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On Joy and War: Black Feminism/Intersectionality

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Abstract

Black feminist theorizing developed outside the formal academy to meet the needs of Black women but did not end there. This review offers entrée to some current “wars” and debates on politics of knowledge about Black feminist theories, concepts, and praxis that have deepened within sociology and increasingly extend into live conference panels, online debates, and legislatures. Shared characteristics within Black feminism include persistent and critical attention to Black women’s knowledge production, power, and social change—but there is much more. Drawing on sociology and other disciplines, this review of Black feminism/intersectionality covers families of Black feminisms, disciplinary citation trends, methodological considerations, and tensions around embodiment in claims to Black feminism and intersectionality. In the conclusions, we propose directions to untether conflicts, unsettle wars, and move toward joy and liberation as the struggle continues.

INTRODUCTION

We enjoyed writing this review, even—perhaps especially—as we struggled, reminding us of Black lesbian feminist poet Audre Lorde’s quote, “The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference” (Lorde, quoted in [brown 2019](#bib21)).[[1]](#footnote-2) This joy bubbled up despite continued evidence in the United States and abroad of Black feminist thought and Black women being under siege.

Black feminist theorizing developed outside the formal academy to meet the needs of Black women but did not end there. Black feminist frameworks take as a given that race, gender, and other systems matter together and are inseparable. Intersectionality,[[2]](#footnote-3) while indebted to Black feminism and taking on some of the same starting assumptions, began with legal analysis in critical race theory ([Crenshaw 1989](#bib44), [1991](#bib45)), yet grew beyond that proscribed space to “travel” to many countries, disciplines (Salem 2018, p. 405), government institutions ([Bond 2021](#bib15), Falcón 2016, UN Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities 2021), and popular culture ([Hancock 2016](#bib65), [Nash 2019](#bib94)), simultaneously increasing and losing its value to some scholars and activists (Falcón & Nash 2015). As concepts emerging from Black feminism have been universalized, concerns about accountability and praxis have been raised, along with a seeming return to explicitly naming contributions brought forth by Black feminist scholarship.

This review offers entrée to some current debates, but we take a different approach from a traditional survey of the literature for several reasons. First, the past decade has produced multiple histories, genealogies, retrospectives, and typologies on Black feminism and intersectionality, some of which go back to Sojourner Truth or traverse outside the United States ([Alexander-Floyd 2012](#bib3), [Brewer 2020](#bib19), [Carbado et al. 2013](#bib25), [Cho et al. 2013](#bib27), [Collins 2015](#bib39), [Collins & Bilge 2016](#bib41), [Davis & Lutz 2024](#bib49), [Hancock 2016](#bib65), [Ken & Helmuth 2021](#bib81), [Keuchenius & Mügge 2021](#bib82), [Nash 2019](#bib94), [Nash & Pinto 2023](#bib96), [Tomlinson 2020](#bib126)). Furthermore, discipline-specific endeavors abound, including in legal academy ([Alexander-Floyd 2010](#bib4), [Cho 2013](#bib26)), organizational studies ([Holvino 2010](#bib70)), philosophy ([Thomas 2020](#bib125)), psychology (Cole 2009, [Grzanka 2020](#bib62)), political science ([Dhamoon 2011](#bib52), [Mügge et al. 2018](#bib93)), and sociology ([Choo & Ferree 2010](#bib28), [Clarke & McCall 2013](#bib32), [Collins 2015](#bib39), [McCall 2005](#bib88)), among others. Second, we imagined a reader who would benefit from a (sociological) literature review that includes politics of knowledge production that increasingly extends into live conference panels, online debates, and legislatures.[[3]](#footnote-4) Third, we thought about what, how, and to whom we write. This article offers one model of how Black feminist traditions are inclusive of audiences of various backgrounds—from people who are in our chorus to those who might be forced to engage us—and as a way to emphasize our voice and place as knowledge producers on our own terms.

The first debate we engage centers on the question of whether Black feminist sociology has coalesced around singular approaches to Black feminism and intersectionality—clearly, the answer is “no.” However, we recognize that central theories, histories, and methodologies exist with at least three shared characteristics across intertwined frameworks: (*a*) attention to Black women’s knowledge production (even when not the focus of a study/text), (*b*) addressing power, and (*c*) commitment to social change. While not exhaustive, this review of Black feminism/intersectionality covers disciplinary citation trends, definitions of Black feminisms, methodological considerations, embodiment in claims to Black feminism and intersectionality, and directions toward joy and liberation.

THE LANDSCAPE: DATA ON THE DISCIPLINE

Is Black feminist work being published in sociology? To review the landscape on the topic, we conducted a keyword search within six sociology journals—*American Journal of Sociology, American Sociological Review, Social Forces*, *Social Problems,* *Gender & Society,* and *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity.* We searched the following key phrases in the Sociological Abstracts database on ProQuest using broad filters to produce a generous overview of relevant scholarship: Black Femin\*, Femin\*, Intersection\*, and Black wom\*.[[4]](#footnote-5) We did not constrain publication period (*Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* is the newest journal, for example), how the search terms appeared in the manuscript (e.g., title, abstract, key terms, or text), or publication type (e.g., peer reviewed articles, presidential addresses).

As shown in [Table 1](#tb1), our search yielded 5,354 articles. Yet only 174 articles, or a mere 3.25% of the total search, resulted from the Black Femin\* search term. Searching Black Feminism yielded substantially fewer results than our other search terms, with Black wom\* eliciting 505 results, Intersection\* eliciting 701 results, and Femin\* eliciting 3,974 results. *Gender & Society* had the most returns for Black Feminism\* overall, and *Social Forces* returned the highest yield among generalist journals. [Table 1](#tb1) does not assess engagement: A publication could cite Collins’s *Black Feminist Thought* once or use the book as its framework, yet it would count the same. Thus, the low numbers indicate that sociology largely studies intersectionality, feminism, and Black women without naming Black feminism.[[5]](#footnote-6)

**<COMP: PLEASE INSERT TABLE 1 HERE>**

These findings stem from historical exclusion. Black feminist sociologists sought opportunities in non-sociology departments and publications in fields like Black studies and women’s studies ([Higginbotham 2012](#bib69)). As [Higginbotham (2012, p. 24)](#bib69) put it, “In the early 1970s and into the 1980s, we might have been brave, but at the same time many of us were isolated….[A]nd we faced a host of other obstacles because of how research on Black women was viewed as the time.”[[6]](#footnote-7) The push-out from sociology, while painful, produced a valuable consequence: people with an outsider-within perspective grounding their sociological imaginations and standpoints ([Collins 2000](#bib38), [Griffin 2012](#bib61)). Black feminist sociological theories travel in part because of the interdisciplinary positioning of Black feminist sociologists.

FAMILIES OF BLACK FEMINISM[[7]](#footnote-8)

Beyond emerging from a particular standpoint, “Black feminist thought’s identity as a ‘critical’ social theory lies in its commitment to justice, both for U.S. Black women as a collectivity and for that of other similarly oppressed groups” ([Collins 2000](#bib38), p. 9). Conceptualizing Black feminism as only ideological, in contrast to supposedly pure theoretical sociology, highlights lack of engagement with the abundance of theoretical concepts that fit within families of Black feminist thought. As sociologists, our strength is simultaneous attention to agency and structure, micro and macro processes, identity, and institutions. Thus, sociology should contend with the thriving complexities of Black feminist approaches.

