

## Introduction

### Abstract

Many Black women are keenly aware of the racist, sexist and classist assumptions that shape their positions and experiences in society, using Black feminist theory to foster intersectional analysis and discussion. However, can the same be said for Black adolescent girls? More and more research is being done on how the misrecognition of Black women, both in society and onscreen, affects Black women and girls. This qualitative study sought to investigate the effects of Black female figures on the self-concepts of adolescent Black girls.

### Aims of the Research

The purpose of this case study was twofold:

- 1) to evaluate the effect of book clubs in helping adolescent students respond to print and broadcast/digital media, and
- 2) to evaluate Black adolescent girls' response to Black female public figures.

### Research Questions

- What is the role of the book club in helping Black adolescent girls respond to mediums that center Black women and girls?
- How do images of Black female public figures affect the self-perceptions of Black adolescent girls?

### Research Design

The primary methodology for this case study was the focus group framed within the theory of Black feminist thought, which posits that collective conversations among Black women can lead to greater understanding of the world around them (Collins, 2018).

I combined the focus group with active interview methodology, in which participants wrote and shared answers to guided response questions after viewing images of Black female figures.

## Method

### Participants

I originally planned to conduct my own summer book club with older teens, aged 15-17; however, their summer schedules interfered with our meeting times.

Thankfully, I was given the opportunity to work with another cohort: Black adolescent girls ages 10-12. All girls were participants in the 2021 installment of FAMU DRS Freedom Schools program.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection took place over the course of a week. We began by meeting in a book club, titled Sister Circle, where we read from a text entitled "Brave. Black. First. 50+ African American Women Who Changed the World." After completing a short Likert survey, each participant was given a copy of the book and a "Sister Circle journal. After browsing the book, they were instructed to choose the woman they were most inspired by. In addition to choosing said woman, the participants were asked to write about this woman in their journals.

We did not meet in a traditional book club the following days; instead, images of the Black women were posted in the school hallway, and the girls went on a Gallery Walk to choose their final two important figures. After choosing their final two figures, they wrote journal entries about them, answering the same questions.

I used an Excel document to analyze the data. First, I divided the Black figures in the book into large categories: entertainment, politics, education, etc. Then I created a spreadsheet in which the names of the figures were intersected with the four participants. For each participant's choice, I color-coded the box next to the figure. The colors for their first, second and third choices were green, yellow and red, respectively.

Female Figures	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Harriet Tubman	Green	Yellow	Green
Fannie Lou Hamer	Yellow	Green	Red
Rosa Parks		Red	
Michelle Obama	Red		Yellow

## Results

### Conclusion

Results were inconclusive, since we did not get a chance to meet the entire summer, as originally intended. Data analysis is ongoing. Despite the limitations of the research, however, the preliminary data analysis shows great promise. Most of the girls gravitated toward historical figures, such as Fannie Lou Hamer and Harriet Tubman. This goes against my original assumption that Black adolescent girls would immediately find entertainment figures most intriguing. Instead, what the study found is that Black adolescent girls find inspiration in political and educational figures. This finding may be due in part to the strong historical emphasis in the Freedom Schools curriculum and programming.

### Discussion

I am pleased with the small insights that were made about Black girls' responses to public Black women. The Sister Circle study provides enough data to make a hypothesis: Black adolescent girls' self-concepts are positively affected by images and examples of powerful Black female leaders; thus, these images are necessary to include in literature and curricula. After completing the shorter study with the early adolescent girls, I am interested in continuing the research, as originally intended, with a group of older adolescents.

The implications of this research are exciting for Black adolescent girls and teachers seeking to educate Black adolescent girls.

### Key References

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