

Reviewed by [Marcia Watson-Vandiver](#) - February 08, 2021

Title: Black Girl Civics: Expanding and Navigating the Boundaries of Civic Engagement

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Publisher: Information Age Publishing, Charlotte

ISBN: 1648022170, **Pages:** 230, **Year:** 2020

In their recent book, *Black Girl Civics: Expanding and Navigating the Boundaries of Civic Engagement*, editors Ginnie Logan and Janiece Mackey recast the purview of educational research on young women of color to include Black girls as cogenetic agents within educational theory and methodology. This book is divided into three sections (“Kinship Reflections,” “Toward Educational Justice,” and “Media Intersections”), which collectively present eleven distinct chapters that explore Black girls’ enmeshed contributions to civics. It is important to note that Logan and Mackey make distinctions about the use of term *civics*, in contradistinction to assumptive notions of *advocacy* or *activism*, by positioning the former as an emergent, encompassing term that cohesively ties intersecting themes together. Likewise, the editors define civics as “the wide range of meaning making, activities, and forms of participation, where young people speak up and try to influence public discourse or policy, which may include but may not be limited to activism” (p. xxi).

In doing so, the editors and authors empirically ponder the question: “What does it mean to be a civic actor who is Black, young, and female in the United States?” (p. xii). This book honors the nuance and complexity of Black girl experiences in a wide spectrum of civic and political activities, including, but not limited to protest, community organizing, digital activism, and civic engagement. In each chapter, the authors offer renewed ways of engaging with and exploring civic education. Logan and Mackey use “Little Miss Flint” as a case study for the edited work and position this imagery as an emblematic example of an asset-based conception of youth. In each of the subsequent chapters, authors present ways in which youth assert themselves and (re)negotiate power in non-civic spaces. While intersectionality is a common theme in research on Black women, this book additionally explores the ways in which race, gender, and most importantly—age—provide renewed possibilities for discourse.

Section One, entitled “Kinship Reflections,” is comprised of four chapters, each of which ponders the ways in which Black girls and women find agency in communal relationships. In chapter one, Kel Hughes Jones explores the demonstrative act of *othermothering*, which describes the intentional and learned concept of care ethics within African American education. This opening chapter situates the theme of Black girl civics perfectly within the interpersonal and intergenerational narrative of learning. Chapter two later delves into these generational complexities by providing two autoethnographic accounts of Black girl civic identities. Celicia L. Bell and Jasmine A. Clayton explore their own sociocritical literacies in the midst of the nationwide #BlackLivesMatter movement. In doing so, Bell and Clayton explore concepts of Black female consciousness and identity across generations. In chapter three, Jeanelle K. Hope and Vajra M. Watson expand the notion of intergenerational awareness to explore healing and justice in the arts. This chapter presents “hood civics” as a pedagogical avenue for youth to express art and activism. The authors assert that by affirming the “hood,” a socioeconomic positioning that is often demeaned and shamed, Black girls are invited to reclaim and redefine boundaries for Black female empowerment. The last chapter in this section, written by Sabrina J. Curtis, explores how interpersonal relationships include sisterhood and a Diasporic kinship. Here, chapter four explores how pedagogy and culturally relevant programming help to shape cultural, ethnic, and civic identities and practices. Curtis excellently advocates for

radical creative spaces that host counter-hegemonic discourse and foster creativity, inclusivity, and transformative learning. In doing so, Curtis presents the findings of how girls theorize and practice civic engagement while interrogating hegemonic assumptions about Black girl identity.

Section Two, entitled “Toward Educational Justice,” is also comprised of four chapters. Each of the chapters in this section explore the educational experiences of Black girls in U.S. schools. Whereas the first section primarily focused on relationships, this section surveyed the importance of environment and “homespaces” for Black youth. Chapters in the “Toward Educational Justice” section showcase a broad range of issues spanning across various age and socioeconomic demographics. Chapter five investigates Black girls’ agency and activism in elite independent schools. Here, author Charlotte E. Jacobs highlights the particularities of Black girl civics in predominately White spaces. Jacobs describes how resistance and critical consciousness work in tandem to negate oppositional conceptions of Black female identity. In doing so, Jacobs presents renewed possibilities for broader change as Black girls continuously locate and name themselves in their own research processes. Chapter six, written by Alaina Neal-Jackson, explores Black women’s civic identity in postsecondary education. This chapter defines and disentangles the concept of #BlackGirlMagic at a predominately-White institution (PWI). Jackson documents interpersonal interactions between Black women and their White peers and notes the ways in which postsecondary institutions can serve as enclaves for Black students, many of whom experience feelings of isolation in the academy. Chapter seven presents Black women’s activism in graduate school. Author Tracie A. Lowe describes the acculturation process of graduate students and notes the ways in which negative experiences manifest in schools, starting in early childhood education. As such, women in Lowe’s study found respite when using graduate education as a form of activism. The last chapter in this section discusses Black femme youth organizing and the ways in which school systems omit matters of race, identity, and sexuality from the learning experience. Here, femme describes “people who identify as feminine, female, girls, young women, and transgender female” (p. 126). In doing so, authors Julia Daniel and Annie Thomas reconceptualize research on Black feminist and social justice education by including issues concerning young LGBTQIA women. Daniel and Thomas discuss topics of reproductive and gendered justice, school discipline, and participatory action research to challenge the ways in which grassroots organizations and education systems can better facilitate active learners and creators of change.

