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Identifying Promising Literacy Practices for Black Males in P-12 Classrooms: An Integrative Review

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Abstract: Much has been written about the ways in which Black boys are often underserved in literacy classroom in the United States. Relatively little has been documented about the literacy strategies that are yielding promising outcomes in this study group. The purpose of this integrated literature review is to identify what we call promising literacy instructional practices with Black boys across the P-12 educational spectrum. Through an analysis of 62 publications, we outline a host of different instructional practices that have yielded positive outcomes with Black boys. Recommendations for teachers and future research studies are provided.

Keywords: diversity, reading and literature instruction, teaching, writing instruction

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Introduction[1]

Today's Black boys often face many challenges that have a negative impact on their school success (Howard, Douglas, & Warren, 2016). There is an increasing disparity between dropout rates and achievement outcomes between Black boys and other student populations--namely, White and Asian boys (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011). Over the past two decades, much has been written about the educational experiences and outcomes of Black boys in U. S. classrooms. Notably, much of this scholarship (e.g., McWhorter, 2010; Riley, 2016; Sewell, 2010; Wright, Morgan, Coyne, Beaver, & Barnes, 2014) is written from a deficit or pathological standpoint that positions Black boys as being "at-risk" in comparison to other student populations. A counter body of scholarship (e.g., Blume Oeur, 2018; Essien, 2017; Howard, Douglas, & Warren, 2016; Wright & Counsell, 2018) has emerged over the past two decades that has investigated educational, institutional, and other environmental factors that have contributed to these disparities in academic outcomes between Black boys and other student populations. This body of scholarship provides valuable theoretical and practical insights related to specific practices that are ineffective with Black boys. A few studies (e.g., Husband, 2012a; Johnson, 2019; Sciurba, 2014; Wood & Jocius, 2013) have begun to highlight promising literacy practices, in particular, for Black boys at various stages of the P-12 educational spectrum. To date, no research study has examined promising literacy practices for Black boys across the *entire* P-12 pipeline with regard to both reading and writing.

"There is an increasing disparity between dropout rates and achievement outcomes between Black boys and other student populations--namely, White and Asian boys (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011)"

Purpose of this Study

Given the absence of scholarship in this area, the purpose of this systematic literature review is to identify promising literacy instructional practices for Black boys across the *entire* P-12 schooling spectrum. It is our contention that teachers, administrators, and literacy coaches alike can benefit greatly from a comprehensive review of literacy practices that are producing promising outcomes with Black boys in early childhood, elementary, middle school, and high school contexts.

The research question that guides this literature review is this: What instructional practices yield promising literacy (reading and writing) outcomes for Black boys in P-12 classrooms in general? It is important to note here that Black boys are not a homogenous student population. Black boys differ greatly in abilities, needs, interests, background knowledge, and experiences. As such, this literature review is not intended to provide a list of "magical" literacy practices that will work with "all" Black boys in "all" classrooms. Instead, this literature review is intended to highlight research-based practices for literacy professionals to consider as they work with Black boys in P-12 classrooms. While we definitely see the importance of minimizing the relation between race and other social identities (e.g. sexual identity, social class, region, etc.) that impact the

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[1] We acknowledge that there is a gender spectrum and that myriad pronouns exist that we can use when referring to individuals in our writing. Throughout this article we use pronouns to refer to individuals that correspond with the pronouns that they use to refer to themselves.

schooling experiences of Black boys, we intentionally chose not to examine this topic from an intersectional lens. This is due to the fact that the majority of studies do not use an intersectional lens as an analytical framework.

Some may ask, "Why focus on Black boys in particular?" Unfortunately, much of what has been written related to "effective" or promising literacy practices for students in P-12 literacy scholarship has not taken into account the nuances and significance of being Black and a male student in a particular educational context. In other words, much of what is written related to effective and or promising practice has been couched in the notion of "students of color" and or "African American" or "Black" students, in general. Much of the existing scholarship (e.g., Kirkland, 2013; Tatum, 2012; Tatum, 2014a) related to Black boys and literacy development in P-12 classrooms has tended to focus on a specific level (e.g., early childhood, elementary, middle school, high school) or developmental period across the P-12 educational continuum. In addition, much of the present scholarship on this topic examines either reading or writing instructional practices in isolation. We intentionally chose to use the terms "Black boys" rather than "Black males" because of the tendency within schools for many teachers to view Black boys as being older than they really are (Wright & Counsell, 2018). Unfortunately, this view is used to justify biased and dehumanizing instructional practices Black boys often experience. Hence, we chose to elucidate the fact that Black boys, even in middle school and high school classrooms, are developing beings and should be treated and viewed as such.

Defining Promising Literacy Practices

For this integrative literature review, we purposely choose to avoid using terms such as "scientifically-based reading instruction" or "effective reading instruction" because these terms have divergent, conflicting, and often highly problematic meanings within the broader educational scholarship and discourse (Goodman, 2014; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; Johnson, 2016; NRP, 2000; Moats, 2014; Seidenberg, 2013). In many instances, the terms "scientifically-based" or "effective reading and writing instruction" are limited to standardized test data (Goodman, 2014). Because the literacy experiences of Black boys in P-12 contexts is far greater, more complex, and more nuanced than what can be reflected on a particular standardized measure, we purposely choose to avoid using these terms. Instead, we use the term "promising" to describe literacy practices that are yielding desirable literacy outcomes with Black boys.

As it relates to the term "literacy" in particular, we acknowledge that the notion of "literacy" in the 21st century may encompass many skills and processes that are more dynamic and multimodal than particular instructional practices that take place in traditional schooling contexts. However, given the scope and sequence and the primary focus of this literature review, we have chosen to operationally define the term literacy (as it relates to promising literacy practices) as the development of processes and skills related to reading and writing, and specifically learning to read. Accordingly, we also chose to focus only on literacy practices that take place in classrooms and schools. Given the intended focus and audience of this review, we chose not to discuss literacy practices that occur outside school.

Conceptual Framework

This study draws from tenets of Critical Race Theory in education (Bell, 1992; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Harper, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002;). More specifically, this study applies the notion of "counter-storytelling." Counter-storytelling is defined by Critical Race theorists as a method of

storytelling that "aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 144). Counter-storytelling allows the stories and experiences of frequently marginalized and often silenced groups in society to be told (Bell, 1992; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). It is also used to expose and interrogate normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes and to examine and critique the dominant and/or master narratives that exist around a particular group of people (Cook & Dixson, 2013; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). To this end, Solórzano and Yosso (2002) identify three different types of counternarratives: personal stories, other peoples' stories, and composite stories. Composite stories or narratives represent an accumulation, a gathering together, and a synthesis of numerous individual stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). We included composite stories because our integrative literature review relies on scholarship related to Black boys and literacy that was primarily produced by researchers and teachers.

For the purposes of this study, counter-storytelling is used in four specific ways. First, we use counter-storytelling to illuminate the (often silenced) voices and perspectives of Black boys. Much of what is written in the dominant scholarly discourse regarding Black boys and literacy development does not include the voices and perspectives of Black boys. As such, we seek to highlight the voices, perspectives, and positionalities of Black boys, wherever possible, in this integrative literature review.

