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For *Us*: Towards an Intersectional Leadership Conceptualization by Black women for Black Girls

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For *Us*: Towards an Intersectional Leadership Conceptualization

by Black Women for Black Girls

Abstract

This article is based on a case study situated in a STEM education research-practice partnership that illumines the work that three Black women school leaders do specifically on behalf of Black girls, and in examining their asset-based approaches, conceptualizes their work by articulating a framework for intersectional leadership. By historicizing and explicating the rich legacy of Black women school leaders, and specifically including the theoretical dispositions in which their pedagogy is rooted, we shine a light on the lacuna that exists in educational leadership that specifically articulates their praxes when working on behalf of students with whom they identify -- that is, Black girls. Black women have modeled what Black girls need because they empathize with their intersectional identities in unique ways. Based on their effective practices, we offer the following definition of intersectional leadership: the operationalization of visionary strategies that privilege the experiences of followers who live the realities of more than one historically oppressive identifier.

Hollowed by the historicity of racism, sexism, and woefully misaligned assumptions, the lacuna in educational research that perpetuates the exclusion of Black girls' and women in solution-focused discourse is slowly but surely filling with efforts that intentionally center the brilliance and resilience that these students and educators possess (Butler 2018; Joseph, Hailu, & Matthews 2019; Watson 2016). The necessity for researchers to respond with scholarship that uplifts Black girls is evident; policies and practices that negligently overlook them have gone unchecked for far too long. Furthermore, in educational administration, there is a need to identify how school leaders intentionally center Black girls' abilities and vulnerabilities in ways that acknowledge their intersectional realities. Reporting how this work has been done by Black women for Black girls, this article expands asset-based narratives about their contributions to education, and society writ large. While acknowledging that overall discussions regarding Black girls are focused on how they are disproportionately over-disciplined (Annamma, et al. 2019; U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights 2014) and under-accepted (Carter Andrews et al. 2019) in the educational milieu, we explicate practices that Black women use to uplift Black girls. Simultaneously, we use case study analysis to corroborate the articulation of a framework, intersectional leadership, that all school leaders can use to support these and other historically underserved students.

To ground this article in the rich legacy of Black women educators, we coalesce scholarship about their work in schools and communities, beginning with the development and influence of the Jeanes' Supervising Industrial Teachers (known as the Jeanes' Supervisors). The historicity of Black women's leadership further includes their unique intersectional disposition based on race and gender (Agosto & Roland 2018; Dillard 1995), their ethic of care (Bass 2009; Collins 2000), and their philosophies and practices regarding educating children of color (Flores 2018;

Johnson 2006). Reviewing statistical data about Black women's and girls' representation across

K-12 education, privileging Black women's leadership, and presenting research that

contextualizes it in STEM education specifically on behalf of students with whom they identify -

that is, Black girls - we endeavor to embolden them both. We articulate the intersectional

leadership framework *for us* - to present models of leadership that Black women have gifted the

field. We offer this new framework as direction for current and aspiring educational leaders who

endeavor to disrupt multiplicative measures of oppression that plague hegemonic spaces where

historically underserved students learn and grow.

An intentionally mirrored exploration of educational leadership that focuses on effects of race

and gender reveals the critical role that Black women fulfill in schools. National data reveals that

Black women are underrepresented in school leadership (Taie & Goldring 2017). In spite of this

underrepresentation, there is a body of research that underscores the impact of Black women's

journeys, experiences, and styles of leadership (Alston 2005; Bloom & Erlandson 2003;

Horsford 2012; Loder 2005a; Newcomb & Niemeyer 2015; Peters 2010; Peters 2012; Reed &

Evans 2008) and informs this study. The history of Black women in education, and ultimately,

educational leadership, has been characterized by challenge. Black women were historically

excluded from education and opportunities to lead. As Black people were given the opportunity

to pursue education, and the field of education became more feminized, more opportunities

became available for Black women. Education was at times dangerous for Black women teachers

and leaders (Shakeshaft 1999). Eventually, opportunities were afforded to Black women to teach

and lead in schools. Most notably, this occurred via the Jeanes' Teachers programs. The Anna T.

