

PREDICTIVE EFFECTS OF BLACK FATHERS' CLASS AND STATUS ON THEIR  
ADOLESCENT SONS' READING PROFICIENCY

by

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## **DEDICATION**

This is dedicated to my parents and siblings for their unwavering support throughout my academic career. I also dedicate this dissertation to my loving wife Heather and my two wonderful children Holden and Noelle for their patience and support in completing this endeavor.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Direct Effect.....	DE
Diversity in Reading .....	DIVREAD
Enjoyment of Reading .....	JOYREAD
Fathers' Employment Category .....	FSECATEG
Home Possessions .....	HOMEPOS
Item Response Theory .....	IRT
Online Reading Activities.....	ONLNREAD
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.....	OECD
Plausible Values.....	PV
Programme for International Student Assessment.....	PISA
Socioeconomic Status .....	SES
Total Effect .....	TE
Total Indirect Effect.....	TIE
Weighted Likelihood Estimates .....	WLE

## **ABSTRACT**

### **PREDICTIVE EFFECTS OF BLACK FATHERS' CLASS AND STATUS ON THEIR ADOLESCENT SONS' READING PROFICIENCY**

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Explanations for the persistent underperformance of Black adolescent males in print reading literacy proficiency are often associated with the socioeconomic status (SES) of the students' parents, and the students' reading habits. Using U.S. public-use Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009 data of 15-year old students, this study seeks to evaluate the predictive effects of Black fathers' class (i.e., home possessions), and status (i.e., occupational status) on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy level through the mediation of reading engagement activities (i.e., the amount of time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading). Research indicates that Black fathers' class and status have a detrimental effect on their adolescent sons' print reading proficiency due to the effects of institutional racism and discrimination that prohibit fathers from accessing and providing benefits that are known

to contribute to their adolescent sons' print reading literacy. Using Max Weber's concept of stratification as a theoretical model, this study proposes to disentangle and evaluate the component parts of SES in order to add to our understanding of the social complexities that shape the literacy environment of Black adolescent males. Through the use of path analysis ( $n = 117$ ), the results indicate that there are no predictive effects of fathers' class and status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency level through the mediation of literacy activities, but there is a statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) direct effect of fathers' class on their sons' print reading literacy proficiency.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Salient Historical Events

Education is the pathway to freedom. Not the type of freedom that affords individuals to do as they please, without concern for the rights of others, but the type of freedom that allows individuals the opportunity to positively affect their life chances. Every individual should have the opportunity to improve themselves and their lives. Yet, some groups in society have more *good* opportunities to improve their lot in life than others. Good opportunities are quality prospects that can engender a higher quality of life in terms of income, social status, and power. One of the most important instruments that can elicit quality opportunities is an individual's ability to read. However, in the United States of America, the opportunity to read for most Blacks was prohibited throughout the period of chattel slavery and when learning to read was allowed, according to Leonardo (2009) and Woodson (1933/2005), it was deemed an inferior practice to that of Whites.

The sentiment that Blacks are an inferior "species" (connoting a subhuman quality) was born from the legacy of slavery to justify their low social standing (Gould, 1996). In 1856, the U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Taney summed up the sentiments of the country and codified it into law when he said, Blacks have "been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they [have] no rights which the white

man was bound to respect” (*Scott v. Sandford*, 1856). His opinion effectively quelled Black opportunities to access literacy education on par with Whites, which resulted in the maintenance of the social hierarchy, where Whites are on top and Blacks are on the bottom.

With the abolition of slavery and the end of the Civil War, racism and racist policies continued to persist under the umbrella of Jim Crow social norms and institutions where Blacks and Whites lived in segregated neighborhoods and were educated in segregated schools (Leonardo, 2009). This type of social bifurcation was codified in 1896 when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the notion of “equal but separate accommodations” for colored races and Whites (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896). Not until 1954 did the U.S. Supreme Court declare that “separate but equal” has no place in public education because it “deprives children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities” (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954).

Tobias (1996) found that the implementation of *Brown v. Board of Education* was uneven throughout the country, with many states in the southern U.S. resisting *full* integration as long as possible. Even with desegregated schools, Blacks continued to underperform academically compared to their White counterparts due to a myriad of social, political, and institutional reasons that were not adequately addressed in public schools. Almost 50 years had passed since *Brown v. Board of Education*, that another piece of legislation shined a spotlight on the racial inequities in public education by addressing the needs of disadvantaged students and promoting literacy initiatives to improve the academic achievement for all students (No Child Left Behind Act [2001]).

Although the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) revealed the symptoms of an inequitable education system, Leonardo (2009) argued that it did little in remedying its structural causes like labor market discrimination and income inequality that adversely effects the academic success of disadvantaged students.

The inability of policies to redress past educational inequities have resulted in the continued marginalization of Black students. Among the hardest hit by their marginal position are Black adolescent males, whose academic underperformance highlights the Black-White achievement gap. Instead of reducing the academic achievement gap between Black adolescent males and their White counterparts, education initiatives have perpetuated academic failure among this marginalized group by providing an inadequate response to the foundation of all learning—reading literacy. Carter G. Woodson (1933/2005), a famed Black historian who helped initiate Black History studies and Black History Week, argued that these failed education initiatives continue to emerge in a repackaged form of its predecessor because they benefit and maintain white social norms, values, and institutions that Jim Crow laws were enacted to protect. Woodson also argued that education for Black adolescent males has boiled down to merely receiving information that buttresses educational and social policies that prohibit them from acquiring the tools necessary to compete with their White counterparts (Woodson, 1933/2005). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the historic academic struggles of Black adolescent males, particularly with reading literacy, continue unabated.

## **The Achievement Gap among Black Adolescent Males' Reading Proficiency**

According to the results of the 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which is an international assessment that focuses on 15-year olds literacy proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science, Black adolescent males' reading literacy performance has consistently been below average both for U.S. students and for all students participating in PISA (Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar, & Shelley, 2010). According to Gluszynski and Bayard (2010; OECD, 2010a, 2010b), students who underperform on PISA incur additional risks of failure to complete high school, and if they graduate from high school, they lack the education necessary to access primary labor market employment opportunities.

Although explanations for the persistent underperformance in print reading literacy proficiency among Black adolescent males are often related to a number of cultural, and social-psychological perspectives, Hampden-Thompson and Johnson (2006) suggest that Black adolescent males' performance on PISA is associated with their socioeconomic status (SES) and reading engagement practices. Hampden-Thompson and Johnson's (2006) assertion regarding the saliency of SES in shedding light on Black adolescent male print reading underperformance is supported by Conley (2010) and others (Rothstein, 2004; Teachman, 1987; Wößmann, 2003) as they argue that Black families tend to have less wealth than their White counterparts, which prohibits them from acquiring material resources that promote reading literacy. Another explanation for the reading literacy proficiency gap may be found in the reading engagement practices of Black adolescent males where Jairrels (2009) asserted that Black adolescents are

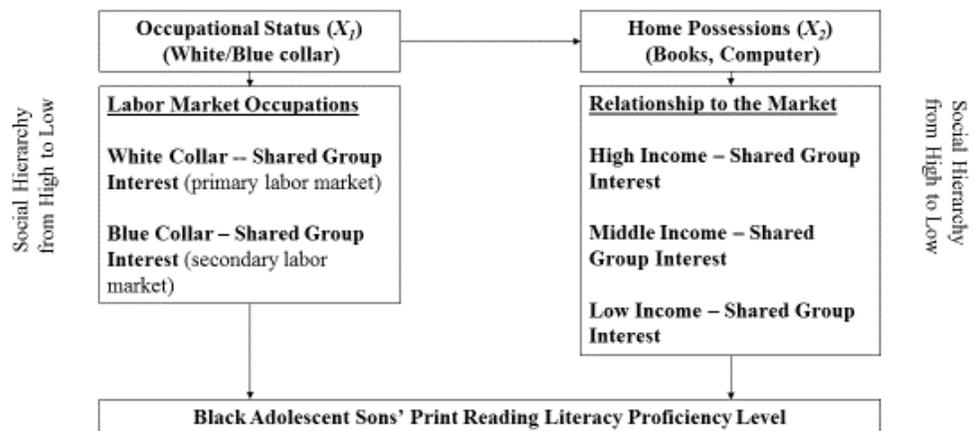
spending less time reading for pleasure, preventing them from performing well in a variety of reading tasks across the school curriculum as well as on standardized tests that are biased toward highly engaged readers.

But the onus for improving reading proficiency among Black adolescent males does not rest solely on the students' shoulders. According to Jarrrels (2009; see also OECD, 2010b), Black fathers must take the responsibility to encourage and model strong reading habits in order to facilitate positive reading literacy skills throughout their sons' lives. Fathers who spend time reading with their sons and engage in conversations with their sons about what is read facilitate their literacy development (Clark, 2009; OECD, 2012a), yet the effectiveness of these interactions is tempered by the intersection of the fathers' class and status.

In order to evaluate the predictive effects of a fathers' class and status on their adolescent sons' reading engagement practices and subsequent print reading proficiency, I will use Max Weber's (1978/2013) concept of social stratification. Although there are other, more recent, explanations for the reading proficiency gap (e.g., stereotype threat [Steele & Aronson, 1995], and cultural opposition [Ogbu, 1997]), Max Weber's concept of stratification (Weber, 1978/2013) may provide an appropriate model to test the predictive effects of a fathers' class and status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy as measured in PISA 2009 because it can differentiate between the dimensions of class and status.

Max Weber, an influential social theorist, provides a theoretical model of social stratification, which goes beyond simply a hierarchical ranking of categories of people.

According to Weber (1978/2013; see also Barbalet, 1980; Macionis, 2012), stratification is the differentiation of individuals based on group interests and motives (see Table 1, for Max Weber’s stratification theory). For instance, class is defined as an individual’s relationship with the labor market in terms of acquired income, where status is associated with social esteem that is founded on style of life or upbringing (Heydebrand, 1994; Weber, 1978/2013). In this research, Weber’s concept of class (i.e., home possessions), and status (i.e., occupational status) will be used to evaluate Black fathers’ contribution to their sons’ reading engagement, and print reading literacy proficiency.



*Figure 1.* Max Weber’s stratification theory as applied to Black adolescent male print literacy proficiency level.

