

School experiences of Black girls in secondary education: A literature review and cross-sectional analysis of their challenges and triumphs

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Scholars have recognized that Black girls' intersectional experiences have real material effects on their educational outcomes and well-being. In response, there has been an increase in research that specifically looks at the educational experiences of Black girls. Drawing from Critical Race Feminism (CRF), this systematic literature review looks at the trends and what they reveal about Black girls schooling experiences within the past 20 years.

Keywords: Black girls, Critical Race Feminism, secondary education, experiences schooling

In the past 20 years, research and literature that focuses on the plight of Black girls' experiences in education has increased. This literature has greatly diversified understanding of the educational landscape for Black girls. Furthermore, it acknowledges that Black girls' experiences cannot be buried and generalized with Black boys' or White girls' schooling experiences without recognition of how intersectionality affects Black girls' educational outcomes (Greene, 2016). Crenshaw (1991) coined intersectionality as a concept that recognizes the ways various social categories such as race, gender, and class interact and inform oppression. Scholars increasingly recognize these intersections as structuring the educational outcomes for Black girls in secondary education (Ireland, 2018; Lindsay-Dennis, 2010) and creating real material effects on Black girl's educational well-being. Over the past several years, scholars have responded to this by producing research that explicitly centers on Black girls' experiences in school (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Love, 2012; Morris, 2016; Watson, 2016; Wun, 2016). Crenshaw et al. 2015; Morris, 2016 and Wun, 2016 extensively researched the effects of the school-to-prison pipeline on Black girls, specifically how schooling spaces indirectly and

directly push them out. Their findings indicate that girls tend to be overpoliced, punished for subjective infractions, and adultified, further bringing attention to inequities Black girls face in schooling spaces. Watson (2016) and Love (2016) examined how Black girls navigate school and identity construction. Their research illuminates the importance of examining the effects of school on identity development and self-perception. Researchers and educators have spent more time understanding how and why Black girls experience marginalization through the schooling system and how they succeed despite the barriers impeding their success (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012; Butler-Barnes et al., 2017; Eggleston & Halsell-Miranda, 2009). Although there has been an increase in the number of peer-reviewed articles published about Black girls in secondary education in the past 20 years, there remains unfinished work that can advance our knowledge about Black girls' secondary educational experiences and put scholars' work in conversation with one another. The purpose of this article is to synthesize qualitative literature that focuses on the secondary educational experiences of Black girls, reveal the trends in the literature which specifically centers intersectionality, and reflect on what is still missing within this literature. This is significant in that we intentionally put literature in conversation with one another that otherwise often gets siloed.

Our collaboration began by asking each other questions about our own experiences with the current research and understanding of the trends. As two Black women scholars who do work centered on Black girls, we saw the need for a comprehensive literature review that centers on Black girls' schooling experiences at the secondary level. To do this, we conducted a systematic literature review using University library databases and our peer-review archives. To be clear, in terms of structuring the literature review, we reviewed several articles and engaged in professional learning which focused on how to write an article that synthesizes and reviews literature (Efron & Ravid, 2019; Valentine & Tanner-Smith, 2020; Xiao & Watson, 2019). These articles and experiences emphasized the importance of methodology, rigor, steps in identifying literature, assessing credibility, and finally, developing a protocol early on in synthesizing the literature. In the end, we sought to establish transparency and reproducibility as key principles for this literature review. Once we had clarity about the structure and the most effective way to synthesize the literature of the article, we created guiding questions.

The following research questions guided our review:

Research Question(s):

1. What does the literature reveal about Black girls' secondary schooling experiences?
2. How have the literature trends concerning Black girls in secondary education changed between the years 2000 and 2020?

Drawing From Critical Race Feminism

Critical Race Feminism (CRF) informs the theoretical framing of this process. CRF is an outgrowth of Critical Legal Studies (CLS), Critical Race Theory, and feminism (Berry, 2010; Wing, 2015). CRF examines how race, class, and gender shape experiences. It also explores how racist and patriarchal society influences and affects these categories (Hilal, 1998; Wing, 1997). According to Wing (1997) CRF emerged “as a race intervention in feminist discourse”

(p.7). Additionally, CRF also serves as a gender intervention to CRT (Wing, 1997, 2015) . These interventions are necessary as feminism often centers the experiences of White middle-class women while racial discourse often centers the experiences of men of color without acknowledging women of color face discrimination differently from their male counterparts (Wing, 1997). Intersectionality becomes essential when analyzing the educational experiences of Black girls. Examining these facets is especially pertinent when thinking about the educational experiences of Black girls in secondary education. According to Evans-Winters & Esposito (2010), "Critical Race Feminism in education offers the most nuanced and straightforward framework for contending with the social, economic, political and educational problems confronting Black female students inside and outside of schools" (p. 23). CRF offers a broad perspective to analyze the education of Black girls. This perspective foregrounds both the systemic and structural issues of justice and inequity and the persevering nature of women and girls of color despite their adversities (Clonan-Roy et al., 2016). Moreover, CRF enabled us to examine diverse articles and acknowledge the importance of anti-essentialism. Therefore, because we wanted to cast a broad range of ideas while trying to understand how the prism of intersectionality affects Black girls in secondary education, we see CRF as a useful theory to inform our analysis and understanding of their experiences.

