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Why Can't I Read? The Demise of Literacy Among African American Boys in the Fourth Grade: The perception of ten fourth grade Chicago Public School Teachers' lived experiences of literary instruction during their undergraduate student teaching program

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Why Can't I Read? The Demise of Literacy Among African American Boys in the Fourth

Grade: The perception of ten fourth grade Chicago Public School Teachers' lived

experiences of literary instruction during their undergraduate student teaching program

A Dissertation in Education
with a Concentration in Educational Leadership

By

Kimberly Darlene Lloyd

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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We approve the dissertation of Kimberly Darlene Lloyd

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Certificate of Authorship

I certify that I am the sole author of this dissertation. Any assistance received in the preparation of this dissertation has been acknowledged and disclosed within it. Any sources utilized, including the use of data, ideas, and words, those quoted directly or paraphrased, have been cited. I certify that I have prepared this dissertation according to program guidelines, as directed.

Author Signature _____   Date   <u>November 17, 2021</u>

Abstract

This qualitative, non-experimental phenomenology study used interviews to better understand the undergraduate literary curricula experiences of ten fourth-grade Chicago Public School teachers. The study explored the lived experiences of their literary instruction to African American fourth-grade boys. The purpose of this study was to identify why these youth have low reading proficiency and score the lowest of all demographics who take standardized test. The study results showed that nine of the ten teachers felt they lacked the skills to teach literacy effectively as a new teacher. The researcher discovered four major themes: connect, curricula, teacher perception/literacy & professional development, and cultural competency.

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Dedication

Let me begin by thanking God for my parents. Nathaniel H. Lloyd, and Sharon B. Lloyd, poured all the love and wisdom they had into me, and I am forever grateful. My angels from above!

To my father, who attentively prepared me and insulated me from the wars I would encounter because of my overly melanin skin, broad nose, and full lips. For all the times he encouraged me with his words of hope when he said, "you can do, and you can be whoever you want to be. But you have to work hard, and you can't be a half doer." I've removed some of his colorful metaphors, but you can fill in the empty spaces. He went on to say, "You must be a person of integrity, and your "word" must stand for something because in this world your "word" is the only thing that you have. Remember baby, you are Black, you are a female, and you are poor, and if people cannot depend on your "word" then you have nothing."

To my mother, who was a woman of great character, strong-willed and a mother who was determined for her daughter to be successful. She taught me what it meant to be supportive of others, a selfless giver, and to follow my dreams even if the road was difficult. She taught me to be ethical and honest and, at all costs, be respectful and demand respect in return. It is because of her that I am the woman that I am today. I am eternally grateful for all the mothering that she bestowed upon me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"I am male. I am African American. I am poor. I harbor generations of resentment. I feel disenfranchised from a society that preaches 'no child is left behind,' and yet I am behind. I am in the fourth grade, and I cannot read. I am labeled illiterate, and amongst others who look like me, I have been herded into special education classes, even though I do not have a learning disability. What I do have is an entirely different way of learning that my teachers are not tapping into. Why aren't they interested in my culture? It reflects who I am as a person and a student? This society does not see me and will not see me because I have no voice. Perhaps, the color of my skin, the underfunded schools that I attend, and the under-served community in which I live, has rendered me invisible. Am I not worthy of receiving a quality education?" (Lloyd, unpublished composition, 2019, p.1).

This study sought to identify dilemmas currently plaguing African American boys and possible solutions for thwarting the devastating impact illiteracy has on their educational development and their lives. In tandem, the researcher also examined the negative impact poor literacy curricula at colleges and universities of education have on the teachers whose responsibility it is to teach this student population how to read.

Unfortunately, many African American boys are 'paying with their lives,' so as Woodson suggests, "to handicap a student by teaching him that his black face is a curse and that his struggle to change his condition is hopeless" (Woodson, 1933, p. 2-3) can catapult him into the abyss of illiteracy, suspensions, expulsions, and incarceration. Nearly sixty years ago, in a piece entitled My Dungeon Shook: A Letter to My Nephew on the Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation, James Baldwin (1963) wrote: "You were not expected to aspire to excellence; you were expected to make peace with mediocrity" (p. 7). Baldwin's more than half a century old warning to his nephew about making peace with mediocrity still rings true for African American boys trapped in America's sub-par educational system. Unfortunately, youth who live in impoverished communities located in urban areas are often victims of such an education.