Although authors often reference the singular “Black feminism,” some develop typologies of Black feminisms ([Brewer 2020](#bib19)), which highlight the differences between how authors may understand their text and how others may interpret them. For example, while “womanism” was not initially defined by a sociologist (Walker 1983), some researchers have found its connections to diaspora helpful ([Brewer 2020](#bib19), [Norwood 2013](#bib98)). Likewise, early Black feminist theorizing ([Combahee River Collective 1983](#bib42)) explicitly named sexuality, which sociologists considered as central to understanding Black people’s social conditions ([Collins 1995](#bib37), [Moore 2008](#bib91)). In theorizing about interconnections, the goal is often to, as described by Matsuda (1991, p. 1189), “ask the other question”—to explore what else happens, why it happens, and what can be done. The following sociological contributions have been critical to asking the other question in different ways, producing iterations of Black feminist frameworks.

Double Jeopardy and Multiple Jeopardy

Activism has consistently inspired Black feminist paradigms. For example, in 1969, Frances Beale wrote a pamphlet on the “double jeopardy” of racism and sexism Black women faced ([Bambara 1970](#bib8)), before cofounding the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee’s Black Women’s Liberation caucus, which developed into the Third World Women’s Alliance. The coalition-based organization published the newsletter *Triple Jeopardy*, focused on racism, imperialism, and sexism, as indicated on the cover tagline ([Springer 2005](#bib118), Jackson 1971) Black feminist sociologist Deborah [King (1988)](#bib83) defined multiple jeopardy as the interplay among classism, sexism, racism, and other systems that oppress Black women throughout their lives. This concept criticizes sociological theories of gender and race that compare systems of oppression in ways that diminish Black women’s experiences of interconnected oppressions:

In the interactive model, the relative significance of race, sex, or class in determining the conditions of black women’s lives is neither fixed nor absolute but, rather, is dependent on the sociohistorical context and the social phenomenon under consideration. These interactions also produce what to some appears a seemingly confounding set of social roles and political attitudes among black women. ([King 1988](#bib83), p. 49)

King offers a model for empirical sociological research using Black feminist thought. The article also criticized the mainstream sociological paradigm of binary and oppositional categorization. Rather than either/or logics, Black feminist sociology employs both/and logics to interpret sociological phenomena. The emergent “race, class, and gender” paradigm (Anderson & Collins 1992, Collins [2015](#bib39)) illustrated, and in some ways remains, a sociological touchstone as indicated by the eponymous American Sociological Association (ASA) section, which in 2022 discussed a renaming from the Race, Class, and Gender section to Intersectionality and rejected the idea.

Matrix of Domination

Patricia Hill Collins ([1989](#bib36)) introduced the “matrix of domination” in *Black Feminist Thought* to describe the organization of power relations in society. The concept spotlights how the structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power shape human action and serve different purposes in maintaining power asymmetries in society. The structural domain covers how the interconnected organization of large-scale social institutions perpetuates systems of oppression. The disciplinary domain addresses how organizational practices exert power and control over marginalized populations. The hegemonic domain of power encompasses the exercise of power by dominant groups through “ideology, culture, and consciousness” ([Collins 2000](#bib38), p. 284). Lastly, the interpersonal domain examines the micro level of social organization and how disempowerment occurs through routine interactions and individual consciousness.

Through collective action, Black feminist activism aims to redistribute the power of dominant social groups and institutions:

Rethinking Black feminism as a social justice project involves developing a complex notion of empowerment. Shifting the analysis to investigating how the matrix of domination is structured along certain axes—race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation—as well as how it operates through interconnected domains of power—structural, interpersonal, disciplinary, and hegemonic—reveals that the dialectical relationship linking oppression and activism is far more complex than simple models of oppressors and oppressed would suggest. ([Collins 2000](#bib38), pp. 288–89)

Overall, the matrix of domination articulates how power relations are organized across different domains in society. By exploring how power is constructed along several axes and acts across interrelated domains, the concept surfaces the dialectical relationship between oppression and action.

Engendering Racial Capitalism

Racial capitalism, or the theory that racialized exploitation and capital accumulation are mutually constitutive, argues that capitalist economic advancement dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide of racialized populations created global modern world systems. The theory emerged out of dissatisfaction with traditional Marxist analysis void of racial analyses (Robinson 2000) and through analysis of radical political projects, such as the antiapartheid struggle, that understood the fall of racially exploitative political systems had to also include anticapitalist strategies. Although racial capitalism theorizes about mutually constitutive systems, Black feminists ([Boyce Davies 2007](#bib16)) have pointed out a lack of a gendered analysis that would reveal heteropatriarchy as an additional, coconstitutive system. For example, Claudia Jones, whose writing predated Robinson’s, theorized about the superexploitation of Black women being shaped by their position as a Black person, a woman, and a worker. As early as 1945, she argued that “the low scale of earning of the Negro woman is directly related to her almost complete exclusion from virtually all fields of work except the most menial and underpaid” (Jones 1949, p. 5) because of White racism.

Rose Brewer (2000) argues that uneven economic development comprises not only class oppression but also hierarchies of race and gender, such that “economic exclusion under late racial capitalism is the critical political economic reality of twenty‐first century Black feminism” ([Brewer 2020](#bib20), p. 101). Engendering racial capitalism therefore contends that exploitation is about devaluation across race andgender, placing Black women as property at the bottom of the hierarchy across global, modern world systems.

Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality is sociological, although it was not created by a sociologist. [Crenshaw (1989](#bib44), [1991](#bib45)) first introduced intersectionality as a concept and metaphor within the academic legal field, using real court cases and lack of remedy for Black women who the court would not “see” ([Carbado et al. 2013](#bib25)). As part of the legal cohort developing the emerging perspective of critical race theory ([Delgado & Stefancic 2011](#bib50)), Crenshaw explicitly drew attention to structural intersectionality, political intersectionality, and representational intersectionality, relationships seemingly lost on many interlocuters ([Crenshaw 1991](#bib45)). Through intersectional subordination, gender and class oppression are compounded by systemic racial discrimination such that “the consequence of the imposition of one burden…interacts with preexisting vulnerabilities to create yet another dimension of disempowerment” ([Crenshaw 1991](#bib45), p. 1249). This serves as a warning, because “where systems of race, gender, and class domination converge… intervention strategies based solely on the experiences of women who do not share the same class or race backgrounds will be of limited help to women who because of race and class face different obstacles” ([Crenshaw 1991](#bib45), p. 1246). Just as Collins and many other Black feminist theorists before, Crenshaw theorizes from real people with real problems. Moreover, for [Collins (2015](#bib39), p. 5), intersectionality offers, among other things, “a constellation of knowledge projects that change in relation to one another in tandem with changes in the interpretive communities that advance them.” Sociologists and philosophers attuned to global dynamics are proposing intersectional Black decolonial feminism ([Tate 2022](#bib122), [Thomas 2020](#bib125)). This approach takes seriously the claim that intersectionality theorists do not make space for application beyond the United States or queer theorizing (sometimes attributed to originating with [Puar 2012](#bib103)) but centers Black feminism rather than displacing it.

