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PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESSFUL
READING DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG AFRICAN
AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS

by

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Dedication

This work is dedicated

...to my three amazing children, Dasire, Marti, and Kelbe. I remember when I started this journey, you all were young and really did not know what a dissertation was. However, during these years, you have watched me struggle to sit down long enough to write my first chapter, and then another until I could finally shout that I was done. As the days turned into months, and months turned into years, the one thing that did not change was your silent cheers leading me on. My proudest moment was when I became your mom and because of this title, I always wanted to make you all proud. Thank you for cheering me on and believing in me when I sometimes did not believe in myself.

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ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESSFUL
READING DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG AFRICAN
AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS

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University of Houston-Clear Lake, 2019

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The purpose of this qualitative research study was to determine the perceptions of administrators, reading teachers, librarian, and campus reading specialist of the factors that contribute to reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. Culturally Responsive Teaching theory was used to frame the perspectives of the participants. A purposive sampling of the participant groups was used. The participants were interviewed, classroom observations were conducted, and field notes were collected. A constant comparative method was used to analyze the data. There were five themes that emerged from the data. The five themes were explicit instruction, differentiating to meet student needs, promoting student engagement, teacher as learner and teacher as supporter. The findings indicated that there are commonalities among the participants relating to their perceptions on the factors that contribute to the reading development of African American male students.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

African American male students continue to lag behind academically, especially in the area of reading. Because of this lag, the study focused on what administrators and teachers perceived to be effective reading practices that contribute to the positive reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. Kafele (2009) stated:

If we want to motivate male students to succeed, we as educators must be of the right mindset first. We must genuinely desire their success, and we must go to school mentally prepared to make a tremendous difference in our students' lives every day. We must be on a mission to ensure that our black male students achieve excellence. (p. 31)

This chapter outlines the importance of literacy and the impact that low-literacy abilities has on the African American male students' graduation rates and the future economic outcome for African American male students. According to Leahy and Fitzpatrick (2017), reading is the key predictor for a student's academic success, with this being especially true for African American male students. Kunjufu (1995) postulated that a male's growth and development are measured by his ability to read. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2016) reported that students who had early learning opportunities before attending kindergarten scored higher on reading assessments as compared to students who had inconsistent learning opportunities prior to attending kindergarten. Research showed that male students start school less prepared and with more limited reading skills than that of their female counterparts (Logan & Johnson, 2010). This assertion also can hold true for African American male students because they often enter kindergarten with limited reading skills as compared to their White

counterparts (Ferguson, 2003). In a cohort of 17,565 kindergarteners through fifth grade students, Sonnenschein, Stapleton, and Benson (2010) concluded that the reading skills possessed by students upon starting school and the students' demographic make-up predict how their reading skills will be developed in the later grades. Ferguson (2003) contended that this gap continues to grow as these students progress from one grade level to the next. Academically, African American male students continue to fall behind their White counterparts (Kirp, 2010). Twenty-four percent of African American students scored below the 25th percentile in reading as compared to their White counterparts who scored above the 75th percentile in reading (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013).

The National Right to Read Foundation (2007) reported that forty-two million American adults cannot read, with fifty million being unable to read above a fourth grade level. Gunn (2018) discussed the impact that illiteracy has on a person's life. According to Gunn, illiteracy limits a person's access to education, economic development and quality of life. Ntiri (2009) asserted that when African American male students cannot read, they are faced with a life filled with obstacles and despair. Collopy, Bowman, and Taylor (2012) contended that the achievement gap continues to marginalize individuals by preventing them from being able to engage in the economic structures of society, thus diminishing their access to employment. Not possessing a high school diploma puts an individual at a substantial disadvantage as compared to an individual who has a high school diploma. According to Gamble-Hilton (2012), it is imperative for African American males to have at least a high school diploma in order to have advanced opportunities in securing employment. An individual who does not possess a high school diploma earns \$6,000 less a year than a person who holds a high school diploma. Over the course of their lifetime, these individuals will earn an average of \$375,000 less than

high school graduates (National Center for Education Statistics, NCES, 2015). In 2016, the unemployment rate for an individual who is 25 years and older without a high school diploma was 8.5 percent in comparison to 5.3 percent for an individual that same age with a high school diploma (National Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Through their analysis of the 1992 National Assessment of Literacy Survey and the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy, Cohen, White, and Cohen (2012) found that the Black-White literacy gap decreased from 1992 to 2003 for adults. Despite current data reflecting that the literacy achievement gap is narrowing, there is more that can be done to continue to close the achievement gap that still remains between African American male students and their White counterparts (Nisbett, 2011).

Educators are not the only ones responsible for the reading outcome of African American male students. The reading achievement of African American male students also rests in the hands of their parents.

According to Gratz (2006), the literacy development of parents has an influence on their children's education. He stated that parents who have not obtained a high school diploma are less involved in their children's education. Some of these parents do not see the value in interacting with schools about their children's academics and are oftentimes intimidated by such interaction. However, it was found that high achieving male students had mothers that engaged them in literacy-rich activities prior to attending schools (Iruka, Gardner-Neblett, Matthews, & Winn, 2012). According to Joe and Davis (2009), schools must ensure that they are engaging and supporting parents in the academic development of their children.

When minority students have access to early literacy and learning opportunities, this closes the gap before it starts to widen for them. Niklas and Schneider (2015) stated that early linguistic skills are essential for the later development of reading and writing in

children. It was found that ethnically diverse students from impoverished backgrounds benefited from attending childcare centers or public Prekindergarten programs. By attending one of these programs, these students made considerable gains in language and cognition (Winsler, et al, 2008). Pigott and Israel (2005) concluded that children within the same socio-economic-status (SES) who participated in Head Start scored higher on reading assessments as compared to children who did not attend Head Start. Sparks, Patton, and Murdoch (2013) stated that the earlier children are exposed to print, the more successful they will be when they participate in more formalized reading instruction.

Wooten (2010) conducted a multiple case study of literacy practices implemented by intermediate teachers. Because reading provides students with important life skills that allow them to successfully transition into the world, she found that Culturally Relevant Teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994) practices, such as making learning relevant, providing small group instruction, having high learning expectations, and establishing authentic relationships facilitated the improvement of reading for students from diverse backgrounds.

According to White (2009), what and how teachers teach also influences their students' ability to learn and achieve. White (2009) contends that little attention is given to culturally responsive teaching practices, resulting in classrooms that lack instructional practices that consider the culture, language, and experiences that students bring with them. Culturally responsive teaching practices acknowledges and uses the students' cultural backgrounds and their prior experience as a vehicle to enhance instruction and student achievement (Gay, 2000, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

The achievement gap between minority students and their White counterparts is narrowing and students of all genders, races, and ethnicities are making academic gains. According to a report released by the Department of Education National Center for

Education Statistics (2015), the graduation rate for African American male students has increased by four percent from 2011 to 2013. With African American males fitting into two categories, race and gender, it is critical that we address their reading deficits before they start school. Davis (2003) suggested that we begin to look for ways to counter the low academic performance for African American male students.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of different stakeholders regarding the factors that contribute to the successful reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. According to Wagner (2008), students leaving high school today are expected to have the necessary skills to survive in a global society and because of this there can be serious implications for African American males who cannot read. Wagner shared that these students face lifelong struggles that can result in being at risk for dropping out of high school, having limited employment opportunities, and living in poverty.

During the study, the researcher identified instructional reading practices that have the potential to prepare African American male students to become successful readers. By exploring the perceptions of different stakeholders about successful practices that promote reading development in African American male students, other educators will be provided with a blueprint as to how they can better engage African American male students in developing, improving, and enhancing their reading skills. The researcher selected this study in order to add to the current body of research since there is very little literature that focuses on the successful reading practices that contribute to the reading development of African American male students in elementary schools. Also more research is needed in this areas because of great deal of the literature focuses on what has not worked for African American male students regarding reading.

Statement of the Problem

With the elementary level being a critical component on the road to academic success, we must focus our attention on developing the reading skills of African American male students in the elementary grades. Without acquiring the necessary reading skills, many African American male students will be faced with economic and social challenges (Gamble-Hilton, 2012; Ntiri, 2009). Critical thinking and problem solving skills are a few of the essential skills needed to survive in this millennium. With only 14 percent of African American male fourth graders and eighth graders reading at or above the proficient level, it seems unlikely that some these students will possess the skills needed to compete with their White counterparts (National Association for Educational Progress, 2011). It is essential that we identify factors that promote the reading development of African American male students, especially at the elementary level because this is where foundational reading skills are developed.

Tatum and Muhammad (2012) argued that the traditional methods used to improve the reading achievement of African American male students have done little to improve the reading skills in these students. In order for African American students, especially African American male students to become successful readers, effective approaches to reading development must be implemented in the early grades. Tatum and Muhammad (2012) also found teachers to play an important role in addressing this dilemma.

Significance of Study

This research study will hopefully contribute to changes to the instructional practices of reading teachers that will promote the reaching achievement of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. This qualitative study described characteristics of teachers and other stakeholders of African American male

students in one elementary school and how their attitudes and perceptions translate into promoting reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. This research study should also provide various stakeholders with ways that they can structure the school environment to engage parents in the literacy development of their African American male students.

This research study may also be beneficial to teachers in how they may come to understand the cultural and learning differences of African American male students. Since there is limited research on the reading achievement of African American male students in early elementary grades, this research study can set the groundwork for more research in identifying additional instructional practices that support young African American male students in reading before a reading gap begins to exist.

Theoretical Framework

Culturally Responsive Teaching Theory

The theoretical basis for this study was centered on the concept of Culturally Responsive Teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The terms culturally responsive and culturally relevant teaching are interchangeable terms, with certain researchers preferring one term over the other. According to Gay (2010), culturally relevant teaching is a multi-faceted approach to teaching that considers the prior learning experience and learning styles of African American children. Ladson-Billings (1995) argues that culturally relevant teaching must do the following: academically develop students; nurture and support cultural competence; and develop sociopolitical or critical consciousness. Culturally Responsive Teaching injects the diverse background of students in classroom instruction. Culturally Responsive Teaching acknowledges that the diverse background of their students may affect how their students respond to learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Culturally Responsive Teaching utilizes varied instructional strategies which are congruent to the unique learning styles of students (Gay, 2000, 2010). Brooks (2006) found that when we understand how students' culture can be used within literature and understand how students from different ethnic backgrounds respond to text, the more informed our curriculum and instruction become.

Powell, Cantrell, and Rightmeyer (2013) contended that teachers who practice Culturally Responsive Teaching methods believe that every student is capable of learning and believes that the cultural backgrounds of their students can be used to enhance their students' learning. The researchers also concluded that culturally responsive teachers create classroom environments that promote trust and risk-taking. Throughout her book, *The Dreamkeepers*, Ladson-Billings (1994) described culturally relevant teachers as having the following characteristics:

- they hold high self-esteem and high regard for others
- they see themselves as part of the community
- they view teaching as an art and not a skill
- they believe that all children hold the potential to learn
- they assist their student with seeing connections between their community, national and global identities
- they see teaching as “digging knowledge” out of their students

Teachers who employ culturally responsive teaching practices use a wide range of strategies to promote and encourage their students to own their learning. Culturally responsive teachers understand how their students learn and consistently look for ways to improve their instruction.

Research Questions

A qualitative case study of an elementary school was conducted in order to identify instructional strategies that different stakeholders perceived to contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. This study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What instructional practices are perceived by teachers and administrators to contribute to the reading development of African American males in prekindergarten through third grade as perceived by teachers and administrators?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive their attitudes and personal beliefs contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

RQ3: In what ways, if any do, administrators perceive teachers' attitudes and personal beliefs contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

RQ4: How do the perceptions of other school personnel such as the librarian and reading specialist contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

Definition of Terms

Achievement Gap -The differences between test scores of minority and or low-income students and the test scores of their White counterparts (National Education Association, 2014).

African American males - A male member of a racial/ethnic (Webster dictionary, 2002).

At-risk students - A student who is at-risk of dropping out of school based certain criteria established by the state (Texas Education Agency, 2015).

Balanced Literacy Program – This program consists of five components; phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development and comprehension. These components are incorporated into an instructional approach that helps teachers with providing support until the student is able to independently apply reading skills (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Culturally Responsive Teaching - Instructional practices that take into account the students' unique, cultural strengths are identified and developed to promote student achievement (Lynch, 2010).

Differentiated Instruction - Teaching practices that provide different avenues to acquiring content, to processing or making sense of ideas, and to developing products so that each student can learn effectively (Tomlinson, 1999).

Effective Schools – Institutions having a climate and culture of high academic expectation, effective administration support, and a shared mission (Sherblom, Marshall & Sherblom, 2006).

Effective Teachers - Educators who possess a strong content knowledge, collaborate with other teachers to promote student achievement, employ various structures and strategies to meet the diverse needs of their students who have high expectations for all students as they help them to learn (Varlas, 2009).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) 2015 - The education law that replaced No Child Left Behind Act. The law holds schools accountable for how students learn and achieve (United States Department of Education, 2015).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 - A federal mandate ensuring that all children have a fair, equal and opportunity to receive a high-quality education and reach, at least a proficient level of state assessments (United States Department of Education, 2001).

Summary

This chapter introduced some of the challenges that the educational system has to consider as it relates to the reading achievement of African American male students. These challenges are best addressed in the early grades, because if not, these students may not be prepared for a world outside of the classroom. As the economy changes and becomes more global, it is imperative that schools find ways to promote reading achievement for African American male students. Although the reading achievement gap is narrowing, there still is a gap that remains between African American male students and their White counterparts. With many students, especially African American male students with reading deficits, there is a critical need to identify what are some literacy instructional practices that may contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of different stakeholders regarding factors that may contribute to the reading development for African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. This chapter will highlight relevant literature in the following areas: (a) the historical perspective of educating African American males, (b) the current state of African American males, (c) the reading achievement of African American males, (d) outside school factors that contribute to literacy development, (e) and the school factors that contribute to literacy development.

The literature review begins with describing the historical context in which African American male students have had to navigate. This section begins with how the mentality of inferiority was instilled in slaves through the prohibition of learning how to read and write. The second section connects the historical perspective to the current state of African American males in the educational arena. The third section of the literature review synthesizes research associated with how reading achievement is influenced by culture and early literacy development. The fourth section of the literature review analyzes how outside factors such as early education and home environment develop early literacy skills. The final section of the literature review proceeds to analyze school factors, such as different stakeholders' influence on the school culture and student achievement and the instructional practices that may promote reading achievement.

Historical Context of Educating African American Males

Throughout history, African American males have been viewed as inferior in relation to their White counterparts (Davis, 2005 & Muffler, 1986). With slaves being the property of their slave owners, they did not have any rights. During slavery, it was

unlawful to teach a slave how to read and write, which denied them the liberation that education would afford. In the book, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass an American Slave* (1845), Frederick Douglass describes the power in being able to read:

From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. It was just what I wanted, and I got it at a time when I least expected. Whilst I was saddened by the thought of losing the aid of my kind mistress, I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction which, by the merest accident, I had gained from my master. Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with hope, and affixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read.

(p. 41)

Even after slaves were freed, they were not afforded equal treatment. There were laws established that prevented the equitable treatment of African Americans. The historic court case, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) imposed the “Separate but Equal” doctrine. This doctrine kept African Americans from gaining access to a quality education. The purpose of this doctrine was to keep African Americans segregated from Whites and to keep them from having access to public facilities. These public facilities included schools and because of this segregation, the schools attended by African Americans were inadequate to the schools that White students attended.

African Americans continued to fight against segregation and the detrimental effect imposed on African American children (Muffler, 1986). The Jim Crow Laws of the South replaced slavery with institutionalized racism (Dubois, 1903). These laws restricted African Americans access to an appropriate education, which critically influenced how African American children were educated. In the landmark case of *Brown vs. the Board of Education Topeka, Kansas* (1954), the Separate but Equal doctrine was struck down, allowing African American students the right to be educated in the same facilities as their

White peers (Jones & Hancock, 2005). Although this case allowed African American students to gain access to quality education, it would take years before these students would be able to claim this right (Jones & Hancock, 2005; Muffler, 1986; Wraga, 2006). Following *Brown vs. the Board of Education* (1954) the federal government has attempted to address the gaps that continued to exist between minority and low-income students and their white counterparts.

In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 was enacted to make education accessible to all children. The purpose of this law was to ensure that low-income children would have equal opportunity to education. The law aimed at equalizing education for these students by ensuring that they had access to textbooks, library resources, and researched-based activities and resources (Alford, 1965).

In 2001, the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 was reauthorized under, *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB). The *No Child Left Behind* mandate (2001) attempted to address the gap that exists between minority and low-income students and their White counterparts. This mandate required schools to provide high quality education to all students by ensuring that academic assessments, accountability, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional materials are aligned to meet the needs of diverse learners (US Department of Education, 2001). As a measure of how well schools did in closing the achievement gap, schools had to test students in grades three through eight in reading, math, and science and report the test scores based on race, ethnicity, and other demographic categories. However, this mandate has done little for African American students. (Rowley & Wright, 2011). Although NCLB forced schools to acknowledge that all students are worthy of a quality education, regardless of the students' race, ethnicity and demographics, still a decade later the dropout rate for African American males remains at 50 percent.

In 2015, Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) was passed. ESSA advances equity to disadvantaged and high-need students. It also requires that all students have access to high academic standards that will make them college and career ready. The law also increases access to high-quality preschool. It also maintains the expectation that low-performing schools are held accountable and changes are made to impact positive change over time (Department of Education, 2017).

