

Copyright
by
Alexandria D. Harrison
2023

FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXAMINING
BLACK BOYS' RELATIONSHIP WITH READING IN GRADES 3-5

by

Alexandria D. Harrison

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The University of Houston-Clear Lake
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements
For the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in Educational Leadership

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE

MAY, 2023

FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXAMINING BLACK
BOYS' RELATIONSHIP WITH READING IN GRADES 3-5

by

Alexandria D. Harrison

APPROVED BY

Jennifer Grace, PhD, Chair

Michelle Peters, EdD, Committee Member

Roberta Raymond, EdD, Committee Member

Heather Pule, EdD, Committee Member

RECEIVED/APPROVED BY THE COLLEGE OF COLLEGE OF EDUCATION:

Terry L. Shepherd, EdD, Associate Dean

Joan Y. Pedro, PhD, Dean

Dedication

I'd like to dedicate my dissertation to my family, especially my mommy. I'd totally be lost without you! Thank you for everything!

Acknowledgements

Without a doubt, this is the hardest thing that I have done in my life thus far. Being in a doctoral program, while working full time, and mostly during a global pandemic was wild to say the least. I am so thankful it is over, but I enjoyed the journey more than I will ever care to admit.

First, I would like to thank my mommy. During this process, she has always been there for *whatever* need I had. Thank you for making sure that I always had food, helping me maintain order in my dwelling, and being my substitute when I needed a day off to catch up. There is no way I will ever be able to repay you for the blessings you have sown into me!

I would also like to thank the rest of my family. My dad, aunt, and cousin. Thank you for your words of encouragement, also making sure I had food, and listening to me complain when I needed a moment to vent. Even though they are unable to read, I would like to extend thanks to my dogs for always spoiling me with their cuddles and kisses.

To Cohort Five: you all are amazing individuals, and I am a better person because I have met you all. I look up to each one of you in more ways than one. Thank you for your encouragement, words of support, and for always motivating me to believe in myself outside of my comfort zone. I love y'all!

Thank you to my coworkers for helping me stay sane through the stress. Thank you for also making sure I had food to eat. Thanks for allowing me the space to vent and for your love and support.

I am exceptionally thankful to my friends. Although I am sure Dr. Grace would have appreciated if I had cut my social life out, I could not miss the bachelorette party or milestone birthdays. Thank you for making sure I had a solid balance between school and social activities.

During the pandemic, when we first began the doctoral program, I picked up the habit of attending F45 regularly. No matter what, that workout was the most difficult part of my day because it challenged me mentally and physically. I am thankful for my coaches who pushed me and showed me that I could do hard things. Thanks for making me lift heavy!

The University of Houston – Clear Lake has the best professors that I have ever encountered. Throughout the entire program, all our professors provided endless words of praise and unceasing guidance. First, I would like to thank Dr. Grace for continuously supporting me. Without your support, I just might have quit! I am endlessly grateful that you guided me into being part of the 4% of Black women that have a doctorate. Thank you for leading the way. Your work and accomplishments will always be an inspiration.

I would like to thank Dr. Raymond for encouraging me to apply for things aligned to my strengths. Thank you for the book recommendations, allowing me to borrow your magazines, and for the quality conversations about reading. Dr. Peters, I still might not like math, but I like it a little more now because of you. Thank you for your patience. Thank you for also ensuring that we ended our semester on a high note with the doctoral dinners. Dr. Pule, thank you for encouraging me to do things outside of my comfort zone. I appreciate you for encouraging me to continue writing and to strive to be published.

ABSTRACT

FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXAMINING BLACK BOYS' RELATIONSHIP WITH READING IN GRADES 3-5

Alexandria D. Harrison
University of Houston-Clear Lake, 2023

Dissertation Chair: Jennifer Grace, Ph.D.

The purpose of this study was to examine the reading experiences of Black boys in grades three through five, gain insight into what they felt contributed to their reading success, explore the relationships that influenced their reading lives, the challenges they faced, and their perspectives of the relationship they had with their reading teacher. A purposeful sample of 3rd-5th grade students who identified as Black boys from an elementary school located within a large suburban school district in the Southeast region of Texas were chosen to participate in interviews. This study used the grounded theory analysis approach (Saldana, 2016). An analysis of the interviews revealed that the Black boys had mostly positive experiences within their reading classrooms. The participants in this study mostly felt that they had positive relationships with their reading teachers. They found that support from their teachers, parents, and school administrators contributed to their reading achievement, while comprehension and unknown advanced vocabulary hindered them from feeling successful in reading.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	x
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Research Problem	3
Significance of the Study	9
Research Purpose and Questions	10
Definitions of Key Terms	10
Conclusion	11
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	13
Reading Achievement.....	13
Culturally Relevant Literacy Instruction	13
Perceptions of Black Boys and Reading	20
Socioeconomic Status	24
Black Boys' Self-Perceptions	28
The School-to-Prison Pipeline	31
Summary of Findings.....	34
Theoretical Framework.....	35
Conclusion	38
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	39
Overview of the Research Problem	40
Research Purpose and Questions	41
Research Design.....	41
Participant Selection and Sample.....	42
Data Collection Procedures.....	45
Data Analysis	47
Qualitative Validity.....	48
Privacy and Ethical Considerations	49
Researcher Positionality.....	50
Research Design Limitations	52
Conclusion	52
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS.....	54
Research Design.....	55
Setting	55
Description of the Participants	58
Data Analysis	61
Emerging Themes	62
Research Question 1	63

Self-Perceptions	63
Being a Black Boy	76
Preferences	81
Experiences in the Reading Classroom.....	91
Research Question 2	102
Reading Habits.....	102
Research Question 3	110
Support.....	110
Research Question 4	116
Barriers to Feeling Successful in Reading	116
Summary of Findings.....	120
 CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS.....	 122
Introduction.....	122
Discussion of Findings.....	122
Relation to Theoretical Framework	125
Connection to Literature	127
Implications for Practice	130
Implications for Future Research.....	132
Summary and Conclusion.....	134
 REFERENCES	 135
 APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT LETTER	 158

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 District Student Demographic Data43
Table 3.2 Student Demographics of Campus.....44
Table 4.1 District Student Demographic Data56
Table 4.2 Student Demographics of Campus.....58

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Reading is an essential foundational skill that is necessary to survive in society; it is woven into all facets of educational material that students interact with and helps students to ascertain the world where they live (Walls, 2022). If a student believes they are proficient in reading, then they will be more likely to be engaged with the material and continue to have affirmative interactions with the subject; however, if a student believes that they struggle with reading, then they might not have experienced success (Stanovich, 1986). The acquisition of early reading and reading proficiencies in children are correlated to learning later in life and success in school (Vernon-Feagans, et al., 2018). Early reading abilities in students in the United States are measured by learning standards, grades, reading levels, and standardized tests, with an added accentuation on school readiness (Halladay, 2012; Johnson, 2022; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2001; Washington, 2001;).

Boys can reject the practice of reading if it does not relate to their interests and needs (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). Given that it is difficult to locate positive portrayals of Black males as readers, it can also negatively influence the way that Black boys perceive their own relationship with reading (Tatum, 2005). The lack of positive portrayals can alter the way that teachers see the link between Black boys and reading. Research has elucidated that the hardships Black boys encounter with academics at school are the results of social and cultural circumstances, which leads to others treating them as disposable and subject to disproportionate discipline practices; this positions Black boys outside of the school's caring realm and puts them on track towards experiencing less educational successes (Brooms & Wint, 2021; Brooms, 2020; Bryan, 2017; Howard, 2008; Rogers & Way, 2015). The damaging effects of school suspensions are also

paramount for Black boys (Bacher-Hicks, 2020). Exclusionary school discipline practices, like out-of-school suspension and expulsions, administered to Black boys is a systemic problem in schools in the U.S. and it can impact the way they view school (Larson et al., 2019).

Ferguson (2000) challenged that Black boys’ “transgressions are made to take on a sinister, intentional, fully conscious tone that is stripped of any element of childish naivete,” which “adultifies” them and robs them of essential empathy (p. 83). Experiences like these cultivate detrimental memories that sabotage Black boys’ personal and academic successes and place them under the unreasonable disciplinary gaze of educators (Little & Tolbert, 2018). According to Tatum (2005), it is believed that the way Black boys are treated in society is how they are treated in the education system. Therefore, Black boys will react to school based on their viewpoint of how they are treated in school and how school will help them in the future (Tatum, 2005). Some Black boys might exert nonchalance in their feelings towards school and their education, however, this portrayal could be a facade, not an indication of their true feelings, and merely a characteristic of their environment (Allen & Boykin, 1992; Gardner et al., 2014). Nevertheless, if Black boys believe the idea that school does not hold value, that idea can be exacerbated if reading instruction is unresponsive to the needs that Black boys have, and if the functions and connections of reading to their lives outside of school are not made.

The Black Star Project published data that yielded only 10 percent of eighth-grade Black boys in the U.S. were deemed as “proficient” in reading (Lynch, 2015). During the 2019-2020 school year in Texas, Black students had the highest dropout rate in grades 7-12, with male students maintaining a higher dropout rate than female students (TEA, 2021). Urban schools are more likely to be inadequately supplied with resources, be

employed by teachers who have less experience, and disproportionately more likely to be attended by Black students (Cooper & Jordan, 2003; Council, 2016; O'Connor et al., 2009). If Black boys will be subjected to more urban schools with less adequate staff, and standardized testing determining their abilities, yet penalized later in life for not progressing in their reading development, then the curriculum that they are being taught deserves to be examined more carefully (Tatum, 2005). When examining statistics, Black boys have the lowest assessment scores, abysmal grades, and the largest dropout rate in K-12 schools (Lynch, 2015). Hardships with reading and writing also position Black boys more at risk for troublesome behaviors, especially if they are from urban low-income areas (Swanson et al., 2003).

There is a critical need to examine Black boys' perspectives about their experiences with reading. The purpose of this study was to examine the reading experiences of Black boys in grades three through five, gain insight into what they felt contributed to their reading success, explore the relationships that influenced their reading lives, the challenges they faced, and their perspectives of the relationship they had with their reading teacher. This chapter will detail the research problem in the study, the significance of the study, the research problem and questions, and explain definitions of key terms.

Research Problem

In 1963, G. Walker, designated the term achievement gap to describe desegregation and the educational gap that existed between Black and White students (Walker, 1963). The achievement gap focuses on student achievement from a deficit lens or one that puts the blame on the victim for the situation that they are in (Davis & Museus, 2019). This deficit thinking does not account for the systemic inequities and structural barriers that exist in society, especially in education (Venzant Chambers &

Spikes, 2016). The achievement gap only focuses on student achievement, but it does not account for the systemic barriers that are plaguing Black children from low-socioeconomic statuses, like school funding (Ladson-Billings, 2007).

Ladson-Billings (2006) contended for the need to examine “education debt” which is described as an accumulation of centuries of Black students being denied access to resources like education and employment, exacerbated by increased poverty rates and school inequalities. She further argues that by not confronting the amassed educational debt owed to Black students, they will continue to be left behind. To encompass the disparities in academic performance between Black students and other demographic groups, the opportunity gap, a change in semantics with larger repercussions in understanding more about the obstacles these children face, emerged (Mooney, 2018). The opportunity gap focuses more on the inequitable system that does not offer all students the opportunities needed to flourish and succeed (Mooney, 2018). For example, Black students who attend schools that are systematically underfunded are regularly subjected to lower expectations and deficit thinking (Parker, 2022). Students who are not equipped with quality instruction from effective teachers might stop taking part in the learning process and drop out of school (Beard, 2018). Opportunity gaps disproportionately and harmfully impact Black students, especially those who are from low-income areas (Anderson et al., 2021).

The process of teaching reading should assist all students as they venture through school and beyond, including Black boys, however, this is not what has occurred (Tatum & Muhammad, 2012). During their early adolescent years, impoverished Black boys become cognizant of the differences between their lives and how others live in society (Tatum, 2005). Also, during this adolescent shift, Black boys begin to formulate their identities, define ideas about the world, and how they situate themselves within it (Tatum,

2005). Like all children, Black children are born with the aptitude to learn but need experiences to develop their potential (Bowman et al., 2018). When Black boys are denied opportunities to explore their innate curiosity, identity, and sense of belonging, they are subjected to learning in a dehumanizing environment that devalues their existence and that also views them as a problem (Little & Tolbert, 2018). As Black boys advance in their academic careers, they can begin to feel disconnected from school-based literature and reading practices because they do not transcend sociocultural parameters (Johnson, 2019). Most books used in reading or English classes are from a Eurocentric perspective, which makes it difficult for Black boys to make connections with the characters they are reading about (Piper, 2015). Students should not only be taught how to read, but they should also be instilled with a love for reading through the opportunities they have to connect with books that reflect their identities and teach them more about themselves (Hale, 1982, 2004; Tatum, 2009).

The lack of connection paired with the absence of Black culture in school reading materials leaves Black boys unengaged with the traditional school curriculum (Piper, 2015). Bryan, et. al, 2011, found that in English classes, Black students were 71% more likely than their White classmates to receive a discipline referral to the counselor, with Black boys being three times more likely than Black girls to be referred to the counselor due to disrupting their English classes. Harsher discipline measuring and unrelated reading approaches that do not develop Black boys' agency and identity as readers can vastly and negatively impact their perception of school and the purpose that it serves (Johnson, 2019; Larson et al., 2019).

Low-achieving schools are often staffed with inexperienced and underprepared teachers who lack the ability to meet their students' reading needs, especially impoverished Black boys (Tatum, 2005). Even teachers who possess a prominent

foundational knowledge in teaching reading still endure difficulties with teaching Black boys who attend schools in high-poverty areas (Tatum, 2008). Additionally, teachers can have low expectations about their Black boy students' abilities to achieve high academic standards (Tatum, 2005). In some instances, educators refer Black boys for special education classes, which can result in a misguided educational placement and undereducation. In 2016, Black boys accounted for 9% of the population in America, however, they constituted most students receiving special education services (Lynch, 2016).

Furthermore, there is an overrepresentation of Black students needing special education services and support, and an underrepresentation of Black students, especially Black boys, in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Gifted and Talented programs (Losen, 2015; Shores et al., 2019; Skiba et al., 2011). During the 2015-2016 school year, the Department of Education's Civil Rights data collection determined that Black students were underrepresented in AP courses and that they were less likely to enroll in an AP course when compared with their White peers (Shores, 2019). White students are also 1.7 times more likely to be identified as Gifted and Talented (Shores, 2019). GT programs can improve students' test scores in reading, math, and science, especially in minority students; but systemic forces and teacher factors regarding race and class in the U.S. are negatively impactful to the representation of Black students in gifted education (Bui et al., 2014; Card & Giuliano, 2014; Shores, 2019).

An overrepresentation of Black boys in special education could mean that these students are less likely to receive a more rigorous curriculum and are less likely to be prepared for college courses (Shores, 2019). Enrollment and utilization of AP tests determine students' readiness for college. Scores on AP tests measure and indicate

students' college coursework readiness and can offer students the chance to receive college course credit. By participating in an AP course, students are exposed to more qualified and motivated teachers, and their probability of attending a 4-year university increases also (Shores, 2019). Increasing reading, reading development, and overall academic achievement in America's Black boys can offer them a greater chance of receiving the good that America has to offer (Tatum, 2005).

The Stanford Center for Education Policy Analysis (2019) reports that when compared, the educational opportunity gap between Black students and White students is monumental. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (2020), which serves as the governing agency office, providing citizens with the National Report Card, determined that 82% of Black fourth graders scored below proficient reading level in the U.S. in 2019. Missing three days of school prior to taking the NAEP equated to fourth graders scoring a grade level lower for the reading portion of the test (Losen et al., 2015). The National Assessment of Adult Literacy reported that two-thirds of students who are unable to skillfully read by the end of their fourth grade year will either be in jail or be placed on welfare (Governor's Early Literacy Foundation, 2020). Furthermore, annual data the U.S. Department of Education publishes indicates an overrepresentation of Black students being suspended and expelled. (Brey et al., 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Compared to their peers of other races and ethnicities, Black students missed the largest number and percentage of days due to out-of-school suspensions in the 2015-2016 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). As a result, students who are out of school due to exclusionary discipline practices have diminished opportunities to learn academic content and socially appropriate behaviors (Christle et al., 2007).

Findings have concluded that suspensions and expulsions do not yield an improvement in students' behavior or an increase in school safety; however, data yielded

that these punishments have demonstrated ineffectiveness, especially for historically disadvantaged groups, like Black males (Skiba & Losen, 2015). When examining the opportunity gap that exists, factors such as curriculum and teachers' perceptions should also be considered. Additionally, curriculum with an inherent Eurocentric focus that is unrelatable, coupled with discipline disparities resulting in a greater number of suspensions and expulsions for minor infractions than peers of other races, has led to a decrease in reading achievement for Black boys and an increase in the school-to-prison pipeline (Piper, 2015).

Teachers' biases and perceptions of Black boys as oppositional, intimidating, and less academically capable than White boys can impact the way that Black boys view themselves (Jenkins, 2018). Moreover, teachers' thoughts of Black boys are consistent with systematically negative portrayals seen on the news and the entertainment industry, which can exacerbate stereotypes (Dixson, 2008). Given that it is difficult to locate positive portrayals of Black male readers in the media, the way that Black boys view their relationship with reading can be negatively affected, as can the way that teachers view Black boys as readers also (Tatum, 2005). Teachers' classroom management styles can also contribute to discipline disparities (Skiba et al., 2011). Harsher punishments in the form of suspensions and expulsions occur because of the lack of knowledge and expertise on how to deal with unwanted behaviors in the classroom. The lack of support and tools to address these behaviors leads to a greater chance of suspensions (Allen, 2016). In America, most public-school teachers are White, middle-class women, but the students that they educate are from diverse populations, and the amount of minority students is steadily increasing (Staats, 2014). The cultural mismatch that exists between teachers and the students that they educate has the potential for teachers' implicit racial biases to be a

factor, which leads to greater discipline disparities and Black boys missing more instructional time (Staats, 2014).

One goal of this study is to center the narrative on Black boys' experiences with reading and to allow them to express their perspectives in that context. Another goal is to explore the lived experiences of upper elementary Black boys in reading classrooms and to have them share how the intersectionality of identifying as Black and a boy impacts their perspective of reading. Finally, this study advances the literature given the lack of research on Black boys' perceptions of their reading experiences.

Significance of the Study

When Black boys grow up in environments where the Black males that they are around have been intentionally or unintentionally overlooked by the school system, it becomes more difficult to understand the value of school as promising for their future (Tatum, 2005). Black boys can begin to oppose the idea that school holds value, especially when reading instruction fails to be accommodating to their identity and needs (Tatum, 2005). By not attending to the reading needs of Black boys, the school system serves to contribute to the opportunity gap and can place Black boys on the school-to-prison pipeline, a conceptual framework that is utilized to explain how the policies and practices in the educational and criminal justice systems operate in tandem to inordinately place Black boys out of the school system and into the prison system (Dean-Burren, 2017; Grace & Nelson, 2019).

Ford et al. (2015) and Martin (2012) proposed that educational systems should seek an understanding of the distinctive experiences of Black boys environmentally, socially, and interpersonally while being educated at school. This study is significant to Black boys because a more in-depth understanding of the reading obstacles that they face from their perspectives can be gathered. Administrators, teachers, and parents can also

glean how relationships factor into Black boys' feelings towards reading. Another aim of this study is to impart educators with Black boys' perspectives about their reading achievement. Given that there is also scant literature focused on Black boys in reading research in elementary classrooms in the south, this study also serves to fill a gap in the literature.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the reading experiences of Black boys in grades three through five, gain insight into what they felt contributes to their reading success, explore the relationships that influence their reading lives, the challenges they face, and their perspectives of the relationship they have with their reading teacher. This study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do Black boys in grades 3-5 describe their experiences in their reading classrooms?
2. What do Black boys in grades 3-5 perceive as contributing factors to their reading achievement?
3. What relationships, if any, guide the reading practices of Black boys in grades 3-5?
4. What specific challenges do Black boys encounter in grades 3-5 that undermine their academic success in reading?

Definitions of Key Terms

Achievement gaps: Achievement gaps are defined as one group of students (gendered, racially, or ethnically) outperforming another group, yielding a statistical difference (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

Exclusionary discipline: School Discipline Support Initiative (2020) defines exclusionary discipline as school disciplinary practices that remove students from their regular, or normal education setting, which might include suspension or expulsion.

Opportunity gap: The opportunity gap is uncontrollable factors, such as race, language, and economic or family structures that can lead to minimal success rates in educational achievement, career choices, and overall life aspirations (Close the Gap, 2022).

Reading: Reading is defined as a multifaceted process that is composed of word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and motivation. It is also creating and making meaning from words in print to operate in society to meet one's goals and to cultivate knowledge and potential (Leipzig, 2013; National Assessment of Adult Reading, 2003).

Reading achievement: Reading achievement is defined as the portrayal of the levels of reading comprehension across the population of a school (Araujo, 2014).

Reading self-perception: Reading self-perception is defined as the development of how students see themselves as readers, their feelings about reading, and how they cherish the act of reading (Henk et al., 2012).

School-to-prison pipeline: The ACLU (2020) defined the school-to-prison as many students who have learning disabilities, are impoverished, have been abused or neglected, and would benefit from educational and counseling services, but have been pushed out of the public education system and into the criminal justice system.

Conclusion

This chapter provided the framework for the need to explore the narrative accounts of Black boys and their perspectives on reading in upper elementary school. Understanding the perspectives of Black boys is vital because they can describe their experiences, one that challenges the narrative portrayed in society (Kelly, 2017). Chapter

two will offer a discussion of the literature that is relevant to the topic including reading achievement in Black boys, culturally relevant reading instruction, the school-to-prison pipeline, barriers to Black boys' education, perspectives of Black boys in education, and how exclusionary discipline impacts the education of Black boys.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Amongst the backdrop of a racialized climate in the United States that children are growing up in, where police brutality continues, demonstrations by white supremacists are visible, callous, and targeted murders of Black people as they are at school or existing in public spaces are far too common, another major inequity exists (Johnson, 2022). Educational difficulties are a persistent issue that Black boys have faced and continue to grapple with (Stevenson & Ross, 2015). Black boys are also subjected to punitive discipline, remedial education practices, and exclusion from academic conversations (Proffitt, 2022).

Furthermore, Black boys remain the most socially and academically marginalized population within American schools, where the most prominent discourse centers on their underachievement (Johnson, 2017). However, there is a need to ascertain the extensive range of explanations for why Black boys have a lower achievement level than other demographic groups (Husband, 2012). There is also scant literature focused on Black boys in reading research in elementary classrooms in the south (Tatum et al., 2021). The purpose of this study is to examine the reading experiences of Black boys in grades three through five, gain insight into what they feel contributes to their reading success, explore the relationships that influence their reading lives, the challenges they face, and their perspectives of the relationship they have with their reading teacher.

Reading Achievement

Culturally Relevant Literacy Instruction

When Black students begin their educational journey, they arrive with enthusiasm and are overzealous about learning (Kunjufu, 1986). Black boys are motivated, want to please their teachers, and have the capacity to achieve at the rate of their White peers;

however, Black boys' can experience an academic achievement downshift after third grade (Kunjufu, 1985; Kunjufu, 1986; Rumble, 2013). Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings cultivated the concept of culturally relevant instruction (Cartledge et al., 2015). Ladson-Billings contends that culturally relevant teaching methods utilize students' cultures to assist in their assimilation of themselves and others, build interpersonal communication, and conceptualize knowledge (Cartledge et al., 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1992).

If the goal of education is to “empower students to examine critically the society in which they live and work for social change,” then educators must acknowledge Black culture as a powerful tool that students use to make meaning of their schooling experiences (Cartledge et al., 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1992, p. 314). Ladson-Billings also posited that using culturally relevant reading material can garner academic success by offering significant content to students (Cartledge et al., 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Outside factors including structural racism, parents' educational accomplishments, and socioeconomic status can serve as barriers to Black boys' reading achievement (Tatum, 2015). Therefore, the reading material that Black children engage with should reflect the lives that they live and the experiences that they have (Walls, 2022). By providing Black children with reading materials that are reflective of their lives, then their reading acquisition will be better supported. Inequalities in school funding and teachers' implicit biases also pose as obstacles that Black boys must overcome to make academic progress. There is also evidence that a lack of academic achievement can lead to disciplinary issues in schools (Pearman II et al., 2019).

Unanswered questions linger regarding young children's understanding and development of racial knowledge (Johnson, 2022). The study managed by Johnson (2022) decentered whiteness in the conversation about the intersectionality of racial awareness and early childhood reading. The researcher also chose dialogic and storytelling

reading methods as her methodological approach. The goal of the study was to utilize literature circles that centered on the perspectives and stories of Black children. Participants were five first-grade Black students who attended a predominately Black, pre-kindergarten through sixth-grade school situated in an urban, Northeastern city. The data collection consisted of observations of the participants two times a week in their first-grade classrooms, a semi-structured interview was held with a parent from the student's family, and a semi-structured interview was held with the principal and the classroom teacher. Then, 30–45-minute audio-recorded literature circles with the students were orchestrated.

During that time, books that the researcher selected, which focused on Black people, were examined. The topics were directed by the conversations the students had in previous sessions or based on what the researcher thought would best resonate with the group. Data was collected during the literature circles based on what the students knew, how they acquired that information, and the methods of showing their knowledge that resonated with them. The researcher gathered that Black students in early childhood can read books that center on Black people, use their inquiries to guide discussions, and speak about racialized conditions. This study lends itself to combating anti-Blackness in education.

In a study conducted by Kathleen Clark (2017), the influence of culturally relevant instructional texts on Black students' reading achievement was examined. The first of the two studies used a quasi-experimental, control group design to examine whether students who only read culturally relevant texts for instruction would demonstrate reading gain versus those who read texts that were not culturally relevant. The second study utilized archived data and used a matched pair design to associate the

reading gain of students from the first study's sole use of culturally relevant teaching texts would demonstrate gains in their reading versus those who read them sporadically.

The results of this study yielded that the students who exclusively read culturally relevant texts greatly outperformed students who did not engage with them and those who read them sporadically. Students who only read culturally relevant texts also experienced an increased recognition of words in context. However, students' word recognition in isolation did not yield a significant difference.

An integrated literature review conducted by Husband and Kang (2020) sought to identify good reading instructional strategies that create a more meaningful experience for Black boys in P-12. Prior research has examined the educational experiences that Black boys have in U.S. classrooms; most studies that have been conducted are from a deficit lens that maintains the view of Black boys being "at risk" when compared with students of other races and genders. Black boys are not a monolith and vary in their abilities, background knowledge, and interests. Prior to the creation of this integrated literature review, there was no study that identified promising reading practices in reading and writing for Black boys that spanned P-12. Therefore, the purpose of this literature review was to determine promising reading and writing practices for Black boys in P-12. The literature review was not designed to be a list of practices that would work with "all" Black boys, instead, it was created to showcase research-based instructional strategies that reading educators can utilize as they work with Black boys.

This study employed standards of Critical Race Theory and how it functions in education. Although the authors of this study mentioned general reading practices that are beneficial for reading instruction of Black boys in early childhood and elementary school, there are also more distinct reading strategies that can be used to yield positive outcomes. The strategies are: (a) helping Black boys to develop their background knowledge when

reading; (b) considering the identities and experiences of Black boys when creating reading experiences; (c) offering cultural connections outside of school; (d) expanding definitive instruction in phonological awareness and language development.

Pre- and post-test data pertaining to reading achievement, phonological awareness, and variations in dialect were examined by Russell and Shifler (2019). From the data, it was determined that Black boys who possessed strong phonological awareness skills typically had higher reading achievement scores than Black boys whose phonological awareness skills were weaker. Two implications were given by the researchers. The first was that teachers should account for the effects that phonological awareness and how the variations in language can impact reading achievement. Teachers should also strive to offer the Black boys they educate more explicit instruction when transitioning from home language and language used at school.

