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**THE AMERICAN CULTURES CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY**

**2015 AMERICAN CULTURES STUDENT RESEARCH PRIZE RECIPIENT: SARA TRAIL
“ THE IMPACT OF RACE, CULTURE AND CONSCIOUSNESS FOR BLACK STUDENTS
AT BERKELEY HIGH”**

Sara Trail
April 13, 2015

AC Student Research Prize Statement

My paper, *The Impact of Race, Culture and Consciousness for Black Students at Berkeley High*, supports the goal of the American Cultures curriculum because through a 10 week research project, I demonstrated how culturally conscious curriculum strengthens minority students sense of race, culture and ethnicity while providing ways for students to both understand and navigate their educational experiences. The data was collected from the student's participation along with the detailed field notes I wrote. Public high school curriculum and education as well as sociology scholars negate the issues and experiences of young minority women. A question I sought to answer was: How can the implementation of female-focused intervention projects open pathways to understanding the race, class, and gender experiences of young minority women in public high school settings? This study was conducted in Berkeley High School in California, which is known to have a student population who range in race and socio-economic backgrounds. This study aimed to offer a transformative approach to cultural enrichment programs for young minority women in high school. Workshops were created to provide a safe haven for young women of color to learn how to respect one another, talk about personal concerns, and to provide historical context for some of their shared personal contemporary experiences. I aimed to create a space to utilize a pedagogy that encouraged nurturing relationships and Black Feminist critical-consciousness building. The findings reveal conscious pedagogy offers an environment to stimulate historical and contemporary self-exploration. Furthermore, certain teaching methods may empower and increase a critical-consciousness amongst youth. I believe an implementation of a female-focused intervention program may encourage future educational researchers, scholars, and practitioners to centralize and address the gender-specific issues of young minority women. An important aspect of American Cultures is engaging the community, whether through service, conversation or scholarship and I think this research project accomplished all three. I created a semester long program for minority females at Berkeley High where I spent numerous hours with students during their lunch period discussing issues that are generally overlooked in their classes. Despite it having a 'Black Female focus' often times there were a young Chicana and Indian women, recruited by the black females who regularly attended, that joined us for our weekly workshops. This project is linked to American culture because it deals with the overlooked history and experiences of minority students in a local public high school.

The Impact of Race, Culture and Consciousness for Black Students at Berkeley High

By: Sara Trail
Education 190: Critical Studies in Education
Professor Zinaida Besirevic Fall 2014

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INTRODUCTION

Much of the educational and sociological research on cultural enrichment programs for historically marginalized communities blurs the experiences of young Black females in the United States. More specifically, U.S. public education systems tend to neglect the needs, desires, and circumstances of young African American female students. This paper discusses the lack of culturally relevant curriculum for Black females in public high school settings. In addition, our literature review and intervention methods seek to demonstrate the urgency to implement Black-female focused programs for young women who identify as Black and female. In order to understand the benefits of a Black female-focused program, I created and implemented the Black Women Empowerment Workshop Series (BWEWS) at Berkeley High School (BHS). This workshop series utilized focus-group sessions, which is the primary source for data collection.

This topic is important because it addresses the disadvantages and discrimination that Black women may face in the public high school setting and beyond. The problem is that Black female issues are not centralized in mainstream U.S. society. Instead, Black men are generally at the focal point of public and scholarly discourse concerning anti-discrimination for Black people. Thus, our study explores the need and urgency to implement Black women empowerment programs in public educational settings. More specifically, focus-group sessions for young Black women were facilitated on BHS's campus. BHS is a historical site that serves as a safe haven to implement and hold workshops. Specifically, in 1968, BHS was the first public school setting to voluntarily desegregate the student body and implement an African American Studies department (Berkeley Unified School District, 2014). The African-American Studies program, now over 30-years-old, serves as a model site to incorporate ethnic studies into core curriculum (Berkeley Unified School District, 2014). Thus, BHS provides a safe atmosphere to create a space for young Black women and race-gender-specific programs such as BWEWS.

