



INTRODUCTION

# Storying Black Girlhoods on Educational Terrain

---

Esther O. Ohito with Lucía Mock Muñoz de Luna

flesh memory (flesh mem' e re) 1. a text, a language, a mythology, a truth, a reality, an invented as well as literal translation of everything that we've ever experienced or known, whether we know it directly or through some type of genetic memory, osmosis, or environment. 2. the body's truths and realities. 3. the multiplicity of languages and realities that the flesh holds. 4. the language activated in the body's memory.

—Akilah Oliver, *The She Said Dialogues: Flesh Memory*

There were no books about me, I didn't exist in all the literature I had read . . . this person, this female, this black did not exist center-self.

—Toni Morrison, quoted in Jill Matus, *Toni Morrison*

We must situate race, not only in a historical context, but also in a historical-geographical context. We must expose the skeletons of places and plant the flesh of black experiences on those bones as well.

—Bobby M. Wilson, “Critically Understanding Race-Connected Practices: A Reading of W. E. B. Du Bois and Richard Wright”

## Black Schoolgirl Becoming

My Christian name is Esther (see Figure 0.1). Where I am from, I answer to other names, including Nyar Ugenya, Nyandere, and Nyamalanga. Within the walls of my childhood home, I was taught that girls are to be seen and silent. But in the privacy of my shared bedroom, gossiping with my older sister into the morning's wee hours and plotting revenge against our woes, I learned that I am naturally a storyteller and story gatherer (Kearney 2007). It was a lesson affirmed at school, where I blossomed by listening intently and purposefully to the worlds around me.

I begin with a story of how I became who I am at my core. By story, "I mean an event in which I try to hold some of the complex shimmer-



**Figure 0.1.** Esther O. Ohito (Nyar Ugenya), approximately age ten. Author photo.

ing strands of a constellative, epistemological space long enough to share them with you. When I say ‘story,’ I mean ‘theory’” (Powell 2012: 384).

A long time ago, when I was eight years old, I found myself sitting beside my father during parent–teacher conferences at St. Nicholas Primary School off Ngong Road, not far from Books & Things, my favorite shop in Nairobi’s Adams Arcade. My teacher, a heavy-tongued Kikuyu woman named Mrs. Mwangi, said to my father, “Your daughter’s a writer.” My father, a journalist with *The Standard* newspaper (if my memory does not fail me), broke into a wide, toothy smile. I stared at him adoringly. I nodded to signal understanding. I was lying. I knew neither what Mrs. Mwangi meant nor what being a writer had to do with the bliss sweeping over me. I just felt happy that I had made my father happy.

I remember being interpellated as a storyteller—a writer—by the kind of elementary and secondary school reading and writing teacher I aspired to be when I began my teaching career in Chicago, Illinois. Many years later and thousands of miles away from Kenya, I realized my why. I became a teacher because I realized the power of being visible to Mrs. Mwangi even before I was visible to myself as a self, which was long before I found language with which to articulate my knowledge. But even then, I had intuition. Even my preteen self intuitively felt called to collect, care for, and (re)tell stories. Care is cultivated by love. Even at age eight, I knew, within, that I loved words as much as I loved my father, and what greater love could there be?

I remember being a child who was most joyful, free, when playing with words. I read the dictionary for fun, which was much more fun than it sounds, sounding words out and committing meanings to memory. This meant I often penned pieces with obnoxious terms. Take *pertinacious*, for example. My absurd use of vocabulary—or use of absurd vocabulary—was fueled by the fact that at that age, I was reading both young adult literature, in the vein of Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys, and the Sweet Valley High series, and—courtesy of my older sister—literature with what some may deem “adult themes” from writers the ilk of Danielle Steel, Sidney Sheldon, and Agatha Christie. I was being (mis)educated about whiteness as (much as) romance and mystery. Yet, I was also gearing up for battle by building an arsenal of words, toys with which to playfully imagine my way out of the misery that lurked at the corners of my world. I knew, even then, that “as a culture worker who belongs to an oppressed people my job is to make revolution irresistible” (Bambara, quoted in Bonetti 2012: 35). This made for some humorous moments. Once, I raised my hand in

class and asked my stern male teacher how to use the word *ejaculate* in a sentence. Guess who laughed?

A girl child's heart is always on the line, pressed against some margin, imperiled, sometimes destabilized, and other times brimming with joy accessible only from that lived perspective and posture. I have a vivid memory and imagination, the meld of which becomes an endless source of colorful vignettes I use to illustrate that I was a creative, curious, playful child. I navigated the landscape of my childhood driven by an exhausting insatiable desire to please an audience (in order to be liked and loved) that falsely projected my interiority as easily accessible. However, within my internal self, I harbored wonder about my place in the world in which I lived, others' worlds, and otherworldly worlds.

My story is that of a *girl* child born not far from the shores of Lake Victoria, known locally in Kenya as Nam Lolwe. This place—Luoland, home to the traditionally pastoralist and fishing community of Luo people, JoLuo—is where I came to know myself as a particular type of girl. This is where my knowledge of girlhood and Blackness is situated. This is my epistemological place of origin.

## Mapping Black Girl Ontoepistemologies on the Educational Landscape

Katherine McKittrick (2011: 947) explained that Black geographies are “shaped by histories of colonialism, transatlantic slavery, contemporary practices of racism, and resistances to white supremacy.” Black girls' and women's geographies are spun from our knowledges, desires, needs, and lived experiences, which are entangled with our negotiations of these processes of domination as they materialize *in place*. Black girl ontoepistemologies—interdependent ways of being and knowing—are also grounded in place. This is because “the earth is also skin and . . . a young girl can legitimately take possession of a street, or an entire city, albeit on different terms than we may be familiar with” (McKittrick 2006: ix). A girl's claim to place is inextricably enmeshed with the knowledges, needs, and lived experiences she embodies. Literature by Black women authors (e.g., H. A. Jacobs 1861; Webster 2020) published as early as the mid-1800s illustrates this assertion. Lucille Clifton's “what the mirror said” exemplifies such literature. It is a poem that says,

you got a geography  
of your own. ([1980] 2012: 199)

Literature fosters a mindset of multiplicity and openness. The literature I encountered as a girl growing up in Kenya, books such as Grace Ogot's ([1966] 2000) *The Promised Land* and Margaret A. Ogola's (1994) *The River and the Source*, taught me to know myself as somebody from somewhere who was worth knowing; a Luo girl of the Ndere clan from Ugenya—Nyar Ugenya, both an individual and collective name literally meaning the daughter of a place called Ugenya. I knew who I was because in Luo culture and society, girls and women (learn to) belong to a people—a clan or community—affixed to a place based on our association to our father's and our husband's land (Ogola 1994). Blood and land—blood sucked by the soil of the land—are how my people lay claim to place.

