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Protest and Resistance: Conceptualizing a Blackamerican Institutional Schema and the Contemporary Relevance of Pre-*Brown* Educators

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In the century following emancipation, Blackamericans developed robust and effective schools despite limited resources. Unfortunately, their successes and contributions to the education system are often overlooked. This interdisciplinary theoretical paper draws on historiographies of segregated school systems, examining the struggles of Blackamerican educators within segregated education systems through the lenses of coloniality and institutional work. This examination reveals a distinct Blackamerican institutional schema rooted in community, guiding educators in navigating structural and systemic dynamics that shape educational opportunities and successfully challenge dominant white education standards. We discuss the coloniality of schooling, a structural framework, and a mindset that continues to undergird our contemporary education system and then draw attention to an alternative perspective. Our goal is to work toward more inclusive and equitable education systems by recognizing and acknowledging the protest and resistance of Blackamerican educators, their contributions to alternative epistemologies, and the mindsets that guided their actions.

Keywords: *Black educators, Blackamerican epistemology, coloniality of schooling, protest, racialized organization,* Brown v. Board of Education*, Black studies*

Contemporary educational practices, systems, and research in the United States are marked by ahistorical and racialized discourses that shape school organizations and institutions. Moreover, critical education research and researchers emphasizing the detriment of these discourses are marginalized (Patel, 2015; J. Wright, 2022). Further, crucial empirical evidence regarding the experiences, contributions, and influence of Blackamerican educators and their communities on the current state of U.S. education is often suppressed and disregarded (e.g., J. D. Anderson, 1988; Fenwick, 2022; Givens, 2021; Hale, 2019; Locke, 1999; Walker, 1996, 2018; Woodson, 1933). For instance, in a discourse analysis of the 1916 establishment of AERA and the 1956 Coleman Report, Powers et al. (2016) noted a significant connection between the two periods: acknowledging overt racial inequality but dismissing it as inconsequential in shaping educational opportunities and outcomes. This deliberate indifference to explicit racial inequality by the founders of AERA and the authors of the Coleman Report is described by Powers et al. (2016) as willful ignorance. Unfortunately, this willful ignorance and neglect of Blackamerican experiences and contributions to the field of education have had far-reaching consequences for practice today. For example, contemporary curricula and teaching that highlight Black and historically racialized peoples' contributions to the development of the United States have met powerful resistance from policymakers, government-elected officials, and renowned academics from elite universities. States, organizations, and institutions are feeling the effects of rollbacks of hard-fought civil rights legislation and attacks on critical race theory, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and book bannings (Brownstein, 2023; Harper, 2024; Shearer, 2023).

Furthermore, overlooking decades of evidence of Blackamerican educators' work serving their students and communities in Jim Crow–segregated schools exposes shortcomings in understanding today's Black students and marginalizes their potential (e.g., Cooper, 1988; Fenwick, 2022; Givens, 2021; Hale, 2019; Locke, 1999; Walker, 2018; Watkins, 2015; Woodson, 1933). By illuminating the work of Black educators in the 100 years between emancipation and the civil rights movement, this paper calls attention to the unique ways that Black educators have served their communities. It further highlights evidence of a deep history of protest and resistance to the coloniality of schooling in the United States. We focus on the 100 years between emancipation and the civil rights movement, an era that saw the establishment and, later, the dismantling of Black schools. We argue that these foundational Black intellectuals' and leaders' ideas, visions, and agency were essential to a *Blackamerican institutional schema.* Amid the aftermath of the Civil War, Reconstruction, Ku Klux Klan terror, and widespread lynching, a prominent Black intelligentsia emerged. Their agency and visions were foundational to a Blackamerican institutional schema (Cooper, 1988; Cruse,

2005; DuBois, 1935; Frazier, 1997; Jackson, 2005; Locke, 1999; Watkins, 2015; Woodson, 1933).

Although Blackamerican communities faced a range of discriminatory laws, policies, and social practices, many prioritized the establishment of schools, resulting in school networks that cultivated intellectuals, political leaders, and social influencers (J. D. Anderson, 1988; Colburn, 2001; Fenwick, 2022; Givens, 2021; Nelson & Meranto, 1977; Podair, 2008; Waite & Crocco, 2004). Although the work of Blackamerican educators during the Jim Crow era has been documented in valuable historiographies (e.g., J. D. Anderson, 1988; Favors, 2019; Fenwick, 2022; Givens, 2021; Hale, 2019; Walker, 1996, 2018; Watkins, 2001), their contributions' theoretical and epistemological implications have been insufficiently explored. This theoretical paper aims to reassess the historiographies that describe Blackamerican school leadership and education systems within the American South from 1865 to 1964 (the Jim Crow era).

