

Portrayals of Black Girls in Books on Puberty for Girls

Briana C. Akani

University of Michigan

Mentor: Rona Carter, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts  
with Honors in Psychology from the University of Michigan 2016

### Author Note

Briana Akani, Department of Psychology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Rona Carter, for all of her guidance and support throughout this project, and for the contributions that she made to helping me develop and explore my ideas. I would also like to thank the members of the Adolescent Interpersonal Relationships Lab, especially Janelle Davis and Amira Halawah for their assistance in tackling statistical analysis as well as for putting up with my many questions, and Clara Wille for her help with coding and developing the coding criteria. Finally, I would like to thank the University of Michigan's Department of Psychology and the Honors Department for providing such a rich opportunity to get involved in this research and for guiding me toward the successful completion of my honors thesis.

### Abstract

This study proposes to examine the representations of a diverse range of girls in popular puberty books in order to determine whether Black girls are being accurately represented and properly prepared for the pubertal transition. The study takes the form of an exploratory content analysis in which frequency and context of representation was coded for five racial categories: Black, White, Latina, Asian, and Ambiguous. Black girls were not found to be represented significantly differently from the population of non-Hispanic Black girls in the United States, however, there was only one direct mention of Black girls' pubertal experiences across all of the books. All other groups of girls were often over- or underrepresented in comparison to their corresponding populations in the United States. This study is significant because it highlights that while Black girls may be represented accurately in pictorial depictions within puberty books, they may not be being prepared adequately for race-specific pubertal experiences.

*Keywords:* puberty, Black girls, representation, racial/ethnic identity, puberty books, content analysis

### Portrayals of Black Girls in Books on Puberty for Girls

In the context of adolescence, research has shown that various aspects of identity can affect an individual youth's course of adjustment and development. One such characteristic that has been studied and found to have significant positive and negative effects on adolescent development is racial identity (Brega & Coleman, 1999; Constantine, Alleyne, Wallace, & Franklin-Jackson, 2006; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & L'Heureux Lewis, 2006; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007). While puberty is typically thought of as a volatile period for all youth, these transitions are particularly difficult for African Americans and other youth of color because, in addition to the general adaptations that all adolescents experience, these youth must also redefine themselves with regard to the social status and meaning surrounding their racial and ethnic identities (Brittian, 2012). Depending upon the positive or negative orientation that these adolescents have regarding their racial and ethnic group membership, the ways in which they view themselves are also affected. For example, experiences of discrimination and prejudice may either lead youth of color toward negative identity development and deviant behaviors, or they may push these same youth toward more prosocial behaviors in an attempt to combat those negative experiences (Brittian, 2012).

Racial and ethnic identity development also affects how youth of color interact with members of ethnic groups different from their own (Phinney, Ferguson, & Tate, 1997; Ruck, Park, Killen, & Crystal, 2011; Sullivan & Ghara, 2014; Tynes, Giang, & Thompson, 2008). It has been found that, among college students, minority group members who display a greater commitment to their ethnicity are more open to and accepting of members of other ethnic groups than their counterparts who have no such ethnic commitment (Phinney, Jacoby, & Silva, 2007). Among high school students, ethnic identification is shown to lead to higher thinking about

intergroup contact in those with a stronger and more positive orientation to their ethnic group than students whose ethnic identity is more diffuse (Phinney, Jacoby, & Silva, 2007).

Additionally, students with an achieved ethnic identity are more able to look at both the positive and negative components of diversity and intergroup contact (Phinney, Jacoby, & Silva, 2007); these students are more able to view both their own and other ethnic groups dynamically and multidimensionally as opposed to the narrower lens of their diffuse identity counterparts.

### **The Pubertal Transition**

A child's entrance into adolescence marks the beginning of major transitions as they struggle to reconcile their individual conceptions of themselves with wider social contexts, and the beginning of this process is often marked by the onset of puberty. During this period, adolescents undergo various biological, physical, hormonal, and cognitive changes (Biro & Dorn, 2005; Blakemore, Burnett, & Dahl, 2010) that intersect with social changes that are also occurring, which alters adolescents' position in regard to the people with whom they interact; these seemingly sudden changes may put youth at risk for various health-related behaviors (Brooks-Gunn & Graber, 1996).

### **Black Girls' Experiences of Puberty and Sexualization**

On average, African American girls tend to reach puberty at an earlier age than their peers from other racial and ethnic groups (Herman-Giddens et al., 1997; Rosenfield et al., 2000; Talpade, 2006; Talpade, 2008) and may grow at a faster rate than their White counterparts (Salsberry, Reagan, & Pajer, 2009). In general, actual or perceived early maturation has been linked to various negative outcomes, such as increased internalizing and externalizing symptoms, depressive symptoms, and substance use as well as poorer academic performance (Caspi & Moffitt, 1991; Copeland et al., 2010; DeRose, Shiyko, Foster, & Brooks-Gunn, 2011; Ge,

Conger, & Elder, 1996; Hayward et al., 1997; Hamlat, Stange, Abramson, & Alloy, 2014; Mendle, Turkheimer, & Emery, 2007; Reynolds & Juvonen, 2012; Tanner-Smith, 2010; Tareen, 2015). Studies have also found this increase of psychological distress and internalizing and externalizing behaviors, symptoms, and disorders as a result of perceived or actual early pubertal timing to be pertinent to African American girls specifically (Carter, 2015; Ge, Brody, Conger, & Simons, 2006; Ge et al., 2003; Keenan, Culbert, Grimm, Hipwell, & Stepp, 2014). Various studies have also found that African American girls engage in increased aggressive or delinquent behaviors in connection with early maturation (Carter, Jaccard, Silverman, & Pina, 2009; Lynne, Graber, Nichols, Brooks-Gunn, & Botvin, 2007; Obeidallah, Brennan, Brooks-Gunn, & Earls, 2004).

