

# How Far Have We Really Come? Black Women Faculty and Graduate Students' Experiences in Higher Education

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*This paper presents a critical overview of the sociological research on black women's experiences as graduate students and faculty in higher education, with a focus on research since 1995. In interactions with the social inequalities of race and class, how are black women faculty and graduate students' experiences with sexism, racism, and classism reproduced within the institution of higher education? What kinds of policies have been implemented to address these problems? What changes, if any, have there been in the experiences of black women faculty and graduate students over time? How do black women scholars fare in relation to their white and male counterparts in higher education? What suggestions do scholars provide toward more equitable work experiences for black women faculty and graduate students in higher education?*

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Scholarship that examines women and work must also examine the unique experiences that women face at the intersections of race, class, and gender. Black, female graduate students and faculty in institutions of higher education inhabit those intersections. Beginning in the late 1970's and continuing throughout the 1980's and 1990's, Standpoint (Smith 1974), Critical Race (Crenshaw 1988, 1991) Black Feminist (Combahee River Collective 1979; Collins 1986, 2000; hooks 1984, 2000; Henderson, Hunter and Hildreth 2010), Multiracial Feminist (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983; Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996), and Anti-racist Feminist (Sommersell 2003) scholarship examining black women's experiences at the intersections of race, class, and gender suggested that both sociological and feminist scholars needed to do more than simply add gender, or add race, respectively. These works suggest a sociological study of race, class, and gender should incorporate intersectionality

as an analytical framework (Collins 2015) for such research.

Such a framework requires researchers to look at the ways in which these interlocking systems of oppression function within black women's experiences as blacks, as women, and as having a particular class location within higher education. An intersectional analytical framework understands intersecting identities such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability, among others, are relational rather than isolated from each other. These identities are co-constructed while underlying and shaping intersecting and interrelated systems of power such as racism and sexism. These intersecting power systems result in a socially constructed and complex set of social inequalities for people, like black women faculty and graduate students working in higher education who experience these intersecting identities via their material reality. As social inequalities are also cross-culturally specific and historically situated, social interactions and unequal material realities will vary depending on the space and time of

social interactions. Groups and individuals who occupy various spaces within the matrix of oppression have varying points of view of their own and others' experiences with inequalities, which results in knowledge projects reflecting their social location within systems of power. Knowledge projects, such as intersectionality as an analytic tool, has the power to shape knowledge projects which challenge the status quo (Collins 2015).

Utilizing intersectionality as an analytic tool, we may be better able to understand which patterns persist in black women's experiences as faculty and graduate students in higher education, and what suggestions scholars provide for black women faculty and graduate students toward successfully navigating their experiences in higher education. This paper examines sociological scholarship between the years of 1995 and 2015 of black women's experiences as faculty and graduate students in higher education with a focus on their navigation of three areas; workplace discrimination, unequal access to resources, and strategies for resistance. Missing from this research is a variety of nuanced statistical analyses that can identify occupational segregation effects for black women faculty and graduate students over time, and tangible suggestions for institutional level strategies of resistance for black women graduate students.

### *Workplace Discrimination*

Workplace discrimination is central to the experiences of black women working as faculty or graduate students in higher education. The research in this area reveals the existence of negative stereotypes rooted in racist, sexist, and classist notions from the era of chattel slavery about black women as undeserving recipients of affirmative action (Spraggins 1998) and lacking workplace productivity (Wilson 2012). These stereotypes translate to fewer educational and employment opportunities and lower wages for Black women faculty in higher education than their white male counterparts (Aparicio 1999;

Sotello and Turner 2002). Negative racial stereotypes affect women of color, particularly black women, disproportionately, and in ways gender discrimination alone cannot explain. Black women faculty and graduate students face a double-bind of racial and gender discrimination at every level of academic life. This double minority status leads faculty and students to view black women scholars as less capable, leading to fewer full-time, tenured positions for black women faculty, and assumptions of black women graduate students as affirmative action recipients incapable of graduate level work. Common across both black women faculty and graduate student experiences is the image of the Mammy, who is expected to give deference not only to white faculty, but also white students, and experience sabotage from their white peers (Wilson 2012). Attending to these issues is further complicated as black women rarely hold administrative positions in universities.

