Maria S. Johnson

#BlackGirlMagic
and Its Complexities

Johnson dives into #BlackGirlMagic to "explore some of the paradoxes of its use" (p. 110). She specifically considers media and articles produced in January 2016 -- a notable period of use and critique of the hashtag when *Essence* magazine and *Elle* magazine published articles and responses to #BGM.
"#BGM celebrates the existence and actions of Black women and girls by highlighting their emotions, stylings, accomplishments, and their efforts to supersede societal limitations" (p. 110).

Discussion & Debate: Who and What Gets to be "Magical"?

Beauty & Appearance

#BGM is commonly associated with traditionally feminine with detailed make-up, hairstyles, and clothing. This category of #BGM is slightly skewed towards dominant ideals of beauty which are paired with "phenotypes associated with light skin tones and looser curled hair" — excluding some Black women and girls (p.115). While the portrayal of femininity by those for whom it has been restricted can be an act of resistance, we must acknowledge all images of beauty, hair, and complexion.

Accomplishments

#BGM can be used to celebrate accomplishments like school graduations, job promotions, and entrepreneurship. However, "everyday achievements" and the lives of "hood" Black girls, #BGM posts rarely exposed failure, vulnerability, or mistakes, which isn't surprising since people often present their best selves on social media (p. 115).

Johnson's findings show that #BGM exists in a nuanced space that has been able to celebrate Black women despite its limitations and subtle exclusivities. The analytical and theoretical work examining #BGM involves understanding how people reject #BGM because of their racial or gender identities and expression. Suggesting a promotion of "multiple magics", Johnson writes that rather than the products of success, Black women and girls perform **daily magic to survive and thrive** in environments that were not constructed for their successes.

Issues to consider when doing social media research:

1. How does BFS identify the intended ideas and emotions behind the posts?
2. How should BFS study private/unlisted posts that influence the people who can see them?
3. How can BFS examine Black women and girls' experiences on social media when user identities are difficult to discern?
4. How should BFS code and consider data from colorist, classist, and heterosexist posts?

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