While Black girls face negative psychological, academic, and behavioral outcomes due to early pubertal timing, they are also at risk for negative social and sexual outcomes as well. One concern for early maturing girls in general is that this precocious sexual development may lead to sooner societal sexualization of these girls (Brown, Halpern, & L'Engle, 2005; Roberts, 2013). For Black girls in particular, one view of puberty held by some adolescents and their parents is that the onset of menarche indicates girls' sexual readiness and availability and communicates to boys a desire or urge to engage in sexual activity (Hawthorne, 2002). In addition, pubertal maturation is associated with body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviors (Cousineau et al., 2010; Zehr, Culbert, Sisk, & Klump, 2007); however, research shows that cultural body ideals may protect Black girls against the development of negative body image in regard to puberty (Brown et al., 1998; Granberg, Simons, & Simons, 2009; Siegel, Yancey, Aneshensel, & Schuler, 1999; Talpade, 2008).

### **Black Girls and Literary/Media Representation**

One way in which adolescents develop their understandings of racial and ethnic identity and interracial and interethnic relations, aside from their own personal experiences, is through representations of race, ethnicity, and intergroup relations in books (Brooks, 2006; Ghiso, Campano, & Hall, 2012). It has been found that, when trying to shape the attitudes of children surrounding various social issues, books can contribute to these attitudes (Edmonds, 1986). For African American youth, media and literary representations of African Americans can have an especially significant effect on their self-image and group esteem (Martin, 2008; Reid-Brinkley, 2012; Smith-D'Arezzo & Musgrove, 2011). For Black girls in particular, in the midst of societal degradations on the levels of race, ethnicity, and gender, positive literary representation seems to play a key role in reinforcing positive self-image (Brooks, Browne, & Hampton, 2008; Marshall, Staples, & Gibson, 2009). According to Boston & Baxley (2007), this type of dynamic portrayal of Black females in literature is critical in encouraging enthusiasm for reading in Black adolescent girls as well as supporting the experiences that these girls have in their daily lives.

### **The Current Study**

In keeping with this theory, I posit that the importance of literary representation holds true not only for fiction, but for educational nonfiction as well. In the case of books dispersing information on topics such as puberty and other adolescent experiences, the diversity of literary audiences must be taken into account. For Black girls specifically, representation and discussion of Black girls in puberty books may play a significant role in the types of information that these girls receive regarding the novel developments that their bodies are going through. Black girls and women are largely sexualized at a societal level through messages and images received from popular cultural media (Adams-Bass, Bentley-Edwards, & Stevenson, 2014; Stephens & Phillips,

2003), and, in conjunction with early maturation, this can have various implications for African American girls (Dagbovie-Mullins, 2013; Richardson, 2013; Stephens & Few, 2007) which lend to a unique gendered and racialized experience (Thomas, Hacker, & Hoxha, 2011).

The existing literature presents a gap in the type of youth-directed material that is researched. This study aims to address this gap by investigating educational nonfiction aimed toward girls going through puberty in order to gain a better understanding of whether Black girls in particular are being properly prepared for puberty – physically, psychologically, and culturally. Questions guiding this study included the following and were address through an exploratory content analysis: In what ways, and how frequently, are Black girls depicted or described in puberty books? Are these girls being represented accurately and proportionately to the population of puberty-aged girls in the United States? What are the common themes presented surrounding Black girls and their pubertal development?

## **Method**

### **Sample**

The sample of books used in this study was taken from Amazon's top 26 bestselling girl-specific and gender-neutral books in children's health and maturing as identified on June 21, 2014. From the original sample of 26, three books were excluded because they did not include illustrations or only included educational diagrams (i.e., drawings of the reproductive system but no images of girls themselves), bringing the final sample to 23 books (Table 1). These books included 21 nonfiction books and two picture books. While the majority of the books (17, 73.9%) of the books were originally published in the United States, 6 of the books (26.1%) were published abroad, with 5 books coming from the United Kingdom and 1 book coming from Australia. 13 of the books (56.5%) were published with images in color, while 10 of the books



(43.5%) were published in grayscale or black and white. The types of authors of the books included medical professionals (e.g., medical doctors or nurses; 4 books, 17.4%), mental health professionals (e.g., counselors or psychologists; 4 books, 17.4%), girls' magazines (specifically *American Girl* and *Girls' Life*; 4 books, 17.4%), and children's authors and teachers (11 books, 47.8%). Book 3 was the only book that included photographs of actual girls in addition to two-dimensional illustrations.

### **Coding Procedure**

One Black female undergraduate student (the researcher) read each book and assigned each image or textual reference to a racial category. For the purpose of verifying interrater agreement, one White female graduate student coded each image and textual reference as well.

In the text, only direct mentions of race or ethnicity were coded (e.g., "African American" reference coded under Black). Regarding illustrations, only depictions of puberty-aged females (falling into the age range of 8 to 18 years) were coded; depictions of small children and babies, puberty-aged boys, and both male and female adults were excluded from the study. If the same girls were photographed multiple times (book 3) or if the same girl was depicted in multiple illustrations in one book (i.e., drawings purposely and recognizably having the same features and/or clothing), then that girl was coded only once. Racial categories were outlined as follows:

**Black.** Girls were coded as Black if the image depicted a girl with brown skin; dark curly, kinky, or braided hair; a wider nose; fuller lips; and/or dark eyes.

**White.** Girls were coded as White if the image depicted a girl with fair, light, or pale skin; straight, wavy, or curly hair in a range of colors; thinner noses and lips; and/or eyes in a range of colors.

