

Educating Black Males With Dyslexia

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Much of the scholarship on Black males in the educational literature focuses on the achievement gap; their underrepresentation in gifted and advanced placement programs; their overrepresentation in special education programs and their high rates of school suspensions and expulsions. Although overrepresented in special education, Black males with dyslexia are seldom given attention in scholarly works; and an extensive review of the literature yields a lack of empirical research or articles on Black males with dyslexia. This article focuses on Black males with dyslexia and provides recommendations for appropriate classroom practice based on the author's lived experiences.

Keywords: Black males, dyslexia, learning disability, Project Success, special education overrepresentation

Effectively educating Black males with dyslexia is of utmost importance. Scholarship addressing Black males in special education who are not receiving effective intervention and diagnosed with needs other than dyslexia should be an urgent matter for administrator's practitioners, researchers, policy makers, and teachers. The purpose of this article is to emphasize the need for scholarship (theory and literature) on learning disabilities, specifically dyslexia, among Black males, its impact on their reading proficiency, and the importance of appropriate classroom pedagogy to address their unique academic needs. Indeed, the need is great given the realization that many Black males have poor or dismal school outcomes, more than any racial and gender group (e.g., Aud et al., 2012) and seen in various reports on the educational status of Black males (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012; the U.S. Department of Education, National Center of Education Statistics, 2013).

This article focuses on the learning needs of Black males with dyslexia and provides recommendations for appropriate classroom practice. The article begins with a review of the literature pertaining to Black male students and the achievement gap as a whole, and reading in particular. Next, the article reviews the intersection of race and dyslexia among Black males. Suggestions are recommended as interventions for Black male with dyslexia. The article concludes with a narrative of my personal pre-college and college years as a Black male with dyslexia.

Literature Review

Black Males and the Achievement Gap

The achievement gap between Black and White students is widely recognized as an urgent crisis (Barton & Coley, 2009; Buly & Valencia, 2002; Moats & Dakin, 2007; Parkinson & Rowan, 2008). This is evidenced by Barton and Coley (2009):

Most of the progress in closing the achievement gap in reading and mathematics occurred during the 1970s and 1980s. Since then, overall progress in closing the gaps has slowed. With the exception of the gap in reading for 9-year-olds in 2008, the size of the gaps seen in the late 1980s has never been smaller (p. 7).

Nationally, Black males who make it to the 12th grade are performing at least four years behind White males in reading and math. The Black-White achievement gap can be examined in several ways, among which are teacher quality, academic rigor, high academic expectations, family involvement, and exposure to literacy-enriched environments, all of which significantly influence students' achievement (Barton & Coley, 2009; Edwards & Turner, 2009; Van Kleeck, 2004; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). A lack of these dynamics can contribute to racial achievement gaps but due to space limitations, I focus on only three contributing factors.

One indicator of the achievement gap between Black and White males is the difference in graduation rates. During the 2009-2010 school year, the Schott Foundation for Public Education (2012) reported that 52% of Black males graduated from high school compared to 78% of their White peers. In the District of Columbia, the graduation rate for Black males was 38%; 44% in Nebraska; 37% in New York; and 55% in Wisconsin, compared to their White peers, which were 88% in the District of Columbia; 86% in Nebraska; 78% in New York; and 92% in Wisconsin.

A second indicator is performance on statewide tests. The Schott Foundation for Public Education (2012) reported that in four major cities, the percentage of Black males with above average reading proficiency scores on statewide tests was Boston (10%), Charlotte (12%), Miami (11%), and New York (13%), compared to their White peers, which was 45%, 50%, 41%, and 32%, respectively. Even worse, this report revealed that two cities had tremendously low levels of Black male test proficiency - Cleveland (3%) and Milwaukee (3%)—compared to their White peers, which were 17% and 21%, respectively.

A third indicator of the achievement gap relates to suspensions and expulsions, which affects the educational performance of Black males and their ability to achieve acceptable school outcomes. Information from the U.S. Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC, 2012) revealed that Black males were three times more likely to be suspended or expelled from school than their White peers.