Mediocrity has produced a group of young African American boys who are illiterate.

Mediocrity has forced these youth into special education classes simply because they have failed to master the ability to read (Kunjufu, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2016; Noddings, 2016). Being the product of a mediocre education is often synonymous with being labeled 'at risk', which is like "being voted least likely to succeed.   For where there is no faith in your future success, there is no real effort to prepare you for it" (Day, 2013, p. 10).   It is easier to build strong African American boys than to repair broken men (Douglass, 2021).

Background of the Study

This phenomenological study sought to identify dilemmas currently plaguing African American boys, as it relates to their poor literacy scores, their educational development, and how these elements affect their lives as a whole. But before the researcher could delve into these topics, it was necessary to first examine how the education of African Americans has been negatively impacted for over 200 hundred years. Below is a historical overview of some of the most important legislation that was to change the direction of education for African Americans from a negative to a positive.

Historically, obtaining an education has not been easy for African Americans. Up until the latter part of the 19th century, African Americans across the United States were not legally allowed to read (Scott, 2009). During the period following slavery, the government found it was necessary to give the newly emancipated slaves enough training to make them productive parts of an economic system that was changing from agricultural to industrial. However, the idea was never to give the masses of African Americans enough education to achieve equality with white Americans (Scott, 2009).

During the 1880s, there was an attempt to pass a bill by Senator Henry Blair that would have required the government to provide $77 million to be spent equally for the education of all

children, without distinction of race or color (Cruse, 1987). The period from 1896 to World War I was a critical period in African American education regarding the place of African Americans in the social order of things (Shujaa, 1996). Not quite sure what to do with them, those in control wondered whether they could be integrated or returned to Africa? How would or could they contribute to the economic and political schemas in the United States? Most importantly, what educational agenda would best suit their status, and who would decide? (Shujaa, 1996).

During the mid-twentieth century, many African Americans thought that public school desegregation Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), would be the key to social and economic equity but this opportunity never came to fruition. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, W.E.B. DuBois was one of the most important African American scholars and activists. He co-founded the NAACP and was the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University. W.E.B. DuBois, along with the NAACP, submitted a petition, "An Appeal to the World" to the United Nations to address the denial of human rights of African Americans in the United States (ACLU, 2017). He personally spearheaded reform, as the progressives and reconstructionists called attention to the emerging problems of the U.S. corporate-industrial state and issues related to it. With this effort, education was subject to increased scrutiny (Shujaa, 1996). The progressives began to explain schooling in terms of power and ideology. They believed that schools were linked to the dominant political and economic ideology.

Chicago Public Schools Historical Overview

Having reviewed the education legislation and the education movement started by DuBois, it would have been remiss of the researcher not to take a historical overview of the Chicago Board of Education and on the people who contributed to its development. Especially

since this study was performed on the southside of Chicago and all the participants were Chicago Board of Education elementary school teachers. For the purpose of this study, it was important to examine how the board of Education allocated monies to its schools and how these monies provided support or lack of support to its' teachers. What is for certain is without adequate monies to pay for salaries, supplies and improvements to infrastructure, a mediocre education is often what students who live in impoverished urban communities receive. Below are dates that identify some of the most important legislation that guided the Chicago Board of Education.

In 1851, the Illinois State Legislature gave the city council responsibility for the Chicago Public schools. The council hired the city's first school superintendent in 1854. In 1872, the Illinois State Legislature established a Board of Education, with members appointed by the mayor, to oversee all aspects of public education in Chicago. While other school districts in the state established elected school boards, Chicago remained unique in having a board appointed by the mayor (Lipman, 2021).

In 1980, the Illinois State legislature passed the Chicago School Reform Act of 1988. The state law rewrote Article 34 of the Illinois School Code, the portion of state law that dealt only with Chicago public schools. The 1988 law established the elected local school council of every public school in Chicago. The LSC had immense power, including the sole authority to; select and evaluate the principal, approve an annual school improvement plan, help develop and approve a school budget, with major control over an average of $500,000 a year in flexible funds from the state (Lipman, 2021).