Similar to Critical Race Theory (CRT) and CLS, CRF situates the importance of centering racialized experiences as this social category intersects with the law. Both CRT and CLS originated by recognizing the racialized experiences of People of Color (POC) and non-white individuals within America's legal system and how they encounter the law differently than their White counterparts. Taking pan-ethnicity to a higher level, the term People of Color (POC) now encompasses Black, Native Americans, and both Asians and Hispanics, as well as other non-White groups (Starr, 2022). CRT and CLS as theories worked diligently to display the differences that exist for POC's in comparison to their White counterparts with the law. Although these theories established the need for tools that consider POC's experiences, room for growth existed, especially when thinking about gender and sexism. Both CRT and CLS often fail to acknowledge how women and girls experience the law and racism differently from boys and men. Hence the need for Feminist Legal Theory (FLT) centering these efforts in CRF. The influence of FLT allowed women to be centered but often lacked acknowledging the differences between the experiences of Women of Color and White women (Berry, 2010). CRF not only builds on these theories but also prioritizes the experiences of women and girls of color. CRF explicitly centers on women and Girls of Color in understanding how racism and sexism structure social inequities (Clark & Saleh, 2019). Although scholars have been utilizing CRF for several years, CRF has mostly been intertwined with the law and has only recently expanded into the analysis of the education sector generally (Childers-McKeen & Hytten, 2015). In this literature review, we specifically use CRF to look at the diverse perspectives that speak to the Black girls' experiences in secondary education. Specifically, we were interested in understanding how the trends have evolved or changed over time when thinking about how

racism and sexism affect Black girls' educational experiences and how Black girls have challenged adversity through scholarly research literature.

We chose CRF because it specifically lets us center on the experiences of Black girls while also being uplifted as one of the most nuanced frameworks to study this population (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). CRF allowed us to find literature that considered the intersectional experiences of Black girls and it reframed Black girls in a way that moves beyond deficit-based understandings. Additionally, we contend that CRF offers a lens that will enable us to move beyond the binary of what is “positively” or “negatively” written about Black girls at the secondary level in the literature. Further, this theoretical framing offers us a diverse way to dig deeper into written narratives and spoken rhetoric focusing on Black girls. Standing in the traditions of CRF it is important to provide readers with a brief background that details who we are and what brings us to this work. We recognize that our experiences shape the ways that we designed the current article and acknowledge that no research is objective.

Positionality Statements

Author 1

Author 1 identifies as a Black woman and is an assistant professor in California. She has experience in higher education and afterschool programs. Her research interest girls stems from her own educational experiences growing up as a Black girl in a mixed race and classed community. She observed how Black girls were treated in educational spaces and has worked with them in community settings, valuing their voices. Author one has used CRF to move beyond deficit frameworks and to analyze how racism, sexism, and age influence Black girls' educational outcomes.

Supporting Author

The supporting researcher is a Black woman, founder of an educational non-profit, a P-12 Practitioner, and leader in the area of Mathematics, STEM, and Gifted & Talented education. She adopts an innovative approach to preparing students and supporting educators. Author two advocates for Black girls to enroll in advanced mathematics starting in middle school, which is proven to lead to higher success. She uses CRF to study how power dynamics in society oppress Black girls in schools, focusing on curriculum identification, especially for advanced coursework, programming, and opportunities.

Methodology

This literature review includes qualitative studies and literature reviews (comprehensive reviews and shorter, topic-specific summaries) focused on Black girls' secondary educational experiences in the United States. Essentially, we aim to make sense of existing literature, interpretation, explanation, or integration of existing research (Efron & Ravid, 2019). The purpose of this review is to describe and examine how the literature addresses Black girls' secondary experiences in relation to the research questions. We used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISR) standards (*Figure 1*) as defined by Moher et al. (2009), to improve transparency. This procedure screens possible literature and narrows down the selection by screening, applying an eligibility rubric, and includes only the articles that address our

systematic literature review's theme(s). In addition, our search covers the literature published between 2000 and 2020. This period produces a body of work that focuses on trends in education for Black girls that yield change from one decade to the next.