Defining Dyslexia

Before moving forward, it is critical to establish a definition of dyslexia. The definition of Lyon, Shaywitz, and Shaywitz (2003) seems to capture the essence of this reading disorder. They defined dyslexia as a:

... Specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experiences that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge (p. 2).

Despite having average or above average intelligence, students with dyslexia have difficulty acquiring reading skills at a proficient level (Berninger et al., 2006; Byrnes & Wasik, 2009; Catts, Hogan, & Adlof 2005; Gustafson, Ferreira & Ronnberg, 2007; Snowling & Hulme, 2005; Snowling, 2000; Troia, 2004; Wolf, 2007). They may also have difficulty learning the alphabet, rhyming words, and connecting letters to their sounds (Cassar & Treiman, 2004; O'Connor & Bell, 2004) as well as a plethora of other associated conditions.

Intersection of Race and Dyslexia

Race and dyslexia is an area that needs more research (Blanchett, 2010; Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry, 2009). Lindo (2006) examined 10 years of articles in this area from *Reading Research Quarterly* (1994-2004), the *Journal of Educational Psychology* (1994-2004) and all volumes of the *Journal of Scientific Study of Reading* (1997-2007). Lindo's analysis revealed that none of the research articles reported conclusions by race and suggested that in addition to increasing the quantity of rigorous studies for this population, more reading interventions need to include Black students (Hoyles & Hoyles, 2010; Proctor, Graves & Esch, 2012).

Scholars have suggested that the specific study of Black males with dyslexia has been long neglected. For example, D.Y. Ford (personal communication, Jan 5, 2012) stated, "Little to nothing exists on this population and topic" and J. Moore (personal communication, May 18, 2012) stated, "It is a topical area that certainly needs a lot of attention".

To investigate the extent of research on Black males with dyslexia, an experienced library operations manager/reference librarian whom I will call T. X. Alpha conducted a search using SAGE Premium Journal and the keywords Black students AND dyslexia, gender AND dyslexia, and Black AND dyslexia. T. X. Alpha (personal communication, October 7, 2013) noted:

So far I have been unable to find any research paper that ties dyslexia and Black males. I searched primarily in the SAGE journal database and there are a few articles that mention race as one of the factors of their research, but there is no conclusion that generalizes reading disabilities to Black male students. There are a couple that address the gender factor, but not race and gender together.

Next, T. X. Alpha provided insight regarding another database that could be searched – ProQuest Educational Journals. The specific content of this search focused on education topics and resulted in 283 articles. However, none of these articles focused on Black males with dyslexia nor did they concentrate on the unique academic needs of Black males with dyslexia. These articles focused on general studies of dyslexia. In contrast, there were 9,008 articles on Black males in special education and Black males 'at-risk'. An imbalance of literature on Black males with dyslexia may reflect misguided thinking about Black males with dyslexia not having this learning disability diagnosed and, instead, placed in special education classes for emotional or behavioral disorders.

Black Males with Dyslexia

The extent to which dyslexia contributes to gaps in reading levels among Black males and other students is unclear. The lack of data is evidenced as Black males with dyslexia are understudied (Connor, 2008). The rate of dyslexia among Black students has not been well researched, and

according to researchers associated with The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity (2014), approximately one in five (20%) of all students (i.e., 6 out of 30 students in a typical classroom) suffer from dyslexia. Black males with dyslexia may have even more challenges because they face both racial discrimination and are overrepresented in special education, which can contribute significantly to the reading gap.

Therefore, it makes sense that studying Black males with dyslexia and identifying ways to address this condition could make an important contribution toward reducing the reading gap. Among the factors contributing to the reading gap are lack of awareness of the intersection of race and dyslexia (Connor, 2008) and the inadequacy of remediation and intervention programs in response to the needs of Black students, in particular, Black students with dyslexia (Lindo, 2006).