Data were analyzed through coding and cross-case analysis to pinpoint likenesses and differences that existed in the participants' interactions. Data findings yielded that offering the participants an option of the texts they engaged with encouraged participants to read more. Participants also felt more encouraged to grow and develop as a reader due to the Freedom School's classroom culture and setting. The child participants described their appreciation of gaining historical content knowledge through the usage of MO-CRiTlit's authentic depiction of historically marginalized populations through interactive read-alouds. They were able to have more purposeful discussions with their servant leader intern which yielded a more progressive learning cycle that encouraged more cultural awareness and academic achievement. Additionally, through their engagement with MO-CRiTlit, participants' identities developed, and their willingness to read was enhanced. Essentially, the findings affirmed the need for multicultural education in traditional schools to ensure that more equitable education is implemented

for all children, but especially the populations who are more susceptible to institutionalized racial practices.

Most research that exists is centralized on Black boys at the pre-adolescent stages of development and the ensuing years. However, little attention has been focused on early childhood and early elementary settings and how those years shape reading underachievement in Black boys. The purpose of the article written by Husband (2012) served two purposes. The first was to detail components that contribute to reading underachievement in Black boys. The second purpose was to offer a multi-contextual approach to assist with this issue. It was important for the researcher to note that not all Black boys were underachieving in reading and that the ideas presented in the article are not a one-size fits all solution to reading underachievement in Black boys.

As presented by the researcher, one possible factor that explains reading underachievement in Black boys is the text offerings that are present in most classrooms. Black boys are typically not offered the opportunity to engage with texts that are reflective of their cultural and world experiences. Given this, Black boys tend to be more apprehensive about reading and reading-related activities. This could also explain why Black boys in early childhood and elementary school classrooms are less engaged during reading activities because of the absence of text that represent their cultural experiences. Reading curricula that are standards-based often encourages teachers to rely disproportionately on whole-group instruction that is scripted and offers narrow approaches to reading as a way of assisting students to demonstrate mastery of grade-level standards on standardized reading tests. Using this approach leaves little opportunity for teachers to tailor their instructional practices to and here to the needs and cultural interests of individual black boys that they serve in their classrooms.

Another factor that lends itself to reading underachievement in Black boys is the way that texts are read in the classroom. There is little focus on reading critically or reading in a manner that helps students gain an understanding of the world around them and how they fit into it. Because of this, Black boys opt to disengage from reading when they sense that it has no significance to them (Tatum, 2006).

People of color make up 37% of the U.S. population, however, only 13% of children's books that were published in the last 24 years were written with a multicultural background (Lee & Low Books, 2017). This means that school and classroom libraries are missing books where Black and other minority students can see themselves and their experiences presented in the literature. For reluctant readers, especially those who attend public schools in low-income communities, ascertaining texts that can posit positive life outcome trajectories is a critical yet surmountable challenge (Tatum, 2016). In the article written by Henderson et al. (2020), the researchers created a study to investigate the books that were available in their classroom libraries that were representative of the student population they served, namely Black students.

To conduct this research, the teachers, who also served as the researchers, examined their early elementary school classroom library books. The researchers categorized the books that comprised the libraries, scanned them, and put them on named shelves on Goodreads. From there, they looked at the number of books within each teacher's library and then exported this information into an Excel spreadsheet. For this study, the researchers did not classify the formats of the books, but they did notice the lack of transitional chapter books for Black boys. White children were offered a large selection of texts to choose from and had more chapter books that catered to their experiences. However, Black boys typically stuck with the same picture books week after week. The researchers noticed that the chapter books that featured a Black male

protagonist were usually about sports and were too hard for the students who were new to chapter books. One observation made by the researchers was that the reading experiences of their Black boy students varied from their other students' experiences. The researchers sensed that the boys' enthusiasm to read grew initially, but then it began to halt, while other students' reading enthusiasm continued to grow. This finding is consistent with what previous research has reported, that Black boys swiftly lose interest in reading when they find little relevance in books. This led the researchers to conclude that the absence of transitional books about or centered around Black boys could be one explanatory facet in their students' disinterest in reading and lack of progress as readers.

Perceptions of Black Boys and Reading

Husband (2012) noted that another factor that contributes to reading underachievement in Black boys is the negative perception of Black boys and reading. Essentially, low expectations are set in society about Black boys and their academic achievement. Teachers who believe these societal stereotypes, in turn, have lower expectations for Black boys. When Black boys in class believe these negative stereotypes, then they will put forth less effort into reading and their overall academic achievement. If Black boys view themselves as incapable, then they are more likely to be disengaged with reading and the processes that occur. Therefore, there will be a lower level of reading engagement which leads to a direct impact on reading achievement.

The multi-contextual framework that the researcher created was based on the strategies and reading practices that worked in schools with Black boys. One way the researcher suggested teachers tackle reading underachievement in Black boys is to increase the amount of culturally relevant books. Increasing reading engagement could lead to increased reading production. Teachers should also offer Black boys more books that are focused on Black male characters.

Neighborhood dads were brought into a classroom to support reading engagement in a study by Lynch and Zwerling (2020). The sociocultural theory was utilized to deepen the understanding of the role that fathers have in developing reading skills in elementary school. There are few studies that have assessed fathers' roles in sustaining children's reading in the elementary school years.

The Fatherhood Reading Squad is a program that is used by a public school district in the Southeastern U.S. Within the district, nine Title I elementary schools participate. Data were collected through semi-structured focus groups with participating fathers, interviews with teachers, and observations of fathers reading to students in the classrooms. The data were analyzed through inductive coding, then the authors searched for emergent themes. Findings from the study yielded that having a reading program that centralizes fathers reading to children is beneficial. There was also an increase in reading motivation, and the image of a positive male role model emerged.

Beyond experiencing prejudice, Black children are more likely to incur dehumanization (Warren et al., 2022). Black students are fictionalized as not being real children and treated more like Black bodies whom society should display minimal compassion or connection (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). However, encouraging interactions with adults at school and the cultivation of positive relationships has the potential to deter Black boys from having a dehumanizing school experience. In the study designed by Warren et al. (2022), the implication of positive relationships between Black boys and adults at school throughout their educational journeys from P – 16 was examined. The researchers used a descriptive phenomenological approach to gain insight into the relationships and dynamics between Black boys and adults at their school. The goal of the study was to elucidate first-person perspectives from Black boys and young men

regarding the extent of the relationships and how antiblackness factors into those interpersonal interactions.

To collect data, 28 Black boys and young men engaged in seven various focus groups, with four to six participants per grade band. The data was analyzed through the researchers watching the video-recorded focus groups, transcript readings, and coding by reviewing the data set across the grade bands to find similar interactions regarding disciplinary/behavioral, social/relational, and academic. Findings from this study yielded that the participants had a strong desire to feel seen by the adults whom they engage with for their virtuousness and the potential they possess to do well. The results from this study also summarized that the participants felt that their words, behavior, and actions are often misconstrued and misunderstood in American society. Warren (2022) also noted that humanizing interpersonal experiences and the cultivation of positive interactions with adults at school can counter the negative stereotypes that teachers can possess regarding Black boys.

An amassed understanding of Black boys' educational paths indicates that their early preschool experience can influence their secondary schooling and college. Brooms and Wint (2021) used a relational care framework to explore how Black boys understand their experiences of care during preschool and high school. The goal of the study was to extract findings from two independent qualitative research projects, determine parallels, and center discourse regarding Black boys' educational journeys, as opposed to only focusing on one moment in time. The researchers sought to find how Black boys feel cared for in school by their teachers and peers and how being cared for influences their schooling experiences. One study was a narrative inquiry into eleven Black boys' experiences in preschool based on observations and interviews, while the second study

was a longitudinal study about twenty Black boys' treks through college as discussed during in-depth qualitative interviews and ethnographic observations.

Data were analyzed through four various phases. Care was measured as tangible, time, or personal. The findings returned that effort displayed as care when the students were younger demonstrated benefits as the boys got older and learned how to show care for themselves and others. For younger and older Black boys, how the teacher shows care can build an environment that lends itself to compassionate relationships, which can also double as a demonstration of the manner that they should communicate and treat each other. The researchers emphasized the need for schools to utilize care in Black boys' school experiences to encourage the achievement of goals and aspirations and to develop their identity, as evidenced by narratives from the participants.

A reality for some Black boys is abysmal academic performance coupled with excessive rates of school discipline often stems from biases and translates into how they are treated at school (Cole-Lewis et al., 2021). The way that Black boys view themselves, and how their families view them often does not align with they are perceived at school. Cole-Lewis et al. (2021) conducted a longitudinal, qualitative study to investigate how teachers' perceptions of Black boys are aligned or unaligned with their family's view or the boys' views of themselves and the cruciality of teachers' expectations of students' academic achievement and socio-emotional progress. To gather data for this study, a descriptive case study was utilized, and primary data was collected from multiple informant interviews. Students who participated attended a middle school where the student population was nearly 70%, but there was also a majority White teacher population.

Individual interviews occurred at the end of the students' eighth-grade year, except for one student whose interview took place during his sixth-grade year. Sixty-to-

ninety-minute teacher interviews and phone interviews with parents were also conducted. Then, the data were analyzed as two individual cases, where each case comprised interviews with the student, his mom, and two teachers. The interviews were transcribed, checked for accuracy, searched for individual codes, then code families were identified. Findings from the study elucidated that two of the boys who had similar academic backgrounds were not viewed the same by their teachers.

Teacher perceptions were misaligned with the boys' self-perceptions and their mom's perceptions. One teacher possessed a stereotypical, deficit view of Black culture which might have influenced how she treated one of the boys, her expectations of him, and the magnitude of support she gave him. The teacher who provided more support and knew more about the boy's educational and career goals viewed him with an asset-based mindset over a deficit-focused view. Findings also showed a misalignment between teacher and parent insights of parental involvement in their son's education. The lack of alignment between Black boys' self-perceptions and their teachers can position Black boys at a detriment in the classroom which can subject them to effects on their education and achievement and what they believe about themselves internally (Sorhagen, 2013). Teachers' perceptions of students impact the quality of instruction that students receive and students' academic performance, and it also inherently influences how discipline is addressed in the classroom and on the school's campus.

Socioeconomic Status

Black boys are also subjected to issues related to low socioeconomic status and living in high-risk neighborhoods (Tatum, 2015). However, there is limited research existing that examines the intersectionality of race and families' socioeconomic status (SES) and how that impacts the development of the Black-White achievement gap over time. In the study by Henry et al. (2020), the researchers sought to build upon a previous

study by: (a) determining the independent associations between income and education and disparities in skills, as opposed to utilizing a composite SES measure; (b) exploring the trajectories of numerous achievement outcomes, instead of focusing solely on one achievement measure; and (c) the primary focus, investigating the within-SES skills disparities based on races. The purpose of the study was to lay the foundation for future research to define the combination of the aforementioned factors.

The researchers used data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten (ECLS-K). The study was longitudinal, representative of the nation, and a multimethod study that documented the educational experiences and evolution of students in the U.S. from the fall of kindergarten through the spring of eighth grade. Furthermore, the researchers chose to use data from the ECLS-K due to its racial, economic, and geographic diversity. The data were also used because it measures parental demographics, family and home environments, and students' academic advancement as they progress from kindergarten to eighth grade. Specifically, the study consisted of 9,100 Black and White children born to parents from the U.S.

Academic achievement was measured through direct assessments of 100 items that were designed by the ECLS-K to determine age- and grade-appropriate skills and ability, and to coordinate with the National Association of Educational Progress structures. The reading tests that students were given assessed students' abilities to recognize letters, phonological awareness, knowledge of vocabulary, comprehension skills, and reflection and analysis competence. Family SES was retrieved from parents' reports. Child characteristics were also a factor to ensure that only students who were Black or White were used for data reporting. Additionally, dichotomous indicators of maternal employment status were used to report parental and household characteristics.

The results from the study determined that most Black families were more socioeconomically disadvantaged than White families. Even after adjusting for SES factors, the gaps that existed were considerable when students entered kindergarten and grew when the students advanced from kindergarten through eighth grade. Black students' reading skills were behind White students upon kindergarten entry, and the gaps continued to expand. Extensive disparities in achievement projections related to parents' education were noticeable when students entered kindergarten and exacerbated as students advanced through elementary and middle school. Consistent with similar studies, this study found that gaps in academic achievement exist between Black and White children, even when family SES is accounted for.

In a study conducted by Kuhfeld et al. (2018), the researchers used time-varying effect modeling (TVEM), a non-parametric spline regression approach, to estimate how the relationships between race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and math and reading achievement differ between the ages of 5 to 15. Socioeconomic status is usually determined by parents' education and the income of the household, however, in this study, the trajectory of academic development was estimated for groups dictated by race or ethnicity and poverty rank. Data from the Children of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (CNLSY) and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort, 1998-1999 (ECLS-K-1998) were used. A child's race or ethnicity was determined based on what their mothers reported, while socioeconomic status was ascertained from the family income the year before the assessment, which was also reported by the mother. The Peabody Individual Achievement Tests (PIAT) were used to measure children's initial math and reading skills, and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R) was used to measure the children's vocabulary.

Findings from this study yielded that Black students who were from a low-socioeconomic status had lower PPVT scores compared to other groups, and they also achieved less development over time. The researchers also found that Black students who were from a low-socioeconomic status did not achieve at the same reading or math academic level as White students beginning later in elementary school. When the data was disaggregated, White students almost always performed higher on all tests than Black students from ages 5 to 15, while White students from a low-socioeconomic status performed the same as Black students who were not from a low-socioeconomic status.

In the article by Newman and Moland (2019), the influence of income segregation on a family's ability to acquire books in early childhood was examined. The goal of the study was to evaluate how communities faced with high-poverty and "borderline" neighborhoods, or those who have a 20% to 40% rate of poverty, are advancing in offering access to books, especially during the summer when schools are closed. To conduct the study, the researchers explored Anacostia, a low-income area in Washington, D. C., Capitol Hill, a borderline area in Washington, D. C., Hamtramck, a low-income community in Detroit, University District, a borderline community in Detroit, Vermont Square, a low-income part of Los Angeles, and Culver City's areas of borderline and middle income, also located in Los Angeles.

To collect data, first, neighborhoods were delineated, then the researchers used systematic social observation to determine the prevalence of books in the area. If they found a store where print resources, like newspapers, could be accessed, they went into the establishment and counted and categorized each resource. More than 82,389 print resources were located across 75 stores in the six neighborhoods while focusing on the number of preschool and children's books, and simultaneously excluding books with minimal print, like coloring or sticker books. The number of preschool books that were

located within a neighborhood was then divided by the number of children who were 5 and below. All children's fiction and nonfiction books were added together, then they were divided by the number of children who were 18 and below. The data were analyzed to determine where books were sold and compared between high-poverty and borderline areas to gain an understanding of where families were able to buy books for their children.

Results from the study yielded that children's books are difficult to locate in areas of high poverty during the summer months. In low-income areas, books were available for purchase only at dollar stores or CVS drugstores. In borderline neighborhoods, there are more establishments to purchase books, but few bookstores were available in the areas. The data also yielded that significant inequalities exist in the number of books that were available for sale per child across neighborhoods. Substantial print resource gaps exist between high-poverty and borderline communities, especially noteworthy was the lack of books available for early childhood. However, neither community offered an abundance of books to support children's early reading proficiencies.

Beginning in elementary school, parental engagement helps to nurture students' success holistically (Englund et al., 2004; Lynch & Zwerling, 2020; Newland et al., 2013). The absence of male role models in elementary school has been noted as a potential contributing factor to reading achievement among boys (Zambo & Brozo, 2009). One way that parents can actively engage is to read to or with their children (Lynch & Zwerling, 2020).

Black Boys' Self-Perceptions

Individuals' self-perceptions are developed through the foundation of accretion of experiencing success and failure (Campbell et al., 2003). Adolescents' identity development process is one of the most critical periods in their lives (Hauser &

Kasendorf, 1983). The way that Black boys perceive themselves as readers is a contributing factor to their engagement and achievement in reading. Few studies have investigated urban Black boys' perceptions of their academic needs to be successful, despite acquaintance with adversity like poverty, deficient housing, and financial insecurity (Williams & Portman, 2012).

Grace (2020) designed a study that utilized a Critical Race approach to conceptualize the experience of Black boys who were attending an alternative high school in New Orleans. The author of this study wanted to gain an understanding of the perspectives of Black boys as students and to have them explain the experiences that they had at school. Furthermore, this study explored racism as a component of institutionalized entities and how it hinders Black boys' educational venture through the public school system. Participants were selected to be a member in this study if they were Black, a male had been expelled from a public school within the last 1-3 years and was registered as a student at an alternative school due to discipline. The 10 Black boys participating in the study were between 15 and 18 years old. The qualitative nature of this study lends itself to dialogue centralized on Black boys detailing their own experiences within the education system.

The author of this study opted for a phenomenological approach because it would provide a deeper insight into the participants' feelings toward their educational experience. Critical Race Theory (CRT) was utilized in this study because it gave Black participants the opportunity to share their educational experiences, and because it harnesses the potential to interrupt the relationship between race, racism, and power. Counter-storytelling, or a narrative of one's experiences, is a facet of CRT that gives participants the opportunity to voice their perspectives and detail their experiences. By opting for this approach in the study, the participants were able to detail their lived

experiences within the school system with the hopes that the institutional racism and systemic obstacles to Black boys receiving an education could eventually be dented.

Findings concluded that the participants in this study felt confined to a lower ranking label at school which was displayed through teachers not providing quality instruction, a lack of high-quality and engaging textbooks, abysmal libraries, dismal food choices, and limited opportunities for extracurricular activities. The participants were fully aware of the more favorable school conditions that upper-class, white students received that fostered critical thinking skills and developed more creativity. These ten Black boys could feel the vast difference in their unwelcoming school environment where they were not encouraged to divulge their thoughts or engage in the deep analysis of subject materials. Given that five of the participants were considered seniors, one was a junior, and post-secondary goals after the completion of high school were already in place, the students voiced frustration over the absence of support in preparing for post-secondary options. Moreover, they identified the lack of equity in access to resources and opportunities to further their lives' trajectories.

Findings also elucidated that the issues Black boys face at school are widespread and precursors to disconnection and exclusion from the educational environment. Furthermore, the participants shared that their teachers' negative perceptions and low expectations impacted their self-esteem. This was not limited to what a teacher said, but also their non-verbal actions. Teachers who created highly engaging lessons over those who merely gave their students busy work were seen as caring more about the success of their Black students. Participants also highlighted a lack of connectedness with their teachers. From the participants' perspectives, the way that society perceives Black men

negatively impacts the way that their teachers communicate expectations and the caliber of the relationship they engage in with the Black boys they educate.

Ellis (2020) managed a multi-case study to emphasize critical reading as a motivational component for two Black boys who have reading dysfluency. The purpose of this study was also to gather in-depth insight into the boys' motivation from their perspectives. The two participants in the study were Black boys who were diagnosed with a learning disability and grappled with reading during elementary and middle school. The study used a qualitative research design to investigate the educational journeys of two Black boys who have reading disabilities, and a multi-case study approach was utilized to provide insight into the participants' educational, cultural, and social experiences (Barone, 2011). Participants were chosen through purposeful sampling.

The data were analyzed in three stages by using constant comparative method of case study analysis. Findings elucidate instructional strategies that the participants found helpful in overcoming their challenges in reading. The two boys preferred culturally relevant and responsive reading curricula, specifically content that connected to the current lived experiences of Black Americans. Both boys were motivated to read more when the reading material was about the real world.

The School-to-Prison Pipeline

Exclusionary discipline, or discipline that punishes a student by removing them from the classroom or school, can result in students losing access to general learning opportunities (Casella, 2003; Gregory et al., 2010; Rafaelle Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Removing students from the classroom because of exclusionary discipline disproportionately impacts low-income students of color (Losen & Martinez, 2013; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Rafaelle et al., 2003). As a result of exclusionary discipline practices, students who miss instructional time have a higher probability of leaving

school voluntarily or involuntarily (McGhie, 2015). The school-to-prison pipeline can be described as the point in an educational journey when students are forced out of school and therefore become involved with the court system, are detained, or are incarcerated (McGhie, 2015). The development of reading skills, or the lack thereof, has been a persuasive factor in the school-to-prison pipeline (McGhie, 2015).

The interpretivist qualitative study by Kennedy-Lewis and Murphy (2016) sought to examine middle schoolers' experiences with being "frequent flyers" to determine how the labeling of them as "bad" influences their educational experiences. The participants for the study were four Black boys, five Black girls, and two girls of mixed racial descent, all of which were suspended between one and six times during the school year that they were interviewed. Each student was interviewed for 45 to 60 minutes four times. During the interviews, the students were asked to recall their school experiences from kindergarten to the grade that they were in at the time of the study. Transcripts from the interviews were coded, and themes were identified. Findings from this study yielded that the students did not see themselves as "bad kids," but rather that their middle school teachers saw the paper trail of office referrals and automatically assumed that the students were guilty, which led to students' identification of being labeled as "frequent flyers." However, the students felt that being subjected to exclusionary discipline practices led to feeling like their perspectives were misunderstood by teachers. The students also found themselves wanting to learn, but also standing up for themselves when they were treated inadequately. Three of the Black boy participants, Marcus, Dallas, and Dayron, reported receiving discipline for being late to class, even though they all saw themselves as possessing the capacity to be good students.

The impetus of the study by Grace and Nelson (2019) was to examine Black boys' perceptions of race and racism and how they factor into the school-to-prison

pipeline. The researchers opted to use a phenomenological investigation of ten Black boys who attended traditional public schools in New Orleans. Black males from New Orleans who were subjected to the school-to-prison pipeline were chosen as a focus for this study because they could impart their evidence from their experiences. A major tenet of CRT is understanding the lived experiences of individuals of a particular population with the goal of altering mindsets or changing outsiders' thinking about a phenomenon (Grace & Nelson, 2019). To collect data, the researchers conducted individual in-depth interviews about the participants' K-12 experiences.

The data were analyzed through bracketing, and manual coding, then the codes were put into categories to search for the emergence of larger themes to describe the phenomenon. Results from this study found that participants' experiences during their K-12 journey were fueled by pervasive and concealed issues of race and racism. Participants also explained how race and racism were facets of larger societal issues that influence the educational systems and how they experienced those systems. Furthermore, to be treated fairly in the traditional school setting, participants described how they felt like they had to present themselves as something other than what they were understood to be. Given that these participants were unable to adequately circumvent that challenge, they were placed in alternative schools, which is what they needed to be successful.

Civil rights are comprised of methods and actions needed for political and civil involvement (Winn & Behizadeh, 2011). Although voting and protesting are typically seen as civil rights, reading and writing, especially the ability to do both critically, are also essential tools for civic involvement (Winn & Behizadeh, 2011). In a generative case study conducted by McGhie (2015), the researcher explored the early reading experiences of Black boys who dropped out of school and were involved with the court system. The

study viewed how the boys' home, family, and reading experiences put them on the school-to-prison pipeline.

The researcher utilized four conceptual frameworks, CRT, Adolescent Development, Critical Literacy, and the School-to-Prison pipeline. To collect data, the researcher used one-on-one interviews, but observations and the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) survey were used to provide additional sources of data. There were six participants between 19 and 20 years old who voluntarily or involuntarily left school. Data were analyzed using cross-case analysis and extended analysis, which created case congruencies and incongruencies, which yielded four subthemes. Findings from this study concluded that reading and the skill of literacy influenced their perceptions of school and how they experienced it. Literacy Confusion, a term that describes students' relationships at home and school pre-maturely subjects them to the school-to-prison pipeline. The study found that literacy confusion was a powerful factor in the participants' communication practices with parents, teachers, and school administrators.

Summary of Findings

Few bodies of recent research solely examine the intersection of Black boys' self-perception as readers, outside factors that affect academic progress, and reading achievement. The review of the literature demonstrates the need for more studies to be conducted examining the relationship between those constructs. In some cases, schools serve as structurally violent institutions that marginalize Black students, especially Black boys (Gopalan & Nelson, 2019). Parental involvement in education is typically centered around the ideals of white, middle-class families. Teachers and administrators also blame the failure of Black boys on their families and do not always take responsibility for the role they play in educating the population of students. If schools create a relationship and

build programs, notably in under-resourced school environments, then parents can be more involved and support their child's educational journey (Hughuley, 2019). The limiting views that are held about Black boys' abilities are also contributing factors to the lack of academic progress made (Lynn, 2010). These limiting views, in turn, influence the way that Black boys feel about their own abilities at school. If low school expectations and teachers' negative perceptions are communicated, it can impact Black boys' self-esteem (Grace, 2020). Tatum et al., (2021) found that there is scant literature focused on Black boys in reading research in elementary classrooms in the southern region of the United States; therefore, this study serves to fill a gap in the qualitative literature by focusing on the counter-stories, or narratives of Black boys' reading experiences.

Theoretical Framework

This study used Critical Race Theory (CRT) which was initially developed by Derrick Bell in the 1970s (Delgado, 2017). CRT was originally used by activists and scholars to study and transform the relationship between race, racism, and power (Delgado, 2017). This theory indicates that meritocracy, equal opportunity, and colorblindness were thought of to serve White people, which hides the deep structural inequalities pervasive in society (Robinson, 2020). Currently, CRT is used in education to gain a deeper understanding of school discipline and authority, affirmative action, standardized testing, curriculum controversies as it relates to history, and bilingual and multicultural education (Delgado, 2017).

As posited by Dixson and Anderson (2018), there are six major tenets of CRT in education:

CRT in education argues that racial inequality in education is the logical outcome of a system of achievement premised on competition.

CRT in education examines the role of education policy and educational practices in the construction of racial inequality and the perpetuation of normative whiteness.

CRT in education rejects the dominant narrative about the inherent inferiority of people of color and the normative superiority of white people.

CRT in education rejects ahistoricism and examines the historical linkages between contemporary educational inequity and historical patterns of racial oppression.

CRT in education engages in intersectional analyses that recognize the ways that race is mediated by and interacts with other identity markers (i.e., gender, class, sexuality, linguistic background, and citizenship status.)

CRT in education agitates and advocates for meaningful outcomes that redress racial inequity. CRT does not merely document disparities.

As defined by Solórzano and Yosso (2002), critical race methodology is a theoretically grounded approach to research that (a) foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process. However, it also challenges the separate discourses on race, gender, and class by showing how these three elements intersect to affect the experiences of students of color; (b) challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color; (c) offers a liberatory of transformative solution to racial, gender, and class subordination; and (d) focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of students of color. Furthermore, it views these experiences as sources of strength and (e) uses the interdisciplinary knowledge base of ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, humanities, and the law to better understand the experiences of students of color (p. 24).

Critical race methodology in education contests the theories, methods, and texts that have traditionally been used to describe the experiences of people from marginalized communities (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). It also discredits research that is deficit-

informed and the practices that silence or alter the experiences of people from marginalized populations. Instead, it centralizes their experiences based on their race, gender, and class and how that empowers them (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

As applied to the present study, CRT holds that the reading opportunity gap in Black boys is because of reading educational inequities and the pattern of racial oppression in history (Dixson, 1998). Counter-storytelling, a facet of CRT, is also purposeful for this study because it allows Black boys to name their own reality and to negate society's stereotypic messages that have been communicated to them (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Critical race researchers and teachers can collect beneficial data from the counter-stories offered by students from marginalized populations (Kelly, 2017). According to a study conducted by Howard (2008), using counter-stories also "gives agency to African American males to offer narratives which can counter much of the rhetorical accounts of their identities that frequently describe them as culturally and socially deficient, uneducated, unmotivated, prone to violence, and anti-intellectual" (p. 975). Furthermore, CRT queries how racism surfaces through lived experience narratives (Woodson, 2015).

