

Constructing Female Education and Empowerment in No Better Time: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Gendered Power Dynamics

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Abstract

This study examines the construction of women's education and empowerment in the novel *No Better Time* through the analysis of feminist critical discourse with Fairclough's three-dimensional model. The aim of the study was to analyze how educational discourse is constructed as a site of resistance and agency for African American women in the face of gender- and race-based intersectional oppression. The research method uses an interpretive qualitative approach, with data in the form of discursive episodes that represent access to knowledge, formal and informal learning, and agency actions. The analysis was carried out at three levels: textual (lexical choices, modalities, representational strategies), discursive (production, distribution, consumption of discourse), and sociocultural (patriarchal context, racism, militarism). The results showed five main thematic categories: epistemic discrimination (18 emergences), resistance through literacy (24), collective solidarity (21), institutional exclusion (15), and agency and leadership (27). The identified typologies of feminist discourse include liberal, socialist, and radical currents, which are integrated into the narrative. From a psychological perspective, the findings reveal the psychological impact of persistent marginalization on the formation of women's identities, as well as the role of collective solidarity as a psychological resource that restores and empowers. This study concludes that education in the novel is not limited to formal instruction, but rather includes experiential and communal learning that enables women to develop critical awareness, build psychological resilience, and collectively challenge patriarchal and racial structures toward structural transformation and epistemic justice.

Keywords: african american literature, empowerment, feminist critical discourse analysis, intersectionality, psychology, resistance, women's education

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INTRODUCTION

The study of language in contemporary critical scholarship has increasingly moved beyond viewing discourse as a neutral medium of communication toward understanding it as a constitutive force in the production of social reality. Education has long been positioned as a key instrument in women's empowerment efforts, but the relationship between education and empowerment is not linear or automatic. Stromquist (2015) asserts that although education is recognized as a key driver of women's empowerment, impacting the economic, political, knowledge, and psychological dimensions, formal education systems often fail to provide a safe and inclusive environment for girls. Formal curriculum tends to emphasize academic subjects while providing inadequate life skills, thereby limiting the transformative potential of education (Stromquist, 2015). In contrast, non-formal education programs that encourage critical reflection on gender norms have proven more successful in empowering women, demonstrating that the pedagogical format and approach of education are as important as access itself.

In a global policy perspective, the evolution of UNESCO's strategy in addressing gender equality in education demonstrates the complexity of the empowerment agenda. Jiang et al. (2025) identified several phases in UNESCO's approach, ranging from the provision of equal legal access, women's participation in economic development, recognition of power dynamics, to gender mainstreaming for empowerment. However, critical analysis reveals that these strategies often fail to address deep structural inequalities and tend to reproduce pre-existing gender power relations, particularly due to their reliance on feminist liberal frameworks that emphasize equal access without challenging broader patriarchal structures (Jiang et al., 2025). Anderson (2023) reinforces these findings by showing that shift. However, gender has become an organizing framework in international education policy, the dominant policy discourse often limits the potential for transformative change because it reflects changing cultural expectations yet operates within existing structural boundaries.

Similar criticism also emerged from studies of development initiatives at the local level. Raju (2005) in her case study in rural India reveals that women's empowerment projects in the development discourse often fail to address fundamental issues rooted in asymmetrical gender power dynamics, such as child marriage practices and low life chances for girls. These initiatives tend to focus on the individual and collective levels of women without touching on the broader economic, social, and political structures that are the main sources of inequality (Raju, 2005). This shows that empowerment cannot be achieved through partial interventions alone, but rather requires systemic structural transformation. Unterhalter et al. (2013) in their research in Northern Tanzania and Northern Nigeria assert that the relationship between distributional aspects, such as access to education, and empowerment is complex and highly contextual, with empowerment closely related to teacher qualification levels and broader socio-cultural and political contexts.