In Dholuo, the language of Luos, my middle name, Oganda, means community. But as a displaced immigrant in the United States, a daughter who often felt isolated, set adrift in the Black diaspora, I could not find myself anywhere, least of all in the literature. Did I cease to exist? I wonder. Édouard Glissant noted,

One of the most dramatic consequences of interdependence concerns the hazards of emigration. When identity is determined by a root, the emigrant is condemned (especially in the second generation) to being split and flattened. Usually an outcast in the place he has newly set anchor, he is forced into impossible attempts to reconcile his former and his present belonging. ([1997] 2010: 143)

Identity is tethered to and untethered by place. In other words, place does not just change people; people change in place. The self—and the sense of belonging to one's self—is shaped by “multiple and changing boundaries, constituted and maintained by social relations of power and exclusion” (McDowell 1999: 4). For a time, after immigrating to the United States, my sense of self was lost in space. The truth is, before a chance encounter with Toni Morrison's ([1970] 2000) *The Bluest Eye* as a teenager, I did not know that I could exist as myself, a *Black subject*, in the worlds found in the books most accessible to me through official school curricula, including the books that lined the shelves of the library at the public school I attended. When I finally read *The Bluest Eye*, the narrator mirrored back to me a complex self, making the textures of the self whose existence I was beginning to recognize and know anew visible to me. Thumbing through the book's pages, I was no longer simply one of those “never taken seri-

ously by anybody—all those peripheral little girls” (Morrison, quoted in Duvall 2000: 31). Using that text as a compass, I found that I was no longer a nobody to myself.

Curiosity can be formalized and fashioned into a researcher’s compass (Hurstun [1942] 2006). This volume presents research that takes Black girls seriously as particularly creative, curious, and desiring somebodies with particular bodies of knowledge cultivated and cultivable in the capaciousness of Black girlhood. Here, *Black*—a racial code and shorthand for Afrodiasporic subjectivities—and *girl* are fluid, sociocultural constructions with meanings that shift in place. In the United States, this dynamism is evident in the discursive practices of Black girls and women. As we spin among categories and identities, such as age and gender, we frequently acknowledge each other by saying, “Hey, girl!” To greet each other this way is to offer linguistic recognition that the other has the capacity to be and become both girl and friend (Canaan 1990; Scott 2000).

Girl, listen. *Girlhood* is a hood: an infinitely expansive universe that is home to the embodiment of galaxies, a site of knowledge generation, an ontoepistemological standpoint, and a place into which people and polarities can disappear. Girlhood is a *black* hole, a space where the complexities and contradictions of ideologies and politics, as well as (inter)personal and social relations on multiple scales, offer pathways to possibilities for liberation (Bey 2022). Indeed, what could be more educational for Black girls than a space that provides endless possibilities for genesis, again and again?

Using illustrative stories about, with, for, and on Black girls (even those who live within the self), authors included in this volume map a Black girl ontoepistemological terrain fastened to relationality (Shange 2019). On this land, creativity is queen mother to curiosity, and sibling to desire. Across the chapters in this book, Black girls are interpellated, made into not just knowers but knowers of what nobody else knows. How powerful might it be to know (you know) what no other body except your own knows? In this book, Black girls become known as keepers of epistemological secrets, creative farmers of earth fertile enough to bring forth precious knowledge.

## Where My Girls @?

I remember the first time I saw a girl resembling me in a book. I was standing at the checkout desk at Roseville County Library in a suburb of

St. Paul, Minnesota. A colorful cover caught my attention from the corner of my eye. Responding to the visual stimulus, I tiptoed to the librarian's desk, magnetized by the allure of the color purple. Then, I picked up an audiocassette case (yes, I am dating myself) containing Morrison's ([1970] 2000) masterpiece, *The Bluest Eye*. Later that evening, I listened to the author reading her own words, entranced as much by the content as by the storyteller's embodied craft. Morrison created a world in which girls like me existed *and* made sense, made meaning, made knowledge, made theory.

Susmita Roye surmised that by speaking of and to girls like me, Morrison

sheds light on a painful paradox: while they experience their girlhoods mired in physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect, these girls, more often than not, are robbed of their girlhoods in a struggle for survival. The disturbed girlhoods of Toni Morrison's disrupted girls most powerfully register her angry protest against a gender system that designates a woman a secondary rank and against a social system that effortlessly overlooks what befalls a poor (black) female child. (Roye 2012: 212–13)

Whereas I disagree with the interpretation of anyone's girlhood as robbed—and, instead, invite thinking about girlhood as a spacious genre containing *different* illustrative types—I appreciate Roye's invocation of Morrison as a model for the type of critical spatial analysis of Black girlhoods that the current volume attempts and invites. Morrison, then, a foundational Black girl cartographer (Butler 2018, reprinted as Chapter 1 in this volume), becomes central to this book illustrating Black girl ontoepistemologies as processual creative praxis and emplaced, embodied geographies.

This is a timely volume, curated during the global COVID-19 pandemic and amid calamity after calamity caused by climate change and various catastrophes. It is a collection of stories about all types of knowledges, desires, needs, and experiences that Black girls find in this wild world called Black girlhood. The book's pages contain stories for Black schoolgirls and school-age girls, and those who love them; girls seeking solidarity, stimulation, and God knows what else while traversing educational spaces, endeavoring to make sense of experiences that vary in relation to where intersecting lines of social difference, such as gender, sexuality, race, class, dis/ability, immigrant status, religion, and ethnicity, fall on their bodies and along the perimeters of their lives. Authors illuminate and inquire into Black girls' geographies in response to scholarly

calls for analyses of girlhoods that account for the *structures* and *strictures* of colonialism, imperialism, and racism in tandem with other -isms, such as capitalism and neocolonialism, and patriarchy (Vanner 2019). These constraints facilitate the ongoing (re)production of inequitable urban, rural, diasporic, local, and transnational educational spaces. This book foregrounds Black girls' complex negotiations of these spaces vis-à-vis the sociospatial aspects of teaching and learning that shape Black girls' being and becoming.

By (re)positioning Black girls as agents and actors in specific educational spaces, authors make visible the emplaced and embodied plurality of Black girlhood not as a singular object of research but rather as multiple sites of inquiry wherein knowledge that challenges hegemonic, white-washed understandings of *Black* and *girl* as subjectivities can be found. Ultimately, the book invites both a recognition and a reimagining of possibilities for a world where the many somebodies Black girls can be and become (sometimes all at once) in and through education exist freely in every place, space, and body.

