

It is rare to find a book that offers the reader a seamless, yet powerful, integration of Black liberation theory; intersectional feminism; and illustrations of the stark, intergenerational, and persistent effects of the sexual assaults that have been perpetrated on Black women's bodies from the moment they were hauled onto slave ships 400 years ago. Yet *The Cultural Betrayal of Black Women and Girls: A Black Feminist Approach to Healing From Sexual Abuse* does all of these things, and eloquently. Any therapist who works with women of African descent, any woman of African descent healing from trauma, any ally to these women, should be reading this book, because it is transformative, and what Jennifer Gómez has to say matters.

—**Laura S. Brown, PhD, ABPP**, independent intersectional feminist practice, Seattle, WA

In *The Cultural Betrayal of Black Women and Girls: A Black Feminist Approach to Healing From Sexual Abuse*, Jennifer M. Gómez, PhD, brilliantly articulates a widely known phenomenon that often goes unnamed—that the trauma following sexual abuse is exacerbated when those we trust, those from our own cultural group, are our perpetrators. Dr. Gómez reviews how cultural betrayal sexual trauma complicates nearly every part of surviving sexual abuse, from our freedom to seek safety from family members, our church homes, or the legal system to our ability to seek medical and therapeutic care even decades after the abuse has ended. This book is a must-read for anyone who works with Black women and girls who have experienced sexual trauma and wants to offer culturally competent trauma therapy that contributes to our holistic healing. Equally important, Black survivors of cultural betrayal sexual trauma will benefit from this book, seeing the complexity of their abuse and their pain named and validated. Finally, Dr. Gómez encourages all of us to think beyond the individual to consider how each and every one of us can strive for radical healing in our communities and in the world.

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1

WHAT'S RACISM GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Black Women and Girls, Sexual Abuse, and Liberation

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

In this chapter, I provide the landscape for the book: defining cultural betrayal trauma theory, detailing the scope and format of the book, providing a Black feminist primer to aid readers in how to get the most from the book, and stating my goals for both the book and society.

The colored woman of today occupies . . . a unique position in this country. . . . She is confronted by both a woman question and a race problem, and is as yet an unknown or unacknowledged factor in both.

—Anna Julia Cooper, 1892, As Cited In K. Taylor, 2017, p. 5

It is telling that a book written by a Black woman in the 21st century could open with another Black woman's quote from the 1800s: a quote that remains frighteningly poignant and disturbingly true in many ways. Perhaps because

<https://doi.org/10.1037/0000362-001>

The Cultural Betrayal of Black Women and Girls: A Black Feminist Approach to Healing From Sexual Abuse, by J. M. Gómez

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of the resonance in the above quote by Anna Julia Cooper, I have created this book as an odyssey that I hope can contribute to actual, tangible, individual, interpersonal, cultural, and structural positive change in the lives of Black women and girls. My ambitious anchor is that *everyone needs to know everything*, meaning that trauma researchers and clinicians need to understand structural racism, intersectional oppression, and the context of Black women and girls being erased from the “rape problem” discourse in the Black community. Race scholars need to know about cultural betrayal, trauma, abuse, violence, and mental health. The clinicians need grounding in the trauma, race, and Black feminist research while knowing about the White supremacy within the psychology profession and, relatedly, the need for radical healing within and outside of formal therapy. The dominant and mainstream researchers need to grasp the importance of Black feminist theorizing, as well as the empirical research that can stem from such theorizing. Change agents, which we all should be, need to be knowledgeable of and empowered by institutional courage (Freyd, 2014b), with actionable steps for making structural, systemic, and lasting societal change. Most important, the Black women and girls who do and do not occupy the aforementioned professional positions need to have aspects of themselves reflected in this work—a mirror of the intersectional oppression, the violence, and the pain, right alongside the self-determination, the self-valuation (Collins, 1991/2000), the hope, and the freedom that we as Black women and girls can and often do possess.

In this introduction chapter, I first provide the societal landscape of the present time, and then I define cultural betrayal trauma theory (CBTT). Next, I discuss the contextual predicaments of conducting CBTT research within the context of structural inequalities. Following that, I provide the scope and format of the book, with descriptions of each chapter. I then detail how readers can get the most out of the current book by providing a primer on Black feminist tradition and related ideologies, including the role of premises and emotionality in this work. Finally, I conclude with thoughts on my goals for both the book itself and the world in which we live.

SOCIETAL LANDSCAPE

We are living in contradictory realities. (Laurence Ralph, personal communication, 2022)

Our current reality is filled with absurdity of the worst kind (P. J. Williams et al., 2021). With Whiteness being a set of power relations (Mills, 1997), the combined structural and direct harm of COVID-19 and anti-Black violence

(e.g., Cokley et al., 2022; Poteat et al., 2020) manifests in at least two distinct ways. First, there is repetitive, persistent, and arrogant everyday discrimination (McClelland et al., 2016) that many White people—particularly those with additional institutional power—often engage in by denying racism while perpetrating the same individually and structurally. The epistemic violence (e.g., Dotson, 2011) associated with silencing marginalized individuals is simultaneously deeply personal and truly systemic (R. L. Calcott, personal communication, March 12, 2022). Second, the contemporary context includes the disproportionate death of Black people from COVID-19 (Wrigley-Field, 2020), government-sanctioned racist murder of Black people (Dreyer et al., 2020), and ubiquitous dehumanization and degradation of the Black community (for a discussion, see Gómez, 2022d).