The educational institution itself, including its pedagogical practices, can be a space for the reproduction of gender power relations. Stride et al. (2022), in their analysis of four departments of Physical Education (PE) in English secondary schools, found that PE continues to reinforce gender power relations through its structure, activities, and delivery that reflect dominant messages around motherhood, sexuality, and the physical.



The gender beliefs held by teachers and the performative nature of the curriculum significantly reinforce this gender hierarchy (Stride et al., 2022). These findings underscore the importance of gender-sensitive teacher training and curriculum design that consciously challenge existing power relations, rather than simply reproducing them.

Despite the enormous structural challenges, empirical studies show that education can still serve as a tool of resistance and transformation when appropriately contextualized. Ghose and Mullick's (2015) longitudinal study of female learners in rural North India, 15 years after their participation in an empowerment programme, revealed that although many women have successfully transformed their lives, empowerment outcomes are complex and require ongoing power negotiations at various levels. Hatlebakk and Gurung (2014), in their survey in Nepal, found that women's empowerment has a positive impact on children's education, both boys and girls, although boys are still prioritized if the male family is in a weak economic position. These findings show that there is a negotiation between empowerment and patriarchal structures that are still strong. Another inspiring example comes from Silverman's (2012) study of Macedonian Romani Muslim women in New York City, where education has become a tool for building agency and power, helping them reduce patriarchal foundations in their communities and enter the professional labor market.

Although the study of gender representation in African American literature has grown rapidly, there are still significant gaps in previous studies, especially in integrating the analysis of educational discourse as a feminist epistemological project. Previous studies have tended to focus on representations of oppression, identity, or resistance within a general framework without specifically examining how educational discourse is constructed as a mechanism for women's empowerment (Khan & Muhammad, 2021; Kumari, 2025). Several studies have uncovered how novels depict women's subordination under patriarchy (Muslimat, 2025) or moments of resistance and independence (Ganesh, 2025), but few have systematically questioned how women's access to knowledge, both formal and informal, is represented narratively as a key instrument of empowerment or marginalization.

In African American literature, Collins (2022) and Davis and Jackson (2023) show that education is often narrated as both a tool of liberation and a mechanism of exclusion in a racially stratified society. However, most of the existing studies focus more on racial oppression without examining the educational discourse in depth, or treating education solely as a background theme rather than a central ideological formation (Byrd & Chlup, 2012). Furthermore, feminist studies of the narrative of empowerment in literature often focus on individual achievement or institutional access, thus ignoring how informal, collective, and embodied learning processes are constructed discursively in fictional texts (Huq, 2023; Al-Fadhli, 2024). As a result, there are still significant gaps in integrating textual feature analysis, discursive practices, and socio-cultural contexts to explain how women's education operates as a feminist epistemological project in literary discourse. Unterhalter et al. (2013) and Stromquist (2015) have more broadly criticized educational approaches that emphasize access without structural transformation as tending to reproduce existing inequalities. Still, these studies are in the realm of education policy, not literary discourse analysis. This shows the need for a bridge between the study of critical education and the analysis of feminist literary discourse to understand how fictional narratives can contribute to a more holistic epistemology of empowerment.



Responding to these gaps, this research offers novelty by positioning itself at the intersection of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, African American literary studies, and critical education theory. The main novelty of this research lies in its integrative approach that not only analyzes gender and racial representation in the novel *No Better Time*, but also conceptualizes education as a collective, intersectional, and transformative struggle, rather than as an individual path to success. In contrast to previous studies that tend to separate micro (linguistic) and macro-level (social) analysis, this study uses Fairclough's three-dimensional model to uncover how textual features, discursive practices, and socio-cultural contexts simultaneously build women's education empowerment discourses.