The 1988 law also abolished the existing 11-person Education Committee. The law expanded the Board of Education to 15 and created a School Board Nominating Commission, composed of 23 parent and community representatives from LSCs across the city and five

members appointed by the mayor. Commission screened candidates and selected three

candidates for each vacant position on the 15-member board of directors. The mayor had 30 days

to select 15 board members from the list submitted by the Nominating Commission. If the mayor

rejected all three slated candidates for a slot, the commission had to come up with three more.

The mayor's choices had to be approved by the City Council (Wong, 2009).

By 1995, the basis of the distribution had been modified, and monies were allocated

according to the number of students at a school who were qualified for "free" or reduced-price

lunch, based on federal guidelines also known as Title I. Although more decisions had been

made locally, especially regarding the election and renewal of principals, there had been little

change in terms of the quality of education (Joravsky, 1990). A parent-member of a northside

elementary LSC was interviewed, and she said, "Giving control over the purse strings to a local

body is a good first step but as long as the purse arrives half-empty, it is nothing but a first step.

To even begin to address adequately the problems our schools face, we need much more money"

(Joravsky, p. 2, 1990).

To add credence to this LSC parents' response to the allocation of funds, the Census

report confirm that based on the 2019 school year budget, Chicago public schools spent $4,397

per pupil (CPS, 2018). However, schools in the nearby Cook County spent $12,541 per pupil

and the schools in the state's most affluent district spend $15,337 per pupil

(Illinoisreportcard.com, 2018). While school districts that are housed in northern Illinois suburbs

(including Winnetka, Glencoe, Hinsdale, and Lake Forest) in 2015 spent more than $30,000 per

student (ISBE, 2017). In Illinois, the highest-poverty districts received 22percent less than

lowest-poverty districts. Yet, teachers at the Chicago Public Schools, in urban communities,

were expected to effectively teach students with only a fraction of the monies that other school

districts in the same state were allocated. These dismal allocations of funds to educate urban black and brown children is why the researcher used Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Intersectionality theory as theoretical framework of the study. The use of these frameworks is discussed in chapter 2 of this qualitative study.

As previously mentioned, it is crucial that monies be allocated not only to the rich suburbs of Chicago, but to the inner-city schools as well. The schools where 90 percent of the students received free or reduced lunch. This study shines a light on the importance of how economics played a negative role in the education of brown and black children in the inner-city. Below, the study examined the social and economic woes of the educational journey of fourth-grade, African American boys.

Statement of the Problem

Regardless of the social, economic, and parental environment of fourth-grade African American boys, nationwide, these young people still exhibit the lowest scores on standardized testing in literacy (Lynch, 2017). The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) 2013 data theorizes that it is the fault of schools, and that learning literacy is tailored to girls. So how do we adapt literacy instruction to better reach our boys - particularly our young boys of color (nationreportcard, 2013)?

Reading is the most essential component of the educational process. To be proficient in math, science, and social studies, students need a strong foundation in reading (Wright & Counsell, 2018). According to Harvey and Ward (2017), boys need multiple ways to enter reading and multiple ways to show that they know how to read. Many boys complain that they hate reading. Tatum (2005) argues that "the solution to increasing literacy among African American boys is embedded in social, cultural, economic and historical dynamics" (p. 53).