Current State of African American Males

The current structures of the educational arena are inadequate in serving African American males (Jenkins, 2006). For example, the conditions for minority boys are still challenging. They are still far less likely to read and perform on grade level (Harris, 2015). In 2013, African American male students scored 24 points lower on reading tests than White students (National Association for Educational Progress, 2013). Also, African American males are more likely to drop out of school and are half as likely to get a college degree than their female counterparts (Harris, 2015; Kirp, 2010). African American males are three times more likely to be suspended from high school than African American women (Kirp, 2010). The rate that African American male students are suspended increases their chances of dropping out (Tyner, 2017). In addition to dropping out, Tyner found that African American male students are more likely to be referred to the police for disciplinary reasons, which creates the school-to-prison pipeline. Today, there are 1.5 million African American males in the penal system (Green, White, & Green, 2008).

However, despite current statistics, there are gains being made in narrowing the achievement gap. From 2010-11 to 2016-17, the graduation rate for African American male students increased by 11 percent (Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). It is important to identify factors that may be contributing to

low academic achievement of African American males in order to understand and positively counter the current state of African American males.

Reading and Gender

Concern over the “gender gap” in reading has prompted a great deal of conversation when it comes to boys and reading. In the book, *Why Can't My Son Read?* Hurst and Hurst (2015) share that boys consistently perform less well in reading than girls, which is evidenced in a recent report by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP, 2019). The NAEP assesses reading and comprehension skills of students in fourth grade, eighth grade and twelfth grade. NAEP reported that 33 percent of boys in the fourth grade were at or above proficient in reading as compared to 39 percent of girls performing at or above proficient in reading. According to the 2019 NAEP, there was little change in how African American male students performed in reading. The results showed that White fourth-grade students scored 26 points higher in reading than African American fourth-grade male students. The reading failure among boys may be contributed to the following: boys develop at a slower rate than girls; boys are more competitive than girls; boys not interested in the books that they are asked to read; and boys lack positive male role models for literacy (Hurst & Hurst, 2015). Mead (2012) in her research about reading preferences and motivation stated:

Boys and girls demonstrate very different attitudes towards reading, some of which may be because of the different reading preferences that each gender possesses. Because of these differences, it is important to understand how boys and girls select books based on their interests and abilities, which in turn can motivate them to become better readers.

McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995) investigated the reading attitude of a stratified national random sample of over 18,000 children on the basis of gender and ethnicity.

They found that girls had a significantly more positive attitude about reading than boys. The study revealed that girls enjoyed recreational reading more than their male counterparts.

In a study conducted by Fisher and Frey (2012) in an urban school, they identified classroom practices that can close the gender gap in reading. The researchers identified questioning, teacher modeling, and choice as emerging themes that can be used to structure a classroom to improve reading outcomes for boys. By teachers asking students essential questions about their reading, this practice can generate students' interests in what is being read. Another practice that can facilitate reading for both boys and girls is teacher modeling. When teachers model their thinking while reading, the students are hearing and seeing what it is like to interact with text. A classroom practice that facilitates reading for both boys and girls is the choice of reading materials. Fisher and Frey (2012) found when teachers provide boys with a choice of what they want to read, this can increase their motivation to read.

Reading Achievement of African American Males

Culture on Reading Achievement

Lynn (2006) defined culture as having common beliefs, attitudes, practices, and customs shared by a group of people. It is essential to examine how culture may influence literacy development when considering the literacy achievement gap that persists among African American male students and their White counterparts (Bedard, Horn, & Garica, 2011). Bedard, Horn, and Garcia (2011) contended that often what a student reads and writes is influenced by their cultural background.

Irvin and Darling (2005) stated that it is important to recognize culture in the constructs of education. They felt that when students' cultural backgrounds are not considered or valued in schools, it can become problematic when attempting to foster

relationships with minority students. However, Davis (2005) contended that the polarization of the academic achievement gap that continues to plague African American students evolved during slavery. During this period, it was engrained in African Americans that they were inferior to their White counterparts. Davis (2005) argued that slavery shaped many aspects of African Americans' culture, especially in the context of reading and writing.

Outside Factors that Contribute to Literacy Development

According to Ferguson (2003), African American male students enter into kindergarten with a lack of reading skills as compared to White students. Ferguson stated that this gap continues to grow as these students progress from one grade level to the next. Sonnenschein, Stapleton, & Benson (2010) concluded that reading skills that students possess upon starting school and the demographic make-up of students predict how their reading will be developed in the later grades.

Early Childhood Education

During their early childhood years, children develop in their cognitive, language, social, emotional, and physical skills. In order for students to achieve academic success, the foundation must be created early (Kostelnik & Grady, 2009). According to Goldstein, Warde, and Peluso (2013), early education has been determined to be an important vehicle with providing all students with educational success. In many instances, the socio-economic status (SES) of families determine the school readiness of children. The researchers found that low-income minority children enter school with varied literacy skills. Children from some low-income homes enter school lacking the prerequisite skills needed for academic success because they oftentimes lack exposure and experience to acquire knowledge and skills considered to be foundational to school readiness. With early literacy development being critical to the academic success of low-

income minority children, it imperative that they attend effective early childhood programs (Pigott & Israel, 2005).

Preschool can provide these low-income children with early literacy intervention. By providing low-income students with literacy intervention, they can gain the critical literacy skills needed to become successful readers (Callagan & Madelaine, 2012). Hilbert and Eis (2014) conducted a study of children who attended preschool programs that received early literacy intervention. They found that children who received early literacy intervention while attending preschool made significant gains in picture naming, increased vocabulary and print knowledge as compared to children who did not receive early literacy intervention.

Molfese and Westberg (2008) revealed that preschool and kindergarten programs were effective in preparing children for school entry. Although the effect was small, preschool and kindergarten attendance influenced how children learned to spell, which resulted in them being able to translate their knowledge of spelling to print and phonemic awareness. In a longitudinal study, Skibbe, Connor, Morrison, and Jewkes (2011) found that decoding and letter knowledge were positively influenced by the amount of time children spent in a preschool setting. However, the impact was more significant for children who spent more than two years in a preschool setting. Youn (2016) found that children who attended a Head Start program for at least two years also had higher language and literacy skills. The study examined the influence that Head Start had on 3,349 children's language development and mathematical skills in 486 classrooms in 129 centers. It is important to notice that the researcher only focused on the time children spent in Head Start and not on the instructional practices of the Head Start teacher.

Winsler, Tran, Hartman, Madigan, Manfra, and Bleiker (2008) determine that low-income children from ethnically diverse backgrounds who attended center-based and

public prekindergarten programs made gains in their cognition, language, and fine motor skills. Although children in both settings made gains, the children attending public prekindergarten programs made slightly higher gains in cognition and language. In a similar study, Goldstein, Warde, and Peluso (2013) concluded that four year old children from low-income families who attended 40 randomly selected community-based prekindergarten programs in Florida also made moderate gains in school readiness skills, including a significant increase in the children's cognitive and receptive vocabulary.

Diamond, Gerde, and Powell (2008) examined the influence that Head Start programs had on the development of early literacy skills. The researchers found that the children who participated in Head Start developed print awareness, which supported them in kindergarten. The researchers also concluded that students who attended full day Head Start made greater academic gains than those students who attended only half day Head Start. Evidence from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS) suggests that children who attended Head Start made better gains in reading as compared to their peers from similar economic backgrounds (Pigott & Israel, 2005). The non-profit organization, Children at Risk (2016) conducted a study to determine if prekindergarten programs benefitted 47,000 economically disadvantaged students in Texas. They found that Texas children identified as economically disadvantaged who attended a full-day Prekindergarten program scored higher on the state's third grade STAAR Reading assessment than students who did not attend prekindergarten. The study also found that students who attended half-day prekindergarten scored higher on the STAAR reading assessment in comparison to students who did not attend prekindergarten at all.

In The Great City School report (2012), 12 percent of African American fourth grade boys in large cities were proficient in reading as compared to 38 percent of their White peers. Although the statistical data described how African Americans are

progressing in reading, the report also noted that children who enter kindergarten with phonological skills showed progress similar to that of White students. In 2013, African American students in fourth and eighth grade had an average score that was about 24 points lower than their White counterparts on reading assessments (National Association for Educational Progress, 2013). Although early childhood was found to be important in the developing the early reading skills of African American male students, their home life plays an important role in the reading development of African American male students.

Home Environment

Although schools have the expertise needed to deal with children, parental involvement is found to crucial to improving their children's education (Perriel, 2015). A child's environment has a great deal of influence on their reading development (Molfese, Modglin, and Molfese, 2003). Moflese, Modglin, and Molfese found that the activities in the home, characteristics of the home, and parenting practices impact the overall cognitive development of a child. Lynch, Anderson, Anderson, and Shapiro (2006) identified the education level of the parents and the socio-economic status (SES) as being the demographic factors that play a significant role in parents' belief about literacy. Mothers who interacted with their children in reading-related activities had a lot to do with the mother's level of education. In a longitudinal study by Gottfried, Schlackman, Goffried, and Boutin-Martin (2015), it was found that the educational level of the mother had a significant effect on the amount of time she spent reading to her infant child and the type of reading materials and resources found in the home. In other words, the higher the mother's level of education, the more she spent on reading activities at home.

The beliefs about the early education was contingent upon the mother's feelings about early learning. Weigel, Martin, and Bennett (2006) found that parents hold different beliefs about literacy development. In their study, Weigel, Martin, and Bennett

identified two literacy belief styles of mothers that impacted literacy development of their preschool children: *facilitative* and *conventional*. Mothers identified as *conventional* believed that pre-school children are too young to learn how to read and that teaching children was the role of the school, rather than the parents. Mothers identified as *facilitative* believed in taking an active approach in their children's reading development. According to Weigel, Martin, and Bennett, *facilitative* mothers had higher education than conventional mothers. Facilitative mothers read to their children and believed that their children can gain different learning experiences from being read to. Children who had facilitative mothers made greater gains in their print knowledge. However, conventional mothers believed that they can do very little to prepare their children for school. These mothers found it to be difficult to read to their children because of limited space, time and resources. Mothers are not the only influencers on their son's learning. Fathers also have a positive impact on their son's learning.

Ransaw (2014) found in a qualitative study that African American men play a positive role in their son's lives. In this study, Ransaw investigated how nine African American men to help their children in school. He found that these fathers are involved throughout their children's well into and after college. They have a strong desire to be good male role models for their children. The fathers in this study who were college educated helped their children with homework.

Parents' interaction with young boys prior to school had a positive impact on their academic. In a longitudinal study of preschool boys to kindergarten from birth until the end of kindergarten, Iruka, Gardner-Neblett, Matthews, and Winn (2014) found that how parents interact with their sons has a profound effect on their achievement. The researchers found that boys transitioning from preschool to kindergarten who had mothers that engaged them with literacy-rich activities were likely to achieve at higher

academic levels. Gottfried, Schlackman, Gottfried, and Boutin-Martinez (2015) found that early reading experiences had a lasting impact on children well into adulthood. When children are read to at an early age, this carries over into how children view and value reading throughout school. Children who are read to are much more motivated to read, which has an impact on their reading achievement (Gottfried, et al, 2015).

School Factors that Contribute to Literacy Development

School Culture

Sherblom, Marshall, and Sherblom (2006) contend that academics should not be the only focus for impacting academic achievement. The researchers found that school culture is the key predictor of successful student outcomes in a four-year study of federally-funded community-based programs of 40 randomly selected inner-city school districts. A school culture that places emphasis on reading achievement makes reading a priority. When a school is academically focused, it creates a culture that supports reading achievement for all students (Mohan, Raphael, and Fingeret (2007). After a comprehensive analysis of research on school reform aimed at creating school cultures that provide rigor and relevant instruction to all students, Daggett's (2005) research found that the teaching and learning environment can be transformed in a number of ways. One way that the environment can be transformed is when data is used to provide a clear focus on curriculum priorities that are both rigorous and relevant. A second way that this can occur is when teachers create a culture that embraces the attitude that all students can learn. Another way that the teaching and learning environment can be transformed is when students are provided with real-world applications of the skills and knowledge taught in the curriculum. Also, the teaching and learning environment can be transformed the curriculum is organized toward both rigor and relevance.

School Principals

There are many stakeholders who directly and indirectly influence the culture of the school and how they influence successful readers and writers. Supovitz, Sirindes, and May (2010) found that principals and teachers have a direct impact on how instruction is delivered, monitored and adjusted to meet the learning needs of all students. In order for schools to be effective, they must have effective principals. According to Supovitz, Sirindes, and May (2010) by the nature of the principals' position, they promote and foster a culture centered on clearly communicated goals that support classroom instruction.

Supovitz, Sirindes, and May (2010) identified the school principal as having a tremendous influence on classroom instruction. Principals also impact student achievement in how they indirectly impact instruction. Pressely, Mohan, Raphael, and Fingerest (2007) found that principals indirectly impact instruction based on how they allocate resources to the classroom. Principals who provide their teachers with adequate resources help to encourage and foster teacher commitment to the overall culture of the school.

Principals who make an effort to involve teachers in conversations about their instructional practices support a culture that values how students are taught (Collie, Shapha & Perry, 2011). According to Collie, Shapha, and Perry, principals who involve their teachers in conversations about instruction and provide them with adequate resources to support student achievement they produce teachers who are committed to creating a culture of teaching and learning.

Effective Teachers

Although school principals influence student achievement, there are other stakeholders who play a vital role in student achievement as well. Teachers are important

to student achievement as well as being charged with creating a culture of readers and writers. Wray, Medwell, Fox and Poulson (2000) believed that teachers who are effective use a myriad of reading practices. They found that effective teachers made connections between texts and made text meaningful for their students. They also found that effective teachers know their students and are aware of their students' needs.

Bright (2012) contended that the most important variable in the classroom is the teacher. Effective teachers view students' success beyond the classroom. Effective teachers consistently look for ways to improve their delivery of instruction and look for ways to motivate their students to learn. He found that teachers who are effective in their practice seek to give their personal best and hold themselves accountable for student learning as well as their own personal learning. Trehearne (2005) determined that teachers' beliefs and understanding are primary factors that influence how effective teachers will be in influencing student achievement. The researcher found that effective teachers believe in their students' potential to learn, believe in their own teaching ability, and believe that what they are teaching is important,

A study conducted by Borman and Kimball (2005) found that minority students who were already lagging behind academically and performing below grade level were taught by teachers who received low evaluation scores. High achieving students were taught by teachers who consistently received high evaluation scores. These teachers were considered successful because they were closing the achievement gap for their low performing students. According to Halvorsen, Lee, and Andrade (2009), effective teachers do what is necessary to help their students to become successful learners by holding themselves accountable for their students' learning.

Morrow, Tracy, Wu, and Pressley (1999) identified characteristics of exemplary teachers who are effective in their reading practices. They found that these teachers were

skilled at balancing their instructional approaches and grouping strategies to meet the varied learning needs of their students. The exemplary teachers were also skilled at providing their students with differentiated literacy experiences throughout the day.

In the book *Dream Keepers*, Ladson-Billings (1994) described the practices of exemplary teachers of African American students. She found that the exemplary teachers changed how they instructed their students based on what their students needed. The exemplary teachers also took into account their students' cultural background. Duke, Cervetti, and Wise (2018) discussed three studies that described exemplary literacy teachers who taught African American students. Duke, Cervetti, and Wise found that one exemplary third-grade teacher created a classroom community by reorganizing her seating charts to allow her students from different backgrounds and cultures to work together. In addition to building a strong classroom community, she provided her African American students with different reading structures to include paired reading. During the paired reading, she allowed her African American students to read together. In their discussion, Duke, Cervetti, and Wise found that exemplary teachers provided their students with opportunities to collaborate around literacy.

Teacher Attitudes and Beliefs

According to Davis (2003), African American male students have a desire to establish a personal connection with teachers. Ferguson (2003) stated that the interaction that occurs during most of the instructional day among teachers and students determine the perceptions and expectations of the teachers' goals that impact academic success for African American students. Ferguson stated:

No matter what material resources are available, no matter what strategies districts use to allocate children to schools, no matter how children are grouped for

instruction, children spend their days in social interaction with teachers and other students. (p. 461)

Ferguson (2003) articulated that some teachers' perceptions, expectations and behaviors are motivated by what can be perceived as racial stereotypes, and because of this perceived racial stereotyping, African American students learning potential is sometimes underestimated. He felt by underestimating African American students' potential for learning, it would create low expectation from teachers. According to Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, and Garrison-Wade (2008), the teacher must attempt to hold African American students to the same academic standards as their White counterparts and push them to greater academic achievement.

The attitudes that teachers project about their students can "elevate or undermine" the academic success of students, whether positive or negative (Thomas & Stevenson, 2009, p. 167). Davis (2003) exerted that African American male students should be nurtured and encouraged in schools. Rey, Smith, Yoon, Somers, and Barnett (2007) examined the relationship between teachers and their students as perceived by both the students and the teachers. In their study of 89 African American children and their teachers in five third grade through sixth grade urban classrooms, the researchers found that when children perceive that their teachers care they have better academic outcomes, such as better classroom behavior, school interest and motivation, and school involvement. The teachers in this study also perceived their relationship with their students to have a positive impact on their students' academic outcomes. In a similar study, Hamre and Pianta (2001) sampled 179 students from kindergarten through eighth grade to determine the extent to which kindergarten teachers' perceptions of their relationships with students predict a range of school outcomes. They found that the early

relationships formed between teachers and their students may predict the academic and behavior outcomes more specifically in the early elementary grades.