The purpose of this study is to critically analyze how the discourse of education and women's empowerment is constructed in the novel *No Better Time* through the analysis of textual features, discursive practices, and socio-cultural contexts, and to examine how these constructions contribute to the formation of feminist epistemology in literature. Drawing on Collins' (2022) frame of mind on intersectionality and knowledge as transformative forces, as well as Stromquist's (2015) critique of the limitations of formal education in empowering women, this study argues that fictional narratives can serve as an alternative space to reimagine gender-responsive models of knowledge, agency, and social change. Thus, this study not only complements existing studies on gender and race in literary discourse but also expands on them by showing how feminist critical discourse analysis can reveal the transformative potential of education that has been neglected in literature studies.

METHOD

This study uses an interpretive qualitative design with a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (AWKF) approach integrated into Fairclough's three-dimensional model to examine how women's educational discourse, empowerment, and resistance are constructed in the novel *No Better Time*. The qualitative approach was chosen for its ability to explore the meanings, values, and ideologies embedded in the text in depth and contextually (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016). Critical Discourse Analysis (AWK) as the main framework views discourse as a social practice in which power, ideology, and knowledge are produced, legitimized, and contested through language (Fairclough, 2015; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). AWKF strengthens this framework by explicitly highlighting gender-based power relations and intersectionality in textual representation (Lazar, 2005, 2007). Fairclough's three-dimensional model allows for an integrated analysis at three levels: text (micro), discursive practice (meso), and socio-cultural practice (macro), thus being able to uncover how the construction of women's empowerment discourse not only operates at the linguistic level but is also connected to broader social structures (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

The primary data of this study are selected narrative segments from the novel *No Better Time* that explicitly and implicitly represent women's access to knowledge, learning processes (formal and informal), epistemic restrictions, stigma, structural marginalization, and agency. Units of analysis are defined as discursive episodes i.e., paragraphs, dialogues, and narrative scenes in which education, knowledge, or empowerment are articulated through lexical choices, character positioning, metaphors, narrative perspectives, and evaluative framing (Fairclough, 1992). The selection of units



of analysis at the episode level allows the researcher to capture not only the literal meaning but also the ideological nuances developed through the interaction among textual elements. This approach is in line with the AWK principle, which emphasizes that meaning is never neutral but is always embedded in specific ideological power relations and interests (Van Dijk, 2001).

Data collection was carried out through a systematic close reading of the entire novel, followed by the withdrawal of purposive samples of excerpts with the highest density of representation of empowerment discourse. The purposive sampling technique was chosen because it enables researchers to select units of analysis that are most information-rich and relevant to the research question (Patton, 2015). The extracted excerpts are then compiled into a structured textual corpus. To increase analytical transparency, each excerpt is coded based on thematic categories (e.g., epistemic discrimination, resistance through literacy, collective solidarity, institutional exclusion) before a more in-depth discursive examination is undertaken. This coding process allows the identification of initial patterns that then form the basis for analysis at the textual and discursive levels (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020).

Data analysis proceeds iteratively and recursively across three interrelated Fairclough dimensions. At the textual level, the research examines lexical patterns, modalities, transitivity structures, metaphorical constructions, and representational strategies to determine how female characters are positioned as knowing, silenced subjects, or resistant agents (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Transitivity analysis, for example, is used to uncover who performs actions to whom and how verbal and mental processes are allocated to female and male characters. At the level of discursive practice, the analysis explores how empowerment discourses are produced and circulated through narrative techniques such as focusing, dialogical interactions, interdiscursiveness, and intertextual mixing between feminist, racial, educational, and ideological discourses (Fairclough, 1992). An analysis of interdiscursiveness is important to uncover how the novel reconfigures existing discourses to construct counter-narratives. At the sociocultural level, discursive patterns are contextualized in patriarchal structures, racial stratification, and broader educational inequality, with intersectionality serving as a central explanatory lens (Collins, 2022).