Black males who have dyslexia potentially face a ‘triple’ burden. They face the mutual problems of other Black students such as prejudice, discrimination, and inadequate resources (Ladson-Billings, 2012; de Valenzuela, Copeland, Qi, Park, 2006; West-Olatuji, Baker & Brooks, 2006). They face the common problems often associated with dyslexia (Byrnes & Wasik, 2009; Catts et al., 2005; Vellutino & Fletcher, 2005). And, they are confronted with racial stigmas such as being labeled ‘at-risk’ and dysfunctional. Unfortunately, with such labels, Black males are often misdiagnosed and placed in special education for behavioral or cognitive disorders rather than programs for remediation of their dyslexia (Gardner & Hsin, 2008). As a result, they may not receive appropriate intervention; and they may be isolated from standard academic programs, despite being capable of achieving in a general classroom, if given appropriate accommodations.

Deficit Thinking

Deficit thinking cannot be discounted in scholarship on Black males with dyslexia in special education. This kind of thinking undermines the proper diagnosis of dyslexia, which could add to the increasing number of Black males who do not know they have dyslexia and thus are not receiving effective remediation (Donovan & Gross, 2002; Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Gallini, Simmons, & Feggins-Azziz, 2006).

Teachers who exhibit deficit thinking place Black males in dead-end situations that can lead to frustration and alienation (Ford, 2013, 2010). Their deficit-oriented views can influence students’ behavior, perhaps causing withdrawal from school, acting out, low self-efficacy, poor attitudes, and eventual low academic success (Whiting, 2009; Young & Ley, 2002). Students displaying such behaviors may relate all too well to Young’s (2007) refrain in his manuscript titled *Your Average NIGGA Performing Race Literacy and Masculinity*, in which he describes an almost universal attitude that may be possessed by Black males who display deficit-thinking regarding their academic abilities, in particular, and life in general. When behaving in this manner, as a result of feeling neglected, it is not surprising that Black males often experience academic difficulties and ineffective instruction in academic institutions (Anastasiou, Gardner, & Michail, 2011; Bailey, 2003; Bailey & Paisley, 2004; Grantham et al., 2011; Horace, 2006; Hosp & Reschly, 2003; Jackson & Moore 2006; Lee, 2008; Noguera, 2008; Tatum, 2005, 2009; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson & Rodriguez, 2003).

Culturally Appropriate Assessment and Interventions

Culturally Appropriate Assessment

Dyslexia and how it contributes to achievement is relatively absent in educational literature and failure to highlight Black males with this developmental reading disorder inhibits professionals from developing an understanding of the resources and interventions needed to enhance academic achievement. An essential factor in the remediation of dyslexia is culturally appropriate assessment. If dyslexia is not accurately diagnosed, Black males with dyslexia will continue to experience academic problems, be seen as defiant, and receive the label of emotional or behavioral disorder (Gardner & Hsin, 2008). Standardized norm-referenced tests alone do not accurately measure a student's intellectual and academic ability (Ferguson, 2003; Ford, 2013). For a strong assessment system, teachers should have knowledge of formal and informal measures of reading proficiency and be skilled in the use of these measures. Leslie and Caldwell (2009) provided important direction for the use of assessments by emphasizing that researchers need to question traditional views of validity and reliability. Like Ford (2013), they also provide examples of assessments that provide implications for best practices in reading achievement such as informal assessments (i.e., think – alouds). Ford (2013) recommended a greater reliance on performance-based assessments and non-verbal intelligence tests. Non-verbal measures reduce the reliance on language and social-cultural influences.

Appropriate and culturally responsive assessment is essential for effective pedagogical practice. Therefore, teachers need to be careful when evaluating students because an incorrect evaluation could hinder cognitive development, which ultimately will set them apart from their peers (Ford & Helms, 2012). Teachers also need to realize that no single assessment is sufficient for diagnosing dyslexia. To be effective, multiple measures should be used over time to assess, facilitate, and monitor students' academic performance, especially in spelling and reading. Multiple measures provide a more complete evaluation, which is essential to guiding instructional practices. While there are many forms of assessment, those comprised of multiple-choice questions generally focus on lower-level skills. To evaluate students' abilities, assessments that measure intelligence, achievement, and reading across multiple contexts are needed.