Additionally hopeful, however, is the awareness and mobilization against these societal ills (e.g., Dreyer et al., 2020; Fisher et al., 2017), including from the American Psychological Association (APA) Council of Representatives in their resolutions *Apology to People of Color for APA's Role in Promoting, Perpetuating, and Failing to Challenge Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Human Hierarchy in U.S.* (APA, 2021a) and *Role of Psychology and APA in Dismantling Systemic Racism Against People of Color in U.S.* (APA, 2021b). While these statements were met with understandable mistrust (e.g., Association of Black Psychologists, 2022), action within APA continues, with Black feminist trauma psychologist Dr. Thema Bryant as the President (Tan, 2022). With that recognition and action, importantly, comes the possibility for change (Gómez & Freyd, 2014).

INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL BETRAYAL TRAUMA THEORY

A theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity. (Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga, 1981, p. 23)

Created, expanded upon, and tested within societal inequalities, CBTT (e.g., Gómez, 2012, 2019c; Chapter 4, this volume) provides a theoretical anchoring for the current book. Based on scholarship, research, and activism within Black feminism (e.g., Collins, 1991/2000), structural racism (e.g., Mills, 1997), and intersectional oppression (Combahee River Collective, 1977, as cited in K. Taylor, 2017; Crenshaw, 1991; Chapter 3), I specifically created CBTT with Black people in mind (Gómez, n.d.-a, n.d.-b, 2015b, 2015e, 2016, 2018, 2019b, 2019c, 2019i, 2019k, 2022a; Gómez & Freyd, 2019; Gómez & Gobin, 2020a, 2020b, 2022; Gómez & Johnson, 2022; McDaniel et al.,

2022), though this framework has and can be used in culturally congruent ways with other marginalized populations (e.g., Gómez, 2017, 2019a, 2019e, 2019j, 2019k, 2021a, 2021b, 2021d; Gómez & Freyd, 2018; Howard Valdivia et al., 2022).

According to CBTT in reference to the Black community (e.g., Gómez & Gobin, 2020a), anti-Black racism engenders (intra)cultural trust, or solidarity, within the Black community. As such, abuse perpetrated by a Black person against another Black person includes a cultural betrayal because it is a violation of this (intra)cultural trust. This abuse, known as *cultural betrayal trauma*, is associated with abuse outcomes, such as dissociation, and cultural outcomes, such as internalized prejudice. Moreover, (intra)cultural pressure—including violent silencing as a cultural mandate to not disclose cultural betrayal trauma—further harms survivors.

In the current book, I focus specifically on cultural betrayal sexual trauma, or sexual abuse within the Black community. Though cultural betrayal sexual trauma occurs across genders (e.g., Gómez & Johnson, 2022), for brevity and to centralize Black women and girls, the term *cultural betrayal sexual trauma* in the current book refers only to Black male-perpetrated sexual abuse against Black women and girls. As such, this book can serve as a companion to work that centralizes the experiences of Black people of other genders.

THE MEANING OF CBTT

Black women's oppression made them more open to the possibilities of radical politics and activism. (Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, 2017, p. 8)

In CBTT, I make complexity the subject, allowing for layered harms to be identified and addressed. As a basis for research, CBTT is a kind of radical scholarly activism (Gómez, in press) against both raceless, contextual-less work and the scientific racism predicated upon dehumanizing Black people across genders as genetically and socially inferior (e.g., Washington, 2006; Winston, 2020). As such, CBTT itself is an act of self-determination in which I, a Black woman, centralize Black women and girls through lenses of oppression, abuse, vulnerability, strength, and hope.

CBTT provides a framework for understanding Black women and girl survivors of cultural betrayal sexual trauma, including the roles of cultural and societal contexts. For example, with CBTT, we can systematically investigate how cultural betrayal sexual trauma for Black women and girls can result in protecting the perpetrator(s) in the aftermath of the abuse by not reporting

to the police (e.g., Slatton & Richard, 2020). CBTT additionally grapples with deeply entrenched myths and erasure of Black women and girl survivors due to both intersectional oppression (e.g., racism and sexism; Chapter 2) from the dominant society (e.g., Davis, 1985; Gómez, 2019k; McGuire, 2010) and secondary marginalization within the Black community (C. J. Cohen, 2009; Chapter 3).