To ensure analytical rigor, this study implemented several validation strategies. First, researchers build a trail audit that documents every analytical decision, from the extreme selection to the drawing of conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Second, iterative coding and recoding are conducted to ensure consistency in interpretation. Third, internal textual triangulation is applied by tracing discursive patterns across rounds and scenes, rather than relying solely on isolated quotations (Denzin, 1978). Fourth, the research integrates conceptual abstraction and typological mapping to synthesize the findings into a theoretical-visual model. A conceptual model was developed inductively from coded data to visualize the structural logic underlying the formation of female subjectivity in the novel. Meanwhile, the typology of feminist discourse is compiled by mapping textual manifestations into liberal, socialist, and radical streams, so that the transformation of descriptive findings into coherent analytical categories can be carried out systematically. The integration of narrative analysis with conceptual modeling and typological visualization strengthens methodological



transparency, improves theoretical clarity, and aligns research with international publication standards that emphasize interpretive depth and analytical readability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

From the perspective of discourse production, *No Better Time* serves as a feminist intervention that consciously reconstructs historical narratives that have marginalized or erased Black women's presence in war memory and national historiography. The authors construct layers of feminist discourse, liberal, socialist, and radical, that not only note exclusion but also articulate theoretical pathways toward educational, economic, and ideological empowerment. Liberal feminist movements are represented through an emphasis on women's rights to equal access, professional recognition, and institutional participation. By portraying African American women as capable military personnel and knowledgeable actors, this narrative directly challenges the historical tradition that places epistemic authority exclusively on men. Socialist feminist elements appear in the narrative's focus on collective struggle, which asserts that authentic empowerment requires structural change rather than isolated individual achievements.

Table 1.

Thematic Categories of Education and Empowerment Representation in *No Better Time*

Thematic Category	Frequency	Forms of Representation	Sample Quotations
Epistemic Discrimination	18	Intellectual stigma, mockery, derogatory labels, restriction of access to knowledge	"They said we couldn't handle the work, that our place was in the kitchen, not in the command room"
Resistance through Literacy	24	Mastery of technical knowledge, informal education, self-directed learning	"I taught myself the filing system in three days, faster than any of them expected"
Collective Solidarity	21	Knowledge sharing, mutual support, communal nighttime learning	"The women gathered at night, sharing what they'd learned during the day"
Institutional Exclusion	15	Racial segregation, discriminatory assignments, medical surveillance	"We were given the worst assignments, the equipment that didn't work"
Agency and Leadership	27	Decision-making, refusal of compliance, initiative without permission	"She didn't wait for permission; she simply did what needed to be done"