> **"…we use counter-storytelling to create and communicate narratives that stand in direct opposition to the dominant, deficit, and racist narratives of Black boys and literacy development."**

Additionally, we use counter-storytelling to create and communicate narratives that stand in direct opposition to the dominant, deficit, and racist narratives of Black boys and literacy development. Historically, much of what has been written in the dominant discourse related to Black boys and literacy instruction has positioned Black boys as the "problem" or the cause of their outcomes (Tatum, 2003). As a result, Black boys are often viewed as being illiterate or semi-literate, and resistant to developing academic reading and writing proficiency (Tatum, 2003; 2008a). The current study seeks to challenge this narrative by sharing stories of teaching practices that lead to promising literacy outcomes for this student population.

Lastly, we use counter-storytelling in this study to reveal how broader systems of racial oppression in schools and classrooms contribute to less-than-desirable literacy outcomes for Black boys, as a necessary first step in provoking social change. By highlighting literacy practices that are producing promising outcomes with Black boys, we seek to challenge the ways in which traditional and often taken-for-granted (and unquestioned) literacy practices are implemented with this student population. Ultimately, our goal is to inspire and encourage literacy professionals to re-think and re-imagine the ways in which Black boys are taught to read and write in P-12 classrooms by highlighting promising methods, strategies, and practices from the literature.

Method

We began our literature review by searching for relevant scholarship, using the databases EBSCOHost, ERIC, Academic & Education Research, and Google Scholar. Because the terms "Black" and "African American" and "literacy" and "reading/writing" are often used interchangeably in the professional literature, we used a number of different terms while searching for publications on this topic. More specifically, we used the following combinations of terms to facilitate our search: Black boys + literacy; Black males + reading; Black males + writing; African American males + literacy; African American males + reading; African American males + writing; Black boys + literacy; Black boys + reading; Black boys + writing.

Inclusion Criteria

Based on our research questions, we viewed integrative review as an appropriate method for this study. According to Whittemore and Knafl (2005), an integrative review is an appropriate method to examine and summarize past empirical literature to provide a more comprehensive understanding of strategies used to promote reasoning and tools used to measure effectiveness of educational approaches. An integrative review also provides an opportunity to examine both qualitative and quantitative studies and include diverse methodologies. Integrative reviews are used to review theories and current evidence and to examine methodological issues. Furthermore, we found it useful to implement the five stages outlined by Cooper's (1998) framework for conducting integrative reviews. These stages include problem identification, literature search, data evaluation, data analysis, and presentation.

All of the scholarship included in this literature review met three specific selection criteria. First, we only included published scholarship in this review that focused explicitly and exclusively on Black boys and literacy. As a result, we did not include scholarship that involved Black girls or other student populations. Although we certainly value scholarship related to Black girls and literacy development, our purpose in only including scholarship on Black boys was to draw conclusions from our analysis that pertain to Black boys specifically. Next, we only included literature in our analysis that examined some aspect of literacy instruction or development specifically. Although there are many studies that examine the experiences of Black boys in schools, in general, and we definitely see value in this body of scholarship (concerning Black boys and schooling, in general), we wanted to emphasize the relationship between Black boys and literacy instruction. Thus, we opted not to include this body of scholarship in our review. Third, we only included scholarship that has been published in book, article, or chapter formats. Consequently, we did not include dissertations in our review. Based on the aforementioned criteria, we identified and included 61 publications in our review. These publications included empirical studies, research-based arguments, and literature reviews, and appeared in journal articles, book chapters, and books. The publications included in this review were published between 1994 and 2019.

Coding Scheme and Reliability

We relied on the following questions to inform our coding decisions:

1. Is the publication a book, book chapter, or article; and did it comprise a research-based argument, or empirical study?

2. Does the publication focus on Black boys in early childhood, elementary, middle school, high school, or all of the above?

3. Does the publication focus on reading or writing practices or a combination of both?

4. What research methods, if any, were used in this publication?

5. What findings/conclusions/implications were presented in this publication?

In keeping with the first question mentioned above, we identified a comprehensive list of books, book chapters, conceptual papers, and empirical studies related to Black boys and literacy instruction in P-12 classrooms. We listed these publications by type, focus area (reading or writing), grade level, and research method using a spreadsheet in Google Drive. Next, in keeping with the second, third, and fourth questions, we reviewed each publication and completed the corresponding information related to focus area and grade level on the spreadsheet. We input information related to each of these questions into the spreadsheet. Then, we read each publication and input information related to the findings, conclusions, and implications into the spreadsheet. Furthermore, we coded each publication separately and reached 100% inter-rater reliability agreement.

Initially, we created and sorted the coded data into three categories for analytical purposes. The categories were based on the developmental focus of the publications. These categories were: (a) Black boys in early and elementary settings; (b) Black boys in middle and high school settings; and (c) Black boys and the field of information and library science. We created digital folders in Google Drive and sorted the 61 publications into one of these three folders for later analysis. We use the developmental continuum to inform our categories, because the overwhelming majority of publications on Black boys and literacy emphasized Black boys at one particular point along the P-12 developmental

spectrum. Also, from an instructional standpoint, we found it valuable for literacy professionals if we discussed the scholarship in terms of teachers at various stages of the educational pipeline. Appendix A provides a summary of the studies that were included in this literature review, organized by each analytical category.

Findings

In the following section, we discuss the findings from this integrative literature review in terms of reading and writing instructional practices across the P-12 schooling continuum. We begin by discussing scholarship involving reading instruction and Black boys in early childhood/elementary classrooms. Second, we discuss scholarship involving Black boys and writing instruction in early childhood/elementary classrooms. Next, we discuss scholarship involving Black boys and reading instruction in middle school and high school contexts. Finally, we discuss scholarship involving Black boys and writing instruction in middle school and high school contexts.

Black Boys in Early Childhood/Elementary Contexts

Reading Instruction

Only 17 of the 62 publications involved in our review focused on Black boys in early childhood/elementary settings specifically. See Appendix A for information related to the focus of each study involved in our review. Several recurring themes emerged in this scholarship related to teaching reading. These themes include: (a) culturally responsive texts; (b) critical literacy; (c) choice and collaboration; (d) disciplinary supports; (e) explicit instruction in specific areas; and (f) unified effort. In the following sections, we discuss each of these themes.

Culturally Responsive Texts. The first theme that emerged in our review of scholarship related to Black boys in early childhood and elementary classrooms pertains to culturally responsive texts. Numerous scholars (Husband, 2012a; Husband, 2012b; Husband, 2014a; Husband, 2014b; Jenkins, 2009; Johnson, 2019; Stevenson & Ross, 2015; Wood & Jocius, 2013) in our review discussed the power and potential of using culturally relevant texts with Black boys in early childhood and elementary classrooms. Essentially, Black boys tend to be more engaged and motivated to read when they have opportunities to read texts that reflect and respond to their social, cultural, economic, and racialized experiences in the world. These increased levels of reading engagement and motivation can translate into positive outcomes in and among Black boys, such as improved fluency and decoding skills (Stevenson & Ross, 2015). It is important to note that simply providing Black boys with culturally relevant texts to read will not automatically lead to positive reading outcomes. In order for culturally responsive texts to have a significant impact in the literacy lives of Black boys, the texts must be used as part of a broader robust and culturally responsive literacy program in a particular classroom or school (Johnson, 2019).