By challenging ahistoricism and instead relying on the transdisciplinary knowledge foundation of the historical treatment of marginalized populations, critical race scholars can examine how students, especially Black students have been treated in education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Tate, 1997). Challenging ahistoricism means viewing the intersectionality of race, class, and gender and how that relates to the education and equitable treatment of students from marginalized populations. The rejection of ahistoricism, another facet of CRT in education, is purposeful for this study because it analyzes race and racism by centralizing the role that they play in historical and modern perspectives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Since this study is relying on the

narratives of Black boys in upper elementary school, the perspectives of the boys and their treatment in school can be explored.

According to CRT, White dominant society repudiates what is obligatory to restructure what is in place that perpetuates minorities in places that continue to exacerbate the achievement gap, like what is observed in the school system (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In education, the achievement gaps between races can be linked to qualitative research practices and the CRT tenet that centralizes on disturbing the racial philosophy (Parker, 2015). Qualitative research in the form of narrative accounts offers insights into the educational system (Tate, 1997). The voices of students from marginalized populations can be centered to move members of society who are unaware of racist policies, harmful practices, and detrimental structures that are in place (Bryan, 2020). By recognizing racism in society and the role that it plays in education, measures can be taken to positively impact the current state of the educational system in America (Walls, 2022).

Conclusion

There are several contributing factors that exacerbate the reading opportunity gap that students of other demographic groups are not faced with. The review of literature assists with the constructs of this study by offering information about reading achievement in Black boys, barriers to Black boys' education, as well as Black boys' perceptions of themselves as readers. The subsequent chapter on methodology will establish the research strategies that will be used during this study.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the reading experiences of Black boys in grades three through five, gain insight into what they felt contributed to their reading success, explore the relationships that influenced their reading lives, the challenges they faced, and their perspectives of the relationship they had with their reading teacher. This study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do Black boys in grades 3-5 describe their experiences in their reading classrooms?
2. What do Black boys in grades 3-5 perceive as contributing factors to their reading achievement?
3. What relationships, if any, guide the reading practices of Black boys in grades 3-5?
4. What specific challenges do Black boys encounter in grades 3-5 that undermine their academic success in reading?

This qualitative study collected interview data from a purposeful sample of Black boys from an elementary school who were in grades 3-5 within a large suburban school district located in southeast Texas. An inductive coding process was used to search for themes that emerged from the participants' individual interviews. This chapter presents an overview of the research problem, operationalization of theoretical constructs, research purpose and questions, research design, population and sampling selection, data collection procedures, data analysis, privacy and ethical considerations, and the research design limitations of the study.

Overview of the Research Problem

Research has elucidated that self-perceptions can encourage or discourage learning (Schunk, 1982, 1983a, 1983b; Zimmerman & Ringle, 1981). Reading research further demonstrates this idea by emphasizing the correlation between self-perceptions and academic achievement (Martin, 2008). Students who read well typically engage with reading more because they are accomplished readers which yields more reading success (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Conversely, students who do not read well typically read less because they do not want to engage in a practice where they do not feel successful. The Matthew Effect, a term used to describe this phenomenon, exemplifies how the rich get richer due to affective and cognitive reasons alike (Stanovich, 1986).

The ability to read and comprehend the reading material is paramount to students' ability to succeed in school and later in life (Rumble, 2013). Those who are unable to read will discover that getting the most out of their educational experience will be unattainable (Rumble, 2013; Trelease, 2001). Furthermore, educating Black students remains unequal to educating White students (McGee, 2004). Standardized test scores, which continue to be a measurement of academic success, show that Black boys' achievement remains behind White students and Black girls (Morrell, 2008).

The National Report Card (2020) determined that 82% of Black fourth graders scored below the proficient reading level in the U.S. in 2019. Governors in some states perceive poor reading ability as an indicator of committing crimes, and they measure prison growth according to fourth grade reading scores (Kunjufu, 2007). In classrooms, Black boys are not paired with texts where they can see themselves, read about information that reflects their lived experiences, or be exposed to reading material that connects to their lives (Gangi, 2008; Tatum, 2009). However, if they were offered exposure to that type of material early in their reading journeys, then their relationship

with reading and their reading practices could progress (Bishop, 1990). To improve the educational, social, and future employment opportunities for Black boys, then changes should be made to offer them the necessary tools they need to succeed in reading.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the reading experiences of Black boys in grades three through five, gain insight into what they felt contributed to their reading success, explore the relationships that influenced their reading lives, the challenges they faced, and their perspectives of the relationship they had with their reading teacher. This study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do Black boys in grades 3-5 describe their experiences in their reading classrooms?
2. What do Black boys in grades 3-5 perceive as contributing factors to their reading achievement?
3. What relationships, if any, guide the reading practices of Black boys in grades 3-5?
4. What specific challenges do Black boys encounter in grades 3-5 that undermine their academic success in reading?

Research Design

A qualitative approach was appropriate to seek answers to the research questions because qualitative research is structured to explain aspects of human experience and understand situations (Maxwell, 2012). Furthermore, a phenomenological approach was the most suitable for this study because it “aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of meaning of our everyday experiences” (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). Using CRT as a framework, but phenomenology as the research design allows the researcher to understand how race is systematically rooted in civic and social relationships, how it

intercedes in society, the description of the racial experience, and how that allows for counter-storytelling to emerge (Woodson, 2015).

A purposeful sample of 3rd-5th grade students who identified as Black boys from an elementary school located within a large suburban school district in the Southeast region of Texas were chosen to participate in interviews. Purposeful sampling was utilized to identify Black boys in third through fifth grades, and within this sampling technique, the researcher identifies the individuals who match the characteristics of what is being studied (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). The goal of the individual interviews was to gain deeper insight into upper elementary Black boys' experiences in reading, what they felt contributed to their reading success, the relationships that influenced their reading lives, the challenges they faced, and their perspectives of the relationship they have with their reading teacher.

Participant Selection and Sample

The population of this study consisted of a large suburban school district in southeast Texas. The school district was made up of 276 schools (eight early childhood campuses, 160 elementary schools, 39 middle schools, 37 high schools, 32 combined/other schools), employs 11,621 teachers, and served a student population of 196,943. The sample consisted of Black boys in third, fourth, and fifth grades who met the inclusion criteria of identifying as Black and a boy. Excluded from the sample were Black boys whom the researcher taught and Black boys whom she was currently teaching. Table 3.1 provides the district student demographic data that was obtained from 2019-2020 Student Enrollment data provided by the Texas Academic Performance Report from the Texas Education Agency (2021). Of the district population, 49.5% were female and 50.5% were male. There were 22.4% who were African American, 61.8% were Hispanic, 9.7% were White, 0.2% were American Indian/Alaskan Native, 4.4%

were Asian, 0.1 were Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 1.5% were two or more races.

Additionally, of the population, 78.5% were economically disadvantaged, 52.7% were at risk and 8.3% were special education.

Table 3.1

District Student Demographic Data

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Female	97,604	49.5
Male	99,339	50.5
African American	44,123	22.4
Hispanic	121,786	61.8
White	19,035	9.7
American Indian/Alaskan Native	345	0.2
Asian	8,660	4.4
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	138	0.1
Two or More Races	2,856	1.5
Economically Disadvantaged	154,511	78.5
English Language	29,439	15.0
At-Risk	103,805	52.7
Special Education	16,238	8.3

Table 3.2 details the student demographic data of the campus that was obtained from 2019-2020 Texas Academic Performance Report data provided by the Texas Education Agency (2021). Of the campus population, 46.3% were female and 53.7% were male. There were 33.9% who were African American, 49.5% were Hispanic, 10.9% were White, 0.4% were American Indian, 3.4% were Asian, and 1.9% were two or more races. A purposeful sample of Black boys in upper elementary school (3rd-5th) within the school were selected to participate in this study. The goal was to select 8-10 3rd-5th grade Black boys. The boys were selected based on the following criteria: being Black, and a boy, with a preference to boys who have experienced exclusionary discipline practices, especially during reading class.

Table 3.2

Student Demographics of Campus

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Female	344	46.3
Male	399	53.7
African American	252	33.9
Hispanic	368	49.5
White	81	10.9
American Indian Native	3	0.4
Asian	25	3.4
Pacific Islander	0	0.0
Two or More Races	14	1.9
Economically Disadvantaged	631	84.9
English Language Learners	296	39.8
At-Risk	544	73.2
Section 504 Students	25	3.4

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to the collection of any data, the researcher gained approval from the University of Houston-Clear Lake's (UHCL) Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) and the school district's office of research and accountability in which the study took place. Before including any participants in the study, a meeting with the principal was conducted to inform her of the purpose of the study and the data that was going to be collected. In tandem with the classroom teachers, the researcher identified individuals who met the criteria for the study, students who identified as being Black and a boy. Inclusion criteria are described as descriptions that the potential subjects must meet if they are to be involved in the study (Garg, 2016). The researcher excluded Black boys whom she taught in the past and Black boys whom she was teaching at the time of the study. The recruitment letter and parent consent/student assent forms were sent home with individuals who met the inclusion criteria. Students were excluded if they did not return the form or if their parent or guardian did not approve for them to participate in the study.

Once parents returned the signed parental consent/student assent forms, then the researcher scheduled the individual interviews with each boy during one of their enrichment classes. One advantage of using interviews to collect data is that it centers on structuring meanings derived from life events and how the meanings gleaned influence potential actions (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The data was collected over a two-week period.

Individual interviews with the boys were the best option for this study because counter-storytelling, a tenet of CRT, allows the participants to have their voices validated as they share their lived experiences (Flores, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1998). One of the major tenets of CRT is examining the lived experiences of those within a specific

population with the goal of changing mindsets about a particular problem or phenomenon and counteract the dominant language that is used against people from marginalized populations (Flores, 2018; Grace, 2016).

Interviews took place in the researcher's classroom. The participants were assured that the information gathered during interviews would remain confidential, pseudonyms were used to protect their identities, and the information shared was not relayed to their respective teachers. An interview guide was created, adapted, and sent to elementary school teachers to ensure the questions were suitable for the intended subjects to elicit responses. The questions used during interviews can be found in Appendix C. The researcher asked open-ended questions to allow for an explanation of reading experiences from the participants. The researcher refrained from asking questions that could be answered with one-word responses. As described by Kvale (1996), semi-structured interviews are effective because the format allows the researcher to ask follow-up questions if needed. Within the semi-structured interviews, participants were asked to share their experiences in the reading classroom, their perceptions about contributing factors to their reading success, relationships that guide their reading practices, challenges that undermine their reading success, and how their relationship with their teacher affects their view of reading. If necessary, the participants had the opportunity to ask any clarifying questions to clear up any misconceptions before proceeding with a response.

All institutional identifiers were removed. Given the age of the participants, the interviews were no longer than 30-40 minutes. The responses from the participants were audio-recorded on the researcher's phone. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai, an artificial intelligence software designed to transcribe interviews or meetings.

The data collected during the study was stored in two locations: the computer hard drive and the researcher's cloud storage. Both the hard drive and the cloud storage were password protected. The laptop was kept in a locked office. The cloud storage will be stored for five years, and after that time, the data will be destroyed. All data will be always secured in a password-protected folder on the researcher's computer and in the researcher's office within a locked file cabinet. At the culmination of the study, the data will be maintained by the researcher for five years, which is the time required by CPHS and district guidelines. The researcher will destroy the contents of the file once the deadline expires.

Data Analysis

The process of developing clear statements into a broader description or explanation of a particular phenomenon that a researcher has examined is known as data analysis (LeCompte, 2000). Data analysis is a process for methodically ascertaining, arranging, and suggesting insight into various themes across a set of data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This study used the grounded theory analysis approach (Saldana, 2016). Grounded theory is a systematic approach to qualitative inquiry and requires thorough analytic attention occur by employing explicit types of codes to be ascribed to data through collective coding cycles that lead to the formulation of a theory that is grounded in the original data (Saldana, 2016). Data analysis occurred after each interview.

First, data gathered during the interviews was collected and transcribed using Otter artificial intelligence software. Then, interview transcriptions were printed, and the first step of analysis began using In Vivo Coding. The researcher read each transcription, line-by-line, or microanalysis of the data occurred (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Saldana, 2016). Words or phrases that needed to be emphasized were underlined, and participant-inspired codes were put in quotation marks in the margin (Saldana, 2016). Analyzing the

data using In Vivo Coding was appropriate for this study because it used the language that participants used to develop codes (Saldana, 2016). It also valued participants' voices, especially the voices of children from marginalized populations which allows adults to gain a better understanding of their perspectives (Saldana, 2016).

A theme “is an *extended-phrase or sentence* that identifies what a unit of data is *about* and/or what it *means*” (Saldana, 2016, p. 199). Therefore, repeated codes were organized into themes to categorize repeated ideas into “an implicit topic that organizes a group of repeating ideas” (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 38). Engaging in “themeing” the data was appropriate for this study because it is a phenomenological study, and it assisted in exploring the participant’s world (Saldana, 2016). Then, the researcher “looked for how various themes were similar, how they were different, and what kinds of relationships may exist between them” (Gibson & Brown, 2019, pp. 128-129; Saldana, 2016, p. 202). Themes were categorized by commonality and ordered in an outline format to delineate possible relationships that existed (Saldana, 2016). Finally, theoretical coding occurred to specify the “possible relationships between categories and [to move] the analytic story in a theoretical direction (Charmaz, 2014, p. 150; Saldana, 2016, p. 150). Patterns in the theoretical codes were analyzed using the perspectives of both phenomenology and CRT. By analyzing the data in that manner, the themes of racism, oppressive power structures, and how that intersected and impacted each participant’s experience with reading, I was hoping to gain a better understanding of Black boys' overall experience with reading (Pickett, 2022).

Qualitative Validity

When conducting qualitative research, it is important to use validation strategies to manage trustworthiness issues (Creswell, 2007). The responses received during the interviews were member-checked by having student participants review the preliminary

results and transcripts with a guide to enhance the accuracy of the responses that were provided and to help the researcher interpret the data. The benefit of member checking is that it can clarify any areas of miscommunication or misunderstanding, and to ensure that the participants agree with what was transcribed (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). Member checking is also a “way to validate the findings thus far” (Saldana, 2016). To ensure validity, data from the interviews were peer-reviewed by an established qualitative researcher. The benefit of peer reviewing is that the outside reviewer can challenge the researcher to offer solid evidence for interpretations and conclusions that emerge (Johnson, 1997). The purpose of the peer reviews was to gain feedback about the participants’ responses regarding their attitudes towards reading, reading class, and what motivated them to read.

Privacy and Ethical Considerations

Prior to the collection of any data, the researcher gained approval from the UHCL’s CPHS and the school district in which the study took place. All participants were provided with detailed information related to the purpose of the study and the interviews. Parental consent/student assent forms informed the potential participants of the purpose of the study, its voluntary nature, expectations for participation, and contact information for questions or concerns prior to collecting any data. The data collected will remain securely locked in a cabinet and pin drive in the researcher’s office. The researcher will maintain the data for 5-years as required by the CPHS and school district guidelines. After the deadline has passed the researcher will destroy all data files associated with the study.

The researcher used tactics to protect confidentiality during the qualitative portion of the study. The researcher did not collect data from students whom she taught in the past, nor did she collect data from students whom she was currently teaching. Interview

participants filled out and signed an informed consent form, which explicitly stated the risks and rewards of participation in the study. The informed consent form also described the methods that were used in the study and what participants could expect if they decided to participate in the study. Participants were made aware that their participation in the study was voluntary, and that their identities would remain confidential by using pseudonyms when reporting data. During interviews, the researcher strived to be as objective as possible. During the qualitative coding phase, the researcher ensured that subjective interpretations were not input as themes emerged. The data that was collected was stored on a computer hard drive and on the researcher's cloud storage. The hard drive and the cloud storage were both password protected. The computer was kept in a locked office. The data stored on the cloud storage will remain there for five years, then it will be destroyed.

Researcher Positionality

I am a Black woman who is a fourth-grade teacher in a traditional, public-school setting and am currently in my eighth year of work in the field of education. I have served as a classroom teacher and a teacher specialist and a librarian. Qualitative researchers must possess an understanding of self to create quality research. Both how I identify as a Black woman and passionate reader, as well as my background in education, will help me to develop a strong rapport with the participants, which will be ideal during the data collection process.

While conducting qualitative research, subjectivity is pervasive in all aspects of the research process (Peshkin, 1988). It aids in understanding why a particular topic was chosen, how the population was chosen to examine, the methodology selection, the questions that are asked, and how the data is analyzed. In short, we are driven by what we are passionate about. Conversely, it is important to maintain awareness of subjectivity so

that as conclusions are made in research, the findings can remain accurate, and effective recommendations can be made.

The entirety of my career has been spent working with students who are historically marginalized populations and attend a Title I public school. Throughout this time, I have seen how Black boys score on standardized reading tests. Some of these boys were subjected to disproportionate discipline practices earlier in their school journeys or after they were in my class, but not while under my care. Therefore, I chose not to interview students who are currently in my class or those whom I have taught. Some of these boys have had reputations that labeled them as class disruptors, disrespectful, or underachievers. I have been interested in the stories of Black boys because I can see how the educational system often works against their best interests. I have grown frustrated with the curriculum that is in place as well as the systems that exist that continue to hinder Black boys from achieving success in school and drive them toward the school-to-prison pipeline. This is an additional reason why CRT was chosen as the theoretical framework for this study.

The aspect of CRT revealing the nuanced institutional racism in the public education structure aided me in being more reflective about the biases that I have. The bias that I possess is ingrained in me, and it led me to select this topic to study further. While conducting this research, I have been enlightened, but I have also moved beyond my personal feelings and beliefs to look at what the data shows.

Black boys are generally perceived as being older. Therefore, to negate adultification and preserve their innocence, I opted to use the term Black boys throughout this study. Within schools and society, Black boys are typically seen as older, less innocent, more apt to claim responsibility for their behaviors, and exposed to punitive treatment (Ferguson, 2000).

Research Design Limitations

As defined by Price and Murnan (2004), research limitations are defined as types of design or methodology that impact the understanding of the findings of a research study. The research design consisted of several limitations. First, the most prevalent limitation was students not having a full understanding of the questions that they were being asked. A second limitation could be students felt uncomfortable sharing what their true feelings were during their interviews. Third, this study only focused on Black boys in grades 3-5, and it did not examine the full scope of their reading journey through secondary and post-secondary schooling. Fourth, a limitation could be that this study does not offer the perspective of Black girls and their experience with reading. A fifth limitation could be generalizability and that data from this study will only be generalizable to other districts with demographics that are like the one being used.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the reading experiences of Black boys in grades three through five, gain insight into what they felt contributed to their reading success, explore the relationships that influenced their reading lives, the challenges they faced, and their perspectives of the relationship they had with their reading teacher. This study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do Black boys in grades 3-5 describe their experiences in their reading classrooms?
2. What do Black boys in grades 3-5 perceive as contributing factors to their reading achievement?
3. What relationships, if any, guide the reading practices of Black boys in grades 3-5?

4. What specific challenges do Black boys encounter in grades 3-5 that undermine their academic success in reading?

This chapter identified the need to further explore the relationship amongst the constructs, and to gain more insight into Black boys' experiences in the reading classroom, the relationship that exists between Black boys and their reading teachers in grades 3-5, as well as the relationships that promote their reading lives, and the challenges that impede their reading success. Qualitative phenomenological data was essential to this study. In Chapter IV, the interview data will be analyzed and discussed in further detail.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the reading experiences of Black boys in grades three through five, gain insight into what they felt contributed to their reading success, explore the relationships that influenced their reading lives, the challenges they faced, and their perspectives of the relationship they had with their reading teacher. The researcher gathered qualitative data by conducting individual semi-structured interviews with the upper elementary participants who identified as being Black and a boy. The purpose of the interviews was to gain a deeper insight into the boys' perspectives on reading.

The phenomenological approach was suitable for this study to have the participants describe their lived experiences with reading and their reading classrooms. The interview transcripts were then analyzed using inductive coding through Dedoose software. This chapter presents a detailed description of the participants and findings for each of the four research questions:

1. How do Black boys in grades 3-5 describe their experiences in their reading classrooms?
2. What do Black boys in grades 3-5 perceive as contributing factors to their reading achievement?
3. What relationships, if any, guide the reading practices of Black boys in grades 3-5?
4. What specific challenges do Black boys encounter in grades 3-5 that undermine their academic success in reading?

Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach to seek answers to the research questions about the participants' experiences with reading and their lived experiences in their reading classrooms. The purpose of this study design was to gain new perspectives to add to the literature about upper elementary Black boys and reading. The fourteen participants were asked open-ended interview questions. The interview questions are available in Appendix C. The 14 participants were purposefully selected from a large suburban school district in Southeast Texas, were informed of the purpose of the study, provided with consent/assent forms, the interviews were scheduled, then the interviews were conducted. Each interview was conducted in the researcher's classroom. The interviews were digitally audio recorded using the researcher's iPhone, and they were audio recorded and transcribed using Otter artificial intelligence software. After each interview, the interview data was member-checked by having student participants review the transcripts with a guide to ensure the accuracy of the responses offered. An inductive coding process was used to identify themes that emerged from the participants' responses from the interviews.

Setting

The district utilized in this study is a large suburban school district in southeast Texas. The school district was comprised of 276 schools (eight early childhood campuses, 160 elementary schools, 39 middle schools, 37 high schools, 32 combined/other schools), employed 11,621 teachers, and served a student population of 196,943. Of the district population, 49.5% were female and 50.5% were male. There were 22.4% who were African American, 61.8% were Hispanic, 9.7% were White, 0.2% were American Indian/Alaskan Native, 4.4% were Asian, 0.1 were Hawaiian/Pacific

Islander, and 1.5% were two or more races. Additionally, of the population, 78.5% were economically disadvantaged, 52.7% were at risk and 8.3% were special education.

Table 4.1

District Student Demographic Data

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Female	97,604	49.5
Male	99,339	50.5
African American	44,123	22.4
Hispanic	121,786	61.8
White	19,035	9.7
American Indian/Alaskan Native	345	0.2
Asian	8,660	4.4
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	138	0.1
Two or More Races	2,856	1.5
Economically Disadvantaged	154,511	78.5
English Language	29,439	15.0
At-Risk	103,805	52.7
Special Education	16,238	8.3

Table 4.2 details the student demographic data of the campus that was obtained from 2019-2020 Texas Academic Performance Report data provided by the Texas Education Agency (2021). Of the campus population, 46.3% were female and 53.7%

were male. There were 33.9% who were African American, 49.5% were Hispanic, 10.9% were White, 0.4% were American Indian, 3.4% were Asian, and 1.9% were two or more races. A purposeful sample of Black boys in upper elementary school (3rd-5th) within the school were selected to participate in this study. The goal was to select 8-10 3rd-5th grade Black boys. The boys were selected based on the following criteria: being Black, and a boy, with a preference to boys who have experienced exclusionary discipline practices, specifically during reading class.

Table 4.2*Student Demographics of Campus*

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Female	344	46.3
Male	399	53.7
African American	252	33.9
Hispanic	368	49.5
White	81	10.9
American Indian Native	3	0.4
Asian	25	3.4
Pacific Islander	0	0.0
Two or More Races	14	1.9
Economically Disadvantaged	631	84.9
English Language Learners	296	39.8
At-Risk	544	73.2
Section 504 Students	25	3.4

Description of the Participants

A purposeful sample of 14 students who met the inclusion criteria of being Black and a boy were chosen to participate in this study. The boys were in either third, fourth, or fifth grade at an elementary school within a large suburban school district located in southeast Texas. The pseudonyms for the 14 boys selected for the study are: Abraham, Andrew, Amir, Brandon, Da'Mari, Ian, Isaiah, Jackson, Jaden, Jamal, Levi, Marcus, Michael, and Salim. The participants were also chosen based on those who returned their parent consent/student assent form that approved their participation in the study.

Michael was nine years old and a third grader at the elementary school. He described himself as being smart, strong, nice, and well-behaved. He said, “Since I want to be known as a good student in class, I behave as best as I can.”

Jackson was an eight-year-old and a third-grader. He described himself as a gamer and a good friend to other people. In terms of his reading abilities, he thought he was a good reader despite the difficulties he faced with saying words that he was unfamiliar with.

Abraham, a nine-year-old, third-grade student, perceived himself to be honest and pretty nice. He described his reading abilities as in the middle because he felt he was not that good at reading, but at the same time, he was good at reading. Despite this sentiment, he enjoyed reading because it kept him entertained.

Da’Mari was an eight-year-old, third grader who described himself as clumsy, yet smart. He found himself to be clumsy due to his ability to trip on everything, but he believed he was smart because he would tell his mom, grandma, and great-grandmother random facts. At the time of the interview, he had only been at the elementary school for a few weeks.

Brandon was a ten-year-old fourth grader who characterized himself as smart, playful, helpful, and talkative. He articulated that he enjoyed reading because it helped him to understand words that he previously did not know and to learn new things that helped him with homework or class work. During the interview, he shared that he spent an extensive amount of time reading at home and that his mom would often have to tell him to stop reading.

Jaden was a nine-year-old fourth grader who described himself as a good, fun, and always a happy person. During the interview, he shared that he lived with a tight-knit

family whom he loved. He also articulated that when he grew up, he aspired to either be in the NFL or go to the military.

Isaiah is a ten-year-old fifth grader who described himself as creative, athletic, and not so nice. He described himself as being not so nice because he would get annoyed easily, and his quick temper would drive him to get into fights with the other students, he would make fun of them, or do things to annoy them. At the time of the interview, he said, “I have only been in one fight this year.”

Jamal was an eleven-year-old student who reported that he was a nice person and very relaxed until someone made him mad. Once someone made him mad, he tried to rely on the strategies his mom taught him at home to calm down, such as meditating like a dragon or imagining that he was on a beach or somewhere that he wanted to be in his mind. If he could not calm himself down, or if someone continued to make him mad, then his anger would escalate. He shared that if someone challenged him by encouraging him to do something, then he would fight.

Ian was a ten-year-old who was in fifth grade and described himself as smart, kind of popular, had a lot of friends, and liked baseball. He voiced that he liked reading and shared that as he had gotten older, he preferred to read more chapter books. Although Ian liked reading, he remarked that he did not like reading books that were too long.

Amir, a ten-year-old fifth grader described himself as smart because he was good at math and reading. His sarcastic personality shone throughout the interview. For example, when asked what he thought his teachers felt about him, he laughed and said, “That I’m the best wide receiver in fifth grade.”

Salim was an eleven-year-old fifth grader who described himself as being nice, helpful, and athletic. He felt that he was a good reader if he knew what the material was

about. Overall, he shared that he enjoyed reading, and the proper environment either enhanced or hindered his reading experience.

Marcus was a ten-year-old fifth grader who thought he was playful, hyper, and friendly. He was an older brother; his younger brother was in first grade and attended the same elementary school. In terms of his reading abilities, Marcus believed he was a good reader, and reading was an enjoyable activity for him. He liked to read books about basketball, which is his favorite sport.

Andrew was a ten-year-old fifth grader who described himself as helpful, quiet, and kind. As a reader, he thought of himself as being in the middle. Overall, he enjoyed reading, especially funny books. He had an older sister who was in middle school and two younger brothers who also attended the same elementary school.

Levi was a ten-year-old fifth grader who characterized himself as a jokester. He identified as a student with dyslexia. Although he did not perceive himself as a good reader because of his slow speed in accomplishing the task, he still enjoyed reading.

Data Analysis

This study examined the reading experiences of Black boys in third through fifth grades, gained insight into what they feel contributes to their reading success, explored the relationships that influence their reading lives, the challenges they face, and their perspectives of the relationship they have with their reading teacher. The interview questions were drafted by the researcher, peer-reviewed, then the final questions were written. The individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. An analysis of the participants' individual interviews generated the data set. To establish trustworthiness while collecting data and during data analysis, the participants' interviews were recorded and transcribed, and pseudonyms were created and assigned. The study's credibility was supported through member checking and peer review. The

interview data was member-checked by having student participants review the transcripts with a guide to ensure the accuracy of the responses that were offered. The data were also peer-reviewed by an established qualitative researcher. Despite the many studies that are focused on the deficits that Black boys have in reading, this study was created to examine the reading experiences of Black boys in third through fifth grades, gain insight into what they felt contributed to their reading success, explore the relationships that influenced their reading lives, the challenges they face, and their perspectives of the relationship they have with their reading teacher.

