Transforming the Narrative:

How Can Increased Critical Media Literacy Empower Black Female Students in Schools?

Introduction

- For over half of my academic career, I have attended predominantly white schools
  - Schools that haven't embraced and uplifted my history, culture, and traditions
  - Teachers who have not provided me tools to change false mediated narratives about myself and my community
- Inspired by an experience in SCFE to reclaim my power and voice through my research studies, so that my future Black and Brown students don't lose theirs
- Goal is to learn how Black girls can dismantle the racist, sexist, and classist stereotypes presented by the media by interrogating the false stories being told and counteracting them with authentic ones.
- Will analyze the media's portrayal of Black women, understand how it is interpreted by young Black girls and their peers, and explore how it affects their educational experience

"You have the power to change perception, to inspire and empower, and to show people how to embrace their complications, and see the flaws, and the true beauty and strength that's inside all of us."

- *Beyoncé*

Concepts from *American Education*

Chapter 7: Multicultural and Multilingual Education

- Empowerment through Multicultural Education: Racism (Spring, 2017, p.191-192)
  - Having the power to socially, politically, and economically oppress another race
- Empowerment through Multicultural Education: Sexism (Spring, 2017, p.195-197)
  - From elementary to high school, girls' self-esteem declines from 60% to 29%
  - "modes of classroom interaction, the representation of women in textbooks, and other educational materials, and the discriminatory content of standardized tests" contribute to girls' lack of self-esteem
- There wasn't any mention of the intersectionality of racism and sexism in schools, which is a reality for many Black female students

Concepts from *American Education (cont.)*

- Ethnocentric studies - "Curriculum taught from a particular culture " (Spring, 2017, p.199)
  - Looks to redirect cultures and build self-esteem of minority students
- SETCLAE: Self-Esteem Through Culture Leads to Academic Excellence
  - "to improve academic achievement, discipline, and school climate while transmitting racial pride and enhancing student's knowledge of culture and history and its significance to contemporary living" (Spring, 2017, p.200)
- Afrocentric education w/ a womanist perspective
  - A curriculum of empowerment: Purging images given by white culture of African-Americans as stupid and powerless
  - Implementing critical media literacy classes and tools

Literature Review

Black Girls' Responses to Media's Misinterpretations

"This Is Not Reality … It's Only TV": African American Girls Respond to Media (Mis)Representations - Hall and Smith (2012)

- Gained insight on how eleven Black high school girls interpret and challenge media's portrayal of their race, class, and gender within music videos, highlighting the importance of one's cognitive development during adolescence and the influence of their sociocultural environment.

"Styled by Their Perceptions" : Black Adolescent Girls Interpret Representations Of Black Females In Popular Culture - Muhammad and McArthur (2015)

- Perspectives of eight Black adolescent girls, between the ages of twelve and seventeen, when it relates to these current media representations
- Three distinct themes, (a) Judged by my Hair, (b) Angry, Loud, and Violent, and (c) Sexualized and Objectified emerged from when the participants in this research expressed how they viewed representation

Implementing Critical Media Literacy

Black Girls And Critical Media Literacy For Social Activism - McArthur (2016)

- Young Black girls in classes need to be empowered and critical media literacy can do that for them "because it is not simply an exercise in reading and writing; it is a mode through which Black girls learn how to push back and (re)write who they are."

Developing Curriculum To Support Black Girls' Literacies In Digital Spaces - Price-Dennis (2016)

- Developed specific curriculum comprised of several different units that leveraged digital literacy practices to help students process content and demonstrate their learning in various ways. These units were implemented into the classroom of a fifth-grade teacher, Ms. Jones, who constructed lesson plans to teach the content.

Congregating to create for social change: Urban youth media production and Sense of community - Charmaraman (2013)

- Explored how adolescents were empowered through afterschool media production activities and, in the process, re-imagined themselves as active and engaged citizens within their community.
- Three specific themes that emerged from her analyzation of the experience: (1) sociocultural capital through group ownership; (2) safe space for creative expression; and (3) developing a sense of community with diverse voices.

Gaps: Need to better understand how to empower all school-aged Black girls in accessing the different talents and skills. Only focuses on the K-12 education and lacks information about Black women in higher ed

Research Methodology

To expand on my research, I was interested in understanding the critical media literacy of Black college women by learning more about the TV that they watched growing up in the 2000s and how they are affected today by social media.