Interventions

According to Gavelek and Bresnahan (2009), classroom instruction is viewed through a sociocultural lens and how students make meaning from texts and personal experiences. While there are a number of factors that shape students' learning, I selected four to discuss—classroom organization, instructional strategies, remediation, and culturally relevant pedagogy.

Classroom organization. A well-organized classroom is crucial to learning. Teachers should provide opportunities for Black males' interactions in the classroom as much as possible as this is an effective way for them to learn, especially when it comes to spelling and reading. Organization provides much needed structure for Black males with dyslexia; it helps with order, focus, and concentration. With this in mind, as I reflect on my past experiences, there were some special education teachers I had who provided little classroom organization, which left students

unsupervised and not academically engaged. Consequently, with such disorganization, I was disengaged and viewed as defiant and labeled with a behavior problem, instead of those teachers implementing classroom practices that were designed and organized to keep my attention.

Classrooms can be organized in a number of ways, and teachers should incorporate different organizational structures to meet the learning styles of Black males. Examples of organizational structures are individually assigned seating, small groups, student dyads, and peer tutors. Strategically identifying content area peer-tutors in areas such as mathematics and English can be a cost-efficient solution for providing more individualized instruction and mentoring (Fuchs et al., 2011) for Black males.

Instructional strategies. There are a number of strategies that teachers can use to address instruction. For Black males with dyslexia, scaffolding is one such strategy that can be used to help them become engaged with content in their texts (Palincsar & Schutz, 2011). Scaffolding techniques may include, for example, direct instruction (e.g., my turn-your turn model), making connections to students' prior knowledge, and teaching vocabulary by using visual aids (i.e., graphic organizer). Not only have I found these strategies valuable from my personal experiences and performance, but also, have found them beneficial when teaching Black males with dyslexia how to spell and read.

Teachers' learning from students is another very useful instructional strategy. By asking specific content questions, teachers can encourage Black males with dyslexia to participate in meaningful conversations that stimulate learning and their motivation (Guthrie et al., 2009; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Miller & Faircloth, 2009).

Questioning can also be used to deepen and enrich knowledge as well as expand their understanding of content. For this strategy, Black males are taught to self-question by modeling, leading, and then releasing responsibility to other students. Specific content questions not only engage Black males with dyslexia in divergent and evaluative reasoning, these types of questions also tap their knowledge. Martin and Duke (2011) stated that questioning is important because it can help students make links between texts and background knowledge, think about exact content within the text, draw out meaning in order to make coherent explanations, develop inferencing skills, and construct key points to build mental representations.

Another effective strategy is think-alouds. This strategy requires students to extract, construct and think about the content, which facilitates their knowledge. Think-alouds tap a metacognitive process where students monitor their reading before, during, and after reading (Baker & Beall, 2009). This instructional strategy can provide valuable insight and information about what cognitive strategies students are using to comprehend text. The foundational framework for think-alouds is the constructivist idea of gaining knowledge.

The specific classroom pedagogies discussed here are necessary to engage Black males with dyslexia in learning because it allows them to make connections between information learned from texts, school, and home. This observation is also shared by Tatum (2005) who stated, "Classroom materials that are effective with adolescent students of minority groups are those that

provide them with multiple opportunities to create links between the text and their prior knowledge” (p. 75).

Remediation. Pure and Complete Phonics (PCP; Nash 2012) is a remediation strategy that can be used to correct the language deficits of Black males with dyslexia. PCP employs the concept of direct and explicit instruction and specific references and formats to effectively use the language’s 26 alphabet letter and 103 phonemes or phonemic units to identify 441 assignments for spelling words and 472 assignments for reading words.