First, we define and contextualize the term *Blackamerican*, which designates the formerly enslaved Americans of African descent as a resistant and collective protest group (Jackson, 2005; Lincoln, 1967, 2011; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Subsequently, we briefly discuss coloniality as a framework for comprehending the experiences of Blackamerican educators and the role of coloniality in shaping U.S. school systems (Bainazarov et al., 2022; Dei & Adhami, 2021; J. Wright, 2022). We then present a concise overview of the history of Blackamerican schooling, commencing with the abolition of legal enslavement in 1865 and the subsequent 100-year segregated school system. From there, we introduce Ray's (2019) framework of racialized organizations and its applicability in understanding our concept of a Blackamerican institutional schema—segregated school systems operating within, yet independently from, the education system established for white communities. Furthermore, we explore the institutional work of Blackamerican educators, as documented in historical accounts, using Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) concept of institutional work. This paper makes three significant contributions to scholarship. First, our analysis reveals patterns illuminating underlying Blackamerican schema, constitutive of the breadth and depth of Blackamerican epistemologies and experiences. Second, we link this institutional schema to acts of protest and resistance to the coloniality of schooling. Third, we contribute to a growing and robust body of scholarship working to address prior neglect of Blackamerican experiences and contributions to the field of education.

Architects of Blackamerican Sociopolitical Advancement and Education

This section highlights the architects of Blackamerican sociopolitical movements and advancement and how they centralized education to resist coloniality. The emergence of prolific Black intellectuals, just two decades after enslavement, exemplified Black agency, protest, and activism. They protested the term *Negro* and identified themselves as Black. They aligned themselves with Black resistance struggles and against colonialism throughout the diaspora, campaigned for comprehensive education in the United States, and set the stage for the coming civil rights movement. They all more or less championed economic freedom, political potency, social advancement, women's rights and education, and equality for Black women, men, and children. This group of intellectuals and thinkers included notables such as Booker T. Washington (1856–1915), Julia Ann Cooper (1858–1964), W. E. B. DuBois (1868–1963), Carter G. Woodson (1875–1950); Mary McLeod Bethune (1875–1955), Alain Locke (1885–1954), Marcus Garvey (1887–1940), and Elijah Muhammad (1897–1975), among many others (Alridge, 2007; Cooper, 1988; Cruse, 2005; DuBois, 1935; Frazier, 1997; Jackson, 2005; Locke, 1999; Watkins, 2015; Woodson, 1933). These individuals and their organizations were only sometimes collaborative, rarely aligned in method and approach, and occasionally hostile toward one another (Cruse, 2005; Frazier, 1997). However, they shared the same goal: freedom and advancement for Black people.

The Blackamerican institutional schema developed initially with a critique of and resistance to coloniality frameworks and ideology that depicted Blacks as morally and intellectually deficient and inferior to white people. These critiques and acts of resistance would later be incorporated into curricula, pedagogy, and school leadership practices. Thus, a specific epistemology and school culture emerged. For example, Locke (1999), a Harvard-educated philosopher and Howard University professor, asserted in *The new Negro* (first published in 1925) that Blacks in the United States were not a subculture of white society but constituted a distinct world culture. Further, the conceptualization of Blackamericans as protest groups shows up prominently in the work of K–16 educators in Jim Crow–segregated schools (e.g., J. D. Anderson, 1988; Favors, 2019; Fenwick, 2022; Givens, 2021; Hale, 2019; Waite & Crocco, 2004; Walker, 2018; Walker & Byas, 2009). Most notably, Carter G. Woodson (1875–1950) argued in 1933 against white-controlled Black education, highlighting the impact of racial hate and the traditions of white supremacy. Givens (2021) demonstrated how Black educators in segregated schools were engaged in *fugitive pedagogy*—developing alternative epistemologies and contributing to the development of a Black educational legacy. Favors (2019) mentioned a *hidden curriculum* that helped generate the racial consciousness and upliftment that spawned the civil rights movement. Walker (2018) described the cunning work of the all-Black Georgia Teaching Education Association and its president, Horace Tate, who played a high-risk game encouraging principals and teachers to present a docile public persona while

working behind the scenes to secure civil liberties and educational resources in the heart of Jim Crow era Georgia.

Blackamerican as a Protest Group: "Say It Loud!"

Throughout this paper, we intentionally use the term *Blackamerican* instead of *African American* (Jackson, 2005; Lincoln, 1967; J. Wright, 2022). U.S. sociologist Eric C. Lincoln argued that *Black American* was a descriptive term for Black people and groups in the United States engaged in protest against racial inequality and injustice (Jackson, 2005; Lincoln, 1967, 2011; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Lincoln examined identity formation within Black communities, analyzing the variations and evolution of names and titles used to refer to formerly enslaved Black individuals in the United States. Terms such as *Negroes* and *American Negroes* were imposed by white writers and politicians but were protested by Blackamerican leaders and intellectuals. Lincoln (1967) observed that *Black people* and *Black American* were self-designations adopted by Black thought leaders who encouraged courageous protest during the Jim Crow era. Anna Julia Cooper, with a master's degree in mathematics and a PhD in philosophy in 1924, referred to herself as a *Black woman* at a time when society referred to Black people as Negros (Watkins, 2015). Lincoln contextualized various acts of protest politics, protest organizations, marches, and songs composed and performed by Black singers and artists as part of the protest-oriented groups within Blackamerican communities. Moreover, these protest groups significantly impacted Blackamerican culture, giving rise to new religious denominations and associations that included prominent thought leaders, athletes, musicians, and artists (Lincoln, 1967, 2011; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

Jackson (2005) further developed Lincoln's premise and condensed the term from *Black American* to *Blackamerican*. This term acknowledges and celebrates the African heritage of Blacks in the United States while protesting the historical forces such as colonization, enslavement, and institutionalized segregation and inequality. Thus, *Blackamericans* describes formerly enslaved Africans and their descendants who have been shaped by the structures and institutions of white supremacy throughout U.S. history (Jackson, 2005). Building on Lincoln and Jackson, J. Wright (2022) employed the term *Blackamerican* as a historical designation specific to groups of Blacks in the United States who have actively protested against inequality, injustice, and oppression.