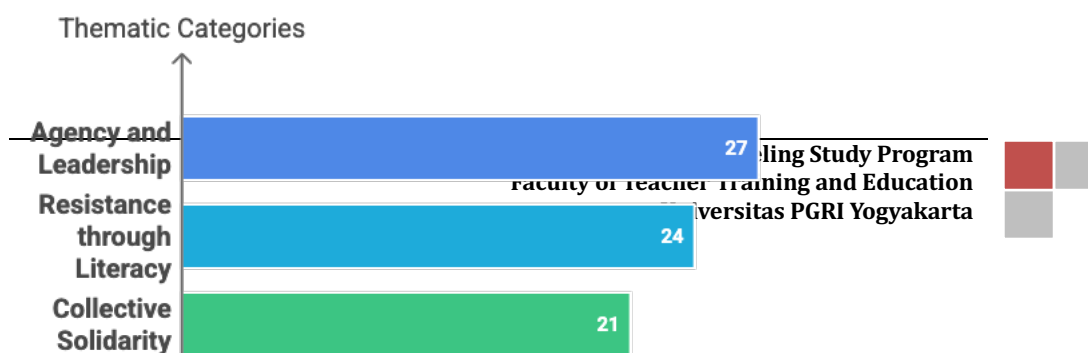


Figure 1. Frequency Distribution of Thematic Categories

A textual element that appears repeatedly is the presence of stigmatizing language that frames Black women as intellectually disabled, professionally unqualified, and worthy of being placed in a marginal position. This stigmatization is constructed through dialogues that contain ridicule, derogatory labels, and depictions of institutional barriers that reflect entrenched societal assumptions about women's inability to perform important roles in military service. The narrative consistently shows how women's knowledge and aspirations are routinely rejected, surveilled, or undermined by male-dominated power structures. In addition, the novel also highlights how sexism operates simultaneously with racial segregation. The exclusion of Black women from professional education and training opportunities is not solely gender-based, but is exacerbated by a racial hierarchy that marks them as inherently inferior. Through its depiction of discriminatory practices, segregated environments, and racially charged insults, the novel asserts that access to education has always been embedded in the broader structures of patriarchy and white supremacy.

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Table 2.

Typology of Feminist Discourse in *No Better Time*

Feminist Strand	Textual Manifestation	Discursive Strategy	Socio-Cultural Critique
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Liberal	Demands for equal access, professional recognition, institutional participation	Focalization on characters who penetrate institutional boundaries	Critique of explicit discrimination in policies and practices
Socialist	Collective solidarity, resource sharing, joint resistance	Dialogic interaction between characters, communal gathering scenes	Critique of economic exploitation and class structures
Radical	Women as narrators of history, creation of alternative knowledge, rejection of male epistemic hierarchy	First-person point of view, embodied experience narratives, intertextuality with African American oral traditions	Deconstruction of patriarchal and racial knowledge authority

Meanwhile, radical feminist discourse emerged through the reversal of the epistemic hierarchy, in which women took on the role of historical narrators who produced alternative accounts of war, work, and identity. Through these layered strategies, texts do not merely document past events, but construct a feminist epistemology that validates women's life experiences, restores historical agency, and unitarianizes patriarchal knowledge regimes. In terms of circulation, the novel's presence in various spaces of academic institutions, public libraries, reading communities, and even military archives shows how feminist knowledge is mediated and recontextualized across settings. From a reception standpoint, this narrative positions the reader to critically engage with the historical injustices experienced by Black women, interrogate discriminatory practices, and reflect on the transformative role of education in challenging oppressive systems.

At the sociocultural level, *No Better Time* demonstrates that women's educational empowerment does not occur in a vacuum but rather at the intersection of race, class, and national identity. The novel situates African American women in a historical context in which wartime mobilization created unprecedented opportunities for social mobility, while also reinforcing the compounded structures of gender dominance. In this situation, military service forces women to negotiate two conflicting realities: the open institutional access to training, wages, and mobility, and the perpetuation of discriminatory practices that systematically seek to subjugate them. The military thus functions paradoxically as a dual apparatus on the one hand, providing access to professional education and material improvement, on the other, acting as a disciplinary mechanism that regulates women's bodies, knowledge, and behavior.

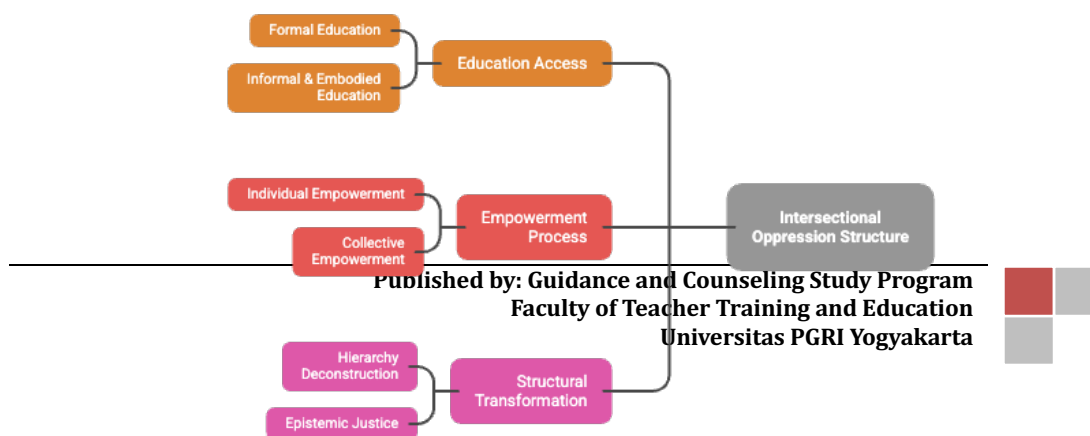


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Women's Educational Empowerment