PCP identifies instruction across several areas: (a) the dictionary’s diacritical marks; (b) an identification of the six kinds of syllables; (c) a method for teaching and learning how to spell and read words by their left to right sequential sound structure; (d) the use of sequential steps in completing five formats—two for spelling and three for reading; and (e) the use of a special format for teaching the concept of “reverse chaining” in order to enunciate multi-syllabic words.

The objective of PCP is to allow Black males to master the entire phonemic sound structure of the American-English language, which influences cognitive development, increases competence, and helps students become independent learners (Nash, 2012). I selected the word APARTEID to show the instructional procedures for implementing PCP. In so doing, I include: (a) the dictionary’s diacritical marks; (b) an identification of the syllable types; and (c) the use of reverse chaining.

In *Merriam-Webster’s Colligate Dictionary* (11th edition, 2009), the word APARTEID is written out twice in bold and regular print. The bold print identifies the phonetic assignments of a given letter or letter-combination(s). The regular print identifies the whole word pronunciation by syllable.

Bold Print	Regular Print
Apart•heid	/ə-ˈpär-tāt-tīt/

/ə/		/ā/ /t/
<u>A</u>	p <u>ar</u>	t h <u>ei</u> <u>d</u>

Each letter/letter-team has a diacritical mark placed above it to illustrate the way the graphemes are identified (i.e., sound-by-sound). The letter “A” is identified as a vowel and is an open syllable (OS) because an OS contains an isolated vowel or vowel representation that is not followed by one or more consonants in the syllable. The phonetic value is defined as having the sound represented by the schwa (/ə/), which is the sound the letter ‘u’ represents in the word up. The letter “p” has no mark, while the letters “**ar**” become an R-Controlled syllable because the sound of the vowel or vowels proceeding (r) are masked by the overwhelming sound of the (r) in the syllable (Nash, 2012).

The letter “t” has no mark and the letter “h” is a silent letter. The letter-combinations “ei” make the sound(s) /ā/ or /ī/. What this means is that the letters “ei” are representing the *long-sound* of the letter “A” or “I” and the first most common way to read is “A” and the syllable type is a

vowel team. A vowel team contains two or more adjacent vowels that combine to make one vowel sound in the syllable.

The last sound you hear in the word APARTHEID is the sound 't' and the letter "d" makes the 't' sound and is a Closed syllable (CS) because a CS contains an isolated vowel (or vowel representation) followed by one or more [voice/non-voiced] consonants in the syllable.

The above example demonstrates how the phonetic assignments of a given letter or letter-combinations are identified and how the three-syllable word is to be pronounced from left to right. After Black males have independently mastered the entire sound structure of the American English language, they would be able to automatically read the word from right to left order [reverse chaining] to enunciate the word APARTHEID. Reverse chaining procedure would have them read the last syllable first, sound-by-sound, repeat with the second and first syllable together and then include all three-syllables simultaneously.

Culturally relevant/responsive pedagogy. The last area, culturally relevant (or culturally responsive) pedagogy is an instructional practice that enhances students' learning by using cultural referents.

Gay (2002) defined culturally responsive pedagogy as a teaching practice that not only considers students' cultural backgrounds, but also acknowledges their lived experiences. In addition, culturally responsive pedagogy is a framework that can be used to directly connect teachers with students (Ladson-Billings, 2012, 2000). This pedagogy is a process by which teachers can leverage Black males' connections to historical, social, and cultural situations associated with their backgrounds to provide opportunities for higher-level thinking and classroom participation. It is also a venue for teachers to relate to the cultures of students and acknowledge their lived experiences (Paris & Ball, 2009).

Culturally relevant pedagogy not only recognizes students' cultural backgrounds, but also uses a teaching pedagogy to modify teaching practices to embrace students' culture. Ladson-Billings (2012, 2000, 1995) noted that this pedagogy is effective for teaching African American students and relies on students maintaining academic success and cultural competence, and gaining consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of order.