Defining Coloniality

Although various critical concepts, frameworks, and theories offer insights into the experiences of Blackamerican educators, we turn to coloniality. Building on previous examinations of coloniality in education systems and schools (Bainazarov et al., 2022; Dei & Adhami, 2021; J. Wright, 2022), this lens centers the history of land theft, enslavement, and racial hierarchies underpinning Western organizations, institutions, and systems. From this context, we argue that educators work to realize the promise of education as protest and resistance. *Coloniality* refers to the postcolonial structures and networks that shape and operate within contemporary Western organizations and institutions (Grosfoguel, 2018; Quijano, 2000; J. Wright, 2022). The realization of coloniality is characterized by persistent patterns of land theft, enslavement, and racial hierarchies, discourses, and rhetoric of justification, all of which inform and shape organizations, institutions, systems, and individuals involved in managing and sustaining them. Therefore, coloniality represents the foundation of white supremacy that is inherent in modern institutions and systems, perpetuating racial inequities and systemic injustices. Coloniality epitomizes racial hierarchical notions that every race and gender are inferior to white Western men and their cannons of knowledge.

We argue that contemporary educational organizations and institutions have been fundamentally rooted in white supremacy since their inception, thus naming, organizing, and governing—colonizing, through *knowledge* and schooling, groups of people and communities through education (Dei & Adhami, 2021; Mignolo, 2011). Subsequently, we build on previous examinations of coloniality in education systems (Bainazarov et al., 2022; Dei & Adhami, 2021; J. Wright, 2022). Increasingly, there is recognition across the Americas, including the United States, that schools are governed by deeply racialized systems and structures rooted in coloniality (Battiste, 2013; Dei & Adhami, 2021; Lopez, 2021; Paris, 2019; Patel, 2015; J. Wright, 2022). Consequently, more than 150 years after enslavement in the United States, systemic marginalization, mistreatment, denial, and pervasive vilification of Blackamericans, their communities, cultures, and epistemologies remain constant within schools.

Lastly, all the Black architects for social advancement during the pivotal years between 1892 and 1940 were well informed of and in opposition to coloniality. They traveled internationally and were conscious of the kinds and degrees of colonization Blacks faced globally and called out colonialism throughout Africa and the Caribbean and as far as Southeast Asia (Alridge, 2007; C. Anderson, 2003; Cruse, 2005; Locke, 1999; Warren, 2023; Watkins, 2015; Woodson, 1933; R. Wright, 1993, 2008). In 1945, members representing 34 Black organizations participated in the UN Charter conference: at least two Blackamericans, Mary McLeod Bethune and W. E. B. DuBois, were delegates who spoke at the conference. Dr. Bethune spoke forcefully about the "common bond between African American and colonial peoples" (C. Anderson, 2003, p. 57). Blackamerican organization members and delegates highlighted the grievances of people living under European colonization and the specific

hardships women faced, which mirrored the Blackamerican experiences in the United States (C. Anderson, 2003; Cook-Bell, 2023 ; Warren, 2023). In sum, the earliest Blackamerican intellectuals understood their experiences with coloniality, identified its global impact, and worked within organizations to resist and disrupt coloniality.

The Color of Pink Slips: 100 Years of Blackamerican Education, 1865–1964

During the 100 years between the Civil War and the civil rights era, Blackamericans persisted in their pursuit of education despite facing overwhelming resistance and interference from white Americans (J. D. Anderson, 1988; Favors, 2019; Fenwick, 2022; Givens, 2021; Waite & Crocco, 2004; Walker, 2018). According to J. D. Anderson (1988), education was significant cultural capital for Blackamericans seeking to oppose the economics and ideology of coloniality dominating southern whites' politics and culture. Southern whites were overwhelmingly opposed to Black education. However, the 95% illiteracy rate in 1860 dropped to 30% by 1910 (J. D. Anderson, 1988). Over the next five decades into the 1960s, Blackamerican epistemologies, curricula, pedagogy, and educational cultures had developed substantially. Graduation rates from the more than 100 historically Black colleges and universities spanning 19 states skyrocketed, along with educational certification and graduate degrees from elite midwestern and northern institutions (Fenwick, 2022).