CBTT also amplifies the need to be in solidarity with Black men as our brethren, while often tolerating the costs of privileging Black men as the primary victims of racism (Combahee River Collective, 1977, as cited in K. Taylor, 2017). Moreover, CBTT details the (intra)cultural trust and support that make our Black lives so connectedly rich and giving. With mind and heart centering on the humanity of Black women and girls, CBTT helps determine what research questions to investigate (e.g., internalized prejudice as an outcome of trauma), what questions to avoid (e.g., no White comparison groups), what harm to tackle clinically (e.g., beyond fear present during the abuse), what context to pull from (e.g., structural racism, intersectional oppression, [intra]cultural pressure), and what levels of intervention to employ (individual, group, community, structural).

PREDICAMENTS

By naming sexist oppression . . . it would appear that we would have to identify as threatening a group we have heretofore assumed to be our allies: Black men. . . . If we cannot entertain the idea that some [Black] men are the enemy . . . then we will never be able to figure out all the reasons why, for example, we are . . . raped by our neighbors. (Barbara Smith, "Notes for Yet Another Paper on Black Feminism, or, Will the Real Enemy Please Stand Up?" as cited in hooks, 1984/2015, p. 76)

CBTT, and by extension this book, is situated within this predicament of wanting and needing solidarity within and across the Black community while acknowledging the cultural betrayal sexual trauma and the accompanied violent silencing that tear us apart from our community and ourselves. Within societal reckonings against anti-Black racism (e.g., Black Lives Matter Global Foundation Network, Inc., n.d.) and sexist sexual abuse (#MeToo; e.g., Burke, 2021), I write this book from under the spotlight of high-profile perpetrators of cultural betrayal sexual trauma (e.g., R. Kelly [Gómez, 2019k]; Russell Simmons [Gómez & Gobin, 2020b]) and courageous Black women survivors (@RapedAtSpelman as cited in Gómez, 2016; Dick & Ziering, 2020; A. Hill, 1997; Feminist Campus Team, 2017).

WHITE SUPREMACY, BLACK FEMINISM, AND THE BOOK

Racism has become an accepted topic in feminist discussions not as a result of black women calling attention to it (this was done at the very onset of the movement), but as a result of white female input validating such discussions, a process which is indicative of how racism works. (bell hooks, 1984/2015, p. 52)

I experience dis-ease knowing that Whiteness has given validity to the Black experiences I describe in this book. What began 10 years ago as ceaseless rejections has turned into exaltation in many elite, and often tightly guarded, spaces. As I share this work across the United States and abroad, I understand that the same racism and intersectional oppression that is presently granting credence to this work also maintains White domination. In addition to the within-group focus, my critical consciousness of the White supremacist world in which I live continues to inform my work with CBTT and this book. In this way, my own identity politics, as defined by Black feminists (e.g., the Combahee River Collective, 1977, as cited in K. Taylor, 2017), has provided me with a way to examine my own experiences and that of my Black sisters through research, scholarship, clinical work, and activism. As such, I have written this book as an exercise in disrupting my own internalized inclination to cater to the White Read (Bowleg, 2021; Chapter 5). The White Read is an interpretation of how a homogenous White audience will interpret one's own writing. Catering to the White Read distorts the work by privileging a homogenous White population as both the primary and the most important audience of one's own work. Instead, I center Black women, girls, and our perspectives in ways that neither ask permission of Whiteness nor run comparisons with Whiteness to justify our existence and legitimacy.

Additionally in this book, I am engaging in a cultural shift in dominant psychology, from rote memorization to critical thinking that complicates constructs as opposed to providing easy answers. In the tradition of Ladson-Billings (2021; Chapter 5), this book builds upon critical theoretical and empirical research that promotes asking different questions and thus sparking different solutions from across disciplines, including psychology, Black feminist studies, law, social work, sociology, philosophy, political science, anthropology, and women and gender studies.

Importantly, I conceptualize the work of this book as a starting place, not a seminal conclusion. Though I have tried to create a work with equality and equity in process and outcome (Cummins, 2021a; Chapter 7), I have no doubt that in the years following publication, I will reread, rethink, reassess, and reframe concepts I have laid out here. As lifelong learners, I invite readers to do the same. Critical interrogation that furthers our lives and our work

requires taking what is known and building on it for a better, brighter, more equitable future.

SCOPE AND FORMAT OF THE BOOK

Sexism as a system of domination is institutionalized, but it has never determined in an absolute way the fate of all women in this society. (bell hooks, 1984/2015, p. 5)

The primary audience for this book is academic, research, and clinical psychologists, as well as researchers and clinicians from social work, sociology, gender and feminist studies, public health, psychiatry, anthropology, Africana studies, and other allied professionals in fields interested in understanding the impact of cultural betrayal sexual trauma against Black women and girls within the context of racism and intersectional oppression. The secondary audience includes graduate and undergraduate students involved in academic, research, and/or clinical training in psychology, social work, psychiatry, and allied fields (see primary audience disciplines above). Additional audiences include Black women and girls who have experienced cultural betrayal sexual trauma; Black people who want to contribute to shared community healing across genders; people who have been sexually victimized who are not Black women or girls; anyone who wants to better understand and support Black women and girls who have been sexually victimized; and race, feminist, and other activists engaged in fights for societal equality related to anti-Black racism, sexism, intersectional oppression, and violence against women and girls.