Black Feminist theory grounded facilitation of this workshop series and discussion during focus- group sessions. Specifically, I utilized nurturing Black Feminist pedagogical methods. For example, at the beginning of our

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workshop series, I provided young women with notebooks to encourage journal-writing exercises. Despite the lack of funding and resources, I provided young women with journals to demonstrate my commitment and dedication to foster intellectual and spiritual growth. Moreover, journals enabled young women to explore, examine, and understand their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. Scripting enabled young women to meditate on past and current occurrences, become comfortable to share thoughts and experiences, and demonstrate a sense of confidence to share experiences in verbal- group-discussion. The purpose of workshops was to create a safe haven for young women to learn how to respect one another, talk about personal concerns, and provide historical context to the contemporary experiences of Black women. I aimed to create a space and utilize a pedagogy that encouraged nurturing relationships and Black Feminist critical-consciousness building.

This paper seeks to call attention to the lack of inclusivity of Black females in the public education system. I centralize the impact of Black female-focused curriculum in which students are provided a positive and inviting space to share lived experiences. I hope to have future workshops funded by BHS. In addition, focus-group sessions will sustain a predominantly Black and female student population. Currently, I am in conversation with one of BHS's African American Dean of Students (Mr. McDonald) in regards to funding and future implementation of our program on BHS's campus.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The curriculum utilized in U.S. public school settings tends to ignore the significance of cultural enrichment for students of color. Tyrone Howard (2010) discusses the explicit and implicit ways that mainstream academic knowledge reinforce dominant ideals of "concepts, paradigms, and experiences" onto students of color (Banks, 1996; Carter, 2005). This theory emphasizes how culturally diverse students are bombarded by mainstream notions of information in the classroom that conflict with "concepts, explanations, and interpretations that students derive from personal experiences in their homes, families, and community cultures" (see Banks, 1996 in Howard, 2010). In other words, the classroom setting is used as a space to indoctrinate mainstream or dominant American ideals onto youth. Moreover, the material used in the classroom does not seek to incorporate or consider the cultural

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practices and ways of knowing for students outside of mainstream cultures. Instead, the common curriculum or “mainstream academic knowledge” utilized in the classroom intends to distort students’ perceptions of acceptable cultural practices and ways of knowing. This ideological and practical disconnect discourages students of color to embrace their cultural identities. However, the efforts on behalf of the educator can significantly impact and create different dynamics in the classroom setting.

More specifically, education scholars who push for culturally sensitive pedagogy argue that educators should view the world from the perspective of their students. Noguera (2007) utilizes Freire’s (1972) “generative themes” to highlight the sensibility educators must develop to support historically marginalized communities. Noguera’s work with inner-city youth enabled him to understand the logic that guides students’ behavior in neighborhood and school settings (Noguera, 2007). He emphasizes the only time he is able to connect with inner-city students is when he engages with students to understand their culture (Noguera, 2007). Only from this position can teachers and students participate in critical discussion as a means to challenge students’ positions, experiences, and behavior in society. In the case of young Black women, there are limited spaces for students to express their views; thus, there are limited possibilities to develop necessary connections with educators.

Young Black women in public high school settings are deprived of a combination of culturally sensitive curriculum and educators who seek to understand their ways of existing in the world. This severs the possibilities for young Black women to develop positive conceptualizations of gender and racial identities. In order to empower students’ cultural history, public high schools must integrate educators and literature that speaks to the complex experiences of that cultural group. In O’Connor and colleagues ethnographic study, an “exceptionally achieving” African American female student argues that classrooms should utilize text from Black women authors and educators who push the discussion of African-descended people beyond experiences of enslavement (O’Connor et. al., 2011). This student argues for an academic space that validates the voices of Black women authors who speak to her ways of knowing and existing in the world as Black and female. Moreover, she asserts that educators who freeze curriculum in one historical moment distort the history and narratives of people in the African Diaspora. Ultimately,

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this demonstrates the desire of young African American women to have a safe space to engage in personal and historical-political dialogue.

It is important to acknowledge that Black women share a common experience and way of knowing which is often negated in public discourse and educational settings. Patricia Hill Collins' (2000) describes *Black feminist epistemology* as an alternative lens to articulate the experiences of Black women. Black feminist epistemology captures how Black women at the intersection of both Black and female can tap into Black and feminist consciousness to practice non-oppressive forms of knowledge and assess identity-based experiences (Collins, 2000). Due to the Eurocentric and masculine notions of cultural knowledge that dominate public school settings, the experiences of Black women are often invalidated. Black feminist epistemology encourages young women to speak from their own standpoints and ways of knowing. Thus, the application of Black feminist epistemology, as a tool, is necessary to explore the experiences of young Black women in public high schools.