> **"The voices, histories, and perspectives of people of color, women, and other historically marginalized groups are often missing and/or silenced in many of the texts that are used in schools."**

Critical literacy approaches. In addition to using culturally responsive texts with Black boys in early childhood and elementary classrooms, our review also suggests the importance of implementing critical literacy approaches with Black boys. Several researchers (Tyson, 1999; Wood & Jocius, 2013, 2014) advocate for teachers to use critical literacy approaches with Black boys. Although there are multiple conceptions, theories, and iterations of critical literacy with broader educational scholarship, we find it useful to draw from Lewison, Leland, and Harste's (2015) model of critical literacy. In their model, they identify four key dimensions of critical literacy: disrupting the commonplace, considering multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action and promoting social justice. The first dimension, disrupting the commonplace, concerns using language to question the status quo while simultaneously integrating various forms of critical and popular media in the curriculum. Early childhood teachers who are attending to this dimension might purposefully engage their students in historical content and concepts that are typically avoided and so seen as being "too controversial" to discuss with young children. In the case of discussing issues of race and racism, for example, a second grade teacher might intentionally introduce and discuss issues related to racial profiling and police brutality into their social studies curriculum as a means of disrupting the common view that "all" police officers work for justice in our society.

The second dimension in this model deals with considering multiple viewpoints. The voices, histories, and perspectives of people of color, women, and other historically marginalized groups are often missing and/or silenced in many of the texts that are used in schools. For this reason, this dimension of critical literacy seeks to highlight, reveal, and center the voices, histories, and perspectives of these groups. An early childhood teacher who is attending to this dimension in her classroom might take extra steps to read and incorporate texts in the classroom that share the

narratives of historically marginalized people and groups from the first-hand perspectives of these people and groups. For example, rather than reading texts that characterize Christopher Columbus as a "hero," first-grade teachers might include and read texts in their classrooms that discuss the ways in which native people suffered as a result of Christopher Columbus' actions and conquests. In doing so, students are able to learn about people and events in the world from multiple vantage points.

The third dimension within this model of critical literacy deals with the sociopolitical aspects of the content taught as a part of the curriculum. In clearer terms, early childhood teachers strive to find ways to make connections between what is taught in school and various forms of social injustice within the everyday lives of the children they serve. For example, given much of the sociopolitical tension surrounding immigration in the United States today, a kindergarten teacher who is attending to this particular dimension might purposely read texts and integrate learning activities in the classroom that humanize people who have immigrated from other countries in our society. Ultimately, the goal here is learning to move beyond the acquisition of facts and skills and to help children develop a deeper and more critical consciousness of the ways in which the concepts, ideas, and knowledge learned at school connects to the broader society. A secondary goal with this dimension is for children to develop the capacity to recognize, question, and challenge the ways in which politics often lead to unjust and oppressive outcomes for themselves and others in their everyday lived experiences.

The fourth dimension of this model deals with taking action and promoting social justice. Long-term and sustained changes within society relative to social justice cannot occur by simply identifying and discussing issues of injustice in classrooms and schools. Consequently, this fourth dimensions of critical literacy encourages early childhood and elementary teachers and students to design and implement actions to resist and combat social injustice in very "real" and "practical" ways. For example, third grade teachers who attendto this dimension of critical literacy might encourage their students to write letters to the president of the United States after reading about their current stance and policy on immigration in this country. These letters serve as a small, yet powerful and developmentally appropriate, example of how children might assume social action toward combating racism within the larger U.S. society.

Choice. A third theme that emerged from our literature review concerns student choice. Providing Black boys in early childhood and elementary classrooms with choice during reading instruction emerged as another theme in the publications we reviewed. Several studies (Husband, 2014a; Jenkins, 2009; Johnson, 2019) on this topic attributed lack of choice as a significant reason behind lack of reading motivation and motivation among Black boys and pointed out the importance of providing Black boys with access to many different text choices and genres in the classroom. Essentially, Black boys are likely to read more deeply and more frequently if they have the opportunity to voluntarily select the texts they read, rather than when they are forced to read texts that they have little or no input into selecting. To this end, Jenkins (2009) advocates for teachers to provide Black boys with access to many different types of texts, in general and with extensive choice regarding specific topics. For instance, if a teacher learns that a particular group of Black boys in her second grade classroom has an interest in learning about dogs, she should provide opportunities for these boys to read many different types of fictional and non-fictional literature related to dogs.

Collaboration. Multiple scholars (e.g., Husband, 2014a; Johnson, 2019; Wood & Jocius, 2013) reveal that Black boys are likely to be engaged and thrive in classrooms and activities where literacy is viewed as a social process and part of a collaborative process, rather than in classrooms where literacy is viewed solely in individualistic terms. Hence, teachers should consider creating spaces, opportunities, and activities in the classroom that encourage and depend on collaboration between Black boys and other students. Similarly, teachers should look for and provide opportunities for Black boys to read with other Black boys outside the classroom in informal ways as well.

Specific instructional strategies. In addition to the broad practices we outlined earlier in this section for supporting reading instruction with Black boys in early childhood and elementary classrooms, our review also indicates that many scholars (e.g., Harris & Graves, 2010; Rosa, 1994; Russell & Shifler, 2019; Washington, Branum-Martin, Lee-James, & Sun, 2019; Willis, 1995) recommend several specific instructional strategies to improve literacy outcomes among Black boys as well. In short, these strategies involve: (a) aiding Black boys in developing using appropriate schema while reading; (b) considering the cultural identities and experiences of Black boys when designing and facilitating literacy learning experiences; (c) providing access to cultural experiences outside school; and (d) increasing explicit instruction related to phonological awareness and language development. Because only 5 of the 17 publications in our review relate to the theme, we find it useful to discuss each of these publications individually.

Building and Utilizing Schema. Helping Black boys develop appropriate background knowledge and/or schemata related to particular expository texts can lead to higher levels of reading comprehension (Rosa, 1994). For instance, in a study involving 43 fourth-grade Black boys attending three elementary schools in a medium-sized urban public school district in southeast Michigan, Rosa (1994) found that Black boys who had the ability to access and successfully use textual and content schemata in reading comprehension of expository text were able to comprehend at higher levels than Black boys who did not possess this ability. Hence, the researcher recommends that teachers provide Black boys with strategies and tools to help them organize information more effectively while reading. These strategies and tools include using behavioral objectives, signaling, advance organizers, underlining, structure training, and elaboration activities. What Rosa's study ultimately implies is that by focusing on the previously mentioned reading processing skills, Black boys will comprehend expository texts at higher levels.

Centering the identities of Black boys. Designing and implementing literacy learning experiences that draw from, center, and affirm the cultural identities of Black boys can increase reading motivation and engagement in this group (Willis, 1995). For example, in a study involving her firsthand experiences as a parent of a Black son who "struggled" with reading throughout much of his K-12 schooling years, Willis (1995) advocates for teachers to become conscious of their own cultural identities and experiences and the cultural identities and experiences of the Black boys in their classrooms. Willis points out that teachers can gain valuable information and assets about Black boys as they intentionally learn about and from the lived experiences of this group. In turn, this information can be incorporated into the classroom generally and specifically in reading instruction as a means of facilitating more meaningful and engaging learning experiences. Learning about and centering the identities and experiences of Black boys in the classroom will also help teachers identify and

eliminate the assumptions, biases, and/or misunderstandings they may have about Black boys. Ultimately, these two strategies are likely to create literature-rich, critical literacy learning communities where Black boys have a greater likelihood of thriving and performing well.