The cultivation of Blackamerican education systems resulted in the emergence of multiple generations of Blackamerican professionals, intellectuals, thinkers, leaders, and icons (Givens, 2021; Waite & Crocco, 2004). Givens (2021) illustrates how Blackamerican educators in segregated schools retold the narratives of the United States and its history with a competing narrative of the enslaved fugitive as a Blackamerican hero in pursuit of freedom, education, and dignity denied through enslavement and its benefactors and gatekeepers. However, this Blackamerican institutional schema was decimated by the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* and subsequent legislation, policies, and sociocultural norms (Bell, 2005; Hale, 2019). In this section, we provide a succinct overview of three pivotal periods that shaped the establishment of the Blackamerican institutional schema and its resistance to coloniality.

Late 1800s to Early 1900s

The U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) established the doctrine of "separate but equal" and the segregated Jim Crow school system in the South (Baugh, 2011; Martin, 1998; Waite & Crocco, 2004). However, Blackamerican educators found loopholes and silver linings in Jim Crow's dark clouds (Walker & Byas, 2009). According to J. D. Anderson (1988), the efforts of freed Blackamericans to establish universal schooling were described as an "uprising." Consequently, the struggle for control over the education of newly freed Blackamericans involved three main groups: Blackamerican leaders, northern industrial philanthropists, and southern planters (J. D. Anderson, 1988).

Blackamerican visionaries and educators envisioned themselves and were seen in their communities as political, economic, and intellectual leaders (C. Anderson, 2003; J. D. Anderson, 1988; Favors, 2019; Givens, 2021; Waite & Crocco, 2004; Watkins, 2001, 2015). In contrast, southern planters opposed any aspect of Blackamerican education that contradicted their vision of a subservient Black population. The goals of Blackamerican education by northern philanthropists were focused on advancing the economic and industrial interests of the North, with little consideration for the intellectual growth of Blackamericans. Both these white interest groups' objectives restricted the potential development of Black people (J. D. Anderson, 1988; Woodson, 1933). The visions and goals of Blackamerican leaders for education did not align with the industrial philanthropists, planters, and white political leaders' public schooling agenda—the coloniality of schooling. As a result, Black leaders, educators, and community members organized and developed clandestine and subversive practices.

Early 1900s to 1965

J. D. Anderson (1988) described a common practice known as *self-help*, in which Blackamericans in the early 1900s, encouraged by school leaders, donated their time, materials, and money to build schools and support the needs of their students despite also paying taxes that were redirected toward funding white schools. The presence of respected school leaders and teachers within Black communities further substantiated the value of education and the teaching profession. These realizations allowed Blackamerican school leaders to rally community support for their schools around ideas of community uplift and collective progress, which strengthened Blackamerican educational institutions (Fenwick, 2022; Turner, 2003; Walker, 1996, 2001; Walker & Byas, 2009).

Notably, Jim Crow laws impeded Blackamerican educators from pursuing advanced degrees in their home states. However, to comply with the separate but equal law, between 1933 and 1946, at least 10 Jim Crow states legislated out-of-state scholarships that enabled Black citizens to earn advanced degrees out of state (Waite & Crocco, 2004). This Jim Crow loophole created a cadre of highly skilled and educated Blackamerican educators boasting graduate degrees from elite northern institutions (Fenwick, 2022; Waite & Crocco, 2004). These opportunities "helped the progress of black education as well as laying the foundation for

continued resistance to disenfranchisement" (Waite & Crocco, 2004, p. 583).

Blackamerican school principals frequently collaborated with state education associations and local chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, ensuring that these organizations were well informed about local situations and issues (Fenwick, 2022; Walker, 2013). Engaging with these organizations served as a protective shield for school leaders who risked losing their positions due to their advocacy work (Walker, 2018). The growth of public schooling in the United States during this time was controlled and funded primarily by white local school boards. These boards also had oversight over Black schools, which faced resource limitations and racist practices from white leadership (J. D. Anderson, 1988). In some cases, white school leaders and governing boards refused to collaborate with Black educators and their communities, leaving these schools unsupported and largely independent (J. D. Anderson, 1988; Hale, 2019; Tillman, 2004). Consequently, some Blackamerican school principals assumed the role of de facto superintendents, established governance systems that determined educational requirements for teachers, and set expectations for family engagement (Foster & Tillman, 2009; Walker & Byas, 2009).

In 1954, the *Brown* decision overturned the *Plessy* (1896) and separate but equal doctrine (Baugh, 2011; Martin, 1998; Waite & Crocco, 2004). The civil rights movement had gained momentum, and the industrial revolution had reached its apex and spawned a new way of life and new demands on the population. Southern teacher associations began unifying around the time of *Brown*. By 1964, the National Education Association, the largest education organization in the United States, began mandating mergers to subsume southern teacher associations (Hale, 2019). However, "Black educators controlled the mergers of their associations and carried forth a civil rights agenda that protected the gains of the movement and the integrity of their professional labor" (Hale, 2019, p. 463). As southern schools desegregated, the southern teacher associations fought on behalf of displaced Blackamerican educators in mostly hostile school environments. The adversity Blackamerican educators faced due to the demise of their thriving institutions is distorted and marginalized in most of the historical analyses of *Brown* (Fenwick, 2022; Hale, 2019).