Some of the “intersectionality wars,” as Nash(2019) calls them, appear to come from purposeful disregard of the both/and approach that proto- and intersectional theorizing offered. Competing arguments exist for why intersectionality gained more popularity than related Black feminist concepts ([Davis 2008](#bib48), Falcón & Nash 2015, [Tomlinson 2020](#bib126)). According to emotions theorists ([Ahmed 2004](#bib2), [Gould 2012](#bib60)), one consideration is feelings: Referring to a matrix of domination names power imbalances centrally, immediately raising the question of where you as a speaker/writer are positioned, which can produce a discomfort. Intersectionality, in contrast, invokes images of intersection, familiar globally in mundane daily life.[[8]](#footnote-9) Intersections can exist neutrally, whereas domination cannot.

METHODS, METHODS, METHODS

Sociologists mobilize scientific inquiry to understand social phenomena, particularly social structures. For example, social sciences broadly and critical race theory appear to have some possible benefits to each other, although there are challenges due to the former’s assumption of neutrality (Carbado & Roithmayr 2014). In this vein, Black feminists have highlighted the shortcomings of research methods traditionally considered strong or rigorous ([Alexander-Floyd 2012](#bib3), [Crunktastic & Susiemaye 2010](#bib46)). Black feminist sociology critically examines power dynamics involved in the research and writing process. Some research studies purport to be intersectional, studying differences based on race or gender or both, but do not address power and oppression related to the intersectional experiences. A common goal of Black feminism is “to disrupt the normative order and reimagine a world of respect, justice, and equality” ([Brewer 2020](#bib19), p. 93), providing a rubric for evaluating the varying works that people claim are Black feminist, irrespective of method.

Standpoint, Positionality, and Voice

The standpoint of Black women sheds light on how the intersection of race and class leads to varied experiences of gendered oppression. Centering the marginalized illuminates how power relations operate within society and deconstructs the logics of oppositional binaries that characterize much of western knowledge ([Collins 2000](#bib38), [Reynolds 2002](#bib108), [Taylor 1998](#bib123)). In addition to standpoint theory, Black feminist sociology embraces voice as a key component of analysis ([Griffin 2012](#bib61), [Wingfield 2010](#bib128)). The outsider-within perspective rejects hierarchical social categories and criticizes the conflation of White male perspectives with human universality ([Collins 1989](#bib36)). It examines testimony and dialogue across power differentials in pursuit of self-determination and self-definition. Through their speech communities, Black women cultivate a self-defined standpoint to voice how institutionalized power relations contribute to their objectification. This process establishes their authority of experience with power asymmetries through everyday theorizing, which enables them to reclaim their humanity ([Alexander-Floyd 2012](#bib3), [Collins 2000](#bib38), [Stephens & Phillips 2003](#bib120)). Black feminist frameworks do not require only studying Black women, as multiple thoughtful analyses of masculinity have demonstrated (Grundy 2021, Jones 2018, [Matlon 2016](#bib87)). Yet, Black feminist methods require accountability and transparency, as people other than Black women are increasingly using intersectionality as an analytical method and citing Black feminist sociology as an influence.

Qualitative approaches stand as the centerpiece of Black feminist sociological research for the vivid way they showcase standpoint and emphasize the power of voice. Black feminist ethnography broadly centers “that people understand the stakes of their reality based on circumstances and experiences they live through” (K. [Brown 2022](#bib23), p. 198). Autoethnography showcases the humanity of Black women scholars who take ownership of the analysis ([Fabrizio Pelak 2014](#bib54), [Gatwiri & McLaren 2016](#bib57), [Griffin 2012](#bib61), [Prendergast 2012](#bib102)). They reject the negative framing of “mesearch,” or researching one’s own community, and the tendency to study Black women as othered objects. Interviews approached through Black feminism create a “collective dialogue” where participants reflect on the analyses their voices provide ([James 2022](#bib78), p. 208). [Gonzalez & Deckard (2022)](#bib59) model how a Black feminist approach interrogates the unsaid, or silence, as a being informative among Black women’s lessons on survival in the face of police violence. Qualitative methods provide a quality—beyond rigor—across modalities including oral interviews (Collins & Nash 2022), speeches ([Roberts 2022](#bib113)), letters and poems ([Spelmanites et al. 2022](#bib117)), and podcasts/webinars ([Perry & Greenidge 2023](#bib13), [Stylz et al. 2021](#bib121)) that breaks through typical academic avenues, building out a Black feminist public sociology.

Quantitative methods have been critiqued by Black feminists but are not totally dismissed ([Higginbotham 1980](#bib67)). Quantitative approaches should be theoretically informed, incorporating a critical approach to the measurement and operationalization of variables and relationships tested (López et al. 2018). QuantCrit researchers encourage use of critical race theory to reveal assumptions embedded in supposedly neutral quantitative approaches ([Garcia et al. 2018](#bib56)), and new entities train emerging scholars, such as the Institute in Critical Quantitative, Computational, & Mixed Methodologies(https://www.icqcm.org/). Pushing beyond the simple multiplication of identity categories, recent conceptualizations operationalize structural oppression across racism, sexism, and income inequality using varied data sources ([Homan et al. 2021](#bib71)) to measure interactions that most negatively impact Black women’s physical health. Mixed methods complement quantitative work for the similar way Black feminism pushes for multiple stories: “Adding voices behind the numbers can be a powerful way to enact social change and community building” ([Lindsay-Dennis 2015](#bib85), p. 514).

Community-based research offers another avenue, as it values multiple forms of truths by bringing in experiential knowledge. Examples include Richards’s (2022) work to preserve a Black community facing gentrification, demonstrating how respect and trust with communities offers a compassionate approach. [Denyse et al. (2022)](#bib51), who developed culturally relevant focus groups, called the Ubuntu approach, with Black women breast cancer survivors, break downs the manifestation of the superwomen schema in their lives.

With all methods it is important to consider power throughout the research process from the question formation to publication. Ultimately, research is best reflective of Black feminist sociology when it attends to theory, advocacy ([Bonaparte 2022](#bib14)), research justice ([Oparah 2022](#bib99)), and oppositional knowledge ([Richards 2022](#bib109)).

WHO YOU CALLING A BLACK FEMINIST? TENSIONS IN TETHERING BLACK FEMINISM/INTERSECTIONALITY

This review was solicited to write on Black feminism/intersectionality. The “/” points to the (sometimes) ambiguity between the concepts.[[9]](#footnote-10) Ironically, a key debate in multiple fields is how closely to “tether” Black feminism and intersectionality ([Nash 2019](#bib94)).[[10]](#footnote-11) Many Black feminists articulate deep concern that their work has been “disappeared” as sources of knowledge and subjects of study ([Alexander-Floyd 2012](#bib3)). Furthermore, for many scholars who see themselves as part of what Hancock calls intersectionality’s “interpretive community” ([Hancock 2016](#bib65)), the proliferation of intersectionality scholarship that does not attempt to engage race or performs rhetorical gymnastics to disavow Black women’s knowledge frustrates many ([Alexander-Floyd 2012](#bib3), [Bilge 2013](#bib9), [Tomlinson 2020](#bib126)). Although this occurs within US scholarship, it is particularly notable in the European academic context. In their cross-national review of political science scholarship—and survey of scholars’ perspectives on intersectionality as a paradigm or social justice endeavor—[Mügge et al. (2018, p. 20)](#bib93) argue that “eschewing race as a category of analysis, however, is neither unproblematic nor apolitical in Europe. While processes of racialisation differ across Europe and the grammar of race is less available, race is omnipresent in continental political discourses.” Institutionalizing theories is not a neutral process, no matter the nation.