Facing both de jure segregation in the south, and de facto segregation in the north, Edghill (2007) reports black women were hopeful that access to education would lead to equal access in employment with the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* ruling of 1896 which called for separate but equal education for blacks. Under this ruling, Edghill (2007) discusses black women's placement in primarily black schools. Here we see the genesis of sexism (Collins 2000; Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman 2003; hooks 2000; Morales 2014; Ramey 1995; Thomas and Hollenshead, 2001; Thorpe 2014; Sotello and Turner 2002) and racial discrimination against black women within other research reviewed here (Aparicio 1999; Browne and Misra 2003; Collins 2000; hooks 2000; Ramey 1995; Seo and Hinton 2009; Spraggins 1998; Thorpe 2014; Sotello and Turner 2002).

During economic expansion, black men gained access to marginalized faculty positions in higher education, while black women were restricted from such opportunities. During periods of economic decline linked to economic globalization, Edghill (2007) finds that, in the interest of the capitalist class, black women

provided the opportunity for labor that was cheaper than their male counterparts. Therefore, while they could gain access to white campuses, they were relegated to race-specific positions. Aparicio (1999) found black women described race-specific positions as a “ghetto appointment” where a “person of color [is] hired to do the Black stuff” (p. 125). This research supports Thomas and Hollenshead (2001) who also find that black women’s labor as faculty is both the cheapest and least valued, and as such, will then be used to educate black women graduate students whose cheaper labor will be further exploited in race-specific positions within the institution of higher education. We can see through the historical analysis Edghill (2007) provides, and Aparicio’s (1999) interviews with black women faculty, how black women’s experiences with racism and sexism in academia can be historically traced back to their initial participation in higher education, which clearly explains the devaluation of black women’s labor and why black women faculty are still paid less than their white and male counterparts (Browne and Misra 2003; Cotter et. al. 2003; Edghill 2007).

Predominantly white institutions are particularly difficult places for black women faculty and graduate students (Edghill 2007; Henderson et. al. 2010; Spraggins 1998; Sotello and Turner 2002), where they face a type of double minority status that negatively impacts perceptions of them as less than capable educators, researchers, and scholars (Wilson 2012). Sotello and Turner (2002) find that in 1997, out of all women faculty in the U.S., black women accounted for only 6 percent of all full and associate professors, and 7.5 percent of assistant professors. By 2013, black women accounted for only 6 percent of all full professors, 3 percent of all associate professors, and 4 percent of all assistant professors in degree granting postsecondary institutions<sup>1</sup>. Black women report that whites are surprised by their presence within the halls of academe where

faculty are not prepared to address the scholarly interests of black students (Spraggins 1998; Henderson et. al, 2010). Graduate student peers and faculty assume that black students are affirmative action recipients, and/or unprepared for graduate level work (Spraggins 1998).

Patricia Hill Collins (2000) utilizes Black Feminist Thought to discuss the saliency of negative stereotypes, what she calls ‘controlling images’, particularly those for black women. According to Collins, stereotypical images of black women are part of a “general ideology of domination” (2000:69) that take on special meanings. Collins theorizes that the elite groups holding the instruments of power within their ability to define societal values, can and do manipulate ideas about black women by exploiting existing symbols, and creating new ones when necessary, to make poverty, sexism, racism, and other forms of injustice appear as normal and inevitable parts of life. Prescient to this review is the image of the Mammy, created to justify black women’s economic exploitation by whites during slavery, and continued into their relegation as domestic workers post-slavery. Collins (2000) describes the Mammy as the constructed image of the black woman who accepts her racial and gendered subordination, and that to which all black women’s behavior is measured.

While negative stereotypes of the Mammy affect black women faculty and graduate students, another negative racial stereotype, the Model Minority, is co-constructed for Asian and Asian American women against the Mammy. For Asian and Asian American women, the Model Minority myth expects these scholars to be quiet, compliant, and not draw attention to themselves. For black women, the Modern Mammy construction expects black women to give deference to their white and male counterparts, allows for students along with colleagues to question their professorial competence, and then expects black women faculty and graduate

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *The Condition of Education*

2016 (NCES 2016-144), Characteristics of Postsecondary Faculty.

students to comfort those who question their abilities (Seo and Hinton 2009; Wilson 2012). Black women professors are also sabotaged by white administrators who often take the side of offended white students in introductory courses that cover racism and sexism, even within Sociology departments (Wilson 2012).