Chapter Overview

Offering subordinate groups new knowledge about their own experiences can be empowering. But revealing new ways of knowing that allow subordinate groups to define their own reality has far greater implications. (Patricia Hill Collins, 1991/2000, p. 222)

Each chapter opens with a Chapter at a Glance section that provides a brief statement of the scope of the chapter, followed by an introductory paragraph (a) framing the chapter. Next, the critical visioning section relays the background and CBTT lens for a tension engendered by White supremacy that is germane to one or more topics of the chapter; after that, my self-reflexive critical visioning on the tension is a pedagogical tool that provides examples of my positionality, standpoint (e.g., Collins, 1986, 1991/2000), and underlying premises of the chapter, as well as the complexity of the thought process endemic in my theoretical, empirical, and clinical work with Black women

and girls. Following detailing basic and/or applied theoretical and empirical research and scholarship, Chapters 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7 include sections with examples of what the content of the chapter could actually be like in reality. This section serves to ground each chapter in Black women and girls' humanity while providing tangible skills to readers. To protect their privacy, I use pseudonyms in all true stories from real people. Lastly, Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 each close with summary bullet points that highlight the chapter's main takeaway messages. All in all, I have created each chapter to have practical implications and tangible knowledge that is grounded in the literature reviewed and described.

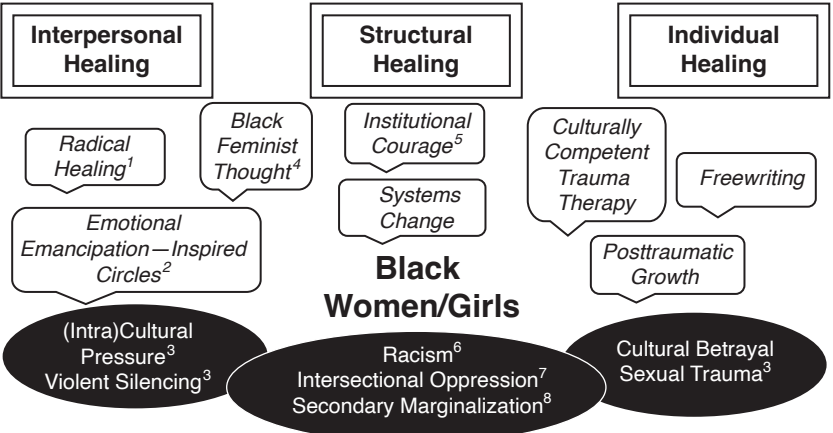
As in the current introduction chapter, quotes are peppered throughout the book to serve as guideposts—orienting readers to upcoming content, situating the work within such content, and highlighting brilliant scholars and activists. In using these quotes to frame my writing, I am rejecting a singular, individualization of my work in favor of contextualizing my contributions within the past and present collective *We* (Collins, 1991/2000). This rhetorical strategy can illustrate how my scholarly expertise and outsider-within stance (Collins, 1991/2000) are in connection with others' work and activism that has been done across disciplines, contexts, and time periods. Using these quotes additionally provides a meta-message for the whole book: The concepts I am discussing and naming, such as cultural betrayal, are placed within and atop more than 150 years of Black women's (and some others') scholarship and activism; as such, we can call upon the strength, wisdom, perseverance, soul, spirit, and heart of our lineage.

Though they each could be read as stand-alone chapters based on the interest of the reader, I have written the book with each chapter building on the prior content. I have also deliberately woven an arc that begins with structural oppression and violence, extends through individual and interpersonal healing, and ends with structural change, freedom, and liberation through institutional courage (Freyd, 2014b). Specifically, critical race perspectives on racism (Chapter 2) explain why the rape problem in the Black community (Chapter 3) is typically understood as that of White women's false accusations against Black men and boys. The Black feminist concept of intersectional oppression (Chapter 2) and secondary marginalization (Cohen, 2009; Chapter 3) further elucidates how Black males' perpetration of sexual abuse against Black women and girls is occluded from dominant White feminist and antiracist movements. Built within this multifaceted context, CBTT provides a scientifically testable framework for examining cultural betrayal sexual trauma, including community response to (intra)cultural pressure in the form of violent silencing—a theme of the book (Chapter 4). Taken together, the basic research from Chapters 2 to 4 inform culturally competent trauma therapy while indicting the White

supremacy within the medical model (Chapter 5). Understanding that healing cannot and should not ever be relegated to the confines of the four walls of therapy, radical healing that promotes critical consciousness, hope, freedom, and liberation is possible for Black women and girl survivors of cultural betrayal sexual trauma, as well as Black families and communities (Chapter 6). The entire book culminates in furthering us toward a truly peaceful and equitable world through specific structural healing and change through institutional courage (Freyd, 2018; Chapter 7). The Conclusion provides a capstone of lessons learned from the book.