Some of this seems to continue debates of who can theorize about Black women’s experience or claim the moniker “Black feminist.” Key texts such as *The Black Woman* (Bambara 1970) includes contributions from non-Black authors such as civil rights activist Grace Lee Boggs. Black feminist sociologists wrote about Black feminism in texts coauthored with people who were not Black women. They shared “discontent” ([Zinn et al. 1986](#bib129), p. 291) and consequences of exclusion from women’s studies and feminist theory, worked with other women of color (multiracial feminism), and wrote with White women from working-class backgrounds. When fielding submissions for the edited volume *Black Feminist Sociology: Perspectives and Praxis*, [Luna & Pirtle (2022)](#bib86) received inquiries from non-Black women about whether they could submit, and the answer was yes. Indeed, the final volume includes non-Black women authors who understand their work as Black feminist sociology, speaking to this tension in their goal to “rebuff the notion that supporting the very real cause of struggling Black men and boys requires casting off Black feminism” ([Ouer & Grundy 2022](#bib100), p. 253). Black queer and transgender scholars have called out the limits of Black feminist theorizing for people other than cisheterosexual Black women ([Buchanan & Ikuku 2022](#bib24), [Hammonds 1994](#bib64), [Moore 2008](#bib91)). The goal of Black feminism is not to exclude, but rather to center Black feminist standpoints. Still, expansion requires acknowledging Black women’s embodiment in scholarly production.

Nash points to the exhaustion that comes from continually monitoring the use of intersectionality. Thus, she explains “Letting go untethers black feminism from the endless fighting over intersectionality… letting go allows us to put the visionary genius of black feminist to work *otherwise*. It is, thus, a practice of freedom” ([Nash 2019](#bib94), p. 138, emphasis in original). We can imagine the joy that comes with freedom, the ease of creativity free of tethers to the conflict. Yet even those who agree that monitoring is of limited use advocate keeping some parts connected:

When I say not to cede Blackness or intersectionality, I mean do not cede either *term* to projects that do not take social justice into consideration. Refusing to cede Blackness is fundamental, because as Black women intellectuals, we bring our total selves into all our work, including Blackness, whether we want to or not. ([Collins 2022](#bib40), p. 25, emphasis in original)

This relationship continues to be source of debate.

One answer to this conundrum requires distinguishing among Black feminist thought as an analytical framework, a social movement frame, and a means of self-identification. As the ubiquity of intersectionality indicates, people other than Black women adopt concepts originating from Black feminist thought as an analytical framework ([Cho et al. 2013](#bib27), [Choo & Ferree 2010](#bib28), [Levac et al. 2018](#bib84), [Montoya 2021](#bib90)). However, as previously mentioned, such an application may not remain rooted in Black feminist thought and may be used instead to center groups other than Black women in empirical research ([Alexander-Floyd 2012](#bib3)). Black feminism as a social movement frame, on the other hand, remains primarily rooted in the lived experiences of Black women ([Black Feminist Future](#bib12) 2023). While Black feminist activists build coalitions with women of color and other marginalized groups, Black feminist social movements cannot exist without Black women at the helm ([Cohen & Jackson 2015](#bib33), [Collins 2000](#bib38), [James 1999](#bib77), [Richardson 2020](#bib110)). Within academic writing and movements, we can find evidence of the consequences of not acknowledging Black feminist knowledge contributions, as exemplified by the #CiteBlackWomen project.

#CiteBlackWomen

#CiteBlackWomen, a 2017 public movement to exhibit Black women scholars and their research, shows citational issues across several fields ([Smith et al. 2021](#bib116)). Sociology is not immune from this citational erasure[[11]](#footnote-12), which largely results from a knowledge production problem that, as Tressie McMillan Cottom identified, constructs Black women’s contributions as a few things: “we bear children, we can bear problems, we can bear culture, but we can never bear knowledge. If it was important enough to know, White men would already know it” ([Cite Black Women Collective 2019](#bib31)).

A goal of the hashtag is to disrupt the academy by situating Black feminist scholarship as key to knowledge production—thus, not just to be cited, but to be engaged on the intellectual merits. In the critical praxis statement, the founder and collaborators ([Smith et al. 2021](#bib116), p. 11) ask:

Cite Black Women is more than just a catchphrase or a hashtag: it is an emphatic statement, a command, a rebuke, a call to action, a celebration, an act of rebellion, an ethos, and an act of love. Behind it lies this critical question: What does it look like to dismantle the patriarchal, white supremacist, heterosexist, imperialist impetus of the neoliberal university (and its accomplices) by centering Black women’s ideas and intellectual contributions?

But is citing enough? In the largest study we found to date, [Keuchenius & Mügge (2021)](#bib82) analyzed 3,807 publications on intersectionality and showed some consequences of citational practices. Their multimethod analysis identified several disciplinary communities of citations among 6,089 scholars, with social scientists producing most citations. The authors argue that “Intersectionality did not spread like an oil stain, evenly and outward from a single center. Instead, the trail shows multiple centers and local webs” ([Keuchenius & Mügge 2021](#bib82), p. 364). Still, they did not address whether texts in their dataset used the term “Black feminist” beyond its appearance in the title of Collins’s (1990) and [Crenshaw’s (1989)](#bib44) foundational texts. However, they did find that among what they term the Black feminist core of scholars, only 42% cite Collins (1990) and only 33% cite the [Crenshaw (1989](#bib44)). They also found that some community clusters cite the author (node) in their field as the scholar who introduced intersectionality even when the nodal scholar was citing Collins or Crenshaw. This is not surprising as people cite other authors’ work as a proxy for the original. But researchers risk becoming experts in others’ interpretations of theory rather than innovating their own theoretical contributions. This approach undoubtedly contributes to what [Tomlinson (2020)](#bib126) found while analyzing critiques of intersectionality that parroted other authors and duplicated analytic mistakes or misattributed words.

Can we imagine authors claiming their research focuses on “habitus” without citing Pierre Bourdieu or their research is about “the second shift” without citing Arlie Hochschild? If they did, can we imagine knowledgeable reviewers allowing the omission to continue? [Nash (2020)](#bib95) argues that concern about accurate citation practices “has resulted in citation becoming the primary way that scholars are called upon to make visible their ethical engagement *with*[,] rather than the strategic deployment *of*[,] Black feminist work” (p. 79, emphasis added). That is, as [Alexander-Floyd (2012, p. 2)](#bib3) lamented over a decade ago, many researchers continue to treat Black feminist scholarship “not like a discipline with a history and a body of rigorous scholarship underpinning it, but like an anybody-can-play pickup game played on an open field.”