Jeanes Fund initiated the formation and training of Black administrators for the purpose of

enhancing Black communities (Jones 1937). Kriesman (2017) depicted this process by

examining the impact of Jeanes supervisors:

> These "Jeanes supervisors," most of them women, were assigned to Southern counties and served a variety of tasks in each county's Black schools, including: teacher training, curriculum development, administrative work, and fundraising, often for Rosenwald schools, among myriad other tasks… By 1930, the Jeanes Fund had placed supervisors in over 40 percent of Southern counties, ostensibly reaching nearly half of Southern Black pupils. (574)

As with Black educators, the decline of Jeanes supervisors can be linked to the desegregation and

closing of Black schools. Although desegregation facilitated the decline of Black educators and

leaders (Milner and Howard 2004; Oakley, Stowell, and Logan 2009), research informs that

Black educators are integral to the educational experiences of Black students (Tillman 2004).

Considering the ongoing advances in Black girlhood and Black women school leaders, this

article aims to synergistically expound upon the leadership of three Black women middle school

educators as they champion Black girls in STEM education.

Educational Experiences of Black Girls

The constellated effects of marginalization on Black girls resulting from racialized

discrimination and gendered bias (Fordham 1993) are documented across literature that explores

each stage of their academic and social development. Scholarship about Black girls' experiences

details how they face hardships that cumulatively ostracize them from equitable educational

opportunities. Likewise, the effects of policy, from desegregation (Grant 1984) to current

discipline sanctions (Morris 2016) have affected how they fare when pursuing educational and

professional opportunities.

Academic Status of Black Girls in U.S. Schools

Scholars are increasingly investigating how Black girls navigate schooling challenges that

influence their academic experiences. Within Black girlhood studies, research that focuses on

their education provides insight into the ways they express their brilliance and resilience. Gholson and Martin (2014) contributed to much-needed STEM discipline literature focused on Black girls by pinpointing the significance of social networks in influencing their mathematical and racial identities. Analyzing student interviews, classroom observations, and group interactions, the researchers found that eight- and nine-year-old Black girls expressed their desires to be included, respected, and relevant in their mathematical community of practice. Gholson and Martin recounted how Black girls were actively and happily involved with group activities on the rare occasions they were invited to be a part. Also noted, was one Black girl's decision to work individually when directed to move to work in groups. When questioned about her choice, the student described how she preferred to forgo the bothering she often faced when she joined groups, and instead stayed where she felt more comfortable in the classroom. This act was viewed as one of the students' many "campaigns for relevance, respect, and inclusion" (30) in a math classroom. It demonstrated the researchers' capacity to use intersectional and emic views to properly situate Black girls' behaviors in positive, self-advocating ways in STEM learning contexts. Recent research corroborates the unique position of Black girls in STEM education both in and out of school (Young, Young, and Ford, 2017; Young, Young, and Ford, 2019).

Researchers have taken on the important task of countering deficitized perspectives of Black girls, as it is essential that they are not exclusively stereotyped and vilified in scholarship and practice. Amidst problematizing narratives about Black girls, scholars have shifted the foci by illumining manners in which Black girls academically excel. Muhammad and Dixson (2008) offered a necessary statistical snapshot of Black girls' educational success by analyzing data from the Educational Longitudinal Survey of 2002. In their study of high schoolers, the sample

population of 21,757 tenth-graders included 946 Black girls. Muhammad and Dixon's use of independent t-tests and chi-square analysis offered comparisons of Black girls' educational experiences with those of their contemporaries. They analyzed the respondents' assessment of (a) school environments; (b) academic recognition, opportunities, and achievement; and (c) future orientation and college plans. Muhammad and Dixon's findings upheld assertions that Black girls are academically competitive while highlighting the importance of students having access to academic support that encourages them to excel. The researchers' results also specified that Black girls were "just as likely as [their] peers to receive academic honors and recognition for good attendance and service to their community" (176). This asset-based explanation is a much-needed difference from the oft-cited realities of their disproportionate discipline referrals (U. S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights 2014). Such reports demonstrate the need to make the schooling ethos and experience genuinely inclusive and nurturing for Black girls.

Social Status of Black Girls in U.S. Schools

The U. S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights depiction of Black girls' educational experiences is indisputably disturbing. The devasting reality is that while they make up 8% of the student population, they are 14% of the out-of-school suspensions and 9% of the expulsions. (U. S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights 2016). Their start in the discipline pipeline also begins early, as they are 54% of the preschool girls who receive out-of-school suspensions, while only occupying 20% of the preschool population. These alarming overrepresentations are not only results of hypervigilant and hostile school climates, but also indicative of educational leadership policies and practices that aggressively position Black girls as offenders.