Case Selection

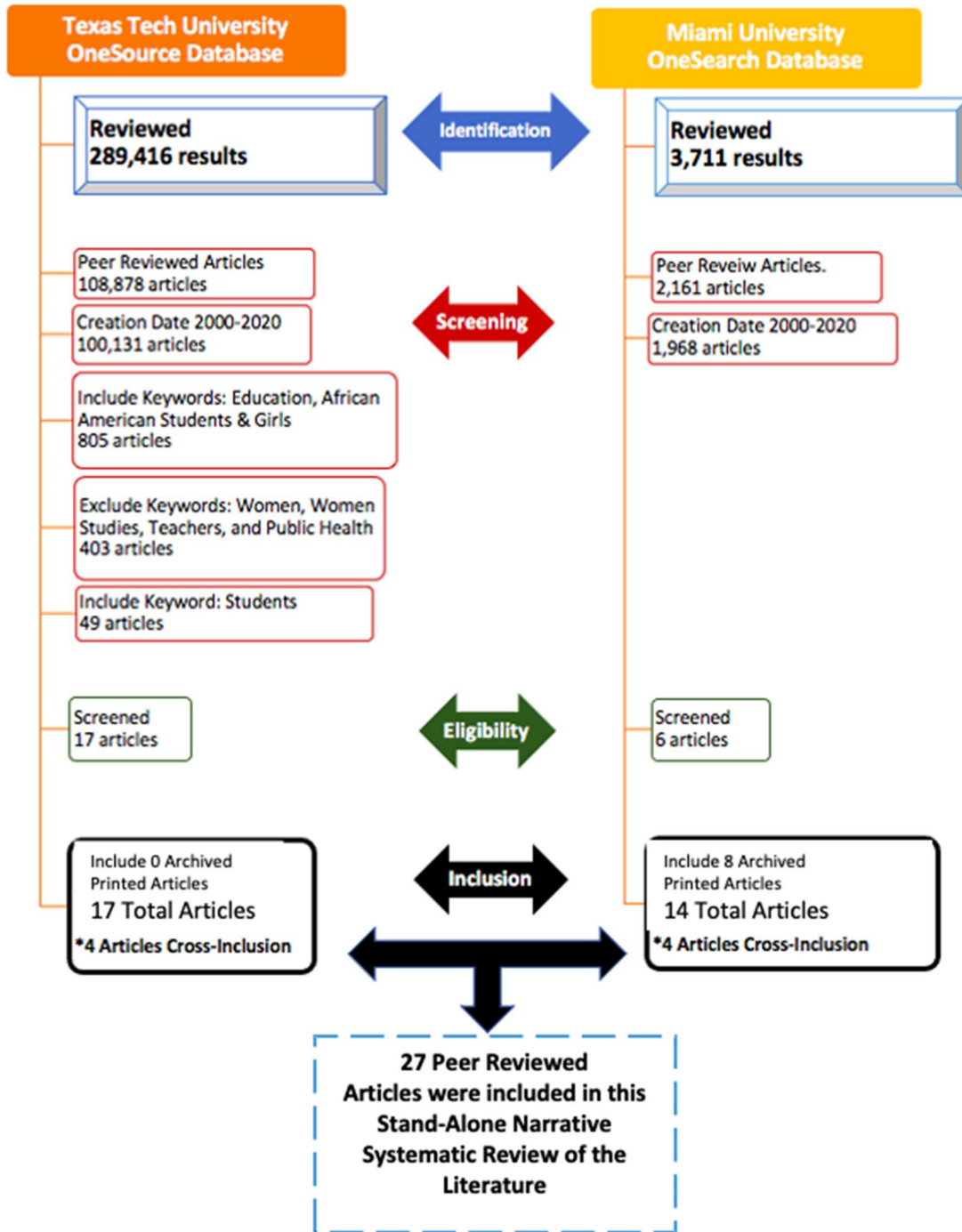
We went through several stages to select the literature for this review. These steps consisted of 1) merging our individual research passions, 2) applying PRISR standards with institutional databases to later compare, contrast, and merge our findings, and 3) adding articles that met our rubric but were not a part of the PRISR process, drawing from our previous research. Initially, as Black women with specific research interests we situated our research passions to best intertwine our pursuit for this literature review. We determined common themes in the literature prevalent in our previous research pursuits. The first author's agenda concentrated on Black girls' secondary education experiences through visuals, specifically through using photography to understand how they construct their educational worlds. The second author's concentration focuses on illuminating the brilliance of Black girls and their experiences in middle school advanced mathematics coursework. This collaboration allowed the authors to identify common themes and passions among their previous research aims for this literature review, allowing a focus on merging the two concentrations into a combined topic to examine literature that meets the eligibility for inclusion in this review. We settled on the experiences of Black girls in secondary education.

Next, we used systematic literature search methods, including databases like OneSource (Texas Tech University search engine) and OneSearch (Miami University database), to find suitable articles. We searched our respective university databases primarily to find articles suitable for our systematic analysis. Initially, we used terms like "Black girls AND secondary education" (*Figure 1*) to start our search for literature that would support the theme of this review. We later found that the keywords "African American Girls AND Secondary education" provided a higher yield within the diversity of findings. Therefore, we tailored our search efforts to include African American Girls AND Black Girls to explore potential articles. It is important to note we use Black and African American within our search and throughout the article interchangeably. When referring to individuals as Black, we embrace Nyachae's (2016) description:

Individuals who are descendants of US slaves and socially constructed as Black based on an African phenotype. [additionally,] However, Black is usually used to identify people worldwide who are of African descent and phenotype, whereas African American refers to Black people born in the USA. (p. 802)

Using these identifiers, we followed the organized search process outlined in the flow chart (*Figure 1*) to display how we searched for and selected articles.

Figure 1
Flow chart of the search and selection process



Inclusion Criteria

Qualitative methodologies inform the research studies in this systematic review. We selected qualitative studies for this stand-alone systematic literature review to amplify the voices

of Black girls and provide a platform to showcase their plight in school environments. As authors, we began this journey by reviewing the literature with prior knowledge that Black girls' voices are silenced, left out of the conversation in education, or whited out entirely (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Joseph et al, 2017). Therefore, we privileged qualitative research to showcase and illuminate Black girls' voices to provide an audible sounding board for their experiences in education through this review. To qualify for inclusion in this systematic review, primary qualitative studies had to meet the following criteria: (a) the sample is composed of secondary students (either middle or high school) who are Black and female; (b) articles are peer-reviewed in a journal; (c) published between the year 2000 to 2020; and (d) the literature must center on Black girls' secondary educational experiences. We chose this time frame because the number of articles about Black girls in school saw an increase during the time frame, with a heightened publication after 2010. Early in our search, we, as researchers, found only a few empirical book chapters that met the inclusion criteria, so we excluded them to ensure consistency within the systematic review. Once we agreed on the inclusion criteria, we started our literature search. Additionally, we sought to include studies that we have referenced in past research pursuits, that are peer-reviewed empirical studies with a focus on Black girls' secondary educational experiences. These articles, which are a part of our printed professional research database, added value to this literature review.

