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Intersectionality in Hidden Figures

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Intersectionality in the movie *Hidden Figures*

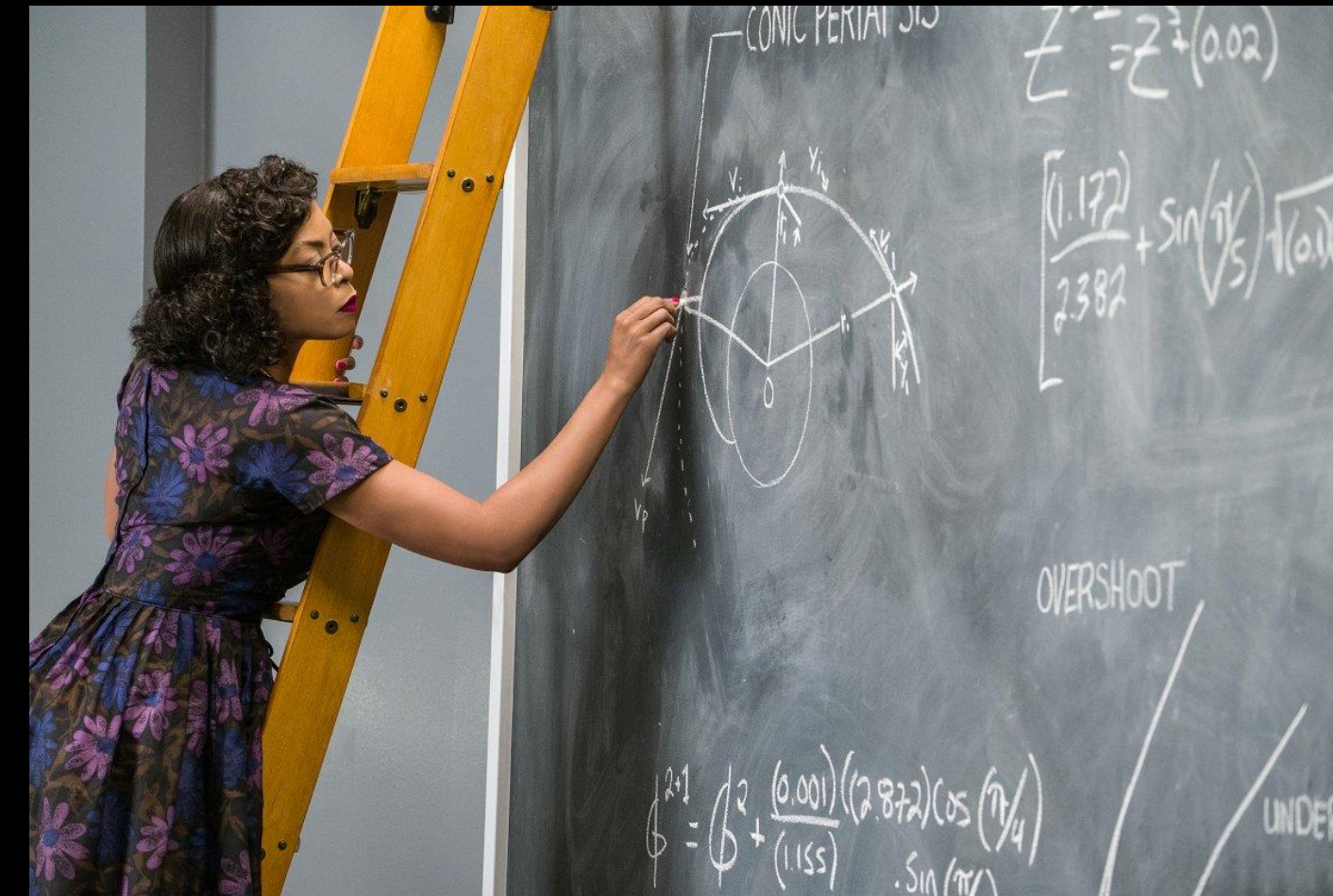


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WGST 115: Gender Representation and Culture

Abstract

This poster focuses on the intersectionality in the movie *Hidden Figures*. The main identities that are the focal point of the movie are race and gender. Being a black woman in the 1960's was not an easy feat, however Katherine Johnson and her companions overcame the many struggles of such, while also being the minority not only in society but also working in the STEM field. Ireland et al. says that "the bodies of education research focused on the experiences of Black students and female students in STEM fields often render Black women and girls "hidden figures" in that they have not sufficiently addressed their simultaneous radicalized and gendered experiences in educational contexts" (2018). There is such a stigma when it comes to women in the STEM field and especially in the era in American history when segregation was happening in full force, there were many hurdles for a black woman to overcome.

1



Discussion

The author argues that intersectionality played a huge part in the treatment of black women in STEM in the 1960s and how strong women like Katherine Johnson overcame. *Hidden Figures* is based on the true story of Katherine Johnson and how she overcame the struggles of being a black woman in a segregated society and career field. She proved to be the exceptional woman that she is.

Movie Examples

1. Katherine Johnson was an amazing mathematician who aided NASA in many space missions. One of her most noteworthy works, and the focal point of the movie was her help in calculating the trajectory needed to get Apollo 11 to the moon and back. She faced many hardships while working for NASA. Being a woman in a man centered field was difficult to navigate. There was the indignation that women did not belong in this field and could do no better than a man. Not only did Katherine have to face being a woman in STEM, but she also had to deal with being a black woman as well. During a time when racial segregation was rampant. Despite the things holding her back, Katherine was able to excel greatly.

2



2. This scene in the movie is the most pivotal moment of the story. The slow rise of tension between Katherine and her boss/coworkers builds into the monologue of this scene. She calls out all the biases and stigmas that are being pushed onto her and how she is being mistreated in the workplace. It's a cry for acceptance because of how she is overlooked and not accommodated in the slightest. This scene really molded the entirety of the intersectionality plot in the movie and brought to light the struggles faced by black women, not only in the specific time period, but still today.

3



3. Katherine was not the only black woman to break barriers working in NASA in the 60's. There was an entire group of women who were working for the company and were essentially "behind the scenes" in the process. They were not recognized for their work and were believed to not be able to do any better than the men who were the face of the company. Despite their hardwork and dedication they were overlooked in many aspects for a long time.

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