## **Purpose**

Although class and status inequalities exist, there is scant research discussing how these variables interact with each other to predict Black adolescent male print reading literacy proficiency. I propose evaluating how a fathers' class (i.e., home possessions) and status (i.e., occupational status) relate to his sons' reading engagement practices and subsequent print reading proficiency by arguing that the material and symbolic resources that are associated with a fathers' occupation influences the values that are brought into the home, which may in turn, act as an exemplar to be imitated by his son (Kohn, 1969). As suggested by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), if reading literacy is not a priority in a fathers' job, it may not be a priority in the home, thus putting his son at an academic disadvantage (OECD, 2010b).

This study also seeks to determine whether time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading activities play a mediating role in the impact of Black fathers' class and status on his adolescent sons' print reading proficiency from PISA 2009. Black fathers' class and status are used to represent his ability to provide the necessary academic support for his adolescent sons' print reading proficiency. To evaluate the association between class and status on reading engagement and print reading proficiency, I will utilize Weber's (1978/2013) multidimensional conception of stratification which may provide an appropriate and precise theoretical basis for investigating the complex relationship between class, status, and reading proficiency. Weber's theory of stratification (1978/2013) allows researchers to effectively parcel out the effects of class from status, which will provide a precise

analysis of the particular factors that influence Black adolescent males' print reading literacy proficiency. Furthermore, this study will utilize the PISA 2009 database which is administered by the National Center for Educational Statistics to assess 15-year-old students' capabilities in reading, mathematics, and science literacies.

### **Research Questions**

PISA 2009 provides a unique opportunity to investigate the relationship between class, status, reading engagement practices, and print reading proficiency for Black adolescent males who are close to graduating from compulsory education by providing three important variables that represent the following areas of interest for this research (1) I consider the PISA 2009 variable home possessions as a proxy for class, (2) the PISA 2009 variable white collar/blue collar classification is a proxy for fathers' occupational status, and (3) the PISA 2009 reading engagement indicators are predictors of Black adolescent male print reading literacy proficiency. This dissertation extends the previous research in two key areas. First, the use of Max Weber's (1978/2013) dimensions of stratification will provide a nuanced analysis of parental influences on their child's reading proficiency. Second, the use of PISA 2009 data, which focused on reading, provides student achievement data that was collected for the purpose of addressing student needs as they prepare to meet the challenges of adulthood (OECD, 2010a).

Research Question 1: What is the predictive effect of fathers' home possessions on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency level through the mediation of the amount of time reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading?

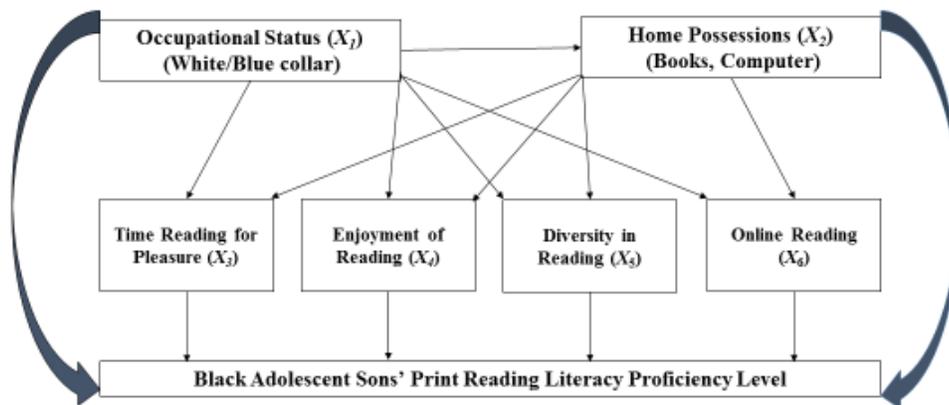
Research Question 2: What is the predictive effect of fathers' occupational status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency level through the mediation of the amount of time reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading?

### **Conceptual Model**

This study adopts Max Weber's theory of stratification (Weber, 1978/2013) in proposing a theoretical model that summarizes the hypothesized relationships between fathers' class and status, and their adolescent sons' reading engagement practices and print reading literacy proficiency. The proposed theoretical model consists of two exogenous variables (home possessions and occupational status) and five endogenous variables (the amount of time on reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, online reading activities, and print reading literacy proficiency levels). The exogenous variables fathers' home possessions and occupational status predicts or influences the accumulation of educational resources in the home to support their sons' reading proficiency.

There are hypothesized predictive effects of fathers' home possessions and occupational status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency that are mediated by their sons' reading engagement practices, which includes the amount of time spent on reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading activities. There are hypothesized predictive direct effects of fathers' home possessions and occupational status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency. The theoretical model shown in Figure 2 demonstrates the hypothetical

relationships between a fathers' home possessions and occupational status on their sons' reading engagement and print reading literacy proficiency.



*Figure 2.* Theorized path analysis model of Max Weber’s stratification theory used to test the interaction effects of a Black fathers’ class and occupational status on their sons’ print reading literacy proficiency as mediated by time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading.

### **Definition of Terms**

**PISA.** PISA reports student performance not just as scores, but also uses text to describe the expected level of competencies of a typical 15-year old student that is commensurate with their reading literacy proficiency level (OECD, 2012b). PISA scales provide participating countries student reading proficiency levels which indicate what

students can do, and provides an overview of each country's areas of opportunities in terms of education (OECD, 2012b).

**Reading engagement.** The amount of time spent on reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading activities are all indicators of reading engagement (OECD, 2012b). Hence, reading engagement is defined as the individual's participation in reading activities. OECD (2010b) has found that students who are highly engaged in reading activities are more likely than other students to perform well at school.

**Class and Status.** Weber's stratification theory (1978/2013) is composed of three dimensions—class, status, and power. For the purposes of this study, I will only measure class and status. Class will be measured by fathers' home possessions, and status will be measured by fathers' occupational status in terms of white collar and blue collar classifications. Each dimension (i.e., class or status) can be characterized by their role in maintaining the social structure. The distinctions between Weber's dimensions of class and status are empirically important because they can be used to measure an individual's position in the social structure on a continuum ranging from high to low (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007).

**Plausible Values.** Plausible values (PV) are used to create point estimates of achievement scores. In PISA, students are not administered every assessment item. Each item has missing student responses, though these are missing by design. Thus, it is not possible to estimate scores for individual students. Instead, the results of individual students are aggregated to produce a set of scores for groups of students. The distribution

of scores indicates a set of plausible values, which represent a range of abilities for a certain group of students (e.g., U.S. 15-year-old Black male students). For analysis purposes, PISA data sets include five plausible values for each of the PISA scales (i.e., PV1READ, PV2READ, PV3READ, PV4READ, and PV5READ) (OECD, 2012b).

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Black adolescent males performed well below average on the 2009 PISA print reading literacy examination (Fleischman et al., 2010). Fleischman et al. (2010) found that Black males' average reading literacy score was 417, which was 97 points below White males, whose average score was 514, and 83 points below the U.S. average of 500. Fleischman et al. also reported that a score of 417 indicated that, on average, these students were just beginning to demonstrate reading proficiency toward the end of their compulsory education, which placed them at a higher risk of low labor market outcomes after school (U.S. Department of Education n.d.; Fleischman et al. 2010). According to Fleischman et al., (see also Hampden-Thompson & Johnson, 2006; Marx, 2002) the underperformance of Black adolescent males on PISA 2009 reading examination was due to their parents' class and status and their own lack of voluntary reading.

On PISA examinations, Fleishman et al. (2010) and Hampden-Thompson and Johnson (2006) found that a parents' class and status were an indicator of their ability to provide the necessary material and symbolic resources to support their adolescent sons reading engagement practices and subsequent reading proficiency. But, the ability to adequately provide for their sons' reading literacy may be due to social mechanisms beyond their control. Bonilla-Silva (2001) (see also Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Conley, 2010; Leonardo, 2009) asserted that Black fathers' class and status positions tend to be low due

to a host of social factors that keep them languishing at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Bonilla-Silva also showed that Blacks tend to be low across both class and occupational status not so much because of their abilities, but because of the institutionalized racism that fosters the inequities that exist in society. This assertion supports Hampden-Thompson and Johnson's (2006) findings that found that non-school factors such as parents' class and status were key predictors of Black adolescent male reading literacy achievement because they often become tools of subjugation in a stratified society, where in order to maintain a social hierarchy where Blacks on the bottom, it is imperative that they do not acquire the tools for upward social mobility (namely, access to primary labor market jobs where higher income and higher occupational status can be found). Therefore, according to Clark (2009) and others (Guthrie & McRae, 2012; Halle, Kirtz-Costes & Mahoney, 1997; Hampden-Thompson, Guzman, & Lippman, 2013; Nicholas & Fletcher, 2011; Tatum & Muhammad, 2012) the role of Black fathers, is to find a way to facilitate their adolescent sons' print reading literacy development through reading engagement in order to help them acquire the necessary skills to successfully maneuver through society despite the social discriminatory practices that exist in maintaining the social hierarchy.

The purpose of this research is to determine the predictive effects of Black fathers' class (i.e., home possessions) and status (i.e., occupational status) on his adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency through the mediation of reading engagement practices (i.e., time spent on reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading activities) by arguing that the material and

symbolic resources that are brought into the home act as an exemplar to be imitated by his son (Kohn, 1969) in promoting the value of reading (OECD, 2010b).

To evaluate the association between Black fathers' class and status on their adolescent sons' reading engagement practices and print reading literacy proficiency, I will utilize Weber's (1978/2013) multidimensional conception of stratification which allows researchers to effectively parcel out the effects of class from status in order to provide a precise analysis of the particular factors that influence Black adolescent males' print reading literacy proficiency.

The research questions of this study are built on a foundation of three big ideas. These ideas are: (1) Black-White reading literacy achievement gap, where I will briefly review three dominate theoretical perspectives of the Black-White reading achievement gap in hopes it will provide a rationale for its persistence; (2) Max Weber's (1978/2013) concept of class and status, where I will investigate Max Weber's concept of social stratification to help reveal the complexities associated with exploring how Black fathers' socioeconomic status effects their sons' print reading literacy proficiency; and (3) the predictive effects of Black fathers' class and status on their adolescent sons' reading engagement practices and print reading literacy proficiency, where I will evaluate the predictive effects of Black fathers' class and status by reviewing the literature on the role fathers' class and status play on their sons' reading literacy development and proficiency. Looking through the lenses of these three ideas will provide an opportunity to explore the components of socioeconomic status that facilitate a fathers' ability to affect their adolescent sons' print reading literacy achievement. This research seeks to investigate

the predictive effects of fathers' class and status on their adolescent sons' print literacy proficiency by answering the following questions:

(1) What is the predictive effect of fathers' home possessions on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency level through the mediation of the amount of time they spend reading for pleasure, their enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading materials, and their online reading practices.

