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Champagne Problems & Popular Feminism: Naming White Feminism in Young Adult Literature

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Introduction & Research Questions

For better or worse, feminism is in vogue. Popular webshops like Etsy make it possible to purchase likenesses of feminist icons on t-shirts, mugs, notecards, and framed prints. Ruth Bader Ginsburg's dissent collar can be purchased as a costume, as a lapel pin, even as earrings. A trip into most bookstores will reveal displays of books by, for, and about feminists of all ages. This commodification of feminism in media is described by some scholars as a post-feminist method of "invoking feminism...to suggest that equality has been achieved" (McRobbie). However, activists and abolitionists within grassroots movements make clear that inequity of wages, access to healthcare, transcare, clean water, and food sovereignty are feminist concerns. As literacy scholars and educators, we are interested in exploring how these tensions between feminist representations in media and the work of political movements can be productive sites for critical literacy and civic engagement within the English Language Arts classroom.

In this paper, we analyze a series of young adult novels that we see as part of the commodification of feminism: stories featuring young women who are "smashing the patriarchy" through school-based organizing and activism. By examining how youth respond to school-based politics of sexism and misogyny within young adult literature (YAL), we argue these texts, paired with foundational feminist theory, create opportunities for teachers and students to analyze the affordances and limitations of complex feminist ideologies. We believe these texts can support teachers and students in critical conversations about the impact of *white feminism*—a feminism that centers white women's experiences at the exclusion of Black women and women of color (Kendall). Beck contends *white feminism* is an ideology and belief system that views gender equality as "anchored in the accumulation of individual power rather than the redistribution of it" (xvii), and that ultimately white feminism works in service of maintaining

white supremacy. The stories within our study offer readers portraits of young women developing feminist identities and organizing around collective needs. Our inquiry was guided by the following questions:

1. How are authors of YA fiction marketed as feminist drawing on feminist theorists and activists?
2. How do the protagonists utilize feminist empowerment clubs and literacy practices to speak back to school-based politics of sexism and misogyny?

We align with scholars like Sara Ahmed, Chandra Mohanty, and bell hooks, who argue that feminism must seek to end sexism, sexual exploitation, and sexual oppression within a white supremacist, capitalistic, and patriarchal society. In *Feminism without Borders,* Mohanty contends that feminism operates at three levels: daily life and everyday acts that aid in identity formation; community collective action for social transformation; and theory and pedagogy for the production of knowledge (5). In this critical review, we examine the ways that characters in YAL are living and doing feminism. We argue these characters use feminism, sometimes narrowly, to advocate and enact social transformation in their school spaces.

Positionality

As we write this paper—amidst political and social unrest and in the wake of the 2020 presidential election—we are thinking about the voting patterns of women and teachers: 55% of white women and 29% of teachers voted to re-elect a candidate who consistently espoused racist, sexist, xenophobic, and ableist rhetoric. Discourses about women's voting patterns circulated in the headlines, and we watched friends and family puzzle over how it was possible that women could vote for someone so clearly misogynistic. It was clear to us that feminism, when narrowly

defined only in terms of gender and without considerations of race, was not an appropriate lens to view these results.

As white, cisgender, middle-class women, we strive to be critical of our complicity in upholding tenets of white feminism in our own research, practice, and personal lives. We know that anti-racist and intersectional feminist work is—as the Combahee River Collective stated—"...by definition work for white women to do." In our research, we are indebted to the theoretical contributions of BIPOC scholars, and recognize that we must constantly engage in critical self-reflection so as not to perpetuate what Ortega calls white women's "loving, knowing ignorance"—the commitment to listening and learning from BIPOC women without engaging in critical self-reflection and questioning (61). Part of our aim is to support educators and students in critically engaging with the ways feminism is often portrayed as a singular liberatory ideology for women without nuancing dynamics of race, gender, class, and nation. According to the US Department of Education's 2018 National Teacher and Principal survey, 79% of teachers are white women. For us, this is a reminder that our work with predominantly white pre-service teachers at a midwestern university must make visible the ways that white feminism manifests within pedagogical praxis. We are interested in how critical engagement with YAL marketed as feminist can be coupled with feminist theory to support teachers and readers in naming how practices upheld by institutions of education and schooling, particularly practices embedded into curriculum and literacy instruction, reproduce white feminism.