Providing access to specific extracurricular experiences. The cultural experiences Black boys participate in outside the classroom can have a significant influence on reading outcomes in the classroom. Interested in the ways in which cultural knowledge outside of school influenced the reading outcomes in Black boys, Harris and Graves (2010) examined the relation between cultural capital (as transmitted by parents) and reading achievement scores in Black boys in kindergarten through fifth grade. Using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten-fifth grade (ECLS-K) data file and extensive parent interviews related to activities they participated in with their children outside school, the researchers found a positive relationship between Black boys' reading scores and their participation in "parent supervised cultural activities" (e.g., visiting the zoo, visiting museums, visiting libraries, etc.). The Black boys who participated in this study and who had parents who supervised cultural activities scored higher on the reading assessment than the Black boys in the study who did not participate in these parent-supervised cultural activities. Based on the findings from this study, the researchers recommend that schools and teachers work with cultural institutions to provide these and similar types of experiences to all Black boys as a means of improving reading performance on standardized measures.

Phonemic Awareness Instruction. Interested in the relationship between phonemic awareness instruction and reading achievement and language development in Black boys, Russell and Shifler (2019) analyzed pre- and post-test data related to

reading achievement, phonological awareness, and dialect variation. Data from the multivariate analysis of variance/multivariate analysis of covariance suggest a predictive relationship between the level of phonological awareness of the Black boys in the study and reading achievement. In other words, the Black boys who had strong phonological awareness skills tended to have higher reading achievement scores than the Black boys who had weaker phonological awareness skills. Based on the data from this study, the researchers outline two implications for practice. First, teachers should consider the effects that phonological awareness and language variations have on reading achievement when designing assessments for Black boys. Next, teachers should be willing to provide explicit instruction related to helping Black boys make successful transitions between language variations used outside school and the language used predominantly in school and business settings. This instruction supports language diversity and promotes reading achievement in and among Black boys simultaneously.

Whole school approaches and models. Having discussed both broad and specific instructional practices that can be used to support reading development in Black boys in early childhood and elementary classrooms, we now shift our discussion to whole school approaches and models. It is important to note here that making a substantial and prolonged impact on the literacy lives of Black boys requires the efforts of many different people at school. As a result, critical scholars (e.g., Anderson, 2015; Husband, 2012a; Husband, 2014a; Husband, 2014b; Jenkins, 2009; Johnson, 2019) advocate for unified and comprehensive approaches that involve educators, administrators, counselors, and parents working together to accomplish various goals. For example, drawing from his firsthand experiences as an associate superintendent of instructional services in a Michigan school district and research studies

related to the social, emotional, cultural, and academic development of Black boys, Johnson (2019) theorizes a Black Male Literacy Paradigm instructional framework for teachers who work with Black boys.

This framework has seven key components. First, it considers, invites, and incorporates the home language that Black boys bring to the classroom as assets in the reading classroom. Because language is deeply contextualized and nuanced, this framework also requires teachers to develop intertextual understandings of how language and various texts are used in different contexts in the lives of Black boys. Next, this framework requires teachers to develop a deep understanding of how cultural and other socializing agents impact Black boys in schools and within the greater U. S. society. In this perspective, teachers must be willing to identify and work against implicit and explicit negative perceptions and biases they may be holding against Black boys and their academic abilities and development. Teachers also use literacy processes, practices, texts, and tools to create empowering spaces in classrooms and schools where Black boys can showcase their various identities and take agency toward bettering themselves and the lives of those connected to them. Finally, because these components will not come to fruition without extensive teacher preparedness, this framework depends on high quality and ongoing professional development for teachers.

Learning related skills. Unfortunately, Black boys are suspended and expelled from school at disproportionately higher rates than students from other racial backgrounds (Howard, Douglas, & Warren, 2016; Wright & Counsell, 2018). Being removed from the classroom or the school environment at large has a negative impact on reading outcomes in and among Black boys (Husband, 2012a; Johnson, 2019). In an effort to

combat this systemic issue, Matthews and Kizzle (2010) suggest that teachers spend a significant amount of time helping Black boys learn the "Learning Related Skills" (LRS) that are necessary to participate fully in literacy activities and classrooms. LRS include academic organization, learning independence, responsibility, and attentiveness. The researchers argue that these skills should be explicitly taught along with other social and academic skills as a means of equipping young Black boys with the self-regulatory skills and dispositions needed to meet the teacher's behavioral expectations in the classroom. They recommend that teachers use a variety of different methods to help Black boys acquire these skills, such as direct instruction, play, and sociodramatic activities. The ultimate goal in teaching LRS is to minimize the amount of times that Black boys are removed from the classroom for disciplinary issues, allowing them to increase the amount of time spent participating in reading-related instructional activities. In the same vein, Husband (2014a) advocates for teachers and schools to design and implement disciplinary programs where Black boys remain in the classroom instead of being removed from reading instructional opportunities.

Writing Instruction

We next discuss promising writing instructional practices for this student population. Only three of the publications we reviewed dealt with writing instruction and Black boys in early childhood/elementary classrooms. Given the fact that so few publications exist in the scholarship to date that examine the topic of writing instruction and Black boys in early childhood/elementary classrooms, we found it valuable to discuss each of the publications individually. Collins (2011) discussed the importance of not creating writing instructional interactions that directly and indirectly position Black boys as being "bad boys" or rebellious. In a discourse analysis of a writing lesson

involving a fifth grade Black male named Larnell, she reported that the teacher used both verbal and non-verbal communication consistently in ways that positioned Larnell as being a non-compliant and defiant learner during the lesson. Ultimately, this social positioning inhibited Larnell from meeting the writing expectations embedded in the lesson. Collins further points that teachers should be careful not to view Black boys as being "problematic" or "disruptive" in the classroom, as these deficit perceptions can have a negative impact on their writing development and progress. Furthermore, she recommends that teachers reflect critically on the practices and structures they enact in the classroom to ensure that these practices and structures are not "blaming" Black boys for issues created by the teacher.

Umbreit, Ferro, Liaupsin, and Lane (2007) found a direct link between the amount of time and child spends on-task and the overall outcome of the task. In an effort to examine how this association might apply to writing instruction involving Black boys, Aitken and colleagues (2011) examined the effects of a systematic functional assessment-based intervention with a third-grade Black boy named Caleb. In an effort to decrease the amount of time Caleb spent off-task during writing tasks, the research team designed and implemented an intervention that: (a) adjusted the antecedent conditions; (b) taught the replacement behavior; (c) provided two strategically time reinforcements; and (d) no discouraged teachers from attending to off-task behaviors. The research team then observed and recorded Caleb's behaviors while completing the assigned writing tasks.

Findings indicated that the self-regulation intervention had a positive effect on the writing development of the student in the study. Initially, Caleb had low scores in both total word count and functional story elements during the baseline phase. However, as instruction of the writing strategy continued, Caleb used the strategy in planning and writing his stories. The strategy prompted him to include more elements in his writing, thereby lengthening his stories and increasing his overall word count. Although Caleb's behavior cannot be generalized to all Black boys, his improvement suggests the potential of incorporating self-regulation interventions during instances of writing instruction to increase the amount of time students spend engaged in writing tasks and activities.

More recently, Graham, Harris, and Beard (2019) examined the effectiveness of instructional procedures for improving the writing of young Black boys who experienced difficulty learning to write. The researchers reanalyzed the data from five true experiments (Graham, Harris, & Fink, 2000; Graham, Harris, & Fink-Chorzempa, 2002; Graham & Harris, 2005, 2006; Saddler & Graham, 2005) previously conducted with mostly young Black students who were experiencing difficulty learning to write, and only focused on the students who were male and Black for this study. Each of these studies taught one or more fundamental writing process(es) or skill(s) using evidence-based writing practices validated in previous research. Data from this study reveal that teaching fundamental writing skills and processes (i.e., planning, revising, self-regulation, sentence construction, handwriting and spelling) improved writing performance in and among the Black boys in this study. Although the sample size for this study was small, it nonetheless suggests the importance of teachers' incorporating these fundamental writing skills and processes into their writing programs as a means of improving writing performance in and among Black boys.