## Textual Tracings of Black Girlhoods

### *Black Girlhoods in Scholarly Literature*

The womanist (Walker 1983) notion that Black girls are innately creative somebodies has appeared in several Black girlhood studies texts essential to the field (e.g., Sankofa Waters, Evans-Winters, and Love 2019; Tolver 2022b). Undergirding this notion are the womanist ethoi of care and love, as ascertainable in Ruth Nicole Brown's (2013) *Hear Our Truths: The Creative Potential of Black Girlhood*. Brown's book details an exploration undertaken collaboratively with the community-based, performance arts-oriented youth collective Saving Our Lives Hear Our Truths. Framing the project, Brown wrote,

Black girlhood is freedom, and Black girls are free. As an organizing construct, Black girlhood makes possible the affirmation of Black girls' lives and, if necessary, their liberation. *Black girlhood as a spatial intervention is useful for making our daily lives better and therefore changing the world as we currently know it* [emphasis added]. Love guides our actions and permeates our beings. For those who do not know love, we create spaces to practice Black girlhood and sense love, to name it, claim it, and share it. What we know, what we say, our process, and what we make is of value. The space is specific enough that Black girls recognize



it as theirs. The making of the space is collective and creative; uncertainty and complexity motivate, and revolutionary action is the goal. (2013: 1)

Brown's book is considered a canonical text in Black girlhood studies, and Brown a progenitor of the field. As others have remarked,

Black girlhood studies actualized as an important, necessary, and rich field of inquiry because Ruth Nicole Brown dared to believe not only that Black girls were worthy of our intellectual, artistic, and political labor, but also that they had something in turn to teach us—that they could, *if we listened* [emphasis added], change the world. (Owens et al. 2017: 117)

Listening to Black girls, then, is an instrumental method in the burgeoning field of Black girlhood studies, which is broadly concerned with righting the materially consequential and downright wrongful erasure of Black girls' ontoepistemologies from the knowledge canon (Halliday 2019).

Since 2013, the year Brown's (2013) *Hear Our Truths: The Creative Potential of Black Girlhood* was published, several studies have illuminated that in the social imaginary, Black girls exist on the periphery of hegemonic ideas of the ideal girlhood: a fiction moored to discourses that mold Black girlhood in the shape of a singular white, Western, Judeo-Christian, heterosexual, middle-class model (Nyachae and Ohito 2023; Webster 2020). The history of Black girls constitutes a relatively robust line of inquiry in Black girlhood studies. Much of that literature corpus situates Black girlhoods, real and imagined, in the historical-geographical context of the United States (Chatelain 2015; Hartman 2019; Simmons 2015; Webster 2021; Wright 2016). Some studies have brought to view the history and experience of Black girlhood in Germany (Donaldson 2019) and the knowledges, needs, and experiences of Black girls on the African continent, such as in Senegal and on the Gold Coast (Duke Bryant 2019; Hern 2021). However, to date, the United States remains the primary geographic site of Black girlhood studies.

The publication of *The Global History of Black Girlhood*, a volume edited by Corinne T. Field and LaKisha Michelle Simmons (2022), signaled a shift away from the field's narrow Western focus. The text underscores the importance of making global meaning of Black girls' place-bound histories. The book's authors also responded to calls for an interdisciplinary approach to Black girlhood studies by featuring scholars, artists, and activists theorizing and storying the storied pasts of Black girls in the diaspora, and exploring the imbrication of identity,

imagination, time, and place in the space of Black girlhood (Owens et al. 2017).

### *Black Girlhoods in Education Literature*

Research on Black girls' educational experiences in schools and school-adjacent spaces has continued to increase (e.g., Cabral et al. 2022; Coker and González 2022; Crenshaw 2015; Farinde-Wu, Butler, and Allen-Handy 2022; Morris 2016, 2022). Thus far, much of this research has focused on the criminalization and adultification of Black girls, thereby explaining why schools and classrooms can be considered "hostile geographies" (Rogers 2022: 34)—warlike terrain—for Black girls (e.g., Burnett et al. 2022). This scholarship has brought much needed attention to damaging school policies and practices employed to police and control Black girls' bodies through exclusionary disciplinary measures such as discipline referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. These detrimental policies and practices push Black girls out of classrooms and schools. Black girls are cast as deserving of this mistreatment through the continuous discursive construction of an ideal (white) girlhood that always already excludes them. Researchers have surfaced the miseducation received by this group and the harms Black girls endure by being (mis)perceived as "the epitome of exactly what whiteness (as maleness) and femininity (as whiteness) is not: dark, sinister, raunchy, belligerent, burly, and licentious" (Evans-Winters and Esposito 2010: 18).

Contemporary scholarship on Black girls' educational experiences has brought visibility to the specificity of Black girls' suffering in classrooms and schools (Butler-Barnes et al. 2021; Dumas 2014). Within the published research, however, Black girlhood itself rarely has been theorized and/or articulated as contested beyond topical references to fixed notions of race and gender. Consequently, Black girlhood and Black girls have been (re)presented through frames that privilege one type of middle-class, heterosexual, and cisgender Black girl. These frames have spotlighted "only a few kinds of Blackness in Black girls, thus (re)producing the fiction that Black girls can be but one thing and that one thing must be abject" (Franklin-Phipps 2017: 385). Obscured or erased from view have been the nuanced educational needs, rich and plural knowledge, and textured lived experiences of Black girls who may, indeed, be raunchy, belligerent, burly, licentious, and wayward. Those who exist on the edges of the specific strand of Black girl deemed most worthy of educational interventions have been largely ignored and/or

forgotten in educational research. Specifically, the “good” Black girl has been configured according to middle-class norms and ideals of purity, propriety, and respectability (Nyachae and Ohito 2023). The resulting good/bad binary has marginalized the “bad” Black girl, whose possibly tenuous relationship to Black girlhood may be moored to her situatedness in a specific geographical, environmental, sociohistorical, and cultural place, and/or her expansiveness and expressiveness with regard to gender and sexuality.

In short, the narrow (re)presentations of Black girls that have abounded in educational research have contributed to a construction of Black girlhood that does little to challenge categorizations that are based in, and uphold, (neo)liberal humanist structures of what it means to be freely human. Ergo, because Black girlhood has been commonly conceptualized as monolithic rather than heterogeneous, suggested educational interventions and innovations have tended to be shaped from a one-size-fits-all mold that excludes queer Black girls marginalized in relation to their different (from the norm) geographies, genders, and sexualities.

Summarily, educational scholarship on Black girl geographies published between 2013 and 2022 has contributed to the larger field of girlhood studies along three germane lines. First, this body of research has situated the history and experiences of Black girls in specific school and community sites (e.g., Chatelain 2015; Nyachae and Ohito 2023). Second, the researchers have illuminated the conditions faced by Black girls in schools and classrooms, with an emphasis on interrupting the criminalization of Black girls as enacted through mechanisms such as the school-to-prison pipeline (e.g., Morris 2022). A third line of inquiry has interrogated Black girls’ pedagogic needs, which span the academic, across a range of content areas and subjects, and the socioemotional (e.g., Apugo, Mawhinney, and Mbilishaka 2021; Cotton, Davis, and Collins 2022; Davis 2022; Delano-Oriaran et al. 2021; C. E. Jacobs 2019).