Review of Relevant Scholarship

Feminisms in YAL

A large body of scholarship attends to the becoming of young women in YAL (Trites; Hentges; Baxley and Boston). Many scholars illustrate how feminist identities and girlhood are constructed across intersections of race and class: while young white girls can be angry, rebelling feminists, young girls of color are not afforded this way of becoming (Nunn; Player et. al). For example, Sensoy and Marshall explore a series of books they dub "missionary girl power" books—stories written and consumed by white women "in which monolithic Muslim girls are inherently oppressed and in need of saving by Western ideas and feminisms" (309). Feminism, as it is often understood, fails girls of color. We hope to add to the conversation about feminisms in YAL by analyzing texts and characters with deliberate and explicit invocations of feminism. We see this trend as another way that white feminism has, as Beck asserts, "lurked, adapted, and endured—rebranding and reincarnating alongside the revolution of its day" (10). The type of feminism currently flourishing is often defined by empowerment rhetoric that encourages breaking glass ceilings without shattering systemic problems, what Banet-Weiser calls popular feminism. Failing to challenge the status quo is connected to a white, neo-liberal feminism that only makes space for white women to fit into the current capitalist white supremacist system (Beck; Hamad). White feminism and popular feminism focus on the individual, not recognizing collective needs.

To begin imagining new futures where the collective thrives, we draw on theories of intersectionality to analyze the texts within this study. Intersectionality, coined by Crenshaw, is "... a meaningful framework that exposes a matrix of domination, and seeks to improve vital women's services" (Olufemi 7). Scholars, such as Gill, argue that an intersectional framework,

"given its flexibility, can serve as a beneficial tool for literary analysis" (76). Supporting readers in applying an intersectional lens as they read can illuminate how matrices of domination reveal the necessity for broad systemic change.

Our analysis of characters' feminist identities is informed by the current conversation surrounding feminism. As Hamad argues, "Representation has real world consequences" (27), and as hooks asserts, "Children's literature is one of the most critical sites for feminist education for critical consciousness" (23). Using Critical Race Feminist Theory, Rubinstein-Avila analyzes popular YAL, such as Judy Blume's *Forever,* to draw attention to protagonists who are overwhelmingly white, middle-class, and heterosexual, contending that texts like these often fail to treat issues of sexism systemically (371). Similarly, Toliver examines the limited representation of Black girls across literature, noting the necessity of more windows and mirrors for "varied representation" of Black girlhood (19). The books' protagonists within our analysis underscore Rubinstein-Avila's and Toliver's claims: they are primarily white cisgender girls. However, we think the characters in these stories are also engaging in collective acts of solidarity that attempt to critique the systems that uphold misogyny and sexism, offering readers new ways of becoming critically conscious feminists. Feminism in YAL can support readers and teachers in noticing and naming the complexity of a feminist project.

Girls' Literacy Practices

We are particularly interested in how adolescent girls use literacy practices to enact feminism. As Simmons states, "Girls have always used multiple forms of literacy to determine who they are" (x). Research illustrates the myriad uses of literacy in girls' lives (Cherland; Finders; Greer; Sutherland; Muhammad, "Creating Spaces"; Muhammad, "Iqra"; Muhammad and Haddix; Player; Cisneros). For example, Muhammad examines how adolescent African

American Muslim girls use “writing as a sociopolitical tool” through writing protest poetry (“Iqra” 288). In an after-school writing club with girls of color, Player illustrates how members wrote counternarratives focusing on self-love for themselves and their community (236). When girls use literacy practices, such as making zines, writing blogs, and posting on social media, their agency creates culture (Piepmeier 7).