As of 2007, the National Center for Education Statistics reports that black women in academe rarely hold authoritative positions, accounting for only 6 percent of managerial, executive, or administrative positions (Seo and Hinton 2009). Here, the Modern Mammy construction, as in its original version, still calls for (now middle-class) black women in higher education to be subordinate to their white male bosses, but also assertive in such a way that professionally advances them. These assertions, the authors argue, are only acceptable when aimed toward the benefit of other people. When black women's assertions are aimed toward their own benefit, negative stereotypes come forward, more powerful colleagues and administrators label these women as aggressive, and black women's progress in academe is stunted.

Seo and Hinton's (2009) findings support Pierce's (1995) findings that black women are both racialized and gendered in professional settings. Although not focused specifically on black women faculty and graduate students' experiences, Pierce's findings are useful in understanding that black women lawyers, like black women faculty and graduate students in higher education, experience a 'double bind,' or double minority status, as both gendered and racialized individuals. Here, black women faculty are trapped in negative race and gender stereotypes where they are considered as both aggressive and less competent by their (often white) male colleagues and students when being assertive (Aparicio 1999).

In addition to a double bind, black women faculty are expected to mentor students of color more than their white and male counterparts are, particularly for graduate students of color. This leads to the overextension and exhaustion of

black women faculty, and most certainly impacts their ability to expeditiously complete their requirements toward tenure (Glover 2006; Seo and Hinton 2009). For black women working in higher education, the Modern Mammy is a negative stereotype that relegates black women faculty into race-specific, lesser paid, over-worked, and unappreciated mentoring positions (Seo and Hinton 2009; Wilson 2012). Negative stereotypes also impact black women's faculty placement in over-worked and lesser appreciated race-specific courses. This can lead to unequal pay, limited access to resources, and limited mentorship opportunities for black women in new job placements within higher education (Edghill 2007).

Attitudinal and institutional racism are dependent upon each other and inseparable for black women graduate students in higher education as a social institution plagued with the same sexism and racism found within larger society (Spraggins 1998; Sommersell 2003). Supporting Spraggins' (1998) findings that black women graduate students also face a double-bind, Morales (2014) finds that black women students face racial eroticism and microaggressions from non-blacks on their campuses that were tied with stereotypes that as black women, they were hypersexual, aggressive, and exotic. Like other scholarship reviewed here pointing to racism as a root cause for workplace discrimination faced by black women faculty and graduate students (Ramey 1995; Spraggins 1998; Aparicio 1999; Collins 2000; hooks 2000; Sotello and Turner 2002; Browne and Misra 2003; Sommersell 2003; Seo and Hinton 2009), Morales sees racial microaggressions rooted in classed, gendered, and racialized ideas of black women. For black female graduate students, these microaggressions are also tied to other student (and faculty) perceptions that they are lower income. Faculty members' complicity in the perpetuation of negative stereotypes about black women graduate students can lead to further isolation and

marginalization (Borum and Walker 2012; Charleston et al. 2014; Morales 2014).

### *Limited Access to Resources*

In addition to research on workplace discrimination, other research has examined black women's limited access to resources in higher education. Some of this work focuses on women in female-dominated occupations. For example, Cotter, Hermsen and Vanneman (2003) utilize crowding, devaluation, and human capital theories to examine occupational gender segregation effects across multiple racial/ethnic categories. Comparing whites, blacks, Latinos, and Asians, the authors examine how the processes of occupational segregation for workers in female-dominated occupations and those of all workers in highly segregated labor markets may affect earnings. The authors find the observed segregation effects (i.e., those in segregated occupations earn less money) most negatively affect black women. By moving beyond the black/white binary, the authors find both individual and contextual effects can benefit women from all racial/ethnic groups; women in predominantly male professions or in less gender segregated professions earn more than women in predominately female professions. Therefore, black women within academia may earn more than black women in other occupations, but still earn less than their white and male counterparts within academia as they experience gender and occupational segregation effects. Cotter and colleagues (2003) found that black women are the only group particularly penalized relative to white women, may face more intense racism than Latinas and Asian women, are more occupationally segregated, and are concentrated in highly segregated labor markets. These patterns are attributable to the negative racialization of black women and its associated negative stereotypes (Collins 2000; hooks 2000; Ramey 1995; Seo and Hinton 2009; Spraggin 1998; Sotello and Turner 2002).