Methodological Influence

CRF is multidisciplinary in scope and breadth (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). As a theory, it “focuses on the lives of Women of Color who face multiple forms of discrimination, due to the intersections of race, class, and gender within a system of White male patriarchy and racist oppression” (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010, p. 20). CRF guided our inclusion practices as we sought to place Black girls in the center, rather than the margins of the discussion, research, and praxis (Berry, 2010). We examined literature with the prescribed inclusion criteria to illuminate the multidimensions of Black girls being. “By doing so, we are able to disregard the monolithic discourse of the universal Black girl and acknowledge the multi-dimensionality of their personhood” (Berry, 2010, p. 24). Selecting literature with a qualitative research design enabled us to amplify the voices so they can share their stories, not just display statistical attributes of Black girl participants who were featured in the peer-reviewed articles of inclusion. CRF acknowledges the importance of storytelling. Students' stories, including their stories of school, are important to know in the context of their development because these stories of their experiences may influence what they learn and how they learn it. Making their stories important to teaching and learning also centers, rather than marginalizes, their personhood. CRF advocates for such centering. Through the lenses of CRF, Black girl participants will be heard through the literature as we center their roles, experiences, and narratives in analyzing systems, structures, and institutions (Pratt-Clarke, 2010).

Analytic Process

We analyzed the articles selected with the guidance of CRF. We wanted to go beyond the writings of each article and delve deep into how intersections of identities affected and influenced Black girls' experiences in secondary education as outlined in the literature. CRF also helped us better understand how these influences have changed the research trends over time about Black girls and their secondary education experiences. Crenshaw (1991) defined the prism of Intersectionality as the interconnections between various social categories such as race, gender, and class that shape the multiple dimensions and social inequities connected to a person's lived experiences. Based on this definition, we were intentional in our exploration of the included peer-reviewed articles. In most of the articles, issues of sexuality and gender were not central components in terms of asking Black girls what these two characteristics meant to them. Finally, we recognize the articles selected were not internationally focused and centered on Black girl's experiences who were born in the United States. Crenshaw (1991) defined the prism of Intersectionality as the interconnections between various social categories such as race, gender, and class that shape the multiple dimensions and social inequities connected to a person's lived experiences. Based on this definition, we were intentional in our exploration of the included peer-reviewed articles. With that being said, we acknowledge that the articles analyzed mainly focused on cis-gender Black girls. Sexuality and gender identity were not issues examined as central components in most of the articles reviewed. Finally, we recognize the articles selected were not internationally focused and were centered on Black girls born in the United States.

Opening Coding and Theming

We began exploring commonalities in the included literature using open coding to make sense of our analysis data. As a tool, we used an annotated bibliography to organize our inclusion of literature. This tool included eight categories that range from the peer-reviewed article citation and keywords to the findings and summary of the literature. As our initial step, we read and coded each article to identify patterns, concepts, and repeated words. Additionally, categorizing the literature through coding helped us capture, with a short phrase, the overarching themes of each paper. A theme is a concise expression or sentence that identifies what a particular set of data is about (Saldaña, 2013). In total, we completed two rounds of coding. In the first round, we organized the keywords from each article's abstract and provided an abbreviated summary of the literature; this helped us effectively summarize the main points (open coding). To give the literature more precedence, we highlighted key quotes that resonated with us as researchers. Using this data, we identified attributes of each article that centered on the tenets of CRF. In the second round, we condensed the coded words into themes (thematic coding). These themes enhanced our organization and understanding of the common explanations about Black girls in educational literature. We relied on a checklist spreadsheet to identify articles that met our analysis criteria and organized them electronically by theme.

Findings

Through our analytic process, we organized our findings into four themes. These themes represent what we found based on the literature we analyzed in our systematic review. We also

formed these themes around CRF in terms of the key components of the theory. *Table 1* displays each article we examined, its methods, and the theme(s) we assigned to the literature. Our findings influenced our CRF lens. We specifically paid attention to peer-reviewed articles which complicated racism and sexism. As a reminder, with a CRF concentration, we wanted to understand how the literature examined Black girls in secondary education, considering their intersections of identities. Additionally, we aimed to explore how the themes associated with Black girls in educational literature have changed over the past 20 years (2000-2020). Based on our analysis, we found the following themes:

Theme 1: Black Girls' Identity During Secondary Education Experiences (BGI)

Theme 2: Discouragements, Challenges, and Adverse Experiences (DCAE)

Theme 3: Supports and Encouragements (SE)

Theme 4: Resilience & Achievement Despite Intersectional Barriers (RADIB)

Black Girls' Identity During Secondary Education Experiences (BGI)