Emerging Themes

The context of this study focused on the perspectives of Black boys in third through fifth grades and their lived experiences with reading within their reading classrooms. Each participant provided their experiences on what they felt contributed to their reading success, the relationships that influenced their reading lives, the challenges that they faced in reading, and the relationship that they had with their reading teacher. The interviews consisted of the researcher asking the participant open-ended questions that examined their lived experiences with reading. The themes that emerged from the interviews provided a comprehensive perspective of how the participants perceived their experiences with reading, their reading classroom, and their reading teacher.

Research question one focused on the participants' perspectives of their reading classrooms. Research question two centered on what the participants perceived as contributing factors to their reading achievement. Research question three concentrated on the relationships, if any, that guided the participants' reading practices. Research question four addressed the challenges that undermine the participants' academic success in reading.

The most prevalent themes that emerged from this study were (a) self-perceptions, (b) being a Black boy, (c) preferences, (d) the reading classroom experience, (e) reading habits, (f) expectations, (g) support, and (h) barriers to feeling successful in reading. The themes correlate to the research question that they provide answers to. The ensuing sections offer a discussion for each question and summarize the participants' responses.

Research Question 1

Research question one, *how do Black boys in grades 3-5 describe their experiences in their reading classrooms?*, was answered using a qualitative, inductive coding process. Fourteen participants responded to this question along with related interview questions. The inductive coding analysis generated four distinct themes from participants' responses about how they described their experiences in their reading classrooms. The themes were: (a) self-perceptions, (b) being a Black boy, (c) preferences, and (d) the reading classroom experience.

Self-Perceptions

The participants in this study were asked to describe their experiences in the reading classroom. Nearly all the participants used positive adjectives to describe themselves. They also shared the positive experiences that they had in their reading classrooms and how they felt when they were called on in class when they knew the answer and when they did not. Based on the participants' responses, they communicated how good it felt when they were called when they knew the answer. Conversely, when they were called on when they did not know the answer, it triggered negative emotions, like embarrassment. Through their responses, the participants illustrated their favorable attitudes and feelings towards their reading classrooms and reading.

Michael, a nine-year-old third grader, described himself as being "smart, strong, nice, and well-behaved." He offered, "I really want to be known as a good student in the

class, so I try to behave as best as I can.” The adjectives that he used to describe himself also highlight the efforts he put forth in class to be known as a good student.

He perceived himself as being a “pretty good” reader. He shared, “I can read high level words. I’m the highest reading level in Miss Honey’s class, so I’m pretty good at reading.” Michael stated that he liked reading because of the knowledge that he acquired, and the interesting book selection offered in his teacher’s classroom library. To him, reading was an enjoyable activity. He explained, “It helps my brain grown, and I learn a lot of new words every day.” Strategically, he also sought out books that were challenging in his teacher’s classroom library merely to see if he could read them.

Michael said:

She has all the books in the library. I just read. I try to find the high-level books because they’re the ones that are challenging. Like they’re challenging for people. So I want to see if I could read it. And I read a lot of high-level books and I’m very good at it. And so the next time I try to go on higher level books. So by the end of the year, I hope I can reach the highest books in the class probably.

Michael said that he opted for high-level books because of the level of difficulty. However, he felt that he rose to the challenge and that he was skilled at reading those books. He described himself as earning grades between 93 and 96 in reading and thought that his teachers perceived him as being “four out of five stars.” One star was extracted from his self-given rating because he did not feel like his voice was fluent enough when he was called on to read orally during class. He added, “So I sometimes have troubles reading, just fluently. But I know how to read the words.”

Jackson, a third grader, who described himself as a gamer and a good friend to other people thought he was a good reader despite the difficulties he faced with saying words that he was unfamiliar with. Jackson was unsure of what his teachers thought

about him, but he felt that they thought he was a good reader, just not good at speaking loudly. He said that he did not like reading and preferred relaxing instead. Reading was not his preferred activity because it felt like a waste of time with the other things that he had to do. Instead of reading, he stated, “I would rather watch the book on the computer than listen to it.” The aspect that he did like about reading was that it made him smarter.

In Miss Hamadi’s class, third-grade reading, he did not mind being called on when he knew the answer. If he knew the answer, he felt good about it. Conversely, if he was called on when he did not know the answer, he revealed that it made him feel terrible. Miss Hamadi showed her students that she cared about them by making sure that their voices were heard during class. For example, he shared “When someone interrupts me when I am reading, she says, ‘hold on Jackson,’ and then she takes a minute, and then I go again.” This small gesture demonstrated to Jackson that his teacher valued what he wanted to share with the class.

Abraham, a nine-year-old student perceived himself as “honest and pretty nice.” In terms of his reading abilities, he said he was “in the middle.” He said, “Cause I’m not that good at reading, but at the same time, I’m good at reading.” Despite this sentiment, he said he liked to read because “It keeps me entertained.” When asked what he thought his teachers saw when they looked at him as a student he said, “That I’m a good reader.” He shared, “All the time, they say me and like other people are the smartest persons in the class.” The rationale behind that statement was because of Abraham’s score on the practice STAAR Reading test.

Eight-year-old third grader, Da’Mari, described himself as clumsy. He explained, “Because I always trip on everything.” He added, “I would say smart too. I always tell my mom and grandma and great-grandmother random facts.” He had recently changed schools from another in the area. He shared that at his previous school, he was given a

reading report. “Well, in Treemont Elementary, they gave me my reading report and it wasn’t that good.” His perception of himself as a reader at the time of the interview reflected how he interpreted the report. He shared that he thought he was “kind of bad” as a reader. Regardless of that report, Da’Mari shared that he still liked to read.

When asked what he believed his teachers thought about him as a student, he responded, “I don’t really know.” This could have stemmed from his recent transfer to Stone Creek Elementary School. Despite not having a concrete thought about what his teachers thought about him as a student, as well as not knowing what he thought about himself as a student, he shared, “I raise my hand in class.” That thought illustrates that Da’Mari understood the norms of the classroom and potentially thought of himself positively as a student. When asked what kind of grades he got in reading class, Da’Mari replied, “B’s. Just B’s. I was a top student in second grade. I used to get all A’s.” The idea that his grades in reading decreased from second to third grade might have also contributed to what Da’Mari perceived about himself as a reader.

When asked to describe himself, fourth grader Brandon replied, “smart, helpful, and talkative.” To describe himself as a reader, he said, “a fourth and fifth grade reader.” He perceived that his teacher thought he was “smart, talkative, and energetic.” He elaborated, “Because that’s what I do sometimes in the class.” He also shared, “I think I’m energetic because sometimes, I like to get up a lot. Because whenever she says we can talk for two minutes, I talk really fast. She thinks I’m smart because I get A’s in reading.” Brandon’s responses provide a sense of self-awareness. He provided adjectives for his perceptions, and he offered a rationale for his thoughts.

Nine-year-old, fourth grader, Jaden, expressed how he thought his teacher saw him.

As a good and disciplined enough student because of the people around me and what they're doing when they're trying to make me do something bad to get in trouble. I just sit there and just wait until I can have instructions.

It appears that Jaden understood that he was not easily swayed by the students around him and that he could separate himself from what he found as problem behavior. To describe his abilities as a reader, he replied, "Pretty good. I'll probably still need a little more help in reading." Jaden shared how he interpreted his scores on a computer-adaptive, district-required assessment. "So far on all the tests, I've been in the blue. Trying to work up to the green." On the test, blue depicted students were not yet on grade level, while green illustrated students were at or above grade level. To describe how his teacher shared his scores with him, he said, "She gave us cards and what our reading level was. I think mine was like fourth, or fifth. One of those. And that's what books we have to read." Additionally, when asked about Jaden's class grades, he said, "I get A's and B's. Sometimes lower than B's." Jaden's perceptions of his reading abilities are demonstrative of how he interpreted his scores on the district's periodic adaptive test and his grades in reading. His teacher providing the scores and communicating what they meant further helped him to understand how he was performing in reading.

Knowing his reading level and knowing that he was on grade level made Jaden feel good. However, he did not feel limited by his reading level. He explained, "If you're fourth and fifth, you can go higher. But if you're like third grade, you got to do the third-grade books and then you can level up." Regardless, he shared that he liked the books or materials that Miss Abadi gave the students to read, and that he found them fun and entertaining. Adding that, the texts "tell you information you never knew about."

Jaden enjoyed the reading block in Miss Abadi's class. When asked what materials or books his teacher gave him to read, he said, "Sometimes I think we'll do

fiction books. And then we'll just do regular reading books." He explained, "She teaches you stuff that you never learned before." When called on in class and he knew the answer, he felt good about his response. He said,

I feel good about my answer. Like we had a book that we had to read. One short page. It's about to never give up. And my claim was to keep going and my evidence was that they were saying, in the book, that if you keep going and never give up, then everything you will do will always become better. And you always get better at it. To keep going.

However, if Jaden did not know the answer and he was called on, he felt scared and afraid because he felt like he was going to get the answer wrong. But when that was the case, he shared that he felt scared and afraid.

I feel like I'm gonna get the answer wrong. That's how some people just like me feel when they get the answer wrong. They feel like me sometimes if I get the answer wrong. I just take a deep breath and try to rethink my thoughts and get a new answer and raise my hand again.

In Jaden's eyes, his classes were interesting because of the information that they got to learn that he had previously not known about. Conversely, the classes were deemed as uninteresting when the class lost time off recess because "People always want to talk back to the teachers at lunch and also throw food and stuff." When asked how he felt when students talked back to the teacher, he said, "It makes me feel bad for how many days these teachers are sitting here with other students talking back." Jaden said he demonstrated respect for his teacher by remaining quiet and waiting for further instructions, therefore, having to lose recess because the other students were not adhering to expectations was frustrating for him.

To describe himself, ten-year-old, fifth-grader Isaiah said, “I like to run, and some people say I’m an athlete because I run fast, and I’m good at football.” He also viewed himself as “not so nice.” He shared, “I get annoyed easily.” Whenever he became annoyed, he said, “usually, I fight, hit, or just annoy them.”

In terms of his reading abilities, he perceived himself as being a good reader. He stated:

I’m good at reading. It’s just, I get tired. Especially in chapter books, how long I have to read. And then after every chapter, I take a break, and I end up forgetting about the book. And then that’s when I get irritated at myself because I keep forgetting about the book that I read. But if I keep reading it, my head starts to hurt, and I just fall asleep on the page and I can’t remember.

Although he struggled with stamina and comprehension, Isaiah reported that he did well in reading. He said, “I get high grades. I get 80s and 90s. Because Miss Ashbee never gives anyone 100s. She gives everyone 90s. She gives lots of people an 80, but no 100s.”

He was unsure of what his reading teacher thought of him because “She just looks at everyone crazy.” Further, he divulged, “I feel like she thinks about everyone the same way. Like sort of annoying and blaming.” He alleged that his teacher, Miss Ashbee, blamed students for things that happened in the classroom without having proof that they were the culprits.

She blames people even though she has no proof. Like just today, Marissa was doing her own thing. And then out of nowhere, she started yelling at Marissa saying that she stole something. And Marissa, she doesn’t steal. She just has her own stuff, so she doesn’t really steal and stuff.

In comparison, he shared that his math teacher, Miss Bowers, liked all her students and that she was a positive teacher.

Fifth grader, Jamal, reported that he was nice and relaxed until provoked which made him angry. As a reader, he perceived himself as being good. In her class, when he knew the answer, he voiced that he felt great. He stated, “Whenever you get called on and then you get it right, you get your fifteen seconds of fame. Flexing on the haters.” However, when he did not know the answer and was called on, he felt embarrassed.

He thought that his teachers viewed him as being talkative in class, but, at times, he was very good and a B student. He said, “At times, I could talk too much. But then, after they’re telling me be quiet and telling me to move my spot, then I get my day turned around.” He shared that he usually talked too much to the people that he sat next to in class.

Ian, a ten-year-old, fifth grader, described himself as smart, kind of popular, having a lot of friends, and enjoying baseball. To explain how often he engaged with reading, he provided a scale. He said, “On a scale of one to ten, I would give it like an eight and a half.” This self-provided score highlights that Ian frequently interacted with reading. Further, he shared, “I read both at home and at school.” Reading at home and at school allowed Ian to have a deeper relationship with reading as evidenced by his responses throughout the interview. When asked about his grades in reading class, he said, “90 to 95.” He perceived that his teachers viewed him as “fun, funny, smart, and helpful.”

I like to help out a lot with them. Because when they need someone to help them, I can like ask them for their permission to help them. And like, they view me as smart because like, you know, like, I can do a lot of stuff like quick.

If he was called on in Miss Ashbee's class and he knew the answer, he vocalized, "I feel confident because I might know the answer because I have like read certain types of books, and I can like connect them together." When he was called on and did not know the answer, he said, "I feel kind of nervous because I might say something on accident without thinking."

Ten-year-old, fifth-grader, Amir, initially described himself as "the number one wide receiver in my classroom." When reminded that the purpose of the interview was to elicit information about reading and academics, he altered his description. Then he added, "Smart. Extra, I guess. I do a lot of dumb stuff. But I'm good at math and reading." He also thought his teachers saw him as "The best football player in the classroom." When he was reminded again that we were discussing academics, he shared that he thought he was, "smart, focused, and hardworking." To add, he said, "Because in class, I'm a hard worker in class, and I'm at school most of the time, and I behave." Seemingly he perceived himself as smart since he believed he was good at math and reading. In fact, he expressed that he was "perfect and amazing" at reading. Further, he said, "I can understand reading. I know how to do stuff." The positivity that he felt towards reading stemmed from his perceived abilities to accomplish the tasks set forth for him by his reading teacher.

Additionally, he said, "I prefer reading. Math is hard." Amir shared, "I like reading because the books are cool. Fun." He felt that he read frequently but revealed that he only read at school. When asked why he did not read at home, he shared, "I'll play the game." Video games proved to be more of a source of entertainment for Amir and the way that he chose to use his free time at home.

Nonetheless, his grades in reading were unaffected. In response to a question about his grade in reading class, he expressed, "I think, like right now, my grades is like

the nineties. Maybe the eighties.” He shared that he felt good when he was called on when he knew the answer in reading class.

If Amir was called on and he knew the answer during reading class, he exclaimed, “Feels so good. Like, I figured out the answer before everybody else does.” When asked how he felt when he was called on when he did not know the answer, he said, “Lowkey nervous. I’m just gonna be stuttering the whole time.” There was a contrast between the confidence Amir felt when he knew the answer in class, versus his embarrassment when he did not, which illustrates that he cared about the way he was seen by others.

Ten-year-old fifth grader, Andrew, described himself as quiet, helpful, and kind. He perceived his reading abilities as being in the middle because he did not think he was good at reading. He shared that not knowing some words while he was reading caused him to take longer. Regardless, he expressed that he enjoyed reading, especially funny books. He liked Miss Ashbee’s reading class because she played music, and he could talk to his friends sometimes. He conveyed that he felt excited when he was called on during reading class when he knew the answer. He elaborated, “Because she called on me and I know the answer. And now I know I’ll get it right.” If he did not know the answer, he shared that he felt nervous. When asked why, he said, “Because, I really don’t know the answer and she just calls on me.”

Marcus, a ten-year-old fifth grader thought that he was playful, friendly, and hyper. “I’m a good reader. I like to read,” he responded when asked how he described himself as a reader.

Initially, he was unsure of what his teachers thought of him as a student. Then he divulged, “Mr. Cleveland don’t like me.” When asked why he thought that his math teacher didn’t like him, he shared, “Sometimes I do stuff.” In response to the vagueness, he was prompted to share what he thought made his teacher not like him, to which he

responded, “Sometimes, I used to be actin’ up.” Conversely, he described that he felt his reading teacher, Miss Rodriguez liked him. He shared, “She doesn’t care what sites I go on. And she’s a fun teacher. She lets us play all types of games.” Since Miss Rodriguez provided her students with entertaining gamified learning experiences, Marcus enjoyed her class more.

In reading class, if Miss Rodriguez called on Marcus and he knew the answer, he voiced that he felt good. He also shared that if he did not know the answer, he felt good, he added, “Because I don’t care.” To him, reading class was good or excellent because he had good grades, and, as he described, “Nothing goes wrong.” Initially, he could not explain why his experiences in reading were positive while his experiences in math class were negative, but he did mention that there was a contrast between the two. However, he later divulged that he felt he got in trouble more during math class. He said, “He blames me for everything,” referring to being blamed for events that transpired during Mr. Cleveland’s math class. Even though Marcus shared that he loved math and science and that was why he liked Mr. Cleveland’s class, he felt that he was always in trouble. He declared, “When I don’t talk, he will just call out a name. He’ll face the board and call out a name.” These responses demonstrate how Mr. Cleveland’s negative perception of Marcus caused him to feel as if he was the troublemaker in class.

Salim, an eleven-year-old, fifth grader at Stone Creek Elementary School perceived himself as nice, helpful, and athletic. To describe himself as a reader, he said, “Good, as long as I know what I’m reading.” Salim also shared that he liked to read. He illustrated, “It’s like, you stopped when you open a book, and you look at it. Like, it’s like you zoned into the book and you’re inside of the book as you read.” Zoning into the book and understanding what the text was portraying made reading more impactful for Salim. He also communicated that his highest report card grade was in reading. He

shared, “My highest grade is in reading class. I have a 95 or a 97.” Although grades can be subjective, the grade could also be reflective of Salim’s abilities.

Teacher Perceptions and the Impact on Black Boys’ Self-Confidence. A review of the literature conveyed that teachers’ perceptions were misaligned with Black boys’ self-perceptions. Throughout the interviews conducted for this study, the prevalence of confidence emerged. Participants shared various times when they felt confident while reading or during reading class. Some participants used the word confidence during their interviews to describe ideas centered around reading. Most of the participants shared how they felt good when they were called on during reading. They also shared how their teachers worked to instill confidence in them through their actions and encouragement.

For example, fifth-grader Salim perceived that Miss Bowers and Miss Ashbee thought highly of him. He stated, “They think that I have great potential and that I can achieve anything I put my mind to.” The way Salim’s teachers seemingly thought about him impacted his perception of himself and his abilities. He elaborated, “Because they always give me confidence when I think like I can’t do it or something. And then they help me understand the question that I’m getting asked.” He said that they show him they care about him because “They give me confidence. You can do this. And stuff. Courage. They give me courage and confidence.” He also felt that he had great potential. He vocalized again, “Anything I put my mind to, I can achieve.”

When called on and he knew the answer during reading, Brandon shared, “I feel confident, and I feel, like, proud.” He added, “Once I say the answer, and she says that it’s right, that’s when I feel very proud of myself.” If he was called on and he provided the incorrect answer, he disclosed that he would still feel proud. He shared, “That’s when I’ll know that the answer that I choose is the other answer, so then once I try again, that’s

when I can choose the right answer.” Brandon’s teacher telling him that he provided the correct response instilled confidence in his abilities. Even if the answer that he provided was incorrect, his teacher did not make him feel inferior.

Salim expressed that he felt good about reading class. He imparted, “I feel like it’s making me a better reader. Sometimes the teacher will suggest books and then I get a new book to read and it’s an adventure.” During reading class when he knew the answer, he tried to describe how he felt. He said, “I don’t really know how I can explain that.” When asked if it was a good or bad feeling, he proclaimed, “It’s like a confidence feeling.” His teachers imparting book suggestions coupled with the correctly answering questions in class helped Salim to feel confident in his reading abilities.

If Salim was called on and he did not know the answer, he said, “I start to feel like a little nervous.” The feeling was exacerbated if the teacher allowed the other students to shout out the answer and did not stop them. He went on, “Then my brain starts getting mixed up and it ends up taking a long time to answer.” As a result of not knowing the answer when other students did, Salim felt less confident and seemingly unsure. He did not want to display an inferior disposition, especially if the other students knew the answer when he did not.

Levi, a ten-year-old fifth grader disclosed his struggles with dyslexia. Although he enjoyed reading, he did not feel like he was good. He stated, “I enjoy reading, but I’m not very good. I can read, but it takes me longer than other people and stuff.” He also had Miss Bowers and Miss Ashbee for math and reading. When asked how he thought his teacher viewed him as a student, he shared, “I think she views me as someone that doesn’t show my full potential. That’s what I see.” When pressed on why, he disclosed, “I can lack on stuff, not doing stuff that I know I can do. I’m just not doing it because I can be lazy sometimes.” He also added, “Well, I’ve been told that I am not reaching my

full potential by my mom. My dad.” Levi’s perception of what some of the adults thought about him reflected his view of himself. Based on his responses, it was clear that he knew the areas where he struggled with reading along with where and how he needed to improve. Adjusting in these areas could have impacted his performance, the perceptions of those around him, as well as the perception he held about himself.

When Levi was called on during reading class and he knew the answer, he proclaimed “I feel very confident because I know the answer.” Knowing the answer and providing it to the teacher and the class made him feel good about himself and his abilities. In contrast, if the answer was wrong, he said, “But if she says it’s wrong, my confidence goes down.” Levi’s responses portray that when he understood the information taught in class by his teacher and provided a correct answer, he felt enthusiastic about his abilities. Conversely, when he provided an answer that was incorrect, it impacted his confidence.

Being a Black Boy

A review of the literature elucidated a plethora of studies that highlighted the negative experiences that Black boys faced in schools, especially in reading class. However, through the interviews conducted for this study, the fourteen participants shared their lived experiences at school, especially in their reading classes. Overall, 12 of the participants did not perceive that their teachers at their school treated them differently because they were Black and a boy. A few participants perceived that their teachers treated them differently because they were Black and a boy. Their responses illustrate how positive and negative encounters with others impacted their lived experiences. When asked how it felt to be Black and a boy at school, Michael declared:

I like being a boy because I’m strong. I can run fast, and I have the ability to do a lot of stuff. And also, Black. I like it because I’m introduced into a school that has all

different types of colors and I feel when I see a lot of Black people, I feel like I'm important. So that's what I love about being Black.

When asked what he sensed teachers thought about Black boys as students, Michael shared what he perceived his teacher, Miss Honey, felt.

Well, Miss Honey, she doesn't care about if you're Black or Indian or Asian or Spanish. She doesn't care about anything of that. She is just a person who thinks everyone deserves to be treated the same way. Because everyone in the class is always nice to Miss Honey, so Miss Honey is always nice to us.

Abraham, a third-grade student, perceived teachers treated the Black boys they educated fairly and similarly to how other students were treated. Similarly, third grader Jackson felt that his teachers did not treat him differently than they treated students who were of a different race.

Andrew felt that his teachers saw Black boys as being good students because, as he described, "most of the people that are Black are in our class, so it's good." As evidenced by his statement, the teachers were not treating Black boys differently than students of other races, and he felt comfortable because he was around other students who looked like him. Ian articulated that his teachers viewed Black boys in their classrooms as normal people. He said, "It doesn't matter whatever race you are. Like if you want to be a different gender or like a regular gender, like straight, it doesn't really matter. They treat you like a normal person. You're not anybody else." Ian's declaration shows that his two teachers treated their students with dignity and respect. His statement also highlights that his teachers have created a comfortable environment for their students.

Levi described that people mostly wanted him to fit into their idea of what it meant to be a Black boy. His perspective of other people's opinions of Black boys

centered around them being athletes or playing sports. Even though he enjoyed engaging with sports at recess, being an athlete was not his preference. On the day of the interview, another fifth grader was badly injured at recess while playing a sport as the other students stood by as witnesses to the incident. He said,

Well, mainly, people think I like everything that everyone else likes. Like yeah I'm really, really good at football and stuff like that. But I don't really like when it comes down to that, mainly because of the incident that happened today.

Furthermore, when asked how he thought his teachers perceived their Black boy students, Levi remarked, "Mainly, the things that I see on movies and like other shows about like people and stuff. They really have low expectations. I don't think my teacher has that. But other teachers I see have." When asked how that made him feel, he shared that it made him feel disappointed because "everyone should have the same chance to do something. Because I'm different doesn't mean I have no idea, and I can never learn." Levi's thoughts reveal that he had seen negative portrayals of Black boys in the media. Although he was thankful that his teachers did not treat him poorly, it was discouraging for him to know that people thought lowly of Black boys and their abilities to learn. Levi's expression regarding his abilities being seen regardless of his skin color, coupled with having dyslexia, embody Black boys wanting to be seen and valued for who they are.

Jaden detailed his experience of being Black and a boy at school from a respect standpoint. Referring to other students, he said, "They know how to respect me and everybody else." However, he expressed that if he was disrespected, he would not be mad, he would just need time to calm down and reapproach the conversation later.

Overall, he remarked that teachers had a good perception of their Black boy students. He conveyed the idea that his teacher, and perhaps his third-grade teachers,

cared about how they were doing in class. He said, “They should know how they’re doing in class.” He also depicted that Black boys were resilient, and their teachers should not give up on them. He said, “Once they get a low grade, they work on that thing repeatedly at home. And then once you see them come back, and they get a higher grade on that, you get surprised and shocked.” Jaden’s comments attest to Black boys working hard, remaining resilient and achieving academically, and demonstrating their abilities to their teachers.

For Marcus, being Black and a boy at school was difficult. He described, “I got moved to a different homeroom and it’s terrible.” He shared, “The other kids are mean to me. They call me bad words in Spanish.” When asked how he knew that they were speaking badly about him, he shared, “Because somebody will tell me.” As a Black boy, he was unable to assimilate to the culture of the classroom because he did not speak Spanish. This made him feel further ostracized from school and kept him from feeling like he was accepted as part of his class community.

When asked what being Black and a boy at school felt like, Jamal said, “It feels normal. Nobody really looks at me any more different than the White people.” Jamal also shared, “I have a Black teacher and like I never really get mistreated like that, it’s just normal. It’s just like it is with like the White students.” Jamal recognized the cultural match between his teacher and attributed the lack of mistreatment to their similarity.

One participant, Isaiah, expressed that he felt his teacher, Miss Ashbee, had a negative perception of the Black boys in her class which can be contrasted with what Jamal shared. Isaiah divulged that Miss Ashbee’s glare made him uncomfortable. He said,

She always looks at someone in a angry way. And then, she starts looking at everybody, and everyone may ask her, what did they do? They asked her is she looking at them all mad. Then she just starts yelling at us and saying we're in trouble.

Without an explanation for her facial expressions, demeanor, and yelling, the students, especially Isaiah were left feeling confused. When asked how his reading teacher's classroom environment motivated him to get good grades, he responded, "I don't know," which could be because he felt indifferent towards the environment based on the experiences he had. He added,

It motivates me to get good grades. Because, Miss Ashbee, like, it's not like she's trying to make us do bad things, but she's always angry at people which makes them not want do their work and stuff. But I'm trying to motivate myself to keep doing it, but she keeps getting mad.

Throughout the interview, he described mostly negative interactions with his reading teacher, who identifies as a Black woman. These interactions not only altered the relationship he had with his teacher, but it also impacted how he felt about her classroom.

He also shared what he thought his teachers viewed when they saw Black boys as students. He contrasted the viewpoints of his two teachers by expressing, "Well, Miss Ashbee, she just looks at me like weird. And Miss Bowers, she's just happy with everyone." As evidenced by his responses and recollections of various negative experiences with Miss Ashbee, it was clear that Isaiah did not think that his reading teacher, who identifies as a Black woman, possessed a positive view of her students, and namely the Black boy students in her class.