(2) What is the predictive effect of fathers' occupational status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency level through the mediation of the amount of time they spend reading for pleasure, their enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading materials, and their online reading practices.

### **Black-White Achievement Gap**

The persistent underperformance in Black adolescent males' reading proficiency continues unabated on PISA 2009, with the average Black adolescent reading at a level that is commensurate with someone who is just beginning to demonstrate reading proficiency (Fleischman et al., 2010). Explanations for Black adolescent males' reading underperformance may include Ogbu's (1997) cultural-ecological approach, Steele and Aronson's (1995) stereotype threat, and a number of scholars that argue that socioeconomic status (SES) is the salient indicator in explaining the Black-White reading literacy proficiency gap.

**Cultural opposition.** Ogbu's (1997) cultural-ecological approach suggests that the lack of school performance and reading achievement by Black adolescents is an "adaptation" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 178) to their subordinated position in American

society. Ogbu (1997) and others (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) argue that institutionalized racism is so pervasive that the only thing that Black adolescents can do to keep their sense of self-worth is to adapt to their social environment. Moreover, according to Ogbu (1997) and Fordham and Ogbu (1986), their “castelike” status precipitates an oppositional stance to the dominate culture, which is based on white values and expectations. This oppositional stance is seen as a rational response to the social environment in which they are limited participants due to their inability to fully assimilate into the white culture. Consistent with the tenants of this oppositional stance to white culture, Black adolescents are not expected to be successful in striving for white measures of goodness or values in terms of reading literacy or academic achievement for “fear” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 176) of acting white, which has profound implications for their individual and group upward mobility and success. The fear of acting white, which is associated with high academic achievement runs contrary to what Blacks must have in order to change their life circumstances and find an avenue to upward social mobility. As argued by Fryer (2006) and others (Austen-Smith & Fryer, 2007; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), Black group expectations, in opposition to acting white, help keep Blacks from succeeding by preventing them from desiring access to academic and economic success as defined by Whites. This rationale is seen as a legitimate argument among Black adolescent males in their effort to stand in opposition to the white culture as a way of garnering and maintaining peer acceptance over the benefits of education (Austen-Smith & Fryer, 2007). Its legitimacy is based on a fallacy that striving for reading proficiency and academic achievement is a rejection of the values associated with

their racial group. Due to its perceived legitimacy, researchers contend that Black adolescent males have effectively devalued the opportunities available for academic and economic success which imposes “unbearable” (Austen-Smith & Fryer, 2007) social costs (Austen-Smith & Fryer, 2007; Fryer, 2006).

**Stereotype threat.** Steele and Aronson (1995) argued that some Black adolescent students may fall victim to what they define as a stereotype threat, where they underperform on standardized tests due to the negative stereotypes that are associated with their groups’ perceived comparatively low intellectual ability. The perception of Black intellectual inferiority is another tool for subjugation by providing the rationale and legitimacy for their low position in the social hierarchy. The stereotype of Black intellectual inferiority is interwoven into American society to such a degree that according Steele and Aronson (1995), when Black students take a test, they endure the added pressure of running the “risk of confirming” the negative stereotype (p. 797), which adversely affects their intellectual ability and performance (Aronson, Cohen, & McColskey, 2009; Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007; Steele & Aronson, 1995). The stereotype threat may be of particular interest among Black adolescent males as they encounter a number of pressures associated with intellectual stereotypes in high school which prohibit their print reading literacy proficiency. Steele and Aronson (1995) found that when Black students were given the verbal portion of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), the racial stereotype of Black intellectual inferiority was so pervasive, that it adversely effected their test performance, which in turn effects their academic and

economic opportunities after compulsory education (U.S. Department of Education n.d.; Fleischman et al., 2010).

**Socioeconomic status.** Middle and upper class groups have access to valued resources that support academic achievement (Broader, Bolder Approach to Education, 2008; Cohen & Little, 2005; OECD, 2010b; Rothstein, 2004; Rothstein, 2005). Rothstein (2004) and others (Broader, Bolder Approach to Education, 2008; Cohen & Little, 2005; OECD, 2010b; Rothstein, 2005) argued that the middle and upper class groups, as opposed to the lower class groups, have the ability to acquire the necessary books, reference materials, computers, and other educationally related materials that are essential for academic achievement and print reading literacy proficiency. Middle and upper class groups can acquire the material resources that target academic deficiencies because of their membership in the primary labor market. These class groups can also provide access to activities that may indirectly support reading literacy development. On the other hand, lower class groups, particularly Blacks, are associated with the secondary labor market (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011a), which hinders their ability to purchase the necessary material resources that promote academic achievement and reading literacy proficiency (Fleishman et al., 2010; Hampden-Thompson & Johnson, 2006). But for Black families, income may not be the sole determinate in providing material resources for academic achievement.

Rothstein (2004) and others (Conley & Yeung, 2005; Gosa & Alexander, 2007; Noguera, 2003; Tatum & Muhammad, 2012; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2004), found that the benefits of high income that are commonly associated with high academic

performance do not translate to Blacks adolescents in general, or to Black adolescent males in particular. Conley and Yeung (2005; see also Mulkey, Crain & Harrington, 1992; Oliver and Shapiro 1995; Orr, 2003; Rothstein, 2004) argued that there may be other mechanisms in play that contribute to the persistent literacy underachievement of Black adolescent males and therefore, SES may not be specific enough to adequately explain the persistent underperformance of Black adolescent male reading literacy proficiency.

Explanations for Black adolescent male underperformance in reading on PISA 2009, such as Ogbu's (1997) cultural-ecological approach, and Steele and Aronson's (1995) stereotype threat are too complex for the purposes of this study as they require a different set of questions and assumptions that go beyond the scope of PISA objectives. Even the use of socioeconomic status as a platform for understanding Black adolescent male reading underachievement may be suspect in terms of not providing enough specificity in revealing the predictive effects of fathers' class and status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy. Hence, for the purposes of this study, I will use Max Weber's (1978/2013) concept of stratification as a theoretical model to disentangle the components of SES by evaluating a fathers' class and status in order to add to our understanding of the social complexities that shape the literacy lives of Black adolescent males.

### **Max Weber and Social Stratification**

Max Weber's concept of stratification (Weber, 1978/2013) is a viable model to understand how Black fathers' class and status effect their adolescent sons' print reading

literacy proficiency because Weber's concept has the ability to distinguish between the concepts of class and status. Class, status, and power are the dimensions of Weber's concept of stratification. Although the concept of power is ever present, it is not used in this analysis. According to Weber (1978/2013), class refers to economic well-being, where individuals are ranked in terms of their ability to provide material resources to their child. These material resources can take the form of books in the home or internet accessibility for educational purposes. In other words, class is stratified according to an individual's "acquisition of goods" (Heydebrand, 1994, p. 119).

Status, Weber (1978/2013) asserted, refers to a number of social positions where individuals are ranked in terms of their ability to reflect a certain life style, and set of attitudes that are afforded by a particular profession, which includes cultural patterns and literacy learning in the household (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007; Heydebrand, 1994). Of the many types of statuses an individual can hold in society, I am using occupational status for the purposes of this research. Occupational status refers to the type of occupation individuals have and is based on a hierarchy that ranks these jobs according to their literacy demands, which in turn affects their attitudes and beliefs about the efficacy of reading.

In following Weber's conception of stratification (1978/2013), class and status are related to one another as one often influences the other, but they are able to retain their distinctive qualities as they refer to different dimensions in society. For instance, Conley and Yeung (2005; see also Royster, 2003; Shapiro 2004; Shapiro, Meschede, & Osoro, 2013) found that Black fathers tend to occupy lower class positions due to their

overrepresentation in secondary labor market jobs, and as a result, shared a common set of life chances or level of capabilities due to the number of possessions they could acquire relative to their income (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007; Conley & Yeung, 2005; Sen, 1999; Weber, 1978/2013). As a result, Black fathers' class and status play a critical role in supporting their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency (Hampden-Thompson & Johnson, 2006) by creating a disposition to read (Clark, 2009; Jarrrels, 2009; OECD, 2012a).

A Black fathers' ability to adequately support their adolescent sons' reading literacy is often negatively impacted by their inability to access primary labor market occupations due to institutional racism and discrimination, which in turn, affects a fathers' capacity to provide the necessary material resources (i.e., books, computers) and symbolic resources (i.e., attitudes toward reading) for reading development (Conley & Yeung, 2005; Hampden-Thompson & Johnson, 2006; Marx, 2002). Max Weber's (1978/2013) concept of stratification, then, provides a framework to investigate how the dimensions of class and status operate in distributing material and symbolic resources to address the print reading literacy performance of Black adolescent males.

### **Reading Engagement of Black Adolescent Males**

Although research suggests that reading engagement is highly correlated with reading achievement and print reading literacy (Brozo, Shiel, & Topping, 2007; Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Kirsch, de Jong, Lafontaine, McQueen, Mendelovits, & Monseur, 2002; OECD, 2010c; Stanovich, 1986), Black adolescent males are not heeding the call to engage in reading activities. According to

Hampden-Thompson and Johnson (2006; see also Flowers, 2003; Jarrrels, 2009; Marx, 2002; OECD, 2010c), resistance to participating in reading engagement activities that facilitate increased print reading literacy proficiency on international examinations may be brought on by attitudes associated with cultural opposition, stereotype threat or fathers' socioeconomic status.

Black adolescent males may oppose participating in reading engagement practices as it may represent 'acting white,' which may foster a sense of betrayal to their group's oppositional stance (Ogbu, 1997; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Black adolescent males may also resist reading engagement practices if they view themselves through the lens of the stereotype threat where they feel the pressures of behaving in ways that confirm the Black intellectually inferior stereotype that is placed upon them by society and internalized (Aronson et al. 2009; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007; Steele & Aronson, 1995). These positions, taken by some Black adolescent males, may elicit negative attitudes towards voluntary reading (Partin & Gillespie, 2002), which come with significant social and economic costs (Austen-Smith & Fryer, 2007; Fryer, 2006).