Literature with a focus on identity and self-perception was a common concept that emerged. Our first theme, BGI, specifically focuses on Black girls' identity during the years of their middle school and high school experiences. We define this theme as, how Black girls see themselves and how others see them (hooks, 1990). Adding to this understanding, "As with all students, Black girls' identities come partly from what they think of themselves and partly from how their parents, teachers, and counselors position them" (Joseph et al., 2019, p. 135). We were conscious of how their identity is influenced and affected by their environment, including their educational institutions. Butler-Barnes et al. (2017) examined school climate, racial identity beliefs, and achievement motivation within a resilience framework. They mentioned, "The strengths that African American girls bring to their academic experiences act as an asset rather than a risk factor" (p. 568). The findings from this study revealed that racial identity and ideology beliefs were associated with higher achievement and motivation beliefs over time, while a sense of belonging served as protective factors. Furthermore, King and Pringles (2018) study confirms this through promoting a counterspace where Black girls psychological well-being is not ignored. They found this is especially important in STEM spaces where Black girls often go unseen. They remarked, "notably, the girls [in their study] made sense of how their STEM learning experiences across settings informed the ways in which they perceived and defined themselves as STEM learners through their interactions with researchers (p. 542). Further contributing to the importance of literature on Black girls' identity development in a variety of educational spaces. We not only looked at the literature that centered Black girls in their real-world but also literature where Black girls had the opportunity to directly discuss their experiences and how they define themselves. Identity and self-perception became a resounding narrative that examined Black girls in schooling situations, their interactions with peers and teachers, and how educators view them in American classrooms. Greene's (2016) study found the importance of after school spaces in allowing Black girls to be centered and providing the space for them to discuss and make sense of self.

The literature recurrently features the ongoing issue of silencing Black girls in their educational identity construction (Carter-Andrews et al., 2019; Evans, 2019; Muhammad & Haddix, 2016). Their inaudible voices erase their power to describe and construct their identity in education; this is epistemic violence (Carter-Andrews et al., 2019). Furthermore, we must listen to and value Black girls' constructions of their identity, especially their academic selves. According to Carter-Andrews et al. (2019), "the silencing of Black girls in school spaces makes their experiences appear isolated from White supremacist narratives that position their knowledge and ways of being as antithetical to "appropriate" behavior" (p. 5). In our analysis, we continually found this as a common concern for scholars researching and trying to understand Black girls in secondary education and their identity construction.

Discouragements, Challenges, and Adverse Experiences (DCAE)

Articles showcasing challenges and barriers that Black girls face in secondary education became the bedrock for our second theme. Our goal remained to examine literature that not only identifies challenges experienced by Black girls in schooling environments but also articulates solutions to the issues that became apparent in the research (theme three). Our review of the literature revealed findings about the educational brutality as a form of discouragement, instances of misunderstanding that became a barrier toward learning, and sadness due to the adverse experiences of Black girls in school systems (Morris, 2007; King & Pringle, 2018; Nunn, 2018; Ricks, 2014; Watson, 2016). Morris (2007) found that teachers were more concerned with Black girls' social aspects, such as acting like a "lady", rather than focusing on their academic achievements. This focus is connected to how Black girls at the secondary level are impacted by punitive practices in school. For example, differential treatment in discipline remains prevalent for Black girls in school spaces (Morris, 2007). Aggressive punishment against Black girls reinforces the perception that society needs to control their bodies (Martin & Smith, 2017; Morris 2007; Murphy et al., 2013). Programs and activities implicitly prioritized controlling Black girls' behaviors as programs and activities were implemented to help Black girls learn "proper" etiquette (Morris, 2007). King and Pringle (2018) found that misunderstanding and invisibility challenges Black girls' participation in STEM education.

Our review also uncovered challenges that situate Black girls in inequitable learning environments such as their limited access to advanced curriculums or their expressed isolation in such classrooms of prestige and privilege that lacked diversity. Archer-Banks and Bahar-Horenstein (2012) state, "Researchers have identified several disparities that African American students encounter at the secondary level, including course placement, discipline, and college preparation" (p. 200). Joseph et al. (2019) responded to the way of teaching that has the potential to impact Black girls. Educators must both teach their subject matter and adjust their methods to their students' humanity. When this pedagogy lacks this critical awareness, it fails to counteract the societal dehumanization of Black girls (Joseph et al., 2019). According to Archer-Banks and Bahar-Horenstein (2012), learning environments should adapt their practices to be more inclusive to ensure that Black girls' needs are adequately met. They suggest schools set higher expectations for African American girls, hire highly qualified and caring teachers, incorporate

college preparation for all students, and establish delineated rules and regulations.

Black girls also face the challenge of generally negative perceptions from educators. Our review revealed educators continue to hold deficit perceptions, images, and stereotypes about Black girls that negatively affect their educational outcomes. Unfortunately, instead of providing widespread efforts to combat this, Ricks (2014) displayed how Black girls fall through the cracks due to the lack of theoretical and practical solutions that specifically address their needs. The lack of suitable and visionary solutions exhibits how Black girls find themselves in adverse educational environments without many escape options that acknowledge them holistically (Nunn, 2018). Although this is true, we found that there are glimmers of hope through supportive factors that exist.