**Latina.** Girls were coded as Latina if the image depicted a girl with tan to brown skin; dark straight, wavy, or curly hair; and dark eyes. These girls were differentiated from girls coded as “White” or “Black” primarily on the basis of skin color (darker than “White” girls and lighter than “Black girls”) and hair.

**Asian.** “Asian” was used as an umbrella term under which to include girls coded as East, Southeast, or South Asian.

**East and Southeast Asian.** Girls were coded as East or Southeast Asian if the image depicted a girl with fair to light brown skin; straight dark hair; and dark eyes that were smaller in comparison to other depicted girls.

**South Asian.** Girls were coded as South Asian if the image depicted a girl with brown skin; dark eyes; and dark wavy or straight hair. These girls were differentiated from girls coded as “Black” primarily on the basis of hair type (i.e., hair not curly or braided) and thinner noses and lips.

**Ambiguous.** Girls were coded as racially ambiguous if the image depicted a girl with features that, in combination, did not clearly or completely fit into any of the previously outlined categories. These girls could have been drawn to represent bi- or multiracial girls, or to purposely be racially unidentifiable.

## Results

### Data Analysis

Data was originally coded using Microsoft Excel, and included the assigned book number, the number of representations of a given race on one page, the page number, and a short description of the girl(s) in the image and what racial category the illustration(s) fell into. Frequencies for all racial categories and books were then transferred to SPSS and T-tests and

ANOVA analyses were run to compare frequencies and racial representations across grouping criteria.

Books were grouped and analyzed according to three separate criteria: publication location (2 groups: US-published books compared to non-US published books), color scheme (2 groups: color books compared to books drawn in black/white/gray), and type of author (4 groups: medical professionals, mental health professionals, girls' magazines, and general authors). Z-scores were also calculated for each book and each grouping criteria in comparison to US populations of puberty-aged girls (Table 2) as follows: White girls in books compared to non-Hispanic White girls in the population, Black girls in books compared to non-Hispanic Black girls in the population, Asian girls in books compared to Asian girls in the population, Latina girls in books compared to Hispanic girls of all races in the population, and Ambiguous girls in books compared to bi- or multiracial girls (Two or More Races) in the population.

### **Comparisons to Girls in the United States Population**

As a whole, the entire sample of books represented 72 ambiguous girls (5.39%), 190 Black girls (14.21%), 146 Latina girls (10.92%), 795 White girls (59.46%), and 134 Asian girls (10.02%), resulting in a total of 1,337 representations of puberty-aged girls (Table 3).

Representations for each racial category by publication location, color scheme, and author type can be found in Table 4.

Table 5 presents Z-scores for each racial category across all of the books and by each grouping category. The percentage of Black girls in the books and in each category did not significantly differ from the percentage of Black girls in the population. Asian girls were shown to be significantly overrepresented both across the books and within each grouping category. Latina girls were shown to be significantly underrepresented across the books and within each

category except for medical professional authors, in which they did not differ significantly from the percentage of Hispanic girls in the population. Ambiguous girls were significantly overrepresented across all books and categories except for color books – in which they did not significantly differ from girl in the population – and books written by girls’ magazines, in which ambiguous girls were significantly underrepresented. White girls were significantly overrepresented across all books and in the majority of the grouping categories; only in grayscale books and books written by medical professionals were they underrepresented, and their representation in US books and books written by mental health professionals did not differ significantly from girls in the population.

### **Comparisons within Grouping Categories**

**Publication location.** A T-test was done to compare US and non-US books, but no significant differences were found for any racial category between the two groups.

**Color scheme.** A T-test was done to compare books printed in color and books printed in grayscale or black and white. Only representations of White girls differed between the groups when equal variances were not assumed (Table 6).

**Author type.** An ANOVA was run to compare books written by medical professionals, mental health professionals, girls’ magazines, and general children’s authors. Only representations of White girls were shown to be significantly different among the groups (Table 7). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the representations of White girls in books written by girls’ magazines differed significantly from all of the other author types (Table 8). None of the other author types differed for any racial category.

### **Textual Representation**

Across the sample, five themes were approached to varying degrees in each book: breast development, skin care, height or growth spurt and weight gain, hair growth, and menarche. Racial identity and the effect that it may have on pubertal development was mentioned only twice. Black girls were mentioned once in book 16 in the context of skin care through the following quote: “If you are African American or a girl who has dark skin, you should not use bleach on your skin.” (p. 20). Asian girls were also mentioned once in book 8 regarding hair growth: “Some Asian women do have less pubic hair than women from other backgrounds.” (p. 38). Because there were so few textual references, no separate analysis of the text was conducted, and these direct mentions of race were included in the frequency counts along with pictorial depictions of girls.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether popular girls’ puberty books accurately and proportionately represent Black girls and whether the information given to these girls through these books is culturally or racially relevant in order to properly prepare them for the pubertal transitions that they will undergo. While in the images, Black girls were not represented at a statistically significant proportion as compared to the population of puberty-aged Black girls in the United States, there was virtually no specific racial or cultural reference to the pubertal development, needs, or experiences of Black girls within the text. What this means is that, although Black girls may see themselves portrayed within these popular puberty books, the information that is dispersed to them follows a one-size-fits-all approach to development, resulting in a lack of information pertinent to Black girls’ pubertal experiences (i.e., maturing earlier than their peers, facing racialized sexualization through popular media, etc.).

White girls were represented most frequently in each individual book, but in comparison to the actual population of White girls in the United States, these girls were often significantly overrepresented. This is most evident among author types, where books written by girls' magazines had the greatest overrepresentation of White girls and differed significantly from the other three groups of authors. Books were grouped into these author-based categories because of speculations on the different reasons for why a specific author may or may not choose to represent a diverse range of girls in their material. Medical professionals may want to reach a wider range of girls in order to ensure that they are properly prepared for biological, hormonal, and other physical changes, while mental health professionals may focus more on dispersing information about psychological, social, and mental wellness to girls during puberty. The books in the girls' magazine author category were written by *American Girl* (3 books) and *Girl's Life* (1 book), and the racial representation within them may reflect the demographic that they believe holds the most buying power for their products.