Additionally, research examines how girls utilize various types of literacy to express their feminist identities. For example, Kim and Ringrose study one school’s feminist society, showing how girls both use and critique feminist social media. Keller analyzes two feminist blogs created by teenage girls, arguing “teenage girls are actively reframing what it means to participate in feminist politics...to embrace new understandings of community, activism, and even feminism itself” (430). This research articulates that girls navigate their feminist identities through participation and critiques of internet culture.

While popular feminism highlights how traditional empowerment rhetoric focuses on the power to consume (Beck), we argue the girls in the books we analyze are engaging in participatory media, creating activist spaces and movements rather than simply being consumers. Like the writing clubs Muhammad and Player describe, these girls draw on a wide variety of literacy practices, such as writing poetry, writing blogs, and using hashtags on Twitter to critique their school cultures. These literacy practices aid them in their enactment of their feminist identities.

Text Selection Process

As avid readers of YAL, we began to notice the recurrence of stories following a similar narrative pattern: a girl protagonist who invoked discourses of feminism to create school clubs that engaged in collective activism as a response to experiences of sexism and misogyny at

school. In this essay, we review six works of YA fiction that reflect current trends in YAL marketed as feminist. Brief summaries of each text are located in Table 1. We define "marketed as feminist" as any book that flags or cues feminist ideologies within the peritext (i.e. book covers, reviews, summaries, endpapers). It is in these features we see explicit feminist cues (Priske), such as the raised fist, the color pink, and the Greek symbol for woman. The production of these texts is happening within a cultural moment that includes The Women's March, the #MeToo movement, and political figures running for president such as Hilary Clinton, Kamala Harris, and Elizabeth Warren. *Six Angry Girls,* one of the books under study, is even dedicated to Elizabeth Warren. For inclusion in this critical review, the following criteria informed our text selection: the book was published after 2016; the book features a protagonist who identifies as a feminist and responds to school-based injustice by creating or attending activist-oriented clubs; and the book includes specific references to feminism, feminist history, or feminist leaders and thinkers.

Table 1
Summaries of Feminist Young Adult Literature under Review

Title & Author	**Brief Synopsis**
Mathieu, Jennifer. *Moxie*. Roaring Book Press, 2017.	Inspired by her mom's Riot Grrrl history, Vivian responds to sexism at her school by creating an anonymous zine that she distributes secretly.
Reed, Amy. *The Nowhere Girls.* Simon Pulse, 2017.	After the rape of a classmate, Grace, Erin, and Rosina join together to form The Nowhere Girls, a group dedicated to discussing sexism and organizing actions for justice.
Watson, Renee, and Ellen Hagan. *Watch Us Rise*. Bloomsbury YA, 2019.	After their feminist writing club *Write Like a Girl* is shut down by the principal, Jasmine and Chelsea use blogs to organize a protest.
Bushnell, Candance, and Katie Cotugno. *Rules for Being a Girl.* Balzer +	Marin navigates the aftermath of her English teacher kissing her by writing an editorial entitled "Rules for Being a Girl" for the school newspaper and starting a feminist book club at school.

Bray, 2020.	
Kisner, Adrienne. *Six Angry Girls*. Fiewel and Friends, 2020.	After being ousted from the all-boy Mock Trial team, Millie teams up with Raina to create their own rival team after becoming engaged in feminist politics through a politically active yarn store.
Williams, Lily, and Karen Schneemann. *Go With the Flow*. First Second, 2020.	Abby, Brit, and Christine befriend a new girl at school, Sasha, when she stains her pants from her first period. Abby begins a petition to make tampons and pads free and accessible at school.