Culturally relevant pedagogy is based on research which asserts that reading is a social practice that is not only influenced by culture and historical contexts [sociocultural context] but also influences reading development (Gavelek & Bresnahan, 2009). Teachers who use culturally responsive methodologies recognize and acknowledge students' cultural background and they use instructional practices that embrace students' culture (Harmon, Kasa-Hendrickson & Neal, 2009; Fairbanks et al., 2009; Ford, 2013; 2011; (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

Teachers must develop a cultural diverse knowledge base in regards to their classroom population and the content in order to avoid a mismatch (Gay, 2002). Having such skill will allow the teacher(s) to build a bridge between Black male' home and school experiences, which will increase their classroom engagement because their cultural or home practices are modeled and valued (Tatum, 2011). Overall, teachers must also raise the bar and have high academic

expectations for their students, especially Black males with dyslexia (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2012).

To connect with Black males, teachers need to step outside the classroom and into their communities to build relationships (Gay, 2002). Instructional practices that incorporate this technique could provide a venue for Black males to feel safe in sharing their backgrounds, which could offer teachers more insight into how they see the world. It may also help teachers to develop a level of trust and gain a deeper understanding of students' views and insights (Gay, 2002).

Another way to understand Black males is to consider how texts can be used as a strategy to engage them academically. Engaging Black males through readings on topics of interest, as well as writings [narratives] or text-based discussions can be empowering by letting Black males see their experiences reflected in books (Tatum & Muhammad, 2012). Teachers should realize that topics of interests can be empowering because when students feel their voices or cultures are being valued, it can lead to a sense of personal liberation. Ford (2011) recognized the power of books for transforming the lives of Black males who can learn from the stories (Ladson-Billings, 2012; 2000).

Personal Vignette

Writing about dyslexia is my self-therapy. I am a Black male who was in special education (grades 3-16), completely illiterate – unable to perform the most basic elements of reading, writing, spelling, and grammar – and, as a result, was filled with academic frustration and rage. I started college with elementary spelling and reading levels in my freshman year at the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh. However, while there, I was exposed to the Project Success, a program that transformed my life. Based on my experiences—both positive and negative—I feel obligated to become an advocate for assessing and remediating Black males with dyslexia by sharing my story.

Throughout my entire academic journey, I have been faced with difficulties compounded by ineffective instruction in the areas of spelling and reading. Being in special education as opposed to general education between third and twelfth grade exacerbated the problems. In elementary school, testing was conducted and the results of the evaluation revealed the following diagnoses: LD, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), and Behavioral Disorder (BD). The school that I attended at that time did not offer special education services, and I had to transfer to a school that offered smaller classes. The class I was sent to was comprised of all Black males, a White aide who rested her head down on the desk, a White female teacher who was disconnected from the students, and students running around the room. I recall the classroom resembling a prison, as it was extremely institutionalized and quite depressing. Teachers offered little instruction in basic skills like reading, spelling, writing, and math, and there were no opportunities to engage in high-level thinking or problem solving.

Fast-forwarding to six years later, I enrolled in high school and experienced another environment in which there was minimal teaching and learning for my LD. After a turbulent three years of high school and two years attending an alternative school where I continued to underachieve, I

wanted to attend college. I made an appointment with the high school counselor but this person had no interest in helping me. In fact, during the meeting, the following was said, "...You are not college material and should look at mechanics." My dreams plummeted, but I did not let the misguided and unprofessional counselor deter me. After doing some investigating, my mother discovered that there were colleges for students with LD. My mother helped me complete college applications because I was too illiterate to complete them on my own.

As an 18-year old, I took the Woodcock Johnson Achievement Battery subtests to measure my achievement level in the areas of letter-word identification, passage comprehension, spelling and word attack. My grade equivalent scores were as follows: (a) 5.4 for letter-word identification; (b) 2.3 for comprehension; (c) 2.3 for spelling; and (d) K.7 for word attack. In spite of my abysmally poor preparation, I was accepted and enrolled in the University of Wisconsin—Oshkosh and the Project Success program. Dr. Robert T. Nash, was able to see past my frustration and anger, and recognized my talents when others were convinced that college was not an option for me.