This ambivalent positioning exposes a fundamental contradiction in wartime American democracy: the state demands the loyalty, work, and sacrifice of women who are systematically excluded from full citizenship, bodily autonomy, and legal recognition. Women are expected to idealize patriotic ideals without being guaranteed political rights and basic education. This narrative presents this contradiction not as incidental tensions but as the structural condition of democracy under racial capitalism. In reclaiming African American women's participation in the war effort, the novel rejects the dominant historiography that places women as passive dependents or auxiliary supporters. Military participation is recognized as a form of intellectual work, professional training, and collective consciousness building.

The findings of the study show that education in *No Better Time* is constructed as a multi-layered arena of ideological contestation. First, education serves as a pathway to economic and social mobility, allowing women to access resources previously denied to them. Mastery of administrative, technical, and organizational skills opens up opportunities for promotion, recognition, and financial independence. Second, education became a site for the formation of feminist consciousness, where women learned to criticize and resist oppressive conditions. Through interactions with fellow women and exposure to systemic injustices, female characters develop a critical understanding of their positions in power structures. Third, education operates as a mode of collective transformation that emphasizes solidarity over individual achievement. Scenes of nightly gatherings in which women share knowledge represent alternative pedagogical practices rooted in African American communal traditions. Fourth, education is a political challenge to patriarchal and racist power that creates an institutional framework that positions women as inferior. When female characters exhibit competencies that exceed expectations, take over tasks previously mastered by men, or resist discriminatory commands, they directly challenge the legitimacy of gender and racial hierarchies. The novel thus advances a feminist epistemology in which the production of knowledge is never neutral, but always political. Learning, knowing, and speaking become acts of resistance that destabilize the dominant narrative and challenge the logic of exclusion.

Table 3.

Dimensions of Education and Their Manifestations in the Narrative

Dimension of Education	Narrative Manifestation	Function in Empowerment
Economic-Social Mobility	Technical training, promotion, administrative skills, mastery of job of	Opens access to resources and institutional recognition



Feminist Consciousness	Critical reflection on injustice, identification of patriarchal structures	Builds positional understanding and capacity for social analysis
Collective Transformation	Communal gatherings, knowledge sharing, mutual support	Strengthens solidarity and capacity for joint resistance
Hierarchy Deconstruction	Rejection of unjust authority, taking initiative	Challenges the legitimacy of existing power structures

One of the most significant findings of the study is the novel's rejection of empowerment narratives centered on individual success. Throughout the narrative, *No Better Time* consistently emphasizes that empowerment cannot be reduced to personal success stories or exceptional achievements of a few characters. Such narratives risk obscuring the systemic barriers that most women face. Instead, the text asserts that empowerment must be conceptualized as a collective process that aims to dismantle institutional hierarchies, transform social relations, and reconfigure the conditions that produce inequality. Within this framework, African American women's military service was not a symbol of assimilation into patriarchal society, but rather a material practice in which subjects gained critical capacity, built solidarity, and challenged epistemic dominance.

The narrative also highlights that inclusion in existing institutions, such as the military, does not, in itself, guarantee authentic empowerment. The female characters continue to face racial segregation, discriminatory assignments, medical exploitation, and institutional surveillance even though they have been "accepted" as military personnel. These conditions reveal that empowerment is not a matter of mere inclusion, but rather a matter of dismantling the epistemic and structural regimes that make women beings who can be exploited and discarded. Thus, the novel insists that structural transformation, not just access, is a necessary condition for genuine empowerment. By highlighting the entanglement of race, gender, education, and nationality, the novel constructs a feminist vision that refuses to separate personal agency from collective liberation, or knowledge from power.