According to Halvorsen, Lee, and Andrade (2009), teachers' attitudes about student cognition and their commitment to teaching were important to a child's learning. Teachers must have the attitude and belief that all students are capable of learning and must provide opportunities for them to learn, especially African American male students.

Teachers' attitudes toward children's abilities to learn and how they interact with their students also influenced how students perform. The research findings of Halvorsen, et al (2009) found that teachers that teach in low-income urban schools not only take responsibility for student learning, but are also dedicated to the profession by exhibiting the following characteristics; they attend more early childhood conferences, spend more time preparing for student learning, and improving their own learning.

Borman and Kimball (2005) found that high quality teachers also used activities and assignments that sustained student engagement and on-task behavior. They also found that these teachers made adjustments to their instruction to reflect and to meet the varied needs of learners that were not successful with the learning at the first attempt. According to Qureshi and Niazi (2012), teachers are pivotal to student learning. They contend that student learning is influenced by how effective teachers used varied methodologies in their practice.

School Librarians

According to Hirsh-Pasek and Golinkoff (2004), teachers are not the only instructors of reading. School librarians have also been identified as important stakeholders on impacting student achievement and cultivating a culture of readers. School librarians are critical to modeling reading skills and developing life-long readers. Smith (2002) believes that library media centers are essential to schools because it is the

hub for both the acquisition of knowledge and on-going learning. More than 1,850 Pennsylvania librarians, teachers and school administrators were surveyed during a study to determine the impact that school librarians have on student achievement. The study revealed that reading and writing scores, especially for African American and Hispanics students, were positively influenced when school libraries are staffed with a full-time librarian, adequate resources such as books and technology and are easily accessible to students (Kachel & Lance, 2013).

Lance (1994) conducted a study on the impact that library media centers and librarians have on student achievement. He found that librarians who had a strong, positive active role in the school helped to create a culture committed to shaping student learning and achievement. Gavigan and Lance (2016) found that there is a high correlation between librarians and student achievement in a similar study. Librarians play a pivotal role in the context of school leadership and how they tie into the infrastructure of the overall culture of reading achievement by collaborating with teachers to develop students' information literacy skills, teaching different activities, conducting library lesson, and increasing students' and teachers' access to print and electronic materials. Another key finding in this study was schools that had better funded library media centers reported to having students with high reading scores despite the socio-economic conditions of their communities.

Farmer and Stricevic (2011) found that librarians have a great deal of influence on the materials and resources that are available to their teachers and students. Since librarians are instrumental in cultivating a culture of readers and having a direct impact on student achievement, it is important that they provide teachers and students with a wide selection of books that are representative of all cultures. Lafferty (2014) found that students primarily checked out books that were written by White authors about mainly

White characters. One explanation for this is that school libraries may not have a wide selection of multicultural books for their students to checkout.

McGrath (2015) contended that schools have to transform into cultures that promote inquiry and innovation. He described the benefits that library media centers have on accomplishing this. School librarians can assist with innovative, problem-based learning by providing teachers with professional development and modeling 21st century practices. Smith (2002) agreed that librarians must be the individuals to emphasize the importance of teaching and learning and also be the ones to encourage on-going professional development.

Professional Development

According to Kennedy (2010), “Multifaceted professional development program for teachers is essential in addressing underachievement in literacy” (p. 386). Teachers who enhance their instructional practices are able to meet the needs of their students (McKinley, 2003). Wasik and Hindman (2011) randomly selected three Head Start centers and selected 30 teachers to determine if intensive on-going professional development impacted children’s language and pre-literacy skills. The teachers in this study participated in the Exceptional Coaching for Early Language and Literacy (ExCELL) Professional Development model, which included coaching, attending a summer literacy institute, group trainings, in-class modeling, books and materials. The researchers found that the teachers who participated in this study provided their students with quality instruction, which ultimately impacted their students’ language and literacy skills.

Podhajski, Mather, Nathan, and Sammons (2009) found that first- and second-grade teachers who participated in professional development on reading instruction impacted their students’ reading outcomes. The researchers found that the teachers were

able to immediately implement what they learned in the professional development sessions in their reading instruction. In a study conducted by Gersten, Dimino, Jayanth, Kim, and Santoro (2010), they found that when first grade teachers participated in professional development on reading instruction, their knowledge about comprehension and vocabulary increased, thus resulting in moderate gains in their students' achievement.

Cone (2012) determined that teachers who believe that students from diverse backgrounds are incapable of achieving, employ ineffective instructional practices, which continue to fuel the academic failure of many students from diverse backgrounds. However, the researcher felt that this belief can be changed if pre-service teachers are adequately trained to teach students from diverse backgrounds.

Effective Literacy Instructional Practices

Day (2002) stated that because some educators do not remain current with respect to teaching practices continue to face challenges with teaching the students most at risk of failing. He stated that how much a child learns in school determines his success. Wilson-Jones and Caston (2004) contended that formal methods of educating African American students have failed because educators do not attend to the unique learning styles of African American children. When teachers do not employ instructional practices that optimize students' learning, they are not providing their students with an appropriate education (Collins 2006). Collins (2006) also believed that teachers who use culturally relevant teaching practices promotes improvement in their students reading and achievement. Culturally responsive teaching is defined as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (Gay, 2010, p. 31).

Piazza, Rao, and Protacio (2015) asserted that equity is important to add to the discussion of responsive literacy instruction. When teachers fail to recognize the social culture of diverse learners and do not consider this in their instructional practices, they can further support the marginalization of these students because these students may come from homes that do not practice the same literacy skills that are found in the classroom. Effective instructional practices are critical to African American male students in elementary school. By identifying successful instructional practices, African American male students' academic achievement may be impacted, thus potentially narrowing the achievement gap that begins to exist in early elementary. In their literacy instruction, culturally responsive teachers provide their students with literacy instruction that is authentic (Powell, Cantrell, and Rightmyer, 2013).

Early reading intervention must also be considered when considering learning structures that promote academic achievement among African American male students. Critical skills in reading, such as phonemic awareness, must be introduced in early reading programs (Wilson-Jones and Caston, 2004). In order for struggling readers to make sense of the reading text, it is important for teachers to provide direct and explicit comprehension strategies (Mahdavi & Tensfeldt, 2013). The researchers found that comprehension strategies allow students to become active, involved participants in their reading.

Another important reading skill for struggling readers is fluency. Since comprehension and higher order thinking cannot be developed without speed and accuracy, Mustio-Rao and Cartledge (2009) evaluated the impact that repeated reading had on the oral reading skills of 12 fourth-grade students identified as struggling readers. Although the students did not meet the end of the study benchmark goals, the students' oral reading rate did improve.

According to Mustio-Rao and Cartledge (2007) small group instruction was one of the strategies used to teach at-risk students. They stated that small group instruction provides differentiated instruction that is needed to meet the varied needs of all students. Small group instruction allows students to be engaged and encourages the students to engage in academic conversation (Mustio-Rao & Cartledge, 2007).

Although small group instruction is beneficial to struggling students, that instruction must be focused on specific skills that will increase the support needed in meaningful ways. Small group instruction provides students with opportunities to practice skills learned while receiving correct feedback (Harn, Linan-Thompson & Roberts, 2008). The researchers found that small group structures are instrumental in the students' learning outcomes. With an estimated one and three children having reading difficulties, a research-based reading strategy such as guided reading is an important reading strategy (Iaquinta, 2006).

Guided reading is an instructional approach used to address individual reading needs of students in the context of small group instruction. Guided reading is also an instructional practice aimed at improving the reading skill of individual students (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001 & Iaquinta, 2006). Students who struggle may need assistance with learning how to decode, comprehend what was read, and other literacy skills. During guided reading, students are provided with explicit instruction that focuses on specific literacy skills.

Guided Reading provides scaffolding that is necessary to support young readers as they interact and make sense of the text in order to develop independent reading strategies (Rog, 2003). Rog identified the following structures of Guided Reading:

- the reading group consists of no more than six students
- the teacher selected text or books on the students' reading level

- the teacher targeted the reading strategies based on the students' needs
- the reading groups were fluid
- the teacher monitored the students' progress periodically
- the goal is for the students to become independent readers

According to Iaquina (2006), the goal of guided reading is to develop self-extending systems of reading which supports the students in being able to learn about the process of reading while they are reading.

Although there are many methods that teachers can use to engage African American male students in the learning process, cooperative grouping is a method that has been identified as having a positive impact on how African American male students engage in learning. Identifying how African American students learn can have an impact on how the teacher interacts and instructs African American students. Day (2002) states that students' achievement increases when cooperative learning methods are used. In their investigation on how African American children prefer to learn, Wilson-Jones and Caston (2004) found that some of the children prefer to work in groups, rather than working individually. The researcher concluded that using cooperative learning groups positively impacted academic achievement of African American students.

Ellison and Boykin (2005) also found that African American male students held a greater preference for learning in cooperative groups. According to these researchers, the cultural values of African American communities play a significant role in this type of learning style because in the African American community children tend to prefer collaboration over competition. Kanjufu (2005) found that when African American male students are in cooperative groups, they are supported in their learning. Kanjufu identified the jigsaw method as one of the cooperative grouping strategies that has an impact on increasing academic achievement. According to Conderman, Bresnahan and

Hedin (2011), the jigsaw approach divides students into smaller groups where the students in the groups take turns becoming an “expert” on different learning concepts.

Classroom Environment

LaRocque (2008) determined that there is a cause and effect relationship between the classroom environment and how students learn and achieve as perceived by both the teachers and the students. She found that when students perceived the learning environment to be challenging it had a significant impact on their reading achievement. It is important for teachers to create a classroom environment that supports stimulation and engagement, especially in the context of reading.

McMillon and Edwards (2000) investigated the learning experience of an African American male in the school setting and in the church setting and discussed reasons why some African American male students are more successful in some environments than in other environment. According to McMillon and Edwards (2000), the male preschool student in this study thrived in his Sunday school classroom because the teacher created a structured learning environment centered on the acquisition of basic reading prerequisites. The student in the study followed a routine that included prayer, scripture, Bible lesson and discussion, storytelling, learning activity and snack. The researchers found that the Sunday school classroom created a learning environment that was encouraging, motivating and accepting. However, the African American male student in this study was not successful in his preschool classroom. The researchers determined that because of unstructured learning environment and the amount of flexibility given to the student in his preschool classroom that significantly impacted the students’ behavior, resulting in low reading achievement.

Schools can also engage students by providing them with text that they can culturally relate to. By ensuring that classrooms and libraries have text that reflect the

experiences and background of African American males, schools are providing connections of these students' cultural experiences to their academic knowledge, thus cementing what they already know (Husband, 2012).

Conclusion

This literature review has provided an overview of research about the educational dilemma of African American male students in the United States, specifically with respect to early literacy development. The literature review outlined the historical context of educating African American males and political structures that were designed to prevent African Americans from having access to equitable education. The educational history of African Americans serves as the backdrop for the current state of the African American males in the education arena. The literature review also outlined research on instructional practices and factors that promote the reading development of African American male students. These factors included administrators, teachers, librarian and the campus reading specialist's attitudes and perceptions about African American male achievement, high quality teachers who provide instruction that meets the needs of diverse learners, such as small group instruction and cooperative learning groups (Kunjufu, 2010; Ponitz, Rimm-Kaufman, Grimm, & Curby, 2009).

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methods used for this case study. This is a qualitative case study of one elementary school from an urban school district in the southwest Texas. The purpose of this single case study was to investigate the perceptions of different stakeholders regarding the factors that contribute to the successful reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. This research study answered the following four research questions:

RQ1: What instructional practices are perceived by teachers and administrators to contribute to the reading development of African American males in prekindergarten through third grade as perceived by teachers and administrators?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive their attitudes and personal beliefs contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

RQ3: In what ways, if any do, administrators perceive teachers' attitudes and personal beliefs contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

RQ4: How do the perceptions of other school personnel such as the librarian and reading specialist contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

Instructional Setting and Context

The school district used for this research study is located in an urban school district in Texas spanning over 36.6 square miles. It is surrounded by homes, apartments, and local businesses. The school district has a student population of approximately 46,000 students (Texas Education Agency, 2018). Robust Independent School District (a

pseudonym) is made up of a diverse student population, with more than 80 different languages and dialects spoken within the district. (See Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

Robust Independent School District's Student Demographic Information

Ethnicity	Percent of Student Population
Hispanic	47.7%
African American	32.2%
Asian	14.7%
American Indian	1.4%
White	3.4%
Two or more races	0.2%
Economically Disadvantaged	73.4%

Note: Demographics were obtained from Texas Education Agency (2018).

The school district has 41 campuses with 24 of them being elementary campuses. Each campus has at least one English Language Arts (ELA) Specialist. The ELA Specialists are supervised by their campus principals.

The participating school in this study was a school located within Robust Independent School District (RISD) with a large number of African American students enrolled. Blue Bell elementary school (a pseudonym) is comprised of 625 students from a variety of backgrounds, with 32.2 percent of the student population being African American and 79.7 percent of the students being Economically Disadvantaged. As reported by the Texas Education Agency School Report Card (Texas Education Agency, 2018), Blue Bell Elementary received a “Met Standard” rating with distinctions in four areas.

Texas Education Agency (2018) stated:

Campuses that receive an accountability rating of Met Standard are eligible to earn distinction designations. Distinction designations are awarded for achievement in several areas and are based on performance relative to a group of campuses of similar type, size, grade span, and student demographics. The distinction designation indicators are typically separate from those used to assign accountability ratings. Districts that receive a rating of A, B, C, or D are eligible for a distinction designation in postsecondary readiness.

Blue Bell Elementary received with distinctions in academic achievement in ELA/reading, comparative growth, comparative academic growth, comparative closing the gap, and post readiness. According to the Texas Education Agency (2018), a campus earns a comparative academic growth distinction if the campus Part A scaled score is within the top quartile of its comparison group. A campus earns a Comparative Closing the Gap distinction if the campus is able to show differentials among racial/ethnic groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, and other factors within its comparison group. A campus earns a Post Readiness distinction if the campus is in the top quartile for at least one of the indicators for which they have data for.

The researcher employed purposive sampling. When purposive sampling is used “individuals can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). The participants for this study were selected because the campus principal recommended them. The principal shared that the participants had strong knowledge and understanding about the practices that can be employed at the campus level to engage African American male students in reading at the elementary level. The participants were also selected for this study because of their employment in the school district as well as their interaction with African American male

students. The participants included one assistant principal, one campus reading specialist, one librarian, and five classroom teachers. The five classroom teachers in this study comprised of prekindergarten, kindergarten, second grade and third grade. The perceptions of each stakeholder regarding the instructional practices used to develop the reading of African American male students was explored.

Figure 3.1 represented where each of the participants in the study fall on the district's organization chart.

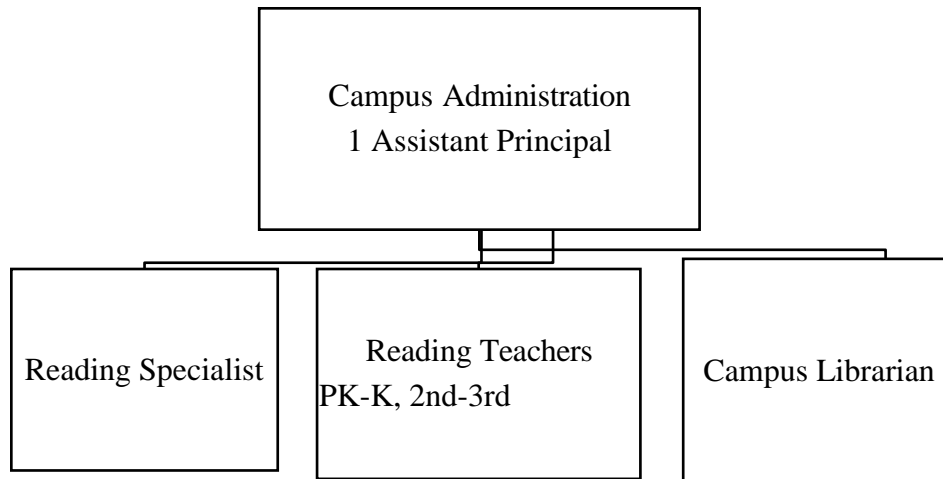


Figure 3.1 Organization Chart

School Level

At the school level one assistant principal, one campus reading specialist, one librarian and five classroom teachers grades from prekindergarten through third grade reading teachers were included in this study. Each one of the participants were selected because of the role that they play in the reading development of African American male students.

Assistant Principal. The elementary assistant principal was included in this study because of the leadership skills exhibited and for the supervision provided to the librarian, the reading specialist, and the classroom reading teachers. The school's

assistant principal plays a vital role in how resources are allocated and how professional development is planned. The assistant principal also assists in interviewing, hiring, and supervising the librarian, the reading specialist and the teachers who provide reading instruction to African American male students.

Classroom Reading Teachers. The classroom reading teachers were included in this study because they provided direct reading instruction to African American male students. The classroom reading teacher is responsible for incorporating a variety of instructional practices that develop and engage African American male students in the reading process. The classroom teacher plans lessons, determines the resources that will be used to teach reading, and establishes a learning environment that promotes reading.

The participants reflected on what they perceived to be effective reading practices that have a positive outcome for African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade as it relates to their reading development. The participants also reflected on what they perceived to be the attitudes and personal beliefs that promote the reading achievement of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. District level personnel work directly and indirectly with campus level personnel on selecting literacy resources, materials and professional development.

