



FEATURE ARTICLE

It's Complicated: Black College Women Dating Experiences

By: Maudry-Beverley Lashley, PhD¹, Vanessa J. Marshall, PhD²,
and TyWanda L. McLaurin-Jones, PhD²
Medgar Evers College (CUNY)¹ & Howard University²

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ABSTRACT

The college experience presents many opportunities for dating, partnerships, and intimacy that have implications for sexual health. Yet, there is limited research about the dating experiences and influential risk and/or protective factors among racial/ethnic college students. This study employed a qualitative content analysis to investigate the perceptions of one hundred Black college students aged 18-25 and their dating and intimate relationship experiences. More specifically, young Black college women at a Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) were asked about their definition of dating, expectations and actual experiences of dating, and their experiences of having a monogamous relationship. Data from thirteen focus groups were aggregated and six themes were identified. Generally, college women had varied definitions of dating and experiences were shaped by perceptions of the male to female ratio. The complications of dating by Black college women, presents a complex dating environment coupled with their experiences as they seek intimate relations are highlighted.

Keywords: Dating; Emerging Adults; HIV/AIDS; HBCUs

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