Being Black and a boy at school also includes the walk to and from school. Salim shared an anecdote about an uncomfortable confrontation with an older White woman when he was walking home from school as a fourth grader. He was walking on the

sidewalk with one of his classmates. They were halfway between the school and his apartment complex. They found a collection of brand-new composition notebooks haphazardly thrown in the grass and curiously stopped to look at them. He recalled that at the time, they were reading *The Landry News* by Andrew Clements, and they were trying to figure out what they wanted to do with the notebooks. He said,

The woman, she had came, walked up behind us and she started saying what do we do, and what are we doing with the stuff. Then we said we were trying to think of something to do with those notebooks 'cause they were brand new, like left in the grass. No one was there and stuff. And then she walked up behind us and stuff. Then she started taking pictures. And she says she's gonna report us to the principal and stuff.

This experience was alarming for Salim and his friend because they did not feel like they were doing anything wrong and that their actions were being misconstrued. He said, "It upset me. We almost did get in trouble for that. We weren't even doing anything." He also added, "I was kind of nervous. I didn't want to get in trouble." He was worried and nervous about getting in trouble and concerned that the lady was going to call the school principal to provide her with pictures of the boys that she had taken.

Salim shared that his dad educated him at home, saying, "My dad always tells me about art, about Black history and stuff. So they always say I'm a God and stuff." Therefore, despite the experiences he carried with him, when he got to school, being Black and a boy felt good because he remembered the affirmations instilled in him by his parents.

Preferences

Throughout the interviews, the participants expressed how they preferred to read whether that was independently or listening to a read aloud. They also detailed the genres

and books they enjoyed reading. Relying on their preferences provided them more autonomy over some areas that they could control in their experience with reading.

Michael shared that he preferred to read by himself. He articulated, “I feel like I can concentrate more and just learn new words.” Although Miss Honey led her students in read alouds, Michael said that by just listening, he was not acquiring new vocabulary, and he was unable to identify how to spell the words he heard. He added,

If Miss Honey or someone else is reading to me, it’s like I don’t even see the book. I just listen to it. I don’t know any words because I’m just listening to her. So I’m not learning any new words. She just says the word and I don’t even know how to spell it. So I like to read by myself because I learn new words every day by reading every day.

Therefore, he found independent reading more suitable than being read to so he could learn new words.

Jackson preferred reading by himself because of his peers’ distracting behaviors and excessive talking. He shared, “Sometimes when we have read alouds, other people just keep being distractive and then they always have to talk.” He also enjoyed reading digital and physical books, he even mentioned how reading books on district-provided applications on school-provided laptops were beneficial in helping him read. He offered, “I like picture books, but I also like apps I can enjoy books with no pictures.” Jackson felt that he did not connect to the books that he read or had read to him; he did not engage with books where the characters resembled his appearance. He said, “I just like books about animals.” His favorite book was a book about spiders that he found in Stone Creek Elementary’s library. He explained, “The spiders book I got from the library is my favorite because I like spiders and they told me about spiders I never knew even existed though.” This book was enjoyable because Jackson was able to read about a topic that he was interested in.

Jackson's teacher, Miss Hamadi also provided him with reading material and books that were on his reading level. He enjoyed the books that he was provided with because "They finally have color." When clarifying his statement, he said that when books did not have pictures in them, he would get confused. He preferred colorful picture books, not those containing black and white illustrations. "It shows me the detail, and it also stops confusing me," he said regarding books that contained pictures in color being his preference. Further, he felt that colorful pictures in books provided more detail and assisted in his understanding of what was transpiring in the text. "It shows me the detail and it also stops confusing me," he offered. Additionally, Jackson shared that he liked reading class. He said, "I like how our teacher reads to us cause if she didn't read to us, we wouldn't know how to read." As evidenced by Jackson's responses, he saw the benefits of having specific books and that his teacher demonstrated techniques for students while engaging in read alouds.

Abraham shared, "Miss Hamadi gives me fourth and fifth grade level books to read." He enjoyed the books and reading materials that he was given because he saw them as entertaining. He also said, "She read *Dragons Love Tacos*. And we know a lot of things about dragons." He stated that he connected to books "Because I always remember the books I read." Offering up what he knew about dragons, he said, "And then they told us not to feed dragons the green hard stuff." He said that he preferred to be read to "Because then I don't have to do all the work." He chose to read chapter books, specifically the ones that would allow him to earn more Accelerated Reader (AR) points. He was motivated to read the books that afforded him more points. To share his rationale, he said, "So I can get a lot of AR points and then be the people that have the most AR points on the board." He voiced that he liked reading "chapter books like *Captain Underpants*." However, his favorite book that was read to him was *The Girl Who*

Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin. He said, “because it inspired people to think positive.” Being exposed to a variety of books offered Abraham the opportunity to connect with both fiction and non-fiction books. Although he shared he was motivated to read books because of the points he could get on AR, this could also mean that he was picking from a host of genres and topics, which could broaden his background knowledge.

Da’Mari said that preferred to read by himself, and his genre of choice was non-fiction. However, when asked about the types of books that he preferred, he shared, *Nate the Detective* was his favorite book because “It was very pictured, and it was very good.” Additionally, he described a book that he enjoyed, but could not remember the name. He expressed, “It’s actually a fiction book. It was by the creator that made *Rosie Revere, Engineer*. It was very detailed. I like how it was kind of talking in riddles and rhymes.” Although he shared that he enjoyed non-fiction the most, during the interview, Da’Mari listed two fiction books that he enjoyed the most.

Da’Mari described that his teacher read books to the class like *Those Shoes* and *Not Norman: A Goldfish Story*. Despite Miss Hamadi’s efforts, Da’Mari said that he could not connect to the books that she read in class. Even when pressed on the idea, “Have you ever seen a kid and liked his shoes, and been like, ‘I wish I had some shoes like that?’” Da’Mari still maintained the idea that that experience was unrelatable.

Brandon said that his teacher usually provided him with chapter books or non-fiction books to read in class. More specifically, he was given a book about oceans. He said, “I enjoy the ocean books. And I enjoy reading the books that have a little bit of a twist at the end.” The real photographs in that book were interesting to him. He expressed, “Well, normally, I like the pictures. I like seeing what’s inside the book.” Further, he shared, “I also like the books that mostly show words and the pictures

equally.” Additionally, he was able to connect to the books that his teacher shared with the class during read alouds. He described, “It usually shows me something that I have like being playful and talking, like being helpful and caring.” Brandon was able to connect to the books that his teacher read because he resonated with the character traits that were displayed in the read alouds his teacher selected. When asked about what he liked about reading, Brandon proclaimed that he liked when his self-contained teacher, Miss Abadi, read to them. He made it known. “I like how she reads a bunch of books to us, and I like how she lets us read our books sometimes and lets us pick out a book.”

Jaden said that his favorite book was *I’m Trying to Love Spiders*.

You get to learn about spiders. It tells you facts about spiders. And it tells you how the person is trying to like spiders, not be afraid of them when they come up and try to be friends. And they’re like helping spiders. But it teaches you how you can help. Help spiders become way better.

His love for this book probably stemmed from Jaden’s love for exotic animals; during the interview, he shared that he had two ball pythons at home.

He said that he preferred reading independently, as opposed to being read to. He stated, “I’d rather read by myself.” This was his preference because, as he shared, “So you can focus, and nobody’s making me not be focused on my book and get me in trouble.” He also preferred to read fiction books because “It’s fun to see how good and funny the books are, by the way, because fiction means not real. It’s fun to look at these crazy stories that people made up.” He mentioned that he enjoyed reading fairy tales because those stories were fun to read also.

Isaiah also communicated that he liked picture books. Stating, “Some picture books you can just automatically relate to.” Likewise, he conveyed his adoration for graphic novels. His favorite book was *Extraordinary Warren*, a humorous graphic novel

about a chicken. He also said, “I like picture books. Because most picture books, you can just automatically relate to. And then, graphic novels, like, I like reading them, but I just look for mystery.” The plot twists in mysteries were interesting to Isaiah.

Additionally, Isaiah stated that he enjoyed reading, and he preferred reading chapter books. However, he shared “It depends on like, what kind of chapter books. I like mystery, adventure, and action chapter books.” Further, he said, “Mysteries always give you an inference about what do you think is going to happen. Adventure is just cool. Action is just interesting.” Adventures allowed him to use his imagination of what he would do if he were in that situation, and action books were just interesting to him. Regarding mysteries, he also vocalized,

Every time you have a mystery book, there’s no pictures. And it lets you picture the stuff in your head. And it makes me want to make an inference about what is going to be next. And I like to tell my friends and stuff what it is and let them try and make an inference out of it.

The strategies that Isaiah learned in reading class translated to his independent reading skills and made the reading experience more interesting for him.

Isaiah also shared that he did not connect to the books that he read at school. He used a district application on his school-supplied laptop to read virtual books. He shared,

Usually, like the virtual books – like, the ones on Amazing Books, well Forward Reading, they have some pictures. It makes me get pictures in my head. But Amazing Books, it like shows you a lot of pictures and chapter books, or mystery books. I connect to some of the library and the books I have.

The books that Isaiah had in his personal library were more of a connecting point for him as opposed to the digital books he interacted with at school.

Jamal's preference for reading fiction, anime, and graphic novels led him to discovering his favorite book, *Diary of an 8-Bit Warrior*. He shared, "I like the books that have pictures and words equally." He also liked that he was able to create pictures in his mind when there were not any provided in his book of choice. He expressed, "I like moving around the room to do my work because then, that's when it's going to be a little bit more quiet. Whenever everybody being good, we can move." His preference for completing classwork was moving around the room because it encouraged the students to work together and deterred them from just screaming the answers out.

Ian voiced that he liked reading, specifically, that he liked reading books like *Cameron Battles and the Hidden Kingdoms*. This book was his favorite because it is a fantasy chapter book. He shared, "It was actually pretty epic when they like fell into the portal, like picturing it. And then they're like fighting and stuff. That's what I liked about it." Ian expressed his preference for reading independently. He shared, "I'd rather read by myself because it's more quicker. If you put your finger on paper and then read, your mind will read fast." His response demonstrates the self-awareness he possessed regarding his mind's abilities to consume literature at a pace that was suitable for him.

He also said that as he had gotten older, he preferred to read more chapter books than graphic novels. He realized, "When I read the chapter book more, I can picture more than just a graphic novel. The graphic novel will show me the picture below, but the chapter book, I can see the picture if I imagine it." Ian's response demonstrates that the act of visualization made reading more of an impactful experience. He also offered, "I like to read the digital copies because they have more books than in the classroom shelves." Evidenced by Ian's statements highlights how he benefitted from the autonomy for students to self-select their texts and their preferred method for reading, virtual or physical copies of books, in his teacher's reading class.

Engaging in independent reading was more of Amir's preference. He did not like when his teacher, Miss Ashbee read to the class. He said, "Whenever she's like reading to the whole class, it sort of gets annoying to me. Like, it kind of takes too long. And she reads too slow kinda." Instead, he wanted to read picture books about famous people and sports books. He also opted for virtual books over the physical copies of book. He expressed, "I don't like reading the ones that like they give us, like the ones on the shelf. I don't like them because they're just not my type." Amir described that he chose different books when Miss Ashbee gave the students independent reading time. When the interview was conducted, he described that he read a cookbook earlier in the day. He explained, "I was looking at books and then I didn't see no books that I liked. I saw that, so I clicked on it." Without guidance in self-selecting texts to engage with, Amir's independent reading time focused on meeting the requirement of ensuring he was reading, but he did not purposefully choose a book.

Earlier in the school year, one of the school's interventionists was the substitute for the students in Miss Ashbee's class. Given that Miss Ashbee did not read aloud to her students, the book that the interventionist read, a version of *The Three Little Pigs* was named as one of Amir's favorites. He explained, "The wolf was funny. The pigs were funny, and they played the wolf." The version that the interventionist read was humorous enough and was entertaining to Amir. However, his example also highlights what the lack of reading aloud and exposure to new literature can impact students. Amir did not have many options to choose from because his teacher did not employ read alouds.

Salim contended that he preferred to read books on the computer because there were not many physical copies of books that he was interested in reading in Miss Ashbee's library. He said, "All the ones that she has, I don't really have any, like, interest in. I've read almost all – I opened almost all the books that she has on her shelf." Instead,

he said that he would use his laptop to venture to the district-provided public library application or use one of the other literacy applications to read. Reading on the computer was a preferable activity as opposed to reading physical books because, as he stated, “It’s like an unlimited source of books.” He tried reading a physical book called *The Donut Fix* that was in the classroom. He chronicled, “When I read it, I don’t think it was the book, I think it was like the stuff, like everyone else, cause, like the class, they did not stop talking. I think I just read the first 20 pages, but I couldn’t get into it.” Salim’s response showed that he if he was not able to connect to a book that he would abandon it to find one more suitable.

Further, Salim indicated that he enjoyed reading independently and being read to, but he could not articulate why he liked both. He had an appreciation for independent reading because that’s when he really started to zone in on what he was reading. He favored chapter books, especially long chapter books. He expressed,

Especially if they’re interesting. I can like zone into them for a long time. I also like bigger books that might have, like, little pictures per one to three pages, but mostly words. Cause those are more adventure like.

His favorite book that he read independently was *Leon the Extraordinary: A Graphic Novel*. He offered that this was his favorite book “Because it’s like a lot of things that happen inside the book. And then at some point, because I read at home, and then it was so quiet in my room, so I was really able to zone into it.” Reading at home, in the quiet of his room, allowed him to zone into the book and pay attention to the adventure. He also added, “I like adventure books a lot because then when I zone into adventure books, it’s kind of like I’m just in a jungle or something.”

Levi shared, “I like reading by myself. To explain why reading independently was his preference, he said, “I don’t want someone telling it because when I’m reading a

book, I like imagining other things.” To describe what he enjoyed about reading, he shared, “I like how it could turn into anything. A lot of plot twists. Most of the time, the books that I read are very entertaining. And I like the thought behind them. Why the author did that.” Levi’s response demonstrates how he infused what he learned about author’s purpose and plot in class and how that influenced his preferences and what he enjoyed about reading independently.

“I like graphic novels. I like comic books. That’s – I don’t really like chapter books,” he commented. He opted for graphic novels or comic books over chapter books. Chapter books were not his preference because, as he explained, “Mainly because they don’t have pictures. And like, it’s hard for me to like understand.” The graphic novel or comic book format helped Levi to comprehend what he was reading.

In fact, he explained that his favorite book was a graphic novel. He shared, “My favorite book ever that I’ve read is *Baby Sitters: Little Sister*. I really liked it.” When asked why that book was his favorite, he said, “I think I like connected to it because I like following after my sister. Whatever she does, I like kind of doing that.” The ability to relate to the character’s experience impacted Levi’s experience and helped him to identify his favorite book.

Marcus preferred to read independently. He explained, “When I read by myself, I don’t get sleepy. When people read to me, I get sleepy.” Regardless, he selected the books he was going to read because they reflected his interests. At recess, and outside of the school day, Marcus enjoyed playing basketball. “I love basketball. I like to read basketball books because I love basketball. I want to find out interesting stuff,” he shared as his motivation behind selecting texts. At the time of the interview, he expressed that he had just begun reading *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*. When asked what he thought about the book, he said, “It’s very interesting.” His rationale for selecting that

book was, as he shared, “Because I didn’t have any other book.” As demonstrated by his response, although Marcus had a method for selecting the books he wanted to read, he did not always utilize it.

Experiences in the Reading Classroom

During the interviews, participants explained how their reading teacher’s classroom environment motivated them to achieve and behave. They also explained the strategies that helped them in reading and how they connected to the texts that they read. The visualizations that they had in their minds also impacted how they comprehended and understood the text.

Michael described Miss Honey, his self-contained third-grade teacher, as being “very nice.” He described, “She gives us chances. That’s what I like about her classroom.” He found the activities that she planned for her students were interesting and could not describe anything he found uninteresting in her class. Michael offered, “We learn a lot of stuff. And we also do fun stuff.” He also added that Miss Honey was nice because of her concern towards her students when they were working through personal problems. He offered, “If we’re ever like sad, she’s always concerned if we have a problem.” Miss Honey’s classroom was also depicted as being “non-negative,” and that the walls were adorned with decorative posters which he felt were encouraging for the students.

Additionally, Michael found Miss Honey’s class interesting, especially reading due to his ability to read the words they were given. “I can read words. And I just think that Miss Harris explains it more better than any teacher I’ve ever had, I think.” The students in Miss Honey’s class were provided with curated options of books that were reflective of their individual reading levels. For example, Michael shared, “I would say

she gives me about level 50 books. Like fourth grade books. Or fifth sometimes.” He was provided with fourth and fifth grade books which presented a challenge for him.

Michael also appreciated Miss Honey for her explanations and instructional breakdowns of reading. One instructional strategy Miss Honey used was growing her students’ vocabularies. He said,

She said for the people who are good at reading, she said they already know the words. But Miss Honey says it for the people who don’t know because not everyone is good at reading. People have trouble so she does it for the people who don’t understand what it means.

During reading class if he knew the answer and was called on, he said, “I feel good, but she doesn’t call me much because she knows I know the answer.” Even though Michael was not called on often because he knew the answer, he said, “But I love when I get called on because I know the answer and I want to share my opinion.” Further, he added, “Even if I get it wrong, I don’t feel embarrassed.” To Michael, getting the answer wrong was an opportunity for learning. He offered,

I just think about it and I share my best opinion. Even if I know that’s not the correct answer. And she just tells me what it is, and I say okay, and I remember it the next time she asks anyone that question.

Michael benefitted from the strategy of having Miss Honey politely correct him or offer him the correct answer, then he would store that information and feel better prepared for the next opportunity that the question was posed.

Abraham found that his reading class was interesting. He said, “Because I get to learn new things.” When asked how he felt when he was called on in during reading class when he knew the answer, he said, “I feel kind of good.” He added, “But I just want other people to have a chance.” His response offers insight into feeling somewhat positive

about sharing the answer, but also, he possessed the self-awareness to not always want to dominate the spotlight. If he was called on when he did not know the answer, he shared, “I just like... I’ma think about it. I have to wait, and then tell her can I have a minute.” The strategy of asking the teacher for a moment to gather his thoughts helped Abraham in case he was not prepared to provide the correct answer.

Miss Hamadi’s classroom environment was motivational for Abraham. He shared, “Because she always says positive stuff, and she always teaches us new stuff. So if the STAAR test comes, we have to remember that.” Abraham clearly valued his teacher and her demeanor was conducive to his progress. However, he shared that her classroom environment could also be demotivating. “Because sometimes she’s not even there. And then, when we’re not that loud, she says we’re going to lose our whole recess.” He shared he was motivated to maintain good conduct in her class “cause if I be bad, she’s gonna call my parents.” Conversely, he shared, “and if I be good, then she might reward me with something.” Based on Abraham’s answers, the classroom environment Miss Hamadi created for her students held students accountable for their behavior, provided consequences and rewards, and a reading foundation for the state assessment.

“I can discover interesting facts,” Da’Mari shared as the aspect of reading that he liked. However, he did not find his reading class interesting, only his math class. He shared, “I don’t like reading class. I found out that math is actually easy. And the most easiest subject is multiplying, subtracting... well, all of them are easy.” In his opinion, math was the easier of the two subjects because of the tricks he had learned from his math teacher to solve multiplication problems.

When asked what he liked about reading class, Da’Mari offered, “The books.” Yet, he divulged, “I kind of don’t like the AR test.” Meaning that he did not like that his teacher included taking Accelerated Reader tests as part of their post reading activities.

He said, “I like taking physical tests. Not tests on the computer.” Some teachers use AR tests as a way to quickly assess students’ comprehension after reading a book, however, the routine was not something that Da’Mari enjoyed.

Brandon described reading time as “the feel-good part of the day.” He also shared that he enjoyed independent reading time. He said, “We finish our day early, and at the end of the day, we usually do social studies. But like before dismissal, that’s when we have independent reading.” The reading block of class and engaging in independent reading were two of Brandon’s favorite parts of class and when he got most of his reading accomplished. He felt that he connected to the books that he read at school. He said, “It usually shows me some things that I have, like being playful and talking, being helpful and caring.” Brandon identified the character traits that resonated with him, and that was how he connected to the texts he engaged with.

Jaden explained that his teacher approached behavioral issues with her students using various tactics. He shared, “She punishes us different. Sometimes she’ll take all of our recess away, or she’ll just give us three strikes. Once we get all three strikes, she will call our parents and talk to them.” He also said that his teacher’s classroom management involved providing students with extrinsic rewards in the form of tickets which motivated some students to adhere to expectations. At the time of the interview, Jaden’s teacher was throwing a behavior party for students. He shared, “We use tickets a lot. We used tickets today. If I couldn’t get five tickets, I wouldn’t be able to participate in our party.”

Furthermore, the environment in Jaden’s teacher’s classroom motivated him to get good grades. He shared, “If we don’t get something, the next day when we walk in the classroom, there’s a poster trying to help you.” He described that he was able to reference the anchor charts in Miss Hamadi’s room.

Sometimes, she'll take it down when you're doing it. Because we have this poster that we went over so many times to go on our questions. She told us we'll be doing that paper again sometime, but we won't have the poster we can use. We're gonna do it, and then she'll put it back up again.

Isaiah voiced, "Well, what makes Miss Ashbee's class interesting is we do Kahoots sometimes. She cuts it off, puts it back on when you least expect it, and that's when people start getting it wrong." In contrast, he articulated that what made Miss Bowers' math class interesting.

She lets us work as groups and move around the room. Like, not only with our table, but like move and work with anyone and then you can choose to work there. Sometimes she will let you listen to music while you're working.

Isaiah's explanation of the two classroom environments exemplifies what made students more motivated to complete their classwork. The way he conveyed Miss Bowers' math class appeared to be more laidback, while Miss Ashbee relied more on academic games to keep the students interested.

When we sat down to begin the interview, Isaiah stated that he was not initially with the pair of teachers, but his behavior became a problem with the other fifth grade teachers and students, so he was switched to their classes. Isaiah revealed that since the switch, that Miss Ashbee did not provide the students with books. He said, "Since my first switch to her class, we only read one book, but ever since then, we've only read two." His fourth grade teacher, Mr. Hernandez, read aloud to his students every day. When asked if he missed the daily read alouds, he said, "yes, and "that was the only fun part in the class." All in all, Isaiah shared, "I feel good about reading class."

A strategy that Isaiah relied on in reading class was attempting to focus on what he was reading. He shared, "I tried to ignore everything that's going on, and I just try to

focus on my book, but it's kind of hard because it's very loud." He found that it was difficult to concentrate sometimes due to the loud volume of the students in class. He conveyed that in Miss Ashbee's class students were yelling and cursing across the classroom. To explain, he said, "Everyone just starts screaming... Well, not everyone. A lot of people." When asked what his teacher did in response to the foul language usage, he offered, "She just looks at them. People just yell, curse, use curse words... She just looks at them, or just look at a random person. Then she just gets mad though. She just looks at them and does something else." He also shared that she would state the expectations, but students would not always adhere to them. He said, "She just tells us our expectations one time, but sometimes we forget it because of how much things she makes us do. Our minds will forget. We start doing something, then she gets mad." Isaiah mentioned that the expectations were different with his math teacher. He said, "Miss Bowers reminds us every day. Sometimes she gives us a lot of things, but not all at once though. Usually, we're really busy, so she just reminds us." Through Isaiah's responses, it is clear that being reminded of the expectations and the tasks they're supposed to be focused on helps him.

Jamal expressed that what made Miss Ashbee's class interesting. He shared, "Basically, like, we have a lot of time to read. Basically, I read all the books that I like that are fiction books. Sometimes non-fictional." Jamal communicated that they typically had to write an essay after reading a non-fiction book in Miss Ashbee's class, and that he did not find that activity enjoyable. He shared, "Up on non-fictional books, it's hard for me to remember." Comprehending non-fiction then writing an essay was practice for the state's assessment, however, the trial was not interesting and was difficult for Jamal.

Again, Jamal expressed that Miss Ashbee did not provide her students with books or materials to read. But, he shared, "Well, basically, we have a personal library. We

have a lot of non-fiction books, fiction books. Also, there's informational books as well." The classroom's library was where students were encouraged to select a book during independent reading time. Jamal shared that he enjoyed the book selection "Because some of them, they're about animals, people, and there's one that's kind of like anime." He mentioned that he connected to the books he read at school. "If I'm really interested, I'll probably read it. Like, if I'm really interested, then even if she doesn't tell us to write about it, I'll just write about it with my free time." Even though Jamal did not enjoy writing essays after reading a non-fiction book, if he found a book that he was interested in, he would want to write about it and share what he read with his friends.

Jamal also said sometimes his peers would come to him and ask him about the book that he was reading. He exclaimed, "There's a lot of people reading the same book that I'm reading right now!" As evidenced by his excited response, Jamal was amused at his ability to suggest a book that his peers also enjoyed. This also allowed him to connect with his peers in a different method and to connect over literature.

Further, in Miss Ashbee's class, Jamal recalled being praised when chosen to be the super student. He provided, "That means that you get some candy, or you get to go get like a toy or something." This reward was given to him because, as he shared, "I'm ready. In the ready to learn position. I have my stuff ready and basically know what I'm supposed to do. And basically, getting the questions right." Jamal also chronicled getting in trouble in Miss Ashbee's class for talking too much. "I usually get moved to the circle table where, like, people just sit there just to concentrate." He also offered that the circle table was in proximity to the teacher's desk which provided another layer of motivation for students to concentrate and focus more.

Ian believed that his reading class was interesting. "My class is interesting in a way because my teacher makes jokes. We learn a lot more subjects of the topics we've

learned before, and we get more like learning experience slash vocabulary,” he said. Miss Ashbee was also Ian’s reading teacher, so he shared that she gave them pencils, paper, and a book, then they were expected to write an essay about it.

Additionally, Ian stated that he liked the books that were given to him in Miss Ashbee’s class.

What I like about the books is that they’re chapter books. They give you the experience of learning and more vocabulary. They have more words that you can learn instead of just looking at them through pictures or just reading it like a graphic novel.

He also shared why he did not enjoy the books that his teacher gave the students. He said, “One thing I do not like it that we had to write an essay, but I can write an essay. It just gets boring after a while.” Again, although the skill was an important one to possess for the state’s assessment, the practices they used in Miss Ashbee’s class were not enjoyable.

Ian was able to connect to the books that he read at school. He offered, “I can, like, you know compare them together and how I do not like them and how I like them. Or, how they are the same and how they connect to each other.” Demonstrated by how he connected to the texts, Ian employed skills that he learned in reading to rank his enjoyment or lack thereof.

Ian also mentioned that he got in trouble during reading class when he argued with one of the other students.

We were in the line and they were like pushing me back and forth. And I was like, at first, I was like, I can handle it. It’s like, not that big of a deal. And then, after a while, they kept doing it back and forth, so I’m slowly getting irritated and annoyed. But I’m not like that type of person who will immediately start punching and stuff. So, I call the teacher over, they back in position, act normal... Then, when the teacher leaves, they’ll

start doing it again and again. So I start arguing. I tell them to stop. And then, but I didn't even do anything! So I like, I'm just mad at that point.

Even though Ian told Miss Ashbee, and she tried to resolve it, when her back was turned, the situation escalated. At that point, Ian took matters into his own hands, which then caused him to get in trouble.

When asked about his motive behind continuing to talk, Amir shared that sometimes it stemmed from being bored in class. He explained that he talked more in Miss Ashbee's reading class because "Sometimes she gets an attitude out of nowhere on us. I feel like she can just scream at us for no reason sometimes. It gets on my nerves." When describing Miss Ashbee's class, he added, "She can be very nice, and she can be not annoying sometimes." He also chronicled getting in trouble during reading class with Miss Ashbee because of his "disrespectfulness." When asked for an example of his disrespectful behavior, he said, "A lot of things. I don't know." Then he explained

So, it was me and this kid named Joseph. So, I think he said something about my dad, and after that, I went off. Joseph, last year, he was all quiet. But this year, he gets in trouble a lot of times.