### **Limitations**

Because racial identity is relatively subjective in that an individual may identify or have roots within a racial category that outsiders may not perceive them as, the operationalization of race in this study proved difficult. Even with parameters in place for classifying different races of girls, the coders were ultimately left to use their subjective judgement in order to code a given girl as one race or another, and each coder's idea for each race – read: what does a Black, White, etc. girl look like? – may have changed at any point during the content analysis. It may be beneficial for future studies to create stricter criteria for coding race.

It is also important to acknowledge that “Latina” is a pan-ethnic term and does not describe race, although it is often used a racial identifier. Black, White, indigenous, and other

Latinas exist, but this study is based on a very stereotypical – and potentially problematic – image of Latina identity as tan-skinned and dark-haired.

Another limitation to the study arises in the lack of knowledge that the coders had about the racial makeup of Australia and the United Kingdom, where the non-US books were written and published. The overrepresentation of ambiguous girls may be a result of this, as well as the lack of a wider range of racial categories. Because categories such as Pacific Islander, Native American, and Middle Eastern were not included, and because South Asian, East Asian, and Southeast Asian girls were condensed into one “Asian” category, the actual representations of a diverse range of girls in these books may be skewed.

A final limitation concerns the sample of the books themselves. It is a possibility that niche, or less popular, books exist that *do* deal with more ethnically or culturally specific information regarding puberty, but these books were not studied because they were not classified as bestsellers. “Bestselling” does not always indicate the best information, and as discussed previously with the overrepresentation of White girls in books written by girls’ magazines, these rankings reflect buying power more than effectiveness of preparation for puberty.

### **Future Research**

In future studies on books about puberty, it may be interesting to look at racial representations in books for boys. In addition, to address the aforementioned limitation regarding books with a niche market, analyzing the content of books that are aimed toward specific cultures, races, or ethnicities may provide insight on whether these types of books prepare girls in the areas that their mainstream counterparts do not. I also suggest that other research studies also collect survey or focus group data from real-life girls and their parents. Even though these books do not explicitly prepare girls for race-based pubertal developments,

adolescents and/or their parents may feel that they are receiving adequate information to prepare for and cope with these changes.

### **Conclusion**

It is important to remember that identity development is a key part of the transition through puberty from child to adolescent to adult, but youth do not always experience these changes in the same sequence or at the same rates. Particularly for youth of color, children may be dealing with the development of racial identity and their place in society even before they reach puberty or adolescence, and the narratives and rhetoric surrounding identity development in puberty books needs to address that. When the diverse experiences of youth are kept in mind and highlighted in literature that will prepare them for the pubertal transition, this may lead to better adjustment and outcomes for these adolescents.



## References

- Adams-Bass, V. N., Bentley-Edwards, K. L., & Stevenson, H. C. (2014). That's not me I see on TV . . . : African American youth interpret media images of black females. *Women, Gender, and Families of Color*, 2(1), 79-100. doi: 10.1353/wgf.2014.0000
- Biro, F. M., & Dorn, L. D. (2005). Puberty and adolescent sexuality. *Pediatric Annals*, 34(10), 777-784. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/217550835?accountid=14667>
- Blakemore, S.-J., Burnett, S., & Dahl, R. E. (2010). The role of puberty in the developing adolescent brain. *Human Brain Mapping*, 31(6), 926-933. doi: 10.1002/hbm.21052
- Boston, G. H., & Baxley, T. (2007). Living the literature: Race, gender construction, and Black female adolescents. *Urban Education*, 42(6), 560-581. doi: 10.1177/0042085907305186
- Brega, A. G., & Coleman, L. M. (1999). Effects of religiosity and racial socialization on subjective stigmatization in African-American adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 22(2), 223-242. doi: 10.1006/jado.1999.0213
- Brittian, A. S. (2012). Understanding African American adolescents' identity development: A relational developmental systems perspective. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 38(2), 172-200. doi: 10.1177/0095798411414570
- Brooks, W. (2006). Reading representations of themselves: Urban youth use culture and African American textual features to develop literary understandings. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 41(3), 372-392. doi: 10.1598/RRQ.41.3.4
- Brooks, W., Browne, S., & Hampton, G. (2008). "There ain't no accounting for what folks see in their own mirrors": Considering colorism within a Sharon Flake narrative. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 51(8), 66-669. doi: 10.1598/JAAL.51.8.5

- Brooks-Gunn, J., & Graber, J. A. (1996). Puberty as a biological and social event: Implications for research on pharmacology. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 15*(8), 663-671. doi: 10.1016/S1054-139X(94)90634-3
- Brown, J. D., Halpern, C. T., & L'Engle, K. L. (2005). Mass media as a sexual super peer for early maturing girls. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 36*(5), 420-427. doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2004.06.003
- Brown, K. M., McMahon, R. P., Biro, F. M., Crawford, P., Schreiber, G. B., Similo, S. L., . . . Striegel-Moore, R. (1998). Changes in self-esteem in black and white girls between the ages of 9 and 14 years. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 23*(1), 7-19. doi: 10.1016/S1054-139X(97)00238-3
- Carter, R. (2015). Anxiety symptoms in African American youth: The role of puberty and biological sex. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 35*(3), 281-307. doi: 10.1177/0272431614530809
- Carter, R., Jaccard, J., Silverman, W., K., & Pina, A. A. (2009). Pubertal timing and its link to behavioral and emotional problems among 'at-risk' African American adolescent girls. *Journal of Adolescence, 32*(3), 467-481. doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2008.07.005
- Caspi, A., & Moffitt, T. E. (1991). Individual differences are accentuated during periods of social change: The sample case of girls at puberty. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 61*(1), 157-168. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.61.1.157
- Constantine, M. G., Alleyne, V. L., Wallace, B. C., & Franklin-Jackson, D. C. (2006). Africentric cultural values: Their relationship to positive mental health in African American adolescent girls. *The Journal of Black Psychology, 32*(2): 141-154. doi: 10.1177/0095798406286801