In order to take theory into praxis, spaces that are sensitive and considerate of Black women experiences must be created. For example, Nicole Ruth Brown (2013) asserts the need to open space for the creative potential of Black girlhood. Brown (2013) states that programs oriented towards visionary modes of Black girlhood is a "political necessity of redirecting our attention and effort away from blaming, shaming, and punishing Black girls, towards new articulations of age-old questions, organizing dilemmas, and sacred knowledge." Brown emphasizes the need to transform censoring, labeling, and harshly treating Black women and girls into new expressions of embracing their culture. Moreover, Brown (2013) asserts that Black girlhood is "a useful framework from which to (1) articulate visionary Black girlhood as a meaningful practice; (2) showcase Black girl inventiveness of form and content, (3) expand our vision of Black girlhood beyond identity, (4) sense radical courage and interdependence, (5) honor praxis, the analytical insight that comes only by way of consistent action and reflection" (Brown, 2013). In other words, Black girlhood is a way to explore, discuss, and express modes of knowing, lived experiences, and creativity. This framework is useful to create a space that extends notions of what it means to be Black and

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female beyond widespread ideals in U.S. society. Black girlhood strengthens the process scholars and researchers use to study, support, and empower Black women and girls. Ultimately, Black girlhood, as a framework, organizes the space to envision Black girlhood as freedom of expression for Black girls (Brown 2013). However, lack of spaces and intervention projects complicate and limit the possibilities for Black women and girls to freely express daily-lived experiences.

More specifically, some Black Feminist scholars have provided discussion to this lack of attention for Black female-focused interventions. For instance, legal scholar, Kimberle Crenshaw (2014) highlights the issues of President Obama's, *My Brother's Keeper* initiative that centralizes the experiences of young males of color, particularly young Black males. Crenshaw (2014) argues that this pattern of Black male- focused interventions is predicated on the "common belief that black men are exceptionally endangered by racism, occupying the bottom of every metric: especially school performance, work force participation and involvement with the criminal justice system." In other words, because Black men are assumed to experience some of the harshest forms of discrimination such as high rates of incarceration and faring poorly in education systems and labor markets, there is an urgency to create interventions that address Black male issues. On the other hand, Crenshaw (2014) states that, allegedly, "Black women are better off... and are thus less in need of targeted efforts to improve their lives" (p. 2). The negation of issues that young Black females endure directs the attention of governmental and philanthropic organizations elsewhere; thus, the disadvantaged social and educational conditions of young Black women are exacerbated. For instance, Black girls "have the highest levels of school suspension of any girls" and are more likely to experience gender-specific risks" (Crenshaw, 2014, p. 2). Young Black women suffer higher chances of sexual-threat and violence, involvement in governmental agencies for child aid and youth criminal justice systems, and experience death in a severe manner (Crenshaw, 2014, p. 2). Despite racial and gender-specific disparities, there are relatively few Black female-focused intervention programs. This disparity calls for the immediate attention to focus on the issues of young Black females.

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BACKGROUND

This study used intervention methods to provide cultural enrichment in public high school settings for young Black women. The Black Women Empowerment Workshop Series (BWEWS) was launched to open a space to hear the stories of young African American female students. Focus-group sessions were utilized to deepen understandings of how young women navigate and negotiate race, class, and gender identities in high school and beyond. This space was crucial to introduce Black Feminist scholars and intellectuals to provide academic language that name, explain, and validate their experiences.

The creation of BWEWS is grounded in a Black Feminist Theory framework. Several Black Feminist scholars provide theoretical tools to develop a transformative approach to cultural enrichment programs and Black female-focused interventions. Crenshaws' (1989) concept *intersectionality* demonstrates how identities such as race, class, and gender shape the experiences of young Black women in high school. This study employs a race, class, and gender sensibility to engage with students and literature in ways that are more specific to their experiences in the world.

The implementation of a Black female-focused intervention is fueled by the contribution of Black Feminist scholars who have developed frameworks, tools, and social justice programs. I use the work of these scholars to design and implement intervention methods that seek to empower young Black women in public high school settings. Ultimately, it is an urgency and necessity to open spaces to discuss the issues of young Black females and to demonstrate that the lives of young Black women matter.