Black Boys in Middle School and High School Contexts

In the following sections, we discuss promising reading instructional practices for Black boys in

middle school and high school contexts, with attention to (a) deficit mindsets; (b) cultural competency; (c) identity; (d) text selection; (e) whole school models; and (f) culturally responsive literacy instruction.

Reading Instruction

Deficit Mindsets and Cultural Competency.
Research (e.g., Harper, 2009; Howard, Douglas, & Warren, 2016) reveals that a teacher's mindset can have a positive or negative impact on learning outcomes in and among Black males. From this vantage point, several scholars (e.g., Haddix, 2009; Piazza, 2010; Tatum, 2003) articulate the need for teachers to change negative mindsets and discourses about Black boys, as a means of supporting literacy development in this student population. For example, Haddix (2009) argues that framing Black adolescent boys and their literacy development in deficit terms within the dominant discourse dehumanizes Black boys and blames Black boys for their literacy progress or lack thereof. As a means of disrupting these deficit mindsets, she advocates for teachers to consider the ways in which individualized and institutionalized factors have and continue to contribute to literacy outcomes in Black boys. Furthermore, she also argues that the historical, social, political, and cultural factors that impact the schooling process of Black boys must be taken into account when developing and implementing research, policy, and practice aimed at improving the literacy outcomes of Black boys.

It is equally important for teachers to disrupt and dismantle deficit mindsets discourses and perspectives surrounding Black adolescent boys and literacy. Several scholars (Piazza, 2010; Tatum, 2006) point out the need for teachers to develop cultural competence to appropriately respond to the needs and strengths of Black boys in middle school and high school contexts. For example, in a study

involving three adolescent Black boys in an after-school program who were labeled by their teachers and others as "struggling readers," Piazza (2010) found that developing a deep understanding of the cultural background, knowledge base, and perspectives that these young boys brought to the classroom enabled her to create instructional spaces and opportunities that were engaging and relevant for the learners involved.

Considering the Social, Cultural, and Historical Identities of Black boys We now discuss the importance of considering the social, cultural, and historical identities of Black boys during literacy learning opportunities. A myriad of scholars (e.g., Dwarte, 2014; Gyimah & Allen, 2016; Johnson, 2015; Kirkland, 2009, 2011a, 2013, 2015, 2017; Kirkland & Malone, 2017; Staples, 2012; Tatum, 2005, 2013) highlight the need for teachers to consider and incorporate the rich and varied social and cultural identities, language systems, and experiences that Black adolescent boys bring to the classrooms as "assets" when designing and facilitating high quality, meaningful, and responsive literacy learning opportunities for this population. For example, drawing from a study involving extensive literacy instructional activities and interactions between a teacher named Mr. Kegler and a 15 year-old Black boy named Derrick, Kirkland (2011a) found there was a direct relationship between Derrick's social identity and the ways in which he selected texts to read in the classroom. Derrick explained that he resisted reading the classic text *Beowulf* because it had little or no connection to his identity. Interestingly enough, Derrick did enjoy reading the classic text, *The Iliad*. Unlike the protagonist of *Beowulf*, the main character in The Iliad was relatable to Derrick. Kirkland recommends that teachers inventory the ideologies of the Black boys in their classrooms and provide opportunities for them to select books that speak to and reflect their social identities. To this end, he also argues for

teachers to "tailor" the ELA curriculum in middle school and high school classrooms to meet and respond to the individualized and collective ideologies of the Black boys involved in much of the same way that a tailor customizes clothes to meet the needs of any individual person.

Relevant, Meaningful and Empowering Texts. The texts that Black boys have access to in the classroom can have a powerful impact on the literacy learning process (Tatum, 2014a). Numerous scholars (e.g., Boone, Rawson, & Vance, 2010; Kirkland, 2011b; Orange & Horowitz, 1999; Piazza & Duncan, 2012; Sciurba, 2014; Tatum, 1999, 2006, 2007, 2008a, 2009, 2014a, 2014b) articulate the importance of providing Black adolescent boys with access to relevant, meaningful, and empowering texts in the classroom as a means of increasing reading motivation and engagement. For example, Tatum (2009; 2014a) argues that teachers should provide opportunities for Black adolescent boys to read what he calls "powerful" and "enabling texts." These texts encourage and empower Black adolescent boys with the dispositions, tools, and resources to take action in their lives and within their local contexts. Moreover, enabling texts are texts that speak to cognitive, cultural, social, political, and economic experiences of Black adolescent boys (Tatum, 2014a). Hence, teachers should take the effort and time to inventory the reading preference of Black adolescent boys in the classroom prior to making decisions related to which texts will or will not be included in the literacy curriculum and classroom libraries, as the reading preferences of Black adolescent boys are often quite different from the reading preferences of the teacher in the classroom (Orange & Horowitz, 1999).

It is important for teachers to make relevant, meaningful, and empowering texts accessible to Black adolescent boys as a means of increasing reading engagement and reading outcomes. It is equally important for school librarians to make these types of texts available in school libraries (Hodges & Pringle, 2013; Hughes-Hassell & Rawson, 2011, 2014; Hughes-Hassell, et al., 2012). Hughes-Hassell et al. outline six strategies that school librarians can implement to make relevant, meaningful, and empowering texts more inviting and accessible for Black adolescent boys. First, they suggest that school librarians actively collect, display, and encourage the reading of texts that might be relevant to Black adolescent boys. Second, they recommend that school librarians allow Black adolescent boys to choose the texts they would like to read. Third, they recommend that school librarians provide opportunities for Black adolescent boys to engage in meaningful discussions related to the text and to encourage written connections where feasible. Fourth, they recommend that school librarians structure the discussions in ways that allow them to be driven by Black boys. Next, they recommend for school librarians to find ways to make connections between the texts that are offered and read and school and the home and communities of the Black boys at the school. Lastly, they advocate for more professional development for school librarians related to meeting and responding to the needs of Black adolescent boys.

Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction. Providing Black boys with access to empowering, relevant, and meaningful texts is not enough to facilitate promising learning outcomes (Tatum, 2014a). Numerous scholars (e.g., Enriquez, 2013; Johnson, 2014, 2015; Kirkland, 2011a; Kirkland&Jackson, 2009; Piazza, 2010; Piazza & Duncan, 2012; Tatum, 2008a, 2014a) find it imperative for literacy instructors to implement culturally responsive and differentiated instructional approaches with Black adolescent boys, as a means of improving reading motivation and desired reading outcomes. For example, in their study with

Black adolescent boys enrolled in an after-school reading program, Piazza and Duncan (2012) found that incorporating "alternative" mediums (e.g., popular culture, games, music, etc.) into reading instruction tended to increase the motivation to read among a small group of Black boys. The Black boys in their study read more frequently and made stronger and deeper connections when they had opportunities to participate in literacy experiences that draw from these non-traditional assets. Hence, they advocate for teachers to take the time to develop deep, meaningful, and mutually beneficial relationships with students as a necessary requisite in designing and facilitating responsive literacy learning experiences for Black boys. In a similar fashion, Johnson (2015) advocates that teachers build on and draw from the assets and resources that exist within local communities and contexts that Black adolescent boys live in. He calls for implementing "place-based" pedagogies to improve literacy outcomes in and across this group of students. In sum, "place-based" pedagogies provide experiences that are community-based, relevant, hands-on, and thereby highly attractive and engaging for Black boys.