On the whole, extant research has made visible the specificity of Black girls’ educational lived experiences, where education is a relational process of teaching and learning that happens everywhere all the time: at home, in communities and schools, in virtual and online spheres, and through media. Yet, revolutionary action requires more fuel than visibility; “we need to challenge the tropes of both Blackness and woman/girlhood and add to the analysis on Black girls in informal and formal educational spaces” (Rogers 2022: 36). This is where the assemblage of stories contained in the present volume enters the field.

## Black Girlhoods in Theory and Method

As I wrote this introduction, I was awaiting a forthcoming volume on Black girls, love, and educational spaces, inspired by bell hooks and edited by Autumn A. Griffin and Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz (2024). I was also reading a special issue of the journal *Girlhood Studies* on African girlhoods (Jaksch, Fourshey, and Moletsane 2023). These works seek to address gaps in the literature on Black girls in educational spaces, which can be organized into three main themes.

In my review of literature, I found, first, theoretical imprecision with regard to terminology (see, e.g., D. Smith, Caruthers, and Fowler 2019). *Black girl* has been taken as a foregone conclusion, an already known entity, but really, who is a Black girl? Specific to education, how might this girl be known and be knowin' vis-à-vis place and/or space? Moreover, what are the dimensions of Black girlhood as an educational place and/or space? There, what new possibilities may be opened for who and what a Black girl could possibly be and become? What makes this particular girl's particular girlhood quintessentially (or not) Black? How might these questions be asked and answered across and with/in people, places, spaces, and times? I presume that pursuit of these queries may produce deeper knowledge of Black girls' place-based knowledge-making practices, knowledge potentially useful for creating worlds capacious enough for the complexities of Black girls—worlds in which Black girlhood is a viable, vibrant hood, within and outside of the limits of imagination.

The second aperture in the literature gestures to the need for the actualization of disciplinary and methodological border crossing. Despite calls in that vein, I found that illustrations of theoretical and methodological trans- and interdisciplinarity are limited in the literature (Griffin 2022; Owens et al. 2017). Also, there has been limited engagement with Black girl ontoepistemologies situated in educational spaces both outside of the United States (see, e.g., Stanger 2018) and beyond the Global North (see, e.g., Bhana and Mayeza 2019; Florence 2021).

The third gap in the literature corpus concerns knowledge of the interior lives of Black girls and the interiority of Black girlhoods, the inner human essence, within and across markers of social difference, as emplaced and embodied in educational spaces across time and place. S. R. Toliver (2022a) and other Black girlhood studies scholars have asked for a (re)turn to the imagination, in both theory and method. I wonder, where and how

in education literature can the transgressive knowledge suggested by such calls be located?

Location denotes area, and geography points toward spatial analysis, a lens that allows for zooming in and out while exploring different scales, from the intimate (Moss and Donovan 2017; Valentine 2008) to the intergalactic, and beyond.

Geographical analysis necessarily includes critical social analysis: race, class, and gender are not fixed identities but ongoing social productions; the multi-scalar spaces in which such social production takes place are vitally important to understanding how our societies work and, most importantly, how we might improve our social processes, especially for the most marginalized in our society. (McCreary, Basu, and Godlewska 2013: 255)

A geographical analysis brings attention to the spatiotemporal dimensions of human life. A Black feminist geographical lens allows for knowledges, desires, needs, and lived experiences to be located in “the weeping, living, hurting, body” (Bakare-Yusuf 1997: 172), recognizing this enfolded body as essential to the intimate, complex work of *doing* human, of learning to live relationally in a place at a particular point in time.

Humans are storied into being. We become what we come to know through stories. Our stories, our theory(ies), can spark and facilitate sustaining intimate relation(ship)s across both the transatlantic and the space-time continuum, thereby producing political and potent—and perhaps potentially pleasurable—reverberations. As Black girl cartographers coediting this volume with a commitment to care and love, Lucía and I turned to the embodied art of gathering stories as a method for bringing to view the diverse landscapes of the Black girlhoods mapped in each chapter, bearing in mind that stories are cartographies of creativity, curiosity, and play, at once local and global, intimate and intergalactic, and/or everything in between.

Storytellers and story gatherers make meaning relationally. The writer of a story is in relation to the story content and characters, real or fictional. The writer is also in relation to the reader, although the reader may have a desire for the writing that the writer cannot or does not wish to fulfill. Stories can be refusals of the binary thinking characteristic of whiteness as epistemology and practice. Stories can resist dichotomization and invite plural interpretations. Stories can allow for experimentation and improvisation with voice, form, and word. Stories are also primed for revision, which Kiese Laymon posited

as a dynamic practice of revisitation, premised on ethically reimagining the ingredients, scope, and primary audience of one's initial vision. Revision required witnessing and testifying. Witnessing and testifying required rigorous attempts at remembering and imagining. If revision was not God, revision was everything every God ever asked of believers. (2021: para. 16)

For the Black girl cartographer, possibilities abound in the words strung together to create stories. Words make people possible and make it possible for people to be. When story is approached as methodology (Mucina 2011), revision becomes the possibility of reinvention and rebirth.

### **True Story: Black Girls Be Knowin'**

Storytelling, as a practice and process, allows for the creative “mapping of the body's inner surface, the surface of sensations, intensities, and affects, the ‘subjective experience’ of bodily excitations and sensations” (Grosz 1994: 37). Drawing from geographic engagement with Black feminist praxis, the stories constellating in this volume position Black girls *not* as objects of study but rather as actors, creators, composers, and interpreters of, and in, educational spaces. These stories challenge and expand understandings of Black girls and/in educational spaces by paying attention to the particular embodied and emplaced ways Black girls practice curiosity, play, desire, and/or relationality.

The attendant practices of storytelling and story gathering can be powerful, potentially leading to “the breaking of conceptual ethnic and cultural borders” (A. Smith 2019: 11). Contained in this collection are

stories and forms of storytelling that address the ways that individuals and communities reconcile themselves with the weight of history while imagining and seizing opportunities to make themselves anew, . . . important reminders of the existence of alternative genres of the human. (Clarke and Mullings 2023: 170)

This collection of stories owes much to Tamara T. Butler's (2018) “Black Girl Cartography: Black Girlhood and Place-Making in Education Research.” Originally published as a journal article in 2018, the chapter applies intersectionality as a lens of analysis to include a consideration of space—particularly in thinking through schools as geopolitical spaces—and Black girls as navigators and mappers of those spaces, creating and enacting liberatory practices rooted in Black girl ontoepistemology. Butler's interdisciplinary methodological offering to Black girlhood studies opens

the door for education research that can behold the multiplicities of Black girlhoods.

