

The Black Girl's Burden: The Impact of Sexual Stereotypes on the Reproductive & Sexual Health of Black Women

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INTRODUCTION

- African-American women fare worse than white women on almost every health outcome.
- Disparity particularly more pronounced in reproductive & sexual health outcomes (Augustine, 2004).
- Why this gap beyond social-economic realities?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What impact does shouldering the “burden” of sexual stereotypes have on the reproductive & sexual health of African-American women.
- Does current sexual and reproductive health programming adequately respond to the needs of young women of colour?
- Can culturally competent sexual educational programs bridge the health disparity divide?

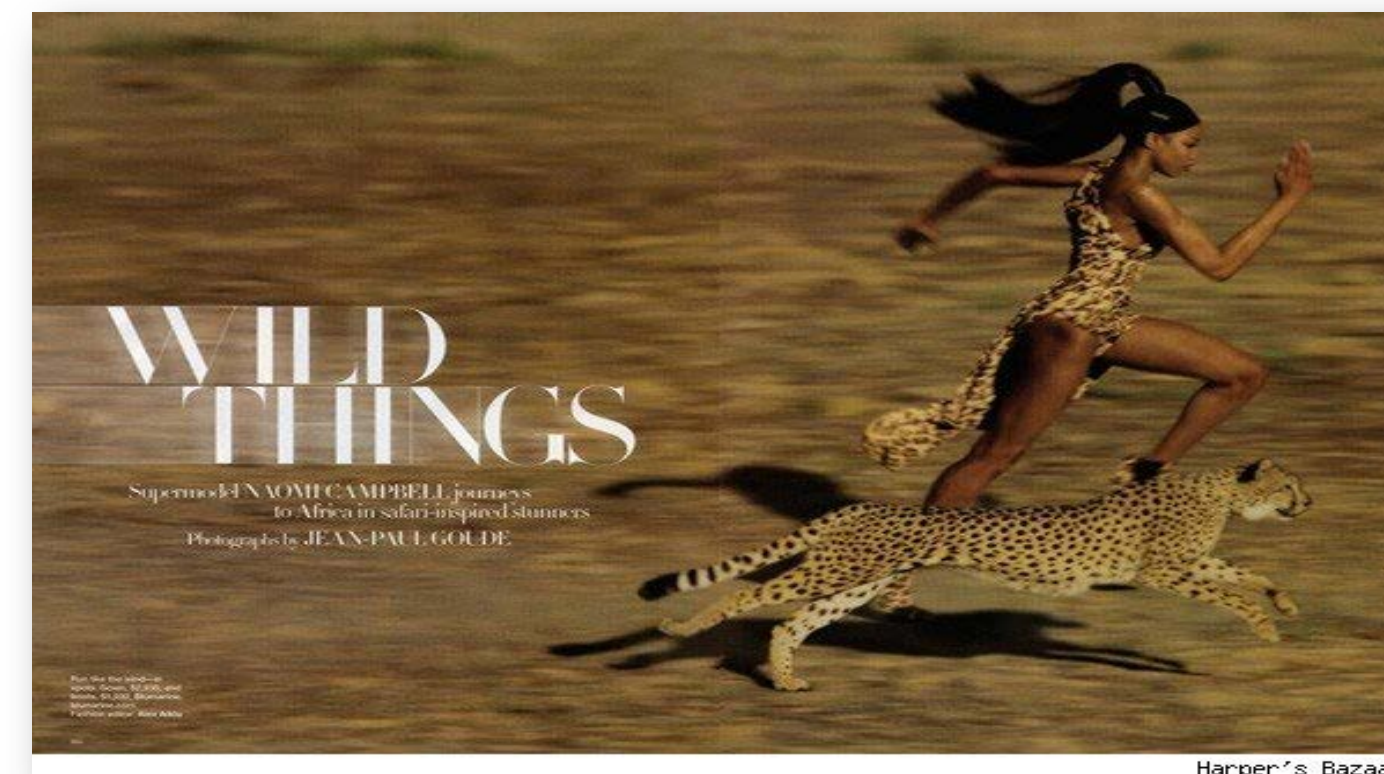
METHODOLOGY

- Comprehensive literature review of culturally competent sexual health education
- Examination of the current sexual health curriculums and programming available to young women of colour
- Case study analysis of the Native Sexual Health Network (NYSHN)’s programming
- Analysis of the historical and present sexual representations of black women
- Findings were presented using a photo essay method so that it could be engaging.