Race-specific positions also undermine the access to authority for black women faculty at all levels of higher education, including with students (Huston 2006; Henderson et al. 2010). Both Aparicio (1999) and Sotello and Turner (2002) discuss Kanter's (1978) concept of tokenism for women of color academics. Although she does not focus specifically on black women faculty and graduate students, Sotello and Turner (2002) do point to the disproportionately low numbers of women of color who, as tokens, are contextually being stereotyped so their mistakes are more visible and on display within their workplaces, and pressure to be perfect is greater. As tokens, black women find it harder to gain credibility, are more isolated and peripheral, have fewer opportunities to be sponsored, face misperceptions of their role and identity in their departments, and face more personal stress (Sotello and Turner 2002:76). This can be particularly difficult in the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields where black women graduate students are found to drop out, at least in part, due to lack of faculty mentors and extreme isolation (Borum and Walker 2012; Charleston et al. 2014).

Being positioned as a token creates for black women in academia an "outsider within" status wherein black women's intimate proximity to the white families that employed them lends them a unique view of whiteness that most others in the black community and those in the white community themselves never had (Collins 1986; Henderson et al. 2010). Accompanied with the knowledge that no matter how valued whites in power viewed them to be, black women knew they would and could never really be considered equal to whites. In academia, this standpoint of black women as outsiders within uniquely situates them for more nuanced analysis, particularly when in touch with their marginalization. Black women are, thus, strangers and "marginal intellectuals" (Collins 1986:15). In the STEM fields, black women graduate students are exceptionally marginalized

intellectuals, particularly when transferring from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Spraggins 1998; Charleston et al. 2014).

Spraggins (1998) documented the sharp culture shock that black students experience when transferring to predominantly white graduate schools from Historically Black Colleges and Universities when they first become outsiders within. Much like how the veil of invisibility by W.E.B. DuBois (1996) described Blacks experience in a white world, black women graduate students are so few in academic spaces that white ignorance of their lives, burdens, and histories leaves black women graduate students feeling as though they are expected to serve as black spokespersons, even when they have no desire for centrality within such settings. Rooted in white men's understandings of a social world that has nothing to do with black people or with women, black women graduate students do not see themselves reflected in either race or gender scholarship (Smith 1974), are often unsure of their value as students, and discouraged from focusing in fields still viewed as men's domain, such as the STEM fields. As tokens in the STEM fields, black women graduate students are hyper visible, and are often expected to justify their placement in such programs by their peers who question their abilities as both black women and scholars (Borum and Walker 2012; Charleston et al. 2014). Here again, we see the intersecting effects of race and gender particularly impact black women graduate students, as black male faculty and students do not report feeling as though they are expected to educate whites on such matters (Spraggins 1998).

Limited access to research and class discussions in which they find themselves represented is an obstacle for black women graduate students (Spraggins 1998; Sommersell 2003). Some black women graduate students reported they often silenced themselves when confronted with racially insensitive and outright racist comments from faculty and peers (Borum and Walker 2012), or felt silenced because they

chose to pick their battles (Spraggins 1998). Others report a more traditional silencing that comes from the barriers of power, powerlessness, privilege, and oppression, based on the criteria of class, race, and gender (Brooks 2002). For both black women returning to college as adults, and those in the STEM fields, this can lead to feelings of fear and low self-esteem, diminished classroom participation, limited inclusion in study groups with other graduate students (Rosa 2013), and dropping out to cover up perceived inadequacies (Brooks 2002; Borum and Walker 2012). In this way, black women graduate students face limited access to academic spaces in which they can share their ideas and feedback with peers and faculty.

Black women graduate students also face unequal access to financial support. Spraggins (1998) finds that Latina and black students were less likely than their white counterparts to receive research assistantships and more likely to receive fellowships. Fellowships, while financially helpful, do not provide the much-needed access to faculty and research activities that research assistantships provide, as well as forming the basis for a more competitive resume when on the academic job market. Furthermore, they may contribute to negative interactions with their non-Latina and black peers who draw on negative stereotypes of black women to view such funding as undeserved affirmative action they cannot access (Spraggins 1998; Thurston, Penner, and Penner 2016). Spraggins (1998) also finds that black graduate students are specifically siphoned out of research based funding pools with white students and into those that require they perform teaching assistantships where they face the pressures of isolation and marginalization (Borum and Walker 2012; Rosa 2013), in addition to those described by Kanter (1978) in their positions as tokens representing their departments, where they are also stressed, overworked, and in need of strategies for resisting these institutional and individual barriers.