Fundamentally, the framing of the book makes explicit links between the harmful aspects of Black women’s and girls’ context—racism, intersectional oppression, secondary marginalization (C. J. Cohen, 2009), cultural betrayal sexual trauma, (intra)cultural pressure, and violent silencing (e.g., Gómez, 2019c; current book)—and levels of healing—individual, interpersonal, and structural (Figure 1.1). This is distinct from dominant approaches in psychology that conceptualize sexual abuse as an individual harm that requires individual-level intervention for survivors. Conversely, in addition to individual healing, this book directly names and targets the implicated contextual harms to engender cultural, institutional, and structural change. This shift in focus

FIGURE 1.1. Centering Black Women and Girls: Individual, Interpersonal, and Structural Healing



¹e.g., French et al., 2020
²Grills, 2013
³Gómez, 2012–2023
⁴e.g., Collins, 1991
⁵Jennifer M. Gómez, 2022
⁶Freyd, 2018
⁷e.g., Mills, 1997
⁸Cohen, 2009

can promote radical transformation into a more peaceful and equitable world for Black women and girls.

Chapter by Chapter

Black women's experiences cannot be reduced to either race or gender but have to be understood on their own terms. (Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, 2017, p. 2)

In Chapter 2, "Black Women and Girls: Racism and Intersectional Oppression," my critical visioning centers on understanding how inequality has manifested in Black women-led the Black Lives Matter (Black Lives Matter Foundation, Inc., n.d.) and #MeToo (Burke, 2021) movements. Next, I use Mills's (1997) theory of a "racial contract" as foundational to understanding anti-Black racism, including White supremacy and structural racism. Then, I pull from Black feminist scholar and activist work on intersectional oppression (e.g., Combahee River Collective, 1977, as cited in K. Taylor, 2017; Davis, 1985), with a focus on Crenshaw's (1991) theories of structural, political, and representational intersectionality. Based on Cole's (2009) and Grzanka's (2020a) work, I then detail how intersectionality can be incorporated into the field of psychology. I close with an example of political intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) in antiracism and anti-sexual violence initiatives on college campuses. The goal of this chapter is to provide an accessible foundation of the multiple and oft-interlocking systems of oppression against Black people.

In Chapter 3, "The 'Rape Problem' and Secondary Marginalization Against Black Women and Girls," I begin with critical visioning regarding the diversity within the population of Black women and girls in the United States. Next, I use C. J. Cohen's (2009) theory of secondary marginalization to situate Black women and girls' social location in the Black community as one of additional marginalization compared to that of Black men. Then, I explain how sexual abuse is a manifestation of intersectional oppression through understanding the context of the "rape problem" in the Black community being perceived as White women's false accusations against Black men and boys. This framing erases Black women and girls and their experiences of sexual abuse in the Black community. Finally, I review the literature on the definition, prevalence, and outcomes of sexual abuse for Black women and girls, with attempts of specifications for those additionally marginalized—Black trans*women, Black immigrant women, Black Latinas, Black Muslim women, and Black women who are incarcerated. Of note, Chapter 3 is the only chapter without a What This Can Actually Look Like section because sexual abuse is further delineated in the following chapter on CBTT.

In Chapter 4, "Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory: Framework, Evidence, and Future Directions," I open with critical visioning on how CBTT can be

used as a tool of oppression against Black people. Next, I provide a brief explanation of betrayal trauma theory (e.g., Freyd, 1996), followed by a detailed description of CBTT, including the framework, definitions, and examples of key constructs: (intra)cultural trust, cultural betrayal, cultural betrayal trauma, (intra)cultural pressure, including violent silencing, (intra)cultural support, abuse and cultural outcomes, and posttraumatic growth. Next, I provide an explanation of the 10 postulates of CBTT, under the three classes of premises, counterhypotheses, and outcomes. I then review the general evidence across populations of CBTT, with a specific focus on the findings within Black populations. Following detailing an example of cultural betrayal sexual trauma for a Black female undergraduate, I delineate key theoretical and methodological future directions for CBTT research. As such, this chapter is likely the most empirically dense of the book.

In Chapter 5, “Culturally Competent Trauma Therapy: Holistic Healing,” I engage in critical visioning regarding the potential of replacing the medical model in conceptualizations of psychological distress while abolishing the White Read (Bowleg, 2021). I then explicitly detail the humanity of Black women and girls, alongside our therapeutic responsibility to them as clients. Next, I critique the medical model by interrogating its cultural premises, past criticisms, and lackluster evidence, offering alternative conceptualizations of mental health. Following detailing diverse outcomes of trauma (e.g., Bryant-Davis, 2005), I explain individual and structural cultural competency in therapy. Then, I highlight processes and practices of trauma therapy, including working with and through emotional intensity and complexity; engaging in critical self-reflection; collaborating with clients throughout the therapeutic process; bearing witness to clients’ traumatic experiences, oppression, and pain; holding hope for clients and their futures; centralizing individual and structural cultural competency in therapy; and engaging in self-care. Next, I review relational cultural theory (e.g., Miller, 1976) and the liberation health framework (Belkin Martinez, 2014) as models for culturally competent trauma therapy for Black women and girls. From my work as a student clinician, I close by providing clinical case examples on respecting client autonomy, self-care, power-with collaboration with clients, client-perpetrated discrimination in therapy, and social justice advocacy in clinical work. This chapter is the most clinically rich of the book.