Methodology

Our approach to research is grounded in the methodology of Critical Content Analysis (Johnson et al.; Leavy and Harris; Thein et al). Thein et al. explain that a comparative content analysis is "a series of interlocking and recursive steps that emphasize building interpretations about the differences between texts rather than about a given text in isolation" (154). We believe a critical content analysis across texts marketed as feminist can reveal the affordances and limitations of feminism as a tool of resistance. Initially, we read each of the texts listed for aesthetic enjoyment (Rosenblatt; Johnson et al.). For our second reading, we inductively coded for instances of language that directly referenced feminism, feminist activists, and feminist texts, tracking these instances in a collaborative document (Merriam and Tisdell). After multiple reiterative readings, we analytically coded, looking for themes that might offer answers to our stated research questions. From this analysis, two major themes emerged: the characters grapple with tensions in defining and developing feminist identities, and, as a result, the characters draw on feminist tools to disrupt sexism in school spaces.

Themes

Tensions in Defining and Developing Feminist Identities

For the protagonists across the texts, feminism is initially intimidating, but eventually becomes vital to how they relate to problems they identify in their schools. As Jackson contends, "Popular feminism has reinstated feminism as an identity" (3). As the protagonists learn more about feminism, they realize they could identify as a feminist, even if that meant identifying as less of a "good girl." For example, in *Moxie*, Vivian struggles with being the girl that always follows the rules. But, inspired by her mother's rebellious past, Vivian begins passing out an anonymous zine at school after she becomes fed up with rampant sexism in her school. Vivian worries about no longer being a nice girl, until she realizes that feminism is not a "bad word" (269). Vivian, defining feminism, says, "...all it is is girls supporting each other and wanting to be treated like human beings in a world that's always finding ways to tell them they're not" (269). This definition flattens feminism by "ignoring the differences of race between women and the implications of those differences," which as Lorde asserts, "presents the most serious threat to the mobilization of women's joint power" (117). The importance of feminism as an active and relational process is undermined when feminism is treated only as an identity that characters like Vivian can choose to embody. For many of the characters, their understanding of feminism stops at equality between the sexes, aligning with Rubinstein-Avila's findings of neoliberal feminism in YAL. By refusing to address race within definitions of feminism, protagonists like Vivian, as Lorde argues, "ignore their built-in privilege of whiteness and define *woman* in terms of their own experience alone..." (117).

Other texts embrace a messier, less-easily defined feminism. For example, the narrator of *The Nowhere Girls* offers critiques of white feminist projects, saying, "Because this feminism or whatever it is they're doing—it's a white-girl thing. When they go around making demands and yelling, people call them fired up and passionate. But black girls don't have that privilege. When

black girls stand up for themselves, people call them hostile. They call them dangerous. They call them other things" (Reed 297). This example underscores Lorde's argument that white women's unwillingness to define feminism beyond their own experiences perpetuates the othering of Black and Brown women. In *Watch Us Rise,* Chelsea's character understands that her activism and feminist ways of being is an ongoing process, not a fixed identity she can arrive at, stating "I am a work in progress" (Watson and Hagan 229).

Not all of the stories within the text set define feminist projects as color-evasive (Annamma et al.) battles that pit men and women against each other. Stories like *Go with the Flow* offer readers narratives about girls who are attempting to change material access to menstrual products and medical support within and beyond school spaces. Their antagonist is not exclusively men, rather the collective stigma around period knowledge that is perpetuated across gender lines.

As we read across our text set, we also noticed the recurrence of particular feminist genealogies. The characters drew on major influences in the feminist movement for self-education. We felt as if we could "hear the citations" (@tressiemcphd) of feminist activists and theorists as we read through these books; however, their inclusion felt shallow, cueing feminism without writing characters who are engaging in intersectional feminist work. For example, Audre Lorde is referenced in half of the books even though the authors were writing characters who are never quite able to define feminism beyond sex. In Table 2, we provide a list of feminist figures referenced in each text. As evidenced by this list, these books intentionally invoke a diverse range of feminist lineages. While the majority of the main characters in the books are white, the girls draw on women of color for their knowledge about feminism.