Another part of the game is the different rules depending upon who you are, which might become more heightened off the page. #CiteBlackWomen founder Christen Smith recounted attending an academic conference where she saw her text on the screen uncited with a few words replaced and passed off as the presenter’s ideas. Smith did not have the status to challenge the presenter due to the “risk of painting myself as a hysterical Black woman with a grudge” ([Cite Black Women Collective 2019](#bib31)). Similarly, Trudy and coauthors (e.g., [Bailey & Trudy 2018](#bib7)) have named many instances of plagiarism of her contributions to misogynoir discussions, at times naming the very Black feminist academics committed to stopping these elisions.

NON-BLACK PEOPLE ENGAGING WITH BLACK FEMINISM: CONSIDERATIONS

There are varied material consequences for engaging with and writing as Black feminists. Black women who engage in Black feminist theorizing get accused of biased mesearch.[[12]](#footnote-13) Yet many other people get credit for their supposedly innovative application of Black women’s ideas without ever working with Black feminists in any capacity, all while drawing on theories steeped in Black feminist traditions and activism. [Alexander-Floyd (2012, p. 11)](#bib3) wrote about the disappearance of Black women by non-Black women using maneuvers that universalize the concept of intersectionality, or a bait-and-switch approach, as seen in quantitative analyses that hyperfocus on complexity. Who gets to define and produce knowledge matters because people have different ideas of what that scholarship ought to do.

While this disconnect is talked about in hushed tones or on social media, only a few White and non-Black scholars have written about the privileges of their positioning. Most notably, Canadian sociologist Sirma Bilge, who writes about intersectionality, is “acutely aware of the problems of translation across her three languages of Turkish, French and English” ([Collins & Bilge 2016](#bib41), p. vii). In an article, Bilge identified herself by noting, “It also helps us to address the vexing question of how nonblack women of color (WoC), not only white women, can inadvertently uphold structural anti-Blackness in our intersectional work” ([Bilge 2020](#bib10), p. 2310), and pages later identified herself “as a French and English speaking, light-skinned non-Black woman of color” ([Bilge 2020](#bib10), p. 2317). Bilge described receiving an invitation from an Amsterdam university to present on “post-Black feminist intersectionality.” When Afro-Dutch women in the audience noted the irony of a White-passing academic speaking on Black women’s erasure, other attendees criticized the Afro-Dutch women for their interruption. Textual acknowledgments like Bilge’s reveal and challenge some material benefits to non-Black people who study work produced by Black women. Yet, ultimately, Bilge will continue to be cited, and the Afro-Dutch women who wrote a collective statement later remain unnamed, even as both sets do important work to advance Black feminist theorizing.[[13]](#footnote-14) Sociology, and academia writ large, need more texts that demystify the specifics of privileging.

The tensions discussed in the last two sections can influence activists of color’s perceptions, including impulses to dismiss intersectionality when it is perceived as for white women (e.g., in Brazil, as described in Collins 2015) or being colonized (e.g., in Spain, as described in Owusu 2023). This occurs even though some recent political victories show how grassroots Black feminist activists practice an intersectional politics in seemingly impossible contexts. For example, in 2022, Colombia elected its first Afro-Colombian vice president, Francia Márquez, who speaks out against patriarchy and whose twisty road to victory (Muriel 2022) gained eventual international attention. These contestations are thus far from being only academic.

Solidifying Erasure of Black Feminism

Even as some academics insist there is not a connection between Black women, Black feminism, and intersectionality, the connections are clear to people who oppose them, particularly outside the academy. For example, in 2022, the US College Board, which oversees Advanced Placement (AP) courses in high schools nationally, piloted its long-awaited African American Studies course. In early 2023, as the curriculum became more public, there was repeated criticism, most visibly from Florida Governor DeSantis. Amidst this criticism, the College Board’s proposed final curriculum was drastically changed from the draft curriculum, including removing Crenshaw, critical race theory, a unit titled “Black feminism and intersectionality” and Black queer theorists (see Chavez 2023, which includes the version of the curriculum released in early 2023). The removal indicates both the continued desire to erase Black people and the enduring power of Black feminist ideas to challenge power structures. The converted unit was now named “Black women’s voices in society and leadership,” with a subtopic about “Black women and movements in the twentieth century” whose only required primary source reading was the 1970 op-ed “What the Black Woman Thinks About Women’s Lib” by Toni Morrison. The idea that Black women stopped their public reflections in the era in which the phrase “women’s lib” was still used was historically inaccurate. The unit referred to Combahee River Collective, and states had the option to cover “Movements led by Black women: Combahee River Collective and beyond,” but it was only an optional topic. Furthermore, Black Lives Matter, a contemporary queer Black feminist–led movement that spawned protests globally and gained support among many racial groups, was removed.

In reflecting on the removals, Evelyn Hammonds opined that “we don’t have a voice. And not only do we not have a voice, we don’t have a history” (African American Policy Forum 2023). The College Board continued to claim DeSantis and colleagues’ opposition had no influence and, assumedly, neither would the people vocally supporting inclusion of Black feminism and intersectionality. The College Board’s final curriculum, released in December 2023 ([College Board 2023](#bib34)), put back some, but not all, of the topics initially removed. The initial removal of Black feminist thought that challenged power structures is indicative of the power of Black feminist ideas. Florida Governor DeSantis and the College Board used their political and economic power to shape the educational possibilities of the millions of students taking AP courses. Their and others’ efforts are part of an extended strategy including legislation opposing certain topics at elementary, high school, and university levels ([Chron. High. Educ. Staff 2023](#bib29)). As [Collins (2000)](#bib38) points out, Black feminist thought is in dialectical relationship to oppression. Unsurprisingly, Black feminist scholar-activists like Crenshaw vocally lead continued resistance to “antiwoke” legislation as many White scholars making a career out of debating intersectionality have remained silent[[14]](#footnote-15) or are curiously vocal in their praise when Black feminists receive mainstream accolades like the MacArthur Fellowship (McMillan Cottom won in 2020) or the pathbreaking Berggruen Prize for Philosophy and Culture that Collins won in 2023 ([Rayford 2023](#bib105)). Considering recent attacks on and lukewarm support of Black feminist contributions, we find it important to contemplate how praxis and accountability can be used to support the living people producing Black feminist scholarship.

BEYOND THE PAGE

There is power in the pen and in the page, but Black feminist sociology goes beyond these instruments. This intervention within sociology does not study for the sake of study—but rather actively works to dismantle oppression and build better systems.

Teaching and Pedagogy

Black feminist sociologists intentionally transform the academy through their teaching and pedagogy. They approach curricular change as a structural strategy to transform the academy through everyday strategies such as advocating for rethinking commonly used course readings and materials, diversifying sources of knowledge, and using teaching strategies and approaches that break down classroom hierarchies ([Higginbotham 1997](#bib68), [Perlow et al. 2018](#bib101)). As Black feminist sociologists situated in teaching roles at top research universities, a Jesuit institution, and outside of the academy, we also recognize the power of transgressing ([hooks 1994](#bib72)) through teaching. There are many models for Black feminist sociological pedagogy ([Ali 2009](#bib5), [Higginbotham 1997](#bib68)), including Perlow et al.’s (2018) *Black Women’s Liberatory Pedagogy: Resistance, Transformation, and Healing Within and Beyond the Academy.* Both Luna and Pirtle individually taught Black feminist theory courses for undergraduates (a course that meets the major theory requirement and an optional senior capstone, respectively). Luna had students reflect on their own intellectual journey, produce a blog post to analyze one of Megan Thee Stallion’s *Saturday Night Live* skits using key concepts from course texts, and attend (virtual) events claiming to be about Black feminism and explain how they engaged with Black feminism. Pirtle’s students reveled in the way Black feminist sociology expanded their learning and praxis, culminating in infographics shared with formerly incarcerated scholars on campus.