In Chapter 6, “Radical Healing in the Black Community,” I open my critical visioning by engaging in self-reflexivity to discuss the threat of violent silencing that I, and we, experience as Black women and girls who discuss cultural betrayal sexual trauma. I then describe the psychological framework of radical healing in communities of color (French et al., 2020). Next,

I discuss how radical healing can manifest on the individual level physiologically, emotionally, and behaviorally. In detailing radical healing in the Black community, I draw on principles from restorative justice (e.g., Zehr, 2005), including discussing the role of hatred for the perpetrator(s) of cultural betrayal sexual trauma. Then, I provide tips for how to respond well to disclosure, discuss adapting Emotional Emancipation Circles (Grills, 2013; Myers, 2013) for group-level healing from cultural betrayal sexual trauma and (intra)cultural pressure, and explain the role of Black men in preventing cultural betrayal sexual trauma. Next, I discuss sexist oppression and abuse within the Black family and potential strategies for peaceful and equal family life. Drawing upon Black classical musician Nina Simone (2008), I then query how individuals can define what is free for themselves, followed by two examples from a Black woman survivor using a form of journaling known as *free-writing* to self-discover freedom and liberation within themselves. With this chapter speaking directly to Black women and girl survivors, it can be useful for Black women researchers, clinicians, and students who have experienced cultural betrayal sexual trauma. Additionally, professionals can incorporate this chapter into their work with colleagues, research teams, clinical staff, coalitions, students, and clients to provide institutional support for structured reflection (Delker, 2019) and self-care (Gómez, 2019g).

In Chapter 7, “Institutional Courage to Change the World,” I privilege Black feminist emotionality in institutional change work in my critical visioning section. I then briefly review the literature on institutional betrayal (C. P. Smith & Freyd, 2014), institutional cowardice (L. S. Brown, 2021), and institutional courage (Freyd, 2014b), including adapting steps of institutional courage for the benefit of Black women and girl survivors of intersectional oppression and cultural betrayal sexual trauma. Next, I provide vignette examples of institutional betrayal, institutional courage, and dreamstorming (see the definition in the Preface) a world of peace and equality across health care, universities, and the nonprofit sector. Then, I provide a real example of institutional courage in community–lawyer collaborations on community benefits agreements (CBAs) in the Los Angeles city redevelopment processes (Cummings, 2021a), including lessons for academic, research, and clinical psychologists and allied professionals. Next, I describe four ways in which work toward institutional change can be inhibited through White mediocrity, functions of inequality, difficulty in measuring progress and success, and problems with power as domination. I close with a capstone of perseverance for change that can transcend generations. Built upon the knowledge gained from the previous chapters, Chapter 7 focuses on the practical, tangible, and doable strategies for promoting structural healing and systemic change across institutions and society.

In the final chapter, “Conclusion: What Does It All Mean? From Micro- to Macrolevel Change,” I give a grounded summary of humanizing Black women and girls, with a final lesson on the need for freedom in the process of change. I then provide a table of example solutions by chapter topics. I close with a recognition of how the ubiquity of structural inequality, though overwhelming, also gives us ample opportunity to succeed in change-making in every aspect of our lives. As such, I use the conclusion chapter to highlight hope that structural healing and societal change are in fact possible.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE BOOK: A BLACK FEMINIST PRIMER

Black women intellectuals have laid a vital analytical foundation for a distinctive standpoint on self, community, and society, and, in doing so, created a Black women’s intellectual tradition. . . . Black feminist thought—its definitions, core themes, and epistemological significance—is fundamentally embedded in a political context that has challenged its very right to exist. (Patricia Hill Collins, 1991/2000, pp. 5–6)

In the Black feminist tradition of privileging Black feminist perspectives (Preface), my default audience for the book is Black women. Through reclaiming the Black feminist intellectual tradition, I privilege Black women’s “independent, viable, yet subjugated knowledge concerning our own subordination” (Collins, 1991/2000, p. 13). This is contrasted with dominant mainstream psychological work in which the implicit audience is rich and White, with all cultural outsiders needing to do the labor of culturally translating the work for ourselves. In this book, the onus of responsibility for any cultural translation falls onto cultural outsiders, who will disproportionately be White people; I am deliberately making this decision to centralize and validate the perspectives of Black women and girls with neither apology nor second-class comparison with White people and their worldviews.