Post-1965

The *Brown* (1954) decision, while aiming to desegregate schools, resulted in the illegal and systematic removal of thousands of Blackamerican educators from their positions. These highly qualified and experienced Blackamerican educators were replaced by less qualified white individuals who had no prior experience teaching Blackamerican children and, in many cases, lacked professional experience as educators altogether (see, e.g., Fenwick, 2022; Hale, 2019; Waite & Crocco, 2004). This replacement system disrupted the bonds between Blackamerican educators and students and the community's overall connection to the educational environment. Furthermore, this act placed both Blackamerican and white students in classrooms with underqualified and inexperienced white teachers and school leaders undergoing on-the-job training (Fenwick, 2022).

The displacement of Blackamerican educators had broad implications. Jobs and resources that should have been allocated to Blackamerican educators were diverted to less qualified and unqualified white individuals. This mass demeriting and unemployment reinforced decades of Jim Crow myths and stereotypes about Black inferiority. "Thus, desegregated schools remained all-White in their leadership, teaching force, curriculum, and culture, and most importantly, the policy-making levers that controlled them" (Fenwick, 2022, p. 127). The United States lost a century-long legacy of Blackamerican education science in teaching and learning, gained through historically Black college and university teacher education programs and advanced degrees pursued at elite northern universities due to the exclusion of Blackamerican educators from universities in southern states (Fenwick, 2022; Waite & Crocco, 2004). Because of their graduate studies in midwestern and northern colleges of education, these Blackamerican educators were knowledgeable in "innovative new fields of inquiry," such as educational administration, counseling, rural education, and social studies (Waite & Crocco, 2004, p. 573). Furthermore, the bonds between Blackamerican educators and students were disrupted, as was the community's overall connection to the educational environment. In addition, this act placed both Blackamerican and white students in classrooms with underqualified and inexperienced white teachers and school leaders undergoing on-the-job training (Fenwick, 2022).

The widespread displacement of Blackamerican educators came to public attention due to the persistent efforts of researchers, institutions, elected officials, foundations, university teams, media outlets, and educators dedicated to exposing this systemic removal of Blackamerican leadership and representation (Fenwick, 2022; Hale, 2019). The Senate Hearing on Equal Educational Opportunity, held from March 3 to 6, 1971, played a significant role in shedding light on this issue and documenting the extensive displacement of highly experienced Blackamerican educators due to desegregation, causing significant trauma within affected communities (Hearings, 1971). However, no action was taken to rectify the situation. This oversight and willful ignorance on the part of legislators regarding the displacement of Blackamerican educators and subsequent lack of public attention to the issue then and now have resulted in teacher shortages, particularly Black teachers, as well as a troubling lack of historical awareness in the research informing education institutions and organizations.

Historicizing the Coloniality of Schooling in the United States

The coloniality of schooling in the United States is evident in the century-long period of federally sanctioned segregation in education. Despite efforts toward desegregation, a dual system for Black and white students persisted in some parts of the country until the 1970s and 1980s (Baugh, 2011; Fenwick, 2022). The historiographies of schooling during the Jim Crow era provide insight into the challenges and opportunities presented by racially segregated institutions, which allowed Blackamerican educational leaders to create unique and unparalleled systems of administrative activism (Hale, 2019; Waite & Crocco, 2004; Walker, 2018; Walker & Byas, 2009) and hidden or fugitive pedagogic systems and frameworks (Favors, 2019; Givens, 2021; Waite & Crocco, 2004).

Ray's (2019) framework of racialized organization further amplified these historiographies and narratives on the displacement of Blackamerican educators. Despite facing systemic neglect and racist practices from white-led governing bodies, Blackamerican school leaders and their communities were motivated to develop relevant/responsive approaches to education, highlighted by the framework of racialized organizations. Thus, Blackamericans forged a distinct institutional approach to schooling, navigating and challenging the limitations imposed by the coloniality of the education system.

Work of Educators in Racialized Organizations

To make visible the ways in which educators' work represented acts of protest and resistance, we draw from the concept of racialized organizations (Ray, 2019) and institutional work (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Ray's (2019) concept of racialized organizations describes how racial foundations, hierarchies, and processes are embedded within organizational systems. These organizations are shaped by underlying ideologies that inform racialized assumptions about the distribution of resources. Ray (2019) emphasized that "racial structures arise any time resources are (intentionally or passively) distributed according to racial schemas" (p. 32). Thus, racialized organizations demonstrate four essential elements: (1) to expand or inhibit individual agency, (2) to legitimize the unequal distribution of resources, (3) to view whiteness as a credential, and (4) to decouple organizational procedures to advantage the dominant racial group (Ray, 2019).