Librarian. In RISD, each elementary school had one campus librarian. The school librarian interviewed was important to this study because of her interaction with both the teachers and the students. The school librarian collaborated with teachers on reading lessons by providing them with books and materials. The librarian determined what types of books and materials are available to the students to checkout. The librarian facilitates library lessons and is responsible for selecting books for the school library.

Reading Specialist. Each elementary campus in the targeted school district had at least one reading specialist that provides job embedded professional development to

reading teachers on the campus. The reading specialist selected had a strong curriculum background in the area of reading and language arts. The reading specialist received training and supervision at the campus and district level. The reading specialist worked closely with the principal with providing teacher with resources and materials that will support reading instruction. The reading specialist also assisted teachers with planning and designing reading lessons as well as modeling effective instructional practices.

Researcher's Role

The researcher conducting this study is currently an elementary school principal in a Texas school district with over 20 years of elementary school experience. During her 20 years of experience, the researcher was previously a classroom teacher and an assistant principal. The researcher taught second grade, fourth grade and special education. Her entire teaching career was in Robust Independent School District, with her administrative experience being in another Texas school district. As an educator, the researcher knows and understands why reading is important to learning. The researcher, being an African American woman and mother, not only has a desire for all students to learn, but she feels a personal responsibility to ensure that African American male students have a strong reading foundation. The researcher conducted her research study at Blue Bell Elementary because it has been successful with meeting the needs of its diverse student population. In addition to meeting the learning needs of its diverse student population, Blue Bell Elementary has been successful with meeting the learning needs of its African American male students. As a current school principal, the researcher wants to see the reading instructional practices that Blue Bell Elementary teachers and staff uses with their African American male students to be able to replicate those practices with her African American male students. With the growing number of African American male students at her campus and the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness

(STAAR) campus data, the researcher sees a need for instructional strategies that help with the reading development of her African American male students. The researcher has a professional relationship with Blue Bell Elementary principal who was not a participant of the study, but who allowed the researcher to gain entry into the site.

Research Design

The researcher employed a qualitative case study approach for the study. According to Crewell (1998), a case study is a “bounded system” bounded by time (eight to twelve weeks of data collection for this study) and a place (a single campus). The researcher selected the case study approach because it allowed the researcher to gain understanding of complex issues situated in a real-world setting (Yin, 2009). The researcher triangulated multiple sources of data, such as interviews, observations, and field notes to ensure that the results concluded from the qualitative research study were valid and credible. Using the case study approach, the researcher sought to have the following questions answered:

RQ1: What instructional practices are perceived by teachers and administrators to contribute to the reading development of African American males in prekindergarten through third grade as perceived by teachers and administrators?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive their attitudes and personal beliefs contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

RQ3: In what ways, if any do, administrators perceive teachers’ attitudes and personal beliefs contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

RQ4: How do the perceptions of other school personnel such as the librarian and reading specialist contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

The researcher selected a qualitative case study approach in order to gain a deeper understanding of the instructional practices as perceived by different stakeholders that provide positive reading development and engagement of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), employing a case study approach allows the researcher to take a closer look at a particular phenomenon.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection began once all requirements were met. The University of Houston-Clear Lake for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) permission was obtained (see Appendix G). Approval was also obtained by the school district where the study was conducted with District's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval obtained (see Appendix H).

Piloting protocols

Before interviewing each participant, interview protocols were piloted with a panel of experts. Separate protocols were developed for each of the categories of participants. The separate protocols developed were general questions (Appendix A), campus administration (Appendix B), classroom teachers (Appendix C), librarian (Appendix D), and campus reading specialist (Appendix E). The panel of experts included principals, reading specialists, librarians, and classroom teachers from a neighboring school district. The piloted interview protocols were reviewed and revised until the interview questions were adequately reviewed and fine-tuned. Once the

interview questions were revised, the researcher used the interview questions for the study.

Interviews

With the assistance of the campus principal of Blue Bell Elementary, the researcher contacted each participant individually. Upon contact, the researcher obtained permission from each participation in the study (see APPEXEDIX F). The teacher interviews were structured. The researcher interviewed each reading teacher once during a time that was convenient for the reading teacher. The interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes to an hour. The researcher also interviewed the librarian, the campus reading specialist and the assistant principal one time for approximately 45 minutes to an hour. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed to ensure reliability. In order to protect the identity of the participants in this study, the researcher assigned each participant a pseudonym. The five teachers in this study were Anna, Delores, Sandra, Holly and Bonnie. The assistant principal's assigned pseudonym for this study is Sara. The librarian's assigned pseudonym is Natalie and the reading specialist's pseudonym is Thelma. The table (see Table 3.2) shows the highest degree obtained by each participant.

Table 3.2

Participants Experience and Educational Background

Participant	Ethnicity	Grade Level	Years in Education	Years at Blue Bell	Highest Degree Earned
Anna	Hispanic	Pre-K	4 Years	4 Years	BS Education
Delores	Caucasian	Kindergarten	13 Years	13 Years	BS Education
Sandra	African American	Second	9 Years	7 Years	BS Education
Holly	African American	Second	11 Years	1 Year	MS Curriculum & Instruction
Bonnie	Caucasian	Third	4 Years	4 Years	MS Curriculum & Instruction
Sara	African American	Asst. Principal	20 Years	3 Years	Doctorate of Education
Natalie	Caucasian	Librarian	13 Years	2 Years	BS Education
Thelma	Caucasian	Campus Reading Specialist	20 Years	2 Years	BS Education

The observations were conducted in the natural setting in order to assist the researcher in understanding the complex behaviors of humans in their interactions with others. Creswell (2007) stated that observations allow the researcher to benefit by being a part of what the participants experience in their natural setting. To gain a better understanding of the classroom environment and how it supports the reading development of African American male students, the researcher observed one time in each teacher's classroom during the teacher's reading instructional block of time. In order to see how the teachers interacted with her students during the reading block of time, the researcher observed read aloud, shared reading, and guided reading sessions. During the read aloud and shared reading, the researcher was looking to what strategies

they used and how they interacted with their African American male students. During guided reading, the researcher was looking to see what materials the teachers used to support their African American male students. The researcher was also looking to see how the African male students responded to the teachers during guided reading.

Field Notes

Field notes were compiled by the researcher. The researcher wrote copious notes following each interview. The researcher noted the participants' body language and verbal and non-verbal behaviors. Field notes were used to describe the classroom environment, the library environment and the school environment as it related to the reading development of African American male students.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher gained approval from the University of Houston Clear Lake Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) and RISD Institutional Review Board (IRB). In order to safeguard and protect the human participants in this study, the researcher followed and completed the necessary steps. The participants in the study was provided with information of the potential risks associated with their participation. The participants in this study participated voluntarily. The researcher ensured the participants that confidentiality was maintained. To safe guard the identity of the participants, the researcher informed the participants that they would be given pseudonyms, which are listed in Table 3.2. The school district and school were also assigned pseudonyms. At the conclusion of the study, all data collected were stored in a locked file cabinet at the researcher's office.

Data Analysis

According to Lichtman (2010), the qualitative study is an inductive process. Since this was an inductive study, the researcher analyzed the data to identify factors that

contributed to reading development of African American male students. Before coding began, transcripts of audio-recordings were reviewed to ensure that important information was captured for data analysis. The data was coded from each interview transcript, observational, and field notes. Lichtman's (2010) six steps were followed in order to derive meaningful concepts/themes: 1) initial coding process, 2) revise initial coding, 3) develop an initial list of categories, 4) modify the initial list based on rereading, 5) revisit the categories to remove redundancies, and 6) identify key concepts. The researcher used constant comparative analysis for this study. Constant comparative analysis compared the interview responses between the participants in the same categories and then compared the responses between the participants across the categories. The researcher read through the transcripts and compared the information from the teachers with each other, while looking for similarities and differences. The researcher then compared the information from the assistant principal, the school librarian, and the campus reading specialist, again looking for similarities and differences. The data were then compared across groups to look for common themes. During this process, emerging themes were identified to postulate what were some instructional practices that contributed to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. The key themes that emerged from the study were explicit instruction, differentiating to meet student needs, promoting student engagement, teacher as learner and teacher as supporter.

Validity

Lincoln and Guba (1995) argued that ensuring credibility is one of the important aspects to establishing a sense of trust-worthiness. Credibility or internal validity was instrumental in giving the reader the type of detailed information that establishes that the findings are "congruent with reality" (Merriam, 1998, p. 201). The researcher solicited

individuals from the identified elementary school to participate in the research study. Individuals solicited for the research study served in one of the designated roles, such as campus administrator, librarian, reading specialist and classroom reading teacher. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews in order to obtain data to support and focus on the perception of different stakeholders, such as the assistant principal, the librarian, the campus reading specialist, and the classroom reading teachers regarding what the instructional practices that contribute to the reading development of African American male students in grades prekindergarten through third grade. In order for validity to be preserved, the researcher audio-taped and transcribed each interview verbatim.

The researcher interviewed each participant because they each served in different capacities relating to reading instruction which helped the researcher to gain different perspectives and insights. The researcher kept detailed field notes, in a journal, from interviews and observations. The researcher described changes that occurred in the research and the influence that the changes had on the research study. The researcher kept all recordings with transcriptions and journal with field notes in a secure file cabinet located in the researcher's office at her place of employment. After five years, the data will be appropriately shredded.

Reliability

The researcher piloted the interview protocols with varied stakeholders, such as campus administrators, librarian, reading specialist and classroom reading teachers in another school district. Interview questions were revised and refined based on feedback from an expert panel. To minimize errors, the exact protocols were used for each category of participants. The researcher gave full disclosure of any relationship as it related to the study site and study participants.

Generalizability

The results from the study may not be generalized to all African American male students in grades prekindergarten through third grade in RISD because it is a qualitative study. However, the results obtained may be useful to others in providing positive outcomes for African American male students in reading.

Limitations

The study only reflected the perceptions of a small population of stakeholders, such as one assistant principal, the librarian, the campus reading specialist, and five classroom reading teachers in one district and elementary school. Since the participants volunteered for the research study, the results were based on the perceptions and insights of those individuals. Due to a natural disaster in the area, the time allotted for the study was limited. The researcher was only able to observe one time in each teacher's classroom. Also due to the loss of instructional days because of the natural disaster, the researcher had to shorten the study to six weeks.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of different stakeholders regarding the factors that contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. The case study approach was used in this study to explore some reading practices that supported and engaged African American male students. Each classroom reading teacher interviewed by the researcher regarding their perceptions, beliefs and attitudes about how reading is developed. Other stakeholders, such as the assistant principal, the school librarian, and the campus reading specialist were interviewed by the researcher. The researcher observed in each reading teachers' classroom one time during the study to identify some

instructional practices that support the reading development of young African American male students.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the perceptions of different stakeholders regarding the factors that contribute to the successful reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. Despite the achievement gap narrowing between African American males and their White counterparts, African Americans, especially African American males, continue to be a marginalized group in the educational and economic arenas (Gamble-Hilton, 2012; Ntiri, 2009; & Wagner 2009). Since reading is a key predictor for a student's academic success in the educational arena, this research study is important because it seeks to identify instructional strategies that different stakeholders perceive to contribute to the successful reading outcome for African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. This study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What instructional practices are perceived by teachers and administrators to contribute to the reading development of African American males in prekindergarten through third grade as perceived by teachers and administrators?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive their attitudes and personal beliefs contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

RQ3: In what ways, if any do, administrators perceive teachers' attitudes and personal beliefs contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

RQ4: How do the perceptions of other school personnel such as the librarian and reading specialist contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

Culturally relevant teaching (CRT) was used as the theoretical framework (Ladson-Billings, 1995), a qualitative constant comparison analysis (Lichtman, 2010) was used to compare the data collected from the participants in this study. The participants in this study included five reading teachers, one assistant principal, the school librarian, and the campus reading specialist. Along with interviewing the teachers, the researcher was able to observe in four of the five teachers' classrooms. Due to time limitations for one of the teachers, the researcher was unable to observe in that teacher's classroom. The researcher collected data for this study over a six-week period.

Several of the teacher participants in this study possessed a vast amount of knowledge and teaching experience. The teachers interviewed in this study had previously taught multiple grade levels at Blue Bell Elementary or at other schools, which showed their diverse teaching backgrounds.

Background Information of the Participants

Anna – Prekindergarten Teacher

Anna is a Hispanic teacher who has been teaching for four years is a soft-spoken prekindergarten teacher with very quiet mannerisms. She attended a four-year university and obtained a bachelor's degree in education. She has been a teacher at Blue Bell Elementary for four years, the only school at which she has taught. This was her first year teaching prekindergarten. Before teaching prekindergarten, Anna taught kindergarten for one year and second grade math and science for two years. The researcher asked Anna why she decided to move to prekindergarten. She shared that since she knew what the kindergarten expectations were, she wanted to teach prekindergarten because there are skills that the students need to know before going into kindergarten. In order to gain greater insight regarding the instructional practices that is perceived to contribute to the reading development of African American male students, the researcher

wanted to know about Anna's philosophy regarding reading instruction. According to Anna, she believed that a foundation for reading development needs to be established first. She shared that reading begins with the students being engaged with text.

Delores – Kindergarten Teacher

Delores is a Caucasian teacher who has been teaching for 13 years. She appeared to be confident and more than willing to share how perceptions about reading instruction as it related to her African American male students. Delores attended a four-year university where she obtained her bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. She has been at Blue Bell Elementary for the majority of those 13 years. This was her seventh year teaching kindergarten. Prior to teaching kindergarten, Delores taught second grade for six years. In order to gain greater insight regarding the instructional practices that is perceived to contribute to the reading development of African American male students, the researchers wanted to know about Delores' philosophy regarding reading instruction. Delores shared:

I believe that teachers should read every day and show their students how to read. They need to teach their students about the different concepts of print, such as reading left to right. Just a lot of modeling. When the teacher modeled what reading looks like and sounds like, students see reading in action. For instance, when the teacher reads text out loud with intonation, voice and fluency, the students are able to make better sense of what is happening in the story, which aides in their reading comprehension.

Sandra – Second Grade Teacher

Sandra is an African American teacher who has been teaching for nine years. She attended a four-year university where she obtained a bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary studies. During her nine years of teaching, she was a teacher at an early

childhood center with prekindergarten students. Sandra had been a substitute teacher, a teacher's assistant, a third grade teacher and a second grade teacher. Sandra has been a teacher at Blue Bell Elementary for seven years. When she started teaching at Blue Bell Elementary, she taught second grade for two years where she then she moved up to third grade for three years. After teaching third grade, she went back to second grade, which was her current teaching position during the interview and classroom observation. In order to gain greater insight regarding the instructional practices that is perceived to contribute to the reading development of African American male students, the researchers wanted to know about Sandra's philosophy regarding reading instruction. When Sandra was asked about her philosophy about reading instruction, Sandra shared, "I must give them the tools they need so they can become life-long readers."

Holly – Second Grade Teacher

Holly is a second grade African American teacher who has been teaching for 18 years. She attended a four-year university where she obtained a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. Holly also has a Master's Degree in Counseling. During her 18 years of teaching, Holly taught multiple grade levels to include prekindergarten, kindergarten, second grade, third grade and fourth grade. Holly shared that this was her first year teaching at Blue Bell Elementary. Before coming to Blue Bell Elementary, Holly taught 11 years at another school in Robust Independent School District. In order to gain greater insight regarding the instructional practices that is perceived to contribute to the reading development of African American male students, the researchers wanted to know about Holly's philosophy regarding reading instruction. Holly shared, "They can learn how to read when the teacher provides them with different ways to learn using materials on their level."

Bonnie – Third-Grade Teacher

Bonnie is a Caucasian teacher who has been teaching for four years. She did not get her bachelor's degree in education, but she got a master's degree in curriculum and instruction. She has taught at Blue Bell Elementary for her four years of teaching. During her four-year tenure at Blue Bell Elementary she taught second grade and third grade. Before teaching third grade, she taught second grade for three years. Bonnie looped with her students from second grade to third grade, where she teaches them all subjects. In order to gain greater insight regarding the instructional practices that is perceived to contribute to the reading development of African American male students, the researchers wanted to know about Bonnie's philosophy regarding reading instruction. Bonnie stated:

It is important with reading instruction that what you are asking is very clear and that you are modeling and breaking it down in very small chunks for the students. I have to then allow the students to practice what I have modeled for them and then allowing the kids to do the modeling. They have to be able to go back and explain it, which lets them make connections to what they learned.

Bonnie continued to explain how important it was for teachers to provide opportunities for students to be able to make connections when they are being read to or when they are reading.

Sara – Assistant Principal

Sara is an African American assistant principal at Blue Bell Elementary with 20 years in education. Sara attended a four-year university where she obtained a bachelor's degree in elementary education. Sara holds both a master's degree and a doctorate in education. Sara has been an assistant principal for eight years all in Robust Independent School District. Prior to becoming an assistant principal, Sara taught third grade, fourth grade and fifth grade math and science. Sara also served as a campus Science Specialist.

In order to gain greater insight regarding the instructional practices that is perceived to contribute to the reading development of African American male students, the researchers wanted to know about Sara's philosophy regarding reading instruction. Sara shared, "Reading should have a balanced approach. This balance approach should include phonics-based instruction."

Natalie – School Librarian

Natalie is a female Caucasian who serves as the school librarian for Blue Bell Elementary. Natalie obtained her bachelor's degree from a four-year university. She also holds a master's degree in library science. Natalie has been in education for 13 years. Prior to becoming a school librarian, she taught first grade and was a third and fourth grade reading interventionist. Natalie has been a school librarian for two years. In order to gain greater insight regarding the instructional practices that is perceived to contribute to the reading development of African American male students, the researchers wanted to know about Natalie's philosophy regarding reading instruction. Natalie shared, "Find the right books for the right students at the right time. This is most important in teaching students to read, which will get the students excited about reading."