- Copeland, W., Shanahan, L., Miller, S., Costello, E. J., Angold, A., & Maughan, B. (2010). Outcomes of early pubertal timing in young women: A prospective population-based study. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, *167*(10), 1218-1225. doi: 10.1176/appi.ajp.2010.09081190
- Cousineau, T. M., Franko, D. L., Trant, M., Rancourt, D., Ainscough, J., Chaudhuri, A., & Brevard, J. (2010). Teaching adolescents about changing bodies: Randomized controlled trial of an Internet puberty education and body dissatisfaction prevention program. *Body Image*, *7*(4), 296-300. doi: 10.1016/j.bodyim.2010.06.003
- Dagvobie-Mullins, S. A. (2013). Pigtailed, ponytailed, and getting tail: The infantilization and hyper-sexualization of African American females in popular culture. *Journal of Popular Culture*, *46*(4), 745-771. doi: 10.1111/jpcu.12047
- DeRose, L. M., Shiyko, M. P., Foster, H., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2011). Associations between menarcheal timing and behavioral developmental trajectories for girls from age 6 to age 15. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *40*(10), 1329-1342. doi: 10.1007/s10964-010-9625-3
- Edmonds, L. (1986). The treatment of race in picture books for young children. *Book Research Quarterly*, *2*(3), 30-41. doi: 10.1007/BF02684576
- Ge, X., Conger, R. D., & Elder, G. H. (1996). Coming of age too early: Pubertal influences on girls' vulnerability to psychological distress. *Child Development*, *67*(6), 3386-3400. doi: 10.2307/1131784
- Ge, X., Kim, I. J., Brody, G. H., Conger, R. D., Simons, R. L., Gibbons, F. X., & Cutrona, C. E. (2003). It's about timing and change: Pubertal transition effects on symptoms of major

- depression among African American youths. *Developmental Psychology*, 39(3), 430-439.  
doi: 10.1037/0012-1649.39.3.430
- Ge, X., Brody, G. H., Conger, R. D., & Simons, R. L. (2006). Pubertal maturation and African American children's internalizing and externalizing symptoms. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 35(4), 531-540. doi: 10.1007/s10964-006-9046-5
- Ghiso, M. P., Campano, G., & Hall, T. (2012). Braided histories and experiences in literature for children and adolescents. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 38(2), 14-22. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1266034890?accountid=14667>
- Granberg, E. M., Simons, L. G., & Simons, R. L. (2009). Body size and social self-image among adolescent African American girls: The moderating influences of family racial socialization. *Youth & Society*, 41(2), 256-277. doi: 10.1177/0044118X09338505
- Hamlat, E. J., Stange, J. P., Abramson, L. Y., & Alloy, L. B. (2014). Early pubertal timing as a vulnerability to depression symptoms: Differential effects of race and sex. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 42(4), 527-538. doi: 10.1007/s10802-013-9798-9
- Hawthorne, D. J. (2002). Symbols of menarche identified by African American females. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 24(5), 484-501. doi: 10.1177/019394590202400503
- Hayward, C., Killen, J. D., Wilson, D. M., Hammer, L. D., Litt, I. F., Kraemer, H. C., . . . Taylor, C. B. (1997). Psychiatric risk associated with early puberty in adolescent girls. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 36(2), 255-262. Retrieved from [http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&dopt=Citation&list\\_uids=9031579](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&dopt=Citation&list_uids=9031579)

- Herman-Giddens, M. E., Slora, E. J., Wasserman, R. C., Bourdony, C. J., Bhapkar, M. V., Koch, G. G., & Hasemeier, C. M. (1997). Secondary sexual characteristics and menses in young girls seen in office practice: A study from the Pediatric Research in Office Settings Network. *Pediatrics*, *99*(4), 505-512. doi: 10.1542/peds.99.4.505
- Keenan, K., Culbert, K. M., Grimm, K. J., Hipwell, A. E., & Stepp, S. D. (2014). Timing and tempo: Exploring the complex association between pubertal development and depression in African American and European American girls. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, *123*(4), 725-736. doi: 10.1037/a0038003
- Lynne, S. D., Graber, J. A., Nichols, T. R., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Botvin, G. J. (2007). Links between pubertal timing, peer influences, and externalizing behaviors among urban students followed through middle school. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *40*(2), 181.e7-181.e13. doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2006.09.008
- Marshall, E., Staples, J., & Gibson, S. (2009). Ghetto fabulous: Reading Black adolescent femininity in contemporary urban street fiction. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, *53*(1), 28-36. doi: 10.1598/JAAL.53.1.3
- Martin, A. C. (2008). Television media as a potential negative factor in the racial identity development of African American youth. *Academic Psychiatry*, *32*(4), 338-342. doi: 10.1176/appi.ap.32.4.338
- Mendle, J., Turkheimer, E., & Emery, R. E. (2007). Detrimental psychological outcomes associated with early pubertal timing in adolescent girls. *Developmental Review*, *27*(2), 151-171. doi: 10.1016/j.dr.2006.11.001
- Obeidallah, D., Brennan, R. T., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Earls, F. (2004). Links between pubertal timing and neighborhood contexts: Implications for girls' violent behavior. *Journal of the*

- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 43(12), 1460-1468. doi: 10.1097/01.chi.0000142667.52062.1e
- Phinney, J. S., Ferguson, D. L., & Tate, J. D. (1997). Intergroup attitudes among ethnic minority adolescents: A causal model. *Child Development*, 68(5), 955-969. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.1997.tb01973.x
- Phinney, J. S., Jacoby, B., & Silva, C. (2007). Positive intergroup attitudes: The role of ethnic identity. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 31(5), 478-490. doi: 10.1177/0165025407081466
- Reid-Brinkley, S. R. (2012). Ghetto kids gone good: Race, representation, and authority in the scripting of inner-city youths in the Urban Debate League. *Argumentation and Advocacy*, 49(2), 77-99. Retrieved from [http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA332892395&v=2.1&u=lom\\_umichanna&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w&asid=f1d3c55103fbb071442166026fb7659c](http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA332892395&v=2.1&u=lom_umichanna&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w&asid=f1d3c55103fbb071442166026fb7659c)
- Reynolds, B. M., & Juvonen, J. (2012). Pubertal timing fluctuations across middle school: Implications for girls' psychological health. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 41(6), 677-690. doi: 10.1007/s10964-011-9687-x
- Richardson, E. (2013). Developing critical hip hop feminist literacies: Centrality and subversion of sexuality in the lives of Black girls. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 46(3), 327-341. doi: 10.1080/10665684.2013.808095
- Roberts, C. (2013). Early puberty, 'sexualization' and feminism. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 20(2), 138-154. doi: 10.1177/1350506812456458

- Rosenfield, R. L., Bachrach, L. K., Chernausek, S. D., Gertner, J. M., Gottschalk, M., Hardin, D. S., Pescovitz, O. H., & Saenger, P. (2000). Letter to the editor: Current age of onset of puberty. *Pediatrics*, *106*(3), 622-623. doi: 10.1542/peds.106.3.622
- Ruck, M. D., Park, H., Killen, M., & Crystal, D. S. (2011). Intergroup contact and evaluations of race-based exclusion in urban minority children and adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *40*(6), 633-643. doi: 10.1007/s10964-010-9600-z
- Salsberry, P. J., Reagan, P. B., & Pajer, K. (2009). Growth differences by age of menarche in African American and White girls. *Nursing Research*, *58*(6), 382-390. doi: 10.1097/NNR.0b013e3181b4b921
- Sellers, R. M., Copeland-Linder, N., Martin, P. P., & L'Heureaux Lewis, R. (2006). Racial identity matters: The relationship between racial discrimination and psychological functioning in African American adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *16*(2), 187-216. doi: 10.1111/j.1532-7795.2006.00128.x
- Siegel, J. M., Yancey, A. K., Aneshensel, C. S., & Schuler, R. (1999). Body image, perceived pubertal timing, and adolescent mental health. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *25*(2), 155-165. doi: 10.1016/S1054-139X(98)00160-8
- Smith-D'Arezzo, W. M., & Musgrove, M. (2011). Two professors critique the representations of Africans and African Americans in picture books. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *44*(2), 188-202. doi: 10.1080/10665684.2011.559863
- Stephens, D. P., & Few, A. L. (2007). The effects of images of African American women in hip hop on early adolescents' attitudes toward physical attractiveness and interpersonal relationships. *Sex Roles*, *56*(3-4), 251-264. doi: 10.1007/s11199-006-9145-5

- Stephens, D. P., & Phillips, L. D. (2003). Freaks, gold diggers, divas, and dykes: The sociohistorical development of adolescent African American women's sexual scripts. *Sexuality and Culture*, 7(1), 3-49. doi: 10.1007/BF03159848
- Sullivan, J. M., & Ghara, A. (2014). Racial identity and intergroup attitudes: A multiracial youth analysis. *Social Science Quarterly*, 96(1), 261-272. doi: 10.1111/ssqu.12089
- Talpade, M. (2006). African American child-women: Nutrition theory revisited. *Adolescence*, 41(161), 91-102. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/195941264?accountid=14667>
- Talpade, M. (2008). Hispanic versus African American girls: Body image, nutrition, and puberty. *Adolescence*, 43(169), 119-127. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/195947171?accountid=14667>
- Tanner-Smith, E. E. (2010). Negotiating the early developing body: Pubertal timing, body weight, and adolescent girls' substance use. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 39(12), 1402-1416. doi: 10.1007/s10964-009-9489-6
- Tareen, R. S. (2015). Substance abuse and adolescent girls. *International Public Health Journal*, 7(2), 191-207. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1706226153?accountid=14667>
- Thomas, A. J., Hacker, J. D., & Hoxha, D. (2011). Gendered racial identity of Black young women. *Sex Roles*, 64(7-8), 530-542. doi: 10.1007/s11199-011-9939-y
- Tynes, B. M., Giang, M. T., & Thompson, G. N. (2008). Ethnic identity, intergroup contact, and outgroup orientation among diverse groups of adolescents on the internet. *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 11(4), 459-465. doi: 10.1089/cpb.2007.0085



U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). *Annual estimates of the resident population by sex, age, race, and Hispanic origin for the United States and States: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2014*. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/popest/data/national/asrh/2014/index.html>

Wakefield, W. D., & Hudley, C. (2007). Ethnic and racial identity and adolescent well-being. *Theory Into Practice, 46*(2), 147-154. doi: 10.1080/00405840701233099

Zehr, J. L., Culbert, K. M., Sisk, C. L., & Klump, K. L. (2007). An association of early puberty with disordered eating and anxiety in a population of undergraduate women and men. *Hormones and Behavior, 52*(4), 427-435. doi: 10.1016/j.yhbeh.2007.06.005