Examples of Ray's (2019) four racialized organizations tenets in education are historically rooted and still prevalent today: (1) institutionalized policies and practices enhance the agency of white stakeholders and diminish the agency of Black stakeholders, such as recent government takeovers of predominantly Black schools in Michigan; Oakland, California; and elsewhere (Morel, 2018; Trujillo et al., 2014; J. Wright & Kim, 2023; J. Wright et al., 2020); (2) financial, physical, and human resources are unequally distributed across Black and white schools, including specific denials of opportunity and resource gaps at the school board and administrator levels (J. D. Anderson, 1988; Fenwick, 2022; J. Wright & Kim, 2023; J. Wright et al., 2020); and (3) being white was required to work in or attend the better-resourced white schools and, in some cases, was required to attend school board or district meetings, which exemplify the whiteness as property and a credential found in schools (J. D. Anderson, 1988; Fenwick, 2022; Leonardo, 2007; Walker, 1996). Critical race theorists consider whiteness as a form of property constructed by law, affirmed and defined by identity and privilege associated with who is determined to be white (Bell, 2005; Harris, 1993; Leonardo, 2007). Finally, (4) rules applied differently to Blackamerican educators, students, and families relative to their white peers, in the past (Walker, 2001, 2018) and present (Morel, 2018; Stein, 2004; J. Wright et al., 2020).

Blackamerican Institutional Work in Racialized Education Organizations

According to Selznick (1949), organizations serve as mechanisms for achieving the normative goals of institutions. The legitimacy of an organization is established when its goals align with its cultural values and conform to established operational patterns (Scott, 2013). Thus, organization leaders face the challenge of maintaining legitimacy while adapting to new challenges and opportunities (Scott, 2013).

The concept of institutional work (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006) stems from the field of organizational studies. It is often used to investigate the role of individual actors in achieving change or maintaining stability amid the external forces, macro institutional logics, and internal processes in which institutional actors are embedded (Powell & Colyvas, 2008). This framework helps us understand how the actions of individuals and organizations shape, uphold, or disrupt institutional norms, patterns of behavior, and outcomes. The work of institutional actors within organizations can be categorized into three major areas: (1) *creating*, (2) *maintaining*, and (3) *disrupting*. How these actors engage in institutional work, and the outcome of that work, can inform our understanding of institutional norms and how institutional actors respond to and reshape those norms. For example, Bridwell-Mitchell (2015) used this framework to explore teacher agency in the context of school turnaround. The value of this lens is in its attention to the situated practices of individuals engaging with the institutions that surround and occupy them (Lawrence et al., 2011). Thus, by focusing on individuals' practices within their institutions, this framework provides a bridge between institutional and critical approaches to studying schooling. Applying the lens of institutional work to the actions of leaders and teachers

working in segregated schools enables us to uncover patterns of action that challenged and resisted the normative logics that govern the coloniality of schooling and provides evidence of a distinct and vibrant Blackamerican institutional schema undergirding educator actions.

By examining the historiographies of school leaders, educators, and community members in segregated schools, we gain insights into the institutionalized practices of Blackamerican leadership in support of teachers, students, and their communities. Prominent researchers J. D. Anderson (1988), Vanessa Siddle Walker (1996, 2018), Linda Tillman (2004), Leslie Fenwick (2022), and others have contributed to this understanding. Overall, the lens of institutional work helps us analyze the actions and practices of individuals and organizations within educational institutions, shedding light on the dynamics of power, resistance, and the construction of alternative education systems in marginalized communities.

Creating. The institutional work of creating exemplifies the agency of Blackamerican educators in segregated schools despite the refusal of some white school leaders and governing boards to engage with Black educators and their communities (J. D. Anderson, 1988; Hale, 2019; Tillman, 2004). Such disconnects led some Blackamerican school principals to act as de facto superintendents, establishing rule systems for their schools, such as determining the education requirements for teachers and family engagement expectations (J. D. Anderson, 1988; Fenwick, 2022; Foster & Tillman, 2009; Walker, 1996; Watkins, 2001). Likewise, Jim Crow policies and social norms keeping Blackamericans out of southern white universities opened loopholes for Black educators to attend graduate universities in northern states, resulting in more qualified K–12 teachers and school leaders in the South as compared with their white peers (Fenwick, 2022; Waite & Crocco, 2004). School leaders and teachers drew from their formalized training and knowledge of their students and communities to create pedagogies and practices that defined their schools (Walker, 2009)

Maintaining. Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) description of the institutional work of *maintaining* encompasses various practices institutional actors use to uphold existing norms, sustain organizational routines, and ensure compliance. In the context of Blackamerican school leaders, the work of maintaining involved several strategies aimed at preserving and advancing their vision of schooling despite fundamentally racist systems and structures (Foster & Tillman, 2009; Walker, 2018; Walker & Byas, 2009). One aspect of maintaining was addressing the lack of resources. Blackamerican school leaders often had to navigate power dynamics and conflicting interests, including appeasing white interests, while simultaneously addressing the needs of Blackamerican communities in order to sustain their schools (J. D. Anderson, 1988; Walker, 2018). Overall, the maintaining work of Blackamerican educators was driven by a vision of schooling that transcended racism. They engaged in strategic actions, advocacy, and community mobilization to uphold their vision, navigate institutional constraints, and foster educational opportunities for their students despite restrictive laws and segregation (Favors, 2019; Givens, 2021; Hale, 2019; Walker, 2018).