Thelma- Reading Specialist

Thelma, Blue Bell Elementary's reading specialist attended a four-year university where she obtained her bachelor's degree in early childhood studies. During her 22 years of teaching experience, Thelma has held a number of positions in both private school and public school settings. Thelma taught a kindergarten-first grade combination class in a private school. After leaving the private school setting, Thelma taught in grades first through fourth grade. Before becoming a reading specialist, she was an English as a Second Language (ESL) interventionist as well as a reading interventionist. Thelma has been a reading specialist at Blue Bell Elementary for two years. In order to gain greater

insight regarding the instructional practices that is perceived to contribute to the reading development of African American male students, the researchers wanted to know about Thelma's philosophy regarding reading instruction. Thelma shared, "It is our job to teach children how to read."

Classroom Observations

Anna's prekindergarten classroom

Currently, Anna has 17 students with four of her students being African American males. Anna's classroom was student-centered and supported by a print-rich environment. Her classroom supported reading instruction by having different visuals around the room. Some of the visuals on Anna's wall were posters of alphabet letters, rhyming words, and basic sight words. Anna had a word wall that had high frequency words, such as and, at, the, he, she, I, is, and can at the front of the class. Anna's classroom also had pictures of each student displayed. Under each student's picture was the student's name, which helped the students with recognizing and reading his or her name. Along with visuals, Anna supported reading instruction with different types of manipulatives to include magnetic letters, letter stamps, and puzzles. The classroom had a variety of books in different areas of the classroom. The classroom library consisted of picture books and big books, which included book titles such as, *When I Get Bigger* (Mercer, 1999) and *in my Car* (Dale, 2012). However, in the book collection seen, there were no books specifically about African American children or books by African American authors. Along with books in the classroom library, the students had access to books at their tables. Each table had a basket of books, mainly picture books. The books were not the only types of print available to the students. Anna had a chart stand with different poems displayed. For whole group instruction, Anna had a large alphabet area rug on the floor facing the front of the classroom. The large group area also had a big

book stand and the learning objectives posted, which Anna reviewed with the students during the time the researcher observed. The researcher also observed a horse-shoe table for small group reading instruction. Anna shared that this was where she met with a small group of students to work on different reading skills.

Delores' kindergarten classroom

Delores has 19 students with five of her students being African American males. Imagine walking into a classroom, where you see the teacher at a teaching table with four students working on word work using magnetic letters. As the teacher is working with the small group of students, the rest of the class is rotating through different work stations. During work stations, two students are reading in one corner of the classroom, some are reading in the classroom library and others are at their desk pulling books from a book basket. In one corner of the classroom, there is the classroom library with baskets of books labeled fiction and nonfiction as well as a basket of magazines. Although there were a large number of books, the researcher did not see specific books related to African American characters. The researcher saw at least one magazine that highlighted an African American athlete on the cover. Right next to the classroom library, there is the computer station where the students can access different websites, such as Star Fall, a reading website.

The classroom library was not the only area that had a variety of books. The researcher observed a wooden stand that housed a number of big books. The researcher noticed the title of one of the big books, which was *Mrs. Wishy Washy* (Cowley, 1999). Along with books from the classroom library and the big book stand, each student had individual book bags filled with a variety of books titles. Delores' classroom walls had an area for a word wall that displayed about 50-75 high frequency words and an area that displayed student work.

Sandra's second-grade classroom

Sandra has 20 students with three of her students being African American males. The area in Sandra's classroom that was most striking was her small group reading area. In this area, Sandra had a wide variety of materials and resources to support her students as they worked on different reading skills and strategies. For her small group instruction, she used books according to what reading level her students were reading on. To support her students as they are reading, she had decoding strategies taped on the horse-shoe shaped table where the students met for guided reading. When the students came to a word that they did not know, the students were able to refer to the strategies with Sandra's prompting or guidance. Around the guided reading table, there were other reading strategy posters posted for the students to use or for Sandra's use during direct teaching or modeling. Sandra also had teacher-student created reading comprehension anchor charts. Along with an area for small group instruction, there was a classroom library that had a wide variety of books to include picture books, chapter books, series books, biographies and some magazines. *Junie B Jones and the Mushy Gushy Valentine* (Park, 1999), *The Talented Clementine* (Pennypacker, 2007), and *Flat Stanley's Worldwide Adventure: The African Safari* (Brown, 2010). The researcher was unable to sift through all of Sandra's books and did notice specific book titles about African American characters, such as *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* (Aardema, 1992), *Amazing Grace* (Hoffman, 1993), and *The Snowy Day* (Keats, 1962). Sandra shared that the space in the front of the room was where she facilitated lessons in a whole group setting. In this area, she modeled using different books and reading materials.

Holly's second-grade classroom

Holly has 18 students with three of her students being African American males. Upon walking into Holly's classroom, the researcher saw a very organized and structured

classroom. The desks were placed in clusters, which had book baskets with a variety of books for the students to choose from during independent reading. There was a large area in the front of classroom where the students would meet for whole group instruction. The researcher could not help to notice the books that were lined across the ledge of the chalkboard. The books displayed on the ledge were books about African American characters written by African American authors. For example, *Shades of Black* (Pickney, 2000) was one of the book's title noticed by the researcher. Holly's classroom had a classroom library that was neatly organized by genre, interest, and level. The researcher observed a small group reading lesson that Holly conducted with three of her students. During the small group reading lesson, the students met at a horse-shoe shaped table. Each student had text on his/her reading level. In addition to having leveled text, Holly had dry-erase boards for the students to practice writing the sight words. On the wall next to Holly was reading strategy poster. While Holly met with the students in the reading group, the other students independently read.

Bonnie's third-grade classroom

Bonnie has 19 students with six of her students being African American males. Upon entering Bonnie's classroom, the researcher noticed learning objectives for each content area posted in a visible location. Bonnie shared a reading log of one of her students with the researcher. By looking through the reading log, the researcher was able to capture some of the activities that Bonnie used to promote reading development. The reading log included the following: book title; date the readers read the book; the amount of time the reader read the book; and book genre, such as fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and informational text. The researcher found the following titles focused on African Americans in one student's reading log, *Young Rosa Parks* (Benjamin, 1999), *Lili Kiat*

(McCall, 2009), and *Abraham Lincoln* (Gilpin, 2012). As the students read, they had to complete the reading log and turn in at the end of the week.

Due to time constraints, the researcher was unable to observe Bonnie's reading instruction. Although the researcher was unable to observe Bonnie's classroom, Bonnie shared her small group reading instructional binder with the researcher.

Natalie's Library Observation

The library at Blue Bell Elementary is a large, open space filled with books from one side of the room to the other. Along with thousands of books, the library has twelve desktop computers positioned along one of the walls. Along with desktop computers, there were a set of iPads. The iPads appeared to make up another computer station. The library is attractive and student centered. The library incorporated flexible seating options. Flexible seating provided the students with a variety of seating options, such as bean bag seating, lowered seating, soft seating, and round tables for group meetings. Next to the circulation desk, the researcher noticed two carts filled with new books. The researcher could not help to notice some of the book covers and their titles. The books were written by African American authors and had African American main characters. One wall had a large poster of Clifford, the Big Red Dog, which was noticeable as soon as one walked into the library.

The researcher was interested in finding out from Natalie about Blue Bell's inventory of library books. The researcher specifically wanted to know how many books that Blue Bell Elementary had written by African American authors or books with African American characters. The researcher also wanted to find out the types of books that African American male students checked out most often from Blue Bell's library. However, the researcher was unable to obtain a copy of the library's book inventory detailing the specific types of books that Blue Bell's library had written by African

American authors and books about African Americans characters. Also, Natalie was unable to generate a checkout list of the kinds of books that African American male students checked out. However, Natalie was able to provide the researcher with a verbal account of the books that were most checked out by the African American male students. According to Natalie, African American male students checked out a lot of graphic novels and books about sports. Natalie stated, “A lot of the boys in general like the Dog Man and Wimpy Kids series. They’re always asking for Mind Craft books and the gaming books.” The researcher took pictures of the library to assist with remembering what was in the library as well as the library’s set-up. *The Great Shelby Holmes* (Eulberg, 2016), *The Magnificent Mya Tibbs* (Allan, 2017), and *Last Stop on Market Street* (De La Pena, 2015) were a few of the many books that Natalie had on her book cart.

Explicit Instruction

One of the themes that emerged from this study was explicit instruction. For the purpose of this study, it is the idea that when teachers provide direct, explicit instruction practices in a variety of structures, it contributes to the reading development of their African American male students. In this section, the teacher participants broke down explicit instruction into small group instruction and whole group instruction.

Whole group instruction

Both Anna and Delores shared what they did during their whole group reading instruction time to explicitly teach reading to their African American male students. They discussed that during whole group reading instruction time they modeled reading strategies that readers using while they are reading. Anna and Delores both said that they modeled concepts of print during their reading whole group reading time.

Anna, a prekindergarten teacher shared:

During the whole group instruction, I use the book that I am using to draw the students' attention to different concepts of print. I show the students that as readers we read from left to right. As I am reading, I ask myself questions out loud as to what might happen next. I look at the picture and continue to make predictions. As a kindergarten teacher, Delores was asked to describe what she did during her whole group reading time to provide direction instruction to her African American male students.

I model different concepts of print, such as where to start reading. I model for my students how to read. I show them that readers do not open a book and start reading from the back, but rather they read from the front of the book, reading from left to right.

Both teachers used whole group instruction to model using different reading strategies, such as understanding concepts of print, making predictions and asking questions.

Small group instruction

The four participants discussed the importance of small group instruction and how it supported the reading development of their African American male students. Anna, Delores, Sandra and Bonnie all seemed to agree that during small group reading instruction they were able work with their students on their reading levels. Anna, a prekindergarten teacher shared, "It is important because you are able to work with the students at different levels." Delores, a kindergarten, shared what she did during small group instruction to support her African American male students' reading development. Delores:

I do a lot of word work at my reading table. I show them the sight words. I show them the sight words making them with letters. After that, we spell the word

together. I then have them mix up all the letters, and then they make the word again. And then they write it.

Bonnie, a third-grade teacher, when also asked about what she did during her small group instruction, she provided examples on what she did as a reading teacher to support her African American male students. She stated:

During my small group reading with my students, I use a reading strategy sheet to assist my students with their thinking. This helps them think about what they were reading. As they are reading at the table, they would stop to answer questions using text evidence.

As a second-grade teacher, Sandra discussed what she did to support her African American male students' reading development. "I do guided reading, which during guided reading I always start out introducing the vocabulary words from the new book. I point to the word, read the word, and model reading in and around the word to figure out what the new word means."

In summary, the teacher participants described how they taught reading during their whole group instruction time. During their whole group reading time, they were able to model what to do as a reader. During small group instruction time, the teachers worked with the students on making words, working through words using reading strategies, and comprehension. In both of these settings, the teachers were able to support their student' reading.

Differentiating to Meet Student Needs

Another of the themes that emerged from this study was differentiating to meet student needs. For the purpose of this study, it is the idea that when teachers differentiate their reading instruction it contributes to the reading development of their African

American male students. In this section, the teacher participants broke down differentiating to meet students by discussing assessment, materials, and resources.

According to two teacher participants, before they determined their students' reading needs they discussed how assessment helped them to be able to differentiate instruction for their African American male students. Anna, a prekindergarten teacher discussed, "I use the district's reading assessments to get my students' reading level." Holly, a second grade teacher used multiple reading assessments to determine how to get her students' reading levels. Holly shared, "I'm always looking at data. I look at data from I-station and the Development Reading Assessment (DRA) to see what my students are lacking and what they are strong in."

Two teacher participants described what they did with the assessment data collected in order to meet the specific reading needs of their African American male students when they were asked specifically about how assessment helped them to plan to meet their African American male students' reading needs. According to Anna, "After using the district's reading assessment data, I am able to get my students' reading levels. For example, the students who are able to read basic sight words and reading at an instructional level A, I plan reading lessons using level A books." Anna continued to explain, "Since in my class I have some of my students that know basic sight words while others do not know letters or sounds and cannot read, I have to create lessons to cater to where my students' reading levels and where their interests."

Another teacher, Delores, a Kindergarten, discussed how she used assessment data to meet the needs of her African American male students. Delores discussed:

I am able to meet my students' reading needs at their specific levels. I group my students into reading groups based on their instructional levels. Using books on

their instructional levels, I am able to meet with my students with similar reading needs.

Three of the teacher participants discussed how they plan lessons to meet the reading needs of their African American male students and how the lessons support their African American male students' reading. Delores shared, "Knowing my students' reading needs, I create lessons that are targeted to meet the specific skills of that group. According to Holly, a second grade teacher, "I plan reading lessons to meet the varying needs of my students. For my students reading between levels 28-40, I focus my reading lessons on vocabulary and comprehension during my small group reading instruction. Bonnie, a third grade teacher, shared how she differentiated her students' reading lessons. Bonnie shared, "Since many of my African American male students are reading on grade level, I create lessons, to develop their reading comprehension."

In addition to using assessment data and planning lessons, two teachers discussed lesson activities and assignments they used to meet their African American male students' reading needs. As prekindergarten teacher, Anna provided the researcher with a description of her district's reading program that provides her with differentiating her reading lessons. Anna's described the program:

Frog Street Press (www.frogstreet.com) comes with a lot of resources. It also comes with lesson plans at different levels. It is theme-based program that has different stories I can read and questions I can ask the students. It comes with different activities to teach reading.

When Anna was asked how this reading program benefited her students, Anna stated, "It helps me to meet the different needs of my students, especially those students who do not come in knowing a lot.

Sandra, a second explained, “I modify my reading assignments to my students’ reading ability. Depending on the reading lessons, their reading work stations have different activities based on their reading levels.”

In summary, the teachers used assessment data to help them determine how to meet their students. After the teachers determined their students’ reading needs, they used the assessment information obtained to help plan their reading lessons in order to meet their African American male students’ reading needs. In addition to assessment data, lesson planning, the teachers also met their students’ reading needs using different reading activities.

Promoting Student Engagement

A third theme that emerged from this study was promoting student engagement. For the purpose of this study, it is the idea that when students are engaged they find meaning in the work that they are doing and find value in what they are reading. In this section, the teacher participants discussed student engagement as it related to motivation, classroom environment, interaction with text, and student choice.

Teachers

One teacher found that the lack of motivation to read can sometimes be her biggest challenge with developing her African American male students’ reading. According to Sandra, a second grade teacher, she felt that some of her African American male students lack the motivation to read. She stated:

Finding ways to make them be able to relate to whatever it is they’re reading. Just trying to build up their background. Because I think that once a child can relate to whatever it is we’re reading, it will make them more interested in wanting to read, and that will go for anybody, whether they’re male or female.

A classroom environment can promote reading engagement. Sandra said, “I strive to make my classroom positive for my students.”

Sandra explained to the researcher how she created a classroom environment that encouraged her African American male student to want to read. She said:

I think that if a classroom has a positive atmosphere it promotes learning. If students can feel comfortable taking risks, it is important because they just need to feel comfortable. I think that’s important because they just need to feel comfortable talking to you. They don’t want to feel intimidated by neither the teacher or by their peers, and that’s how you learn. When you feel intimidated, you’re just going to sit there. You’re not going to want to say anything because you’re going to think everybody’s going to think badly of you if you say a wrong answer. I always try to make them feel comfortable. I tell them that’s why we’re here and we’re all here to learn. I think having that positive classroom climate helps to promote learning.

Anna and Delores both shared what they did during read aloud and shared reading helped to engage their African American male students in reading. According to Anna, a prekindergarten teacher, “Shared reading allows the students to get engaged and read aloud is a good way to have my students use their imagination as I am reading.”

When the researcher asked Delores, a kindergarten teacher, what she felt specifically draws her African American male students in during reading instruction. She commented:

I read with a lot expression. I tend to get a little animated. So, I guess when I’m reading that that way, it draws them in and they really like that. Reading with animation and excitement, it draws the students in and engages them.

When African American male students were given choice during reading, it was found to engage them according to two teacher participants. Delores, a kindergarten teacher, also

shared that when she gives her male students Choice, they become more engaged in reading. She said, “I allow them to have some choice on the text that they get to read. For example, when the students are independently reading they have a variety of books in their individual books bags to choose from.” Holly, a second-grade teacher, shared that students need to be active participants in the reading instruction. Holly stated, “I find that my male students are more motivated to read when they get to self-select what they read.”

In summary, the teacher participants discussed how engaging African American male students in reading contributed to their reading development. It was noted that since some African American male students are unmotivated to read it is important to find ways to engage them in reading. It was found that when the classroom environment was positive this helped the African American male students develop as readers. The researcher also found that how the teachers interacted with text during reading instruction and student choice contributed to the reading development of African American male students.

Librarian

For the purpose of this study, the school librarian was found to also play an important role in motivating African American male students to read. As the school librarian, Natalie shared how school-wide reading programs and technology helped to motivate African American male students to read. “We use Accelerated Reader (AR) as a school-wide way to get the students to read.” Accelerated Reading is a computer-based reading program used in schools to monitor and tracking students’ independent reading progress. In addition to Accelerated Reading (AR), Natalie described how competition got her African American male students to want to read. She shared how the Battle of the Books is very popular with the African American male students. Natalie stated:

Battle of the Books is something that Blue Bell Elementary does. Using the books that have been on the Blue Bonnet list. For the third grade students, they have to read 20 books from the list and the fourth grade students have to read 25 books from the list, hopefully the books were read with their team. If the list is split up, that is five books per kid. After reading the books, each team is asked questions about the books, such as which book did this event happen? If the team answers correctly, they earn a point. If they get the author right, they earn another point. Whichever team wins, that team gets to battle other schools within the district, which is done through video conferencing.