For example, Marin in *Rules for Being a Girl* first learns about feminism from reading Roxane Gay. However, while Marin draws on women of color to understand feminism and recognizes that she has a lot of learning to do, she often reifies white feminism and class privilege, such as when she does not get accepted to Brown University. Marin recognizes her privilege, thinking, "In the back of my mind I know not getting into my first-choice Ivy League university is the very definition of a champagne problem" (Bushnell and Cotugno 237). However, Marin does not stop at recognizing her class privilege, continuing, "But this is the one I wanted. This is the one I *earned*" (237). The word "earned" emphasizes Marin's inability to trouble notions of meritocracy; she does not interrogate why she feels entitled to attend Brown University.

In a similar scenario, Raina from *Six Angry Girls* is motivated to join a politically active local knitting group after her boyfriend cheats on her. She dramatically explains to her best friend, "Why does no one feel my pain? This is the worst feeling in the world" (Kisner 10). Raina's path to activism is set in motion by heterosexual heartbreak. Up to this point in the novel, Raina's major conflicts have been navigating the politics of drama club and decisions about whether to attend New York University or Julliard. Both Marin and Raina are able to choose activism because of their material privileges.

White protagonists, like Marin and Raina, can curiously and hesitantly explore feminism because they do not live with the embodied realities of girls of color. For example, Jasmine, a Black protagonist in *Watch Us Rise,* cannot examine her place in school without considering the interactions between racism and sexism. In one blog post, Jasmine writes about being forced to act out stereotypes of Black women in her theatre club (Watson and Hagan 85). Additionally, Jasmine must often educate Chelsea (her white best friend) about her lived experiences as a

Black girl, reinforcing stereotypes of Black women educating white women. However, Jasmine feels supported by Chelsea, saying, "For me it meant Chelsea was my real friend. That she wasn't going to make excuses for anyone's racist comments. She has always had my back. Always" (201). Jasmine helps Chelsea learn, but only because Jasmine feels an authentic friendship with Chelsea.

Similarly, during a discussion of the wage gap in *Go with the Flow,* Christine, a Black girl experiencing chronic pain from undiagnosed endometriosis, is often the one to push her white peers to account for the effects of race in matters of pay and healthcare. Girls of color in these stories often support white protagonists in their unlearning. When white authors write characters of color without rich character development, these stories can perpetuate Ortega's concept of "lovingly, knowingly, ignorant" white girls who appropriate the pain of girls of color, without having to disrupt their own whiteness. Black feminist theories cannot be universally applied to all girls; this is a color-blind approach that erases the intersections of identity. We urge critical readings that draw on intersectionality in order to disrupt the appropriation of knowledge (Beck). Jasmine's character in *Watch Us Rise* is not merely a prop for Chelsea's unlearning. Co-written by Renee Watson and Ellen Hagan, both Jasmine and Chelsea are fully developed characters whose friendship is central to the story, rather than centering the becoming of one white girl.

Although we were excited by the wide range of feminist scholarship named in these stories, we worried about the implications of white girls co-opting theories and language of women of color without examining their own whiteness. This is something we, the writers of this article, often think about in our citational practices and our own processes of unlearning what it means to label ourselves feminist scholars. Beck discusses how women of color's knowledge can

be appropriated to "tell a story of progress...while maintaining power structures as is," including white supremacy (24). Beck continues, "This dangerous maneuver allows white feminism to usurp the accolades, scholarship, efforts, and knowledge of people of color, queer people, of disabled people, of all disenfranchised people and use it against them within the very institutions they hope to change" (24). Changing systemic structures requires power to be given up by white women (22). When authors write white protagonists applying feminist theory to their lives without thinking about how they must also give up power, the stories reproduce narratives of white feminism. In our own writing and lives, Black women's voices and scholarship informs our ability to read the word and world, critically and compassionately. Our reading of the texts within this study would not be possible without the contributions of BIPOC feminist scholarship.