In contrast, he shared, "In Miss Bowers' class, it's good. I don't do nothing in that class as bad. She don't get on my nerves like that." Amir felt that whenever he did not have a good experience with Miss Ashbee, it negatively impacted him. He explained,

Whenever she's annoying or something like that, like on a Friday... It's like, she gets on my nerves on a Friday, and then, the next Monday, I don't want to come to school because I don't want to deal with her today.

Overall, Amir's contrasting experiences in the classes demonstrate the powerful impact that a teacher can have on a student's attitude towards school, and how negative experiences can significantly affect a student's motivation to learn.

On the contrary, Amir shared that he found his classes interesting. He said, “I like the new things that they do in the classroom to make us have fun. To discipline us.” Despite explaining how he felt about Miss Ashbee and her class sometimes, his answer demonstrates that he recognized his teacher’s efforts.

In Miss Ashbee’s reading class, Amir said that she typically taught using the district provided digital textbook. He liked the books that they read from that textbook because they were intriguing. He offered, “The books are interesting. I like them, and they’re cool.” In contrast, he shared that he did not like some of the books. “Sometimes, they can be way too long,” he explained. He also divulged that Miss Ashbee did not engage in read alouds with the students. Connecting to the books was an occasional occurrence for Amir. He said, “Because they’re my type and they’re interesting. They have everything that I’m looking for in them.” He added that he was looking for the themes of the book which resonated with him.

Miss Ashbee’s reading class was interesting to Salim. He explained, “It’s interesting because she does something else, but at the same time, it’s a way of you learning.” Salim’s response demonstrates how he was able to identify how activities like Kahoots served one purpose, but also provided them with a learning opportunity.

In comparison, the class could also be uninteresting to him. “Whenever she’s trying to teach and everyone keeps talking and stuff, and I can’t hear,” made him disengage with reading class. Also in Miss Ashbee’s class, Salim said that at the beginning of the year, they used more paper, but at the occurrence of the interview, she was using more digital formats. He said, “Now we do Kahoots and Nearpods, and so it’s computers and books.” Salim asserted that he preferred completing reading classwork on the computer.

Salim connected to the books that he read at school and felt that he saw himself represented in the books that he liked. He continuously mentioned how the environment shaped his ability to read and get into a book.

Like when the environment around you is just quiet enough and you're somewhere peaceful, calm and stuff. Then you can really, really, like zone into it because you have no distractions around you. And then that's when you start to open your imagination.

Miss Ashbee's classroom environment motivated Salim to get good grades. However, he felt that if the class did not talk as much, it would have been easier to get classwork done, but they were unable to due to the students' excessive talking. He was also motivated to behave in class and chose to ignore others who attempted to distract him. Levi shared that he enjoyed reading class with Miss Ashbee.

Well, I mainly like my class. I like when she spices stuff up. Like, let's say you were just doing a boring thing, and like, let's say you're like adding in more than you would the normal way. I like when your teacher, like mixes it up and does something new with it.

As mentioned by other students who also had Miss Ashbee, they enjoyed when she demonstrated creativity to present material to the students.

Also, Levi felt that Miss Ashbee and Miss Bowers punished all students the same for committing the same infraction.

[We get punished] kind of more in reading class. But in math class, she's... I feel like, my teacher's more laid back. She'll let you get away with everything, but not a lot of stuff. But like, you can do something and there won't be a serious consequence.

He also added, "In reading, there's more of a bigger consequence. If someone does something bad, and someone else does a different thing, you'll get the same

punishment. Based on his response, Levi feels that his math teacher is more laid back than his reading teacher. She allows them to get away with some things, although not everything. He suggests that there are not always serious consequences for their actions, even if they do something wrong. Overall, Levi seems to feel more comfortable in his math class, perhaps due to Miss Bowers' relaxed approach to discipline.

Research Question 2

Research question two, *what do Black boys in grades 3-5 perceive as contributing factors to their reading achievement?*, was answered using a qualitative inductive coding process. The 14 participants responded to this question amongst the other related interview questions. The inductive coding analysis yielded two themes that were derived from the participants' responses concerning factors they perceived as contributing factors to their reading achievement. The themes were: (e) reading habits and (f) expectations.

Reading Habits

The responses provided by the participants elucidate the frequency in which they read and the books they connected with. During his interview, Michael stated that he read at school and at home. "But sometimes I don't read because I forget to bring books home. But I make it up the next day because I like to read." When he forgot, he would make it up with extra reading time the next day because he found reading to be an enjoyable activity. He shared, "I read every day."

Michael stated that his favorite book was anything in *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series by Jeff Kinney.

It has a lot of words, and it's challenging for people. A lot of people in my class said *Wimpy Kid* books are very challenging for them. The first time I read that, I wanted to see how hard it was and it really was not that hard for me. So I kept reading more and I just enjoyed it, and so, I don't know, I just liked it. It's interesting.

The other students in his class found the book to be too difficult to read, yet Michael wanted to determine the level of difficulty, discovered that it was not hard for him, then continued to read the series. Seemingly, this boosted his confidence in his reading abilities.

Michael also expressed that he enjoyed non-fiction books. He responded, “I like biographies, like about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks and stuff.” He mentioned, “I like graphic novels. I don’t read it all the time because like graphic novels, they don’t help your reading level. Doesn’t help your brain grow stronger.” Instead, he opted for chapter books or, as he expressed, “the gray books that just show the words” because they are “much more interesting to read.” In fact, the one thing that he voiced that was unlikable about reading was that some books were entertaining, yet they were not long enough. He was privy to lengthy entertaining books that also provided pertinent information.

When asked if anyone read to him when he was younger, Abraham shared, “my grandma.” But as a third grader, no one at home read to him. He said that he had his own personal collection of books. Although he has a sister who is in fourth grade, when asked if they shared books he stated, “no,” to communicate that they did not share the same collection of books. Then, he added, “I give some to her.” He also stated, “no,” when asked if his family went to the public library to check out books.

When asked how often he engaged with reading, Jackson stated, “I do read at school a little bit, but then I also read at home a little bit.” When asked what he did not enjoy about reading, Jackson responded, “It’s less fun.” The volume of reading that Jackson accomplished might have stemmed from his aversion to reading.

Jackson was asked if anyone read to him at home. As a younger student, especially during the pandemic lockdown, Jackson recalled, “My parents, and then, when

I was virtual, my teacher. Cause I couldn't go to school. There was COVID, so I had to be virtual." He also added, "When I was virtual, my teacher was not able to read to me since I could not see the board." Now that he was older and no longer attending virtual school, his parents no longer read to him. He shared that he did not venture to the public library, but he said, "I have my own collection of books at home." Access to books did not impact Jackson's motivation to read.

In terms of how often he read, Jaden shared, "I read two to three times a day." Although Miss Abadi, gave the students time to read in class, Jaden expressed, "I mostly read at home. Sometimes we barely have time to read in class because we have a lot of stuff." When he was younger, Jaden said, "My mom would usually read to me before bed." However, now that he was older, he shared, "Sometimes I read to myself." Since he compensated for lost reading time at school, making up for it by reading to himself at home was a plausible solution for Jaden.

At the time of the interview, Jaden's family was preparing to move to a different part of the city. On having his own personal collection of books, he offered, "Yeah, but we just haven't gotten done unpacking." In terms of going to the public library to select books, Jaden answered, "I go, usually, I only go like one time. That'd be like Saturday, Sunday... Whichever day she feels like taking us to the library." Based on his responses, it appears that Jaden's mom was a motivating force behind getting her son to read. Providing books for Jaden's personal collection of books and taking him to the library demonstrated that she prioritized his access to texts and encouraged the exposure to books.

Ian was asked if someone read to him at home when he was younger. He replied, "My mom and sister." Nevertheless, now that he was older, no one read to him. He also shared about the collection of books that he had.

I have a lot! I have an entire collection of books on a shelf! I have a manga collection, chapter collection, graphic novels like *Dog Man*, and other stuff. How to – like certain types of books, Harry Potter... and everything.

He added that if he did not have a book that he wanted that his dad would take him to the public library so that he could read it. When Ian described his collection of books, he enthusiastically shared the texts he possessed. This enthusiasm encapsulated his zeal for reading, as well as the ability to have his own books to choose from.

As a fifth grader, Isaiah shared that his reading habits changed. When asked how often he read, he reported, “I don’t read as often anymore because I usually forget about it.” To describe his personal collection of books, he shared, “We have to sort the books out because I have over 100 books on my bookshelf.” Further, when asked if he connected to the books he read, he stated, “no.” However, he articulated that he visualized the texts that he did engage with at school while on the district’s digital platform. On reading digital books he said, “It makes me get pictures in my head.” Despite having many books in his personal collection at home, he chose to use his time in other ways. He chose not to engage with the books from the collection that he had at home as often as he did with the digital texts that were on the application he used at school. Although he had the access to virtual books at school and articulated that he had many books at home, that was not enough to motivate Isaiah to engage with reading consistently.

Isaiah also shared that he was reading a book at home called *The Diamond of Darkhold*. He said, “I am connected with it because it’s already like a mystery.” The freedom to select the books that he wanted and the format that he preferred allowed Elijah the opportunity to engage with texts that were interesting to him when he did feel like reading. At the time of the interview, he had recently begun the book and stopped

after chapter one, adding, “I don’t read as often anymore, so my brain gets tired fast.” He declared, “Sometimes I feel like being read to because, usually when I read by myself, my stamina just falls.” Despite that, what he enjoyed about reading was, “How you can picture stuff in your head while you read the book.” Although he did not engage with reading as much as he used to, Isaiah was aware that visualization was an important component of reading.

Amir was asked if someone read to him when he was younger. He offered, “My mom.” Conversely, as a fifth grader, his mom no longer read to him. He also shared that he had his own personal collection of books at home. When asked more about the collection of books, he explained that the books were not for him and his brother. Rather, “It’s like everybody in the house. The books are old. For grown ups.” Since the books were not appropriate for the school age boys, this provided Amir with another reason to use his phone, play video games, and not engage with reading.

Marcus recalled that when he was younger, nobody read to him. Adding that now, “I read by myself.” Despite that, he shared that he read to his little brother who is in first grade. “I have to read him little books even though he don’t pay attention to them.” Even though his brother enjoyed the experience, Marcus shared that he would almost inevitably fall asleep, a struggle he faced when listening to other people read to him. Offering, “When people read to me, I get sleepy.” Furthermore, he shared that the pair of boys and their family did not have a personal library or collection of books at home, nor did they take trips to the public library.

When Jamal was younger, his mom would read to him. He has an older brother and a younger sister. As a fifth grader, he shared that nobody read to him, however, he shared that he read to his sister. He recounted, “Remember the books they gave us over the summer? I had read mine already. They gave us books over the summer, and I read

those to her,” referencing reading books the school provided each student to counter the summer slide. He also shared that the family shared a collection of books at home. “I have a TV stand and like you have like the little drawers. And then I have a lot of books.” Despite not having an actual bookshelf, the makeshift one was suitable for holding Jamal’s collection of books. When asked if he went to the public library, Jamal stated, “I don’t really go. Well, basically, my mom buys some books, or like we’ll go to the store look at some books.”

Salim shared that reading “puts him in another dimension.”

It’s like in some movies, how people, when they’re reading a book or something. They just get pulled into the book. It’s like that’s how it feels. And it feels especially fun when it’s adventure.

Salim’s statements about his positive feelings towards reading demonstrate his ability to visualize. The simile he provided about being pulled into the book encapsulates how transformative and enjoyable reading is for him.

Expectations

Throughout the interviews, the participants shared how their family’s expectations were consistent with what their teachers expected. Further, they shared how the expectations encouraged them to continue striving. Da’Mari disclosed that his family’s expectations and his teachers’ expectations were similar. When asked what his teachers’ expectations were for his learning, he shared, “For me to get smarter.” When asked what his family’s expectations were for his learning, he shared, “The same thing, same thing... to get smarter.” Da’Mari was able to clearly articulate the consistency between his family’s expectations and his teachers. As evidenced by his responses, he understood that both parties wanted him to increase his knowledge and become smarter.

Jaden explained what his fourth grade teacher, Miss Abadi's expectations were for her students. He said, "She wants us to learn. She wants us to pay attention." But Jaden explained, "Some people just don't decide to listen to Miss Abadi. They just turn to their tables, yell across the room at other people. That's what they do when they're roasting each other." Although Miss Abadi communicated her expectations and what she wanted the students to do, he communicated that some students decided to not adhere to the expectations.

Salim understood his teacher's expectations in reading class. Speaking of all the reading teachers he had, and not just Miss Ashbee, he shared, "They'll give me some of the biggest books in the class, and they'll say, do you want to read this? I usually say yes." When asked about his family's expectations for his learning, he remarked, "They don't think, they *know* I'm going to achieve. I'm going to achieve high things. They have high expectations. High hopes for me." His family would tell him, "If you want to do this when you grow up, then you have to practice it while you're younger." He said, "They'll make me do it sooner, so I know what to expect when I get older." The expectations that Salim's teachers and family communicated to him demonstrate they recognize he is capable and want to see him do well in school and later in life.

Regarding his teachers' expectations, Jamal shared, "Since I'm a really smart kid, they expect me to get A's and B's. And also, for me to stop doing all of that stuff that I do, and then try to do my best in class and then get better grades." Although he did not elaborate on what he meant when he used the word "stuff," one could infer that he was referring to the behavioral issues that plagued him and had sent him to the office the day of the interview.

Jamal's shared that his family's expectations for his learning were, "To get good grades. Read for 30 minutes to an hour a day." More specifically, his mom expected him

“to be good, to not misbehave in class, and get grades. She expects me to be good, like really good.” Referencing the computer adaptive test that students in the district were required to take, he added, “And also, you know like the test that we got, right? She expects me to do good because I’m a smart kid.” He was motivated to get good grades. He shared, “I try to get good grades, because if I don’t get good grades, I’m gonna get in trouble.” Jamal also communicated that when he did misbehave, his teacher would call his mom which demonstrates the boundary that had been set for Jamal to adhere to the expectations. As evidenced by Jamal’s responses, he knew the expectations his mom and teachers maintained for his behavior and academics. Further, the expectations were consistent between what his mom and teachers expected.

Levi communicated, “I feel like my reading teacher has, I think, a little too high expectations.” When asked to elaborate, he shared, “Because like, she’ll like give me like, harder questions, and I can’t really answer that.” To infer, this could have been from dyslexia. In contrast, he shared his math teacher’s expectations. “They’re pretty standard. There’s not really anything she’s gonna ask me. She knows I can struggle in it a little bit, so she offers a little more help.” As elucidated by Levi’s responses, he was aware that Miss Bowers, his math teacher, understood his struggles academically and provided more assistance to help him feel more successful with the content. Conversely, he thought that Miss Ashbee did not fully understand his capabilities in reading.

To add, Levi shared his family’s expectations for his learning. He expressed, “My mom’s expectations are whatever my expectations are for myself. So is my dad’s. So if I have high expectations for this, he’s gonna have high expectations for that.” When asked why his parents’ expectations mirrored his, he said, “Well, I think that my parents are really on my level because they’re both dyslexic like me, and they can both relate to the stuff I’m struggling with.” Levi’s supportive parents were impactful to him because they

understood what it was like to be a student with dyslexia. From his responses, it was clear that Levi's parents maintained achievable expectations for his academic achievement.

Marcus's family's expectations when he came to school centered around keeping him out of trouble. He shared that his family's expectations were, "Don't say anything to Mr. Cleveland because he – they have a problem with him also." He felt that both of his teachers, math and reading, wanted him to do well. When asked how the pair demonstrated what they expected, he shared, "They don't tell me what to do, they just want me to do it right away." The expectations stated by Marcus's parents demonstrate that they did not want him to be disrespectful to his teacher, despite his sentiments that his teacher did not like him. Further, Marcus had a clear understanding of what his teachers expected him to do, he knew that he was expected to adhere to expectations even if they were not always explicitly stated.

Research Question 3

Research question three, *what relationships, if any, guide the reading practices of Black boys in grades 3-5?*, was answered using a qualitative inductive coding process. The 14 participants responded to this question and other related interview questions. The inductive coding analysis generated one theme which was derived from the participants' responses about the relationships, if any, that guided their reading practices. The theme was (i) support.

Support

Through the interviews conducted for this study, the participants described the support they received from their families, their teachers, and the administrators at the elementary school.

Family Support. Jaden's family, consisting of his mom, brother, sister-in-law, sister, and dad were all described as being supportive and encouraging him to do well in

school. When asked who wanted him to do well in school, he offered, “Mostly my mom. Like, mostly all my people. My brother, my sister, my sister-in-law, and my parents, my dad and my mom.” To elaborate on how they offered their support he added, “When I come home with my report card and I have a bit of a low grade, they talk to me about how I can get better and what I need to do to get better.” But, if he came home and his report card had all A’s on it, he shared, “They give me a high five, and we go get ice cream.” Jaden’s family having a conversation with him that encouraged his academic success and celebrating his grades demonstrate that his family supported his academic achievement.

When asked about familial support, Michael channeled that his family wanted him to succeed. He offered, “My mom wants me to be good at class. My dad wants me to be good at science and math because I want to become a doctor when I grow up.” As evidenced by Michael’s response, it was clear that his parents not only supported his future career, but they were also going to support him in his current academic endeavors and encourage his success along the way.

Ian shared that his dad was also one of his biggest supporters. About his dad, Ian said, “He wants me to get good grades, go higher up, and be the best at what I’m doing.” By vocally expressing what and how he expected his son to achieve, Ian’s dad was demonstrating support for his son.

School Support. Abraham felt that his teachers demonstrated that they cared about him and wanted him to do well “because they always treat us equally and fair.” This was made apparent to him because he said, “They don’t always tell us bad stuff. They also tell us positive stuff.” Abraham’s responses convey that he felt supported by the encouragement that his teachers provided. As mentioned earlier, Abraham’s teacher, Miss Hamadi, allowed him to put his head down when he was frustrated. He shared,

“Whenever reading is hard for me, I just put my head down for a while.” When asked if his teacher allowed him to use this tactic, he said, “Yeah, but I just need to ask her.”

Allowing Abraham to take the time that he needed to self-regulate before returning to the lesson also demonstrates the support that Miss Hamadi showed towards Abraham. This gesture, although seemingly minute, provided Abraham a safe space.

Jackson described receiving reading interventions during virtual school in the height of the pandemic when he was in first grade. He shared, “I got into Literacy Lovers. And then, Mrs. Henderson had other kids too, and then, we started working on our vowels and other stuff, and then, that helped me read.” To describe the reading interventions he received, Jackson added, “I actually loved it though.” Two years later, he is still receiving assistance from Mrs. Henderson, a Literacy Lovers interventionist, who has helped him learn strategies that have strengthened his reading. He also added, “My parents, my teacher, and the rest of my family members want me to do well in school.” Jackson’s responses portrayed the support that he received, and how the adults in his life wanted him to do well.

Da’Mari was asked who encouraged him to succeed at school. His response was, “Mrs. Macedonia.” He felt his math teacher, Mrs. Macedonia supported him and encouraged him to succeed in school. He also added “The counselor,” referring to the counselor at Stone Creek Elementary School was an adult who helped him the most at school. He did not mention his reading teacher, but he also conveyed negative feelings towards reading during the interview. His indifference towards reading class could have stemmed from his attendance at various schools throughout the school year and those prior. During the interview, it was brought up that he had already attended two different schools since first grade.

Jaden felt that Miss Abadi shared her support for her students by offering help when they needed it. He said, “Every time we don’t understand something, she’s always there to help you and to inform you about some stuff that you missed to help you out.” He also offered, “One time, we were doing a reading assignment where we had to like write some stuff down on paper. And I would go to her like three or four times to ask for help to understand it.” When asked if he thought his teacher was patient, Jaden replied, “She’s patient, so she can help me understand what I’m trying to do. Through his response, it is apparent that the assistance she provides encourages her students and guides them in learning what they need.

Jaden also described receiving support from his friends at school. Even though he perceived himself as being disciplined, he shared that he would get angry at recess sometimes. “But then, my friends, they know if I fight someone, they’re not gonna like it. So, they’ll grab my arms, and they’ll pull me back.” His friends not only encouraged good behavior at recess but in the classroom too. He shared that he sat next to his friends sometimes in class, at a table near Miss Abadi, and they would hold each other accountable for paying attention and getting their work done. When the students were talking about each other across the classroom, he said, “We just sit there. Me and my friends at our table. We just sit there at our tables right by the teacher’s desk and ignore what’s going on.” Jaden’s response demonstrates that instead of aligning himself with the students who were disrupting the environment, that he chose to be with the individuals who were taking their academics seriously.

Brandon felt that his teacher showed that she cared about her students and displayed support in a different way. He shared, “She usually lets us party. And sometimes she lets us go on different websites for maybe four, five, or ten minutes.” Providing her students with celebrations and time to unwind was a way that Miss Abadi

was able to show support to her students for following expectations. Brandon also appreciated his teacher's sense of humor sharing, "Whenever we're at dismissal, sometimes she gives us Starburst. And then, the funny part is when she says, I know I'm a nice teacher." He also shared, "She always smiles whenever she sees us off." These gestures demonstrated to Brandon that his teacher supported and cared about him.

Ian also felt that his teachers showed that he cared about him because of the rewards that they provided the students. He said, "My teachers show that they care about me in a way, they will reward you, or they will call you out for a good answer." Ian's fifth grade teachers used rewards and accolades to support their students. However, Ian also shared that when the teachers would sometimes require support also. He said, "If they need help with something like decorating, they will ask for your help because they know you will do something correctly." This reciprocal relationship demonstrates that the teachers also wanted the students to feel like connected and appreciated.

Due to his behavior, Isaiah had contact with the principal and assistant principal. He said, "Sometimes I've had to talk to the principal. I've been there like four or five times. I forgot why, and the assistant principal was because [one of my peers] made me angry." He added, "She didn't really do anything. All she did was talk." Although consequences for his actions were not administered, Isaiah appreciated that the assistant principal took time to talk to him. He also recounted, "Well, [Mrs. Johnson] just made me stay in her office the rest of the day. She talked to me and then called my parents. One time, she made me stay in there the rest of the day." Being sent to the principal's office is usually seen as an undesirable occurrence, however, the experiences that Isaiah disclosed about administrator contact did not negatively impact him.

Unlike his previous years at Stone Creek Elementary School, Salim shared he only had to speak to an administrator this school year as a witness and not because he

was in trouble. He shared, “Jamal and [Anthony] had got into a fight. So Ms. Garrett (another administrator) got four witnesses, and I was one of them. I felt really comfortable because Mrs. Kethan (the principal) was being really nice while I was explaining.” He also added that Mrs. Kethan was impactful in keeping the students safe. Referencing the student being injured at recess while also highlighting the adults who had helped him the most at Stone Creek Elementary School, he shared, “Mrs. Kethan and Miss Bowers have helped me the most. Mrs. Kethan, she shut down football because the whole student broke his wrist thing, but she’s just trying to keep us safe. But, Miss Bowers will help us with anything we don’t understand.” Salim’s responses demonstrate an awareness and an appreciation for the support that the principal and his teacher provided him. He was able to rationalize Mrs. Kethan’s perspective for taking away football as a recess option, but he was also grateful for the assistance that his math teacher offered.

Amir shared that he had to talk to the principal and assistant principal multiple times throughout the school year because of his behavior or involvement in events that had transpired. Unlike other participants, Amir felt that the conversations that he had with the two administrators were negative. Describing one instance where he spoke to them, he said, “It was bad. They thought that I did it the whole time. And I don’t think they figure out who did do it thought. But it wasn’t me.” When asked if he liked the assistant principal, he said, “Kind of sometimes. Sometimes she can be annoying. Sometimes she can be good.” Upon asking if he liked the principal, he said, “Oh no. You just have no idea.” When asked if he had any good conversations with the principal, he said, “No.” The only conversations they engaged in were when Amir was in trouble. Regardless of those negative interactions, he still believed that the principal and assistant principal had supported him. He was asked about the adults that helped him the most at school, and he

responded, “Mrs. Walker (assistant principal) and Mrs. Kethan (principal) with my behavior, and Miss Bowers and Miss Ashbee on my math and reading.” Amir's responses convey that he understood Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Kethan’s responsibilities to hold him accountable for his behavior. He also demonstrated an awareness of how the lessons Miss Bowers and Miss Ashbee taught helped to develop his math and reading skills. He also felt that the teachers’ classrooms motivated him to get good grades. He said, “It motivates me because sometimes I can do bad on the test, but it, that gives me a little bit of motivation to keep going to do better on the next one.” The supportive environment encouraged Amir to continue striving to achieve academically and behaviorally.

Jamal shared, “My teachers and also all the administrators,” were the adults who helped him the most at school. At the time of this interview, Jamal was brought from the office because he was due to be suspended for three days for engaging in an altercation. Nevertheless, he felt encouraged by the principal and assistant principal to improve his behavior. He said, “They expect me to do well because they said every time I get in fights, or every time I get in trouble in class, they said I’m the only person that takes in and actually tries to do better.” Therefore, he felt supported by the school administrators.

Research Question 4

Research question four was *what specific challenges do Black boys encounter in grades 3-5 that undermine their academic success in reading?*. The 14 participants responded to this question and other related interview questions. The inductive coding analysis yielded one theme based on participant responses: (j) barriers to feeling successful in reading.

Barriers to Feeling Successful in Reading

As evidenced by a review of the literature, there are many barriers that can hinder Black boys from feeling successful in reading. Participants mostly discussed how

vocabulary and issues with comprehension posed as barriers to feeling successful in reading. These difficulties were usually combated with strategies that their teachers had taught them either in previous years or in their current grade.

To begin with, Abraham already did not feel that he was good at reading. He described himself as being in the middle, he felt that he was not that good, but he did feel that he was good in some areas. To describe a barrier that hindered him from feeling successful with reading, he shared, “Sometimes I don’t know the words. And then I struggle, and then I get mad at myself.” He also added, “Sometimes I get stuck on a word, but whenever I sound it out, I can still get it right.” The strategy that he relied on, sounding the word out, helped him to still get it right and to move beyond the obstacle. Further, he added, “Whenever reading is hard for me, I just put my head down for a while.” He expressed that he had permission from Miss Hamadi to put his head down, gather himself, then return to working. However, his reaction to the work demonstrates that he had a coping mechanism planned whenever he was frustrated.

Michael shared that what made reading difficult for him was “Having to read the words out loud.” Although oral fluency was not his strength, he relied on a strategy that he learned to move past the barrier. He shared, “I just sound words out, and if I can’t sound the word out, I try as hard as I could.” Michael’s motivation to do well assisted him moving beyond obstacles that kept him from feeling successful while reading.

Reading was difficult for Jamal when he could not comprehend the text. He shared, “Whenever I don’t really understand it. I don’t understand like the passage or book that I’m reading about, I’ll go back and then I will end up understanding it at one point if I keep reading.” He revealed that when reading became troublesome, he would also ask for help. He said for example,

I will usually ask for help. Or if I'm at home, if it's like a specific word that I don't really understand then I will search it up on my laptop. Or I will try to go back and then look at the words that are behind it or are in front of it that might lead me to what the word means.

Even though Jamal expressed positive feelings towards reading, when it did become difficult, he felt comfortable asking for help. He used context clues or other strategies for assistance. He also relied on other resources, like using the internet to gain a better understanding of what was unclear.

Jaden shared that reading could be difficult for him sometimes. He said, "Not understanding what I'm reading," was an area where he struggled. He also said that when Miss Abadi provided books for the students to read in class, sometimes they were difficult. He expressed,

Sometimes I get frustrated when I'm reading a book because I can't understand what they're trying to say with it, how much information it's trying to give me. So, it's hard to figure out and find the conclusion on what they're trying to teach me and give me information about.

Comprehension and the vocabulary that authors used proved to be barriers to Jaden feeling successful with reading.