*Strategies for Resistance: Peer Mentoring, Speaking Truth to Power, and Self-Care*

A third area of focus in the research of black women faculty and graduate students' experiences in higher education is strategies for resistance. In this literature, identified strategies for resistance range from interpersonal mentorship to calls for departmental and campus-wide policy change. Relationships with black women faculty mentors and other black women graduate students appear to be crucial for the professional socialization and personal success of both black women faculty and graduate students (Aparicio 1999; Ramey 1995); however, limited access to these important mentoring relationships is yet another barrier black women face in higher education.

Although Sotello and Turner (2002) suggest that aligning community service with academic research can revitalize black women faculty, black women graduate students are often discouraged from engaging in race and gender-specific research to avoid dashing their hopes of establishing mentor relationships with more powerful faculty, distancing them from both community service work and black women faculty. With fewer black women filling full-time, tenure track positions who might serve as mentors to black women graduate students, which increases their isolation and marginalization, research shows that black women graduate students engage in at least five identified strategies of resistance against such distancing. First, they look for faculty of color outside their departments who understand the unique challenges and experiences they face for mentoring (Aparicio 1999; Brooks 2002; Sotello

and Turner 2002; Henderson et al. 2010; Morales 2014). Second, they draw on their expertise to contribute to scholarship in which they see themselves, and work with and encourage each other (Sotello and Turner 2002; Charleston et al. 2014). Third, black women graduate students resist isolation and marginalization from their peers through space making. Here, some black women graduate students who have been intentionally left out of dialogues and study sessions with their peers report they simply show up, making a space for themselves. Fourth, some black women graduate students report they formed academic 'posses' comprised of black women graduate students across their campuses who experience similar challenges in their own departments (Rosa 2013). Strategies of resistance for lack of mentoring are usually engaged at the interpersonal level for black women graduate students. However, informal mentoring programs focused specifically toward black women graduate students such as those in the STEM fields which provide opportunities for creative activities that support their psychosocial



and cultural development (Wilson and King 2016), such a program can be easily applied at the department level for black women graduate students in other academic disciplines.

Peer mentoring relationships with established faculty can help black women faculty navigate their chilly reception, negative department climate, norms and expectations, and the assumption by their peers that blacks are incapable of theorizing (Henderson et al. 2010). Further, these relationships can help black women faculty to psychologically resist the raced and gendered minefield of academia via validation, emotional support, friendship, and mutuality. Peer mentoring relationships appear fundamental for black women faculty's resistance against internalizing their marginalization as they also provide feedback, share information, and give advice on work related issues (Henderson et al. 2010). However, no one mentor can provide all the support new black women faculty need, so sharing the burden of mentorship across a collaborative and supportive group both in and out of their own departments is necessary. Aparicio (1999) suggests black women faculty maintain their relationships with their dissertation advisors from former campuses, and cultivate mentoring relationships through networking with other black women faculty in national and professional associations who can keep them in the loop about informal and formal events and panels where they may collaborate with other black women scholars.

Most research reviewed here finds that mentoring relationships are important for both black women graduate students and black women faculty working toward tenure in predominantly white institutions, and result in positive effects toward black women's professional and personal success as academics (Edghill 2007; Henderson et al. 2010; Rosa 2013). However, Gardner (2014) finds no statistically significant difference in black women scholar's perceptions of personal and professional success between those who were mentored and those who weren't. As her findings go against the larger body of research that finds mentoring relationships highly valuable for black women faculty and graduate students, Gardner

notes that racial significance may have been masked by ambiguity in the survey questionnaire, and identified this as an area for improvement in future studies.

Utilizing Black Feminist Thought and intersectionality as theoretical frameworks may provide a more nuanced understanding of the importance of mentoring relationships via the construction of survey questionnaires which better attend to the needs of black women scholars navigating the intersections of race, class, and gender. Drawing on the multicultural/feminist mentoring model that attends to the specific needs of women of color described by Chesney-Lind, Okamoto, and Irwin (2006), Henderson et al. (2010) utilize Black Feminist Thought (Collins 2000) to provide a framework for better understanding how black women faculty benefit from mentoring relationships. Further, the four main themes of Black Feminist Thought, the importance of self-definition, the significance of self-valuation and respect, the necessity of self-reliance and independence, and the centrality of a changed self to personal empowerment (Collins 2000: 35-37), can be used as strategies of resistance against the racism and sexism experienced by both black women faculty and black women graduate students in higher education.