Table 2
Textual Examples of Feminist Genealogies

Feminist Genealogies. *Who are the characters drawing feminist knowledge from?*				
Scholars	*Activists and Movements*	*Political Figures*	*Authors*	*Artists*
Audre Lorde Gloria E. Anzaldua bell hooks	Black Panther Party #SayHerName #I'mWithHer Malala Yousafzai Radium Girls Nadya Okamoto	Eleanor Roosevelt Coretta Scott King Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Billie Jean King Ruth Bader Ginsburg	Natalie Diaz Gloria Steinem Sandra Cisneros Maxine Hong Kingston Roxane Gay Margaret Atwood Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie Carmen Maria Machado Ida B. Wells Maya Angelou Virginia Woolf Warsan Shire Charlotte Bronte Jane Austen	Riot Grrrl Manifesto + Music Frida Kahlo Shakira Beyonce Ruby Dee Reena Saini Kallat Kiran Gandhi

When the Feminist Toolbox Upsets Those in Power

Across our text set, the protagonists create feminist empowerment clubs to resist instances of sexism in school. For example, in *Watch Us Rise,* the main characters create “Write Like a Girl” in response to their experiences with racism and sexism in other school clubs. In *Go With the Flow*, the characters engage in their activism because there are no pads or tampons available in the school bathrooms. As the characters continue to meet resistance from school administrators and teachers, they use a wide range of literacy practices as tools for enacting feminism and fighting to change a sexist school system. Although many of the literacy practices enacted by the protagonists are public facing, some characters publish anonymous writings, whether in the form of schoolwide emails, like in *The Nowhere Girls*, or a zine, like in *Moxie*. This anonymous writing suggests that either the writer is not ready to publicly claim a feminist identity, or the writer knows they would not be supported in the larger school culture. In other instances, the writer signs her name to her piece, proclaiming her feminist values publicly, like in *Rules for Being a Girl*, *Watch Us Rise*, and *Go with the Flow.* These characters are not afraid to speak out and be seen as rebellious, aligning with the features of feminist girls that Priske examines in YA nonfiction feminist books. Table 3 provides a list of the types of practices used across the texts.

Table 3
Textual Examples of Girls’ Literacy Practices

Literacy Practices that Prompted School Leaders to Discipline the Students
● Zines distributed throughout the school ● Hearts and stars drawn on students’ hands to signal solidarity

- Sticker campaigns
- Anonymous emails
- Flyers
- Protest Posters
- Poems
- Blog posts
- Spoken word performances
- T-shirts with feminists and quotes
- Op-Eds in school and local newspapers
- Discussions at book club
- Free-expression boards
- Social media campaigns with hashtags
- Yarn bombs
- Yarn replicas of cardiographs, uteruses, and vulvas
- Petitions
- Handwritten letters to school district administrators and school board members
- Murals

Whether the characters enact these literacies publicly or privately, they are met with disapproval from school personnel. Characters are often punished or shamed for their participation in the creation of feminist texts. For example, after the principal denies funding for stocking menstrual pads and tampons in the girls' bathroom in *Go With the Flow,* Abby and her friends engage in a series of blog posts, petitions, and letter writing campaigns to bring attention to period poverty. After months of not making any progress on their goals, Abby decides to decorate the school hallway with posters and murals adorned with messages such as "Period Power!", "Period Stigma Hurts Us All," and "Bleeding is Normal" (Williams and Schneemann 244-247). As a punishment, Abby is suspended for two days and told to "Keep your art projects in the classroom" (257), illuminating the disconnects between in and out of school literacy practices. In *Watch Us Rise*, after Jasmine and Chelsea leave flyers around the school with statements like, "The Patriarchy is Dead," the principal dissolves their club (Watson and Hagan 250, 257). The club is deemed "'a distraction to the education of other students'" (257). Jasmine and Chelsea express distress over being silenced at school and continue their activism outside of

school spaces. In these examples, the girls are prolific in their use of language and art to communicate the tensions in their schools. These examples illustrate the possibilities that exist when teachers get out of the way and let students use their voices and literacy skills to impact material issues in their lives and communities.