Disrupting. Finally, the institutional work of *disrupting* encompasses disconnecting practices from their moral foundations; tearing down, tinkering with, and transforming institutional structures; and undermining existing assumptions and beliefs to decrease perceived risks (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence et al., 2011). Blackamerican school leaders consistently demonstrated a relentless drive to create a positive educational experience for students (J. D. Anderson, 1988; Walker, 2018; Walker & Byas, 2009). W. E. B DuBois stated in his study, *The common school and the Negro American* (1911), that "many of the [white] school authorities have shown by their acts and in a few cases expressed declaration that it was their policy to eliminate the Negro school as far as possible" (as cited in J. D. Anderson 1988, p. 154). Thus, Blackamerican school leaders developed expertise in obfuscating Jim Crow laws and educational norms under duress to create nurturing environments for students in segregated schools, exemplified in the work of Horace Tate and the Georgia Teaching Education Association (Walker, 2018). In summary, the institutional work of disrupting undertaken by Blackamerican school leaders involved challenging, transforming, and dismantling the oppressive structures and norms of the racialized education institution.

Blackamerican Institutional Schema

Indeed, the Black intellectuals and leaders who emerged between 1892 and 1940 laid the foundation for an encompassing Black agenda covering politics, social advancement, economics, and education that recognized and celebrated Black identity, history, and achievement (Cooper, 1988; DuBois, 1935; Jackson, 2005; Locke, 1999; Watkins, 2015; Woodson, 1933). Their activism inspired what we identified as the Blackamerican institutional schema. The historical accounts of Blackamerican educators, administrators, and teachers in schools in the South before court-mandated integration highlight the power of community collaboration and a shared agenda in driving the institutional work of creating, maintaining, and disrupting to provide quality education. By working together and in parallel, Blackamerican educators, community leaders, and allied organizations maneuvered the racist Jim Crow system to their advantage to create a relevant/responsive educational system—a system rooted in the belief "that education was the only route available by which their students and community could 'advance as a race'"

(Fenwick, 2022, p. 57). The community mindset played a crucial role in overcoming Jim Crow obstacles and creating a robust and empowering education system.

Discussion

This theoretical paper brings attention to Blackamericans' resistance to the coloniality of schooling by highlighting their distinct and largely unrecognized and/or marginalized institutional schema of schooling rooted in their communities (Cooper, 1988; DuBois, 1935; Favors, 2019; Fenwick, 2022; Givens, 2021; Locke, 1999; Walker, 2018; Watkins, 2015; Woodson, 1933; Waite & Crocco, 2004). By integrating the frameworks of coloniality and racialized organizations, this paper traces the historical origins of and reveals the presence of white supremacy within modern school organizations and institutions. Coloniality offers insight into the robust historiography of oppressive Westernized educational institutions, organizations, and systems and the individuals invested in managing and maintaining them (Dei & Adhami, 2021; Grosfoguel, 2013; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; J. Wright, 2022). This paper emphasizes the historical protests by Blackamericans against the coloniality of schooling, as documented in prior historiographies. Early Blackamerican leaders and trailblazers set a foundation for educators, administrators, and teachers—a collective protest group resisting coloniality constructs embedded in school organizations and institutions (e.g., Favors, 2019; Givens, 2021; Waite & Crocco, 2004). This paper aims to challenge dominant narratives and recognize the agency and resilience of Blackamerican leaders, educators, and communities by shedding light on the richness of the Blackamerican protest against the coloniality of schooling.

Coloniality of Schooling Today

We argue that the racialized policies and practices permeating U.S. education systems are aiding the erosion of potent Blackamerican epistemologies and an undervalued institutional schema (Favors, 2019; Givens, 2021; Waite & Crocco, 2004). Further, academia's deliberate disregard for the role of overt racial inequalities shaping the field of education (J. D. Anderson, 1988; Hale, 2019; Walker, 2018) embodies our reference to the coloniality of schooling. Thus, schooling is imbued with the ideals and ambitions of white supremacy, perpetuating inequities and injustices while upholding the status quo of Eurocentrism, masked as universalism. This Eurocentrism stands in stark contrast to the principles of Black excellence, autonomy, and self-determination.

The coloniality of schooling highlights the entrenched power dynamics and systemic structures sustaining the dominance of white norms and values within educational institutions. It underscores how the educational system, intentionally or unwittingly, reinforces and perpetuates racial hierarchies, privileges Eurocentric perspectives, and marginalizes Blackamerican epistemologies and ways of knowing. This perpetuation of inequality and the suppression of Blackamerican epistemologies further entrenches the colonial legacy (coloniality) within education.

As highlighted, racialized organizations and institutional work amplify a Blackamerican institutional schema organized around resisting and protesting the hierarchies and ideologies reified through the coloniality of schooling. These white supremacy hierarchies and ideologies, historically as well as in the present, were designed to operationalize ways to reallocate resources to and in the service of white-dominant cultures and societies and demonize those in protest or opposition. The disruption of a century's worth of Black community development and leadership, leading to educational resources, learning science, pedagogy, and talent (C. Anderson, 2003; J. D. Anderson, 1988; Fenwick, 2022; Walker, 1996, 2001, 2018), is a classic example of the coloniality of schooling, functioning as racialized organizations and institutional work.

