

# **Black Teens Matter: Examining the Experiences of Black Teens in Public Libraries**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Public libraries in the United States are often touted as a place with doors open to all, bastions of knowledge that make information accessible to the public without regard for the identities of their patrons. But in the context of US libraries, a racist past that is often unattended to and the ramifications of past acts of racism may seep into the present, especially where Black teens are concerned. Working with community organizations in Hampton Roads Virginia area, Black teenagers take part in group interviews to understand how race affects their interactions within the library, what they see as the purpose of libraries, and what an ideal library would look like for them. These questions are undergirded by the notion that Black teenagers are best able to describe their experiences and hold within them the knowledge needed to discuss these issues as both Black people and teenagers. Thematic analysis is used to analyze the data, create codes inductively, and develop themes using critical race theory and critical youth studies as frameworks for analysis. The goal of this work is to create an understanding of the Black teen experience as it relates to the field of youth services librarianship, examine how the experiences of Black teens reflect on the YALSA (soon to be reunified with ALSC) competencies for teen librarians, and to build a conceptual framework for teen led librarianship that accounts for the experiences of Black teenagers. These goals work as a form of epistemic justice.

## **ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS**

Information services; Sociocultural perspectives; Education of information professionals.

## **AUTHOR KEYWORDS**

Young adult services; Public libraries; Critical librarianship; Social justice; Pedagogy.

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