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METHODS

This study was conducted over the course of ten-weeks to examine possible ways to design and implement BWEWS. I utilized my prior affiliations on BHS's campus to connect with teachers and school staff who could provide space to hold the focus-group sessions. In addition, recruitment methods included word-to-mouth from researchers to surrounding Black and female students on BHS's campus. The recruitment population included African American females who ranged from ninth to twelfth grade. While four young women who identify as Black or African American and female, consistently attended and participated in the workshop series we had as many as twelve girls attend one session. The first young African American woman is fourteen years old from Berkeley and a freshman in the International Baccalaureate program. The second young woman is fourteen years old from Albany, a freshman, and enrolled in the small learning school called, Academic Choice. The third young woman is from Oakland, and a senior in Academic Choice. The fourth young woman is a senior who is also from Oakland and enrolled in Academic Choice. This study did not limit population samples based on origins of birth or socio-economic status, thus a mixed-population of young women grew up in nearby Berkeley or Oakland districts and consisted of low-income, working-class, or middle-class backgrounds.

This study utilized qualitative methods such as small focus-group sessions and participant observation. These methods were used to deepen understandings of how Black Feminist pedagogy can effectively work to engage young African American women in the classroom setting. Focus-group sessions were held once a week for one-hour at BHS. Over the course of the semester, eight workshops were hosted. The first two workshops were geared towards ice-breakers and introductions to familiarize researchers and participants with one another. For example, researchers shared information concerning education level and academic interests. In addition, reasons for creating BWEWS were discussed among participants to ensure students were informed on the mission and participation criterion of our workshop series.

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Activities were facilitated to learn more about the life and academic roles of participants. Three workshops focused on the concept of intersectionality. This concept was employed to set the groundwork of how identity functions as a social construction and classifying system in the United States. These workshops enabled students to deepen understandings of identity formation. Moreover, intersectionality clarified understandings of how individuals experience the world based on socially constructed identities. Part two of the remaining three workshops focused on how stereotypes impact the narratives and lives of African American women.

A typical focus-group session consisted of five sections: icebreakers/check-ins, introduction of material, journal exercises, games/activities, and wrap-ups/reflections. Icebreakers and check-ins were used to open a safe space for young women to discuss experiences and feelings that occurred throughout the week. Most check-in questions were relatively broad. For example, a question that was commonly asked included, *how is your week going and what are you most excited about?* The next part of the focus group was the introduction of concepts, theories, and main topics of the group session. Many verbal explanations, text reading, and visual aids on worksheet material related to Crenshaw's (1989) *intersectionality* were distributed. After the introduction of material, participants practiced writing exercises in journals. In addition, guiding questions were posed to facilitate the self-reflection process for students. The next section included open discussion among participants and researchers. Games that included physical movement and verbal engagement were incorporated to appropriately expand concepts and themes of the workshop session. These activities enabled students to learn through different modes of practice. Moreover, games and activities facilitated original thoughts and interpretations of students' standpoints of theoretical material.

DATA FINDINGS

Data collection extracts from particular moments during focus-group sessions. Our findings provide accounts of how young women engaged with Black Feminist pedagogy. Notes were jotted down from observation and participation during workshop sessions.

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Opening to Workshop/Focus-Group Session:

Introduction to Theories

In Part III of the Intersectionality workshop: *Define Your Identity*, young women talked about gender-specific threats in the daily lives of young Black females. More specifically, young women discussed issues concerning interactions with male-counterparts. For example, Onyx was the first to mention the term “cat-calling,” when describing how men would try to get her attention. In addition, Lulu specifically described how she often feels good when young men call for her attention. She described how the “cat-calls” reaffirms her beauty, because she does not hear that she is beautiful from people close to her. However, Lulu went on to say that although she does not hear “you’re beautiful” very often she knows she is beautiful. Moreover, as she flipped her side-braid, she explained that she recognizes her “outer beauty” regardless of “cat-calling.” As Lulu shared her personal experiences, another student, Joy, nodded her head in agreement that she also acknowledges her own physical beauty and does not need “cat-calling” to reaffirm her confidence.

Journal Exercises

In Part II of the Intersectionality workshop: *Define Your Identity*, young women were asked to voluntarily share identity charts amongst the group. During this exercise, Lulu explained that she defines her ethnicity as Armenian and Black. She then explained that she does not identify with any particular religion. She described her gender by stating she is female. This is particularly interesting because in Part I of this workshop series, one researcher posed the question “*When did you first identify with a gender?*” During that workshop Lulu mentioned that in preschool she always had to wear dresses. She said it was not until she saw her older sisters wear leggings that she became interested in adopting that particular style of dress and appearance.