Synthetically, the analysis of *No Better Time* reveals that education is constructed as an epistemological battlefield in which the hegemony of power is reproduced as well as resisted. This novel shows that education is not a neutral entity or an abstract moral good, but rather a material process shaped by economic needs, institutional power, and cultural struggles. Women's access to knowledge, both formal and informal, is presented as a key mechanism in the formation of subjects. Through education, female characters undergo a process of identity reorientation: from obedient subjects to historical agents capable of reading critical reality, rejecting domination, and imagining social alternatives. This process is not linear or easy, but is full of contradictions, negotiations, and struggles.

By reclaiming the historical agency of African American women, the text advances a feminist epistemology that links education to resistance, identity formation, and social change. *No Better Time* ultimately illustrates that feminist empowerment requires the dismantling of the compounded patriarchy and the re-imagining of the social structures that produce inequality. Education is positioned as both a resource for survival



and a catalyst for collective liberation, affirming that knowledge is power and that power must be used to transform the world.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the construction of women's education and empowerment in *No Better Time* is fundamentally related to the intersectional dynamics of gender power. Chattier (2013), in his study of Fiji, shows that even though women have reached a certain level of education, entrenched gender norms continue to generate inequalities in social and economic practices. These findings are in line with the representation in the novel that formal access to military training does not automatically erase the discrimination and segregation that Black women still experience. In contrast, in her research on rural women in China, Ma (2025) found that higher education can enable women to renegotiate gender roles and achieve economic independence, although traditional family structures and patriarchal norms remain significant barriers. In *No Better Time*, informal education and communal learning actually play a more significant role than formal education in building critical awareness and collective solidarity. Evening meetings where women share knowledge represent alternative pedagogical practices that allow them to develop positional understandings of structural injustices and design strategies of collective resistance, confirming that non-formal spaces can be the most productive locus for empowerment.

The relationship between education, employment, and empowerment is non-linear and varies significantly between contexts. Yu, Chen, and Desai (2023) in their comparative analysis of 28 low- and middle-income countries found that the alignment between education, employment, and decision-making power showed substantial differences within a single country, indicating the need for a contextual approach to empowerment. These findings are reinforced by Shin's (2024) study of North Korean refugee women entrepreneurs in South Korea, which illustrates how geopolitical and informal economic contexts intersect to shape distinct opportunities for empowerment. In *No Better Time*, the context of World War II creates a paradoxical situation in which wartime mobilization opens up institutional access for Black women, but at the same time, reinforces discriminatory practices that subjugate them. The experiences of the female characters in the novel show that empowerment cannot be understood in isolation from the specific historical, political, and economic contexts that shape the possibilities and limitations of women's agency. Darcy et al. (2025), in their analysis of power, vulnerability, and trust in public governance through the lens of feminist intersectionality, assert that policy interventions must consider how different social positions generate different experiences of vulnerability and access to resources.

The findings of this study have important implications for educational policies and practices aimed at empowering women. Jiang, Niu, and Teng (2025), in their historical review of UNESCO's strategy on gender equality in education, criticize liberal approaches that emphasize only access and numerical representation for failing to address structural inequalities and reproducing existing power relations. They call for a more transformative approach that challenges entrenched gender norms and dismantles structural barriers. Elkhwesky, Salem, and El Manzani (2025), in their research agenda on talented women for senior positions, emphasize the importance of targeted strategies, such as women-specific leadership programs, flexible work arrangements, and



mentorship, that address the unique challenges faced by women from diverse backgrounds. In the novel, the most dominant representations of women's agency and leadership (27 appearances) indicate that, despite systemic discrimination, women still find ways to take initiative, resist blind obedience, and demonstrate their leadership capacity. This confirms that empowerment policies should focus not only on removing barriers, but also on creating an environment that supports and recognizes women's agency from different social positions.