Based on Arthur Levine's (2006) study, Educating School Teachers, over 100 teachers complained that they were not adequately prepared during their undergraduate career to effectively teach literacy nor did they receive adequate hands-on training, for classroom management. To add credibility to these teachers' complaint, a 2010 study conducted by the Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance found that teachers do not feel comfortable teaching literacy (Salinger, et al., 2016). Teacher candidates who are typically 21 or 22 years old are asked to carry quite a heavy burden. The new teacher is effectively denied the wisdom, experience, and solid research that might make all the difference when confronting a classroom of students for the first time (Walsh, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of fourth grade Chicago Public School teachers surrounding their undergraduate literacy teacher preparation curricula in contrast with the phenomenon of fourth-grade, African American boys holding the lowest scores of all demographics on standardized tests. The study also sought to understand and explored the why and how, the lack of literacy experience among elementary school teachers may have had a direct relationship with fourth-grade African American boy's literacy scores. The research goal was to identify themes and discover patterns related to fourth-grade teachers' lived experiences surrounding teaching literacy to African American boys as well as why and how their student teaching training prepared them to teach literacy effectively.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this qualitative study in an effort to illuminate and examine the catalyst of the phenomenon of low literacy scores of fourth-grade African American boys. Through these questions, the study sought to describe the experiences of

teachers during their undergraduate literary instruction at their colleges and/or universities alongside their experiences providing comprehensive literary instruction in the classroom. This study sought to understand if teachers believe that a lack of exposure to real-life literacy instruction during their collegiate studies may have a negative impact on the development and literacy scores of the African American boys that they teach.

RQ1: Why do African American boys in the fourth grade score the lowest of all youth who take Standardized tests with a 14 percent literacy rate (NAEP, 2015)?

RQ2: How do teachers learn how to teach reading effectively during their undergraduate careers?

RQ3: Do teachers feel comfortable with their ability to teach children how to read when they encounter non-readers or students who have difficulties?

Rationale for the Study

Through qualitative metrics, this study took a deep dive into the experiences and perceptions of teachers' undergraduate literary curricula in the teacher preparation coursework to understand the phenomenon surrounding literacy rates of fourth-grade African American boys. The participants were fourth-grade Chicago Public School teachers of African American boys. They took a semi-structured interview, and each of them was asked closed and opened-ended questions. Each interview was 60 minutes long and consisted of 22 questions. All interviews were conducted at a non-engaged performance site (Kennedy King Library), in person, and transcribed verbatim. All interviews were coded to generate case themes. To render a vigorous grasp of the data, all emerging themes were analyzed. The proposed study was designed as a phenomenology study.

A phenomenological research design was best suited for this proposed study, especially because it has the ability to conduct empirical research to investigate contemporary phenomena in its real life. Various sources of evidence had been used here (Patton, 1990). It is an in-depth and detailed investigation of the development of a single event, a situation, or an individual over a period of time (Hasa, 2017). Phenomenology studies are often used to explore and unearth complex issues such as social issues, including drug addiction, unemployment, and poverty (Hasa, 2017). The other aspect of the research drew upon phenomenological elements with the intent to understand the subjective, lived experiences and participants' perspectives.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study emphasizing teachers' perception of preparatory work surrounding literacy instruction in collegiate courses were that teachers' confidence and ability was contingent upon their education, training, and professional development (Day, 1999). Fourth-grade teachers specifically to meet the needs of all readers, including struggling readers (Brown, 2018). This fact is an aggregate to the already stressful environment that teachers work in where they are poorly prepared for the sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and cultural disparities they will encounter in the classroom but are evaluated on their ability to produce results through their student's standardized tests scores regardless. In a 2016 study, Teacher Stress and Health – Effects on Teachers, Students, and Schools, teachers with nurses at 46 percent reported high stress (Greenber, et al., 2016). To add insult to injury, the University of Missouri's study entitled Empirically Derived Profiles of Teacher Stress, Burnout, Self-Efficacy, and Coping and Associated Student Outcomes indicate that 93 percent of elementary teachers report high stress. Thus, it is safe to conclude that primary teachers consistently feel overwhelmed and more stressed than secondary school teachers (Herman, at el., 2018).

Coupled with the stress of the teachers is the evidence of stress in students demonstrated in the 50,000 preschoolers who are suspended from public preschool programs and another 17,000, who are expelled every year (NSCH, 2016). African American boys face overrepresentation in both suspension and expulsion rates in pre-school. Based on a government study by the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, African American students make up 18 percent of those enrolled in preschools. However, they are found to account for 48 percent of students to garner one or more suspensions. Moreover, the boys in this demographic are suspended at a rate three times their White counterparts, and their infractions are more often deemed criminal in comparison to other students (ocrdata.ed.gov., 2014).