Knowledge Validation Process

Epistemological choices about who to trust, what to believe, and why something is true are not benign academic issues. Instead these concerns tap the fundamental question of which versions of the truth will prevail and shape thought and action. (Patricia Hill Collins, 1991/2000, pp. 202–203)

Collins (1991/2000) provided the groundwork for an Afrocentric feminist epistemology in the knowledge validation process—that is, the process in which purported knowledge becomes conceptualized as valid. This knowledge

validation process (Collins, 1991/2000) centers wisdom through experience, as opposed to detached knowledge, such as memorizing decontextualized facts, as “knowledge without wisdom is adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential to the survival of the subordinate” (Collins, 1991/2000, p. 208). This process has three tenets (Collins, 1991/2000): (a) the importance of dialogue and connectedness in knowledge generation; (b) the ethic of caring, also known as “talking with the heart,” in which unique expression that can represent the group and appreciation of emotions belong in knowledge-sharing (Chapter 7); and (c) the ethic of personal accountability, by which each person is responsible for the information they put forth. These tenets are evident throughout the book at both minute and metalevels, including my own standpoint from lived experience (Preface), the use of quotes representing a connectedness and dialogue with scholars and activists, the emotion-filled tone of my writing, and my ethical accountability to myself, other Black women and girl survivors, and my readers across races, genders, and experiences.

The process of knowledge validation I employ in the current book stems from different epistemological assumptions than that of dominant psychology, including the cultural assumptions and underlying premises upon which the work is built. Historically, White, male, culturally dominated academic spaces have subjugated, rejected, and/or attempted to erase Black feminist scholars’ work stemming from Afrocentric feminist epistemologies (Collins, 1991/2000). In writing this book by using such epistemologies, I am trusting that the dominant epistemic community, including APA, is ready for such contributions in the mainstream.

Premises

Black feminist thought consists of specialized knowledge created by African-American women which clarifies a standpoint of and for Black women. . . . Black feminist thought encompasses theoretical interpretations of Black women’s realities by those who live it. (Patricia Hill Collins, 1991, p. 22)

I use my standpoint as a Black woman in tandem with literature that understands racism and interlocking oppressions as systemic and impactful. Specifically, themes of Black feminist standpoints are evident throughout the current book and include the legacy of struggle, interlocking of oppressions (e.g., racism and sexism), self-definition, Black activism, sexual politics, and empowerment and resistance (Collins, 1991/2000). Moreover, ethical trauma and inequality research requires knowledge of the theory and cultural assumptions that such work depends on (Gómez, 2020a). In addition to standpoint engendering such knowledge, those working from marginalized perspectives may perhaps be more likely to understand the cultural premises

underpinning their own work and that of the dominant field out of necessity (Conclusion): The cultural translation required to understand and engage in dominant work can further foment a deeper understanding of the problems inherent in such work, as well as provide directions for their own work.

Worldview

To write the books one wants to read is both to point the direction of vision and, at the same time, to follow it. (Alice Walker, 1983, p. 8)

In the current book, I am writing in ways where ideas, research, and scholarship are not diametrically removed from real people and their lives (hooks, 1989). Therefore, I am operating from premises related to Black feminism, critical race perspectives, and nonpathologizing frameworks from across disciplines. In addition to the above from Black feminism, I write from the assumption that the humanity and perspectives of Black women and girls carry inherent value and knowledge that should be privileged, particularly in endeavors that include us (e.g., Combahee River Collective, 1977, as cited in K. Taylor, 2017). Additionally from Black feminist (e.g., Collins, 1991/2000) and critical race (e.g., Crenshaw et al., 1995) perspectives, I take as fact that structural racism—as well as interlocking oppressions that include racism—exists, while being endemic and impactful in each and every system, field, structure, community, and individual in the United States. As such, there can be no discussion of mental health (Chapter 5), for instance, without explicitly incorporating the role that White supremacy historically and contemporarily plays in every aspect of mental health's conceptualization and its manifestation in society. Finally, my nonpathologizing stance indicates that the locus of the harm resides in the abuse itself and the context of inequalities (e.g., Gómez, Lewis, et al., 2016). Therefore, Black women and girl survivors are not pathological when they are suffering and/or thriving but rather reacting naturally to the violent and oppressive circumstances they face. The job of the reader includes using the above premises to legitimate the arguments I make in the book while taking the opportunity to interrogate the similar and different assumptions underlain in their own work.

