**Title:** Applying to Collaborate with Professor Joseph Nelson

**Project Description (750 word limit):**

In the Harvard Educational Review article, *"(Re)Imagining Black Boyhood: Toward a critical framework for educational research,"* Dumas and Nelson (2016) draw from critical childhood studies (Stephens, 1995; Wyness, 2012) to argue that Black boyhood in the United States has been rendered both socially unimagined and unimaginable, and largely due to the devalued position and limited considerations of Black girls and boys within the broader social conception of childhood. In addition, the "crisis" focus of public discourse on Black males—focused as it is on adult Black men—makes it difficult to authentically see young Black boys as human beings in and of themselves. A critical reimagining of Black boyhood demands that evaluators, policymakers, and community advocates pursue pedagogical and policy interventions that create spaces for Black boys to construct and experience robust childhoods, instead of enacting professional practices that are rooted in *adultification* (Ferguson, 2000), and associated with fears of who they might become in the future, or in young adulthood specifically. (e.g., high school dropout, "criminals," early death, teenage father)

Dumas and Nelson further argue that this *unimaginability* of Black boyhood is tied to Black boys being essentially erased from most research on Black males in education, especially during childhood. This is unfortunate for several reasons: First, the lack of research on young Black boys means that we have not adequately captured the school experiences of this population, and therefore have little empirical knowledge to inform policies and practices to address their social and educational needs. Second, the absence of research specifically on younger Black boys leads policymakers and educational leaders to extrapolate from research on Black adolescents, as if what we know about older boys and young men is sufficient or even appropriate to use as a guide in designing interventions for young children. Third, given the increased attention to the importance of early childhood education, and new proposals at the federal and local levels to develop initiatives in this area, it is surprising that so little attention has been paid to the experiences and needs of Black boys in preschool and elementary school contexts. For all of our concern about achievement disparities among Black and White students, and the so-called "crisis" of Black males in education, social scientists still devote most of their scholarly attention to understanding what happens, and how to intervene several years after disparities in educational outcomes are already apparent.

This faculty-student research collaboration will entail drafting the single most comprehensive literature review of empirical research on Black boys' education during early and middle childhood. This review is an "invited submission" extended to Michael Dumas and Joseph Nelson by the editors of the high-impact journal, *Review of Educational Research*. This necessary task is to establish a foundational and empirical knowledge-base in order to subsequently do what Dumas and Nelson consider a (re)commitment to further research on Black boyhood in education, and this review is intended to inspire and inform scholarship that asks young Black boys who they are,

what they think, and what they desire in their lives at a critical age range.

Clearly, Dumas and Nelson indeed advocate for more research on, and programs for, younger Black boys. However, their aim here is to address what they see as the boarder challenge: not merely the limited number of young Black male research subjects, but the denial of subjectivity itself—that is, the right of Black boys to self-determine, to speak for themselves, to imagine their own present and presence in the world. The paucity of research on younger Black boys is merely a symptom of the broader *unimaginability* of Black boyhood, which this timely literature review is intended to help policymakers, school professionals, and community leaders begin to image.

**Student Role and Responsibilities:**
- Search educational research databases for relevant scholarship on Black boys' education in the U.S. during childhood (e.g., ERIC/EBSCO, Education Full Text);
- Create a substantive annotated bibliography of relevant scholarship identified using searchable "key words" determined in partnership with by Joseph Nelson (Educational Studies);
- Conduct a preliminary meta-analysis of empirical research compiled (e.g., +100 peer-reviewed journal articles across at least +50 journals);
- Draft a 8-10pg. research/analysis memo that reflects findings and themes unearthed during meta-analysis.

**Student Learning Goals:**
- Strengthen research skills in the following areas: online research database searches, qualitative research, and meta-analysis;
- Enrich analysis memo and research report writing skills.