

African American Girls as Social Leaders in Virginia Hamilton's
Children's Fiction

Abstract:

Virginia Hamilton represents African American female adolescents as social leaders through a feminist leadership model that begins with the narrative of the *Justice Trilogy* (1978-1981) and concludes with *Bluish* (1999). The purpose of this paper is to explain how Hamilton's narrative embodies African American girls' practices of leadership in early adolescence. Hamilton demonstrates a cumulative leadership pattern – one she develops through the late seventies to the end of the twentieth century. Virginia Hamilton represents unconventional African American young females who struggle to liberate themselves from structural and individual oppression. Hamilton challenges broad definitions of leadership by developing models of young Black female leaders through individualistic and collaborative experiences of guidance. As the study of leadership in children's literature is novel, sources on Black female adolescence social leadership theorisation becomes limited, and so my theory is mainly focused on Patricia Collins' Black Feminist Thought. Because Collins' social theory intersects with subjectivity, it helps in understanding the individualistic and cooperative or collective action of Black female activism. The findings of the paper contribute to intersectional feminist understandings of children's literature. Hamilton's narrative in these novels introduces both the individualistic and the cooperative leadership models. *Bluish* represents a more realistic pursue of power by a group of Black girls, promoting the everyday power of leading. The activism implicit in young girls leading serves as a convenient standard since the quest for leadership of young African American female adolescents does not necessarily require more fantastical or exotic efforts, giving a realistic opportunity for readers to find appropriate, liveable models for leading activism.