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The University of Memphis

California 2021 Early Math Symposium (Virtual)

Friday, June 25, 2021  
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

### Creating Identity Safe Learning Environments for Black Boys in the Early Grades



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### Black Boyhood Interrupted and Disrupted in Early Childhood

- Negative stereotypes of Black boys begin as early as preschool and kindergarten
- Black boys behaviors are “adultified” and “criminalized”
- Racialized and gendered classroom experiences that are hostile resulting short- and long-term effects on Black boys (Wright et al., 2018, 2019, 2020)

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### School “Discipline Hubs” and Black Boys

- Preschoolers are expelled at 3 times the rate of children in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Pre-school-aged boys are 4 times as likely to be expelled as girls.
- Black children are expelled almost twice as often as Latinx and White children and more than 5 times as often as Asian American children.
- Black boys represent only 19% of the preschool enrollment, and they represent 45% of preschool children receiving one or more out-of-school suspensions (Gilliam, 2017; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2016).

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**Black boys: Race, Gender, and Schooling**

Race and gender often circumscribe the educational experiences and opportunities of Black boys resulting in over- and underrepresentation.

- **Discipline and Zero-tolerance:** suspensions/expulsions ([Overrepresentation](#))
- **Special Education:** Learning disability, Emotional and behavioral disorders, Intellectual disability, Developmental delay ([Overrepresentation](#))
- **Gifted Education:** Intellectual area, Academic areas (language arts, math, science, social studies), Leadership ([Underrepresentation](#)) (Wright et al., 2018, 2019; Wright & Ford, 2019; Wright, 2020, 2021)

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**Voice and Agency:**

**Voice** is being able to speak up and be heard, and to shape and share in discussions and discourse about curriculum topics, co-construct rules that govern classroom spaces, and participate in decisions about classroom materials and more.

**Agency** is being able to make decisions about one's own life and life inside classrooms and act upon those decisions to achieve desired outcomes toward the advancement of a caring and equitable classroom environment. (Wright et al., 2018)

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**Black boys: Racial Identity in Books**

- A positive depiction of African American boys as readers in books, media, and society are few and far between.
- Lack of representation has the potential to influence how Black boys' view themselves as readers.
- This view is exacerbated by society's perception of Black boys/males as anti-intellectuals further re-inscribes the belief that they are not readers. (Wright et al., 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021)

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**Our Charge...**

"[R]esearchers, [school personnel and communities] who endeavor to improve African American males' success in education should commit at least a fraction of their intellectual efforts to studying those within the race who have earned good grades, avoided trouble and school suspension, assumed leadership positions on their campuses, responded productively to racist stereotypes, resolved masculine identity conflicts, amassed social capital they previously lacked, and negotiated same-race peer support for their school achievement" (Harper, 2010, p. 2).

Harper, S.R. (2010). In his name: Rigor and relevance in research on African American Males in education. *Journal of African American Males in Education*.

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**Thank you! & Contact Information:**

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