The Role of Educational Leaders

Educational leaders' roles in establishing, enforcing, and maintaining disciplinary procedures in schools is important to consider when eradicating punitive discrepancies and replacing them with strategies that include and embolden Black girls academically and socially. The commitment to affirming Black students in schools, so that they can learn and flourish, has been demonstrated in leadership that Black women have reified.

<div align="center">Experiences of Black Women Educational Leaders</div>

Research informs that Black women educational leaders predominantly serve marginalized students, including students of color and students living in poverty in urban settings. While the data is not aggregated for race *and* gender, recent data from the National Center for Educational Statistics inform that less than 10% of public school principals are Black (Taie and Goldring 2017). Additionally, the greatest preponderance of Black principals serve students in urban settings, where the preponderance of students of color are educated.

Narratives have been an important mechanism within the research to illuminate Black women's experiences and epistemologies as school and district leaders. This methodology empowers and validates Black women's voices and provides a space for authentic engagement in disrupting the dominant discourse (Flores 2018). Witherspoon and Arnold (2010) employed a womanist framework to "critically engage traditional hierarchies associated with race and class" (221) in their investigation of spirituality of Black women principals. Flores (2018) used a Critical Race Theory framework to examine the 'counternarratives' of three Black women principals' leadership approaches toward equity and student outcomes. Brown (2014) used phenomenological narratives to understand the recruitment and retention of Black women in public school superintendency.

Additional context-specific research has examined Black women leaders' experiences in urban settings. For example, Loder's (2005b) work examined the nexus of Black women principals' perspectives on district reform, relationships with parents, and maternal leadership orientations, in light of their generational experiences. There are several common and interrelated themes that emerge from the body of literature that investigates Black women leaders. A recurring theme is that of care (Bass 2009; Loder 2005b; Newcomb and Niemeyer 2015; Witherspoon and Arnold 2010). In her work on Black Feminist Thought, Patricia Hill Collins (2000) explains how the epistemological exercise of care that Black women demonstrate is a necessary element of their leadership practice. A second major theme in research about Black women school leaders is the related pursuits of activism, social justice, and cultural consciousness. Principals were often passionate about perceptions of their students, and they focused a significant portion of their efforts on advocacy for students and families (Bloom and Erlandson 2003; Brown 2014; Flores 2018; Loder 2005a).

Theoretical Framework

In order to thoroughly establish the foundation of this study of Black women's leadership for Black girls, we determined it essential to use a theoretical substratum that ineludibly acknowledges the overlapping effects of racism and sexism. We hold that intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991) best undergirds this research, and the resulting conceptual articulation. The framework provides a foundation upon which to build knowledge regarding how ostracizations based on race and gender collectively affect Black girls and women (Crenshaw and Harris 2008). Intersectionality offers a robustly convincing perspective from which to investigate how Black women lead while prioritizing Black girls' best interests in the STEM contexts from which they are often excluded.

Intersectionality Defined

Intersectionality is rooted in the articulation of a "Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics" (Crenshaw 1989, 139). Crenshaw acknowledged the multiple oppressive factors that challenged Black women's success and their mere existence. Rooted in critical legal studies, her development of intersectional studies illumined the ways that Black women were excluded from both feminist theory and antiracist politics. Crenshaw later penned a framework that explained the social underpinnings and consequences of structural, political, and representational intersectionality (1991). Crenshaw clarified that "intersectionality [was] not being offered here as some new, totalizing theory of identity" (1244). The development of intersectionality in educational studies has fueled exploration of how different systems of subjugation influenced Black women's and girls' lives.

Intersectionality and Black Women's Leadership

Researchers have examined Black women's leadership through the lens of intersectionality (Alston 2005; Bloom and Erlandson 2003; Brown 2014; Jean-Marie, Williams, and Sherman 2009; Witherspoon and Arnold 2010; Witherspoon and Mitchell 2009). Several studies rely on epistemological frameworks grounded in notions of race and gender such as Black Feminist Thought (Collins 2000), Afrocentric Feminist Epistemology (Jean-Marie, Williams, and Sherman 2009), Endarkened Feminist Epistemology (Dillard 1995), and womanism (Witherspoon and Arnold 2010). These epistemological frames serve to "deconstruct dominant ideologies that justify, support and rationalize the interests of those in power" (Jean-Marie, Williams, and Sherman 2009, 11). The aforementioned research provides background and validation for the lived experiences of Black women school and district leaders, and yields the

following common themes in the literature: (a) experiences of discrimination, (b) ethic of care, and (c) resistance, activism, and social justice.