Who: Sent to 15-20 Black women currently attending college, majority at Ithaca College
How: Google Forms
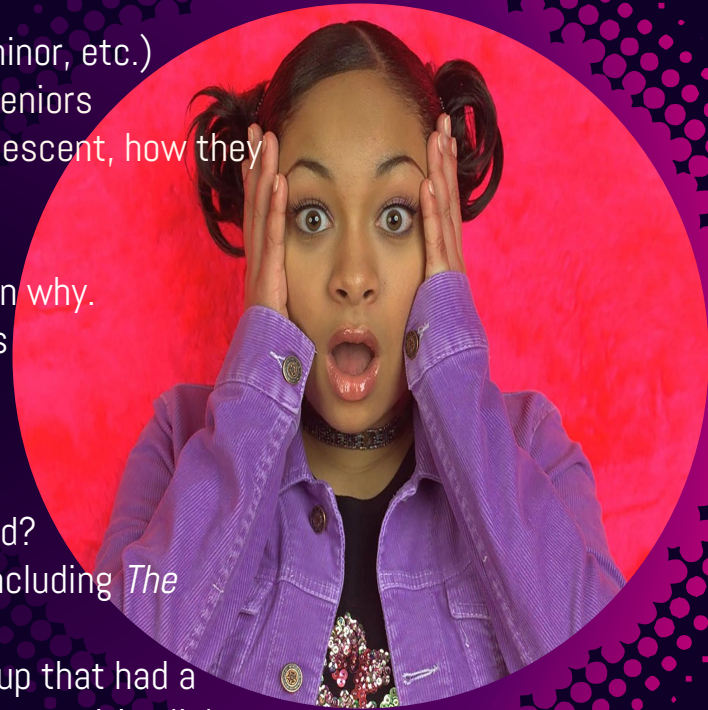**When**: They were given a week and a half to complete in November 2018
Where: Completed online

Research Methodology/Data Analysis

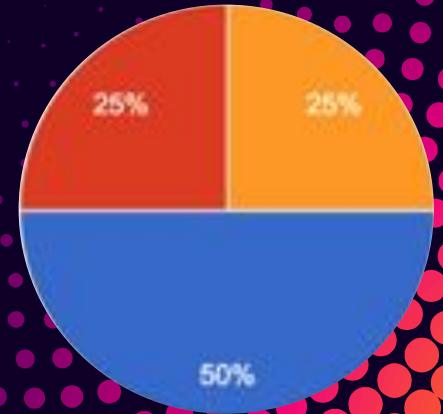Survey (with a mix of close-ended and open-ended questions):

1. Background Information (race, ethnicity, class year, major/minor, etc.)
   a. Eight completed survey: 2 Sophomores, 4 Juniors, 2 Seniors
   b. Though all women were of Black or African-American descent, how they defined their race and ethnicity varied
2. Media consumption growing up in the early 2000s
   a. What was your favorite show as a child? Briefly explain why.
      i. 6 out of 8 named predominantly Black TV shows
      ii. 4 named shows with Black female leads
         1. *That's So Raven* allowed them to see someone who looked like them
   b. What other shows did you watch growing up as a child?
      i. 7 respondents listed at least one Black show including *The Cosby Show* and *Moesha*
   c. If you can, name one show that you watched growing up that had a black female as the main character and showed her in a positive light.
      i. Everyone could name one show except one, Respondent A, who didn't list any Black shows for the previous two questions

Representation matters.

Data Analysis (cont.)

3. Current media consumption, specifically social media and how it affects their educational experience
   a. Do you believe how media portrays black women affects how your white/non-black peers perceive and interact with you?
   b. Do believe how the media portrays black women affects how white/non-black professors and college staff members perceive and interact with you?
   c. Do you think social media (IG, Twitter, FB, etc.) affects how you see yourself as a woman of color?
      i. Name a social media post/page that portrays Black women positively
      ii. Name a social media post/page that portrays Black women negatively and harshly

100%

100%

25% 25%

50%

Implications

Future goals: To have more Black collegiate women complete my survey at various (PWIs and HBCUs) colleges around the U.S.

-Spend time analyzing respondents' social media accounts to see what messages they are communicating about Black women themselves

- To follow-up with several focus groups of 3-5 respondents to ask more in-depth questions, and facilitate a conversation around this topic of critical media literacy and Black girls' identities to discover solutions

- Conduct a free writing exercise for Black women to express creatively how negative and positive media portrayals of Black women affect them personally

- Using my sports background to possibly shifting my focus from how Blacks young girls are affected in the classroom to on the court because of media or the lack thereof.

- How does sports media have an effect on Black young girls participating in athletics and leading healthy active lives? How does the portrayal of famous Black female athletes affect young girls participating in sports?