Speaking truth to power is another strategy of resistance that black women faculty and graduate students are encouraged to engage (Sotello and Turner 2002; Shields 2012). They have called for faculty of color and those belonging to majority groups to speak the truth to power regarding black women faculty and graduate students' experiences with racism, sexism, and classism within the academy. Henderson et al. (2010) suggest black women faculty live Black Feminist Thought by asserting their self-valuation and self-definitions as capable scholars, which will bring an awareness of the interlocking nature of race, gender, and class oppression, and crystallize the importance of including black women's culture as a strategy of resistance. However, speaking truth to colleagues about



these experiences can be difficult as they are often re-interpreted through the lens of white privilege, then dismissed (Henderson et al. 2010). Through their self-definition as capable scholars, black women also indirectly resist sexist and racist teaching evaluations (Chesney-Lind et al. 2006) by keeping their focus on their work, carefully documenting teaching successes and professional development workshop attendance, and planning pedagogy which reflects their dedication and investment in student learning (Henderson et al. 2010). To help black women faculty resist their experiences at the intersections of race/class/gender, campus administrators, policy makers (Sotello and Turner 2002), and white women allies (Shields 2012) need to understand and acknowledge how the race and gender composition of their departments affects their successes or failures. At the administrative level, colleges and universities can ally in resistance by pairing new black women faculty hires with established black women faculty, or other women of color (Henderson et al. 2010), and by providing professional development to assist new black women faculty to overcome challenges of multiple marginalization based on their race, class, and gender (Sotello and Turner 2002).

Although creating and maintaining a healthy work/family balance and engaging in self-care are suggested as crucial strategies of resistance for both black women faculty and graduate students (Spraggins 1998; Thomas and Hollenshead 2001; Sotello and Turner 2002; Thorpe 2014), many of these suggestions focused on individual efforts. Findings suggest black women faculty and graduate students do engage individual strategies of resistance. For black women faculty, individual strategies can include choosing when to serve and when to protect the work/family balance. This can be done by using campus programs and policies, options such as family care leave, mental health days, counseling, and choosing not to respond to campus correspondence (Henderson et al. 2010). Black women faculty also engage in individual

resistance when they respect each other's work, seek advice from mentors and select committees and tasks that are meaningful and overlap research, service to community, and instruction, leaving the campus as often as possible, or leave to find new departments with more supportive senior faculty (Aparicio 1999; Chesney-Lind et al. 2006; Seo and Hinton 2009; Henderson et al. 2010). Black women graduate students engage in similar individual strategies for self-care. These include reaching out for the support of non-academics such as family, friends, and religious communities (Rosa 2013).

Black women faculty and graduate students resist isolation in supporting each other without judgement and against the climate of competition, by making allies and connecting with communities of color as an individual strategy of resistance, and through self-care (Thorpe 2014). Senior black women faculty can support newer black women faculty navigate their new departmental climate, culture and expectations, and mentor them through the department's tenure processes (Aparicio 1999; Seo and Hinton 2009; Henderson et al. 2010). Black women graduate students also resist isolation by creating academic posses with black women and other women of color graduate students in other departments (Rosa 2013). However, future research must attend to the efficacy of such strategies at the individual level, and to what end these might further isolate and alienate black women faculty and graduate students from their departmental peers. For black women faculty who are already overworked, this adds an extra burden to their workload. It can also confirm racist and sexist assumptions from white and male colleagues that black women are less capable scholars, therefore only of use to black women graduate students, whose isolation and marginalization is often perpetuated by faculty members (Borum and Walker 2012). Mentoring relationships, understood as mainly supportive and positive for black women faculty and black women graduate students, must also be understood as relationships with power

differentials between mentor and mentee. The traditional hierarchies common in academia can still risk leaving black women graduate students vulnerable to black women faculty. Utilizing a feminist/multicultural mentoring model (Chesney-Lind et al. 2006) can help black women faculty resist these traditional hierarchies within higher education by using the power they hold as faculty to empower black women graduate students rather than exploit them.