Given this context, our examination of Blackamerican educators' institutional work led us to name a Blackamerican institutional schema, an underlying way of thinking about education rooted in resistance and protest, aided by the power of community and guided by the moral imperative of community uplift. In highlighting the institutional work of Blackamerican educators, we underline the detrimental implications of the gap that Powers et al. (2016) emphasized regarding the willful ignorance pervasive in educational research—the racialization of educational organizations and institutions and how they are legitimized through Eurocentric frameworks posed as universal. Furthermore, we propose that a Blackamerican institutional schema persists, as evidenced by the actions of Blackamerican school leaders documented in contemporary research (Bass, 2020; Khalifa, 2018; Rivera-McCutchen, 2020). This paper contributes to the scholarship on nurturing and caring for Black students, such as Black boyhood (Harper, 2015; Howard, 2008), Black girlhood (Brown, 2008; Morris, 2022), Black principals (Foster & Tillman, 2009), and Black schools (Terry et al., 2014). Recognizing and naming this institutional schema help us understand the unique history and experiences of educational environments in Blackamerican communities (Bass, 2020; Fenwick, 2022; Harper, 2015; Rivera-McCutchen, 2020). Recognizing and valuing this schema can potentially shift the trajectory of the schooling experiences for Blackamerican students today.

Also, the lived experience of schools as racialized organizations remains prevalent. Horsford et al. (2018) drew parallels between J. D. Anderson's (1988) description of the battle to control Blackamerican schooling in the early twentieth century and the back and forth we see in the post–No Child Left Behind era between federal and state governments,

education management organizations, philanthropists, and corporations (J. Wright, 2023). Jones (2009) argued that contemporary policy institutions in the United States driving urban education reform are "structurally indifferent toward the idea of credible African American involvement in education reform, although much of this reform is targeted at African American children" (p. 208). Blackamerican knowledge and institutional schema continue to be overlooked. This premise aligns with the recent school takeover movement of the last decade, understood as a primarily racialized phenomenon (Morel, 2018; Trujillo et al., 2014; J. Wright & Kim, 2023; J. Wright et al., 2020). For example, Morel's (2018) comprehensive look at takeovers noted how educational outcomes or concerns were not the driving force in takeovers, contrary to policy discourse. Instead, race, politics, and economics contributed equally to the likelihood of a district experiencing a state takeover. Morel (2018) argued that these practices were part of a historical strategy "to separate black political empowerment from the process of educating black children" (p. 98). The era of segregated schools, spanning approximately 100 years from 1865 to 1964, played a pivotal role in shaping the educational experiences of Black communities and the foundations that dismantled Jim Crow.

Implications

Educators may find inspiration in the resilience and commitment of past Black community and thought leaders, adapting their methods to promote equity and justice in contemporary education. The historical context of prominent Black leaders between 1892 and 1940 underscores the importance for modern educators to recognize and understand the challenges faced by marginalized communities. Educators should strive to incorporate diverse perspectives into their teaching and acknowledge and contextualize historical events such as the Civil War aftermath, Reconstruction, Ku Klux Klan terror, and widespread lynching as foundational to the Black experience. Emphasizing comprehensive education and fostering an inclusive learning environment can help address the legacies of oppression and contribute to social advancement for all students.

Identifying a distinct Blackamerican institutional schema has implications for education research and practice. Understanding Blackamerican educators' unique contributions and approaches provides valuable insights into the work of school leaders and teachers today. As we have highlighted, Blackamerican leaders provided blueprints for obfuscating racist and inequitable policies and laws (Hale, 2019; Walker, 2018; Walker, 2009). Also, the development of Blackamerican hidden/fugitive curricula was crucial for their students and provided much of the fuel that generated the civil rights movement (Favors, 2019; Fenwick, 2022; Givens, 2021; Waite & Crocco, 2004). The Blackamerican institutional schema outlined herein is a model and an example for school leaders in successful approaches to cultural responsiveness, community engagement, countercurricula, and empowering Blackamerican students. This understanding can inform the development of policies, practices, curricula, and identity development for the betterment of Blackamerican students. The displacement of Black educators resulted in a significant loss to the U.S. educational system and contributed to today's shortage of educators.

Regarding research, exploring the historical Blackamerican institutional schema opens up new avenues for contextualizing and analyzing contemporary culturally affirming/responsive educational environments, the role of Black educators in challenging systemic inequities, and the benefits of racial representation among educators. Future research examining the successes and experiences of other Blackamerican-led schools and school movements, both historical and contemporary, could confirm, expand, and provide further insights into effective practices, strategies, and approaches to our understanding of a Blackamerican institutional schema in education. Further, studying Blackamerican-led schools and school movements fills knowledge gaps and addresses the historical neglect of Blackamerican communities in education. Lastly, the Blackamerican institutional schema represents a 100-year blueprint for effective culturally responsive leadership, pedagogy, and administrative activism relative to much of the contemporary educational reform efforts.

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