtle attacks on authority, credibility, and personhood; and excess work scrutiny. I addressed ways some women "shift," (Jones and Shorter-Gooden 2003), restrict, hide, and shield themselves in predominately White spaces from the aforementioned covert forms of discrimination. Others choose to live in racial enclaves, as means of escape from everyday forms of racism. Though some who make this choice wind up subject to severe levels of economic oppression.

While 2011 participants highlighted specific local racialized events, and discrimination occurring throughout their lives, the participants in 2016 addressed an increased witnessing of instances of violence via social and news media. Moreover, they address minority groups' use of media spaces as tools of resistance, employed in part to highlight the oppressions they experience. Finally, 2016 interviewees expressed a growing sense of vulnerability, both as women and as members of economically oppressed groups.

Such work is imperative at the present moment. As outlined in previous chapters, contrary to beliefs that racial transcendence had been reached in the 1970s (Blauner 1989), or even by the first decade of the 2000s, an overtly racist, sexist, classist attitudinal tide has reemerged in the society.

Specifically, this growing tide of racial hatred has unique consequences for groups vulnerable to multiple intersecting forms of oppression – for instance, Black women, whose raced experiences are colored by gender, class, ability, and sexuality. Ultimately, as women, Black women are vulnerable to disproportionately high levels of intimate partner violence; work place sexism and differential treatment; and underrepresentation the political sphere (Morris and Muhammad 2014; Winfrey Harris 2015). As Black people, Black women watch in fear and frustration as they, other adults, and Black children are experiencing a type of slow genocide – via mass incarceration (Alexander 2012); via state-sponsored violence (Hill 2016; Taylor 2016); via neoliberal economic restructuring (Harvey 2007; Martinez 2016; Morris and Muhammad 2014); and via political and corporate corruption resulting in damage to Black health (e.g., the continuing lead crisis affecting thousands of children and adults in the predominately Black City of Flint). And as Black women, they are more vulnerable to having their actions interpreted by others as threatening, hardness, coldness, unfeeling, or stereotypical angry Black womanhood; their bodies and emotions treated more harshly by others based on perceptions of their "strength"; their motherhood framed pejoratively; their curly and kinky hair deemed unprofessional and unacceptable for its lack of straightness; their intellect or authority questioned unjustly; and their bodies sexualized, fetishized, or deemed tough enough to experience violence.

Contributions of the Project

A growing body of research highlighting Black women's contemporary experiences with multiple forms of oppression continues to move in this direction (Beaubouf-Lafontant 2009; Harris-Perry 2011; Jones and Shorter-Gooden 2004; Winfrey-Harris 2015). In all, through my interviews, article data, and investigation of poetry and lyrics, it is indeed true that Black women bend, shift, negotiate, and maneuver their lives around structures of racism and sexism, as shown by Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003). It does well to lend one's imagination to the metaphor. These are long-standing, structured relations between majority and minority groups in the society – Blacks and Whites, men and women, wealthy and working people. The positions and accompanying justifications, as hardened in the American psyche as steel, support semi-permanent structured relationships. And the current U.S. political administration seeks to see these structured relations reinforced through policy.

Further, although Black women know they cannot move or change the structures through individual acts alone, they are aware that they exercise agency to shift small things in their surroundings, challenge massive structures in small ways, or in the ways that are available to them. My multi-article project was intended as an investigation of this, as well. The project also aims to continue the Black feminist tradition of centralizing Black women in academic research. This dissertation continues the tradition of speaking through Black women's experiences into the development of new Black feminist theory, and in contribution to longstanding Black feminist intellectual traditions.

The project aims to employ Black women – a group who contends not just with racism or sexism alone, but with multiple forms of marginalization – and their contemporary experiences in "post-inequality" America to bridge the gap between these scholarly fields of colorblind

racism theory and Black feminist theory. Analyzing the subtle marginalization Black women continue to experience, the project aims to paint a picture of the continued impacts of subtle oppression on the lives of marginalized group members – even in an era when racism, sexism, and all other –isms are supposedly dead.

Secondly, the project provides multiple snapshots into the experience of being a member of a multiply-marginalized group in the U.S., having that marginalization reinforced in popular media, and seeing members of one's group employ those media and other historical forms to respond to, and validate, the difficulty and beauty of that experience.

Finally, my aim through the dissertation is also highlighting the strategies of response of Black women to these larger belief systems that deny the realities of multiple aspects of their existences. Moreover, I am interested in the specific experiences, events, and instances that continue to reinforce the significance of race and gender in a society stratified along those lines. In all, the project aims to contribute to these areas of Black feminist, contemporary race, and media/discourse scholarship.

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