Equally important to this book is Katherine McKittrick's (2000) "Black and 'Cause I'm Black I'm Blue': Transverse Racial Geographies in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*." McKittrick's geographical reading of *The Bluest Eye* serves as theoretical navigation for this volume, modeling a way to think about Black girls in and out of place. McKittrick writes, "It is through the instability and incoherence of place and sense of self that the characters in Morrison's novel continually 'become': they are embodied processes rather than passive recipients of cultural subjugation" (2000: 130). This sense of unbelonging serves as the point from which McKittrick positions Morrison's characters as spatial theorists and pedagogues.

McKittrick's (2000) posture toward Black girl characters in Morrison's ([1970] 2000) *The Bluest Eye* informs Chapter 2 by Katelyn M. Campbell, Lauryn DuPree, and Lucía Mock Muñoz de Luna. The trio met as graduate students in a course on girlhoods that I taught while on faculty in the School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. My curriculum was interdisciplinary, and the assignment from which this chapter sprouted called for letters to Morrison in response to geographical analyses of *The Bluest Eye*. I was moved to tears and (re)action by the vulnerability and introspective reflections of these three students and writers—none of whom self-identified as Black, and some of whom claimed queerness—with regard to a book of fiction that undoes and remakes realistic notions of Black girlhood. As the semester progressed, I was reminded that sometimes, as both teachers and students, we seek and establish certain types of learning spaces because we sense the potential for parts of ourselves—perhaps perceived as different or odd—to be recognized and affirmed by another (Deckman 2022). Sometimes, we enter classroom spaces desiring legibility, that is, wanting the experience of being seen and heard—of *belonging*—for who we are at the core of our beings. Understanding Morrison and the girls created in her imagination, Pecola and Claudia, as pedagogues, the letters in Campbell et al.'s chapter reach for an understanding of relationality that undoes the world as it has been taught to us, remaking it, instead, with an eye toward liberation in and through one another.

Desire runs wild in "Queer Like Me: Black Girlhood Sexuality on the Playground, Under the Covers, and in the Halls of Academia" by Adilia E. E. James's (2011, reprinted as Chapter 3 in this volume). Revisited here over ten years after it was written and similar in womanist spirit to

Trimiko Melancon and Joanne M. Braxton's (2015) *Black Female Sexualities* and Debra Curtis's (2009) *Pleasures and Perils: Girls' Sexuality in a Caribbean Consumer Culture*, James's work remains a prescient, critical intervention in Black girlhood studies, insisting on desire and inserting pleasure into the study of, with, and for Black girls. Reflecting on her own wants throughout her childhood and early adulthood, James offers readers and researchers an opening to consider pleasure and desire as a way of thinking through and with issues of race, class, gender, and age, suggesting that this consideration might lead to more expansive understandings of identity development.

Although in conversation with themes raised in Morrison's ([1970] 2000) critical spatial analysis of Black girlhood in *The Bluest Eye* and James's (2011) call to counter silences in sex education, Nadine M. Finigan-Carr's chapter speaks primarily to school disciplinary practices that criminalize those girls most in need of care. The author attends to arguably the most vulnerable type of Black girls: those who have been sexually abused and are then subjected to prolonged exploitation. The chapter extends and endarkens research on the long-term material and psychological effects of sexual violence (Carlton 2022). Finigan-Carr shows how policies and practices in school spaces can either exacerbate that vulnerability—as is often the case, with disastrous results—or intervene. Propelled by a personal investment and desire for justice, the author provides a spatial intervention that crystallizes why and suggests how the pipeline from sexual abuse to sexual exploitation to prison, a “triple-stop” space of entrapment for Black girls experiencing a particular type of precarity, must be ruptured.

Black girls who mother in their youth are brought to focus in Taryn T. C. Brown's chapter, which amplifies Black teen mothers' epistemologies. In Brown's writing, Black mothers at the intersections of various social positionings theorize, no longer simply the object of inquiry or the subject of abstract theory. Drawing from observations, photos, and conversations with Black teen mothers in one high school's Teen Parent Success Program, Brown illustrates that it is within this particular educational space that the mothers are free to deconstruct deficit courses that render them other, while in the process learning to desire, (re)construct, and reclaim themselves as more than (m)other.

In “‘You Know, Let Me Put My Two Cents In’: Using Photovoice to Locate the Educational Experiences of Black Girls,” Lateasha Meyers visually maps what Black girls knew and learned while being and becoming



girls and using photography to (re)claim their voices by visually making space for themselves in the silencing and marginalizing context of a Midwestern US high school. Set in an intergenerational mentoring program, Meyers's inquiry is guided by a reflective practice of what it means to truly listen to Black girls using visual methods to creatively engage with and communicate their ontoepistemologies.

Relationality is the connective tissue among the women in Renée Wilmot's lyrically written ode to Black women in Richmond, Virginia. Wilmot traces Black girlhood becoming through space and time in one place, centering an intergenerational dialogue on identity, belonging, and education. The author uses the geopolitical and historical stories of Richmond to contextualize portraits of three generations of Black women interconnected by familial bonds. The resulting picture shows how Black girl navigational practices evolve through time and in the relationships women have with one another, rooted in spaces they claim and create.

For Black girls, belonging is a place of embodiment and freedom, argues Susan Wilcox in her interdisciplinary exploration of the Dipo tradition, a gendered rite of passage among the Krobo people in Ghana. This chapter explores how Krobo girls transition to womanhood in that context, a place where their sense of belonging to people and place is affirmed and confirmed. Wilcox brings to view these girls' particular negotiations of the push and pull of modernity and tradition. Positioning these Black girls as pedagogues (Hice-Fromille 2022), the author pulls out lessons that these young women teach through their always ongoing process of becoming, learnings such as the artificiality of the "distinction between past and future, before and after, childhood and adulthood, control and chaos, and competence and inability, which shifts ideas about time, space, identity, power, and potential."

In the chapter "A Luo Girl's Inheritance" (my adaptation of Ohito 2022), I pose what I consider to be pertinent questions for anyone, any people, pushed up against a margin. I ask what we must understand about our geohistories in order to envision individual liberation and collective freedom, and how we might use knowledge of our past to shape our present and mold our future. Narratively tracing the associative trail of memories across space, time, culture, community, and kin, I try a task similar to that which defeated Humpty Dumpty: putting together the pieces of a broken heart, documenting and remembering some ways a girl child's body and heart can be shattered, and what it means for a grown-up girl

to commit to and carefully undertake the difficult work of reparative revision. The chapter explores the idea of stories that shape our negotiations of our multiple selves, and our relationships, in relation. The chapter also asks, “What if our politics are shaped by the texture of wounds rather than the identity of selves? What possible future will have been opened up by posing that very question?” (van der Zaag 2022: 37). If wounds remind us that we are animals, a fact long known and embraced by Indigenous peoples the world over, then what theoretical and methodological approaches to researching Black girlhoods in relation to the shape of Black girls’ injuries are imaginable and actionable?