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It is important to reiterate here that Black adolescent boys are not a monolithic group. Consequently, Kirkland (2011a) argues for teachers to move beyond the universal literacy standards and curricula that are mandated by many school districts and to create and differentiate literacy learning experiences that best meet the needs of the individual Black boys in a particular context. He further advocates for teachers to give more deference and consideration to the needs, interests, and individual strengths of Black boys in a particular context than the formalized literacy standards that

are prescribed. In doing so, teachers are then able to create a more meaningful, rich, and appropriate literacy experience for the Black boys they serve.

It is important for teachers to design and implement culturally responsive and differentiated literacy approaches with Black boys as a means of creating more meaningful literacy experiences and opportunities in the classroom. Nonetheless, several scholars (e.g., Anderson & Sadler, 2009; Tatum, 1999, 2008b; Tatum & Muhammad, 2012) also emphasize the need for Black adolescent boys to participate in "explicit" instructional opportunities related to specific literacy learning skills as a means of improving literacy outcomes. For instance, Tatum and Muhammad argue thatproviding explicit skills instruction in various areas—e.g., vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—is vitally important to address the needs and strengths of the Black boys involved. Nonetheless, they further explain how equally important it is for teachers to take the cultural, social, emotional, economic, and political identities of Black boys into account while facilitating this skills instruction. In doing so, teachers are able to equip Black boys with the concrete and abstract tools needed to engage with texts more deeply. Furthermore, it is important to note, while the aforementioned scholarship suggests that skills instruction for Black boys has significant merit, it should be balanced with meaning-making approaches to literacy to avoid diminishing reading motivation in this group (Anderson & Sadler, 2009).

Whole School Models and Approaches. The literacy challenges that Black boys experience in schools are often a direct result of a combination of different instructional and systemic factors that

occur implicitly and explicitly in schools. For this reason, a few scholars (e.g., Johnson, 2019; Tatum, 2008b; Tatum & Mohammad, 2012) advocate for school-wide comprehensive literacy approaches and models for Black adolescent boys. For instance, Tatum argues for what he calls an "anatomically complete" model of literacy education for Black boys. This model of literacy education considers: (a) literacy theory; (b) literacy instruction; and (c) professional development. Tatum (1999) argues for literacy scholars and teachers to carefully consider and reconsider the role of literacy instruction, orientations toward curriculum, and approaches to literacy instruction as they pertain to Black boys. Next, concerning literacy instruction, this model challenges teachers to think critically about the instructional practices that are implemented, the texts that are available, and the types of assessments that are used on a regular basis with this population of students. Essentially, teachers should constantly question the degree to which these practices and assessments are producing desirable and equitable literacy learning opportunities and outcomes for Black boys. This model calls for high quality and sustained professional development for pre-service and in-service teachers related to Black boys and their literacy development.

Writing Instruction

Pivotal scholarship (Jocson, 2006; Tatum, 2013b, 2015; Tatum & Gue, 2010, 2012) related to Black adolescent boys and writing instruction suggests that writing can produce benefits for Black adolescent boys, when it is framed in ways that center the identities and experiences of Black boys. For example, in a study involving 12 Black boys (ages 12 to 17) who were involved in a five-week writing program at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Tatum and Gue (2012) found that writing was used by the participants in the program as a medium to deal with some of the social and cultural

complexities and challenges they were experiencing in their daily lives. The participants in the program wrote poems, short stories, children stories, and chapters of novels during the weeks designated for each. Data from the study revealed that writing can provide opportunities for Black boys to gain more insight into their social identities and locations within the world. Next, writing can allow space for them to discuss things that might be bothering them at the time. Finally, writing can serve as a tool to respond to various social issues in history and contemporary society. Thus, teachers should strive to create writing opportunities Black boys can relate to, build upon, and center social, cultural, racial, economic, and emotional experiences, as a means of improving writing engagement in their student population.

More recently, contemporary scholars (Lewis Ellison, 2017; Lewis Ellison & Solomon, 2018) have documented some of the potential benefits and possibilities of using digital writing modes and processes with Black adolescent boys. For example, in a case study involving a middle school Black male named Zack who engaged in digital storytelling processes, Lewis Ellison found that this mode of composing (digital storytelling) created a space for him to use his personal experiences and identity as assets in the writing process. Zack participated in what Lewis Ellison calls a Digital Participatory Choice Culture (DPCC), a digital learning community that encouraged members to use their social and cultural identities as resources and meaning-making tools during online engagement process. Zack used his knowledge about the video game Minecraft while participating in digital storytelling processes. The DPCC and the activities involved provides Zack with a significant degree of choice and agency, as compared with more traditional approaches to writing composition. Lewis Ellison advocates for teachers to create similar types of digital cultures and communities in their

classrooms so that Black adolescent boys can use their home knowledge, skills, and experiences as vital resources during the writing process.

Recommendations for Practice

The purpose of this integrative literature review was to identify promising reading and writing instructional practices for Black boys across the entire P-12 educational pipeline. Overall, our integrative review of the scholarship yielded multiple promising reading and writing practices for Black boys in early childhood/elementary and middle school/high school contexts. Based on our findings, we make the following recommendations for *reading* instruction across the P-12 educational pipeline:

- **Identify and eliminate culturally/racially biased and deficit mindsets** — It is difficult for teachers and literacy professionals to adequately and effectively improve reading outcomes in Black boys if they foster biased and/or deficit mindsets towards this group (Harper, 2009; Howard, Douglas, & Warren, 2016). Hence, we recommend that teachers intentionally consider ways to identify and change these mindsets. A necessary first step in this process is for teachers to move beyond colorblind approaches to learning and instruction, shift toward color-conscious approaches that acknowledge racial identities in classrooms, and recognize these identities as valuable assets in the instructional process (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011). A second way that teachers might begin to identify and eliminate these mindsets is by critically reflecting on the ways in which race and racism operate in their lives as teachers and the lives of their students. Milner (2003) recommends that teachers consider the

following questions to aid them during this critical racial reflection process:

1. How will my race influence my work as a teacher with students of color?

2. How do I, as a teacher, situate myself in the education of others, and how do I negotiate the power structure in my class to allow students to feel a sense of worth?

3. How do I situate and negotiate students' knowledge, experiences, expertise, and race with my own?

4. What are the most important issues for most of my students and myself? How will race impact these issues?

5. To what degree is my role as teacher and my experiences superior to the experiences and expertise of students?

6. What knowledge can I learn from my students?

- **Establish and communicate high expectations for all Black boys** — As much as it is important for teachers to identify and eliminate biased and deficit mindsets toward and about Black boys, it is equally important for teachers to establish and communicate high expectations for Black boys as a means of supporting, encouraging, and facilitating literacy development for and in this group (Doucet, 2017; Howard, 2014; Milner, 2003). Scholars (e.g., Howard, 2014; Milner, 2003) highlight a direct link between student outcomes and teacher expectations. Essentially, Black boys tend to thrive at higher levels in classrooms and learning contexts in which the teacher believes they are able to succeed and provides the corresponding encouragements and supports, rather than in

classrooms where the teacher communicates low expectations related to their ability to be successful. Hence, we recommend that teachers establish and communicate high expectations for and about Black boys related to their reading and writing developmental processes.