Successful Black adolescent male readers according to Hampden-Thompson and Johnson (2006) and others (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Partin & Gillespie, 2002; Partin & Gillespie, 2002; Stanovich, 1986) are those that have strong reading engagement practices, which include setting time aside to read for pleasure and reading for a variety of purposes, which speak to the barriers that are often associated with the socioeconomic status of Black fathers. In other words, regardless of socioeconomic level, students who

demonstrate high levels of reading engagement demonstrate higher levels of reading proficiency than their non-engaged counterparts (Kirsch 2002; Topping, 2006).

Therefore, high levels of reading engagement among Black adolescent males is essential in closing the Black-White reading achievement gap.

Guthrie and McRae (2012) found that the effects of high levels of engagement on reading achievement was stronger for Black adolescents than for White adolescents. In their study, Guthrie and McRae (2012) found that equal amounts of reading between Black adolescents and White adolescents elicited equal results in reading achievement. Yet, if the amount of reading among Black students decreases, their reading achievement level declined at a much faster rate than their White counterparts. Research supports these claims as Tatum and Muhammad (2012) found that reading engagement, which consists of time spent reading, was “a significant predictor of reading achievement” for Black adolescents (p. 443). Hence, according to Tatum (2006; see also Tatum & Muhammad, 2012), strong reading engagement practices have profound positive implications for Black adolescent males’ employment opportunities beyond the secondary labor market.

### **Black Fathers’ Class**

Conley (2010; see also Conley & Yeung, 2005; Dixon-Román, 2012; Hampden-Thompson & Johnson, 2006; Parcel, Nickoll, & Dufur, 1996; Rothstein, 2004; Teachman, 1987; Wößmann, 2003) found that fathers’ income influenced their sons’ educational attainment and reading literacy achievement due to the amount of educational resources they could channel to address their sons’ academic needs. For instance, the

holdings of books, dictionaries, and other educationally related objects foster a home environment that is conducive to academic success and reading literacy (Hampden-Thompson & Johnson, 2006; Teachman, 1987; Wößmann, 2003). However, Gosa and Alexander (2007; see also Noguera, 2003; Rothstein, 2004; Tatum & Muhammad, 2012; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2004) found that the positive influence of income did not translate to Black adolescent males due to institutional racism and discrimination that prohibits Black families, particularly fathers from owning assets to support their sons' reading literacy development and proficiency.

Conley (2010; Conley & Yeung, 2005; Diamond, 2006; Shapiro, 2004; Shapiro, Meschede, & Osoro, 2013) argued that Black fathers may be unable to convert income into academic achievement due to their inability to accumulate wealth. According to Rothstein (2004; see also Conley, 2010; Conley & Yeung, 2005), Black families own less assets to support their sons' reading and academic achievement than their White counterparts at the same income level. Thus, the inability to generate wealth among Blacks can be explained by their inability to convert income into capabilities that elicit an improved quality of life.

The institutional racism and discrimination that supports the social hierarchy prevents Blacks from achieving a desired quality of life by *coupling* income inequality with social disadvantages (Holmwood, 2013; Sen, 1999), which burdens Black fathers with additional costs in achieving their desired lifestyle and capability in providing the necessary material resources to their adolescent sons' academic achievement (Holmwood, 2013; Sen, 1999; Shapiro, 2004). For example, social policies were enacted

specifically to limit Blacks' ability to accumulate wealth despite earning the same income as their White counterparts (Diamond, 2006; Shapiro, Meschede, & Osoro, 2013). Pattillo (2005; see also Shapiro, Meschede, & Osoro, 2013) argued that prior to the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, the housing market discriminated against Blacks by funneling them into segregated neighborhoods where they were unable to accumulate home equity at the same rate as Whites due to higher than market home prices and high interest rate loans. Conversely, according to Pattillo, Whites obtained lower, more favorable interest rates for their homes resulting in the accumulation of wealth at higher rates than Blacks.

According to Bonilla-Silva (2001) and others (Diamond, 2006; Shapiro, Meschede, & Osoro, 2013), this discriminatory housing market policy benefited White neighborhoods by providing an increased local tax base, which supported schools, employment opportunities, and occupational mobility, while Black neighborhoods were relegated to a stagnate or declining local tax base with poor quality schools and limited employment opportunities. This discriminatory policy perpetuated the social inequities that existed in American society as it inhibited Black fathers' ability to support their sons' reading. Conley and Yeung (2005; see also Massey, 2007; Massey & Denton, 1993) found that although this discriminatory policy has been struck down, the practices continue as Blacks are still funneled into segregated neighborhoods with unfavorable outcomes.

Another example of coupling comes from an examination of the occupational structure in which, according to Conley and Yeung (2005; see also Shapiro, Meschede, &

Osoro, 2013), Whites enjoy the benefits of employer-based health insurance, and retirement plans that are representative of white collar jobs, while Blacks are denied these benefits since they are less likely to exist in blue collar occupations. Thus, white collar jobs allow Whites to accumulate wealth by subsidizing their benefits, while Blacks have to pay for those same benefits, and as a result, have less financial means to support their adolescent sons' academic achievement (Conley, 2010; Conley & Yeung, 2005; Holmwood, 2013; Rothstein, 2004; Sen, 1999). Therefore, the legacy of discriminatory social policies continues to limit Black fathers' access to the accumulation of wealth through homeownership and occupational status (Shapiro, Meschede, & Osoro, 2013), which may hinder their ability to provide educational resources that are necessary for their child's academic achievement, reading literacy, and future employment opportunities (Diamond, 2006; Shapiro, Meschede, & Osoro, 2013).

### **Black Fathers' Occupational Status**

Black adolescent males' print reading literacy may be influenced by their fathers' literacy demands at work. According to Clark (2009; see also Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000), a fathers' job-related literacy shapes their sons' values, and attitudes towards reading, which can be passed down from one generation to another (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Weber, 1978/2013; Willis, 1977). Therefore, in order to foster reading literacy proficiency among Black adolescent males, it is important to investigate the extent to which fathers' occupation is associated with their sons' print reading engagement and achievement.

## **Primary and Secondary Labor Market Occupations**

Conley and Yeung (2005) found that persistent employment stratification along racial lines prohibited Blacks from entering the primary labor market. Conley and Yeung also found that primary labor market occupations provided secure employment, healthy working conditions, and good benefits, which were conducive to upward social mobility, whereas secondary labor market occupations provided insecure jobs, low wages, little or no benefits, and poor or hazardous conditions of work, which offered little social mobility. According to Kanter (1977), this discriminatory practice may be due to homosocial reproduction where White men in management positions provide privileges to other White men to reinforce the belief that only *they* are capable of performing well in high reward, high prestige positions (Smith, 2005, Heydebrand, 1994). These discriminatory practices have contributed to labor market characteristics that Blacks males seem to exemplify (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011a), namely low-skilled blue collar work.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2011a), Black males were less likely to be in managerial and professional occupations (e.g., chief executives, software developers, and aerospace engineers) but are more likely to be in the transportation and utilities, and public administration industries which tend to be low status and low wage positions (e.g., bus drivers, railroad brake, signal, and switch operators, and laborers). For instance, in 2010, the median weekly earnings of Black men were well below the earnings of White men in all job categories (e.g., managerial, professional, sales, natural resources, production, and service) (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011b).

## **Labor Market and Reading Literacy**

The differences between primary labor market occupations and secondary labor market occupations manifest themselves in terms of the amount of problem solving and reading literacy skills that are required for effective job performance. Clark (2009) found that it was “not the use of literacy at work by fathers *per se* that impacts on children’s literacy development but rather...it was the way in which job-related literacy [impacts]...the home literacy environment” (p. 13). Therefore, the occupation of Black fathers is associated with their sons’ literacy activities and subsequent reading achievement (Belz & Geary, 1984; Buckingham, Wheldall, & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013; Dixon-Román, 2012; Guthrie, Schafer, & Hutchinson, 1991) in terms of how it impacts the home literacy environment.

A fathers’ role in his sons’ literacy development is influenced by the literacy demands at work (Clark, 2009; Marks, 2008). Smith (1990) and Wollscheid (2013) found that fathers employed in literacy-rich, high-status occupations had positive attitudes toward reading, which not only influenced their reading behaviors at home, but were significantly associated with their sons’ reading engagement practices. Yet, for Blacks, this work is often characterized as low income, support occupations with few benefits (Shapiro, Meschede, & Osoro, 2013), which may prohibit the development of a home literacy environment that is conducive to reading literacy development.

Unfortunately, Black fathers tend not to be employed in literacy-rich occupations, and as a result, may exhibit neutral attitudes towards reading which may or may not influence adolescent sons’ reading engagement practices. In other words, if Black fathers are not

promoting the value of reading, their sons' may be left to their own devices as to the value of reading for academic achievement and future employment opportunities.

Fathers' occupational complexity influences the family by transmitting the skills and values acquired in the workforce to their children (Bowles, 1977; Conley & Yeung, 2005; Parcel & Meaghan 1994; Parcel, Nickoll, & Dufur, 1996; Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000), reproducing the occupational structure (Bandura; 1977; Bowles, 1977; Willis, 1977). For instance, children of managers and professionals are taught to use their imagination, reason, and language to solve problems, while children of support staff are taught to follow orders and the value of conformity (Bowles, 1977; Lareau, 2002; Parcel, Nickoll, & Dufur, 1996; Pearlin & Kohn, 1966).

Lareau's (2002) concept of *concerted cultivation* provides a good illustration of class differences in the transmission of skills and values. Although, Lareau (2002) used the terms working-class and middle-class, these class distinctions were derived from occupational status and their ability to influence the home literacy environment. Lareau (2002) asserted that when helping their children learn to read, working-class parents relied on their child's natural development because they did not want to do the wrong thing for fear they would impede their reading growth. Middle-class parents, on the other hand, engaged in concerted cultivation, where they intentionally fostered growth to stimulate their child's reading development by cultivating their cognitive and social skills. These parental characteristics affected the degree and value placed on reading literacy in the home, which in turn affected the level of their child's voluntary reading and subsequent reading achievement (Kirsch et al., 2002; Marks, 2008; Topping, 2006).

As a result, parental occupation, according to Conley and Yeung (2005), can be seen as “a better proxy” than income for reading attitude formation as well as other qualities that effect academic achievement (p. 1234).