Challenging school culture is not welcomed, and students are disciplined harshly for their participation in community organizing efforts. The villainous characters who uphold these systems and structures are almost always written as male characters, reinforcing the idea that a feminist project is a battle between the sexes. However, the principal from *The Nowhere Girls* serves as an example of a woman actively suppressing the girls' concerns and threatening them with punishment for their activism. It might be easy to initially read her portrayal and motivations as a form of internalized misogyny; however, reading her through a lens of white feminism illustrates white women's role in upholding patriarchal and racist institutions. Principal Slatterly, motivated by maintaining her reputation and job security, fights against the girls in the story, refusing to give up her position of power within a patriarchal system. Instead of school culture supporting the characters' development of activist and feminist identities, the school systems in each book become symbolic stand-ins for the patriarchy. We argue that feminism needs to be sanctioned by the classrooms and school staff, not on the fringes of school curriculum.

Implications for Classroom Practice

We invite teachers to center intersectional and Black feminist theory in their curriculum to support readers in unpacking both the troubling and radical representations found across a variety of feminist YAL and popular media. We suggest creating a layered reading experience by

pairing feminist theory with YAL that is both marketed and not marketed as feminist. In Table 4, we provide examples of foundational feminist readings and possible discussion questions that invite students to compare and contrast how feminist theories can be traced across multiple texts. Many of the theoretical texts we include are full-length books. We suggest extracting short but rich passages for close readings as a whole group and then allowing students to read YAL independently or in small groups. In Table 5, we provide YAL texts that are not marketed as feminist to be paired with texts from this study. We believe these pairings could work in secondary spaces as well as post-secondary spaces to move towards a more complex understanding of feminism. We believe that layering these readings is necessary so that narratives perpetuating white feminist ideologies are not centered in curriculum, thus further subjugating BIPOC stories as secondary.

While the books in this analysis, at times, perpetuate that feminism is “a white girl thing” (Watson and Hagan 257) by centering the issues deemed worthy and important by the white, cisgender, heterosexual protagonists, we believe there is space in the classroom for these stories because they illuminate the messy and often flawed project of feminist movements. These books would be interesting and engaging to a variety of readers, especially if made available as independent reading in classroom libraries. Additionally, books such as *Moxie* have been adapted into film and are widely advertised on Netflix, highlighting that these stories are already being consumed. We can support students in being “savvy media consumers” (Connors) of texts that reproduce ideologies, such as white feminism and popular feminism. While no one novel can completely tell the story of feminism, as all stories are always partial (Kumashiro), we believe we can leverage these texts to engage students in both critical literacy and a variety of community driven literacy practices.

Additionally, the novels in our study and Table 5 feature protagonists drawing on literacy practices that differ from what is traditionally found in a secondary ELA classroom. We encourage teachers to think about incorporating these types of literacy practices into their own classrooms. For example, students could create their own protest posters, zines, pieces of art, or op-eds, discussing an issue in their own school or community they are passionate about. Using the models of literacy practices found in these novels, students can explore their own activist identities, learning about feminist issues that impact their lives.

Table 4
Bridging Feminist Theory to YAL

Foundational Feminist Theory	**Discussion Questions**
Lorde, Audre. "Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism." *Sister Outsider,* Ten Speed Press, 1984.	What is Lorde's argument about the productive uses of anger? How do the characters in each story express anger? How do other characters respond to their anger? Are some characters reprimanded more harshly than others for their use of anger?
Lorde, Audre. "Poetry is Not a Luxury." *Sister Outsider,* Ten Speed Press, 1984.	For Lorde, why is poetry "a vital necessity of experience" for women? Consider the poets you study in your ELA classes. Who do you think poetry is for based on the poets you've been exposed to? What poets do the characters in these books study? How do the characters use poetry in their own lives?
Lorde, Audre. "Transformation of Silence in Language & Action." *Sister Outsider,* Ten Speed Press, 1984.	What is Lorde's argument about the effects of remaining silent in the face of oppression? Trace the silence of particular characters in the stories. When are they silent? When do they speak out? How do other characters respond when they speak out? How does this impact the characters' sense of self?
Combahee River Collective. *The Combahee River Collective*	Who are the Combahee River Collective? How do they define their political beliefs? What arguments are they