- **Develop cultural competencies** — Black boys bring a repertoire of rich culturally-situated language systems, background knowledge, experiences, and ways of being that are underutilized in most reading and writing classes (Piazza, 2010; Tatum, 2006). We recommend that teachers take steps to develop cultural competencies in these areas as a means of providing more meaningful, engaging, and relevant instructional experiences for this group.
- **Carefully consider the ideologies and identities of Black boys**- — Black boys are not a monolithic group. In other words, the ways in which they select and engage in texts will ultimately vary from student to student and class to class. Hence, teachers should make an effort to carefully consider these individual ideologies that Black boys hold in a particular classroom when deciding on which texts and activities to make accessible (Kirkland, 2015, 2017; Kirkland & Malone, 2017).

- **Incorporate culturally responsive texts** — Black boys are likely to have higher levels of reading motivation if they have access to reading texts that relate to their social and cultural experiences and identities (Boone, Rawson, & Vance, 2010; Kirkland, 2011b; Orange & Horowitz, 1999; Piazza & Duncan, 2012; Sciurba, 2014). Hence, teachers should learn about the social and cultural assets that Black boys bring to the classroom and provide access to texts that respond to and reflect these assets.

- **Incorporate culturally responsive approaches to literacy instruction** — It is unlikely that using culturally responsive literature in the classroom, in of itself, will yield long term promising outcomes with Black boys. Instead, teachers should also strive to incorporate culturally responsive approaches to reading and writing instruction (Enriquez, 2013; Johnson, 2014; Johnson, 2015; Kirkland, 2011a; Piazza, 2010; Piazza & Duncan, 2012). In short, a culturally responsive approach to literacy instruction values, incorporates, and draws from the cultural assets that Black boys bring to the classroom during literacy instruction. A culturally-responsive approach to literacy instruction allows teachers to draw on the cultural norms, language systems, and ways of knowing and being of Black boys (Johnson, 2014, 2015).

- **Incorporate critical literacy approaches** — It is important for teachers to equip Black boys with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to identify how various systems of oppression exist in their lives and the world around them, as a necessary first step in making the world a more equitable and socially just place. This awareness makes literacy processes more meaningful, engaging, and empowering for Black boys. Thus, teachers should make conscious efforts to incorporate critical literacy approaches in their reading instruction (Tyson, 1999; Wood & Jocius, 2013, 2014).

- **Provide extensive choice** — Black boys are likely to read more often and more deeply if they have the opportunity to self-select the books they read (Husband, 2014; Jenkins, 2009; Johnson, 2019). Hence, teachers should assess the reading interests/preferences of the Black boys in their classrooms and provide extensive opportunities to read many different types of

texts and across many different genres related to these interests/preferences.

- **Provide opportunities to collaborate** — Reading is often viewed as a more inviting and meaningful process when it is shared with others within a larger social context (Johnson, 2019; Wood & Jocius, 2013). Consequently, teachers should consider providing structured opportunities for Black boys to interact socially and collaborate in meaningful and purposeful ways during the reading process.

- **Teach meaning-making strategies explicitly and continually** — It is important for teachers to teach meaning making strategies (e.g., decoding, summarizing, vocabulary knowledge, fluency skills) in order for Black boys to successfully master and succeed at formal academic and school-based reading tasks (Harris & Graves, 2010; Rosa, 1994; Russell & Shifler, 2019). Hence, teachers should make an effort to teach and reinforce these strategies explicitly and continuously in meaningful and thoughtful ways.

- **Make connections across reading at home, community, and school** — Reading experiences become more relevant and meaningful for Black boys if they have opportunities to make fluid connections across home, community, and school contexts (Harris & Graves, 2010). Hence, teachers should design and implement reading opportunities and activities that encourage organic connections across these contexts.

- **Design whole school models and approaches** — Changing literacy outcomes in and among Black boys cannot be accomplished by the efforts of one teacher in one classroom (Anderson, 2015; Husband, 2012, 2014a, 2014b;

Jenkins, 2009; Johnson, 2019). Consequently, it is imperative that teachers collaborate with other teachers to design and implement comprehensive and whole school models and approaches to meeting the needs of Black boys.

- **Reform disciplinary policies and practices** — The disciplinary policies and practices in many classrooms and schools tend to have a disproportionately negative impact on the amount of reading instructional time that Black boys receive (Howard, 2014). For these reasons, it is necessary for teachers and administrators to (re)think and (re)form these policies and practices in ways that minimize the amount of reading instructional time that is often sacrificed.

We now turn our discussion to *writing* instruction. Based on our findings, we make the following recommendations for writing instruction across the P-12 educational pipeline:

- **Believe in Black boys' ability to write well** — Black boys are more likely to engage in the writing process if they have caring adults, administrators, and/or teachers who believe in their ability to write well (Everett, 2016). Hence, we recommend that teachers work toward communicating their beliefs that Black boys should embrace intellectually challenging writing opportunities.

- **Avoid instructional exchanges that position Black boys in negative ways** — Teachers and literacy professionals should critically examine the participation structures in their writing classrooms to ensure that Black boys are not being view or positioned as "bad boys" (Collins, 2011; Jenkins, 2009). In other words, teachers and other literacy professionals should intentionally create spaces where Black boys can participate

fully and ensure they are not viewed as rebellious by others in the classroom.

- **Incorporate self-regulation supports as needed** — Some Black boys may need additional self-regulation supports during the writing process to fully engage and remain on task for an extended period of time (Aitken et al., 2011). Thus, teachers should be willing to provide these supports as forms of differentiation necessary.

- **Provide explicit instruction related to fundamental writing processes and skills** — In addition to equipping Black boys with the self-regulation supports needed to participate fully in writing tasks for extended periods of time, it is also necessary for teachers to provide continual instruction and scaffolds related to fundamental writing processes (e.g., drafting, revising, publishing) and skills as a means of enhancing writing outcomes in and among this group (Graham, Harris, & Beard, 2019). Black boys will benefit from mini-lessons related to these specific skills and processes.

- **Make connections between writing and social, cultural, emotional, and personal experiences** — Writing can serve as a powerful tool for Black boys to make sense of, express, and respond to issues and situations that are occurring in their personal, social, emotional, and cultural lives (Tatum & Gue, 2012). Hence, teachers should consider structuring writing opportunities in ways that provide the flexibility, autonomy, and agency for Black boys to infuse these critical experiences into their writing.

- **Provide opportunities to use personal and home knowledge as resources in the writing process** — It is evident that when Black boys are forced to respond to scripted curricula, writing prompts, and tasks that are disconnected from their experiences outside of the classroom they lose interest (Jocson, 2006; Tatum, 2013b, 2015; Tatum & Gue, 2010, 2012;). Black boys are likely to be more engaged in the writing process if they have opportunities to write in ways that make connections between their home and school lives. Hence, teachers and literacy professionals should work toward finding meaningful and innovative ways to incorporate these home resources, strengths, and assets into the writing classroom.

Directions for Future Research

Based on our integrative review, we identify three important areas for future research. First, our review indicated that the vast majority of the scholarship related to Black boys center on reading instruction, as opposed to writing instruction. Consequently, we recommend additional research related to Black boys and promising writing practices. More specifically, we recommend that researchers design and conduct classroom-based studies that document and showcase contexts where Black boys are engaged in writing processes that are yielding desirable academic and social outcomes.