Cyberculture

Cyberculture is critical for Black feminist sociological study and is a space for people to create their own Black feminist practices. Online, Black women create and communicate new ideas and self-definitions (that both expand and reify), organize, engage communities of hope and healing, and liberate themselves. Simultaneously, they are attacked and mired in long-standing stereotypes and insidious ideas and practices like racism ([Bailey 2021](#bib6), [Bailey & Trudy 2018](#bib7), M. [Brown 2022](#bib23)). Analysis of Black feminism that does not engage information and communication technologies provides an incomplete picture of Black feminist knowledge, experiences, and futures. Black feminists contribute to this vision, describing how cyberculture and digital technologies reproduce and manufacture intersectional oppression, but also how Black women are utilizing the virtual space for futuristic spaces of joy (M. [Brown 2022](#bib23), [McMillan Cottom 2020](#bib89), [Noble 2018](#bib97), [Steele 2021](#bib119)).

Black feminist sociology, unlike mainstream sociology, is more expansive in the production of scholarship for academic use. In addition to functioning as an analytical framework for empirical research, Black feminist sociology operates as a pedagogical framework both within and beyond the classroom ([Ali 2009](#bib5), [Perlow et al. 2018](#bib101)). Melissa Brown’s blog, https://blackfeminisms.com/, distills research and popular culture for a range of audiences and remains a top search engine result. *Black Feminist Sociology* editors Zakiya Luna and Whitney Pirtle have created syllabi using the volume as a core text (along with faculty at other institutions), while digital editor Brown, in part supported by an ASA Howery grant, added supplemental chapter material and visuals to the companion site, https://blackfeministsociology.com/, that illustrate Black cyberfeminist praxis (M. [Brown 2022](#bib23)). Other initiatives extend the volume’s ideas to other audiences. Indeed, Black feminist sociologists such as McMillan Cottom have developed online platforms such as podcasts to amplify the voices and perspectives of Black women intellectuals. This use of digital technologies allows Black feminist sociology to reach global audiences that might not have access to US-based academic publications ([Brown 2016](#bib22), [2022](#bib23); [Hamilton 2020](#bib63)).

In 2018, doctoral students created the Church of Black Feminist Thought to challenge academic publishing, noting that “**while much of our academic work is suspended in long publishing timelines and hard-to-decipher language, we believe that bringing the words of black feminist thinkers into conversation in physical (or digital) space, then translating our collective ruminations into visual storytelling and illustration will nourish and support ma**[ny” (https:](file:///C:\Users\aabramson\OneDrive%20-%20Annual%20Reviews\Anne\Sociology\SO50\MSs\Luna\07_Cleanup\ny)//www.blackfeministstudy.org/**)**. The Black Feminist Future (BFF) organization developed Fractals (Black Feminist Future 2023), an interactive timeline of Black feminist organizing that features parallel meridians of key people, key terms, action points, social movements, and cultural phenomena. While participants in their freedom schools developed the initial timeline, the resource evolves through public contributions online. Black Women Radicals (BWR) offers a database of Black feminist activists and School for Black Feminist Politics (https://www.blackwomenradicals.com/). In summer 2023, BFF and BWR, respectively, held the Get Free: A Black Feminist ReunionandBlack Feminism Lives! convenings, highlighting how digital endeavors can also foment in-person spaces.

The popular medium of podcasts, initially primarily accessible through smartphone applications, for the most part, emerges from a dominant culture shaping the podcast industry to perpetuate a hegemony of heterosexuality, cisgender identity, and Whiteness. In contrast, *Marsha’s Plate*, a podcast hosted by Black, transgender, feminist Southerners Diamond Stylz, Bre Starr, and LJ, teaches non-Black and cisgender listeners the history and sociology of the Black trans experience, mostly through their “Trans 101” segment. The aural-centric format of podcasts enables Black queer people to chronicle their experiences, challenging society’s social constructions of race and sexuality. Furthermore, their use of digital media technology diverges from the logophilic forms of knowledge valued in academic spaces—access to which comes with several privileges that are seldom addressed when we invoke epistemology ([Richardson 2020](#bib110)). Thus, *Marsha’s Plate* exemplifies the practice of using nonacademic Black feminist sociology to communicate Black feminist thought grounded in a transgender lived experience.

These instances of digital Black feminism not only highlight its critical importance beyond academic settings but also demonstrate its practical applications in activism and everyday life, thereby challenging the notion that Black feminist praxis is purely ideological ([Collins 1986](#bib35)). This real-world engagement encompasses efforts to advocate for the rights and well-being of Black women and girls across various social contexts.

Black Feminist Praxis Outside the Academy

While many Black feminist academics have focused on transforming the academy, understanding their own professional experiences, and serving as intellectual activists, their theories and approaches hold important influence outside academia. Sociologists would benefit from noting Black feminist praxes outside of the academy as they represent standpoint theorizing on the ground that could inform our own work. At the most basic level, we see more Black women identifying as feminist in everyday life, on social media, and even among public figures. Social institutions are also influenced and transformed by Black feminist theories, as has happened with mental health. Although social scientists increasingly examine the influence of social structures and contexts on mental health and well-being, Black women’s mental health remains understudied ([Erving et al. 2021](#bib53)). Nevertheless, Black therapists in practice and advocates on social media, like Therapy for Black Gi[rls (https://www.therapyforblack](file:///C:\Users\aabramson\OneDrive%20-%20Annual%20Reviews\Anne\Sociology\SO50\MSs\Luna\07_Cleanup\rls%20(https:\www.therapyforblack)girls.com) and Tricia Her[sey (https://www.thenapmin](file:///C:\Users\aabramson\OneDrive%20-%20Annual%20Reviews\Anne\Sociology\SO50\MSs\Luna\07_Cleanup\sey%20(https:\www.thenapmin)istry.com), urge healthy approaches to transform the lived experiences of Black folx. Notably, they often invoke Black feminist theories and practices, such as “controlling images,” to interrogate barriers to health, like the strong Black woman schema, that influence the health and well-being of Black women ([Bradford 2023](#bib17), [Hersey 2021](#bib66)). These discussions and therapy practices reflect attempts to understand and disrupt how US society undermines the collective well-being of Black women and girls.

