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Identity constructions of black South African female students.

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Abstract

A viewpoint of the intersectional and complex nature of identity is seen to be integral to the understanding of the identities of black female students. *'Identity constructions of black South African female students'* is an exploratory study with a view to understand the identities of black South African women in institutions of higher learning and education. The study investigated the experiences of 16 female South African black students; with a focus on their race category, gender as well as class subject positions. The study is placed within the context of the Historically White University (HWU) and was specifically conducted in a HWU situated in Johannesburg. The students' articulations of their university experiences were explored qualitatively, within three focus group discussions through an open-ended interview guideline. Results show that their education is accounted for as a significant influence in their subjectivity given the social mobility it grants as the women's experience of self shifts as does their position in society. Furthermore it was found that with the cultural capital attained through education, notions of class, racial and gender identities are affected and a multiplicity of identities exists as a result.

(**Keywords**: identity, intersectionality, black feminism, critical race theory, black female students, higher education, post-apartheid South Africa).