Natalie shared how technology helped a great deal with engaging the students, especially African American male students. Natalie stated:

I incorporate technology. For instance, I have the students use iPads to create books trailers. The goal of having the students create movie trailers is that it gets them to talk about books that they have read, and to have other students read books that they did not read.

In summary, it was found that the school librarian also played an important role in supporting and encouraging African American male students' reading. It was noted that the African American male students benefited from a school library that allowed them to engage with reading in a variety of formats, such as Accelerated Reading and team competition.

Teacher as a Learner

The teacher as a learner was another theme that emerged through the data analysis of the how attitudes and beliefs contributed to the reading development of African American male students. For the purpose of this study, the teacher participants defined what they perceived to be an effective teacher and discussed their attitude and beliefs

professional development as it related to the reading development of African American male students.

Teachers

Since teachers play an integral role in the reading development of their African American male students, it was important to find out what from the teacher participants what they thought an effective reading teacher did to develop their African American male students' reading. Two teachers described what they thought an effective reading teacher. Anna, a prekindergarten teacher, described an effective reading teacher as, "I think that an effective reading teacher must have a passion for her job. The teacher must know what works for the students, knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the students and finding ways to help them." Holly and Sandra as second-grade teachers described what they perceived an effective reading teacher to be. Holly shared that an effective teacher has the belief that learning is ongoing. She said, "An effective teacher seeks out professional development that will enhance her reading instruction."

Sandra shared:

An effective reading teacher knows how to differentiate her lessons to the point where her students are successful, regardless of their academic ability. She also knows how to motivate all students and she know how to keep them engaged. You could also say that an effective teacher seeks out ongoing professional development.

It was important to the researcher to find out how the teachers were being developed as reading teachers in order to develop their African American male students' reading. One of teacher participants described how Blue Bell was developing her as a reading teacher. Delores, a kindergarten teacher, expounded on the learning opportunities offered to her at Blue Bell Elementary, Delores stated, "This year our campus is doing a

school-wide book study on small group instruction where I am able to incorporate the reading strategies learned from the campus' professional development on small group instruction." Delores valued the learning opportunities offered to her by her campus.

When the researcher inquired about the participant teachers' belief about the importance of professional development to them as reading teachers, one teacher shared why professional development was important to her as a reading teacher. Sandra, a second grade teacher, discussed that importance of becoming a better reading teacher for her students.

I guess just basically to overall perfect my profession. To just get better at what I do. I know that teaching is a lifelong learning process, because you are never going to know it all, because every year things are constantly changing. But, I just want to be the best teacher in reading.

After learning about the professional development offered to the teacher participants at Blue Bell Elementary and teacher participants' beliefs about why professional development, it was important for the researcher to find out what specific professional development that teacher participants felt they needed to develop their African American male students' reading.

When the teacher participants were asked about specific reading professional development that they would like to participate in, two of the participants shared. Holly, a second grade teachers, stated, "I would like training on developing and managing rotations for when I am working with students during small group reading instruction." In addition to developing and managing rotations, Holly said, "Students need more phonics instruction, and because of this I need more professional development in the area of phonics." Like Holly, Bonnie, a third grade teacher, discussed specific trainings that she would like to participate in. Bonnie shared, "I would like training on dyslexia and

working with students with learning disabilities. I would also like training on how to gradually release my students to be more independent.”

In summary, the teachers’ attitudes about learning contributed to the reading development of African American male students. It was noted that the teachers wanted professional development would help them to be better reading teachers. At least one teacher wanted professional development on how to manage her reading rotations, with another teacher wanting training on how to teach students with reading disabilities.

Teacher as a Supporter

The teacher as a supporter was another theme that emerged through the data analysis of the how attitudes and beliefs contributed to the reading development of African American male students. For the purpose of this study, the teacher participants discussed how they supported their students’ reading development and how they supported their students’ parents in helping with their child’s reading development.

Teachers

When the teacher participants were asked about what teaches should do to support their students’ reading, three teachers shared. Anna, a prekindergarten teacher conveyed to the researcher that an effective teacher should be a support for their students when she stated, “An effective teacher always finds ways to help her students.” Delores discussed that a supportive teacher not only supports her students, she also encourages her parents to support their children’s reading at home. When the researcher asked Delores to expound on this, Delores said, “Encourage them at home, parents working at home on those sight words.” She shared, “when parents read with their students the students do better in school.”

It was important to the researcher to find out how teachers supported their African American male students’ reading development. Four teachers shared with the researcher

what they did during different times of their reading instruction to support their African American male students. During reading instruction, Bonnie, a third grade teacher explained how she supported her African American male student when they are reading. Bonnie said, “During small group reading instruction I am able to give my students the one-on-one attention that they need to develop as readers. According to Bonnie, her students are able to apply the scaffolding strategies to their own reading in a safe and nurturing environment.

Delores, a kindergarten teacher, and Sandra, a second grade teacher, also shared what they did to support their African American male students. Delores said, “I encourage my students to take risks and to try, especially when they want to give up because they cannot read the word or the sentence. Sandra described what she did to support some of her African American male students who tend to shut down when they were intimidated or afraid to say the wrong thing. Sandra said, “In many cases I would stop to make them feel comfortable.”

In summary, teachers from prekindergarten through third grade discussed how they support their African American male students reading development, not only academically but emotionally. In addition to supporting their students as readers, the teachers also supported the parents as they helped their children at home with reading.

Stakeholders

Other stakeholders, such as the assistant principal, school librarian, and the campus reading specialist supported the reading development of African American male students. These stakeholders provided support to the teachers and the students in a variety of ways.

Assistant Principal

One assistant principal at Blue Bell Elementary was interviewed in this research study. When the assistant principal, Sara was asked what she felt her role was in helping with the reading development of the African American male students on her campus, Sara stated,

As campus administrator, I feel that I play an integral role in the reading skills of African American male students because by being in the classrooms and observing reading instruction it helps to ensure that small group reading is occurring.

In addition to this, Sara also shared the importance of teachers receiving timely feedback was to improving their reading instruction. Sara stated, “By providing timely feedback, the reading teacher is able to make adjustments to her reading instruction and if need be she is able seek help from the reading Specialist.”

In summary, the assistant principal was found to an indirect impact on the reading development of African American male students. As the assistant principal, she supported the teachers by providing them immediate feedback about their reading instruction. The assistant principal noted that by providing teachers with timely feedback the teachers this would support the reading teachers with information that would help their reading instruction.

The school librarian

Natalie, the school librarian was asked to share what she perceived the librarian’s role was in supporting African American male students’ reading development. Natalie responded:

Hopefully a big role, with being a support to both the teachers and the kids. I think the kids come in here, and they know that it's a place that they can be accepted, and make choices. They seem to be excited about coming to library. In addition to sharing what she perceived her role was in the reading development of African American male students, Natalie shared, "If I teach students how to select just right books and to determine if a book is too easy or too hard that helps them with developing as readers."

The campus reading specialist

The reading specialist at Blue Bell Elementary was interviewed in this research study. As the reading specialist, she played an indirect role in supporting the reading development of the African American male students at Blue Bell. The reading specialist provided the teachers with job-embedded reading professional development.

When Thelma, the reading specialist was asked what she thought was the most important part of her job, she stated:

That's hard to pinpoint. I'm going to probably say the coaching part because I feel like I can help teachers meet them where they are and help them grow to that next level, whatever that next level is for them, even if the expectation is to be way over here. If they're way over there getting them to move closer to that. I feel that makes the biggest impact.

Thelma provided specific examples on how she coached a teacher to teach reading.

Thelma stated:

For example, last year when a first grade teacher shared that her students were stuck at a six and they can't seem to get to an eight. I asked, "Why are they stuck?" The teacher responded, "They don't know their sight words." I said, then we are going to teach them their sight words. We went back to the basics. I shared

with the teacher that the students need to be instructed in small group. You need to point it out to them. You need to have the students reading the word wall every day. They need to be practicing locating those words within the book.

Thelma was asked to elaborate on how she supported teachers who needed additional support with teaching their African American male students who were not making reading progress. Thelma shared:

I am working with one teacher. She has low skill and low will. Unfortunately, this is her 15th year of teaching and it's just heartbreaking. When the teacher makes excuses, I tell her to stop making excuses and telling me the kids can't do it. With her, I set specific goals because she is one of the teachers who are over there and need support getting where we need her to be. Although, she may never get there, little by little she is making some change.

The researcher asked Thelma if this teacher was someone she perceived to be effective at teaching reading to African American male students. Thelma responded:

Yes, she is data-driven and specifically looks at what this group of students in front of her needs. In fact, I would say that about the whole first grade team. They really think about those kids. They don't just pick a level three and do the same lesson they did with another group. They look through the lens of what the students will need. For example, if a group of students are struggling with decoding or vocabulary they will focus their reading lesson on that. They really target to the specific needs of their students.

The researcher asked Thelma to discuss any of the school-wide incentives used to motivate male students to read, specifically African American male students. Thelma shared that AR is the school-wide reading incentive that is used across all grade levels,

unlike Battle of the Books only used in the intermediate grades. However, Thelma shared her apprehension with using AR to promote reading: Thelma shared:

Reading is developmental, so I know some of our students don't always come with the best background. With early childhood, it says it could take kids up to seven years-old to eight years-old to read. It's just when the light bulb clicks. My dilemma with AR is that, Oh, yay! -You're this reading level, you're that level. It's not a kid's fault if they're not developmentally ready. They may just need an extra year to catch up, so I feel like it's counterproductive in some regards unless you only do an incentive based on growth, and then that can be tricky, as well.

That's just my personal thought on that.

Thelma as the reading specialist was found to have an indirect impact on the reading development of African American male students. In her role, the reading specialist worked with teachers to improve and or enhance their reading instructional practices through job-embedded professional development.

Summary

Chapter Four described the findings of the case study. This study investigated the perceptions of different stakeholders regarding the factors that contribute to the successful reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. In addition to a brief introduction to each participant in the study and the school in which the participants worked, this chapter included data gathered on the responses of each participant. A variety of sources from the field were considered in this study including classroom observations, interviews, and field notes. From these different sources, there were several themes to emerge regarding factors that contributed to the successful reading development for African American male students.

When observing in the classrooms, the researcher noted that the classrooms for all the participants were welcoming and inviting. Each classroom observed had small group areas for small group reading instruction. In each of the small group areas, there were magnetic letters for word work. There were word walls on each of the classroom wall had basic sight words that supported reading. In one classroom, there were pictures of each student with the students' names under the picture. Along with an area for small group instruction, the classrooms observed had classroom libraries filled with books for varied instructional levels and interest. However, not of all of the classrooms observed had classroom libraries that included books written about African Americans.

The school librarian played an important role in the reading development of African American male students. She understood the importance of engaging African American male students in reading, which was evident in the collection of books on display and on the shelves. The school librarian recognized the importance of having books that interests all students, in particular her African American male students. Graphic novels and books about athletes were many of the books found in the library. Along with these books, there were a number of books that highlighted African American characters as well as a large collection of books written by African American authors. In addition to having a library collection that celebrated African Americans in a positive manner, she created opportunities where African American male students actively participated in reading. The Battle of the Books is a competition where teams of students have to read 20 books from a list and ask each other questions. The Battle of the Books has been successful in engaging African American male students.

Instructional practices that contributed to the successful reading development for African American male students included explicit teaching, differentiating instruction, and student engagement. Explicit teaching in various learning structures, such as small

group instruction was noted as contributing to the successful reading development for African American male students. Differentiating instruction contributed to the successful reading development for African American male students because the teachers created reading lessons based on the students' reading levels. For example, if a student was reading below basic level, the teacher used books on the student's level to teach either decoding or comprehension skills. It was noted that when teachers found ways to engage their African American male students in reading it contributed to the successful reading development of African American male students. It was found that when African American male students could interact with the text through read aloud or shared reading, they were more inclined to participate in the reading instruction. Along with instructional practices, the perceived attitudes and beliefs of students also contributed to the successful reading development for African American male students.

It was noted that when teachers see themselves as learners, this has a direct impact on how their students learn to read. The teachers and the specialist identified that phonics-based professional development is needed in teaching students how to decode words. In addition to phonics-based professional development, at least one teacher expressed wanting more professional development in dyslexia since she has seen an increase in the number of students with characteristics of dyslexia. Since differentiating instruction is important to the reading development of African American males, one of the participants shared that she would like more professional development on differentiation.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of different stakeholders regarding the factors that contribute to the successful reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. This study was important because it examined the successful reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade through the lens of different stakeholders and their experiences with what they perceive to help African American male students become successful readers. This chapter summarizes the results determined from the careful analysis of this qualitative study. Therefore, the findings identified in this study present implications regarding instructional practices perceived to contribute to the reading development of African American male students, the perceived attitudes and beliefs of teachers as it relates to the reading development of African American male students, and how other stakeholders perceive the teachers' attitudes and beliefs contribute to the reading development of African American male students.

The following research questions were answered in this research study:

Research Question One: What are some instructional practices that teachers and administrators perceive to contribute to the reading development of African American males in prekindergarten through third grade?

RQ1: What instructional practices are perceived by teachers and administrators to contribute to the reading development of African American males in prekindergarten through third grade as perceived by teachers and administrators?

Research Question Three: In what ways, if any do, administrators perceive teachers' attitudes and personal beliefs contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

Research Question Four: How do the perceptions of other school personnel such as the librarian and reading specialist contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

Since this study focused on which instructional practices contribute to the reading development of African American male students, the researcher based the study on the theoretical framework of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). Culturally Responsive Teaching according to Ladson-Billings subscribes to the premise that the student's culture can play a role in assisting the student to create meaning. Teachers who incorporate culturally relevant teaching practices capitalize on their students' culture and background to empower their students as learners, (Davis, 1995; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

A qualitative case study approach was selected because it helped the researcher gain a deeper understanding of the instructional practices as perceived by different stakeholders that supported the successful reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), employing a case study approach allows the researcher to take a closer look at a particular phenomenon. This study consisted of structured and semi-structured interviews with five teachers, one assistant principal, the school librarian, and one reading specialist. In addition to the interviews, the researcher conducted classroom observations to understand and immerse himself/herself in the natural setting (Creswell, 2007; Lichtman, 2010).

The data for this study were comprised of the perceptions of the eight participants in this study. In addition, the data collected for this research study consisted of the perceptions of the eight participant collected through interviews and field notes of the observations of the teachers' classrooms. The researcher identified five major themes

that emerged from the data. In the following section, each of the five themes will be discussed.

Summary of Findings

The summary of the findings from this study addressed the five major themes that emerged from the data analysis: teacher as learner, teacher as supporter, explicit teaching, differentiating to meet student needs, and promoting student engagement. The themes were both unique and interconnected because they each support the successful reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten, kindergarten, second grade and third grade.

Instructional Practices

As a former elementary teacher, who was charged with teaching reading, the researcher knows how essential reading is to achievement, especially to the achievement of African American male students. In order for this population to develop strong reading skills, it requires teachers to use effective instructional practices during their reading instruction. The teachers in this study discussed the instructional practices that they employed to develop their African American male students' reading. However, it is important to note that the instructional practices were embedded in a variety of classroom structures to include whole group instruction and small group instruction.

Explicit instruction

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) Theory was used as a framework in order to look at explicit teaching and how it supports the successful reading development of African American male students. According to Hattie (2009), explicit instruction is one of the most effective teaching approaches. In the whole group setting, it was found to be where the teachers modeled for their African American male students what good reading looked like and sounded like. A number of reading teachers in this study discussed the

instructional practices that have been effective in helping them to develop and engage their African American male students in reading. During the interviews, the participants in this study provided specific examples of what explicit instruction looked like during their reading instruction and how it supported their African American male students' reading development. Bonnie, a third grade teacher, shared that when she modeled for her students, they were able to go back and replicate what they saw her doing as they read on their own. Although Bonnie did not specifically say that this benefitted just her African American male students, it was implied by the researcher that when African American male students are provided with direct and explicit instruction they are taught what good readers do when they are reading. According to research, teachers guide students in new learning by modeling what to do as a reader (Rupley, Blair and Nicholas, 2009).

According to Sandra, a second grade teacher:

It is critical to directly teach students what you want them to learn, and there is a certain intentionality to reading aloud to students and that is to show and not just tell students what it means to be a good reader.

Sandra's position regarding explicit instruction aligns with research conducted by Duke, Cervaetti, and Wise (2017). Duke, Cervetti and Wise described that an effective reading teacher explicitly teaches the norms and practices associated with what good readers do and because of this it helped African American students reading. This study suggests that it is during read aloud that the teacher models how he/she interacts and manipulates with the text. In doing this, the African American male students are provided with strategies that will help them develop as readers.

In addition to whole group instruction, small group reading instruction was another reading group structure used by the teachers in this study to explicitly teach reading to their African American male students. It was evident to the researcher that

small group reading instruction was valued and emphasized at Blue Bell Elementary. It is most beneficial to African American male students' reading when they are taught in a small group structure. Ann, a prekindergarten teacher and Delores, a kindergarten teacher, both shared that small group reading instruction was an effective instructional practice for developing their African American male students' reading, since it allowed them to practice reading strategies with reading materials on their instructional level.