Dr. Robert T. Nash (l), the man that saved my life.

As a freshman, being one of the most disabled spellers/readers in a summer cohort of about 55 students was demoralizing; however, my spirit did not allow me to give up—I worked tirelessly. Two years later, testing was conducted again to measure my achievement levels. The evaluator selected several Woodcock-Johnson Achievement Battery subtests and the results revealed the following in terms of my grade equivalent: (a) 6.7 for letter-word identification; (b) 11.0 for comprehension; (c) 3.9 for spelling; and (d) 2.8 for word attack.

With results such as these, attending an institution of higher education should not have been an option for me; however, the intent of the Project Success program was to remediate students' language deficits. Following extensive remediation and participation in PCP (Nash, 2012), a reading intervention that focused on multi-sensory and explicit instruction, I gradually became academically independent. The Project Success program uses a Simultaneous Tri-modal Multi-Sensory Instructional Procedure (SMSIP; Nash, 2012) that emphasizes grapheme-phoneme representation (Ehri & Snowling, 2004; Gustafson, Ferreira, & Ronnberg, 2007; McMurray, et al., 2008; Parker & Riley, 2010; Rost & McMurray, 2009).

SMSIP procedures are based on the teaching principles of direct instruction where teachers first model the desired task and then lead students through the task on a step-by-step basis before testing for independent mastery. In addition to assisting me with my reading skills, the Project Success staff allowed me to voice my anxieties and limitations, and also taught me strategies I could employ to diminish the effect of my learning disability in college and thereafter.

The Project Success helped me develop perseverance, which helped me earn a bachelor's degree in Human Services. It took six years because I needed to learn things that were not taught to me

during my secondary education, in addition to new college material, which was extremely challenging. Once I graduated with my Bachelor's degree, I wanted more education and five years later graduated from DePaul University with a Master's degree in Education.

Now, I am a doctoral candidate, in a Language and Literacy program, a field I had not studied and knew little about, but have flourished in my academics. Aside from the writing requirements, the course content (i.e., learning the rhetoric, vocabulary, and theoretical perspectives) has presented many challenges that initially seemed insurmountable. Reflecting over the course of my academic journey, I wish I had received a balanced approach to teaching, which included not only spelling and reading remediation, but also writing instruction. Learning to write is not any easy task, especially at the doctorate level where a student should already know the art of writing. For instance, I had to quickly learn the art of writing in order to navigate and survive in the doctoral program, which has not been an easy task. I am progressing, and share my journey to hopefully galvanize scholars to increase research on the intersections between race and dyslexia, which is limited, as evidenced from the review of the literature.

Summary and Conclusion

Given the state of affairs for Black males in the academic arena, it is not surprising that they continue to face both racial and disability problems. Black males are still subject to institutional racism; and inequalities are still prevalent within the academic system and classrooms.

The purpose of this article was to call attention to the need for research on Black males with dyslexia, its impact on their reading proficiency and on appropriate assessment and classroom pedagogy to address their academic needs. Currently, there is limited research on theories and models of reading, identification strategies, appropriate classroom pedagogy, and remediation or intervention strategies for Black males with dyslexia. Yet, Black males continue to be misdiagnosed for dyslexia (Hoyles & Hoyles, 2010; Lindo, 2006), which contributes to the reading gap. Addressing the factors that contribute to the misdiagnoses of Black males with dyslexia can be detrimental, especially when there is a significant passage of time without remediation. I provided several instructional strategies that can be used to help Black males with dyslexia achieve academically. It is my hope that this article provides the framework for collaboration about appropriate assessment, classroom pedagogy, and research on Black males with dyslexia.

AUTHOR NOTES

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