### **Black Fathers’ Class and Status, and Their Sons’ Decision to Read**

Diamond (2006) found that efforts by Black fathers to provide material and symbolic resources for their sons’ academic achievement were hampered by social obstacles that prohibited them from taking advantage of opportunities for upward class and status mobility. These obstacles have an adverse effect on Black adolescent males’ attitude towards reading engagement, and achievement as they begin to question the efficacy of reading through the lens of future orientations toward employment beyond school (Gambetta, 2009; Guthrie & McRae, 2012; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Tatum, 2005). According to Guthrie and McRae (2012), if Black adolescent males believed that there was little correlation between high reading literacy proficiency and future economic success, then reading and academic success were of little consequence. Some studies found (Conley, 2010; Diamond, 2006; Gambetta, 2009; Royster, 2003; Shapiro 2004; Shapiro, Meschede, & Osoro, 2013; Wilson, 2006) that this belief is likely to persist throughout their academic career as they become more realistic about their economic opportunities beyond school by watching their fathers and other Black men relegated to secondary labor market positions where according to Smith and Wilhelm (2002; see also Diamond, 2006; Hooks, 2004; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Tatum, 2005; Wilson, 2006), advanced reading literacy proficiency is not required and the capacity to accumulate wealth is diminished (Conley & Yeung, 2005; Conley, 2010; Diamond, 2006; Wilson,

2006). Hence, the rational calculations Black adolescent males' make regarding their ideas toward reading efficacy in relation to future orientations is checked by their fathers' class and status, which in turn, may affect their reading engagement practices and print reading literacy proficiency.

This researcher contends that the capacity for Black fathers to affect their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency is through their class and occupational status, where class represents the ability of fathers to provide material resources for their sons' reading literacy development (Diamond, 2006; Dixon-Román, 2012; Hampden-Thompson & Johnson, 2006; Parcel, Nickoll, & Dufur, 1996; Teachman, 1987; Wößmann, 2003) while occupational status represents a fathers' symbolic transmission of occupationally derived attitudes about the efficacy of reading (Conley & Yeung, 2005). Weber's concept of class and status (1978/2013) provides an explanatory framework for viewing and interpreting the persistent underperformance of Black adolescent males' reading literacy achievement by revealing the complex network of factors that are associated with each dimension.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODS

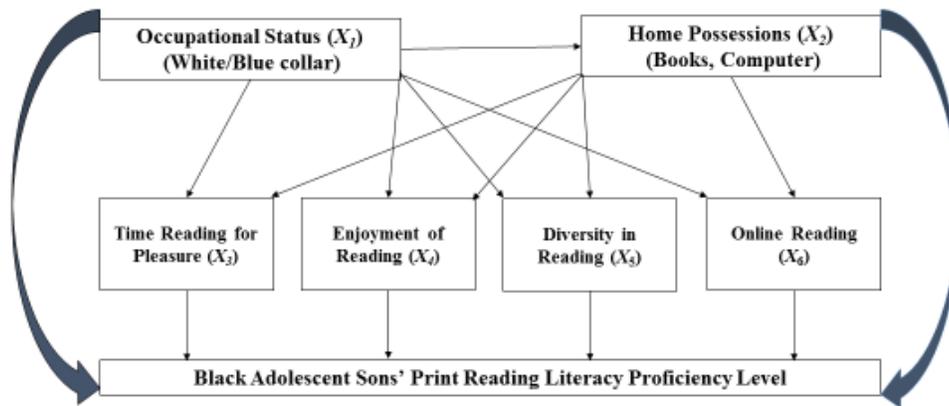
The 2009 PISA project, which is sponsored by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), provides international comparisons of students' proficiency in reading literacy, mathematics literacy, and science literacy across 65 participating countries (PISA, 2011). These comparisons are deemed necessary to assess students' future contribution to the social and economic well-being of their respective countries (OECD, 2012b). The first PISA assessment was given in 2000, which focused on reading literacy, and is administered every three years (focusing on one of the three core subjects) in order to provide historical and comparable data about 15-year-old students' proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science (PISA, 2011).

PISA 2009, the second assessment focused on reading literacy, addressed several issues that were related to students' in-school and out-of-school reading experiences, which included reading motivation, interest in reading, and reading engagement (OECD 2012c). Using U.S. public-use PISA 2009 data, this study seeks to evaluate the predictive effects of Black fathers' class (i.e., home possessions) and status (i.e., occupational status) on their adolescent sons' (a) reading engagement (i.e., the amount of time reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading), and (b) overall achievement on the print reading literacy portion of the assessment. The

relationships among these variables will be analyzed through the lens of Max Weber's theory of stratification, with a focus on class and status (Weber, 1978/2013).

This study adopts Max Weber's theory of stratification (1978/2013) in proposing a theoretical model that summarizes the hypothesized predictive effects of a fathers' class and status on their adolescent sons' reading engagement and print reading literacy proficiency. The proposed theoretical model consists of two exogenous variables (home possessions and occupational status) and five endogenous variables (the amount of time reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, online reading, and print reading literacy proficiency levels). The exogenous variables, fathers' home possessions and occupational status, predict or influence the accumulation of educational resources in the home to support their sons' reading proficiency. Therefore, evaluating the relationships between Black fathers' home possessions and occupational status, and their adolescent sons' reading literacy proficiency is appropriate.

There are hypothesized predictive effects of fathers' home possessions and occupational status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency that are mediated by their sons' reading engagement practices, which includes the amount of time spent on reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading activities. There are hypothesized predictive direct effects of fathers' home possessions and occupational status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency. The theoretical model shown in Figure 2 demonstrates the hypothetical relationships between a fathers' home possessions and occupational status on their sons' reading engagement and print reading literacy proficiency.



*Figure 3.* Theorized path analysis model of Max Weber's stratification theory used to test the interaction effects of a Black fathers' class and occupational status on their sons' print reading literacy proficiency as mediated by time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading.

Weber's concept of stratification (1978/2013) appears to match what is found in the literature regarding socioeconomic status and Black adolescent male reading performance. For instance, Gosa and Alexander (2007; see also Noguera, 2003; Rothstein, 2004; Tatum & Muhammad, 2012; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2004) showed that a fathers' class and status had a detrimental effect on Black adolescent males' print reading proficiency due to the effects of institutional racism and discrimination that prohibited fathers from accessing and providing the social benefits that are known to

contribute to their adolescent sons' print reading literacy. Using Weber's concept of stratification (1978/2013), two research questions are proposed in order to test the hypothesized model.

Research Question 1: What is the predictive effect of fathers' home possessions on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency level through the mediation of the amount of time reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading?

Research Question 2: What is the predictive effect of fathers' occupational status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency level through the mediation of the amount of time reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading?

The purpose of this study is to begin to disentangle and evaluate the component parts of socioeconomic status in order to add to our understanding of the social complexities that shape the literacy environment of Black male adolescents. It is hoped the findings of this study will inform researchers and educators of the complexities associated with improving Black adolescent males print reading literacy performance.

### **Research Design**

To determine the value of Weber's dimensions of stratification (1978/2013) on Black adolescent male reading literacy proficiency, a nonexperimental design will guide the analysis of PISA 2009 student survey data. A path analysis will be used to determine the nature of the hypothesized predictive effects by evaluating the magnitude of the path coefficients, their direction, and their statistical significance. Path analysis may not be

able to capture the total effect of every indicator or the total effect of the hypothesized model due to possible interaction between variables, where the one-way path is actually a two-way path (Land, 1969; Lea, 1997; Stage, Carter & Nora, 2004; Wright, 1934). For instance, due to the nature of the profession, a medical doctor holds a high occupational status that is associated with higher income, while higher income is often associated with occupations that require high literacy proficiency. Another issue of concern is that the validity of the model is dependent on the theory used to construct the model (Wolfe, 1980). The order with which the variables are aligned may or may not be the correct causal order and since path analysis does not correct for user error, the model will always fit the data (Lea, 1997; Heise, 1969; Stage, Carter, & Nora, 2004). To avoid making this critical error, I constructed a nonrecursive conceptual path model that depicts a one-way relationship between the two exogenous variables fathers' home possessions (i.e., class) and occupational status (i.e., status) because it is hypothesized that acquired occupational status influences the extent of home possessions. Moreover, it is suggested, in PISA 2009, that reading engagement activities influence reading literacy proficiency. Using PISA's rationale, it is hypothesized that the exogenous variables may have either a direct or an indirect association with reading literacy proficiency mediated by reading engagement activities. Although the threats to validity are a concern, path analysis provides a meaningful procedure to uncover the predictive effects of fathers' home possessions and occupational status on their adolescent sons' reading engagement and print reading literacy proficiency (Heise, 1969; Stage, Carter, & Nora, 2004).

## **Data**

This study utilizes the U.S. public-use student questionnaire data from the 2009 PISA project to determine the predictive effects of Black fathers' class and status on their adolescent sons' reading engagement, and print reading literacy proficiency. PISA data are collected every three years in order to provide historical and comparable data about 15-year-old students' proficiency in reading literacy, mathematics literacy, and science literacy across 65 participating countries (PISA, 2011). PISA assesses students aged from 15 years and 3 completed months to 16 years and 2 completed months at the beginning of the assessment period who are in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade or higher to determine how well prepared they are to meet real-life challenges beyond the school environment. As a result, PISA 2009 examined how well students can use their reading skills to understand and interpret various forms of printed material as they maneuver their way through life (OECD, 2012b).

PISA 2009 student assessments and questionnaires were administered between September and November 2009. Thirteen versions of the PISA test booklet were used, each containing a different subset of items. The fact that each student completed only a subset of items means that classical test scores, such as the percent correct, are not accurate measures of student performance. Instead, scaling techniques were used to establish a common scale for all students. For PISA 2009, item response theory (IRT) was used by the international contractor to estimate scores for reading, mathematics, and science literacy, as well as for three reading literacy subscales: accessing and retrieving information, integrating and interpreting, and reflecting and evaluating. IRT identifies

patterns of responses and uses statistical models to predict the probability of answering an item correctly as a function of the students' proficiency in answering other questions. With this method, the performance of a sample of students can be summarized on a simple scale or series of scales, even when students are administered different items (OECD, 2012b).

PISA 2009 took great pains to ensure internal and external validity by requiring national centers to generate validity reports from *KeyQuest* (a generic software, designed specifically for the PISA project), and to resolve any issues prior to submitting data to PISA. Any outstanding potential risks to the validity to PISA 2009 results were identified and eradicated. These validity checks were essential, not only to the veracity of the results, but to the weighting process. For instance, checks were done to ensure school and student participation statuses were correctly assigned, and that all student sampling data required for weighting were available and correct. Moreover, field trials were initiated, which provided additional opportunities for review (OECD, 2012b). Due to the extensive steps PISA 2009 took to ensure internal and external validity, I have confidence that the data is representative of the population to which the study findings are expected to generalize.