During small group instruction teachers were able to directly teach what they wanted their African American male students to learn to do as readers. One of the participants, Anna, a prekindergarten teacher, discussed that by having her students with her in a small group setting she is able to directly teach and respond to her students. Another teacher in this study, Delores, a kindergarten teacher, shared that reinforcing the strategies she modeled during whole group in a small group setting allows her African American male students the opportunity to practice these strategies in a setting that provides the scaffolding needed to support their reading needs.

Differentiating to meet student needs

Through interviewing the reading teachers, it was clear to the researcher that differentiated instruction was an instructional practice that was determined to be effective in developing the reading of African American male students. As a former reading teacher, the researcher knows the importance of planning reading instruction that supports the varied needs of the students. Carol Tomlinson (2017) describes differentiated instruction as classroom practices employed by teachers that allow students to have a variety of avenues to make sense of what they are learning and be able to show what they have learned in a variety of ways.

Based on the research collected in this study, the participants also saw the importance of differentiating their reading instruction. Tomlinson and Murphy (2015)

emphasizes the importance of providing students with rich learning opportunities to meet their individual needs. From what was shared by the participants, they too see the importance of providing their students with different opportunities to help them acquire the reading skills specific to their needs. The participants responded that they differentiate reading instruction regardless of their students' reading ability.

Holly, a second grade teacher and Bonnie, a third grade teacher, had African American male students whose reading levels were both on grade level and below-grade level. However, both of these teachers planned reading lessons according to their students' reading needs. For example, Holly, a second grade teacher, focused on vocabulary and comprehension for those students reading on grade level. Although Anna, a prekindergarten teacher, was one of the participants that appeared the least reluctant to talk only about what she did to differentiate to meet the needs of her African American male students, she did share similar examples on how she differentiated her reading instruction, resulting in the researcher seeing that the strategies she used to differentiate helped her African American male students in their reading development.

The activities that the African American male students completed during independent time is just as important in developing their reading. Some of the reading teachers in this study created a variety of reading activities that their African American male students accessed through work stations.

It was evident to the researcher that before the reading teachers in this study differentiated their reading instruction careful consideration was given to their students' reading data, such as the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and I-Station. As a campus administrator and former classroom teacher, the researcher knows how data play a vital role in planning effective reading instruction. Some of the participants discussed how they use data in differentiating reading instruction. The participants believed that in

order for differentiation to be effective, they must carefully plan for their reading groups. Their beliefs aligned with Akrum and Bean (2008) that teachers must think about what grouping strategies they will use to meet the needs of their students. To truly know what these students' needs are, teachers must collect reading data and differentiate reading instruction based on that data.

Promoting student engagement

When the participants were asked about what they felt challenged them as reading teachers in getting African American male students to read, some of them cited, lack of motivation. As former classroom teacher, the researcher knows that keeping students motivated and engaged can be a challenge. It is paramount that classrooms are structured to promote engagement and active learning.

Research supported that teachers who embraced culturally responsive practices in their literacy instruction helped to improve the reading achievement for students from diverse backgrounds (Callins, 2006). According to this research, teachers who embed culturally relevant teaching practices not only consider the culture and background of their African American students but also consider their learning styles (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Although lack of motivation was cited as a factor that influenced the reading development of African American male students, the researcher determined that there were a number of instructional practices used by some of the participants that countered this. For example, some of the participants discussed in detail what they did to increase their African American male students' motivation to read. Although Bonnie, a third grade teacher, did not specifically cite motivation, she did discuss that providing her African American male students with different types of books from which to choose which encouraged them to read. For example, she found that by allowing her African American male students to talk and act out what they read, they were more engaged in reading. In

addition to allowing them to act out what they read, she gave them opportunities to work with a partner or in peer groups.

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) practices also emphasizes the need for having books that celebrate students' culture. In addition to having books that African American male students could identify with, one of the participants discussed how allowing her African American male students to have choice in what they read motivated them to read. It was evident that finding ways to engage African American male students in reading was not only important to the reading teachers, but to other stakeholders at Blue Bell Elementary.

During the interview with Natalie, school librarian, the researcher gathered that it was easy for her to see why it was important to have books that African American male students could identify with and how these supported the successful reading development of African American male students. Research conducted by Essien (2017) stressed the importance of "healthy competition" among African American male students. He found that competition was an effective strategy that engaged African American male students. Natalie, school librarian, supported this assertion that when African American male students compete against each other in a healthy way they were more inclined to be engaged in reading.

Along with having books that the African American male students could identify with, student choice, and competition, African American male students' motivation increased when they worked in groups. Bonnie, a third grade teacher, found that her African American male students preferred to work in groups with their peers, which supported the research that African male students tend to do better when they work in groups with their peers (Viadero, 2009).

In summary, the researcher was able to conclude that explicit teaching, such as modeling and demonstrating helped to support the reading development of African American male students and should be an instructional practice used. The participants in this study empowered their African American male students to apply the reading strategies learned in during whole group modeling and supported during small group instruction. In addition to explicitly teaching African American male students how to read and apply reading strategies, teachers must not forget the importance of differentiating their reading instruction.

Attitudes and Beliefs

Teacher as learner

When the researcher asked the participants to describe what they thought an effective teacher did, most of them described a teacher who was knowledgeable about the subject matter and also who knows how to get their students where they need to be as readers as well as by engaging them in learning. This is especially true if teachers are going to successfully develop their students' reading, in particular their African American male students. An effective teacher was also described as someone who seeks ongoing professional development opportunities. It was apparent to the researcher that the participants understood the need for professional development for reading. Anna, a prekindergarten teacher, expressed a strong desire to have more professional development in reading instruction. Sandra, a second grade teacher's position on wanting to be better at what she does as a reading teacher showed how important professional development was to her. The researcher found that professional development in the area of phonics would benefit African American male students and should be provided to the teachers. Delores supported that having training in phonics instruction better equipped her with teaching decoding strategies. Holly felt that she needed more professional

development in teaching phonics. Regardless if the professional development was desired in phonics or reading in general, the participants desiring professional development in reading reflected their understanding on how professional development helped to improve their reading instructions, thus resulting in successful reading development for their students. In order for school improvement, the process through which how teachers learn need to be developed (Postholm, 2018).

According to research, high quality professional development that supports reading teachers in seeing a connection between their instructional practice and research improved their instructional practices. High quality and effective professional development builds the teachers' own knowledge and skill in order to better address their student needs (Mizell, 2010; Lane & Hayes, 2015). With many of the participants sharing how they explicitly modeled reading instruction, research findings reported that students' reading skills in the areas of self-monitoring and self-correcting skills improved when teachers participated in professional development. Hence supporting the idea that professional development is critical in improving the students' reading development (Pratt & Martin, 2017).

Teacher as supporter

The attitudes and beliefs that teachers have about African American male students greatly impacts student learning outcomes. According to Krasnof (2016), the attitude that teachers have towards students from diverse backgrounds influences student learning, including how students viewed themselves and how they performed academically. Teachers who employ culturally responsive methods support their students. Essien (2017) found that exemplary teachers of African American male students also employed culturally relevant teaching practices and small group instruction. In relationship to the

findings from Essien's study, the participants in this study employed small group instruction in their reading instruction.

Sandra, a second grade teacher, found that some of her African American male students shut down and had a tendency to give up and stop trying. She had to find ways to support them. For example, Sandra, stopped to encourage a student when he was afraid of being made fun of because he felt that he could not read. Her encouragement was a prime example of having a supportive and encouraging learning environment. It is extremely important that African American male students have teachers who are supportive and who encourage them when they feel when they "can't." Teacher support appeared to be most evident during times that the students were able to interact with the text, either during read aloud, shared reading or small group instruction. Delores, a kindergarten teacher, shared how being animated and acting out what she read helped to draw in her African American male students. The researcher felt that Sandra was an excellent example of being a supporter of her students. Sandra shared that when students feel connected to their teacher and have a safe place to learn they want to learn. It was apparent to the researcher that Sandra created a classroom environment that encouraged her African American male students' reading development. The researcher found that the participants not only supported the reading development of their African American male students instructionally, but supported them emotionally. However, not all of the teachers directly mentioned African American male students specifically

Delores seemed to see the importance of not only supporting their students, but also supporting their parents' role in their children's reading development. Sandra also considered how the role of the parents supported their children's reading development. According to Sandra it was important for her to know what her parents are dealing with in order to support her students.

As a campus administrator, the researcher understands the role that other stakeholder play in support African American male students' learning. In addition to the reading teachers, the school librarian, the reading specialist and the assistant principal were the stakeholders who also helped to support African American male students reading development, whether directly or indirectly. The school librarian, Natalie supported the reading teachers by assisting them with their lesson planning by gathering reading materials that supports the teachers with what they are teaching. In addition to gathering reading materials, she helped to cultivate a reading environment that celebrates the African American male students. Natalie, discussed the importance of having a library that promotes cultural awareness.

The reading specialist, Thelma, like the school librarian, provided the teachers with support with lesson planning and resources. The role of the reading specialist also supports teachers with reading instruction and delivery through job-embedded professional development. For example, Thelma facilitated a campus-wide book study using the book, *The Next Steps to Guided Reading* (Richardson, 2017). This book study required the reading teachers to participate in the book study as well as the book as a teaching resource. This book study supported teachers with the implementation of small group reading. Thelma works with all reading teachers, regardless if they are struggling or not, since one of her primary roles is to directly work with teachers to improve student outcomes.

Limitations of this study included the limited number of participants in one public, elementary school. There were five teachers, one assistant principal, one reading specialist and the school librarian. Having a limited number of participants provided a very narrow view of what was perceived to be effective instructional practices that developed African American male students' reading. The time frame of the study was

also a limitation. The researcher observed once in each teacher's classroom and relied heavily on what was observed during that one setting and the teachers' interview. In addition to a limited number of participants, the researcher was unable to interview the campus principal, therefore relying solely on the assistant principal's responses. Furthermore, the interview with the assistant principal provided limited insight due to time constraints of the assistant principal.

In summary, all stakeholders play a vital role in helping to develop the reading of African American male students. The attitudes and beliefs held by those who are charged with teaching African American male students make a big difference in the learning outcomes of these students. The participants not only saw themselves as teachers, but they saw themselves as supporters to their students. By showing their African American males students that they cared about them, this helped them to build confidence as readers. The participants in this study also valued professional development. They participated in a campus-wide book study as well as received job-embedded professional development with the campus reading specialist, thus seeing themselves as learners.

Implications

The findings in this study will hopefully add to the body of research on ways to successfully develop the reading of African American male students. Included in this study are instructional practices utilized by reading teachers in an elementary school that impact the reading development of African American male students. Based on the researcher's experience teaching children how to read, incorporating a balanced literacy program should develop the necessary reading skills needed to think critically. The students should then be able to generalize reading skills into other content areas by participating in small group, where the teacher is facilitating their reading. In order for African American male students to engage and derive meaning from what they have read,

teachers must provide reading materials that interest them and connect to their culture. African American male students who are taught by teachers who have a positive perception about their learning abilities may be more successful academically than male students that are taught by teachers who have a negative perception about them. African American male students who are taught by teachers who have high expectations of them may also develop a greater sense of self, resulting in students working harder to achieve academic success. The researcher was surprised to learn that competition was big with motivating and engaging African American male students in reading. As an elementary principal, the researcher found that teachers need to have on-going professional development in the area of reading. In addition to having access to professional development, the teachers should give input into the type of professional development is provided. This study also found that in order to successfully develop African American male students' reading, teachers must be provided with relevant professional development that focuses on reading instruction, differentiating instruction, and culturally relevant teaching practices.

According to the findings from this study, it may be beneficial to support teachers by identifying reading instructional practices that have positive impact on the reading development of African American male students in early elementary. Teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders have a great deal to learn from schools that employ instructional practices that meet the reading needs of African American male students. Steps that schools can take to ensure that they have sound instructional practices that support the successful reading development of their African American male students are: (a) explicitly teaching strategies during varied reading structures to include whole group, small group, and independent reading, (b) using data to differentiate reading instruction to include small group reading, reading materials, and work stations, (c) engaging and

motivating African American male students during reading instruction, (d) embedding culturally responsive instructional practices, strategies and materials.

Recommendations for Future Research

As a mother of an African American male and an educator who has worked primarily with African American male students, it is clear that there is a need for further research in the area of the reading development for African American male students. A recommendation for future research should be to continue to seek ways to engage African American male students in reading in the early grades in order to build a reading foundation that will support them as they progress to upper elementary and high school. In order for African American male students to be equipped with the tools they will need to successfully navigate through society, the researcher strongly suggests that research continue to explore the instructional practices that schools are using with their African American male students to engage and motivate them in reading. Although this study focused on the reading development of African American male students in elementary, the researcher also suggests researching successful reading strategies for African American male students in the intermediate grades because they will need additional strategies to help them with comprehending complex text.

Even though the results cannot be generalized to all teachers who teach African American elementary school male students, this study may still be helpful to educators and other school personal who work with African American male students. This study may also help teachers to promote greater student reading engagement.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers and other stakeholders' perceptions regarding the instructional practices, attitudes and beliefs that successfully develop reading in African American male students. This qualitative study used a case

study approach to examine these perceptions. This study included face-to-face interviews with reading teachers, an assistant principal, librarian, and a reading specialist. In addition to the interviews, classroom observations were conducted.

The participants in this study supported John Hattie's (2003) research that teachers have the greatest impact on student achievement. These reading teachers perceived that effective teachers possessed instructional practices that engaged their African American male students in reading. Effective reading teachers create classroom environments that support the reading development of their African American male students. They should have classroom structures that engage these students, which should include space in the classroom for small group reading instruction, whole group instruction, and cooperative group learning. It was found that effective reading teachers of African American male students valued and saw the importance of professional development.

Although teachers had the greatest impact on positive student outcomes, the campus principal played a vital role in the overall success and culture of the school. The campus principal provides teachers with varied support structures. In order for teachers to be effective reading teachers, it imperative that the campus principal ensures that teachers have resources and materials to include classroom libraries. In the classes observed, all the teachers had classroom libraries. However, if the sole responsibility of having a classroom library is contingent on the teachers, the students' access to books can be limited. The school librarian can support reading instruction and the development of African American male students' reading by ensuring that the library has books that African American male students have access to books that engage them and have a positive reflection of them.

In conclusion, the findings highlighted in this study can impact how school districts can plan professional development for their teachers regarding culturally relevant teaching practices. Additionally, this study can support the ongoing efforts to improve the educational outcomes for African American male students.

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APPENDIX A:
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS- GENERAL QUESTIONS

Can you share what your general philosophy of reading instruction is? Example needed.

How many years have you been in education?

What type of teacher preparation program did you go through?

What is your current assignment?

How many years have you been in your current position?

How many years have you been in your district?

What grades have you taught previously?

What educational positions have you previously held?

What is your highest degree earned?

Have you received any training regarding teaching students from diverse backgrounds in your district? If yes, what type of trainings?

What are the different types of professional development does your school district offer?

Is there a type of training that you would like to receive? If so, please list.

APPENDIX B:
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS- CAMPUS ADMINISTRATION

What experience have you had with working with students from diverse backgrounds?

What do you perceive to be the biggest challenge in motivating male students to read?

What role does administration play in promoting reading?

What role does campus administration play in developing the reading skills of African American male students?

What staff development and/or training do your classroom teachers receive on reading instruction?

Explain how the school engages parents in literary?

What staff development and/or training do classroom teachers receive on culturally relevant teaching practices?

What type of school-wide incentives, if any, are used to motivate African-American males to read? Can you provide examples to substantiate your description?

What role do you perceive culture plays in effectively teaching African American male students?

How would you characterize the culture in this school? District? Classroom?

APPENDIX C:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS- CLASSROOM TEACHER

Can you share what your general philosophy of reading instruction is? Please, explain and give some examples.

Can you provide some examples of the types of things you do in your class to develop your students' reading skills?

What types of reading programs/approaches does your district use?

What are the major components of this reading approach?

What experience have you had with working with students from diverse backgrounds?

Have you had any specific training in this area? What type of professional development have you had?

What do you perceive to be the biggest challenge in motivating male students to read?

What is your definition of an effective reading teacher?

What do you perceive to be the most effective practices in promoting reading?

What resources are available for reading teachers in your school district and on your campus?

What role does the curriculum play in meeting the needs of African-American male students?

What are the reading needs of African-American male students, and how do they differ, if any from other students?

What instructional practices are effective in engaging African-American male students in reading?

How many of your African American children attended public school pre-k, Head Start or other types of preschool programs?

Can you give me an example of an African American male student who is doing well in the area of reading? What do you attribute this student's success to?

Can you give me an example of an African American male student who is engaged and motivated to learn?

What type of school-wide incentives, if any, are used to motivate African-American males to read? Can you provide examples to substantiate your description?

What role do you perceive culture plays in effectively teaching African American male students?

How would you characterize the culture in this school? District? Classroom?

APPENDIX D:
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS- LIBRARIAN

What are your duties as librarian? How often do your classes get to come to the library?
Can you explain the types of interactions you have with teachers, if any, around lesson planning?

How do you plan for library lessons?

What experience have you had with working with students from diverse backgrounds?

What role does the school librarian play in promoting reading?

What role does the school librarian play in developing the reading skills of African American male students?

What books do African American male students checkout most often?
What role do you perceive culture plays in effectively teaching African American male students?

What is the process for selecting books for the school library?

Do you have many books in your library?

What is your perception of the library collection of books that highlight positive African American role models? Can you name any titles?