More broadly, this research contributes to the development of feminist epistemology in the study of literature and the understanding of intersectionality as an analytical framework. Wijeyesinghe (2023), in his analysis of intersectionality and student development, emphasizes the importance of centralizing power in the analysis, acknowledging that identity is not merely a list of categories but is closely related to power systems that produce privilege and marginalization. Chowdhury and Basak (2026) further assert that marginalized voices and entangled identities require a reimagining of power and resistance that goes beyond simple dualistic frameworks. *No Better Time* demonstrates this by positioning Black women not only as victims of oppression, but also as creators of alternative knowledge and narrative of their own history. The novel intervenes in the historiographic tradition that has erased the contributions and experiences of Black women from collective memory, while offering a model for how education, in its various formations, can be an instrument for dismantling epistemic hierarchies and building more inclusive knowledge. Thus, this study reinforces the argument that intersectional analysis is not only important for understanding the complexity of oppression, but also for identifying points of resistance and possible transformation that arise from the intersection of marginal identities and experiences.

The findings of this study have significant implications for education and psychology, particularly in understanding how education can serve as an authentic instrument of empowerment while addressing the psychological impact of persistent marginalization. In the context of education, the dominance of informal education and communal learning in the novel indicates that the formal education system needs to re-reflect on its structures and pedagogies that have tended to reproduce social hierarchies, by designing dialogical spaces that allow students to develop a critical awareness of structural injustices and build collective capacity to transform them.

Furthermore, the findings of persistent epistemic discrimination despite formal access have been open to confirm that inclusive education policies do not simply stop at the provision of physical access, but rather require more in-depth interventions at the level of school culture, teacher training, and curriculum design that consciously challenge gender and racial biases. From a psychological perspective, the representation of epistemic discrimination in the novel reveals the psychological impact of the experience of marginalization on the formation of women's identity and self-concept, including the phenomenon of internalized oppression and stereotype threats that affirm the importance of intervention not only at the individual level but also in the transformation of the social environment that produces the stigma.

The empowerment process depicted in the novel, from individual consciousness to collective action through solidarity and communal learning, offers a model for how psychological resistance to oppression can evolve into transformative agency, while also indicating the need for a psychological approach that better recognizes the role of



community and social relations in the process of healing and empowerment. At the epistemological level, the novel's deconstruction of the male hierarchy of knowledge highlights the importance of validating women's subjective experiences and embodied knowledge as valid sources of knowledge, underscoring the need for a more inclusive psychology which recognizes that knowledge about the self and the world can be generated from a variety of social positions, and that marginal experiences can instead be a source of critical insight that is not available to those in positions of authority dominant.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the construction of women's education and empowerment in the novel *No Better Time* represents an epistemological struggle in which Black women reclaim their historical knowledge and agency authority through resistance to epistemic discrimination, literacy mastery, collective solidarity, and transformative leadership in a military environment fraught with intersectional oppression. From a psychological perspective, the novel's representation of epistemic discrimination reveals the psychological impact of persistent marginalization on the formation of women's identities and self-concepts, including internalized oppression and stereotype threat, while demonstrating how collective solidarity and communal learning function as restorative and empowering psychological resources. The findings suggest that the education in this novel is not limited to formal instruction, but rather includes experiential and communal learning that enables women to develop critical awareness, build psychological resilience, and collectively challenge oppressive patriarchal and racial structures. The integration of the three streams of liberal, socialist, and radical feminist discourse in the narrative reflects the complexity of African American women's psychological and social struggles, which require multi-front strategies at the levels of access, structure, and epistemology to achieve authentic empowerment. Thus, this research contributes to the development of feminist epistemology in the study of literature, education, and psychology by showing that fictional narratives can serve as an alternative space for knowledge production that challenges dominant discourse while imagining new possibilities for social justice and more equitable psychological well-being.

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