Supports and Encouragements (SE)

Theme three shows how scholars work to support and encourage Black girls' academic achievements. This theme reveals the protective factors that enable Black girls' efficacy, mentorship that supports girls in their development, and opportunities for engagement in college and career readiness programs to prepare them for the future. We categorized articles that addressed support and encouragement that were the pillar of Black girls' plight for academic success. We were especially interested in literature that used asset-based framing rather than deficit-based language to examine ways to support Black girls in secondary education. Joseph et al. (2017) shares that while there are a variety of programs that aim to address Black girls' persistence, three interrelated themes contribute to their perseverance and include (a) structural disruptions, (b) community influences, and (c) resilience strategies. This literature review reveals that although Black girls are brilliant, only those with prominent protective factors are recognized for their merit, leaving the others, who have limited protective factors, without notice or recognition. This connects back to the tenet of CRF that centers the importance of recognizing multiplicity within experiences. Pearson (2008) mentions the strength Black girls inherently bring that allows their "racial identity beliefs" to "act as an asset rather than a risk factor" (p. 17). This research showcases the importance of supporting Black girls in developing a positive racial identity. Furthermore, Pearson (2008) examined the power of teachers that became voices of hope for Black girls finding their own voices. She discovered that when Black girls were given opportunities and support to find their voice they also found "they had untapped potential, unseen promises, untaught principal, unbelievable possibilities, and underdeveloped power" (p. 17). There is tremendous untapped potential that exists in charting their own path toward success in their lives and others when we allow Black girls' voices to be illuminated.

Several scholars share their theoretical solutions that add clarity for educators and others in their quest to understand Black girls' educational experiences (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Butler, 2018). Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010) provide evidence for the importance of connecting CRF with Black girls' experiences in education to study better ways we can support them. Butler (2018) uses Black girl Cartography to map out the importance of being intentional about supporting Black girls through researching and mapping their educational experiences (situating them in place).

The importance of educator preparation clarified other supportive constructs and interactions with Black girls. Many articles within this theme highlighted the importance of culturally relevant approaches to working with Black girls in the academic setting broadly, the significance of mentorship in disrupting internalized stereotypes, and the importance of better preparing teachers and administrators to work with and understand Black girls and how culture influences learning styles (Mayes & Hines, 2014; Ricks, 2014; Joseph et al., 2019). The supportive strategies suggested through each article centered on the humanity of Black girls in education. These articles explicitly pointed to the issues of the educational system rather than pointing at a gap among Black girls. May and Hines (2014) specifically address how to improve support for Black girls in gifted education for career and college readiness. Ricks (2014) scholarship emphasized the importance of educational policies in centering the racial and gendered experiences of Black girls. Her research suggests mentoring models and better resources are needed in order to better support educators and Black girls in the educational landscape. Joseph et al. (2019) suggest Black girls collaboratively with others while at the same time be treated with respect and dignity as valued members of the learning environment. Additionally, the research team highlighted the importance of Black girls being taught by skilled mathematics teachers with whom they are able to form bonds in fun and relaxing ways while engaged in rigorous problem-solving curriculums (Joseph et al., 2019). Furthermore, policymakers and educators must disrupt marginalization while also promoting and encouraging academic excellence.

Resilience & Achievement Despite Intersectional Barriers (RADIB)

The final theme illustrates how Black girls in secondary education are academically successful and resilient despite the intersectional barriers in school environments. Butler et al. (2017) mentioned, “The strengths that African American girls bring to their academic experiences and, specifically, the ways in which their racial identity beliefs act as an asset rather than a risk factor” (p. 17). Articles in this theme offer an insightful perspective on how intersections of identities affect and influence Black girls in secondary education and how they are academically triumphant due to their persistence, grit, and brilliance. In a study by King and Pringle (2018), a portrayal of the complex experiences of Black girls produced six powerful narratives that ignited a “call to awaken the voices of Black girls. The findings confirm that when credence and counterspaces are given to Black girls, they are poised to reveal their luster toward STEM learning” (p. 539). This theme showcased a counterstory to previous research articles that paint Black girls in a negative light, or that dug under the surface to construct unfavorable accounts of this humanity.

Our findings are further organized in *Table 1*, below. As a reminder, each article of inclusion is presented in the table along with the assigned theme that emerged from the analysis in the review. These included:

Theme 1: Black Girls’ Identity During Secondary Education Experiences (BGI)

Theme 2: Discouragements, Challenges, and Adverse Experiences (DCAE)

Theme 3: Supports and Encouragements (SE)

Theme 4: Resilience & Achievement Despite Intersectional Barriers (RADIB)

Table 1
Black Girls in Secondary Education Literature 2000-2020

Studies	Methods	Themes			
		BGI	DCAE	SE	RADIB
Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2012)	Interviews, Journaling, and Field Notes	x	x		
Butler (2018)	Black Girl Cartography			x	
Butler-Barnes et al. (2017)	Focus groups	x			x
Carter Andrews et al. (2019)	Qualitative Interviews	x	x		
Eggleston and Halsell-Miranda (2009)	Qualitative Interviews	x			
Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010)	Literature Mapping			x	
Greene (2016)	Discussions, field observations and notes, and interviews	x			
Ireland et al. (2018)	Abstract and Full-text Screening	x	x		
Joseph et al. (2017)	Synthesis of 62 Studies	x		x	
Joseph et al. (2019)	Semi-structured Interviews	x		x	x
King and Pringle (2018)	Interviews, Journals, Work Samples, and researcher memos	x		x	x
Lindsay-Dennis (2010)	Literature Mapping				x
Martin and Smith (2017)	Secondary data set		x		