Black girlhoods as sites of queer promise, potential, and futurity in both social sciences-based and humanities-based research are the focus of the volume finale, “As Queer as a Black Girl: Navigating Toward a Transnational Black Girlhood Studies.” In this Conclusion, Lucía and I theorize a queer/transnational framework for the study of Black girlhoods. We propose this as an approach to inquiry about the knowledges, needs, and experiences of Black girls in various spaces and places, one that draws attention to the reading and writing of their layered stories, and places an emphasis on the epistemological vitality of their individual and collective creativity, curiosities, desires, and modes of play.

## Lessons From the Abundant Land of Black Girlhoods

Play has been theorized as “the gateway to the unconscious” (Winnicott, as cited in Abram 2007: 252). Play, which occurs in space, is “exciting because it deals with the existence of a precarious borderline between the subjective and that which can be objectively perceived” (Winnicott, as cited in Abram 2007: 252). Furthermore, play, “like dreams, serves the function of self-revelation” (Winnicott, as cited Abram 2007: 252–53). Our hope, then, is that the chapters in this volume reveal play—and, concomitantly, creativity, curiosity, and desire—as the relational tissue connecting multiplicitous stories that illuminate the complexities in Black girls’ social and material worlds, thereby irradiating the textured intersecting interiorities and exteriorities in Black girlhoods.

There are many places Lucía and I hope this book encourages scholars of Black girlhoods and practitioners with investments in lovin’ on Black girls to go, such as deeper into the imagination and the recesses of the

unconscious and all around the subterranean worlds that open there and then. We hope this volume pushes Black girlhood scholars beyond disciplinary borders and the geographic borders of the Global North, where many of the chapters are located. We also hope this book brings to view the fact that perhaps matters that (dis)connect us are, after all, matters of injuries, wounds, and difference.

Recently, while rereading Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*, I was reminded that we never just shape the world; "the world shapes us" (2008: 2). The world—and the worlds contained therein—is not just our home. Our relationships with our homes—even those embodied in other human beings with whom we share space at any given time—are layered and complicated. But in the end, home—our first school, our original place of teaching and learning—is the place to which we return to lose or find ourselves, again and again.

In the end, in a world hostile to their beings, how do Black girls—particularly those perceived as flawed, raunchy, belligerent, burly, licentious, or wayward, yet also wholly beautiful and imperfectly human—survive under siege? My hope is that this book illustrates that refuge and refusal, however partial, can be found through and with/in stories: real, fictional, coauthored, and (re)constructed across time, space, and place. I also hope that this volume kindles in you, dear reader, a sense of wonder and curiosity about the abundance of stories of Black girls and Black girlhoods lived in and out of place.

To love Black girls, in theory and practice, is to cultivate and create spaces for *different* stories. Remember, each of us began once upon a time, when sperm met egg, perhaps after a human agent's (un)hurried ejaculation or a helpful hand from a more-than-human and/or otherworldly actor. Stories weave together relationships, providing a lens that magnifies, inviting us to better see our textured selves and to see our better selves, and perhaps inspiring us to be our better selves when (re)searching for value and purpose in our lives and the lives of others.

I dream of education spaces where each particular Black girl, including the one still living within me, the one who refuses to die, can access knowledge that brings her to life and brings her aliveness into the world. I dream of creating a world worthy of the gift of precious Black girl knowledge, a home where space abounds for teaching and learning about the possibilities creatively embodied by Black girls being and becoming, on multiple scales, across place and space, for all time. Amen.

**Esther O. Ohito**, EdD, is a creative writer, curriculum and cultural theorist, and educational researcher. She is an associate professor of English/literacy education at Rutgers Graduate School of Education. Broadly, her lines of inquiry concern the entangled politics of Blackness, gender, race, and knowledge production at the nexus of curriculum, pedagogy, embodiment, and emotion. Her research agenda is split into three overlapping strands: the poetics and aesthetics of Black knowledge and cultural production, the gendered geographies of Black girlhoods, and the gendered pedagogies of Black critical educators. Her interdisciplinary research is as inspired by Black intellectual traditions as by (memories of) her lived experiences, including her stories as a multilingual, transnational, first-generation Black/African/Kenyan immigrant student in the United States, a teacher in the Chicago Public Schools system, and a US-based teacher/educator in various educational spaces across the African diaspora. She is a member of the Black Girlhoods in Education Research Collective.

**Lucía Mock Muñoz de Luna**, PhD, is a senior program associate in the Center for Innovations in Community Safety at Georgetown Law. She earned a doctorate in Culture, Curriculum, and Teacher Education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Trained as a school social worker, her research focuses on how Western conceptions of schooling are tied to settler colonialism and anti-Black racism and how communities around the world work to refuse those impositions and enact otherwise ways of learning and being. She is the former editor-in-chief of *The High School Journal*, a cofounder of the Raíces Collective, and a member of the Black Girlhoods in Education Research Collective.

## References

- Abram, Jan. 2007. *The Language of Winnicott: A Dictionary of Winnicott's Use of Words*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Apugo, Danielle, Lynnette Mawhinney, and Afiya Mbilishaka, eds. 2021. *Strong Black Girls: Reclaiming Schools in Their Own Image*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Bakare-Yusuf, Bibi. 1997. "The Economy of Violence: Black Bodies and the Unspeakable Terror." In *Gender and Catastrophe*, ed. Ronit Lentin, 171–83. London: Zed Books.
- Bey, Marquis. 2022. *Cistem Failure: Essays on Blackness and Cisgender*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Bhana, Deevia, and Emmanuel Mayeza. 2019. "Primary Schoolgirls Addressing Bullying and Negotiating Femininity." *Girlhood Studies* 12(2): 98–114. <https://doi.org/10.3167/ghs.2019.120208>.
- Bonetti, Kay. 2012. "An Interview with Toni Cade Bambara." In *Conversations with Toni Cade Bambara*, ed. Thabiti Lewis, 35–47. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
- Brown, Ruth Nicole. 2013. *Hear Our Truths: The Creative Potential of Black Girlhood*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Burnett, Marketa, Margaret McBride, McKenzie N. Green, and Shauna M. Cooper. 2022. "When I Think of Black Girls, I Think of Opportunities': Black Girls' Identity Development and the Protective Role of Parental Socialization in Educational Settings." *Frontiers in Psychology* 13: Article 933476. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.933476>.
- Butler, Tamara T. 2018. "Black Girl Cartography: Black Girlhood and Place-Making in Education Research." *Review of Research in Education* 42(1): 28–45. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X18762114>.
- Butler-Barnes, Sheretta T., Charles H. Lea II, Seanna Leath, Leoandra Onnie Rogers, David L. Barnes, and Habiba Ibrahim. 2021. "Visible or Invisible? Black Girls' Experiences in a Mathematics Classroom." *Journal of African American Women and Girls in Education* 1(2): 26–59. <https://doi.org/10.21423/jaawge-v1i2a85>.
- Cabral, Brian, Subini Ancy Annamma, Annie Le, Brianna Harvey, Jennifer M. Wilmot, and Jamelia Morgan. 2022. "Solidarity Incarcerated: Building Authentic Relationships with Girls of Color in Youth Prisons." *Teachers College Record* 124(7): 174–200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01614681221111458>.
- Canaan, Andrea R. 1990. "Girlfriends." In *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa, 302–3. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.
- Carlton, Rosemary R. 2022. "Precarious Girls and (Cruel) Optimism." *Girlhood Studies* 15(2): 18–34. <https://doi.org/10.3167/ghs.2022.150203>.
- Chatelain, Marcia. 2015. *South Side Girls: Growing Up in the Great Migration*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Clarke, Shannon, and Beverley Mullings. 2023. "Storytelling in Anti-Colonial Geographies: Caribbean Methodologies with World-Making Possibilities." In *The Routledge Handbook of Methodologies in Human Geography*, ed. Sarah A. Lovell, Stephanie E. Coen, and Mark W. Rosenberg, 161–72. London: Routledge.
- Clifton, Lucille. (1980) 2012. "What the Mirror Said." In *The Collected Poems of Lucille Clifton 1965–2010*, ed. Kevin Young and Michael S. Glaser, 199. Rochester: BOA Editions.
- Coker, Donna, and Thalia González. 2022. "A Call for an Intersectional Feminist Restorative Justice Approach to Addressing the Criminalization of Black