Role of the Researcher

As an African American woman, who is a police officer, and a previous Chicago Public School educator and administrator, I acknowledge that I have biases. For over 26 years, I have had a front row seat to the adverse effects of poverty, lack of nutrition, subpar schools, inadequate teachers, and poor policing as it pertains to African American boys. These adverse experiences that are all too common for African American boys are often sources of trauma. In young children, the effects of trauma are frequently masked but can show up as uncontrolled anger amongst other things, especially in the classroom, when exposed.

As a researcher, an officer of the law, a former administrator, and a human being, it is vitally important to recognize that African American boys are historically and in present society a group that is often denied the benefit of freedoms and considerations that are unquestioningly lavished onto other children. I entered this research from an extraordinary vantage point as I have been both a part of the school system and the justice system, both of which in their own, yet interconnected rights continue to fail African American boys. My experience provides me with

an uncommon and interdisciplinary insider knowledge. For the sake of this research study, I hope

that my knowledge will be an asset to this research and to the participants, who agree to be a part

of the study.

Researcher Assumptions

As a researcher on this topic of African American boys and how they navigate through

life with regard to their interaction with their teachers and illiteracy, I also investigated how the

lack of elementary teacher literacy preparedness may directly impact literacy success in the

classroom. As previously mentioned, I hold many biases as a former Chicago Board of

Education administrator who has witnessed what truly happens inside many inner-city

classrooms where African American boys constitute a substantial amount of the populous as

students.

I was aware of what the research indicates about fourth-grade African American boys, as

well as what it implied about their teachers. I knew that many of their teachers lack not only the

essential skills to teach African American boys how to read but also the cultural competency to

appropriately engage them. I knew that quite often, these students are looked upon as an

obstacle in the learning environment and not as a student to be engaged with fervor. I,

unfortunately, also knew that too often teachers find themselves in front of this demographic of

children and were unprepared to teach them. Their unpreparedness had nothing to do with their

unwillingness; they simply do not know how to manage a room of children who do not look,

who do not speak, and who do not move in the manner in which they expect children of this age

to move.

Teachers do not know how to reach them, how to connect with them and how to teach

them to read. I knew that these youth are compared to girls, which they are not. I knew that

these youth are compared to white boys, which they are not. I was painstakingly aware that more often than not, African American boys find themselves in adult situations, both in school and in their own communities. The reality for many of these youth is that they are fearful of losing their lives on the way to school, in school, and on their way home.

I knew that they feel scared in a society that has mapped out the who, the what, and the how, of who they are, what they do, and how they should behave. I also knew that fear masquerades in strange ways in children who do not yet have the language for their experiences. I knew that they must appear cool, void of emotion, and these appearances must be maintained in the classroom. I knew that they were treated as and instructed to be men when they were only children. Quite often, their movements are misinterpreted as disruptive, when for many, the way they engage is a coping mechanism.

What I knew, from personal experience, was that African American boys require a different kind of engagement in the classroom that most elementary teachers are not familiar with due to sub-par teacher preparation curricula during their collegiate career. Many researchers may not be privy to the intricate details and nuances that occur within the school walls of Chicago Public schools, and so they must rely heavily on the research. Again, I entered this research from the vantage point of having experience in this area. With that in mind, I tried to remain neutral as I gathered research and attempted to make sense of it all.

Nature of the Study

This was a qualitative, non-experimental phenomenology study that used interviews to better understand the undergraduate literacy curricula experiences of fourth-grade teachers who work for Chicago Public schools. Hopefully, this study illuminated the need for curriculum reform centered in scientifically based and culturally competent instructional practices regarding

literacy in collegiate education programs. This research was designed to be a qualitative study as opposed to a quantitative study because the researcher was interested in the participant's lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Qualitative data is a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts. By its very nature, qualitative data can preserve chronological flow, show precisely which events lead to which consequences, and derive fruitful explanations (Amaratunga, et al., 2002). This study used a phenomenology approach as opposed to a grounded theory as both are appropriate for qualitative research. These two methods are very similar when it comes to data collection; however a phenomenology approach begins with a research question, while a grounded theory discovers a research question after data collection (Sayre, 2001).