Centering Black Feminist Perspectives

Rather than rejecting our marginality, Black women intellectuals can use our outsider-within stance as a position of strength in building effective coalitions and stimulating dialogue. (Patricia Hill Collins, 1991, p. 36)

I understand the harm of presenting disparate information as equally factual, given one side is critical of systems of domination and violence, while the other refuses to acknowledge such harm exists at all, much less in those

systems (Conclusion). Therefore, I do not present views, such as race-neutral paradigms versus critical race perspectives, as if they are simply different ways of understanding humanity, each having its strengths and limitations. I instead use critical transdisciplinary scholarship to name, legitimate, and interrogate systems of oppression and abuse, in order to identify more equal and equitable avenues of change. This rhetorical stance is not meant to make cross-group coalitions more difficult. On the contrary, I hope this approach provides the basis for freedom, equity, and equality within such coalitions by beginning with foundational truth that engenders actual structural change instead of nonperformative lip service (Ahmed, 2012). The reader's role is to engage in critical reflection (Chapter 5; for a review, see D'Cruz et al., 2007) to continually reject White domination through centering and recentering, as necessary, Black women and girls and our perspectives.

Emotionality

Struggle is rarely safe or pleasurable. (bell hooks, 1984/2015, p. 30)

As previously mentioned, an ethic of caring demands that emotions are present in our work (e.g., Collins, 1991/2000; Chapter 7). Furthermore, awareness of emotions provides feedback to ourselves, with emotion suppression rarely serving us fully. The potent content of the book may give rise to feelings of discomfort, defensiveness, denial, overwhelmed-ness, insecurity, and more. This can occur for multiple reasons, including that topics that are often swept under the rug, such as rape and discrimination, are discussed openly in ways that ground the harm done to human beings: ourselves, those we love, and individuals we do not even know.

Additionally difficult is the breadth of the book, including the transdisciplinary scholarship on which I built the book, thus dismantling disciplinary boundaries in favor of centering Black women and girls. With a goal of “everyone knowing everything” as stated at the beginning of the current chapter, there will necessarily be spaces of epistemological distance between what the reader knows—including how they have come to know it—and what is being discussed. That reality can make certain chapters more appreciable and digestible than others based on the worldview and disciplinary lens the reader begins with. Furthermore, that reality can interrupt professional self-concepts of those who consider themselves experts, while amplifying imposter syndrome for those who already feel they are not good enough for academia.

My challenge to readers and myself is to continuously harken back to the reasons for doing the work we do (for further discussion, see Gómez, 2020e).

Our work is not about the arrogance or toxic insecurity that can reify our fragile egos. Instead, for example, I myself do this work with and for those who unfairly, unjustly, and repeatedly are discriminated against, oppressed, abused, and violated, with the explicit goal of being able to contribute to healing and fundamental change across all levels of society. Provided we remain open to using critical epistemologies through critical thinking and reflection, this book can get us closer to understanding the inequality contexts of Black women and girls and what that means for our experience of cultural betrayal sexual trauma, therapy, radical healing in the community, and institutional change. Therefore, we must not allow uncomfortable emotions to stop us from growing, learning, and contributing to a transformed world.

Transformation in Process

The white fathers told us: I think, therefore I am. The Black mother within each of us—the poet—whispers in our dreams: I feel, therefore I can be free. Poetry coins the language to express and charter this revolutionary demand, the implementation of that freedom. (Audre Lorde, 1984, p. 38)

Finally, amid the weight of the pain exposed in the current book, my want for us is that we additionally experience poetry, validation, relief, hope, motivation, joy, healing, connection, solidarity, strength, wisdom, freedom, and even liberation. Not for nothing, our work moves mountains in people's lives—including our own—every single day. We must choose to experience that uplifting reality over and over again.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

If any real efforts are to be made to free Black people of the constraints and conditions that characterize racial subordination, then theories and strategies purporting to reflect the Black community's needs must include an analysis of sexism and patriarchy. Similarly, [White] feminism must include an analysis of race [racism]. (Kimberlé Crenshaw, 1989, p. 166)

My ultimate goal for this book is to use transdisciplinary research, scholarship, and activism to paradoxically make the book itself obsolete. By providing readers with a single book for interrogating anti-Black racism, intersectional oppression, cultural betrayal sexual trauma, violent silencing, culturally competent trauma therapy, radical healing in the Black community, and institutional, structural, and societal change, my hope is to engender transformation at individual, interpersonal, and structural levels. Given this goal will not be

achieved in my lifetime, I wish for the book to benefit Black women and girls by providing a road map for understanding, addressing, preventing, and ultimately healing from cultural betrayal sexual trauma.

My aspirations are grounded in the knowledge that large-scale change occurs in one person, one soul, and one spirit at a time. As such, each and every life matters (for a discussion, see Gómez in Asmelash, 2022). Given it is people who cocreate policy, culture, and society, hope comes from so-called small, individual wins because they foment large-scale policy, cultural, and societal change. Needed for individual and structural change is to abolish the apparent structural needs for violent silencing: the anti-Black racism, the intersectional oppression, the secondary marginalization, the cultural betrayal, and the sexist abuse. Therefore, in embarking upon the odyssey that is the current book, what Robyn L. Gobin and I stated in the summer of 2020 remains true (Gómez & Gobin, 2020b, para. 29):

Today, in a time where Black solidarity is so desperately needed, we hope we can all throw out the silent oath of secrecy we have and replace it with true solidarity that, by definition, includes the needs of all of us—including Black women and girls.