## **Participants**

The U.S. PISA 2009 sample includes 5,233 students from 165 public and private schools. The U.S. sample for PISA 2009 was created using a two-stage sampling procedure that was designed to obtain a sample of schools and a sample of students from each selected school. In the first stage, schools were stratified by public and private

designation, region, and size. These schools were then randomly selected and weighted to compensate for unequal probabilities of school selection, and subsequent student selection as well as to adjust for the effects of nonresponse in order to be representative of the country. In the second stage, participating schools provided a list of all 15-year-old students from which 42 students were randomly selected (PISA, 2011).

From the U.S. PISA 2009 sample, participants were identified through their racial identification, and whether they lived at home with their fathers. Although a total of 147 Black adolescent male students lived at home with their fathers, 117 were selected for analysis after deleting records with missing values.

## **Measures**

**Class.** For Weber (1978/2014), class represents income. Yet, in PISA 2009, the variable income is difficult to assess because there is no direct measure of income in the PISA dataset. As a result, the index home possessions (HOMEPOS) is used as a proxy for Weber's class variable and is comprised of household income, wealth, educational resources, information and communication technologies, and cultural possessions as well as the number of books in the home. The index variable home possessions was recoded into four categories: (0) 0-25 books, (1) 26-100 books, (2) 100-500 books, and (3) more than 500 books (OECD, 2012b).

**Status (occupational status).** Fathers' employment category (FSECATEG), which I will refer to as occupational status, is derived from the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) codes of parents. They were recoded into two response categories from 1 (*white collar*) to 2 (*blue collar*) (OECD, 2012b).

**Father at home.** In order to determine if the student lives at home with their father, the variable Lives at home with you—Father was created. There are two response categories from 1 (*Yes*) to 2 (*No*) (OECD, 2012b)

**Time spent reading for pleasure.** Answers to the question: How much time do you usually spend reading for pleasure, is based on the selection of one of the following five values from 1 (*Don't read to enjoy*) to 5 (*more than 2 hours a day*) (OECD, 2012b).

**Enjoyment of reading (JOYREAD).** Eleven items were used to measure enjoyment of reading in PISA 2009. All items which were negatively phrased were reverse scored for IRT scaling such that positive Weighted Likelihood Estimates (WLE) scores on this index indicate higher levels of enjoyment of reading. There are four response categories varying from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*) (OECD, 2012b).

**Diversity in reading (DIVREAD).** Five items measuring the construct of diversity in reading were included in the PISA 2009 main study. There are five response categories varying from 1 (*never or almost never*) to 5 (*several times a week*). Positive Weighted Likelihood Estimates (WLE) scores on this index for PISA 2009 indicate higher diversity in reading (OECD, 2012b).

**Online reading activities (ONLNREAD).** Seven items are used to measure online reading activities in PISA 2009. There are five response categories varying from “I don't know what it is”, “never or almost never”, “several times a month”, “several times a week” to “several times a day.” Positive Weighted Likelihood Estimates (WLE) scores

on this index for PISA 2009 indicate higher levels of online reading activities (OECD, 2012b).

### **Validity and Reliability of Measures**

Table 1 indicates the PISA 2009 scale reliabilities for the United States.

According to OECD (2012b), the reliability for home possessions (HOMEPOS) is high.

Although the scale reliabilities for enjoyment of reading (JOYREAD) is much higher than diversity in reading (DIVREAD), PISA suggests that this is due to the lack of availability of different reading materials listed in the scale (OECD, 2012b).

Table 1

*Scale Reliabilities for home possessions, enjoyment of reading and diversity of reading and latent correlations in the United States*

<i>HOMEPOS</i>	<i>JOYREAD</i>	<i>DIVREAD</i>	Latent correlations between JOYREAD and DIVREAD
0.80	0.92	0.59	0.42

**Print reading literacy proficiency.** To assess student print reading proficiency, PISA 2009 used “plausible values” as an indicator of individual student performance, and as a basis for national and group estimates (PISA, 2011, p. 2). Using IRT, multiple estimates were employed to determine individual and group performance (PISA, 2011). Plausible values were then used to report student performance in terms of scores and

content (which describes what students can do at a particular proficiency level) (OECD, 2012b).

Proficiency levels, as shown in Table 2, were developed to describe what is typically expected of student at a particular reading proficiency level. Each level has a cut-off point that indicates the likelihood of success in completing at least half of the tasks at that level (OECD, 2012b).

Table 2

*Reading Literacy Performance Band Definitions on the PISA Scale*

Level	Score points on the PISA scale
6	Higher than 698.32
5	Higher than 625.61 and less than or equal to 698.32
4	Higher than 552.89 and less than or equal to 625.61
3	Higher than 480.18 and less than or equal to 552.89
2	Higher than 407.47 and less than or equal to 480.18
1a	Higher than 334.75 and less than or equal to 407.47
1b	262.04 to less than or equal to 334.75

**Plausible Values**

To assess student print reading proficiency, PISA 2009 used plausible values to describe group-level estimates of performance (Beaton, Rogers, Gonzalez, Hanly, Kolstad, Rust, Sikali, Stokes, & Jia, 2011; PISA, 2011; von Davier, Gonzalez, & Mislevy, 2009). Plausible values represent the “plausible range and location of proficiency for groups of students” by providing an “unbiased estimate of the groups’ mean and standard deviation” in reading performance (von Davier, Gonzalez, & Mislevy, 2009, p. 11). Plausible values are derived from individual responses to a subset of

questions, and other relevant information that is known about their overall group performance (von Davier, Gonzalez, & Mislevy, 2009). Therefore, plausible values, for each respondent in the data set, represent their predicted or expected level of proficiency or achievement within the distribution, rather than an individual score, and are used to estimate group performance (Beaton et al., 2011; von Davier, Gonzalez, & Mislevy, 2009).

Summarizing the 2009 PISA results using plausible values requires calculating the path coefficients for each of the 5 plausible values, then calculating their average in order to get an unbiased estimate of the magnitude of the path coefficient for the group (von Davier, Gonzalez, & Mislevy, 2009). According to Gonzalez and Beaton (personal communication, May 2014), “when using plausible values in a path analysis, the plausible values should not be treated as 5 separate variables. Instead, analysis needs to be run 5 times, each time with one plausible value, and then take the average of the results.”

### **Data Analysis**

Data will be entered into an Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998/2014) statistical software program to investigate the direct and mediated effects in a multiple mediator model. A path analysis will be used to determine the predictive effects of a Black fathers’ home possessions and occupational status on their adolescent sons’ reading engagement and print reading literacy proficiency. Moreover, the statistical program will provide the magnitude of the path coefficients, direction, and statistical significance of each path. This information will help me determine whether the amount of time spent

reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading activities play a mediating role in predictive effects of fathers' home possessions and occupational status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency, and finally, whether Weber's (1978/2013) theory of stratification is an appropriate tool for evaluating the dimensions of socioeconomic status, and their role on reading proficiency.

Prior to running the data, a descriptive analysis will be conducted to check for any unusual data patterns (e.g., skewed distributions). Upon inspection of the data, I expect that there will be a distinction in Black adolescent male reading engagement, and print reading literacy proficiency between males whose fathers have acquired a large number of home possessions and those whose fathers have acquired a small number of home possessions. I also expect to see a distinction in Black adolescent male reading engagement, and print reading literacy proficiency between males whose fathers are white collar workers and those whose fathers are blue collar workers. I also expect to see that Black adolescent male reading engagement activities play a mediating role between fathers' home possessions (i.e., class), and occupational status (i.e., status), and their sons' print reading literacy proficiency.

Knowing the predictive effects of Black fathers' class and status on their adolescent sons' reading engagement and print reading literacy proficiency will assist in answering questions about what specific indicators either promote or hinder Black adolescent male literacy.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Explanations for the persistent underperformance of Black adolescent males in print reading literacy proficiency on PISA examinations are often associated with their parents' socioeconomic status (SES) and the students' long-term voluntary reading habits (Hampden-Thompson & Johnson, 2006; Marx, 2002), it has been difficult, however, to identify which components of SES, either class or status, facilitate their performance. According to Hampden-Thompson & Johnson (2006; see also Teachman, 1987; Wößmann, 2003), Black middle and upper class fathers can purchase reading materials that foster a literacy-rich home environment, which was conducive to their sons' reading engagement practices and subsequent reading literacy proficiency. However, Gosa and Alexander (2007; see also Noguera, 2003; Rothstein, 2004; Tatum & Muhammad, 2012; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2004) found that the positive influence of income did not translate to Black adolescent males due to institutional racism and discrimination that prohibits Black families, particularly fathers, from owning assets to support their sons' reading literacy development and proficiency.

Smith (1990) and Wollscheid (2013) found that fathers employed in literacy-rich, high-status occupations had positive attitudes toward reading, which not only influenced their reading behaviors at home, but were significantly associated with their sons' reading engagement practices. Yet, for Blacks, this work is often characterized as low income,

support occupations with few benefits (Shapiro, Meschede, & Osoro, 2013), which may prohibit the development of a home literacy environment that is conducive to reading literacy development.

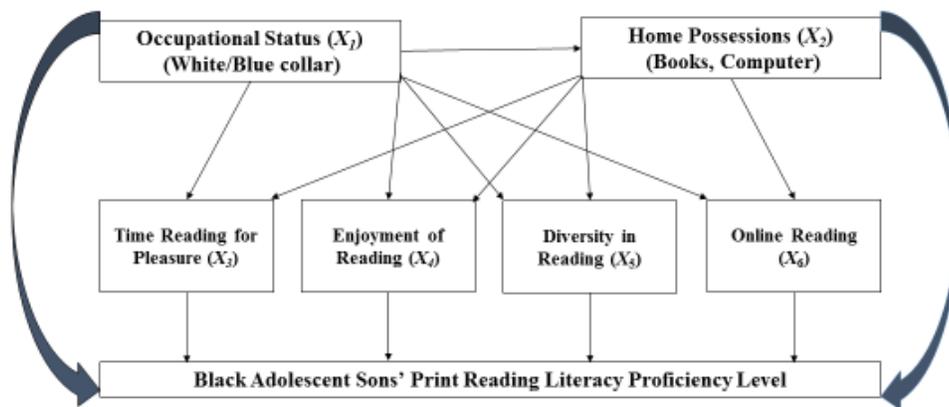
The purpose of this research is to determine the predictive effects of fathers' class (i.e., home possessions) and status (occupational status) on his adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency through the mediation of reading engagement practices (i.e., time spent on reading, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading activities) by arguing that the material resources and symbolic resources that are brought into the home act as an exemplar to be imitated by his son (Kohn, 1969) in promoting the value of reading (OECD, 2010b).