Ian shared, "What makes reading hard for me is taking a quiz. Because I might forget something." To combat the difficulty, Ian shared, "I take a quick break, drink some water, stretch, do something else for a little bit, and then go back to it." Ian's response demonstrates that he relied upon strategies to relieve the frustration he felt with reading.

Amir found reading to be difficult when they had to engage with reading passages. He remarked, "On like the paragraph thingy, the questions can be too hard for me. That makes it hard for me. I think that's all. I think that I'm pretty good at it."

Despite the barrier, Amir still felt confident in his abilities and the obstacle did not hinder him from believing that he was successful with reading.

Salim frequently spoke about the environment during his interview. To describe a barrier to his reading success, he shared, “I was saying this whole time... environment.” To follow up, he was asked if he meant that the wrong environment made it hard for him to read, to which he replied, “definitely.” He also added, “When I try to zone into the book, but it’s like not that interesting. So I can’t like zone in, get into the book.” Salim’s responses shows how important the environment was to his success with reading. The wrong environment posed as a barrier to his success and kept him from deeply engaging with the text he was trying to read.

When asked what made reading difficult for him, Isaiah shared, “remembering.” Comprehension, or remembering what he had read, was a barrier that hindered Isaiah from feeling successful with reading. However, he shared that when it did become difficult, he relied on the support from his teacher. He offered, “I ask for help.” Isaiah’s responses convey an awareness of the area of reading that kept him from feeling successful with reading. They also show that he had a way of superseding the barrier.

Levi shared, what made reading hard for him. “Mainly, I have a hard time comprehending certain books, like books that I don’t find interesting, it’s gonna be harder for me to read.” When reading did get hard for him, he said, “I try to read it because I know people want me to read the book, but I’m not really going to comprehend. If I was reading a book that I didn’t like, and you asked me questions about it, I would struggle with the questions.” As an added layer of difficulty, Levi identified as a student with dyslexia. Nevertheless, he did not let the barriers of having a learning disability or his struggles with comprehension hinder him from feeling unsuccessful with reading.

Summary of Findings

The findings are based on the reading experiences of the participants—Black boys in grades three through five. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the reading experiences of Black boys in grades three through five, gain insight into what they feel contributes to their reading success, the challenges they face, and their perspectives of the relationship they have with their reading teachers. This study employed a narrative approach to highlight the Black boys' perspectives and lived experiences with reading.

The participants described mostly positive experiences in their reading classrooms. They explained their abilities as readers and how often they engaged with reading at school and at home. Most of the participants perceived that their reading abilities were at or above grade level with only a few believing that they were below grade level. Additionally, the participants detailed how confident they felt, especially when they knew the answer, provided it in class, and it was correct. They also shared the types of books that piqued their interest, which were mostly graphic novels.

Findings of this study elucidated that the participants felt that support was beneficial in helping them achieve in reading. Outside of reading, they also shared how they received support to help improve their behavior. Moreover, they highlighted strategies utilized to help them when reading was difficult.

The participants in this study mostly felt that they had positive relationships with their reading teachers. One participant described negative interactions with his math teacher, while another explained negative encounters with his reading teacher. Although some of the participants had to speak with administrators due to fighting, their behavior, or even to help, they mostly detailed positive contact with them. Further, they felt like the administrators positively impacted their elementary school experience. Having support at

school and at home also helped the participants to feel that they mattered, and that people were encouraging their success.

Finally, the participants detailed the challenges that undermined their academic success in reading. Overall, comprehension posed as a barrier for many of the participants. They also expressed that the advanced vocabulary used in books or texts made them feel unsuccessful.

CHAPTER V:
SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This phenomenological study explored the perceptions of Black boys regarding reading in their classrooms in grades three through five. This chapter discusses the findings described in Chapter IV. Furthermore, this chapter presents the relation to the theoretical framework, relationship to the research questions, considerations for educators, recommendations for practice, and implications for future research.

Discussion of Findings

Few studies have explored the experiences Black boys have had with reading in upper elementary school. This study was designed to examine how Black boys felt about reading, their reading classroom, their relationship with their reading teacher, what relationships influence their success in reading, and the barriers that undermine their success in reading. Based on the participants' responses, there were seven themes that emerged from the data: a) self-perceptions, (b) being a Black boy, (c) preferences, (d) the reading classroom experience, (e) reading habits, (f) expectations, (g) support, and (h) barriers to feeling successful in reading.

From the findings, I was able to conclude the Black boys interviewed had good self-perceptions of their abilities as readers, enjoyed being Black boys, wanted to use autonomy to cater to their preferences, and maintained a mostly positive experience in their reading classrooms. Through the interviews, I was able to deduce that the participants were aware of what good reading habits were, although they did not always practice them. The expectations set for them by their families were mostly consistent with what their teachers expected, and that they felt supported by their families, teachers, and school administrators. Finally, the interviews yielded that the participants had barriers to

feeling successful in reading, but they relied on strategies like using context clues or re-reading to overcome those obstacles.

The participants' perceptions of their teachers' perceptions impacted participant's internal voices and what they felt they could accomplish. While most participants felt that they were reading on or above grade level, 12 participants shared the areas where they needed to improve to feel more successful in reading. The participants who felt that they needed to improve provided anecdotes where they also felt successful in reading. Prior research revealed Black boys' perceptions about their abilities is usually inconsistent with how they are perceived by their teachers (Cole-Lewis et al., 2021). However, this study offered a different perspective which concluded that what the Black boys interviewed believed about themselves was consistent with what they thought their teachers perceived.

One participant reported that he had a negative experience with his reading teacher who identified as a Black woman. Conversely, this same participant expressed that he enjoyed being Black and a boy at school. Twelve participants mostly attested to feeling confident and a sense of belonging within their school and their reading classrooms. The sense of belonging is a vital aspect of the academic experience (Uwah et al., 2008). Additionally, twelve of the participants shared that they enjoyed being a Black boy in upper elementary school. One participant highlighted his experience from a respect perspective and indicated that his classmates and teachers demonstrated respect towards him because he was a Black boy. Another participant shared an anecdote about being harassed for finding notebooks on the walk home from school, and he felt that the White woman was pestering his group of friends about their discovery due to their race. Despite their age, the participants were also keenly aware of their Blackness.

In terms of preferences, ten participants shared the different methods they employed to read. While some participants opted to read digital books, others preferred physical copies. Additionally, some shared that they enjoyed reading independently while others explained that listening to read-alouds was their preference.

The 14 participants expressed how they felt within their reading teachers' classrooms. Twelve participants discussed the positive relationships they had with their reading teachers. In summary, the way the teachers treated their students, the structure of their classrooms, and their expectations worked in tandem to provide their students with an impactful experience that encouraged the Black boys' academic and behavioral success. This is consistent with the results of the study conducted by Brooms and Wint (2021).

The literature surrounding Black boys' reading habits typically posits them as being deficit-laden (Tatum & Johnson, 2021). However, in this study participants shared how they engaged with reading through various formats and methods. The participants also highlighted how their parents encouraged them to read at home for extended periods of time which also demonstrates the academic support that they received from their families.

When teachers maintain low expectations for Black boys as students, they are communicating that they do not expect them to achieve high academic standards (Tatum, 2005). Participants of this study communicated that their teachers expected the same out of all of their students, no matter their race. They also expressed that their teachers encouraged their students to achieve at high levels. One participant even felt that his reading teacher's expectations were too high given his struggles with dyslexia. Overall, the participants detailed how the expectations their teachers upheld were in alignment with what their parents expected of them. The alignment of those expectations translated

into what they expected out of themselves and what they attempted to demonstrate within their classrooms and at school.

Parental engagement in the academic journey encourages students' holistic success (Englund et al., 2004; Lynch & Zwerling, 2020; Newland et al., 2013). During the interviews, participants described receiving support from home that nurtured their academic success. Additionally, the students described how they felt supported by their teachers who spoke to them respectfully, built relationships with them, and encouraged their academic success. They also highlighted that even when they were speaking to administrators about an infraction, they still felt encouraged and supported to make better choices as opposed to feeling berated or belittled.

Through the narrative accounts in this study, the participants shared how comprehension and advanced vocabulary kept them from feeling successful in reading. The voices of the participants did not communicate any other significant barriers that they found hindered their reading success. Overall, twelve out of fourteen participants shared positive experiences with reading.

Relation to Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory was the theoretical framework utilized in this study because it discredits research that is deficit-informed and the practices that silence or alter the experiences of people from marginalized populations (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Currently, CRT is utilized in education to examine school discipline and authority, curriculum, and multicultural education (Delgado, 2017). Qualitative research conducted by gathering narrative accounts provides insight into the educational system (Tate, 1997). More specifically, counter-storytelling, a facet of CRT was the most purposeful for this study because the participants were able to detail their lived experiences and negate

society's stereotypical stigmas and perspectives that have been communicated to them, especially in reading (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

In this study, the participants demonstrated that their support systems consisted of their parents, teachers, and friends. The support they were offered motivated them to strive to do their best in school. They internalized the external voices which reminded them of their intelligence and their resiliency. Using counter-stories, the participants provided narrative accounts which also negated society's rhetorical stories about their identities that often describe them as being culturally and socially deficient, uneducated, unmotivated, prone to violence, and anti-intellectual. (Howard, 2008). Multiple participants expressed feeling confident when they were in reading class, especially when they knew the answer, which counters the societal idea that Black boys are unmotivated and anti-intellectual.

Furthermore, CRT was appropriate for this study because of the tenet that rejects ahistoricism and instead examines the intersectionality of race, class, and gender and how that transcends into education and equal treatment of students from marginalized populations (citation). Throughout the interviews, the participants detailed the intersectionality of being Black and a boy in third through fifth grade. Most of the participants described positive experiences where they felt encouraged and respected. However, some participants described receiving different, negative treatment due to the intersectionality.

Within this study, CRT was used to examine the reading opportunity gap by interviewing Black boys and searching for inequities (Dixson, 1998). Examining the participants' narrative accounts also provides insight into the educational system (Tate, 1997). The participants' voices in this study have been centered to offer their perspectives and querying if racism appears in their lived experiences.

The goal of this study was to center the narrative on Black boys' experiences with reading and to allow them to express their perspectives in that context. Additionally, the goal was to explore the lived experiences of upper elementary Black boys in reading classrooms and to have them share how the intersectionality of identifying as Black and a boy impacts their perspective of reading. Because of that, counter-storying, a facet of CRT was chosen since it offers participants the opportunity to voice their perspectives and detail their experiences. By utilizing this approach, the participants were able to recount their lived experiences within their reading classrooms, the relationship they had with their reading teachers, the people who supported their educational journey, and their feelings about reading.

Connection to Literature

When students perceive that they can read well, they feel more successful in reading (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Conversely, when students feel that they do not read well, they might feel less likely to engage with the reading to avoid feeling unsuccessful. Within this study, that was a consistent theme. The participants who felt that they were capable readers engaged in reading and sought to engage with the task more. But the students who did not feel as successful with reading avoided the task more frequently.

Existing research elucidated that teachers' biases and their perceptions of Black boys as oppositional, intimidating, and less academically capable compared to White boys can impact the way that Black boys perceive themselves (Husband, 2012; Jenkins, 2018). Most of the participants in this study reported that their teachers had positive perceptions of them as students. The participants also stated that they had mostly positive views of themselves and their abilities in reading and that their perceptions were consistent with their teachers' perceptions. Additionally, Cole-Lewis et al., (2021)

conducted a study that investigated how teachers' perceptions of Black boys are aligned or unaligned with their family's view or the boys' views of themselves. Within that study, the researcher found that teacher perceptions were misaligned with the boys' self-perceptions and their mother's perceptions. Conversely, participants of this study detailed how their teachers offered words of encouragement and instilled in them the confidence to believe in their abilities. Through the participants' responses, their teachers' perceptions and family's perceptions were aligned. In fact, some boys mentioned that the expectations that their teachers had were the same as what their families expected. Furthermore, the participants attested to how their teachers reacted to them when they got a question right in class, versus when they answered a question and provided an incorrect answer. Teachers' gentle approaches were found to be most effective when the participants answered a question incorrectly. These encouraging interactions with teachers deterred the participants from having a dehumanizing school experience (Warren et al., 2022).

Prior research yielded that Black boys are motivated, want to please their teachers, and have the ability to achieve at the rate of their White peers, but can experience less academic achievement after third grade (Kunjufu, 1985; Kunjufu, 1986; Rumble, 2013). Through the narrative accounts collected for this study, the participants described mostly positive experiences and relationships with their reading teachers. Two participants highlighted that their teachers mostly thought highly of them and believed they had the ability to achieve academically like the White students in their classes. Furthermore, they detailed how good it felt to be a Black boy in upper elementary school. Johnson (2022) found that there were unanswered questions about young children's understanding and development of racial knowledge. Findings from the study found that Black students could read books centered on Black people and attest to racialized

conditions. The findings from this study align with the idea that Black students and Black boys can read books about Black people and understand racial situations. Marcus's anecdote about his teacher believing that he was a troublemaker demonstrates an awareness of understanding how his Blackness can be misconstrued.

Existing research found that reading underachievement in Black boys can stem from the way that teachers use instructional materials in the classroom. A review of the literature also yielded that little attention was focused on reading critically or reading in a way that lends to Black boys understanding the world around them and how they can situate themselves within it (Tatum, 2006). This can cause Black boys to disengage from reading because of the insignificance to their lives and culture. As evidenced by the participants' responses in this study, the participants did not feel that they were underachieving in reading. Additionally, they did not report disengagement with the materials used in their reading classroom. Based on their responses, however, it was not expressed that their teachers expected them to read critically or to gather a deeper meaning about the world around them.

Research conducted by Warren et al., (2022) determined that Black students are more likely to receive dehumanizing treatment. Conversely, positive interactions with adults at school and the cultivation of encouraging relationships possessed the potential to deter Black boys from incurring a dehumanizing experience. The participants attested to the positive interactions they had with their teachers and how the relationships they had with the adults at school supported their academic success. The humanizing interpersonal experiences and cultivation of positive interactions that participants reported having with teachers and administrators at their school is mostly inconsistent with Warren (2022), who found that Black boys felt that their words, behavior, and actions were often misconstrued and misunderstood. This is inconsistent with the humanizing interpersonal

experiences and positive interactions the participants of this study reported having with teachers and administrators at their school.

Brooms and Wint (2021) found that when Black boys feel cared for at school, it influences their schooling experiences. The results of that study also determined when the teacher demonstrates care for students, it encourages their achievement. The results of that study were consistent with what participants reported in this study. Participants of this study explained how they felt encouraged to make mistakes and learn from them. They highlighted the nurturing environment of their reading classrooms and how their relationship with the teachers and administrators posited them toward academic and behavioral success.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study situated context for additional research centered on Black students' perspectives and experiences in classrooms, especially in elementary school. My study adds to the literature that uses counter-storytelling to paint the picture of Black boys' perspectives and experiences in reading. Understanding the factors that encourage Black boys to achieve in reading, the relationships that encourage them, the barriers that they have in reading, and the perspectives of the relationships they have with their reading teachers lend to the research on counter-narratives in research on Black boys in reading. Black boys are not a monolith, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach that can be utilized when working with the population. However, by employing the applicable methods outlined in this study, educators can determine beneficial strategies that might work with their population of students.

Teachers can strive to create and maintain positive relationships with their students, especially with Black boys. Further, teachers can cultivate an environment that celebrates Black culture and relies on systems that combat anti-Blackness. This provides

Black boys with a sense of belonging and allows them to feel that school is a safe space. Within this study, the participants also shared how their teachers treated them when they provided incorrect answers in class. As evidenced by their responses, their gentleness allowed them to turn their mistakes into learning opportunities. A display of admonishment might have resulted in negative emotions, therefore it is important to keep students' feelings, especially Black boys' feelings in mind when redirecting incorrect answers. Furthermore, when redirecting Black boys, engaging in humanizing conversation is impactful.

The words of encouragement, affirmations, and confidence-builders stuck with the participants of this study. Therefore, it is important for teachers to be mindful of the conversations that they have with Black boys, and when presented with the opportunity to offer uplifting words, teachers, administrators, and parents should utilize them wisely. Those words become part of the internalized voice that Black boys use to speak to themselves and what they believe about their abilities. That internal conversation should be positive, reflective, and constructive, not negative and demoralizing.

The participants of this study also highlighted how the autonomy to choose their own reading material and format for reading made them feel more comfortable. The participants' responses highlighted that when applicable, teachers can provide students with the choice to decide how they are going to accomplish the task, while still maintaining that the task gets done. The interviews shed light on students having the choice to read independently, listen to audiobooks, read physical copies of books, or consume books digitally. Regardless of how they chose to read, they were still reading. Additionally, they were allowed the opportunity to self-select the genres.

Participants of this study also indicated there were post-reading activities that they did not enjoy. When possible, educators should employ choice. Options like menus,

choice boards, reading responses, or art, allow the students to accomplish a task the teacher wants without limiting them to only one way to get it done.

Within this study, the participants shared what their teachers perceived about them. Although most participants highlighted positive experiences, there were a few who shared negative interactions, which might have stemmed from the intersectionality of being Black and a boy at school. It is vital that teachers are self-reflective. Further, teachers should check their biases. The responsibility of educating students means instructing all students, regardless of race (Marcucci, 2020). Negative beliefs about Black boys' achievement should be negated. Teachers and administrators should maintain high expectations and encourage Black boys to feel successful through impactful conversations, opportunities to experience success, and opportunities to experience healthy doses of failure.

Implications for Future Research

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the reading experiences of Black boys in grades three through five, gain insight into what they feel contributes to their reading success, explore the relationships that influence their reading lives, the challenges they face, and their perspectives of the relationships they have with their reading teachers. The findings of this study and the similarities and differences to the literature all indicate how important it is to focus on Black boys' narrative accounts of their schooling experiences. To increase the literature, it would be imperative to conduct research that focuses on Black boys' perspectives in younger grades using an age-appropriate method.

Similar to the gap that exists in highlighting Black boys' experiences, there is also a gap in literature that exists that focuses on Black girls' experiences at school. Future research should also focus on upper elementary Black girls' perspectives of reading, their

reading classrooms, and the relationships they have with their reading teachers. By conducting this research, a broader understanding of Black students' perspectives at school could be generated.

Another approach could be to include interviews with the Black boys' teachers to gain their honest perspectives. Those perspectives could then be compared with Black boys' perspectives of themselves to determine alignment. This study would be used to identify commonalities and differences. This study only focused on students' perspectives of what they thought their teacher believed about them. However, by incorporating teachers' perspectives, a greater understanding of the students' experience with their reading teacher could be portrayed.

A mixed-methods study could also be conducted to determine participants' reading achievement and if there is a correlation between achievement and the relationship they have with their reading teacher. The quantitative portion of the study could be conducted first to determine Black boy participants' grades in reading class or their performance on a standardized test. Then, the qualitative component would occur where the researcher would interview Black boys to expound upon the relationship with their reading teacher and how that impacts their achievement in the subject area.

Although this study focused on Black boys' perspectives, a future study could also explore the perspectives of their parents. Incorporating parents' perspectives of their son's experiences with reading might also provide valuable insight. Parents could highlight aspects, struggles, successes, and strategies that students might not be able to articulate.

To further this study, observations of participants could also be conducted. The benefit of adding observations of the participants in their reading classrooms could provide a broader understanding of their lived experiences at school. Additionally, it

would attest to the responses that participants provide. Researchers could contribute what they observed to the conversation to provide readers with a more situated context.

Summary and Conclusion

This study examined the reading experiences of Black boys in grades three through five, gained insight into what they feel contributes to their reading success, explored the relationships that influence their reading lives, the challenges they face, and their perspectives of the relationship they have with their reading teacher. A qualitative methodology was utilized for this study. This study used the grounded theory approach. More specifically, a phenomenological approach was employed. This method was best suited for this study because it provided the participants with the opportunity to share their lived experiences centered around reading. It also provided counter-narratives, a facet of CRT, to counteract the negative stigmas that exist about Black boys in society and education. In this study, individual interviews were conducted, audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed by the researcher. The research questions focused on Black boys and their experiences with reading, their reading teachers, their perspectives of themselves as readers, and the challenges they face with reading. An analysis of the interviews revealed that the Black boys had mostly positive experiences within their reading classrooms. They found that support from their teachers, parents, and school administrators contributed to their reading achievement, while comprehension and unknown advanced vocabulary hindered them from feeling successful in reading. It is my hope that this study contributes to the literature and highlights the importance of including Black boys' voices and perspectives in the conversations about their academic achievement.

REFERENCES

- Adams-King, L. A. (2016). *The African American male achievement gap* [Doctoral dissertation]. <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/>
- Allen, B. A., & Boykin, A. W. (1992). African-American children and the educational process: Alleviating cultural discontinuity through prescriptive pedagogy. *School Psychology Review, 21*(4), 586-596.
- Allen, R. (2016, August 15). Expulsion | Office of special education and rehabilitative services blog. *EDBlogs | U.S. Department of Education*. <https://sites.ed.gov/osers/tag/expulsion/>
- Anderson, A. B., Aronson, B., & Ellison, S. (2021). Assessing systemic inequity: Teacher perspectives, solutions, and “Radical possibilities”. *The Urban Review, 54*(1), 113-137. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-021-00606-1>
- Anyon, Y., Gregory, A., Stone, S., Farrar, J., Jenson, J., McQueen, J., Simmons, J., Downing, B., & Greer, E. (2016). Restorative interventions and school discipline sanctions in a large urban school district. *American Educational Research Journal, 53*(6), 1663-1697.
- Araujo, L. (2014). Reading Reading Achievement. In *Encyclopedia of quality of life and well-being research*.
- Auerbach, C., Silverstein, L. B., & Silverstein, L. B. (2003). *Qualitative data: An introduction to coding and analysis*. NYU Press.
- Bacher-Hicks, A. (2020, September 24). Long-term impacts of school suspension on adult crime. *Harvard University Center for Policy Research Strategic Data Project*. <https://sdp.cepr.harvard.edu/blog/long-term-impacts-school-suspension-adult-crime#:~:text=%E2%80%9CSchools%20that%20suspend%20more%20student>

- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191-215.
- Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist*, 37(2), 122-147.
- Barone, D. (2011). Case study research. In N. K. Duke & M.H. Mallette (Eds.), *Reading research methods* (2nd ed., pp. 7-28). Guilford Press.
- Beard, K. S. (2018). Standing in the gap: Theory and practice impacting educational opportunity and achievement gaps. *Urban Education*, 53(5), 668-696. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085915613553>
- Bowman, B. T., Comer, J. P., & Johns, D. J. (2018). Addressing the African American achievement gap. *YC: Young Children*, 73(2), 14-23.
- Bui, S. A., Craig, S. G., & Imberman, S. A. (2014). Is gifted education a bright idea? Assessing the impact of gifted and talented programs on students. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 6(3), 30-62.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE.
- Brey, C., Musu, L., McFarland, J., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Diliberti, M., Zhang, A., Bransetter, C., Wang, X. (2019). Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups 2018. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf>
- Brooms, D. R. (2020). 'I didn't want to be a statistic': Black males, urban schooling, and educational urgency. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 25(3), 351-369. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2020.1803821>
- Brooms, D. R., & Clark, J. S. (2020). Black misandry and the killing of Black boys and men. *Sociological Focus*, 53(2), 125-140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00380237.2020.1730279>

- Brooms, D. R., & Wint, K. M. (2021). Caring now and later: Black boys' schooling experiences of relational care. *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education*, 123(9), 112-143. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01614681211051995>
- Bryan, J., Day-Vines, N. L., Griffin, D., & Moore-Thomas, C. (2011). The disproportionality dilemma: Patterns of teacher referrals to school counselors for disruptive behavior. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 90, 177-190.
- Bryan, N. (2017). White teachers' role in sustaining the school-to-prison pipeline: Recommendations for teacher education. *The Urban Review*, 49(2), 326-345. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-017-0403-3>
- Campbell, J. D., Assanand, S., & Paula, A. D. (2003). The structure of the self-concept and its relation to psychological adjustment. *Journal of Personality*, 71(1), 115-140. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6494.t01-1-00002>
- Card, D. & Giuliano, L. (2014). *Does gifted education work? For which students?* No. w20453. National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved from: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w20453.pdf>
- Carroll, J. M., & Fox, A. C. (2017). Reading self-efficacy predicts word reading but not comprehension in both girls and boys. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7(25), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.02056>
- Cartledge, G., Keeseey, S., Bennett, J. G., Ramnath, R., & Council, M. R. (2015). Culturally relevant literature: What matters most to primary-age urban learners. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 32(5), 399-426. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2014.955225>

- Casella, R. (2003). Zero tolerance policy in schools: Rationale, consequences, and alternatives. *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education*, 105(5), 872-892. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146810310500507>
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. SAGE.
- Christle, C. A., Jolivette, K., & Nelson, C. M. (2007). School characteristics related to high school dropout rates. *Remedial and Special Education*, 28, 325-339.
- Clark, K. F. (2017). Investigating the effects of culturally relevant texts on African American struggling readers' progress. *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education*, 119(5), 1-30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811711900503>
- Close the Gap Foundation. (2022). *Opportunity gap*. <https://www.closesthegapfoundation.org/glossary/opportunity-gap>
- Cole-Lewis, Y. C., Hope, E. C., Mustafaa, F. N., & Jagers, R. J. (2021). Incongruent impressions: Teacher, parent, and student perceptions of two Black boys' school experiences. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 074355842110621. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07435584211062140>
- Cook, C. R., Duong, M. T., McIntosh, K., Fiat, A. E., Larson, M., Pullmann, M. D., & McGinnis, J. (2018). Addressing discipline disparities for Black male students: Linking malleable root causes to feasible and effective practices. *School Psychology Review*, 47(2), 135-152. <https://doi.org/10.17105/spr-2017-0026.v47-2>
- Cooper, R., & Jordan, W. J. (2003). Cultural issues in comprehensive school reform. *Urban Education*, 38(4), 380-397. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085903038004003>
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research*. SAGE.

- Corrie, J. (2018, May 11). *The diversity gap in children's book publishing, 2018*. Lee & Low Blog. <https://blog.leeandlow.com/2018/05/10/the-diversity-gap-in-childrens-book-publishing-2018/>
- Council III, M. R. (2016). *Investigating the effects of reading RACES on the achievement of second-graders in an urban school who have reading risk* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Ohio State University.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Cunningham, A. E., & Stanovich, K. E. (1997). Early reading acquisition and its relation to reading experience and ability 10 years later. *Developmental Psychology*, 33(6), 934-945. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.33.6.934>
- Curran, F. C. (2016). Estimating the effect of state zero tolerance laws on exclusionary discipline, racial discipline gaps, and student behavior. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 38, 647–668. doi:10.3102/0162373716652728
- Davis, L. P., & Museus, S. D. (2019). What is deficit thinking? An analysis of conceptualizations of deficit thinking and implications for scholarly research. *NCID Currents*, 1(1), 117-130. <https://doi.org/10.3998/currents.17387731.0001.110>
- Dean-Burren, R. (2017). *IN THEIR WORDS: ELEVENTH GRADE BLACK BOY VOICES REGARDING THEIR SUSPENSIONS AND READING* [Doctoral dissertation].

- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (3rd ed.). NYU Press.
- Dixson, A. D., & Rousseau Anderson, C. (2017). Where are we? Critical race theory in education 20 years later. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 93(1), 121-131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956x.2017.1403194>
- Elias, M. (2013). The school-to-prison pipeline. *Teaching Tolerance*, 52(43), 39-40.
- Englund, M. M., Luckner, A. E., Whaley, G. J., & Egeland, B. (2004). Children's achievement in early elementary school: Longitudinal effects of parental involvement, expectations, and quality of assistance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 96(4), 723-730. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.96.4.723>
- Ellis, A. L. (2020). Motivation and its relationship to reading achievement for two middle school African American males. *Journal of African American Males in Education*, 12(1), 1-19.
- Exclusionary Discipline*. (2020, December 17). School Discipline Support Initiative. <https://supportiveschooldiscipline.org/exclusionary-discipline>
- Ferguson, A. A. (2000). *Bad boys: Public schools in the making of Black masculinity (Law, meaning, and violence)*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Flores, O. J. (2018). (Re)constructing the language of the achievement gap to an opportunity gap. *Journal of School Leadership*, 28(3), 344-373.
- Gangi, J. M. (2008). The unbearable whiteness of literacy instruction: Realizing the implications of the proficient reader research. *MultiCultural Review*, 17(2), 30-35.
- Gardner III, R., Rizzi, G. L., & Council III, M. (2014). Improving educational outcomes for minority males in our schools. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 4(2), 81-94.

- Garg, R. (2016). Methodology for research I. *Indian Journal of Anaesthesia*, 60(9), 32-37. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-5049.190619>
- Garth-McCullough, R. (2008). Untapped cultural support: The influence of culturally bound prior knowledge on comprehension performance. *Reading Horizons*, 49(1). https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol49/iss1/3
- Gibson, W., & Brown, A. (2009). *Working with qualitative data*. SAGE Publications.
- Governor's Early Literacy Foundation. (2020, September 18). *Early literacy connection to incarceration*. <https://governorsfoundation.org/gelf-articles/early-literacy-connection-to-incarceration/>
- Grace, J. E. (2016). *Rerouting the school to prison pipeline: A phenomenological study of the educational experiences of African American males who have been expelled from public schools* (2151) [Doctoral dissertation]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Grace, J. E., & Nelson, S. L. (2018). "Tryin' to survive": Black male students' understandings of the role of race and racism in the school-to-prison pipeline. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 18(4), 664-680. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2018.1513154>
- Grace, J. (2020). "They are scared of me": Black male perceptions of sense of belonging in U.S. public schools. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education*, 15(2), 36-49. <https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29402>
- Gregory, A., Skiba, R., & Noguera, P. (2010). The achievement gap and the discipline gap: Two sides of the same coin? *Educational Researcher*, 39(1), 59-68.
- Gregory, A., Bell, J., & Pollock, M. (2016). How educators can eradicate disparities in school discipline. *Inequality in School Discipline*, 39-58. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-51257-4_3

- Hale, J. E. (1982). *Black children: Their roots, culture and learning styles*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Hale, J. (2004). *Learning while Black: Creating educational excellence for African American children*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Harris, T. S., & Graves, S. L. (2010). The influence of cultural capital transmission on reading achievement in African American fifth grade boys. *The Journal of Negro Education, 79*(4), 447-457.
- Hauser, S. T., & Kasendorf, E. (1983). *Black and White identity formation* (2nd ed.). Krieger.
- Henderson, J. W., Warren, K., Whitmore, K. F., Flint, A. S., Laman, T. T., & Jagers, W. (2020). Take a close look: Inventorying your classroom library for diverse books. *The Reading Teacher, 73*(6), 747-755. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1886>
- Henk, W. A., & Melnick, S. A. (1995). The reader self-perception scale: A new tool for measuring how children feel about themselves as readers. *The Reading Teacher, 48*(6), 470-482.
- Henk, W. A., Marinak, B. A., & Melnick, S. A. (2012). Measuring the reader selfperceptions of adolescents: Introducing the RSPS 2. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 56*(4), 311-320.
- Henry, D. A., Betancur Cortés, L., & Votruba-Drzal, E. (2020). Black–white achievement gaps differ by family socioeconomic status from early childhood through early adolescence. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 112*(8), 1471-1489. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000439>
- Hicks, V. R. (2020). *Exclusionary discipline and implicit bias with emphasis on African American students* (28023111) [Doctoral dissertation]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

- Howard, T. C. (2008). Who really cares? The disenfranchisement of African American males in PreK-12 schools: A Critical Race Theory perspective. *Teachers College Record, 110*(5), 954-985.
- Husband, T. (2012). Addressing reading underachievement in African American boys through a multi-contextual approach. *Reading Horizons, 52*(1). https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol52/iss1/2
- Howard, T. C. (2013). How does it feel to be a problem? Black male students, schools, and learning in enhancing the knowledge base to disrupt deficit frameworks. *Review of Research in Education, 37*, 54-86.
- Jenkins, K. V. (2018). *Shaping black boys: Exploring school construction of masculinity and the impact on Black male scholastic perceptions toward academic achievement and schooling* (10636758) [Doctoral dissertation]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Johnson, A. M. (2018). *A walk in their kicks: Reading, identity, and the schooling of young Black males*. Teachers College Press.
- Johnson, R. B. (1997). Examining the validity structure of qualitative research. *Education, 118*, 282-292. <http://s3-euw1-ap-pe-ws4-cws-documents.ri-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/9780815365662/Appendix.pdf>
- Johnson, W. F. (2022). Conducting racial awareness research with African American children: Unearthing their sociopolitical knowledge through Pro-Black literacy methods. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 22*(3), 408-432. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687984221123000>
- Kelly, L. B. (2017). Welcoming Counterstory in the primary literacy classroom. *Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis, 6*(1). <https://doi.org/10.31274/jctp-180810-68>

- Kennedy-Lewis, B. L., & Murphy, A. S. (2016). Listening to “Frequent flyers”: What persistently disciplined students have to say about being labeled as “Bad”. *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education*, 118(1), 1-40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811611800106>
- Kuhfeld, M., Gershoff, E., & Paschall, K. (2018). The development of racial/ethnic and socioeconomic achievement gaps during the school years. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 57, 62-73. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2018x.07.001>
- Kunjufu, J. (2007). *Raising Black boys*. African Amer Images.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. SAGE Publications.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1992). Reading between the lines and beyond the pages: A culturally relevant approach to literacy teaching. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(4), 312-320. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405849209543558>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory Into Practice*, 34(3), 159-165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405849509543675>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(1), 7-24.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate IV, W. F. (2005). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1).
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 3-12. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x035007003>

- Ladson-Billings, G. (2007). Pushing past the achievement gap: An essay on the language of deficit. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 76(3), 316-323. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40034574>
- Larson, K. E., Bottiani, J. H., Pas, E. T., Kush, J. M., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2019). A multilevel analysis of racial discipline disproportionality: A focus on student perceptions of academic engagement and disciplinary environment. *Journal of School Psychology*, 77, 152-167. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2019.09.003>
- LeCompte, M. D. (2000). Analyzing qualitative data. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 146-154.
- Leipzig, D. H. (2013, November 7). *What is reading?* Reading Rockets. <https://www.readingrockets.org/article/what-reading>
- Little, S. D., & Tolbert, L. V. (2018). The problem with Black boys: Race, gender, and discipline in Christian and private elementary schools. *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry*, 15(3), 408-421. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739891318805760>
- Losen, D. J., & Skiba, R. J. (2010). *Suspended education: Urban middle schools in crisis*. Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center.
- Losen, D. J. (2015). *Closing the school discipline gap: Equitable remedies for excessive exclusion*. Teachers College Press. https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-remedies/school-to-prison-folder/federal-reports/are-we-closing-the-school-discipline-gap/AreWeClosingTheSchoolDisciplineGap_FINAL221.pdf
- Losen, D. J., & Martinez, T. E. (2013). *Out of school and off track: The overuse of suspensions in American middle and high schools*. Los Angeles, CA: The Center for Civil Rights

- Remedies.. http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-remedies/school-to-prison-folder/federal-reports/out-of-school-and-off-track-the-overuse-of-suspensions-in-american-middle-and-high-schools/OutofSchool-OffTrack_UCLA_4-8.pdf
- Lynch, M. (2015, August 26). *4 troubling truths about Black boys and the U.S. educational system (Opinion)*. Education Week. <https://www.edweek.org/education/opinion-4-troubling-truths-about-black-boys-and-the-u-s-educational-system/2015/08>
- Lynch, J., & Zwerling, H. (2020). Bringing neighborhood dads into classrooms: Supporting reading engagement. *The Reading Teacher*, 74(2), 169-178. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1913>
- Lynch, M. (2016, October 26). *Black boys in crisis: Why are so many of them in special education?* The Edvocate. <https://www.theedadvocate.org/black-boys-crisis-many-special-education/>
- Marcucci, O. (2020). Implicit bias in the era of social desirability: Understanding antiblackness in rehabilitative and punitive school discipline. *The Urban Review*, 52(1), 47–74. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-019-00512-7>
- Maryfield, B. (2018). *Implicit Racial Bias*. Justice Research and Statistics Association. <https://www.jrsa.org/pubs/factsheets/jrsa-factsheet-implicit-racial-bias.pdf>
- Martin, T. (2008). *The relationship between reader self-perception and reading achievement for black males in special education (3319196)* [Doctoral dissertation]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

- McCray, C. R., Beachum, F. D., & Yawn, C. D. (2015). Saving our future by reducing suspensions and expulsions among African American males. *Journal of School Leadership, 25*(2), 345-367. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105268461502500206>
- McGee, G. W. (2021). Closing the achievement gap: Lessons from Illinois' golden spike high-poverty high-performing schools. *Closing the Achievement Gap, 97-125*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315046099-2>
- McGhie, T. E. (n.d.). *Forecasting the school-to-prison pipeline: A generative case study of the early literacy experiences of Black male youth (2560)* [Doctoral dissertation]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Mizel, M. L., Miles, J. N., Pedersen, E. R., Tucker, J. S., Ewing, B. A., & D'Amico, E. J. (2016). To educate or to incarcerate: Factors in disproportionality in school discipline. *Children and Youth Services Review, 70*, 102-111. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2016.09.009>
- Mooney, T. (2018, May 11). *Why we say "opportunity gap" instead of "achievement gap"*. <https://www.teachforamerica.org/one-day/top-issues/why-we-say-opportunity-gap-instead-of-achievement-gap#:~:text=%E2%80%9D,deserve%2C%20all%20kids%20can%20achieve>
- Morrell, E. (2015). *Critical literacy and urban youth: Pedagogies of access, dissent, and liberation*. Routledge.
- Morris, E. W., & Perry, B. L. (2016). The punishment gap: School suspension and racial disparities in achievement. *Social Problems, 63*(1), 68-86. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spv026>
- NAACP. (2021). *Criminal justice fact sheet*. <https://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/>

- National assessment of adult reading (NAAL) - Definition of reading.* (2003). National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a part of the U.S. Department of Education. https://nces.ed.gov/naal/fr_definition.asp#:~:text=Reading%20is%20the%20ability%20to,Word%2Dlevel%20reading%20skills
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2020, September 22). *NAEP gaps - Achievement gaps.* National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a part of the U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved December 17, 2020, from <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/gaps/>
- National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. (2022). *Discipline.* National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE). <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/topic-research/environment/discipline>
- Newland, L. A., Chen, H., & Coyl-Shepherd, D. D. (2013). Associations among father beliefs, perceptions, life context, involvement, child attachment and school outcomes in the U. S. and Taiwan. *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers*, 11(1), 3-30. <https://doi.org/10.3149/fth.1101.3>
- O'Connor, C., Hill, L. D., & Robinson, S. R. (2009). Who's at risk in school and what's race got to do with it? *Review of Research in Education*, 33(1), 1-34. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X08327991>
- Parker, K. N. (2022). *Reading is liberation: Working toward justice through culturally relevant teaching.* ASCD.
- Parker, L. (2015). Critical race theory in education and *Qualitative Inquiry*. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21(3), 199-205. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800414557828>

- Pearman, F. A., Curran, F. C., Fisher, B., & Gardella, J. (2019). Are achievement gaps related to discipline gaps? Evidence from national data. *AERA Open*, 5(4), 233285841987544. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858419875440>
- Pickett Jr., C. S. (2022). *A phenomenological exploration of the lived experiences of second-year African American male students on predominantly White campuses through critical race theory* [Doctoral dissertation]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Piper, R. E. (2015). *Multicultural education in action: A multiple case study of Black elementary aged children's identity development and engagement with with civil rights literature* (ED566813) [Doctoral dissertation]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Piper, R. E. (2019). Navigating Black identity development: The power of interactive multicultural read alouds with elementary-aged children. *Education Sciences* 9(2), 141. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci9020141>
- Price, J. H., & Murnan, J. (2004). Research limitations and the necessity of reporting them. *American Journal of Health Education*, 35(2), 66-67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19325037.2004.10603611>
- Proffitt, W. A. (2020). From “Problems” to “Vulnerable resources:” Reconceptualizing Black boys with and without disability labels in U.S. urban schools. *Urban Education*, 57(4), 686-713. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085920972164>
- Rafaelle Mendez, R. L. (2003). Who gets suspended from school and why: A demographic analysis of schools and disciplinary infractions in a large school district. *Education & Treatment of Children*, 26(1), 30-52.

- Rogers, L. O., & Way, N. (2015). "I have goals to prove all those people wrong and not fit into any one of those boxes". *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 31(3), 263-298. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558415600071>
- Robinson, T. G. (2020). *A case study exploring the perspectives of students and alumni of education reform at an urban high school* [Doctoral dissertation]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Ross, S., & Stevenson, A. (2015). Starting young: Emergent Black masculinity and early literacy. *Journal of African American Males in Education*, 6(1), 75-90.
- Rumble, M. B. (2013). *I too have a voice: The literary experience of Black boys engaging with and responding to African American literature depicting Black males* [Doctoral dissertation].
- Russell, J., & Drake Shiffler, M. (2019). How does a metalinguistic phonological intervention impact the reading achievement and language of African American boys? *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 35(1), 4-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2018.1535774>
- Saldana, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE.
- School Discipline Support Initiative. (2020, December 17). *Discipline Disparities*. <https://supportiveschooldiscipline.org/discipline-disparities#:~:text=Discipline%20disparities%20refer%20to%20instances,Black%20males%20are%20more%20likely>
- School-to-prison pipeline*. (2020, July 31). American Civil Liberties Union. <https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline>
- Schunk, D. H. (1982). Effects of effort attributional feedback on children's perceived self-efficacy and achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 74(4), 548-556. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.74.4.548>

- Schunk, D. H. (1983). Ability versus effort attributional feedback: Differential effects on self-efficacy and achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 75(6), 848-856. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.75.6.848>
- Schunk, D. H. (1983). Developing children's self-efficacy and skills: The roles of social comparative information and goal setting. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 8(1), 76-86. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0361-476x\(83\)90036-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/0361-476x(83)90036-x)
- Schunk, D. H. (1984). Self-efficacy perspective on achievement behavior. *Educational Psychologist*, 19(1), 48-58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461528409529281>
- Shores, K., Kim, H. E., & Still, M. (2019). *Categorical inequality in Black and White: Linking disproportionality across multiple educational outcomes*. (EdWorkingPaper: 19-168). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: <http://www.edworkingpapers.com/ai19-168>
- Skiba, R. J., Horner, R. H., Chung, C., Rausch, M. K., May, S. L., & Tobin, T. (2011). Race is not neutral: A national investigation of African American and Latino Disproportionality in school discipline. *School Psychology Review*, 40(1), 85-107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2011.12087730>
- Skiba, R. J., & Losen, D. J. (2015). From reaction to prevention: Turning the page on school discipline. *American Educator*, 39(4), 4-11. https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/ae_winter2015skiba_losen.pdf
- Smith, M. W., & Wilhelm, J. D. (2002). *Reading don't fix no Chevys: Literacy in the lives of young men*. Boynton/Cook.
- Smith, M. (2020). *Critical injustice and youth incarceration: The effects of the school-to-prison pipeline* (28094381) [Doctoral dissertation]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

- Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 23-44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800103>
- Sorhagen, N. S. (2013). Early teacher expectations disproportionately affect poor children's high school performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(2), 465-477. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031754>
- STAAR. (2019). *Grade 5 Reading 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Test Design (English and Spanish)*. https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/grade_5_reading_schematic_2020.pdf
- Stanovich, K. E. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 21, 360-407.
- Staats, C. (2014). *Implicit racial bias and school discipline disparities*. Kirwan Institute Special Report. <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/implicit-bias-training/resources/ki-ib-argument-piece03.pdf>
- Strauss, V. (2018, April 5). *Implicit racial bias causes black boys to be disciplined at school more than whites, federal report finds*. The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2018/04/05/implicit-racial-bias-causes-black-boys-to-be-disciplined-at-school-more-than-whites-federal-report-finds/>
- Swanson, H. L., Trainin, G., Necochea, D. M., & Hammill, D. D. (2003). Rapid naming, phonological awareness, and reading: A meta-analysis of the correlation evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 73(4), 407-440. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543073004407>

- Suspension*. (2020, December 17). School Discipline Support Initiative. <https://supportiveschooldiscipline.org/suspension>
- Tatum, A. W. (2005). *Teaching reading to Black adolescent males: Closing the achievement gap*. Stenhouse Publishers.
- Tatum, A. (2006). Engaging African American males in reading. *Educational Leadership*, 63(5), 44-49.
- Tatum, A. W. (2008). Toward a more anatomically complete model of reading development. *Harvard Educational Review*, 78(1), 281-300. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315110592-17>
- Tatum, A. W. (2009). *Reading for their life: (re)building the textual lineages of African American adolescent males*. Heinemann Educational Books.
- Tatum, A. W. (2015). Engaging African American males in reading (Reprint). *Journal of Education*, 195(2), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002205741519500202>
- TEA. (2016a). *STAAR reading resources*. Welcome to Texas Education Agency | Texas Education Agency. <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/Blueprint%20STAAR%20Gr%203%20Reading%202016.pdf>
- TEA. (2016b). *STAAR reading resources*. Welcome to Texas Education Agency | Texas Education Agency. <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/Blueprint%20STAAR%20Gr%204%20Reading%202016.pdf>
- TEA. (2016c). *STAAR reading resources*. Welcome to Texas Education Agency | Texas Education Agency. <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/Blueprint%20STAAR%20Gr%205%20Reading%202016.pdf>

Texas Education Agency. (2021, August 10). *Staar Statewide Summary Reports 2019-2020*. Texas Education Agency. Retrieved November 18, 2022, from <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/dropcomp-2019-20.pdf>

Texas Education Agency. (2019). *Texas Academic Performance Report: 2018-2019 Campus Student Information*.
https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker?_service=marykay&_debug=0&single=N&batch=N&app=PUBLIC&ptype=H&_program=perf rept.perfmast.sas&level=campus&search=campnum&prgopt=2019/tapr/student.sas&namenum=101910191

Texas Education Agency. (2021). *2020-2021 Student Enrollment*.
https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker?_service=marykay&_program=adhoc.addispaadd.sas&endyear=21&major=st&minor=e&format=w&selsumm=id&linesli=60&charsln=120&grouping=s&loop=2&key=101912&_debug=0

The benefits of student choice. (2020, December 17).
TeachHUB. <https://www.teachhub.com/professional-development/2020/12/the-benefits-of-student-choice/>

The educational opportunity monitoring project: Racial and ethnic achievement gaps. (n.d.). Welcome to Center for Education Policy Analysis | Center for Education Policy Analysis. <https://cepa.stanford.edu/educational-opportunity-monitoring-project/achievement-gaps/race/>

Trelease, J. (2001). *The read-aloud handbook* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Penguin Books.

U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (2014). *U.S. department of education office for Civil Rights: Civil rights data collection data snapshot: School discipline*. Retrieved from:
<https://ocrdata.ed.gov/assets/downloads/CRDC-School-Discipline-Snapshot.pdf>

- U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection. (2016). *Number and percentage of days missed from school due to out-of-school suspensions, by student race/ethnicity, disability status, and English proficiency, by state: School Year 2015-2016*. <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/estimations/2015-2016>
- U. S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights. (2018). *2015-2016 Civil Rights data collection: School climate and safety: Data highlights on school climate and safety in our nation's public schools*. Retrieved from: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/school-climate-and-safety.pdf>
- Uwah, C., McMahon, H., & Furlow, C. (2008). School belonging, educational aspirations, and academic self-efficacy among African American male high school students: Implications for school counselors. *Professional School Counseling, 11*(5), 296-305. <https://doi.org/10.5330/psc.n.2010-11.296>
- van Manen, M. (2016). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Routledge.
- Venzant Chambers, T. & Spikes, D. D. (2016). "Tracking [is] for black people": A structural critique of deficit perspectives of achievement disparities. *Educational Foundations, 29*(1-4).
- Vernon-Feagans, L., Mokrova, I. L., Carr, R. C., Garrett-Peters, P. T., & Burchinal, M. R. (2019). Cumulative years of classroom quality from kindergarten to third grade: Prediction to children's third grade reading skills. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 47*, 531-540. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2018.06.005>
- Verow, S. (2022). *The area that continues to be unaddressed in public schools: Teacher bias in the EC-12 setting* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation].
- Walls, A. (2022). *A Qualitative Study on African American Students' Academic Success on State-Mandated Reading Assessments in Elementary Grades* [Doctoral

- dissertation]. <https://ttu-ir.tdl.org/bitstream/handle/2346/90084/WALLS-DISSERTATION-2022.pdf?sequence=1>
- Walker, G. (1963, July 6). Englewood and the northern dilemma. *The Nation*, 197, 7-10. Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.
- Warren, C. A., Andrews, D. J., & Flenbaugh, T. K. (2022). Connection, Antiracism, and positive relationships that (Re)Humanize Black boys' experience of school. *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education*, 124(1), 111-142. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01614681221086115>
- Williams, J. M., & Portman, T. A. (2014). "No one ever asked me": Urban African American students' perceptions of educational resilience. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 42(1), 13-30. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1912.2014.00041.x>
- Youth.gov. (2022). *Implications for school discipline*. <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/school-climate/implications-for-school-discipline>
- Winn, M. T., & Behizadeh, N. (2011). The right to be literate. *Review of Research in Education*, 35(1), 147-173. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732x10387395>
- Woodson, A. (2015). *The politics of normal: A critical race inquiry into the lived experiences of civic disempowerment* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Michigan State University.
- Zambo, D., & Brozo, W. G. (2009). *Bright beginnings for boys: Engaging young boys in active reading*. International Reading Assn.
- Zero-tolerance. (2020, December 17). School Discipline Support Initiative. <https://supportiveschooldiscipline.org/zero-tolerance-policy>

Zimmerman, B.J., & Ringle, J. (1981). Effects of model persistence and statements of confidence on children's self-efficacy and problem solving. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 73, 485-493.

APPENDIX A:
RECRUITMENT LETTER



University
of Houston
Clear Lake

December 1, 2022

Dear Parent:

As a doctoral student at the University of Houston Clear-Lake, I am conducting a research study to examine the relationship that Black boys have with reading. There is a lack of research in Black boys' reading experiences, so it is my hope that by conducting this study, I can fill a gap in the literature. At this point in the dissertation process, I have completed chapters 1, 2, and 3, and I am now looking to gather the necessary data to complete my study. Because you are the parent, I am hoping that you will allow your son to participate in the study. The data obtained from this study will not only allow UHCL's Educational Leadership Department to gain a better understanding of Black boys' relationship with reading from their perspectives, but it will also provide feedback on how to enhance their learning experiences and how teachers can better serve the population of students.

Each student will participate in a 20-minute individual semi-structured interview. The questions will be focused on reading and their reading teacher. All their responses will be kept completely confidential and will not be shared with their teachers. Their names will not be attached to their responses, and pseudonyms will be used instead. No obvious undue risks will be endured, and you may stop their participation at any time. In addition, they will also not benefit directly from participating in the study.

Requested Actions:

- Please complete the Parent Consent/Student Assent form and return as soon as possible. The document will ask for your signature to have your student participate in this study.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated and your willingness to have your son participate in this study is not only greatly appreciated, but invaluable. Should you have any further questions, please feel free to contact Alex Harrison at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Thank you!
Sincerely,

Alex Harrison
Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership

APPENDIX B:

PARENT CONSENT/STUDENT ASSENT FORM

ASSENT FORM: CHILD EDUCATION RESEARCH PARTICIPANT (AGES 7 THROUGH 12)

You are being asked to help in a research project. The project is part of my educational doctorate at the University of Houston-Clear Lake. The purpose of this study is to examine the reading experiences of Black boys in grades three through five. You will be asked to participate, and your participation is entirely voluntary.

Your help will be needed by participating in an interview about experiences with reading.

You do not have to help if you do not want, and you may stop at any time even after you have started, and it will be okay. You can just let the researcher know if you want to stop or if you have questions. If you do want to do the project, it will help us a lot.

Please keep the upper part of this page for your information. Thank you for your assistance.

Title of Study: From Their Perspective: A Qualitative Study Examining Black Boys' Relationship with Reading

Student Researcher: Alex Harrison

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Jennifer Grace

Yes, I agree to (allow my child to) participate in the study From Their Perspective: A Qualitative Study Examining Black Boys' Relationship with Reading

No, I do not wish to (allow my child to) participate in the study From Their Perspective: A Qualitative Study Examining Black Boys' Relationship with Reading

Printed Name of Assenting Child:

Signature of Assenting Child:

Date:

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian:

Signature of Parent or Guardian:

Date:

Printed Name of Witness to Child's Assent:

Signature of Witness to Child's Assent:

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 C:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The purpose of this interview is to ask you questions about reading, your reading classroom, how you feel at school, and your experiences with your teacher. If you need help understanding what a question is asking, please let me know. Otherwise, please try to answer the question as best as you can and as honestly as possible. The information you share is confidential, which means I will not tell your teacher(s) what you share with me. I will change your name to make sure your information is protected. While you're talking, I might write down some notes just to make sure I can remember everything that you are saying. I will also record our conversation to help me remember all the wonderful things that you are saying. Let's get started!

Introductory Questions

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- How would you describe yourself?

Reading Self-Perceptions

- How would you describe yourself as a reader?
- Do you like to read? Why or why not?
- How often do you read? If not often, why?
- What kind of grades do you get in reading class?
- How do you think teachers view you as a student?
 - Why do they think that about you?
 - What makes you think that about yourself?
 - What makes your classes interesting (or not?)

Experiences

- What kind of materials or books does your teacher give you to read?
 - What do you like about them? Why?
 - What don't you like about them? Why?
- What kind of materials or books does your teacher read to you?
- Do you connect to the books that you read at school? How?
- Do you prefer to be read to, or would you rather read by yourself? Why?
 - What kinds of books do you choose to read by yourself?
- What types of books do you enjoy reading?
- What is your favorite book either that you've read or have had read to you? Why is that book your favorite?
- Do you talk about what you read with your friends?
- Tell me how you feel about reading class. Why?
- How do you feel when you are called on in reading class when you know the answer?
 - How do you feel when you are called on in reading class when you don't know the answer?

- What do you like about reading?
- What don't you like about reading?
- Tell me about a time when you got praised or rewarded in reading class.
- Do your teachers punish all students the same for doing the same things?
- Tell me some strategies that help you learn in reading class.
- When you were younger, did someone at home read to you? Does anyone read to you now? How often?
- Do you have a library or personal collection of books at home?
- Do you go to the public library?

Relationships

- Tell me about who wants you to do well in school.
- How do your teachers show that they care about you?
- How do you know how your teachers feel about you?
- What do you feel are your teacher's expectations for your learning? Why?
- What do you feel are your family's expectations for your learning? Why?
- Tell me about people who encourage you to succeed in school.
- Tell me about your experiences with administrators and counselors (like the principal or assistant principal).
- Which adults have helped you the most at school?

Challenges

- What makes reading hard for you?
- What do you do when reading is hard for you?
- Have you ever gotten in trouble during reading class?

Experiences as a Black Boy

- What does it feel like to be Black and a boy at school?
- How does your reading teacher's classroom environment motivate you to try to get good grades?
 - How does your reading teacher's classroom environment not motivate you to get good grades?
- How does your reading teacher's classroom environment motivate you to have good conduct?
 - How does your reading teacher's classroom environment not motivate you to have good conduct?
- How do you think teachers see/view Black boys as students?
- Is there anything else you want teachers and others to know about your experience?