Table 1

*Grouping Information for Books Used in Sample*

No.	Book Title	Publication Location	Color Scheme	Author Type
1	<i>What's Happening to Me?: Girls' Edition</i>	UK	Color	General
2	<i>The Ultimate Girls' Body Book: Not-So-Silly Questions About Your Body</i>	USA	Grayscale	Medical
3	<i>Puberty Girl</i>	Australia	Color	Mental
4	<i>Will Puberty Last My Whole Life?: REAL Answers to REAL Questions from Preteens About Body Changes, Sex, and Other Growing-Up Stuff</i>	USA	Color	Medical
5	<i>Girls' Life Head-to-Toe Guide to You</i>	USA	Color	Magazine
6	<i>The Care and Keeping of You 2: The Body Book for Older Girls</i>	USA	Color	Magazine
7	<i>Sex, Puberty, and All That Stuff: A Guide to Growing Up</i>	USA	Color	General
8	<i>Ready, Set, Grow!: A "What's Happening to My Body?" Book for Younger Girls</i>	UK	Grayscale	General
9	<i>The Care and Keeping of You: The Body Book for Younger Girls, Revised Edition</i>	USA	Color	Magazine
10	<i>Puberty Survival Guide for Girls</i>	USA	Black/white	Medical
11	<i>It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, and Sexual Health</i>	USA	Color	General
12	<i>Is This Normal?: Girls Questions, Answered by the Editors of the Care &amp; Keeping of You</i>	USA	Color	Magazine
13	<i>Growing Up: It's a Girl Thing</i>	USA	Grayscale	General
14	<i>How You Are Changing: For Girls Ages 10-12 and Parents (Learning about Sex)</i>	USA	Color	General
15	<i>Girl to Girl: Honest Talk About Growing Up and Your Changing Body</i>	USA	Color	General
16	<i>Girl Stuff: A Survival Guide to Growing Up</i>	USA	Grayscale	General
17	<i>The Period Book, Updated Edition: Everything You Don't Want to Ask (But Need to Know)</i>	USA	Black/white	Mental
18	<i>American Medical Association Girl's Guide to Becoming a Teen</i>	USA	Grayscale	Medical
19	<i>Period.: A Girl's Guide</i>	USA	Black/white	Mental
20	<i>Girls Are Girls, and Boys Are Boys</i>	USA	Black/white	Mental
21	<i>Hair in Funny Places</i>	UK	Color	General
22	<i>Girls Only: All About Periods and Growing Up Stuff</i>	UK	Black/white	General
23	<i>Just for Girls: A Book About Growing Up</i>	UK	Color	General

Table 2

*Girls in the United States Aged 10-14 Years*

<b>Racial/Ethnic Category</b>	<b>Number in US Population</b>	<b>Percentage in US Population</b>
White	5,567,323	55.14%
Black/African American	1,442,038	14.28%
Asian	434,569	4.30%
Two or More Races	332,618	3.29%
Hispanic or Latina (all races)	2,212,898	21.92%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,989,446</b>	<b>98.93%</b>

*Note:* Information in this table was adapted from 2010 US Census data (U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, 2015). Hispanic-identified data for each racial group was subtracted from each group’s total and condensed into the “Hispanic or Latina (all races)” category, which includes Hispanic or Latina girls of all races (e.g., Afro-Latinas, White Hispanics, etc.). Total percentage comes out to 98.93% because two racial categories in the Census – American Indian/Native American (0.89%) and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (0.18%) – were not coded for in the books and were excluded from the study.

Table 3

*Frequencies and Percentages of Racial Representations in Books*

<b>Book</b>	<b>Ambiguous</b>		<b>Black</b>		<b>Latina</b>		<b>White</b>		<b>Asian</b>		<b>Total</b>
<b>1</b>	6	10.34%	4	6.90%	6	10.34%	41	70.69%	1	1.72%	<b>58</b>
<b>2</b>	3	7.14%	4	9.52%	4	9.52%	26	61.90%	5	11.90%	<b>42</b>
<b>3</b>	8	17.78%	2	4.44%	0	0.00%	33	73.33%	2	4.44%	<b>45</b>
<b>4</b>	1	4.55%	4	18.18%	3	13.64%	9	40.91%	5	22.73%	<b>22</b>
<b>5</b>	1	1.61%	6	9.68%	7	11.29%	44	70.97%	4	6.45%	<b>62</b>
<b>6</b>	0	0.00%	13	17.81%	6	8.22%	47	64.38%	7	9.59%	<b>73</b>
<b>7</b>	0	0.00%	10	14.71%	13	19.12%	42	61.76%	3	4.41%	<b>68</b>
<b>8</b>	6	12.00%	7	14.00%	3	6.00%	31	62.00%	3	6.00%	<b>50</b>
<b>9</b>	0	0.00%	17	14.91%	10	8.77%	82	71.93%	5	4.39%	<b>114</b>
<b>10</b>	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	14	100.00%	0	0.00%	<b>14</b>
<b>11</b>	6	10.91%	10	18.18%	8	14.55%	23	41.82%	8	14.55%	<b>55</b>
<b>12</b>	1	1.02%	14	14.29%	7	7.14%	69	70.41%	7	7.14%	<b>98</b>
<b>13</b>	2	14.29%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	12	85.71%	0	0.00%	<b>14</b>
<b>14</b>	3	7.69%	6	15.38%	2	5.13%	21	53.85%	7	17.95%	<b>39</b>
<b>15</b>	0	0.00%	12	14.63%	7	8.54%	56	68.29%	7	8.54%	<b>82</b>
<b>16</b>	5	6.41%	15	19.23%	8	10.26%	38	48.72%	12	15.38%	<b>78</b>
<b>17</b>	1	1.75%	11	19.30%	8	14.04%	26	45.61%	11	19.30%	<b>57</b>
<b>18</b>	14	13.33%	15	14.29%	27	25.71%	37	35.24%	12	11.43%	<b>105</b>
<b>19</b>	5	6.41%	17	21.79%	9	11.54%	31	39.74%	16	20.51%	<b>78</b>
<b>20</b>	0	0.00%	3	13.64%	3	13.64%	14	63.64%	2	9.09%	<b>22</b>
<b>21</b>	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	5	100.00%	0	0.00%	<b>5</b>
<b>22</b>	5	7.81%	10	15.63%	7	10.94%	33	51.56%	9	14.06%	<b>64</b>
<b>23</b>	5	5.43%	10	10.87%	8	8.70%	61	66.30%	8	8.70%	<b>92</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>5.39%</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>14.21%</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>10.92%</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>59.46%</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>10.02%</b>	<b>1337</b>