Black feminist work in the field of philanthropy is an interplay between the theoretical and guiding principles of Black feminism and actions taken by individuals and organizations to shape and shift the institution. That, at its core, is a sociological concern. Black feminist philanthropists seek to transform how charitable institutions distribute funds. They argue that institutional donors must fund organizations founded and led by Black women, girls, and gender expansive and nonbinary people, and finance national and global social movements, social change, and justice initiatives that they lead ([Johnson 2022](#bib79)). For instance, the Black Feminist Fund distributes grants globally to movements led by Black women, girls, and gender expansive people. The following self-identified Black feminist principles shape their grantmaking: “trust based, participatory, community-led, context responsive, movement accountable, cooperation not competition, the last first, creating bold, welcoming and accessible spaces, making new rules and models to value Black women" (https://www.blackfeministfund.org/grantmaking).These philanthropic efforts represent a sociological imagination toward Black feminist praxis grounded not only in the promotion of individual efforts or narrative shifts, but also in critiquing and attempting to transform multiple social institutions. However, several efforts use resources from an institution (philanthropy) that has a long, extractive and exploitative history and policies (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence 2007). Thus, the question that persists, when it comes to social change and philanthropy, and when Black feminists have more power to influence the dispersal of resources, is “Can the revolution be funded?” As mainstream sociology moves to embrace public sociology more fully, it is important that sociologists not only consider how sociological theories and scholars can influence the public, but also engage how sociological theories and informed practices happen in nonacademic spaces.

CONCLUDING BY BUILDING A FUTURE

In this article, we overviewed the ways Black feminism is distinct from intersectionality, including through its methodology rooted in the Black women’s collective standpoint. We also addressed who can practice Black feminist sociology, demonstrating that Black women must reside at the center of collaboration with researchers invested in such projects. Finally, we explored the ways that Black feminist sociology goes beyond mainstream academic practice through pedagogy, cyberculture, and praxis. In conclusion, we recommend several best practices for future iterations of Black feminist sociology.

First, understanding that there are families of Black feminisms requires critical—not perfunctory—engagement with theories of multiple jeopardy, intersectionality, the matrix of domination, and engendering racial capitalism. Secondly, centering the experiences and perspectives (plural) of Black women is paramount, and this requires a multifaceted methodological approach that includes intersectionality and the outsider-within perspective ([Collins 1986](#bib35)). Third, addressing social and political issues requires crucial collaboration and community engagement ([Brewer 1997](#bib18), Richards 2012). Qualitative methods enable us to focus and center Black women’s experiences, yet quantitative and mixed methods contribute both quality and multiplicity. Fourth, Black feminist sociology should be used as a pedagogical framework in and out of the classroom, using digital technologies to amplify Black women intellectuals’ voices and reach global audiences ([Ali 2009](#bib5), [Brown 2016](#bib22), [Luna & Pirtle 2022](#bib86), [Perlow et al. 2018](#bib101)). Lastly, addressing issues such as bodily autonomy and abolitionism through praxis is essential to achieving Black feminist sociology’s social justice aims ([Collins 2015](#bib39), [Taylor 1998](#bib123)). By following these best practices, Black feminist sociology can continue to challenge mainstream sociology and advance social justice for Black women and other marginalized groups.

The appeal of Black feminism is that it requires facing race: Even in just saying the phrase, the speaker encounters “Black,” a social category with political meaning. Black feminism brings with it the history, preferences, and progression. Therefore, it is almost impossible to talk about Black feminism without talking about Black women and the historical thought they produced. Unlike intersectionality, Black feminism can be absorbed in some ways but has a continued attachment to Blackness. While Blackness itself can be debated, Black feminism will continue to retain the modifier (or amplifier): BLACK feminism. In contrast, as decades of scholarship have shown, it is entirely possible to talk about intersectionality without talking about Black women, even though they created the building blocks and the framework. The inability to solely associate Black feminism with one individual may be part of its challenge to the perceived natural order of theory building. Black feminisms are more interesting than just one theorist, book, or approach: There are countless activists, social scientists, the public intellectuals who get crunk (in the sense advanced by the Crunk Feminist Collective archive at https://crunkfeministcollective.wordpress.com/ and [Cooper et al. 2016](#bib43)) and more. Not every theory survives, and they are not all supposed to, but Black feminists have created durable and life-sustaining theories.

A Black feminist sociology of abolition is one example that applies Black feminist sociology as a field of study inclusive of praxis to a future where all of us might get free. Sociology as a discipline has, in the past five years, supported some conversations about abolitionist theorizing and praxis (see, e.g., [Washington Center 2023](#bib124)), yet it has been central to multiple lauded Black sociologists. W.E.B. Du Bois’s [2014 (1935)] theorizing about abolition democracy in *Black Reconstruction* influenced work today. Du Bois questioned how to dismantle one institution (e.g., slavery) if political and economic systems were left intact. In *Abolition. Feminism. Now*., [Davis and colleagues (2022, p. 58)](#bib47) directly draw on Du Bois’s early arguments on abolition democracy, asking, “what would we have to change in our existing societies in order to render them less dependent” on other systems of oppression. We see a Black feminist sociology of abolition as an intervention within mainstream sociology, and also as one way to transform sociology to engage practices thought to be at the margins and move them into the core.

Leading police abolitionists Mariame Kaba and Andrea Ritchie outline how their movement work for abolition is so “infused” within Black feminism that they call it “Black abolition feminism” (Kaba & Richie 2022, p. 275), revealing that “Black feminism requires us to uproot the stories that define, police, erase, suppress, cage, control, and obliterate us in service of existing systems of power” (Kaba & Richie 2022, p. 279). Informed by Black feminist sociologist Beth E. [Richie (2000](#bib111), [2015](#bib112)), they outline five important ways Black feminism impacts abolition work, including the demand to listen to the stories of those harmed by violence, the acknowledgment that violence is intersectional, and the commitment to addressing violence rooted in support and freedom.

The legacy of Black feminist abolitionists is seen throughout the critical contemporary writings and manuals for how to build anticapitalist, antiracist, decolonial, queer feminist worlds ([Davis et al. 2022](#bib47), Gilmore [2022](#bib58), Kaba & Ritchie 2022, [Purnell 2022](#bib104)). For example, attentiveness to intersecting systems of oppression is how Black feminist abolitionists highlighted the egregious but often ignored race-gendered violence within carceral systems and even in seemingly innocent, so-called child protection services (e.g., [Roberts 2023](#bib114)). An ethic of collective care is at the core of abolition, as seen through both the goal and the praxis in which it is achieved (e.g., mutual aid).[[15]](#footnote-16) Abolitionist scholarship asks of us to work toward ending harms while simultaneously building supports in our research, in our teaching, and in our lives. A Black feminist sociology of abolition is also where we can see sociology engaging with love, joy, creativity—and even “hope as a discipline” (Kaba & Ritchie 2022, p. 283).

As formerly incarcerated Black feminist abolitionist philosopher Angela Davis reflects: “struggles to contest bodies of literature are similar to the struggles for social change and social transformation. What we manage to do each time we win a victory is not so much to secure change once and for all, but rather to create new terrains for struggle" ([Seven Stories Press 2023](#bib115)). While academic wars rage about the purview and property of Black feminism, we encourage attention to the joy of Black feminisms[[16]](#footnote-17) in and out of the academy to untether conflicts and unsettle wars even as the struggle continues.

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Author Contributions

Luna is lead author; all other authorship is equal and by alphabetical order.