MAMMY, SAPHIRE & JEZEBEL: SEXUAL STEREOTYPES OF BLACK WOMEN



- The mammy image: A middle aged, dark skinned and heavysset woman. By giving the mammy “undesirable” beauty characteristics, sexual interest and abuse by white slave owners seemed impossible despite the fact black slaves of all physical appearances were at risk for being victims of sexual assault and abuse.



- Animal prints are more likely to be worn in magazines by Black women than by white women, white men, or black men. The dressing of Black women in animal prints and in animalistic poses perpetuates the stereotype of them as being “sexually aggressive” and “primitive.” The photographing of black women alongside exotic animals also eroticizes them.



- The portrayal of black women as butts, breasts, full lips and shaking hips in the media puts the bodies of black women on display but not their voices and opinions.



- Sapphire: The stereotype of the sapphire or “angry black woman” require black women to be silent about abuse to both themselves and their communities.

What is Culturally Competent Sexual Education?

- “Values diversity, conducts self-assessment, addresses issues that arise when different cultures interact, acquires and institutionalizes cultural knowledge, and adapts to the cultures of the individuals and communities served (advocates for youth).”
- Cultural competency is a crucial concept in creating effective sexual health programs for racialized and queer youth.

Case Study: The Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN)

My favourite condom flavour is...

This meme campaign demonstrates how culturally based sex education can better engage diverse communities.