Mayes and Hines (2014)	Literature Mapping		x	x	
McArthur (2015)	Interviews & Focus Groups	x			
Morris (2007)	Ethnographic		x		
Murphy et al. (2013)	Interviews and Drawings		x		
Neal-Jackson (2018)	Meta-ethnographic	x	x		
Nunn (2018)	Observation, Interviews, Activity Responses		x		
O'Conner et al. (2011)	Ethnographic	x	x		x
Owens et al. (2017)	Annotated Bibliography			x	
Pearson (2008)	Interviews			x	x
Ricks (2014)	Literature Mapping		x	x	
Riegle-Crumb and Humphries (2012)	Surveys and Academic Records		x		
Sutherland (2005)	Interview, Artifacts, and Field Notes	x			
Thomas and Jackson (2007)	Literature Mapping		x	x	
Watson (2016)	Interviews, Field Notes, and Journal	x	x		

Discussion

This systematic review intended to understand Black girls' experiences in secondary education. We specifically wanted to know how peer-reviewed qualitative literature has changed within a 20 year timeframe in terms of the quantity of research and the presented perspectives of authors related to Black girls' perceptions in schools and learning environments. Our analysis revealed four themes that we used to organize and understand the selected peer-reviewed articles.

Within our discussion, we will discuss our findings, express our limitations, and make recommendations for future research.

Analysis of the Findings

We analyzed a total of 27 articles and organized each within the four themes. Our findings yielded literature diversity, and some produced tenets for more than one theme. Theme one, BGI, was illuminated by 14 of the 27 peer-reviewed articles. Also, DCAE was represented in 14 articles of inclusion. SE yielded 10 articles and RADIB was supported by six of the articles. These numbers are telling, they provide a window into where the focus has been when studying Black girls at the secondary level over the last two decades.

These findings are expressive of how the focal point for two decades of research centered on Black girls in secondary education has been and continues to be an area in which we need to explore more. More literature is needed on how Black girls in secondary education academically succeed despite the intersectional barriers they face. Among the twenty-seven articles we examined, RADIB received the least attention as an area of exploration. We know that Black girls in secondary education are academically successful and resilient despite the intersectional barriers in school environments, and it is important to see that aspect of their humanity in scholarly research. Another area of focus is among the SE themes. Between the years 2000-2010, there was a limited amount of scholarship that focused on the support and encouragement Black girls experienced in secondary education. From the 27 articles published, there were six published in that decade. From those six articles from the year 2000 to 2010 only two articles (Pearson, 2008; Thomas and Jackson, 2007) focused on how educators could better support and encourage Black girls in secondary education. Additionally, between 2010-2020 there were 23 articles found for this literature review and eight (Butler, 2018; Evans-Winters, 2010; Joseph et al., 2017; Joseph et al., 2019; King and Pringle, 2018; Mayes and Hines, 2014; Owens et al., 2017; Ricks, 2014) focused on the support and encouragement of Black girls during their academic journey. Therefore, support and encouragement of Black girls is a gap in the field that requires more research on best practices that support and encourage Black girls' academic well-being. This is important because often the literature can be fixated on the challenges that Black girls face, which is important, but there is also a need to push beyond this and work to identify real strategies to support and encourage Black girls.

The analysis revealed that Black girls are very aware of the perceptions that other students and teachers have about them. They use that knowledge to combat negative stereotypical messages that present barriers to their learning (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012; Eggleston & Halsell-Miranda, 2009). Also, Black girls' self-perception is characterized by a small margin centered on the way others see them. Second, our analysis revealed that although there is work that has occurred to mitigate barriers and inequities that Black girls experience in secondary education, our commitment to eliminate barriers that hinder their academic success must be heightened. Scholars have conducted detailed explorations of the challenges affecting Black girls self-efficacy, educational outlook, and motivations in today's educational systems (Morris, 2007; Martin & Smith, 2017; Ricks, 2014; Nunn, 2018). Morris

(2007), Martin and Smith (2017) took a powerful look at over-disciplined bodies of Black girls in schools. Black girls experience higher punitive punishments and their lived experiences are misunderstood in institutional spaces where their learning should occur. Nunn (2018) explored how Black girls have endured messages of defeat that stem from adultification or unholistic acceptance of their humanity by faculty and staff in their educational systems. This also highlights the need for holistic, humanizing approaches when working with Black girls.

The third finding revealed, although many authors before 2010 portray Black girls as a demographic that is “falling through the cracks” (Ricks, 2014), there has been an increase in the number of articles that focus on how we can make the educational environment more equitable for Black girls at the secondary level. For example, Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010) outlined a theoretical solution to studying and understanding Black girls’ educational experiences. These scholars were instrumental in providing a framework to help understand the needs of Black girls specifically. There still is a long way to go in truly understanding what educational practices and theories are needed to improve the education system for Black girls at the secondary level; however, we have come a long way in comparison to the first half of the two decades that we analyzed. The systematic review also revealed that despite facing inequities from racism, sexism, classism, and ageism, Black girls still find ways to achieve academically and create their representations as illustrated by Greene’s (2016) study in an afterschool space.