Statement: Black Feminist Organizing in the Seventies and Eighties. Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1986.	making about the relationship between race, gender, and class? What collective actions do the characters in the YAL books take? How do the collective actions of the feminist clubs rise to or fall short of the beliefs and politics of CRC?
Crenshaw, Kimberle. "The Urgency of Intersectionality." TedTalk, 2016.	As you watch this TedTalk, participate in Crenshaw's opening activity with the audience. When did you sit down? How does Crenshaw define intersectionality? How do the characters in the stories embody intersectional identities? When do other characters in the story fail to recognize the impact of interlocking oppressions?
Ahmed, Sara. *Living a Feminist Life.* Duke UP, 2017.	According to Ahmed, what are the characteristics of a feminist killjoy? When do the characters in the texts embody the characteristics of a feminist killjoy? How do the characters build and sustain a feminist killyjoy "toolbox?"
Kaba, Mariame. *We Do This Till We Free Us.* Haymarket, 2021.	What is an abolitionist? What is the Prison Industrial Complex? What does Kabe mean when says "the system isn't broken?" How do the characters in these books maintain systems and structures of harm? How do the characters attempt to abolish systems and structures of harm? Which characters do you think would most identify as abolitionists?
hooks, bell. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics.* Routledge, 2015.	According to hooks, what is critical consciousness? How does one raise their critical consciousness? How do the characters across the texts raise their own critical consciousness as well as their peers'?

Table 5
Text Choices for A Layered Reading Experience

YAL NOT Marketed as Feminist but Featuring Inherently Feminist Protagonists and Themes
Acevedo, Elizabeth. *Poet X.* HarperTeen, 2018. Smith, Cynthia Leitich. *Hearts Unbroken.* Candlewick Press, 2018. Morris, Brittney. *Slay*. Simon Pulse, 2019. Saied Mendez, Yamile. *Furia*. Algonquin Young Readers, 2020. Sanchez, Erika. *I'm Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter.* Ember, 2017. Ali, S.K. *Saints & Misfits.* Salaam Reads, 2017. Quintero, Isabel. *Gabi, A Girl in Pieces.* Cinco Puntos Press, 2015. Watson, Renee. *Love is a Revolution.* Bloomsbury, 2021.

Conclusion

Even though these books reflect trends in popular feminism, they are also models for readers to explore the complexity of feminist ideologies. We believe engaging in critique of these books can illuminate the multiple levels of feminism Mohanty outlines: daily life, collective action, and knowledge production. As students read across a variety of feminist informed texts, they can engage in critical self-reflection (Schieble et al.) about their feminist identities. Engaging with these texts can help move students toward collective actions that produce community informed knowledge.

We believe this work is possible because we witnessed youth move to action in our own community last summer. In the midst of the pandemic and growing protests in the summer of 2020, youth in our community were not silent, organizing rallies, walkouts, and anonymous social media confessional accounts. One account we were particularly invested in following was an Instagram account (@girlsaticcsd) started by secondary students from our local school district that began publishing reports of sexism, sexual harassment, and misogyny experienced at school. Within a few days, a counter account was created by a group of male students who felt they were being unfairly targeted by a "feminist agenda." We were witnessing the plot of many of these YA texts within our study unfold in real time. We were excited, but we were left with many questions: how were students and teachers responding to these accounts? What support existed within school for students to continue these conversations? What kinds of change, if any, did these actions prompt? What could an intersectional framework illuminate about the creation and response to this account? Local papers eventually reported that these stories were read by the district superintendent, who recognized that school culture must be addressed and changed (Dunlap). Although answering these questions is beyond the scope of this study, these social

media confessionals confirm for us that feminist projects should be encouraged and supported in classroom spaces.

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