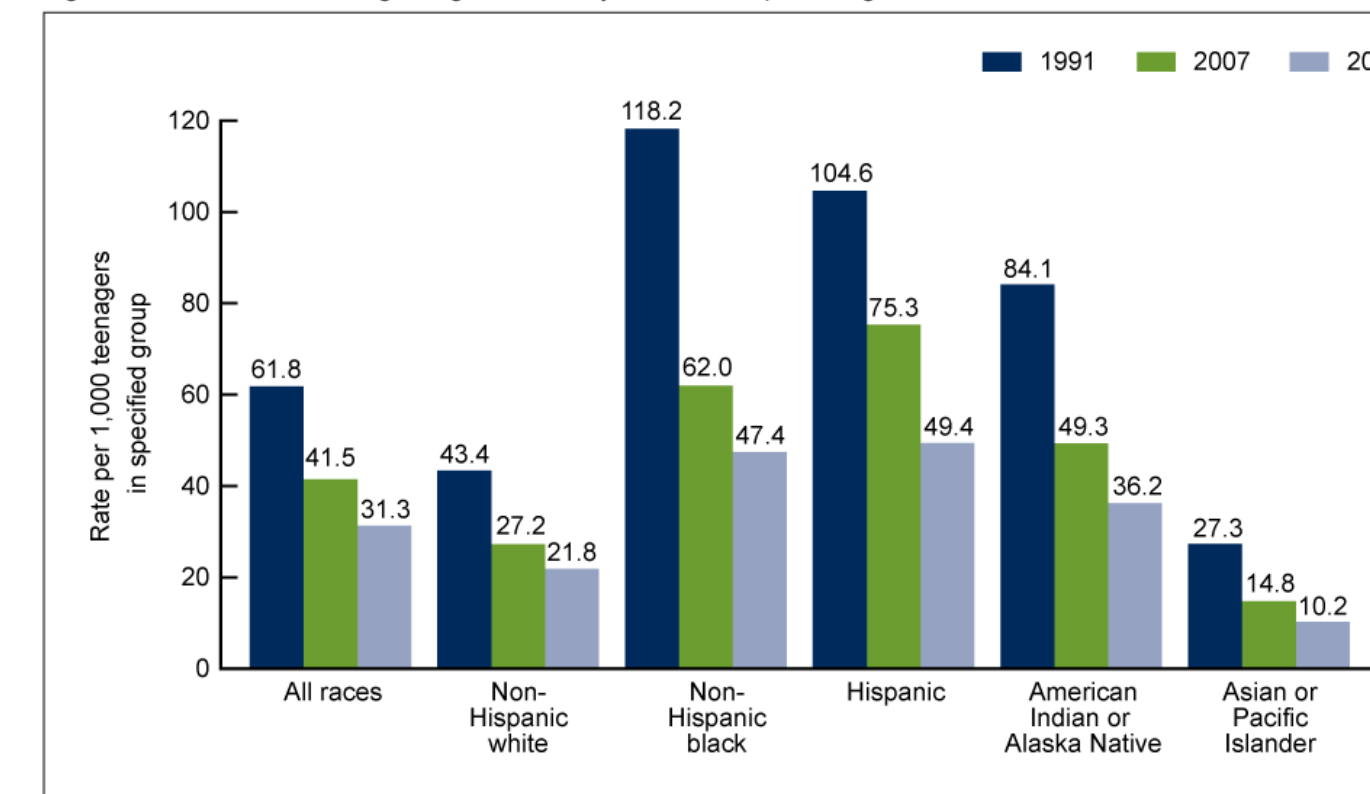


“Sexuality is difficult terrain to approach in Native communities, since it brings up many ugly realities and colonial legacies of sexual violence.”

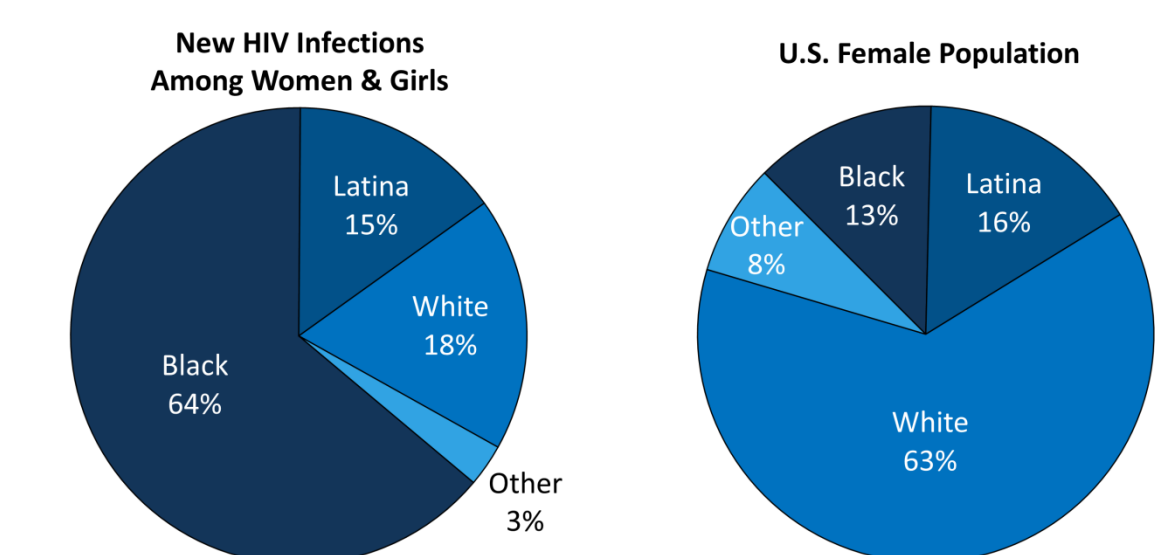
- The Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) is an organization that works with Native youth across North America on issues of sexual and reproductive health, rights and justice.
- Many mainstream sexual health organizations are too focused on contraception promotion; the emphasis on mechanic or anatomy based sexual education ignores the burdens many cultures bear with regards to sexuality and the cultural factors that inhibit youth from making healthy decisions

Reproduction & Sexual Health Outcomes of Black Woman vs. White Women in the U.S

Figure 1. Birth rates for teenagers aged 15–19, by race and Hispanic origin: United States, 1991, 2007, and 2011



New HIV Infections Among Women & Girls and U.S. Female Population, by Race/Ethnicity, 2010



NOTES: Data are estimates among those ages 13 and older and do not include U.S. dependent areas. SOURCES: CDC, HIV Surveillance Supplemental Report, Vol. 17, No. 4, December 2012. U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Population Estimates.

CONCLUSION

- Sexual stereotypes impact the sexual and reproductive health of Black women
- The burden of carrying colonial and slavery histories should be considered when developing sexual health programming for young Black women
- Sex positive and culturally competent programming offered by organizations like the NYSHN can help reduce risk increasing behaviours amongst racialized women
- There is a need for race-desegregated data on the sexual health & reproductive status of Black women in Canada