Experiences of discrimination. Empirical studies have articulated Black women's struggles with White hegemonic systems of power and oppression. This discrimination is obvious from the sheer number of Black women in positions of leadership. Brown (2014) investigated the experiences of Black women superintendents. She stated, "although the number of African American women in the superintendency continues to grow, their growth in no way compares to White women and men" (p. 575). Jean-Marie et al. (2009) refer to experiences of discrimination based on both race and gender as "double outsider" status (p. 11) because Black women experience exclusion based on both race *and* gender.

Ethic of care. Research on Black women educational leaders reveal their practice and expressions of care for students and members of the school community (Bass 2009; Loder 2005b; Wilson 2015, Witherspoon and Arnold 2010). Black women educators often engage in "maternal leadership approaches" (Loder 2005b, 304) in their leadership of Black students. Collins (2000) coined the term "othermothering" to describe the actions and epistemological approach of Black women educational leaders to nurture and support their students and the community at large (Dillard 1995; Loder 2005b). Loder's (2005b) research clarified the myriad responsibilities of these "othermothers" as "obligated to rebuild schools and communities through nurturance, teaching, and leading" (301).

Resistance, activism, and social justice. Black women educators have a historical record of challenging systems of oppression. Collins (2000) informed, "it is no accident that many well-known U.S. Black women activists were either teachers or involved in struggles for educational opportunities for African Americans of both sexes" (211). Alston (2005) characterized Black

women educational leaders who engage in activism as tempered radicals. Ultimately, teaching and leadership are acts of resistance and activism for Black women educators.

Methods

We used the case study method to understand how Black women developed emboldening educational experiences for Black girls in STEM. A case study consists of the "in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a 'real life' context" (Simons 2009, 21). We educed valuable lessons from the decisions the Black women school leaders made to secure equitable access to STEM learning for Black girls and to simultaneously grasp why they made those choices. The research questions guiding this case study were:

1. What leadership and/or instructional practices do Black women utilize to support Black girls in educational spaces where they are underrepresented?
2. How do Black women understand the multiplicative effects of race and gender on the educational experiences and outcomes for Black girls in STEM?

The case study method directly aligned with the goals of this research, specifically the exploration of how intersectionality theory was actualized in education. This investigation of educators' intentions and practices responds to scholars' call for educators to consider how they include intersectionality in their pedagogical decision-making (Morris 2019). Epistemologically we believe that knowledge is engendered as examinations of educators' thinking and practices are conducted. The case study method supported in-depth research with the participants, all Black women, whose explanations of their teaching and leading provided clearer, more accessible entrée into their experiential views (Lincoln and Guba 1985). As Black women

ourselves, case study procedures yielded trustworthy relationships with the participants, a facet

of research found lacking in research with communities of color (LeCompte 1999).

The case study participants included a middle school principal, a middle school science teacher

leader, and a middle school math teacher leader employed at a large, Mid-Atlantic, urban school.

The participants were selected based on their involvement in STEM-Communities (a

pseudonym, as are all other names), a research-practice partnership (Coburn and Penuel 2016)

that fostered collaboration between the school and STEM professionals of color. The partners

developed STEM curricula based on problems of practice that aligned with content from STEM

classes.

The principal, Dr. Foster, was a Black woman who worked in education for 17 years across

elementary and middle school grade levels and at the district level as an instructional coach and a

leadership performance specialist. She was committed to building an inclusive school

environment by holding herself accountable for monitoring how she was adhering to leadership

standards in her decision-making. Dr. Foster was in her first year at Wilson Middle School

during the time that this research was conducted. The science teacher leader, Mrs. Zora, was a

Black woman in her third year of teaching at Wilson Middle School during this study. As a

former nurse, she came to the field of education with an understanding of the importance of

providing relevant examples for students to understand how their work could be used in science

fields. She taught seventh and eighth grade science and was the science department chairwoman.

The math teacher, Mrs. Adelaide, was a Black woman who had been teaching for 10 years. She

began her career in a different Mid-Atlantic state and noted that her current school district had

more Black students than her previous location. She taught seventh grade math at the time of

study and was in her third year of teaching in the school district.