In addition to revealing the need for more scholarship related to writing instruction and Black boys, our integrative literature review also revealed the need for more scholarship related to Black boys and early literacy practices, in particular. More specifically, very few of the publications in our review focused on Black boys in preschool through second grade classrooms. Consequently, very little is known about promising literacy practices related to Black boys at this stage of the developmental spectrum. We recommend additional research in this area. We believe that early childhood teachers,

directors, and others who specialize in working with children and families in the birth to eight age span would benefit greatly from such research findings.

A few of the studies in our review illustrated the potential of using various digital technologies as a means of increasing literacy engagement in and among Black boys. More research is needed in this area to better understand how teachers and literacy professionals might employ various digital technologies to further improve literacy outcomes in this student population. Our review suggests the importance of school wide and collaborative approaches to improving literacy outcomes for Black boys. However, no documented examples of how these school wide approaches exist within the current body of scholarship on this topic. Both researchers and teachers alike are likely to benefit greatly from these types of approaches.

Final Thoughts

For far too long, the literacy development and progress of Black boys has been situated within larger male "crisis" narratives in schools (Brown & Donnor, 2011). As a result, Black boys are often understood and discussed using terms suggesting pathology: bad boy, at-risk, underachieving, disadvantaged, and struggling. Not only does this deficit language and framework blame Black boys for their educational experiences, it also disallows educators from using literacy practices that are yielding positive and promising outcomes with this population. In this article, we have started to counter this narrative by identifying and discussing literacy practices, places, and spaces where Black boys are, in fact, making considerable academic literacy progress, gains, and outcomes. In an effort to find both theoretical

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insights and practical solutions to the various challenges Black boys often experience across the P-12 educational spectrum, we believe it is absolutely essential for literacy scholars and practitioners to continue to design and implement future research studies, reviews, and literacy learning experiences involving Black boys that diligently contest these deficit mindsets and discourses as a means of creating more humanizing and empowering literacy outcomes in this student population.

In an effort to develop assets-based mindsets that work toward equipping and empowering Black boys during literacy opportunities, we believe it is necessary for literacy practitioners to carefully consider four specific areas that matter when designing and facilitating literacy instruction with Black boys across the entire P-12 educational pipeline. First, literacy practitioners should carefully consider how their values and beliefs infiltrate their teaching. Those who study and work with Black boys must understand that there are overall implicit and explicit ideologies, perspectives, and points of view related to Black boys and literacy development. These viewpoints can have a tremendous and even detrimental impact on how Black boys are perceived and ultimately how teachers approach instruction with this group. In the same vein, teachers who believe that Black boys can and will become fluent readers and prolific writers in their classrooms are more likely to experience these outcomes more than teachers who do not share the same way of thinking. Therefore, those of us who labor to make a significant and positive impact on the literacy progress of Black boys must be willing to maintain a posture of ongoing critical reflexivity.

In addition, literacy practitioners must also come to realize that identity matters. In far too many classrooms, the racial, social, and cultural identities and experiences of Black boys are frequently excluded and/or silenced during literacy learning opportunities. Thus, Black boys often see literacy learning in schools as alienating and isolating processes. In an effort to reverse this process, teachers must be willing to incorporate, draw from, and center literacy experiences around the identities of Black boys.

Next, literacy practitioners must also realize that text selection and representation matter. Unfortunately, many of the texts that are made accessible to Black boys in today's literacy classrooms have little or nothing to do with their personal experiences and interests. As a result, Black boys often find themselves less interested in reading particular texts than other student populations. One way to reverse this trend is to inquire about the social, cultural, and personal interests of the Black boys in the classroom and to consider this data when making decisions related to which texts to include or exclude and the literacy curriculum. Furthermore, Black boys are likely to read more often and at deeper levels if they are provided with opportunities to read texts that resonate with their backgrounds, interests, and experiences than when they are forced to read texts where they have no

Finally, literacy practitioners must also consider that culturally responsive and high-quality literacy backgrounds, interests, and experiences than when instruction matter. Black boys are more likely to excel, thrive, and achieve in instructional contexts that are culturally responsive, culturally affirming, and culturally empowering than classrooms that center White, middle class, and dominant ways of knowing and being in the world. Therefore, it is absolutely vital for teachers to work independently and collaboratively to create literacy learning experiences that are responsive to ways in which Black boys experience the world and learn. Along these same lines, Black boys are more likely to accomplish and achieve both micro-level and macro-level literacy goals, objectives, and standards when they experience high quality, meaningful, and thoughtful instruction in reading and writing than when they sit through skill and drill, standardized, and low-quality lessons in reading and writing. Hence, teachers must work diligently, relentlessly, and tirelessly to provide Black boys with the highest quality of literacy learning experiences within their power. Furthermore, not taking these four areas inton serious consideration will continue (and possibly even exacerbate) the negative experiences that many Black males experience in the literacy classroom for many years to come.

natural interest or curiosity.

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Appendix A

Description of Publications in Each Category

Authors and Year	Focus on Early Childhood/Elementary Reading	Focus on Middle/High School Reading	Focus on Early Childhood/Elementary Writing	Focus on Middle School/High School Writing	Focus on Black Boys and Literacy, Irrespective of Grades
Aitken et. Al. , 2001			X		
Anderson, 2015	X				
		X			
Anderson & Sadler, 2009					
Author, 2012a	X				
Author, 2012b	X				
Author, 2014a	X				

Author, 2014b	X			
Boone, Rawson, & Vance, 2010	X			
Collins, 2011			X	
Dwarte, 2014		X		
Ellison, Solomon, M., & Rowsell, 2018			X	
Enriquez, 2013		X		
Everrett, 2016			X	
Gyimah, & Allen, 2016				X
Graham, Harris, & Beard, 2019	X			
Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2005	X			
Haddix, 2009			X	
Harris & Graves, 2010	X			

Hodges, & Pringle, 2013				X
Hughes-Hassell, & Rawson, 2011		X		
Hughes-Hassell, & Rawson, 2014				X
Jenkins, 2009	X			
Jocson, 2006.			X	
Johnson, 2014			X	
Johnson, 2015			X	
Johnson, 2019				X
Kirkland & Jackson, 2009		X		
Kirkland, 2011a		X		
Kirkland, 2011b		X		
Kirkland, 2013		X		
Kirkland, 2015		X		

Kirkland, 2017		X		
Lewis Ellison, 2017				X
Matthews & Kizzle, 2010	X			
Orange & Horowitz, 1999		X		
Piazza, 2010		X		
Piazza & Duncan, 2012		X		
Rosa, 1994	X			
Russell & Shiffler, 2019	X			
Saddler & Graham, 2005			X	
Sciurba, 2014		X		
Staples, 2012		X		
Tatum, 1999		X		

Tatum, 2003	X	
Tatum, 2005	X	
Tatum, 2006	X	
Tatum, 2007	X	
Tatum, 2008a	X	
Tatum, 2008b	X	
Tatum, 2008c	X	
Tatum, 2009	X	
Tatum, 2013a	X	
Tatum, 2013b		X
Tatum, 2014a	X	
Tatum, 2014b	X	
Tatum, 2015		X
Tatum & Gue, 2010		X

Tatum, & Muhammad, 2012	
Tyson, 1999	X
Willis, 1995	X
Wood & Jocius, 2013	X
Wood & Jocius, 2014	X