At the institutional level, promoting a welcoming environment by increasing the representation of black women faculty, graduate students, and other scholars of color is another crucial strategy of resistance in which faculty and administrators in higher education can engage (Sotello and Turner 2002; Seo and Hinton 2009). Borum and Walker (2012) suggest that institutional culture must be addressed to ensure the well-being and academic success of black women graduate students. One way this can be achieved is by seeking greater parity in racial and gender representation among faculty and students of color. This would also require that departments place careful consideration on job candidates that match the racial/ethnic/gender composition of their graduate students. Future research must also attend to strategies that will address institutional issues beyond a welcoming environment and toward substantive programming that will educate departments on racial microaggressions commonly experienced by black women faculty (Aparicio 1995; Sotello and Turner 2002) and graduate students (Morales 2014; Borum and Walker 2012).

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, Sotello and Turner (2002) suggest a four-step strategy of resistance toward a healthy work/family balance that accommodates conflicts of commitment for Black women faculty. First, departments must identify and acknowledge institutional norms and policies that place black women faculty at a disadvantage resulting from family or community commitments. Once identified, departments can then develop and promote new policies that support, not punish, community and

family involvement. Departments should then include women of color in identifying these problems and possible solutions. Finally, departments must examine family friendly initiatives used by private corporations and evaluate their appropriateness for higher educational settings (Sotello and Turner 2002:86).

### *Theoretical Perspectives*

Research reviewed here attending to black women faculty and graduate student experiences in higher education utilizes Black Feminist Thought (hooks 1984, 2000; Spraggins 1998; Collins 2000; Thomas and Hollenshead 2001; Seo and Hinton 2009; Henderson et al. 2010; Wilson 2012; Galveston et al 2014), Critical Race Feminism (Edghill 2007; Seo and Hinton 2009; Galveston et al. 2014), Multiracial Feminism (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996;), intersectionality (Collins 2000; Browne and Misra 2003; McCall 2005; Shields 2012; Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; Morales 2014), and Doing Gender (Martin 2004) perspectives. Additionally, Cotter, Hermsen and Vanneman (2003) utilize Crowding, Devaluation, and Human Capital theories to examine occupational gender segregation effects across multiple racial/ethnic categories.

Analyses within Black Feminist Thought suggests black women utilize a black feminist framework to illuminate the obstacles black women graduate students face, including those that influence graduate studies and professional relationships. For Black women faculty in higher education, Black Feminist Thought provides a lens by which the tenure and promotion processes, institutional hiring practices, disrespect and poor teaching evaluations from students, and the likelihood of experiencing negative departmental climates, can be better understood. This perspective holds that Black women academics have transformational promise resulting from their outsider within status, but also that they experience

subordination of their work, isolation, and exclusion, while their credentials, educational background, expertise, and experiences as black women are all called into question.

Scholars utilizing Critical Race and Multiracial Feminisms focus on the historical and legal impacts on black women faculty and graduate students' entrance into higher education and their subsequent experiences. These frameworks allow us to understand the processes by which black women faculty and graduate students experience academic marginalization and social isolation, particularly when entering predominantly white institutions.

Anti-racist Feminist theory draws from Critical Race, Black Feminist Thought, and Standpoint theories that sought to bridge the gap of exclusion of race from gender studies and gender from race studies. This perspective is particularly germane to the experiences of black women graduate students as it questions the relationship between power and knowledge within academic theory in holding to the idea that theory can be used both in reflection and to maintain central power (or authority) within society. This perspective also provides a framework through which the reproduction of black women graduate students' experiences with racism and sexism as reproduced within racially/ethnically diverse academic departments can be further explored (Sommersell 2003).

Works analyzing these experiences through intersectionality focus on the ways in which race, class, and gender impact black women faculty and graduate students' experiences. These works are particularly useful in examining black women graduate student experiences in the STEM fields. Here, we see that race supersedes gender in a way that the Doing Gender perspective alone cannot explain. However, within the Doing Gender perspective, we can see the ways in which gender is socially constructed for all women, and in doing so, compare gendered experiences across raced experiences for black women faculty and graduate students working and studying in institutions of higher

education. This perspective is also helpful when combined with Black Feminist Thought, using intersectionality as an analytical strategy attending to new understandings of how higher education as a social institution is associated with inequality to discover and suggest ways in which black women faculty and graduate students resist and navigate the minefield of academia through peer mentorship, speaking truth to power, and self-care.