The case study consisted of individual interviews that lasted approximately one hour each. The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed for elaboration and detailed responsiveness to the discourse. The coding structure included two levels of data analysis. We developed codes based on Black women's leadership and Black girls' education and the emerging themes that were deduced from the interview content. The coding consisted of analysis of interview transcripts to identify cohesion across the three narratives and the unique aspects of each individual interview that enhanced the nuanced understanding of Black women's leadership.

Findings

The principal and educators demonstrated an understanding of Black girls' positionality and potential by providing examples of STEM professionals with whom they had an affinity.

Leading to Make Schools More Accountable to Black Girls

Dr. Foster operated with considerations for Black girls by acknowledging that providing an education that specifically supported them required thoughtful attention to the content to which students had access. She readily admitted:

> I have a body of students who are African-American females, who are Black girls, who really enjoy science.… I think the middle school is just a place that should be like a platter of opportunities to touch and do a variety of things. So, bringing STEM-Communities in will give them an opportunity to be exposed to an inquiry process project, [and] other professionals in STEM. I think that with Black girls, as long as they can see women of color doing something positive and in a particular direction, it helps them to have an ability to just do something or dream about something different than what they're in right now. So, STEM-Communities can open up the opportunity for more Black girls to be in STEM and I think that is important for them to know.

An essential aspect of Dr. Foster's leadership was her awareness of the importance of having STEM programming that aligned with the school's inquiry-based pedagogical model. This fueled her commitment to offering Black girls examples of STEM professionals with whom they

identified. Likewise, she acknowledged more could be done to encourage Black girls to explore STEM opportunities:

> We definitely have some work where we can open up the opportunity…. We should have something like Black Girls Rock with STEM, or Girl Power instead. We should have some type of club that these girls do need where they're actually having an opportunity to be one-on-one with an engineer. We need that type of interaction with girls. So the girls right now, they're exposed in the inquiry-based environment, but it's just still at a more general level. It hasn't gone deep enough.

Dr. Foster's resolute commitment to providing Black girls exemplars with whom they could identify was the core of her mission. Her leadership practices also positively influenced the school's staff.

The STEM discipline teachers' reflections on Dr. Foster's leadership corroborated her explanation of her approach to supporting students and staff. For example, Mrs. Adelaide reflected on Dr. Foster's articulation of her approach when the principal once explained in a staff meeting, "If I focus on the teachers, and I focus on you all, and you're okay, then I know the kids are okay." Mrs. Adelaide noted that the principal's approach helped boost the staff's morale. Similarly, Mrs. Adelaide explained that Dr. Foster required faculty to establish and maintain communication with families. Mrs. Adelaide noted how this practice supported her engagement with Black girls and their families. She believed:

> So I'm noticing that the Black girls who are confident in the material or just themselves, they're not afraid to make mistakes. They don't see themselves as inferior to the opposite sex or just anybody else. And I think the confidence... is a big difference in ... the Black girls that I've seen in my class that just really tackled... the design challenges. It may be their home life. I know there are some of the home lives of the students who are more dominant in that area...it's not a perfect traditional family or anything like that, but their parents are more involved. I think that attention is there at home for them...The parents are more involved in the ... students' education, the Black girls' education, and I think that they're just ultimately paid attention to. And I think that may be the reason. Yeah, because I can tell you... a lot of the parents that I correspond with through email and text - because I do class Dojo as well - a lot of those parents that stay on top - they ask me

questions. Those are the Black girls that are very confident, and they dominate just like the others in the class.

Dr. Foster's leadership, which included her commitment to staff, students, and families, was effectual. Likewise, her commitment to partnering with the community was purposeful as it provided opportunities for students to learn from local resources.

Partnering with the Local and Research Communities

Dr. Foster supported the establishing and sustaining of the research-practice partnership at her school. She believed that the STEM education program would broaden her students' academic and social experiences. She expressed an interest in furthering the efforts to increase its influence. She suggested:

> [The] relationship we build between the community and school, with women of color in those [STEM] professions, is what will actually ultimately impact…. We have to start having more conversations… where we have a forum where we have professionals of STEM women, women of color of STEM, and women of color in leadership and education - where we two come together and then begin to build the relationship…. We have a lot of human capital resources that we're not maximizing and so it has to be at a point where we say these two [groups of] women must come together in order to influence the women, Black girls, period…. I would love for STEM- Communities, that to be the next step, where you begin to bring those two bodies together, and we say, 'Okay, so what does our work really need to look like?'