- Girls." *St. John's Law Review* 95(4): Article 2. <https://scholarship.law.stjohns.edu/lawreview/vol95/iss4/2/>.
- Cotton, Carlita R. B., Joy Lawson Davis, and Kristina Henry Collins. 2022. "See Me! Recognizing and Addressing the Invisibility of Gifted Black Girls with Other Learning Exceptionalities." In *Critical Issues in Servicing Twice Exceptional Students: Socially, Emotionally, and Culturally Framing Learning Exceptionalities*, ed. Fernanda Hellen Ribeiro Piske, Kristina Henry Collins, and Karen B. Arnstein, 171–81. Cham, Switzerland: Springer.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé W. (with Priscilla Ocen and Jyoti Nanda). 2015. *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected*. Report to the African American Policy Forum and the Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies, New York.
- Curtis, Debra. 2009. *Pleasures and Perils: Girls' Sexuality in a Caribbean Consumer Culture*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Davis, Amber Caprice Sizemore. 2022. "Nurturing Black Girl Imagination: Using Portraiture to Disrupt the Omnivisibility of Black Girlhood and to Illuminate Black Girls' Childhoodness, Creativity, and Criticality in Science Learning Spaces." PhD diss., University of Michigan.
- Deckman, Sherry L. 2022. *Black Space: Negotiating Race, Diversity, and Belonging in the Ivory Tower*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Delano-Oriaran, Omobolade, Marguerite W. Penick, Shemariah J. Arki, Ali Michael, Orinthia Swindell, and Eddie Moore, Jr., eds. 2021. *Teaching Beautiful Brilliant Black Girls*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin.
- Donaldson, Sonya. 2019. "'How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?': Black German Girlhood and the Historical Entanglements of Nation." *Women, Gender, and Families of Color* 7(1): 12–36. <https://doi.org/10.5406/womgenfamcol.7.1.0012>.
- Duke Bryant, Kelly M. 2019. "Runaways, Dutiful Daughters, and Brides: Family Strategies of Formerly Enslaved Girls in Senegal, 1895–1911." *Women, Gender, and Families of Color* 7(1): 37–55. <https://doi.org/10.5406/womgenfamcol.7.1.0037>.
- Dumas, Michael J. 2014. "'Losing an Arm': Schooling as a Site of Black Suffering." *Race Ethnicity and Education* 17(1): 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2013.850412>.
- Duvall, John N. 2000. *The Identifying Fictions of Toni Morrison: Modernist Authenticity and Postmodern Blackness*. New York: Palgrave.
- Evans-Winters, Venus E., and Jennifer Esposito. 2010. "Other People's Daughters: Critical Race Feminism and Black Girls' Education." *Educational Foundations* 24(1/2): 11–24. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ885912.pdf>.
- Farinde-Wu, Abiola, Bettie Ray Butler, and Ayana Allen-Handy. 2022. "Policing Black Femininity: The Hypercriminalization of Black Girls in an Urban School." *Gender and Education* 34(7): 804–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2022.2072477>.

- Field, Corinne T., and LaKisha Michelle Simmons, eds. 2022. *The Global History of Black Girlhood*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Florence, Namulundah. 2021. "Sowing in the Wind: Girls' Education in Kenya's Bungoma County." *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies* 39: 39–82. <https://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/jenda/article/view/3447>.
- Franklin-Phipps, Asilia. 2017. "Entangled Bodies: Black Girls Becoming-Molecular." *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 17(5): 384–91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708616674993>.
- Glissant, Édouard. (1997) 2010. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Griffin, Autumn A. 2022. "Black Parade: Conceptualizing Black Adolescent Girls' Multimodal Renderings as Parades." *Urban Education* 57(10): 1699–1729. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420859211003944>.
- Griffin, Autumn A., and Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz. 2024. *All about Black Girl Love in Education: bell hooks and Pedagogies of Love*. New York: Routledge.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. 1994. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Halliday, Aria S., ed. 2019. *The Black Girlhood Studies Collection*. Toronto, ON: Women's Press.
- Hartman, Saidiya. 2019. *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Hern, Erin A. 2021. "Colonial Education and Women's Political Behavior in Ghana and Senegal." *African Studies Review* 64(1): 217–41. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/790067>.
- Hice-Fromille, Theresa. 2022. "Teaching for Black Girls: What Every Graduate Student Instructor Can Learn from Black Girlhood Studies." In *Exploring How We Teach: Lived Experiences, Lessons, and Research about Graduate Instructors by Graduate Instructors*, ed. Sam Clem. Salt Lake City, UT: UEN Digital Press. <https://uen.pressbooks.pub/exploreteaching/chapter/teaching-for-black-girls-what-every-graduate-student-instructor-can-learn-from-black-girlhood-studies/>.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. (1942) 2006. *Dust Tracks on a Road: An Autobiography*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Jacobs, Charlotte E. 2019. "Identity in Formation: Black Girl Critical Literacies in Independent Schools." In *Black Girl Magic Beyond the Hashtag: Twenty-First Century Acts of Self-Definition*, ed. Julia S. Jordan-Zachery and Duchess Harris, 80–104. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Jacobs, Harriet A. 1861. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Edited by L. Maria Child. Boston: Boston d'Eleotype Foundry.
- Jaksch, Marla L., Catherine Cymone Fourshey, and Relebohile Moletsane, eds. 2023. *Girlhood Studies* 16(1). Special issue.