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Table 1 Number of sociological articles indexed by Sociological Abstracts using Black feminism, feminism, intersectionality and Black women

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Journal name | Year started | Number of articles returned by search term | | | | Totals |
| Black feminism[a](#tb1fn1) | Feminism[b](#tb1fn2) | Intersectionality[c](#tb1fn3) | Black women[d](#tb1fn4) |
| ***American Journal of Sociology*** | **1895** | **3** | **530** | **60** | **47** | **640** |
| .47% | 82.81% | 9.38% | 7.34% |
| 2.36% | 13.34% | 8.56% | 9.31% |
| ***American Sociological Review*** | **1936** | **16** | **318** | **180** | **94** | **608** |
| 2.63% | 52.30% | 29.61% | 15.46% |
| 9.19% | 8.00% | 25.68% | 18.61% |
| ***Social Forces*** | **1922** | **58** | **575** | **223** | **138** | **994** |
| 1.16% | 60.68% | 23.57% | 14.59% |
| 33.33% | 14.47% | 31.81% | 27.33% |
| ***Social Problems*** | **1953** | **29** | **310** | **108** | **67** | **514** |
| 5.64% | 60.31% | 21.01% | 13.04% |
| 16.67 | 7.80% | 15.41% | 13.28% |
| ***Gender & Society*** | **1987** | **66** | **2,233** | **93** | **150** | **2,542** |
| 2.60% | 87.84% | 3.66% | 5.90% |
| 37.93% | 56.19% | 13.27% | 29.70% |
| ***Sociology of Race & Ethnicity***[***e***](#tb1fn5) | **2015** | **2** | **8** | **37** | **9** | **56** |
| 3.57% | 14.29% | 66.07% | 16.07% |
| 1.15% | .20% | 5.28% | 1.78% |
| **Totals:** |  | **174** | **3,974** | **701** | **505** | **5,354** |

The search was conducted using Sociological Abstracts through the ProQuest search engine. Raw counts are followed by row percentage (percentage of articles returned within journal total) and column percentages (percentage of articles returned within search term total).

aThe term “Black femin\*” was chosen to be inclusive of Black feminism and Black feminist.

bThe term “Intersection\*” was chosen to be inclusive of intersections and intersectionality.

cThe term “Femin\*” was chosen to be inclusive of feminism and feminist.

dThe term “Black wom\*” was chosen to be inclusive of Black woman, Black women, and Black womxn.

e*Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* is the newest journal, and a reliability check from the journal’s homepage shows that Sociological Abstracts is not as current, but we used this search for consistency.

1. Lorde’s original speech is from 1978, but we appreciate brown’s annotations, including emphasis on non-biologically-based gender categories when referring to “women.” This article includes girls and other people who may become Black women. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. We define intersectionality and Black feminism similarly to [Collins (2015](#bib39)). Readers are directed to [Collins (2015](#bib39)) for a detailed description of the difficulties in defining both intersectionality and Black feminism. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Some of this production engenders joy and excitement, while some of it highlights disappointment and anger, such that one of the coauthors joked “I’m gonna have to read a lot of articles closer for shade and mess.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. For further verification, a research assistant also conducted the search through each journal’s homepage with the same search terms. The homepage searches produced fewer results, except for *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, which is newer and therefore likely experiencing an index lag. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. To be sure, some people draw on theories without explicitly identifying them. Or authors may be encouraged by advisors or peer reviewers not to foreground certain authors in their work, which poses a different problem. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Higginbotham’s use of “brave” refers to the groundbreaking anthology *All the Women Are White, All the Black Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave:* *Black Women’s Studies* (Hull et al. 1982). The new Black Women’s Studies Association (https://www.blackwomensstudies.com/) continues work in this vein with an emphasis on “scholarly contributions about Black trans women, non-binary people, queer women, and cis-gendered women.” [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. This section is not exhaustive as we do not cover frameworks, such as hip-hop feminism ([Morgan 1995)](#bib92). These frameworks are still being engaged, as demonstrated by discussions during the National Women’s Studies Association (NWSA) 2023 conference plenary session titled “Celebrating 50 Years of Women’s Creativity and Resistance in Hip-Hop and Beyond,” featuring Dee Barnes, Drew Dixon, Joan Morgan, Monie Love, and Toni Blackman. Also of note is that the session was NWSA’s first plenary session about hip-hop. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. On our panel “Revisiting and Envisioning Black Feminist Sociology” at the ASA 2023 meeting (August 21, 2023), Collins noted that the release of *The Matrix* film likely helped her concept, which was emerging as poststructuralism gained popularity in the academy. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Some people may see a slash as an improvement over invisibility. When we searched “intersectionality definition” on Google, the world’s most popular search engine, we found that Google relies on the *Oxford English Dictionary* as its official English dictionary (https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en), and Google provided a definition of “intersectionality.” In contrast, no definition from Google/Oxford emerged when we searched “Black feminism definition.” Instead, Google only listed various websites (e.g., Combahee River Collective statement posted on Black Past and Yale American Studies sites, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and the National Museum of African American History and Culture). While results may shift over time, the absence of a definition of Black feminism from Oxford/Google indicates its (lack of) importance by one metric. A Black feminism definition does not similarly appear from Oxford, indicating its (lack of) importance by one metric. A quick search of the free Internet resource https://www.dictionary.com/, where many undergraduate or ChatGPT papers begin, finds a definition for intersectionality: “noun. 1. Also called intersectionality theory, intersectional theory. the theory that the overlap of various social identities, as race, gender, sexuality, and class, contributes to the specific type of systemic oppression and discrimination experienced by an individual (often used attributively): Her paper uses a queer intersectionality approach. 2. the oppression and discrimination resulting from the overlap of an individual’s various social identities: the intersectionality experienced by Black women.” In contrast, a search for “black feminism” produces “No results found for black feminism.” [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. The term “tether” is interesting considering the horror film *Us* in which the Tethered live underground, mimicking the fully living people aboveground in a seemingly mindless haze. However, the movie reminds us there is power existing in the shadows. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Multiple coauthors can recall similar experiences, such as seeing words from our conference presentation slides in other people’s print publications uncited, or seeing similar ideas in print from people who were likely journal reviewers for manuscripts that were eventually rejected. There is little recourse even when scholars are more similarly situated and/or known (see [Gammage 2005](#bib55)). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. For example, both Crystal Fleming and Whitney Pirtle were asked to speak on a presidential panel on mesearch at the 2023 ASA conference, during which both admitted they had no idea why they were invited since their core research focused on countries in which they did not live. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. The Afro Dutch feminists who wrote their conference reflection as the Cruel Ironies Collective (2019) may have been trying to normalize shared writing, but upon citation, that keeps them from individual acknowledgment, which is how academia marks its currency. We also see the irony in spending our article highlighting how non-Black people benefit materially from (unintentional) erasure of Black women. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. See https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/open-letter-on-fighting-anti-woke-censorship-of-intersectionality-and-black-feminism and https://freedomtolearn.net/. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. As we discussed in our ASA panel in 2023, “care” should not be interpreted as Black feminists acquiescing to every request that comes from students, employers, colleagues, movement comrades, and so on. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Joys of creating of this publication included Zoom meetings; Pirtle and Luna meeting at a winery in Merced; Johnson and Luna meeting at the Get Free! Black Feminist Future conference; Luna developing versions in Barcelona, the location where the *Annual Review of Sociology* Editorial Committee initially suggested the review topic; the Association of Black Sociologists and ASA 2023 meetings including our shared panel with Patricia Hill Collins; and meals and dancing mere weeks before the review deadline. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)