Games/Activity

In Part I of the *Stereotypes* workshop, one researcher led an activity entitled “Walk Like...” to prompt students and remaining researchers to form a circle. This researcher started by whispering a statement in the ear of the person to her left. The first statement was “Walk like you are sad.” In a telephone like activity, the statement was

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repeated until the last person received the message. Everyone then acted out the statement from her own judgment and experience. The most intriguing statements and demonstrations of character were ‘Walk like you are rich,’ ‘Walk like you are White,’ and ‘Walk like you are Black.’ For example, for the statement ‘Walk like you are rich,’ both Onyx and Lulu laughed and gestured as if they were throwing cash in the air. For the statement ‘Walk like you are White,’ Lulu propped her right hand toward her chest and placed one foot in front of the other as if she were wearing heels. While doing so, she laughed in an unfamiliar tone. Further, she then explained that she should not reenact stereotypes. When asked to ‘Walk like you are Black,’ some of the women walked while clutching the private area between their legs. Almost to emulate the demeanor of a “thug.” All students demonstrated exaggerated mannerisms of social groups, yet acknowledged their performances as ‘reenacting stereotypes.’

In the following workshop, students were asked to share an experience where stereotypes had a negative effect on them. Lulu shared a moment when she was in the 8th grade and on a club volleyball team. She noted that teammates were from high socio-economic statuses. She explained that the young women were mostly White, female, and attended private schools. Lulu explained that at one moment in volleyball practice, girls shared the names of schools they would attend in the following year. She expressed that she would attend a public high school such as BHS. Her teammates made numerous remarks concerning the validity of attending public schools. Particularly, Lulu explained that a mother of one of her teammates questioned her plans. Lulu responded that she had attended “public school since kindergarten” and “not everyone’s parents can afford private school.” She explained that she felt that her teammate’s mother made a condescending remark to her plans of attending public school. From that point forward, Lulu noted that she felt distanced from her ‘privileged’ teammates and felt the need to end future relations with volleyball group members.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

During all three Intersectionality workshops, young women were able to describe theories and phenomena that were explored during open discussions. Crenshaws’ (1989) concept of intersectionality played a key role in examining how young women self-identified. Specifically, students appeared more cognizant of their own ethnicity,

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class status, and gender when someone from an opposing background interacted with them. This is important to note that at this stage of development, young women are able to name and explain their own identities in relation to how others interact with them. Furthermore, this demonstrates their ability to create a distinction between how others classify them versus how they define themselves.

“Cat-calling,” as the young women called it, provides insight into the process of patriarchy in the U.S. Widespread assumptions assert that sexual harassment is exclusive to physical contact. However, many feminist theorists would consider “cat-calling” or verbal sexual harassment as an oppressive action because it demonstrates male dominance over women (Courtenay, 2000). In this way, males tend to believe that women bodies are accessible to make sexual overtures. However, students demonstrated that verbal sexual harassment has a complicated impact on their perception of female-male relations. For example, young women did not view ‘cat-calling’ as disturbing. Instead, students viewed their experiences through a patriarchal lens; young women perceived ‘cat-calling’ or verbal sexual harassment as a positive female-male interaction. Ultimately, this demonstrates how the patriarchal notions internalized by young women stimulate them to assess verbal sexual harassment by men as an act of chivalry.

Moreover, young women offered deeper analysis into intersectionality by mentioning how they view themselves. Although the concept of self-perception was not mentioned, young women subconsciously demonstrated this theory. Self-perception deals with attitude formation (*Bem, 1972*). It asserts that people develop attitudes by observing their own behavior (*Bem, 1972*). Throughout many sessions with the young women, self-perception theory was used to describe or analyze a situation they observed or participated in. Through their personal experiences and positionality, young women labeled, explored, and identified complex occurrences that were once classified as ‘normal’ instances.

Young women were encouraged to write their ideas and feelings in journals. In the initial journal- exercise practice, young women were introduced to intersectionality to open pathways for self-recognition, acknowledgement, and reflection. For example, Lulu demonstrated her understanding of gender dynamics and the socialization process of girls and appearance. She explained that because her mother often made her wear dresses, she preferred this style of

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dress. Moreover, she explained that when her sisters began to wear leggings or tights that took shape of her body, she adopted this clothing pattern. This illustrates the process of gender socialization and how decisions related to fashion and dress can speed the process of adopting particular gender ideals of women or girl appearance. From our work and observations with young women, the process of gender socialization is apparent. Young women have demonstrated a base-level understanding of self-perception, learned behaviors, and gender socialization. Ultimately, students illustrate a critical-awareness to personal and political issues of young Black women.