As our social landscape is changing and academic institutions continue to move forward toward policies of diversity and inclusion, the anti-racist feminist frameworks as used by Sommersell (2003) to examine black women graduate student experiences in racially diverse women's studies classrooms in Canada, combined with Black Feminist Thought, standpoint and intersectionality as analytical tools, might better explain black women faculty and graduate students' experiences in American institutions of higher education. As Sommersell (2003) suggests, just like Smith's (1974) work explained how Standpoint theory sought to correct the imbalance of the 'add and stir' method used by race and gender scholars to examine black women's experiences, simply adding racially and ethnically diverse faculty and graduate students will not fix racism and sexism in higher education.

I suggest future studies examining black women's experiences as faculty and graduate students utilize a multi-perspectival design. Such a design is necessary to understanding how black women's experiences of oppression at the intersections of race/class/gender are both still present and systemic in racially/ethnically diverse academic departments. Utilizing this multi-perspectival design may help scholars better explore connections between the experiences with institutional barriers of racism, sexism, and classism of black women graduate students and the experiences of Black women faculty with these institutional barriers, and the power dynamics that shape these experiences.

### *Methodological Strengths and Weaknesses*

This literature provides a picture of several aspects of black women's experiences within higher education; the evidence shows that their experiences are negatively impacted by racism, sexism, and classism. That this body of work uses both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and analyses from a variety of theoretical frameworks, are strengths of the literature reviewed here. While results from quantitative analyses can lend valuable insights for occupational segregation trends, those reviewed here either found no significant differences in experiences between black and white students and those of other races (Thurston et al. 2016), or utilized ambiguous survey designs and limited scope that possibly masked racial significance (Gardner 2014). However, when quantitative analyses (Sotello and Turner 2002; McCall 2005) are coupled with Black Feminist Thought, Intersectional, or Critical Race feminist frameworks (Browne and Misra 2003; McCall 2005; Shields 2012; Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; Morales 2014), we can see how occupational segregation trends for both race and gender materialize in the lives of black women faculty and graduate students. Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman's (2003) work utilizing Crowding, Devaluation, and Human Capital theories to analyze these effects provides a strong model by which future studies can incorporate these with Black Feminist Thought, Multiracial Feminist, Intersectional and Critical Race frameworks (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman 2003).

Research utilizing ethnographies, in-depth interviews, and historical analysis (Edghill 2007) provides a clear and nuanced picture of the experiences of black women faculty and students in higher education over the past thirty years. However, these studies did not utilize comparative designs that could possibly highlight the differences in faculty and graduate student experiences between races. Because studies like Gardner's do not concur with the

overwhelming findings within qualitative research designs regarding the importance of mentorship for black women faculty and graduate students, future research should incorporate more mixed methods to further explore black women faculty and graduate students' experiences in higher education. I view that such few studies exist within this body of work using mixed methods which could provide valuable insights on occupational segregation trends for black women faculty more of a shortcoming than Gardner's ambiguous findings. More research utilizing complex statistical analyses, such as McCall's (2005) design, would strengthen future research attending to black women faculty and graduate students' experiences within higher education, and attend to such ambiguity in findings.

### **Conclusion**

This review showed that not much has changed for black women faculty and students since we were first legally allowed to pursue an education. The literature reviewed here indicates that black women faculty and graduate students in higher education still face multiple oppressions at the intersections of race, gender, and class. Black women faculty are still relegated to race-specific positions considered not as academic, funneled into mentorship and teaching assistantships that leave them exhausted, and have limited access to mentors who can understand their unique experiences and insights, and help move them toward research grants, full-time faculty appointments, and achieving tenure. Black women graduate students still face isolation and marginalization, racism and eroticization, microaggressions, have fewer funding, research, and network opportunities than their white and male counterparts, and risk dropping out of graduate programs.

Although many works reviewed here include strategies for resistance, these tend to focus on faculty and graduate student efforts at the individual level. Future research may look

beyond identifying individual strategies of resistance for black women faculty and graduate students to identify institutional and policy level strategies for all black women faculty and graduate students in higher education. We need more detailed research that documents what strategies are being employed and whether they are effective in improving experiences for black women faculty and graduate students. While black women faculty and students have clearly persisted in higher education over the last thirty years, they still hold uniquely oppressed positions as they continue working together and with non-black and male allies to help navigate through the institutional and individual barriers they face as faculty and graduate students working and studying in institutions of higher education. Lastly, integrated theoretical approaches must be developed to understand how power dynamics at the intersections of race, class, and gender continue to shape and impact black women faculty and graduate student experiences within higher education.

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