Interpretations and Implications

According to our research, there was a significant increase in Black girls’ secondary education studies after 2010. This trend highlights a growing interest in both centering and better understanding Black girls in secondary education. This interest, as shown in *Table 1*, is diverse and vast. We speculate this increase likely happened for several reasons. In 2006, Beverly Bond created Black Girls Rock to display humanizing representations of Black women and girls. Several years later in 2010, she collaborated with Black Entertainment Television (BET) to host the Black Girls Rock Awards show. Before this, there was no other network explicitly celebrating the music and artistry of Black women and girls. Furthermore, to address health disparities and the myth that Black women and girls do not care about health, Black Girls Run was created in 2009. This organization seeks to support Black women and girls who run. Furthering the interest of Black girls, Noble (2013) provided evidence of how algorithms on search engines reinforced stereotypes and racism. In 2011, she was astonished to see what she found when she Googled the words “Black Girls”. In 2011, Black Girls Who Code was also established. In 2014, the Unlocking Opportunity report was produced by the NAACP and The National Women's Law Center. Although this came several years after 2010, this report further opened up doors to understanding Black girls' experiences in education. Moreover, it further calls us to action. We speculate it was no accident that there was an increase in scholarship after 2010. However, there were intentional ways organizations, reports, and scholars were establishing the foundations of what was to come.

Limitations

Two research scholars with access to specific resources conducted this literature review, potentially offering limited perspective focused on qualitative research in two locales. We acknowledge that we could improve the selection of databases for recruiting sources. In our discovery of combined sources, we found that OneSearch and OneSource proved to provide different articles for review. OneSearch initially offered nearly 300,000, and we found OneSource to provide smaller initial findings listed. Even with these differences, the two databases showed a diversity of articles for our review of the literature, with only four reports of overlap between our inclusion findings. We realized limitations in our ability to access every article that addresses the keywords in our study given we can only access the literature in the database for which we are privileged and those within our professional files. As a purposeful yet convenient sample, we acquired the empirical research studies under review from institutions we can access. We acknowledge that expanding our methodology to include an author search through reference lists could yield more articles that meet our selection criteria. Although these limitations are apparent, the peer-reviewed research articles used for inclusion were found to be of superior quality. The inclusion of 27 articles enhanced the significance of this systematic literature review. Additionally, although we intended only to include peer-reviewed articles, we can include other resources such as books, blogs, and chapters in future research as they could serve as useful sources.

Gaps in the Literature

Researchers need to produce more literature on the academic success of Black girls in secondary education despite the intersectional barriers they face. In addition to hearing their voices, CRF suggests that Black girls be given opportunities and support to become visible in their education to combat instances where they fall into cracks along the journey. Filling this gap is essential and may help us better understand what supports and encouragement are needed to help further Black girls in their pursuit of academic success. Although we found some literature on this topic, it remains minimal. As a community, it is our responsibility to ensure Black girls are equitably supported in a way that pushes beyond the controlling images that exist. Leaning on CRF, particularly working with Black girls to produce counternarratives and utilizing storytelling will provide a powerful contribution to narrow this gap.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on our literature synthesis, we suggest four areas of inquiry for future research that could be conducted to learn more about Black girls' experiences at multiple educational levels and enhance their educational outcomes. We acknowledge the urgency of this work and the implications it could have. In no particular order, our recommendations are as follows:

Continue to conduct research *with* Black girls to understand their educational needs, explore their experiences, the inequities they face, and illuminate their brilliance. Subsequent research should propagate the voices of Black girls. This action alone allows the educational community to hear their stories while illuminating their challenges, motivations, and spaces of isolation in education.

Gather and analyze all research, including books, articles, and popular media that focus on Black girls' experiences at the secondary level to produce a broad picture of Black students' educational needs and resilience. In addition to conducting electronic searches using databases, researchers should explore the richness of inclusion articles that could be contributions from the reference lists of their featured articles. This practice may identify relevant studies for inclusion in future systematic reviews. Engaging in these practices will uphold the anti-essentialist tenet of CRF and foster a more robust understanding of Black girls' educational experiences.

This literature review focused on Black girls' educational experiences while enrolled in secondary school. Future articles and reviews could expand this research vertically by including the voices of Black girls and their experiences at the elementary and collegiate levels. Additionally, research is needed to explore the counterstories of Black girls enrolled in advanced curriculums. Centering on their intersectionality, research with Black girls in these paradigms warrants an expansion to this review and extend research in this area.

Finally, we need to know more about educational environments that cultivate academic wellness and inclusion for Black girls. How and why are schools successful in their approach? Identifying structures that successfully cultivate Black girls' academic well-being can advance a model that informs practitioners about effective educational practices.

Conclusion

The goal of this systematic literature review was to synthesize and organize literature related to Black girls in secondary education. Our examination revealed the importance of centering Black girls' voices and educational experiences to understand their unique needs and the challenges they continue to face. Using CRF allowed us to identify articles which centered intersectionality and remained anti-essentialist when analyzing the plight of Black girls. Moreover, we recognize, "Black girls are uniquely resilient; therefore, their academic struggles are largely absent from the current literature" (Young et al., 2017, p. 71). The lack of narratives that support Black girls' brilliance was found to resonate with Young et al.'s (2017) position as it rang true for our systematic review, especially literature centered on how to improve Black girls' experiences in their educational environments. We concede that beyond the theoretical supports, there is a requirement to provide more practical solutions for educators as well as create and push forward literature that continues to explore the needs and successes of Black girls at the secondary level. Our intention of this review was not to be all-encompassing; however, it was to extend the conversations that already exist in hopes that as educators, we will continue the fight to make educational environments more inclusive and equitable for Black girls. Furthermore, our hope is for educators to continue to analyze Black girls' intersections of identity to complicate ways in which we can provide better support and encouragement to Black girls at the secondary level without essentializing their identities.

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