A common theme expressed amongst young women includes the apprehension to share and write personal life stories in fear of others' interpretations. In exploration of intersectionality, participants and researchers engaged in open discussion. More specifically, in one instance, the workshop opened with brief comments on feelings of the day. Although not prompted, the conversation students shared related to the objective and theme of the workshop, which was intersectionality. In speaking about intersectionality, one of the researchers reminded the young women to continue to write in their journals and reflect on their experiences. The researcher suggested that students "write about their lives and to get it on the page." Onyx reported:

"I'm afraid to tell stories because you know when I write it on the page, the situation sounds much worse than it actually is and I don't want people to be like 'wow she's crazy.'

Onyx, Field Notes, November 6, 2014.

This demonstrates that young Black women tend to become apprehensive towards sharing their life stories in fear of what others may conclude about their psychological state. Darlene Clarke Hine (1988) states that the experiences of Black women in the antebellum years had "powerful ideological consequences for the next hundred and fifty years" (p. 380-382). More specifically, Black women commonly practiced the 'culture of dissemblance' to "protect the sanctity of inner aspects of their lives" such as rape (Hine, 1988, p. 380-382). Hines (1988) continues that it is this culture of secrecy that is still practiced by many Black women in the contemporary moment. Here, 'culture of dissemblance' functions for Onyx not to hide sexual occurrences, but rather general experiences and life circumstances. Onyx utilizes the fundamental purpose of "culture of dissemblance" to prevent others from assuming

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that she is “crazy.” She does not feel free to share her ‘inner aspects’ of her feelings and thoughts; and thus, she refrains from writing her experiences. Through continued discussion, students were encouraged to explore why Black women are generally urged to withhold personal experiences. After someone shared that she had similar emotions as a child yet grew older to realize verbal expression or writing is a form of healing, students perceptions changed. In fact, the same young woman shared:

“Yeah that’s true because I remember when I was so mad one time that [writing in a journal] worked. During my moment of rage, I wrote it down and walked myself through it, and I felt better!”

Onyx, Field Notes, November 6, 2014.

This demonstrates that after facilitation of further thoughts, it became apparent to Onyx that writing can impact her feelings. Paul Tough (2011) provides discussion into methods of “self-talk” in which individuals can tap into the subconscious mind to facilitate healthy modes of self-exploration and self-improvement. Onyx illustrated her ability to apply “self-talk” strategies through intuition and the desire to calm herself down during moments of rage. These findings reveal that through open discussion young women can embrace their intuition and healthy modes of coping with frustration and life circumstances.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is exploratory in nature. Observation and participation methods were used to investigate the potential and impact of Black female-focused intervention projects in BHS. Black Feminist theory was used to guide theoretical frameworks, research design, and implementation strategies. Findings reveal that over the course of eight-weeks, many of the participants strengthened understandings of race, class, and gender experiences of Black women in California. These findings also show that current Black Feminist theories are useful to ground researchers and participants in discussion and facilitation of

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thought and analysis. Moreover, the shared experiences of these young women also highlight the necessity to rework developed theories through the use of basic findings. Specifically, participants provided personal perspectives to contextualize their specific race, class, gender, and regional experiences. Young women reshaped theories to explain the complexity of their thoughts and life outcomes.

Limitations to this study include the lack of funding from organizations to provide resources to students such as journals, writing utensils, and food. The lack of food may have significantly influenced the amount of students willing to participate during lunch-period hours. In addition, because focus-group sessions were held during this time, forty to forty-five minutes was the maximum amount of time to hold workshop sessions. This time constraint may have influenced the ability of researchers to engage in more intimate conversations with participants.

Findings implicate the urgency to create spaces for young Black women to share, compare, and celebrate their experiences. BWEWS opened new avenues for young women to develop bonds and feel comfortable to share personal life circumstances. Future research may include a longitudinal study that examines the impact of Black female-focused intervention programs over the course of four years in public high school settings. Through the demonstration of a consistent and stable program, this may enable focus- group sessions to play a central role in young women's lives and academic careers. Specifically, research may closely examine how Black female enrichment programs may impact the process of identity formation and academic engagement over the course of four years. This may provide insight into the potential of Black female-focused interventions that may stimulate positive conceptualizations of race, class, gender, and academic identities amongst young Black women in secondary educational settings.

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