

# Let's Talk About Sex: Black Women Authoring their own Sexuality

**Abstract:** This research examines Black women's sexuality within the North American context. Framed by a white supremacist capitalist cisheteropatriarchal structure, individuals within this culture are members of a social hierarchy based on a variety of features. Race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status are a few of the traits that determine one's standing. As a result of this hierarchy, Black women are subjected to racism and sexism simultaneously and in ways that cannot be separated or compartmentalized. In the realm of sexuality specifically, centuries of oppression and present sociopolitical factors have created a very narrow understanding of Black female sensuality and sexual autonomy. This project discusses how Black women have had their sexuality defined for them by more powerful parties in North American society as well as the harmful implications. It also illustrates how Black women are changing this narrative for themselves.

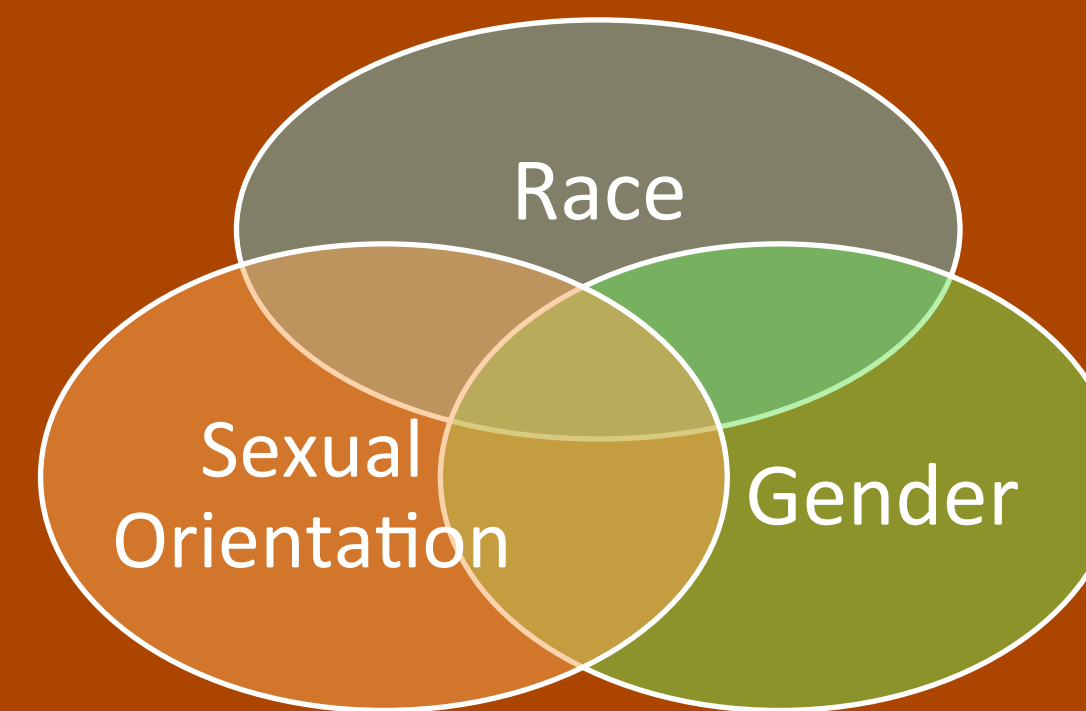
**Thesis:** By Examining Black women's interpersonal relationships, their relation to institutional dynamics, and their influence in popular culture, the effectiveness of black women taking a multilayered approach to redefining their sexuality will be made clear.♪

*"Black women were purposely imaged in opposition of white women... as hypersexual "beasts" to be test-drives for white male consumption "*

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## What is Intersectionality?

The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw.



Simplified Venn diagram illustrating intersectionality

## Arguments

### 1. Interpersonal Relationships

Diverse interpersonal relationships frame the daily experiences of Black women therefore they ought to be safe spaces in which Black women can confront and redefine their sexuality

### 2. Institutional Dynamics

Black female participation in government has the power to redefine Black female sensuality in legal and political spheres in that it amplifies the voices of the marginalized.

### 3. Influence in Popular Culture

Many Black women in popular culture aim to replace antiquated definitions of black female sexuality with complex and nuanced descriptions that better encompass the wide variety of Black women that exist.



Photo of Beyoncé from msmagazine.com

*"To dismantle the propaganda and redefine their sexuality, Black women must reclaim it, accept its pluralistic nature, and vocalize it on their own terms in all possible spheres".*

**Methods:** Examined a variety of scholarly sources for Black Women's Writing: Diaspora & Gender in the Caribbean, Canada, and the United States. Sources in bibliography

## Conclusion:

Redefining Black female sexuality is a multi-step processes. By silencing inaccurate voices on the subject without providing any alternative, a vacuum is left that can potentially be filled once again with prejudiced misconception of the sensuality of black women. Conversely, Black women must use whatever platform they have to share well-informed truths and realities. One cannot be surprised by the white supremacist patriarchy's practice of poorly characterizing Black women, for that is part of its purpose. The only course of action is to confront these systems for the sake of reclaiming all parts of Black women's identities.