

Katsos take a constraint-based approach to explicitly model context in the usage of quantifiers.

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KIRKLAND, DAVID, *A search past silence: The literacy of young Black men*.
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A search past silence is an eloquent, poignant story-fication of the literacy practices of six Black male teens. Drawing on over five years of ethnographic research, Kirkland frames his book not as an analytic contribution (of which he is skeptical, suggesting that decontextualized—and thus distorted—research on Black male literacy is prevalent in academia), but rather as a sympathetic, experiential telling with the power to reveal the “heart” (4) of deep ideas about Black male literacy, hopefully triggering in academic readers a compensatory, humbled version of the titular “silence.” Rooted in this narrative approach, then, the book is organized around sixteen short vignettes, with evocative themes like “Meaning,” “Race,” and “Masculinity.”

The first division of vignettes, “Silence,” sets the context: from the nourishing cocoon of the “cypha,” or hip-hop-inspired supportive circle for language/identity/community, the young men (only in tenth grade at this part of the story) are silenced through police brutality, but write their own versions in diaries, collaborative raps, and public speeches. Kirkland writes beautifully here and throughout, describing how the men “inherited the silence of the world around them, that resounding whisper of the dawn breeze that deftly passes through the dark corridors without disturbing the landscape of stereotype and dreams deferred” (p. 21, accompanied by a characteristically elliptical footnote, “See also Ferguson, 2000”).

The second section, “Language,” focuses on the interactional and multimodal nature of the men’s expressions. The men’s experiences are strongly shaped by interaction with women: Shawn’s grandmother, Derrick’s ex-girlfriend, generations of Keith’s birth family. And their texts make use of many modes: tears, tattoos (“a contract sealed to skin” (65), Derrick calls it), demeanor, and the body in general are shown to be semiotic resources (“languages”). Kirkland develops the theme of silence here through the paradox of Black “loudness,” deftly

illuminating how, in Shawn's words, "we gotta be loud if people gonna hear what we gotta say and respect it" (57).

The vignettes in the final section, "Identity," narrow in to focus on character development. With great sensitivity and nuance, Kirkland describes how each man has been shaped by (and shapes) tragedies like regular violence, poverty, child abuse, and racism. Kirkland concludes by claiming that literacy essentialism and subtle deficit theories are "radically gain[ing] reading in governing discourses that mediate policy documents and educational standards" (148), motivating a reform of educational practice. I found this new appeal to educators writ large confusing, and I wonder if it signals a general anxiety to find the book's academic significance (after all, Scribner & Cole's (1981) study establishing constructivist literacy (*The psychology of literacy*, Harvard University Press), which Kirkland mentions affirmingly, is over thirty years old). Stylistically, Kirkland's decision not to use "I" (because he sees himself, as a Black male, as already represented in the men's struggles) creates, for him, "play" between genres in the name of reader-friendliness (154), but may disappoint readers expecting a nested claim-warrant-summary structure, because interpretation is difficult to separate from data. Overall, *A search past silence* is tender, "real and raw" (10), but may be difficult for some researchers to apply.

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