Section Three, entitled “Media Intersections,” includes three chapters. This section is particularly unique as authors move beyond normative explorations of research to include the widening scope of digital platforms. Chapter nine, written by Cassandra Jean and Dana J. McCalla, delves into civic engagement among young Black girls. Using Solange’s 2016 *A Seat at the Table* album as a parallel, Jean and McCalla conduct a metanalysis of four Black girls’ experiences in the news media. What is perhaps most impressive about this chapter is the way in which Jean and McCalla highlight glaring racialized omissions in national media outlets. This is especially important considering many Black youth today are negotiating competing self-identities in a media-saturated society. Similarly, chapter ten also covers media coverage of Black civic engagement. Authors Cierra Kaler-Jones, Autumn Griffin, and Stephanie Lindo question stereotypical tropes of Black women in digital platforms. Using critical discourse analysis, Kaler-Jones, Griffin, and Lindo reveal the findings of an extensive survey of digital and print media in an effort to disrupt negative stereotypes about Black girls. In doing so, this chapter aims to amplify many of the silenced Black female voices and, ultimately, reframe deficit-based narratives. The last chapter, written by Tiera Tanksley, explores how Black girls leverage social media as a platform for civic engagement. Tanksley argues that the invisibility of Black girls in civic engagement is largely due to implicit and inaccurate understandings of civics that exclude or overlook online forms of engagement. Given today’s educational climate, which is situated in a “post-truth era” (American Educational Research Association, 2019), social media outlets continue to provide reliable sources of information for many Black women—many of whom are overrepresented in digital scholarship but consistently under-researched. Additionally, considering society’s growing reliance on digital platforms in light of the recent pandemic, this

chapter ultimately beckons renewed possibilities for civic engagement and offers social media as a space for political activism, safety and visibility, and community. Ultimately, the chapters in the “Media Intersections” section provide both hope and accountability for today’s digital world.

There are not many works that intentionally center and uplift the perspectives of young Black girls, a group that has been “triply” marginalized (p. 146). For this reason, *Black Girl Civics* provides a comprehensive outlook into the expanding possibilities of research discourse and serves as an excellent complement to Evans-Winters’ (2011) groundbreaking work, *Teaching Black Girls*. Logan and Mackey’s inclusion of social media and digital advocacy in the last section of the book provides exigent research, given the recent pandemic and expansion of online engagement.

It is difficult to find earnest critique of *Black Girl Civics*, as the book is both exceptionally written and arranged. While it is understandable that conversations on democratic education would naturally include John Dewey—as his familiar name helps with readership, which is laudable—it was rather disappointing to see a work so righteously dedicated to Black girlhood grounded in his theories, as many scholars have questioned Dewey’s *true* positions on racial equity in education (Fallace, 2008; Margonis, 2009; Vaughan, 2018). A more thorough treatment of Black women as the *sole* experts of Black girl civics is a desire for future research. It was much more refreshing to see references of Ella Baker, whose work in Mississippi’s 1964 Freedom Summer historically undergirded the work on Black youth democracy, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), who piloted theories on intersectionality and politics, Patricia Hill Collins (1990), whose research on the *matrix of domination* helped to shift conversations of diversity to include sexuality, and Venus Evans-Winters (2011), whose research on Black girlhood and Black female educational experiences have been groundbreaking for the academy. Each of these aforementioned Black women represented—both in theory and practice—the themes represented in this book. Positioning Black women as unparalleled experts on the theories and experiences of Black girlhood speaks to the poignant themes already evident in *Black Girl Civics*.

In personal opinion, *Black Girl Civics* is a must-read for researchers, practitioners, administrators, and community organizers. This book is especially important for those interested in expanding the current scope of research methodology. As the editors note, Black girl intersectionality—an equal exploration of race, age, and gender—is observably underexplored in current discourse. The authors brilliantly push boundaries of Black girlhood identity and demarginalize Black girls as agents, not objects, within their own experiences. This inherently pushes the boundaries of educational research and humanizes a demographic who is far too often overlooked and ignored in their own storytelling. The greatest strength of this text is the way in which the authors dialectically use the personal and empirical to surface the beauty, resilience, and vulnerability of Black girlhood.

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Cite This Article as: *Teachers College Record*, Date Published: February 08, 2021
<https://www.tcrecord.org> ID Number: 23593, Date Accessed: 3/19/2022 10:42:15 PM

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