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Communication Arts and Sciences

Title of your research project.

Hidden Figures to Role Model Figures: Liberal Second Wave Feminism, Intersectional Oppression, and Public Memory in the Film Hidden Figures

Description of research. Please provide a few sentences that explain the question and the methods employed in this research project.

Using rhetorical analysis as a research method, we analyze the 2016 film Hidden Figures, which is set in the 1960s and centers around a trio of African American women who worked at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and played a vital role in sending John Glenn to space during the space race between the United States and Soviet Union. In this analysis, we apply the concepts of liberal second wave feminism and intersectional oppression to the experiences of women in the workplace and the exclusion of voices of non-white women in Hidden Figures. We also apply Blair, Dickinson, & Ott's (2010) six assumptions of public memory to the film, specifically focusing on how public memory allows audience members to observe how memories of past events can bring awareness to present day concerns. In Hidden Figures, viewers reflect on the racial and gender discrimination in the workplace of the 1960s faced by African American women and may be inspired to fight against these same issues of discrimination in the 21st century. Hidden Figures brings to light the lack of African American history stories told in the K-12 history curriculum. Through the stories of Katherine, Dorothy, and Mary, we can learn valuable lessons for the 21st century, such as the importance of advocating for one another.

Did this project include Penn State students as researchers?

Yes

If yes to the above question, please state where it was published.

In progress

What problem do you address with your research?

This looks at how African American women are depicted in the media and how we can improve history curriculum to focus more on black history.