What type of school-wide incentives, if any, are used to motivate African-American males to read? Can you provide examples to substantiate your description?

Are there any special programs that you are in charge of regarding promoting reading in the school and/or the community?

Tell me about the libraries in the school community and the resources they offer?

Do you get a sense that the libraries are utilized by the students, particularly the African American students in your school? Please explain?

How would you characterize the culture in this school? District? Classroom?

APPENDIX E:
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS- CAMPUS READING SPECIALIST

What is your personal philosophy about reading development and engagement?

Describe your role and responsibilities?

What do you perceive to be the most important part of your job?

What experience have you had with working with students from diverse backgrounds?

How do you support students' reading development on your campus?

What do you perceive to be the most effective practices in promoting reading development?

How do you support reading teachers on your campus? Can you provide some specific examples?

When you work with teachers, what are some of the greatest challenges you see them face? How do you go about helping them in these areas?

Can you think of one teacher who is being very effective in his/her reading instruction? Please describe what he/she does in the classroom with the students.

What assessment tools do you use to assist teachers with identifying literacy gaps in their students?

What type of school-wide incentives, if any, are used to motivate African-American males to read? Can you provide examples to substantiate your description?

What challenges, if any, do you feel students of today face in growing in their reading development?

What challenges, if any, do you feel African American male students face in growing in their reading development?

How would you characterize the culture in this school? District? Classroom?

APPENDIX F:

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are being asked to participate in the research project described below. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate, or you may decide to stop your participation at any time. Should you refuse to participate in the study or should you withdraw your consent and stop participation in the study, your decision will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be otherwise entitled. You are being asked to read the information below carefully, and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

Title: Perceptions of Factors that Contribute to the Successful Development of Young African American Male Students

Principal Student Investigator(s): Yvette Sylvan

Faculty Sponsor: Rebecca Huss-Keeler

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to determine the factors as perceived by the district reading strategists, campus administrators, reading teachers, librarian, and the reading specialists that contribute to the reading development of African American male students in PK-3rd grade.

PROCEDURES

The following procedures will be followed during the research study:

Each participant will be interviewed 30-45 minutes using interview protocols designed to illicit responses that provide insight to the researcher. Each interview will be audio-taped and transcribed. After the transcription of each interview, the data will be used for the study. The researcher will observe in each reading teachers' classroom for 20 minutes where a reading classroom observation checklist will be used to capture how the classroom is structured for the reading development of the African American male students. Field notes will be kept by the researcher to document what has been observed in each reading classroom along with general information captured during the research.

EXPECTED DURATION

The total anticipated time commitment will be approximately 30-45 minutes for each participant's interview and one 20-minute observation in each reading teachers' classroom.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

There are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this project.

BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT

There is no direct benefit received from your participation in this study, but your participation will help the investigator(s) better understand factors that contribute to the reading development of African American male students.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your study records. The data collected from the study will be used for educational and publication purposes, however, you will not be identified by name. For federal audit purposes, the participant's documentation for this research project will be maintained and safeguarded by the student researcher for a minimum of three years after completion of the study. After that time, the participant's documentation may be destroyed.

FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

There is no financial compensation to be offered for participation in the study.

INVESTIGATOR'S RIGHT TO WITHDRAW PARTICIPANT

The investigator has the right to withdraw you from this study at any time.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

The investigator has offered to answer all your questions. If you have additional questions during the course of this study about the research or any related problem, you may contact the Student Researcher, Yvette Sylvan, at phone number 713-876-9094 or by email at ysylvan@aol.com. The Faculty Sponsor Rebecca Huss-Keeler, Ph.D., may be contacted at phone number 281-286-6271 or by email at huss@uhcl.edu.

SIGNATURES:

Your signature below acknowledges your voluntary participation in this research project. Such participation does not release the investigator(s), institution(s), sponsor(s) or granting agency(ies) from their professional and ethical responsibility to you. By signing the form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

The purpose of this study, procedures to be followed, and explanation of risks or benefits have been explained to you. You have been allowed to ask questions and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You have been told who to contact if you have additional questions. You have read this consent form and voluntarily agree to participate as a subject in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time by contacting the Principal Investigator or Student Researcher/Faculty Sponsor. You will be given a copy of the consent form you have signed.

Subject's printed

name: _____

Signature of Subject: _____

Date: _____

Using language that is understandable and appropriate, I have discussed this project and the items listed above with the subject.

Printed name and title _____

Signature of Person Obtaining _____

Consent: _____

Date: _____

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS HAS REVIEWED AND APPROVED THIS PROJECT. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UHCL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (281-283-3015). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT UHCL ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. (FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE # FWA00004068)

APPENDIX G:

CPHS FORM



COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

Faculty/Sponsor Application for Investigation Involving Human Subjects
2700 Bay Area Blvd. 281.283.3015 FAX 281.283.2143
Houston, TX 77058-1098 uhcl.edu/research

DATE: July 28, 2017

TITLE: Perceptions of Factors that Contribute to the Successful Development of Young African American Male Students

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S): _____

STUDENT RESEARCHER(S): Yvette Sylvan

FACULTY SPONSOR: Dr. Huss-Keeler

PROPOSED PROJECT END DATE: November 2017

How will this project be funded: Unfunded

If grant, this project is: Pending Funded – Federal Funded – Other

Grant title and/or contract number (if available): _____

All applicants are to review and understand the responsibilities for abiding by provisions stated in the UHCL's Federal-wide Assurance (FWA 00004068), approved by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) on March 9, 2004: (a) The Belmont Report provides ethical principles to follow in human subject research; and (b) Federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and all of its subparts A, B, C, and D are the minimum standards applied to all of UHCL's human subject research.

See <http://www.uhcl.edu/research> -- Protection of Human Subjects, Federal-wide Assurance.

For questions, contact the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) at 281-283-3015 or sponsoredprograms@uhcl.edu

Principal Investigator (PI) / Faculty Sponsor (FS) Responsibilities Regarding Research on Human Subjects:

- PI / FS acknowledges reviewing UHCL's FWA (Federal-wide Assurance) approved by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP). PI / FS understands the responsibilities for abiding by provisions of the Assurance.
- The PI / FS cannot initiate **any** contact with human subjects until final approval is given by CPHS.

- Additions, changes or issues relating to the use of human subjects after the project has begun must be submitted for CPHS review as an amendment and approved **PRIOR** to implementing the change.
- If the study continues for a period longer than one year, a continuing review must be submitted **PRIOR** to the anniversary date of the studies approval date.
- PI / FS asserts that information contained in this application for human subjects' assessment is complete, true and accurate.
- PI / FS agrees to provide adequate supervision to ensure that the rights and welfare of human subjects are properly maintained.
- Faculty Sponsors are responsible for student research conducted under their supervision. Faculty Sponsors are to retain research data and informed consent forms for three years after project ends.
- PI / FS acknowledges the responsibility to secure the informed consent of the subjects by explaining the procedures, in so far as possible, and by describing the risks and potential benefits of the project.
- PI / FS assures CPHS that all procedures performed in this project will be conducted in accordance with all federal regulations and university policies which govern research with human subjects.

A. DATA COLLECTION DATES:

1. From: September 2017
2. To: November 2017
3. Project End Date: November 2017

B. HUMAN SUBJECTS DESCRIPTION:

1. Age range: 22-60
2. Approx. number: 21
3. % Male: 0-2%
4. % Female: 98-100%

C. PROJECT SUMMARY:

Complete application using commonly understood terminology.

1. Background and Significance

Provide a **CONCISE** rationale for this project, based on current literature, information, or data. Include references as appropriate.

With only 14 percent of African American male fourth graders and eighth graders reading at or above the proficient level, it seems unlikely that some these students will possess the skills needed to compete

with their White counterparts (National Association for Educational Progress (NAEP), 2011). It is essential that we identify factors that promote academic achievement among African American males, especially at the elementary level. Tatum and Muhammad (2012) argue that the traditional methods used to improve the reading achievement of African American male students have done little to improve the reading skills in these students. In order for African American students, especially African American male students to become successful readers, effective approaches to reading development must be implemented in the early grades. Tatum and Muhammad (2012) also found teachers to play an important role in addressing this dilemma.

The significance of this research study may contribute to changes to the instructional practices of reading teachers that will promote the reaching achievement of African American male students in prekindergarten through second grade classrooms. This qualitative study will explore characteristics of teachers and other stakeholders of African American male students in one elementary school and how their attitudes and perceptions translate into promoting the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. This research study may also provide various stakeholders with ways that they can structure the school environment to engage parents in the literacy development of their African American male students.

2. Specific Aims

Purpose, Hypotheses/Research Questions, Goals of the Project. **BRIEFLY** describe the purpose and goals of the project (include hypotheses or research questions to be addressed and the specific objectives or aims of the project.

Describe or define terms or methods as needed for CPHS reviewer's understanding.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the perceptions of different stakeholders regarding the factors that contribute to the successful reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. According to Wagner (2009), students leaving high school today are expected to have the necessary skills to survive in a global society and because of this there can be serious implications for African American males who cannot read. These students face life-long

struggles that can result in being at risk for dropping out of high school, having limited employment opportunities, and living in poverty.

During the study, the researcher will explore instructional reading practices that will have the potential to prepare African American male students to become successful readers. By exploring the perceptions of different stakeholders about successful practices that promote reading development in African American male students, other educators will be provided with a blueprint on how they can engage African American male students in developing, improving and enhancing their reading skills. A qualitative case study of an elementary school will be conducted in order to identify instructional strategies that different stakeholders perceived to contribute the reading outcome for African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade. This study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What are some instructional practices that administrators perceive to contribute to the reading development of African American males in prekindergarten through third grade?

RQ2: What are some instructional practices that teachers perceive to contribute to the reading development of African American males in prekindergarten through third grade?

RQ3: In what ways, if any do, administrators perceive teachers' attitudes and personal beliefs contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

RQ4: How do teachers perceive their attitudes and personal beliefs to contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

RQ5: How do the perceptions of other school personnel such as librarians, reading specialists and district reading strategists contribute to the reading development of African American male students in prekindergarten through third grade?

Definition of Terms

Achievement Gap -The differences between test scores of minority and or low-income students and the test scores of their White counterparts (National Education Association).

African American males - A male member of a racial/ethnic group as defined by Webster dictionary.

At-risk students - A student who is at-risk of dropping out of school based certain criteria established by the state (Texas Education Agency, 2015).

Balanced Literacy Program – The five foundational elements of reading; phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development and comprehension, are incorporated into an instructional approach that provides teacher support until the student is able to independently apply reading skills. The goal of the teacher is to support reading development through a variety of structures, such as whole group and small group (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Cultural Responsive Teaching - Instructional practices that take into account the students' unique, cultural strengths are identified and developed to promote student achievement (Lynch, 2010).

Effective Schools - Having a climate and culture of high academic expectation, effective administration support, and a shared mission (Sherblom, Marshall & Sherblom, 2006).

Effective Teachers - Educators who possess a strong content knowledge, collaborate with other teachers to promote student achievement, employ various structures and strategies to meet the diverse needs of their students who have high expectations for all students as they help them to learn (Varlas, 2009).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001: A federal mandate ensuring that all children have a fair, equal and opportunity to receive a high-quality education and reach, at least a proficient level of state assessments (United States Department of Education, 2001).

3. Research Method, Design and Procedures

(A) Provide an overview of research methodology and design; e.g., how the data are to be collected, analyzed, and interpreted.

(B) Provide step-by-step description of procedures and how they are to be applied. Procedures are to begin from CPHS approval and end when data compiled and results reported. Possible information to include: What are participants asked to do? When and where are they to participate? How long will it take to participate? Describe type of research information gathered from participants, i.e., data being collected.

Note that ethical responsibility of researcher to participant does not end until participant's information has been destroyed. Research documentation cannot be destroyed for up to three years after completion of a study.

The researcher will employ the qualitative case study approach for the study. According to Crewell (1998), a case study is a “bounded system” bounded by time (eight to twelve weeks of data collection for this study) and a place (a single campus). The researcher will select the case study approach because it will allow the researcher to gain understanding of complex issues situated in a real-world setting (Yin, 2009). The data will be collected by conducting interviews, observations, and collecting documents.

The data from the interviews, observations, and documents will be triangulated. A constant comparative approach will be used to compare the participants' responses until all information has been extracted from the responses.

The researcher will gain approval from the University of Houston-Clear Lake Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) and RISD Institutional Review Board (IRB). Before the study, informed consent will be obtained from each participant. Once informed consent has been gained, the participants will be interviewed for about 30-45 minutes one time. The classroom reading teachers will be asked not only be interviewed but will be asked by the researcher to observe in their classroom one time for about 20 one time.

4. Instruments for Research with Human Subject

Indicate instruments to be used.

(A) Submit copies electronically, if possible.

(B) Submit copy of copyrighted questionnaire for CPHS review. Copy kept on file by CPHS.

(C) Examples of instruments are as follows: (1) Educational Tests, (2) Questionnaires/Surveys, (3) Psychological Tests, (4) Educational Materials, i.e., curriculum, books, etc., (5) Interview or Phone Script, or (6) human subjects recruitment advertisements.

The researcher used the following interview protocols where there was no copyright permission needed. The researcher also used a reading observation checklist with was modified by the researcher.

5. Human Subject Source and Selection Criteria

Describe the procedures for the recruitment of the participants. Indicate when human subject involvement is expected to begin and end in this project. Example information to include:

(A) Characteristics of subject population, such as anticipated number, age, sex, ethnic background, and state of health.

(B) Where and how participants are drawn for subject selection criteria. Coercion or undue influence needs to be considered and eliminated.

(C) How ensuring equitable subject selection.

(D) If applicable, criteria for inclusion and/or exclusion and provide rationale.

(E) Children are classified as a vulnerable population. See Subpart D, §46.401, of federal guidelines for additional safeguards aimed to protect the rights and welfare of these subjects.

The district level participants will be selected for this study based on their knowledge and understanding about practices that can be employed at the campus level to engage African American male students in reading at the elementary level. The age range of the subjects will be between 25-55 years of age. The anticipated racial make-up of each is African American, Caucasian, and Asian Americans. The subjects in this study will be drawn from a large school district and an elementary school with the district. The researcher will use purposive sampling, where there will be 12-15

elementary reading teachers, one elementary principal along with her two assistant principals, the school librarian, and the campus reading specialist selected to participate in the study.
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6. Informed Consent

For more details, see “Federal & University Guidelines” document, “Informed Consent” section.

(A) Describe procedure for obtaining informed consent.

(B) Use language that is appropriate for age or understandability of subjects.

(C) Attach informed consent page.

(D) If applicable, attach the following documents for review: (1) Parental permission form for participation of minors (under 18 years of age). (2) Assent form for children between ages 7 and 17: (2a) ages 12-17 must sign assent form; (2b) ages 7-11 must have witness sign attesting to child’s positive assent.

(E) **Request CPHS waiver for documentation of informed consent, if appropriate.** Justification is required. See “Federal & University Guidelines.”

See attached

7. Confidentiality

Describe how data will be safeguarded: (a) how confidentiality maintained; use of personal identifiers or coded data; (b) how data collected and recorded; (c) how data stored during project; (d) who has access to data or participant’s identifiers; (e) who is to receive data, if applicable; (f) what happens to data after research is completed.

Note that research documentation, including signed informed consent forms, are safeguarded for three years after completion of study for federal audit purposes. Faculty sponsors are responsible for safeguarding research documentation completed by students.

To safe guard the identity of each participant, they will each be assigned a code and given a pseudonym. The participants in the study will be provided with a written and verbal description on their voluntary participation in the study. Information of the potential risks associated with their	
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participation will be shared with them by the researcher. Any information about the participants will be kept confidential. Each interview will be audio-recorded and then transcribed. Field notes of all data collected during the interviews and the classroom observations. At the conclusion of the study, all data collected will be stored in a locked file cabinet at the researcher's office for five years and then destroyed.

8. Research Benefits

Describe any anticipated benefits to subjects as well as reasonably expected general results.

- The anticipated benefits to the district and the school is learn how to better develop their African American male students' reading.
- The district and the school can provide the teachers with professional development on how to successfully meet the needs of their African American male students as it pertains to reading.
- The district and the school can gain a better understanding on the resources, books, and materials that may successfully develop reading in their African American male students.

9. Risks

Describe any foreseeable risks to the subjects, whether physical injury, psychological injury, loss of confidentiality, social harm, etc., involved in the conduct of the research. Explain precautions taken to minimize these risks. If there are any foreseeable risks, provide contact information of organization(s) for professional treatment.

There are not foreseeable risks associated with this study, whether physical injury, psychological injury, loss of confidentiality, social harm, etc.

10. Other Sites or Agencies Involved in Research Project

Indicate specific site if not UHCL, e.g., school districts or school, clinics.

(A) Obtain written approval from institution. Approval should be signed and on institution's letterhead. Other proof of documentation may be reviewed for acceptance by CPHS.

(B) Institution should include the following information: (B1) institution's knowledge of study being conducted on its site; (B2) statement about what research study involves; (B3) outline specific procedures to be conducted at site; and (B4) identify type of instrument(s) used to collect data and duration needed to complete instruments; (B5) statement that identities of institution and participants will be kept confidential; (B6) institution's permission granting the use of its facilities or resources; and (B7) include copy of Informed Consent document(s) to be used in recruiting volunteers from the institution.

(C) If at all possible, electronic copies of letter or other documentation are to be submitted with CPHS application.

(D) If letters are not available at time of CPHS review, approval will be contingent upon their receipt.

The research study will be conducted on an elementary campus in Alief Independent School District.