Dr. Foster's vision was informed by her interest in reaching more students as well as the success she witnessed take place in the research-practice partnership at her school. She saw how influential it was for her students and her staff.

Exposure to STEM Professionals and Future Career Options

The STEM teachers observed the effects that interaction with STEM professionals had on their students. The science teacher, Mrs. Zora, elaborated:

> I think it's always good to have concrete examples, and I think the connection of engineers, especially Black engineers, to students at this great level helps them to see that science exists outside of the textbook, science or technology exists outside the laptop,

there are real people who look like them who are working, making decent money, you know, making good money, being smart, and they're still doing well.

Similarly, observations of a video conference in Mrs. Adelaide's with a Black women STEM professional, Rayne, showed students eagerly explaining projects they designed in response to a design challenge that centered Rayne's work as a clinical manager in the full genome sequencing field in a western state. Students were moved by Rayne's educational background, including a bachelor's degree in biology, and two master's degrees. Rayne's capacity to inspire the students with her professional story was palpable, as one Black girl responded "Preach!", an acknowledgment of her adamant agreement with Rayne's encouragement to students to continue pursuing their education. These interactions were exemplars of how STEM professionals provided access to relevant educational and career discussions.

Implications and Conclusion

Informed by their own experiences of racialized and gendered discrimination grounded in intersecting identities, Black women educators are uniquely able to support Black girls in schools. The Black women educators in this study encouraged Black girls' interest in STEM and countered the marginalization they historically faced in STEM education. This research on Black women school leaders articulates their passion for marginalized students as evidenced by leaders' interactions with students, parents, and in the community. Dr. Foster accomplished this by being deliberate in facilitating access between Black girls and the STEM community, supporting faculty in their use of inquiry-based pedagogical practices, and requiring faculty to engage with families. These Black women educators actively partnered with local and research communities to provide updated and relevant examples of how the Black girls' course content related to STEM professionals' work. Just as Black women educators have acknowledged the importance of advocates and mentors who can facilitate their growth (Alston 2000; Brown 2014)

and the barriers to success inherent when these supports are not in place (Bloom and Erlandson 2003), these educators ensured Black girls' success in their schools. They took time to get to know students' interests and acknowledged there was more to do to provide STEM opportunities that appealed to Black girls (as evidenced by Dr. Foster's Black Girls Rock with STEM idea). Activities such as this can disrupt deficit perspectives of Black girls pervasive in the research, and in faculty perceptions. Such activities also reconstruct an identity grounded in Black girls' academic interests and honors their subject position. Ultimately, the theme of "making schools more accountable to Black girls" in this study resonates with the extant research on Black women educators and school leaders that illuminates an ethic of care grounded in a social justice orientation (Bass 2009). The educators provided exposure to STEM professionals and career options to which they believed Black girls should have access. This practice was undoubtedly informed by the history of Black women's struggles to identify role models and access to the profession. As a result, the research articulates a passion for identifying such career-embedded, success facilitating support for others. Often this is exemplified as activism and social justice orientation, framed by the leader's own belief system and experiences of marginalization, to promote student success (Loder-Jackson, Christensen, and Kelly 2016).

The data presented here disrupts the deficit notions of Black girls in school. Thus, we propose a framework of intersectional leadership that embodies themes from the literature on Black women educational leaders, and lessons learned from this research focused specifically on the leadership of Black women educators *for* Black girls. The research articulates a way of leading that is influenced by the history and effects of intersectionality, and framed by activism, acts of social justice, and an ethic of care exercised by Black women educators as they facilitate learning opportunities for Black girls in school settings. This article illumines the work that Black women

school leaders specifically do on behalf of Black girls, and in examining their asset-based approaches, conceptualizes their work by articulating a framework for intersectional leadership. By historicizing and explicating the rich legacy of Black women school leaders, and specifically including the theoretical dispositions in which their pedagogy is rooted, we shine a light on the lacuna that exists in educational leadership that specifically articulates their praxes when working on behalf of students with whom they identify -- that is, Black girls. Black women have modeled what Black girls need because they empathize with their intersectional identities in unique ways. Based on their effective practices, we offer the following definition of intersectional leadership: the operationalization of visionary strategies that privilege the experiences of followers who live the realities of more than one historically oppressive identifier. Additional research is needed to fill the chasm of research on Black women educational leaders and Black girls. We hope that this research and definition are useful in informing such future work.

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