Weber's theory of stratification (1978/2013) allowed for investigating the individual predictive effects of fathers' class and status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency. Using Weber's concept of stratification, two research questions were proposed in order to test the hypothesized model.

Research Question 1: What is the predictive effect of fathers' home possessions on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency level through the mediation of the amount of time reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading?

Research Question 2: What is the predictive effect of fathers' occupational status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency level through the mediation of the amount of time reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading?

A path analysis was conducted to determine the predictive effects of fathers' home possessions (i.e., class) and fathers' occupational status (status) on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency level through the mediation of time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading and online reading as indicated in Figure 4.



*Figure 4.* Theorized path analysis model of Max Weber's stratification theory used to test the interaction effects of a Black fathers' class and occupational status on their sons' print reading literacy proficiency as mediated by time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading.

## **Hypothesized Model**

Research Question 1. What is the predictive effect of fathers' home possessions on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency level through the mediation of the amount of time reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading?

The hypothesized model, represented in Figure 4, which contains 10 paths indicated that the predictive effects of fathers' home possessions (i.e., class) on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency level was not mediated through time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading.

Research Question 2. What is the predictive effect of fathers' occupational status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency level through the mediation of the amount of time reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading?

The hypothesized model, represented in Figure 4, which contains 10 paths indicated that the predictive effects of fathers' occupational status (i.e., status) on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency level was not mediated through time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading.

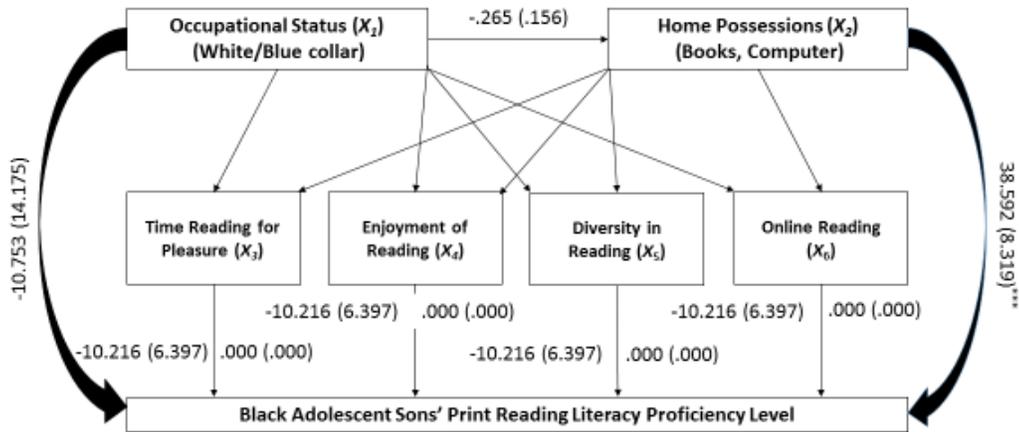


Figure 5: Path analysis model of Max Weber’s stratification theory used to test the interaction effects of a Black fathers’ class and occupational status on their sons’ print reading literacy proficiency as mediated by time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Although the hypothesized model, represented in Figure 5, which contains 10 paths indicated that the predictive effects of fathers’ home possessions (i.e., class) and fathers’ occupational status (status) on their adolescent sons’ print reading literacy proficiency level was not mediated through time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading, there was a statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) direct effect from fathers’ home possessions (i.e., class) to their adolescent sons’ print reading literacy proficiency level.

For the hypothesized model, the goodness-of-fit test statistic was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(0) = 0.000$ ,  $p = 0.0000$ . Keeping in mind that the Chi-square is sensitive to sample size, I continued with the analysis. An RMSEA of 0.00 indicates a good fit, but it is also sensitive to sample size since it is a function of the  $\chi^2$  value, and degrees of freedom. A 90% CI [0.000, 0.000] and a CFI of 1.00 indicates a good model fit as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3

*Confirmatory Factor Analysis Goodness-of-Fit Indices Using Two Factor Model*

Model	$X^2$	Df	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA	90% CI for RMSEA	
							LL	UL
Model 0	0.000	0	1.000	1.000	-----	0.000	0.000	0.000
Model 1	5.692	5	0.999	0.997	-----	0.034	0.000	0.137

Yet, this hypothesized model is just-identified due to fact that the number of known elements equals the number of freely estimated model parameters (thus, there are no degrees of freedom,  $df = 0$ ) (Dimitrov, 2012). Although the just-identified model “yields a unique solution for all unknown parameters, it is not of scientific interest because it always produces a perfect fit ( $df = 0$ ) and, therefore, can never be rejected” (Dimitrov, 2012, p. 100).

### Summation of Predictive Effects

Table 4 summarizes the results from the two estimations under the full model, whereby the effects (direct, indirect, and total effects) for the two exogenous variables (home possessions and occupational status) are presented separately.

In Table 4, statistically significant effects are given in bold whereas the statistically non-significant (direct and/or indirect) effects are dropped from the model to obtain one final model described later. The shaded cell in the first column indicates non-significant direct effects; that is, arrows that are subsequently dropped from the model in order to obtain one final model.

Table 4

#### *Estimation of Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects Under Initial (Full) Path Model (Model 0)*

PATH	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Occupational Status → Reading Engagement → Adolescent Sons' Print Reading Proficiency	-10.753	-10.216	-20.968
Home Possessions → Reading Engagement → Adolescent Sons' Print Reading Proficiency	<b>38.592***</b>	–	<b>38.592***</b>

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

**Fathers' Home Possessions (i.e., class).** Table 4 indicates that the predictive effect of Black fathers' home possessions was not mediated by amount of time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading. The

mediating variables were not predictors on the outcome variable (Black adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency level) (TIE = 0.000). Although Black fathers' home possessions was not mediated by the amount of time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading, it had a statistically significant direct effect on their sons' print reading literacy proficiency level.

There is a statistically significant direct effect on Black adolescent sons' print reading literacy level from the quantity of fathers' home possessions (DE = 38.592), such that Black fathers with higher levels of home possessions had sons with higher levels of print reading literacy proficiency. These results indicate that Black fathers' ability to provide home possessions that support their sons' print reading literacy has a statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) effect on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy performance. The non-significant paths or predictive effects of fathers' home possessions and fathers' occupational status were removed from the model and a revised model was generated as indicated in Figure 6.

**Fathers' Occupational Status (i.e., status).** Table 4 indicates that the predictive effect of Black fathers' occupational status was not mediated by the amount of time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading. The mediating variables were not predictors of the outcome variable (Black adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency level) (TIE = -10.216). Furthermore, the total predictive effect of Black fathers' occupational status was not statistically significant in explaining their sons' print literacy proficiency level (TE = -20.968), such that reading

literacy levels of Black adolescent males cannot be predicted by their fathers' occupational status.

### Revised Model

The revised model, represented in Figure 6, contains paths indicating that the predictive effects of fathers' home possessions and fathers' occupational status on their sons' print reading literacy proficiency level were not mediated through time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading, but had a statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) direct effect from fathers' home possessions to their sons' print reading literacy proficiency level.

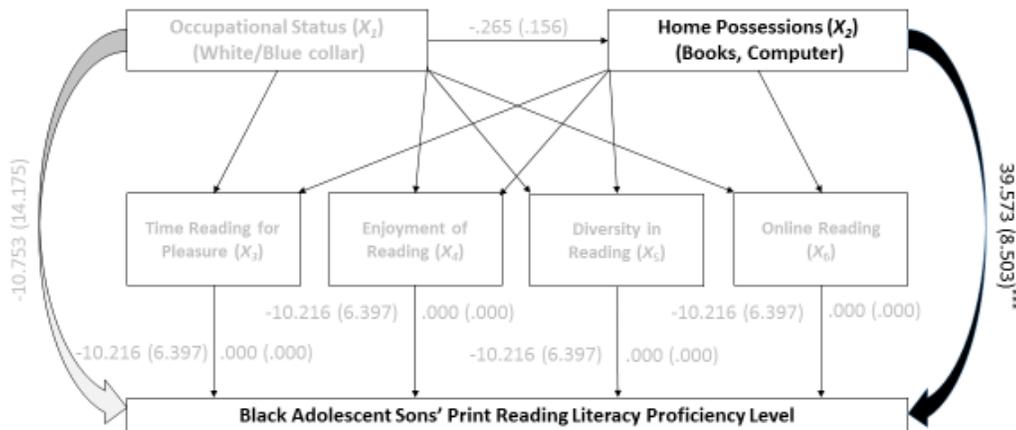


Figure 6. Path analysis model of Max Weber's stratification theory used to test the interaction effects of a Black fathers' class and occupational status on their sons' print reading literacy proficiency as mediated by time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading.  
 \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

For the revised model, the goodness-of-fit test statistic was not statistically significant,  $\chi^2(5) = 5.692$ ,  $p = 0.3374$ . Keeping in mind that the Chi-square is sensitive to sample size, I continued with the analysis. An RMSEA of 0.034 indicates a good fit, but it is also sensitive to sample size since it is a function of the  $\chi^2$  value, and degrees of freedom. With a 90% CI [0.000, 0.137] and a CFI of 0.999, this indicates a good model fit as seen in Table 3.

As indicated by Table 5, there is a statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) direct effect on Black adolescent sons' print reading literacy level from the quantity of fathers' home possessions (DE = 39.573), such that Black fathers with higher levels of home possessions had sons with higher levels of print reading literacy proficiency. These results indicate that Black fathers' ability to provide home possessions that support their sons' print reading literacy has a statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) effect on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy performance.

Table 5

*Estimation of Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects Under (Revised) Path Model (Model 1)*

<b>PATH</b>	<b>Direct Effect</b>	<b>Indirect Effect</b>	<b>Total Effect</b>
Home Possessions → Adolescent Sons' Print Reading Proficiency	<b>39.573***</b>	—	<b>39.573***</b>

\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

## **Unforeseen Results**

The use of Weber's conception of stratification (1978/2013) provided a philosophical direction in understanding the predictive effects of Black fathers' class (i.e., home possessions) and status (i.e., occupational status) on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency through reading engagement practices. The salient literature describes the effects of class and status as important indicators of print reading proficiency by enabling fathers to create a home-literacy environment that provides material and symbolic resources that facilitate reading achievement. However, the findings indicated that the material and symbolic resources were not mediated by reading engagement practices, which made evaluating the direct effects of class and status a necessary option in discussing the fathers' predictive effects on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency.