Table 4

*Frequencies and Percentages of Racial Representations by Grouping*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ambiguous</b>		<b>Black</b>		<b>Latina</b>		<b>White</b>		<b>Asian</b>		<b>Total</b>
<i>Publication</i>											
<i>Location</i>											
<b>US</b>	48	4.78%	154	15.32%	112	11.14%	580	57.71%	111	11.04%	<b>1005</b>
<b>Non-US</b>	24	7.23%	36	10.84%	34	10.24%	215	64.76%	23	6.93%	<b>332</b>
<i>Color Scheme</i>											
<b>Color</b>	31	3.81%	108	13.28%	77	9.47%	533	65.56%	64	7.87%	<b>813</b>
<b>Grayscale</b>	41	7.82%	82	15.65%	69	13.17%	262	50.00%	70	13.36%	<b>524</b>
<i>Author</i>											
<b>Medical</b>	18	9.84%	23	12.57%	34	18.58%	86	46.99%	22	12.02%	<b>183</b>
<b>Mental</b>	14	6.93%	33	16.34%	20	9.90%	104	51.49%	31	15.35%	<b>202</b>
<b>Magazine</b>	2	0.58%	50	14.41%	30	8.65%	242	69.74%	23	6.63%	<b>347</b>
<b>General</b>	38	6.28%	84	13.88%	62	10.25%	363	60.00%	58	9.59%	<b>605</b>

Table 5

*Calculated Z-scores as Compared to Population in Table 2, Across Sample and by Grouping*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ambiguous</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Latina</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Asian</b>
<b>All Books</b>	-4.304**	0.073	9.722**	-3.176**	-10.309**
<i>Publication Location</i>					
<b>US</b>	-2.648**	-0.942	8.260**	-1.638	-10.532**
<b>Non-US</b>	-4.025**	1.792	5.144**	-3.524**	-2.362*
<i>Color Scheme</i>					
<b>Color</b>	-0.831	0.815	8.581**	-5.974**	-5.018**
<b>Grayscale</b>	-5.813**	-0.896	4.841**	2.366*	-10.223**
<i>Author</i>					
<b>Medical</b>	-4.967**	0.661	1.092	2.217*	-5.148**
<b>Mental</b>	-2.900**	-0.837	4.129**	1.043	-7.742**
<b>Magazine</b>	2.830**	-0.065	5.975**	-5.468**	-2.140*
<b>General</b>	-4.123**	0.281	6.938**	-2.403*	-6.414**

*Note:* \* indicates that  $p$  is significant at 0.05, \*\* indicates that  $p$  is significant at 0.01.

Table 6

*T-Test for Books Grouped by Color Scheme*

Racial/Ethnic Category	t	df
Ambiguous		
<i>Equal variances assumed</i>	-1.177	21
<i>Equal variances not assumed</i>	-1.123	15.375
Black		
<i>Equal variances assumed</i>	.045	21
<i>Equal variances not assumed</i>	.044	16.964
Latina		
<i>Equal variances assumed</i>	-.397	21
<i>Equal variances not assumed</i>	-.365	12.288
White		
<i>Equal variances assumed</i>	1.915	21
<i>Equal variances not assumed</i>	2.105*	17.053
Asian		
<i>Equal variances assumed</i>	-1.156	21
<i>Equal variances not assumed</i>	-1.060	12.138

Note: \* indicates that *p* is significant at 0.05.

Table 7

*ANOVA for Racial Representations in Books Grouped by Author Type*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F
Ambiguous	Between Groups	36.881	3	12.294	1.008
	Within Groups	231.727	19	12.196	
	Total	268.609	22		
Black	Between Groups	101.389	3	33.769	1.128
	Within Groups	569.045	19	29.950	
	Total	670.435	22		
Latina	Between Groups	36.672	3	12.224	0.338
	Within Groups	686.545	19	36.134	
	Total	723.217	22		
White	Between Groups	3693.652	3	1231.217	5.046**
	Within Groups	4636.000	19	244.000	
	Total	8329.652	22		
Asian	Between Groups	18.623	3	6.208	0.303
	Within Groups	388.682	19	20.457	
	Total	407.304	22		

*Note:* \*\* indicates that  $p$  is significant at 0.01.



Table 8

*Tukey HSD for Racial Category “White” Grouped by Author Type*

Dependent Variable	(I) Author Type	(J) Author Type	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error
White	Medical	Mental	-4.500	11.04536
		Magazine	-39.000*	11.04536
		General	-11.500	9.12041
	Mental	Medical	4.500	11.04536
		Magazine	-34.500*	11.04536
		General	-7.000	9.12041
	Magazine	Medical	39.000*	11.04536
		Mental	34.500*	11.04536
		General	27.500*	9.12041
	General	Medical	11.500	9.12041
		Mental	7.000	9.12041
		Magazine	-27.500*	9.12041

*Note:* \* indicates that *p* is significant at 0.05.