- James, Adilia E. E. 2011. "Queer Like Me: Black Girlhood Sexuality on the Playground, Under the Covers, and in the Halls of Academia." *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 15(1): 41–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10894160.2010.508408>.
- Kearney, Mary Celeste. 2007. "Productive Spaces: Girls' Bedrooms as Sites of Cultural Production." *Journal of Children and Media* 1(2): 126–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482790701339126>.
- Laymon, Kiese. 2021. "What We Owe and Are Owed." *Vox*, 17 May. <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/22419450/kiese-laymon-justice-fairness-black-america>.
- Matus, Jill. 1998. *Toni Morrison*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- McCreary, Tyler, Ranu Basu, and Anne Godlewska. 2013. "Critical Geographies of Education: Introduction to the Special Issue." *The Canadian Geographer* 57(3): 255–59. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12031>.
- McDowell, Linda. 1999. *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- McKittrick, Katherine. 2000. "'Black and 'Cause I'm Black I'm Blue': Transverse Racial Geographies in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*." *Gender, Place & Culture* 7(2): 125–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713668872>.
- . 2006. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- . 2011. "On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place." *Social & Cultural Geography* 12(8): 947–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2011.624280>.
- Melancon, Trimiko, and Joanne M. Braxton, eds. 2015. *Black Female Sexualities*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Morris, Monique W. 2016. *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*. New York: The New Press.
- . 2022. *Cultivating Joyful Learning Spaces for Black Girls: Insights into Interrupting School Pushout*. Arlington, VA: ASCD.
- Morrison, Toni. (1970) 2000. *The Bluest Eye*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- . 2008 *A Mercy*. New York: Vintage International.
- Moss, Pamela, and Courtney Donovan, eds. 2017. *Writing Intimacy into Feminist Geography*. London: Routledge.
- Mucina, Devi Dee. 2011. "Story as Research Methodology." *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 7(1): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/117718011100700101>.
- Nyachae, Tiffany M., and Esther O. Ohito. 2023. "No Disrespect: A Womanist Critique of Respectability Discourses in Extracurricular Programming for Black Girls." *Urban Education* 58(5): 743–73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085919893733>.
- Ogola, Margaret A. 1994. *The River and the Source*. Nairobi, Kenya: Focus Publishers.



- Ogot, Grace. (1966) 2000. *The Promised Land*. Nairobi, Kenya: East African Educational Publishers.
- Ohito, Esther Oganda. 2022. "My Inheritance." *Southern Cultures* 28(3): 14–41.
- Oliver, Akilah. 1999. *The She Said Dialogues: Flesh Memory*. New York: Nightboat Books.
- Owens, Tammy C., Durell M. Callier, Jessica L. Robinson, and Porshé R. Garner. 2017. "Towards an Interdisciplinary Field of Black Girlhood Studies." *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* 6(3): 116–32. <https://doi.org/10.1525/dcqr.2017.6.3.116>.
- Powell, Malea. 2012. "2012 CCCC Chair's Address: Stories Take Place: A Performance in One Act." *College Composition and Communication* 64(2): 383–406. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43490757>.
- Rogers, Dehanza. 2022. "Hostile Geographies: Black Girls Fight to Save Themselves and the World." *Girlhood Studies* 15(1): 34–49. <https://doi.org/10.3167/ghs.2022.150104>.
- Roye, Susmita. 2012. "Toni Morrison's Disrupted Girls and Their Disturbed Girlhoods: 'The Bluest Eye' and 'A Mercy'." *Callaloo* 35(1): 212–27. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cal.2012.0013>.
- Sankofa Waters, M. Billye, Venus E. Evans-Winters, and Bettina L. Love, eds. 2019. *Celebrating Twenty Years of Black Girlhood: The Lauryn Hill Reader*, 2nd ed. New York: Peter Lang.
- Scott, Karla D. 2000. "Crossing Cultural Borders: 'Girl' and 'Look' as Markers of Identity in Black Women's Language Use." *Discourse & Society* 11(2): 237–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926500011002005>.
- Shange, Savannah. 2019. "Play Aunties and Dyke Bitches: Gender, Generation, and the Ethics of Black Queer Kinship." *The Black Scholar* 49(1): 40–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.2019.1548058>.
- Simmons, LaKisha Michelle. 2015. *Crescent City Girls: The Lives of Young Black Women in Segregated New Orleans*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Smith, Ann. 2019. "The Transnational Girl in the Text: Transnationalism Redefined." In *The Girl in the Text*, ed. Ann Smith, 1–12. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Smith, Dianne, Loyce Caruthers, and Shaunda Fowler, eds. 2019. *Womanish Black Girls: Women Resisting the Contradictions of Silence and Voice*. Gorham: Myers Education Press.
- Stanger, Camilla. 2018. "From Critical Education to an Embodied Pedagogy of Hope: Seeking a Liberatory Praxis with Black, Working Class Girls in the Neoliberal 16–19 College." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 37: 47–63. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-016-9561-0>.
- Toliver, S. R. 2022a. "'Dreamland': Black Girls Saying and Creating Space through Fantasy Worlds." *Girlhood Studies* 15(1): 17–33. <https://doi.org/10.3167/ghs.2022.150103>.

- . 2022b. *Recovering Black Storytelling in Qualitative Research: Endarkened Storywork*. New York: Routledge.
- Valentine, Gill. 2008. “The Ties That Bind: Towards Geographies of Intimacy.” *Geography Compass* 2(6): 2097–2110. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2008.00158.x>.
- van der Zaag, Annette-Carina. 2022. “Touching Wounds: On the Fugitivity of Stigma.” *philoSOPHIA* 12(1/2): 37–55. [https://www.pdcnet.org/sophia/content/sophia\\_2022\\_0012\\_0001\\_0037\\_0055](https://www.pdcnet.org/sophia/content/sophia_2022_0012_0001_0037_0055).
- Vanner, Catherine. 2019. “Toward a Definition of Transnational Girlhood.” *Girlhood Studies* 12(2): 115–32. <https://doi.org/10.3167/ghs.2019.120209>.
- Walker, Alice. 1983. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Webster, Crystal Lynn. 2020. “The History of Black Girls and the Field of Black Girlhood Studies: At the Forefront of Academic Scholarship.” *The American Historian*, March. <https://www.oah.org/tah/issues/2020/the-history-of-girlhood/the-history-of-black-girls-and-the-field-of-black-girlhood-studies-at-the-forefront-of-academic/>.
- . 2021. *Beyond the Boundaries of Childhood: African American Children in the Antebellum North*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Wilson, Bobby M. 2002. “Critically Understanding Race-Connected Practices: A Reading of W. E. B. Du Bois and Richard Wright.” *The Professional Geographer* 54(1): 31–41. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0033-0124.00312>.
- Wright, Nazera Sadiq. 2016. *Black Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.