The findings revealed that there was a statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) direct effect on Black adolescent sons' print reading literacy level from the quantity of fathers' home possessions ( $DE = 39.573$ ), such that Black fathers with higher levels of home possessions have sons with higher levels of print reading literacy proficiency. This result supports Hampden-Thompson and Johnson's (2006) and others' (Broader, Bolder Approach to Education 2008; Cohen & Little, 2005; Conley, 2010; Conley & Yeung, 2005; Dixon-Román, 2012; Hampden-Thompson, & Johnson, 2006; Parcel, Nickoll, & Dufur, 1996; OECD, 2010b; Rothstein, 2004; Rothstein, 2005; Teachman, 1987; Wößmann, 2003) contention that Black fathers' ability to provide home possessions to

support their sons' print reading literacy has a significant effect on their sons' print reading literacy performance.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the predictive effects of Black fathers' class and status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency through the mediation of the amount of time their sons' spend reading for pleasure, their enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and their online reading activities. The results found that there were no predictive effects of fathers' class or status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency through the mediation of the time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading activities.

The results revealed, however, that there is a statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) direct effect of Black fathers' class (i.e., home possessions) on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy level ( $DE = 39.573$ ), such that Black fathers with higher levels of home possessions have sons with higher levels of print reading literacy proficiency. This result supports Hampden-Thompson and Johnson's (2006; see also Broader, Bolder Approach to Education, 2008; Cohen & Little, 2005; Conley, 2010; Conley & Yeung, 2005; Dixon-Román, 2012; Fleischman et al., 2010; Parcel, Nickoll, & Dufur, 1996; OECD, 2010b; Rothstein, 2004; Rothstein, 2005; Teachman, 1987; Wößmann, 2003) contention that Black fathers' ability to provide material resources to support their sons' print reading literacy has a significant direct effect on their sons' print reading literacy performance.

My research questions were built on a foundation of three big ideas. These ideas were: (1) Black-White reading literacy achievement gap, where I briefly reviewed three dominant theoretical perspectives of the Black-White reading achievement gap in hopes it would provide a rationale for its persistence; (2) Max Weber's (1978/2013) concept of class and status, where I investigated Max Weber's concept of social stratification where class and status took center stage as it helped reveal the complexities associated with exploring how Black fathers' socioeconomic status affects their sons' print reading literacy proficiency; and (3) the predictive effects of Black fathers' class and status on their adolescent sons' reading engagement practices and print reading literacy proficiency, where I evaluated the predictive effects of Black fathers' class and status by reviewing the literature on the role fathers' class and status play on their sons' reading literacy development and proficiency. Looking through the lenses of these three ideas provided an opportunity to explore the components of socioeconomic status that facilitate a fathers' ability to affect their adolescent sons' print reading literacy achievement.

### **Black Achievement Gap and Socioeconomic Status**

The results found that for PISA 2009, the Black-White reading achievement gap can be explained by fathers' class (i.e., home possessions), as alluded to by Fleishman et al., (2010; see also Hampden-Thompson & Johnson, 2006). Unfortunately, Fleishman et al.'s, (2010; see also Hampden-Thompson & Johnson, 2006) analyses included PISA's definition of socioeconomic status, which is a composite variable that includes class (i.e., home possessions), parental occupation, and parental education. In the absence of determining the effects of each of the component indices of socioeconomic status, it is

difficult to suggest that socioeconomic status, as defined by PISA, explains the Black-White reading achievement gap.

Due to the lack of specificity embedded in the term socioeconomic status, the use of Weber's concept of social stratification (1978/2013) provided a theoretical framework to separate the indices of socioeconomic status in order to avoid confusion. As a result, fathers' class and status were considered separate dimensions of socioeconomic status.

The use of class and status as separate dimensions of socioeconomic status, and the use of social stratification allowed for a precise investigation of the predictive effects of Black fathers' class and status on their adolescents sons' print reading literacy proficiency through the mediation of time spent reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading activities. Weber's (1978/2013) framework allowed for a discussion of Black fathers' place in a hierarchical social structure and how class and status are modified and constrained by institutionalized racism and discrimination that according to Diamond (2006), prohibit the ability to provide material and symbolic educationally related resources to an adolescent son. The acknowledgement of racial and discriminatory practices, by Black adolescent males, have an adverse effect on their future orientation toward the value of reading and its implications for future employment opportunities (Gambetta, 2009; Guthrie & McRae, 2012; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Tatum, 2005).

### **Fathers' Class**

The results based on data from PISA 2009 were that Black fathers' class has no predictive effect on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy through the mediation of

the amount of time they spend reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and online reading activities. This finding, though not consistent with other findings, nonetheless adds to the literature by evaluating whether Black adolescent males' reading engagement practices mediate the relationship between their fathers' class and status and their own print reading literacy. The results support existing research (Conley, 2010; Conley & Yeung, 2005; Dixon-Román, 2012; Hampden-Thompson & Johnson, 2006; Parcel, Nickoll, & Dufur, 1996; Teachman, 1987; Wößmann, 2003) that claims there is a significant direct effect between Black fathers' class and their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency. The more material resources Black fathers can provide to support their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency, the better they performed on the PISA 2009 reading examination.

Although there was a significant direct effect between fathers' class and their adolescent sons' print reading literacy, there is no explanation as to why this significance disappears when it is mediated by reading engagement activities. This phenomena may be explained by other indices that act as a conduit between fathers' class and their adolescent sons' print literacy proficiency, such as in-school and out of school activities that require the effects of fathers' class in order to participate (i.e., drama club, debate club, etc.).

### **Fathers' Occupational Status**

The results for Black fathers' occupational status were that it has no predictive effect on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy through the mediation of the amount of time they spend reading for pleasure, enjoyment of reading, diversity in reading, and

online reading activities. Similar to the finding related to fathers' class, this result is not consistent with much of the present literature that argues Black fathers' occupation is associated with their adolescent sons' literacy activities and reading achievement (Belz & Geary, 1984; Buckingham, Wheldall, & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013; Dixon-Román, 2012; Guthrie, Schafer, & Hutchinson, 1991).

It is possible that Black fathers' occupational status does not affect their adolescent sons' print reading proficiency because their adolescent sons' are striving to find their independence, and as a result, create their own opinions about the efficacy of reading. It is also possible that these adolescents know that reading literacy may not benefit them beyond school.

### **Limitations**

Using an extant database provides a great opportunity to uncover relationships and predictive effects, but what it does not provide are data for establishing causal relationships. As a result, I have to remind the reader that the findings are not causal, but provide predictive effects. Investigating predictive effects are important to this study because it establishes a starting point for further investigation in determining the role of fathers in their sons' literacy development. Another limitation to using an extant database is that internal validity threats are inherent due to the validity issues that arise in data collection procedures as outlined throughout PISA documentation.

Another limitation to PISA data is the validity and reliability of 15-year old students reporting their parents' home wealth/income via home possessions, and their parents' occupational status in terms of distinguishing between blue collar and white

collar occupations. Student self-report data regarding their reading engagement practices may also pose a validity threat since students may over-report their participation in reading engagement activities.

Questions used in PISA student questionnaires did not fully capture students' relationships and reading activities with their parents. Including questions that capture students' reading behaviors in relation to their parents' reading attitudes and reading habits will go a long way in understanding the social component in students' reading engagement practices. Without additional questions that capture more information about fathers' involvement in their sons' literacy development, the predictive effects of Black fathers' class and status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy remains underestimated.

### **Future Research**

Future research may investigate aspects of fathers' class that facilitate their sons' reading engagement and subsequent print reading proficiency. As indicated by the path diagram in Figure 2, there is a significant direct effect between fathers' class on their adolescent sons' print reading proficiency, which has implications for further research on Black adolescent males. Three questions arise from the class analysis: (1) How does fathers' class directly affect their sons' print reading proficiency?; (2) Why does the significant relationship between fathers' class and their sons' print reading literacy proficiency disappear when it is mediated by reading engagement activities?; and (3) What are other possible variables that mediate fathers' class and their sons' reading literacy proficiency? In reality, class by itself does not directly affect an adolescent

males' print reading proficiency. It is what class does that initiates a mechanism whereby print reading proficiency emerges. For instance, wealth and income affords Black fathers the capacity to provide tutors, fund their adolescent sons' in-school and out of school activities, and enjoy a variety of experiences, such as vacations away from home. Hence, future research may investigate fee-based activities vis-à-vis their fathers' class in facilitating reading engagement for Black adolescent males. In other words, participating in interesting activities may facilitate reading about those activities. Results from this research could shed light on how adolescents' busy lives support literacy through activities, in which reading becomes an enriching experience that supports their interests.

Additional research that focuses on different racial and ethnic groups is warranted. As evidenced by this research, there were many contradictions regarding the effects of class and status on print reading literacy proficiency. This is due to the over-emphasis on aggregating data to explain reading performance. Although aggregated data are helpful, in terms of getting the big picture, educators, parents, and other stakeholders find it frustrating that the aggregated data that directs their work, allow some students to underperform. Therefore, additional research is necessary to address the specific needs of racial, and ethnic groups in order for them to find reading success.

Further studies are warranted to investigate other variables that may play a mediating role between Black fathers' class and occupational status and their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency. Knowing the variables that mediate Black fathers' class and status on their adolescent sons' print reading literacy proficiency will

help target material and symbolic resources in order to support their sons' reading development.

### **Final Thoughts**

Fathers play a critical role in providing resources to support their adolescent sons' literacy development. Unfortunately, not all fathers have the capacity to provide the necessary resources to support their sons' development, especially when race, class, and status are taken in to account, which speaks to the injustice that exists in society.

The significance of this study is that it reveals the unexpected non-effects of fathers' class and status in providing assistance to their adolescent sons' reading literacy proficiency through the mediating effects of reading engagement practices, and the lack of fathers' status to directly influence their sons' reading literacy proficiency. These unexpected effects should be closely examined in order to support fathers in their effort to promote their sons' literacy development.

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## **BIOGRAPHY**

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