Furthermore, a phenomenology approach was the most appropriate design for this study because it does not require a large sample size and because the goal of the design is to acquire rich descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants (Patton, 2002). Morse (1994) and Creswell (1998) recommend that phenomenology studies' sample size should range between six and 10 participants.

The participants were fourth-grade Chicago Public School teachers of African American boys. They were to partake in a semi-structured interview, and each of them was asked closed and opened-ended questions. Each interview was 60 minutes in length and consisted of 22 questions. All interviews were conducted at a non-engaged performance site (Kennedy King Library), in person and transcribed verbatim. All interviews were coded to generate case themes and to render a vigorous grasp of the data; all emerging themes were analyzed (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The primary advantage of personal interviews is that they rely on personal and direct

contact between interviewers and interviewees. Consequently, they eliminate non-response rates, but in order for them to be effective interviewers, they need to develop the necessary skills to successfully carry an interview (Fisher, 2005, Wilson, 2003).

Moreover, unstructured interviews are flexible in terms of the flow of the interview, thereby leaving room for the generation of conclusions that are not initially meant to be derived regarding a research subject (Gill & Johnson, 2002). It was my intention that the results of this study could be used to encourage and assist colleges and university of education in implementing the science of reading into their curricula to ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to teach students of diverse backgrounds. Additionally, the results of this study could also heighten public awareness, help increase funding and influence educational policy.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are used operationally in this study.

Culturally responsive literacy, refers to a student-centered approach to teaching in which students' unique cultural strengths are nurtured to promote academic achievement and a sense of well-being about one's cultural place in the world (Callins, 2006, p. 63).

Implicit biases, unconscious attribution of particular qualities to a member of a certain Social group. Implicit stereotypes are shaped by experience and based on learned associations between particular qualities and social categories, including race and or gender (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006, p. 951).

Reality pedagogy, teaching and learning approach introduced by Christopher Emdin. This approach focuses on the understanding of students by the teacher (Emdin, 2012, p. 286).

Psychomotor, refers to how the brain's mental processes affect physical movement (Werner, 1972, p. 111).

Phonemic awareness, is a subset of phonological awareness in which listeners are able to hear, identify and manipulate phonemes, the smallest mental units of sound that helps to differentiate units of meaning. Separating the spoken word "cat" into three distinct phonemes and requires phonemic awareness (Cunningham, 1990, p. 429).

Pedagogical framework, is designed to promote the consistency of practice and supports teachers to deliver high quality teaching and learning. It focuses on the idea that quality teaching is the key to improved student outcomes (sac.gld.edu.au, 2019, p. 2).

Diverse learners, is a learner who is one of two things: a learner that is racially, ethnically, culturally, economically and or linguistically diverse. Learners who learn differently from the majority (Sarvia-Shore, 2008, p. 42).

Intersectionality, is a theoretical framework for understanding how aspects of one's identity including, gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability might combine to create a unique form of discrimination (Gillborn, 2015).

Science of Reading, is a body of research that incorporates insights and research from disciplines that include developmental psychology, educational psychology, cognitive science, and cognitive neuroscience.

Assumptions

The intent of this study was to provide Chicago Public Schools' fourth-grade teachers a platform to voice their perceptions about their undergraduate literacy curricula in contrast to teaching literacy to fourth-grade boys in an urban environment. The researcher hoped that the teachers would share rich descriptions of their experiences, in response to the research questions. The greater hope was that these experiences would reveal discrepancies between his, her, their, etc., undergraduate literary curricula and its' efficacy in real-world classrooms. While

conducting the interviews and analyzing the teachers' responses, the researcher remained neutral and did not impose personal beliefs and experiences as a previous Chicago Board of Education elementary school administrator.

In an effort to control researcher biases, this researcher used epoche (Husserl, 2003, 2016). Husserl developed the method around 1906. The first step of Moustakas's (1994) principles of phenomenological research data analysis will require the researcher to be discerning and not judgmental during the data collection and analysis process. To ensure data collection and analysis are credible and reliable; the researcher did not rely on personal beliefs, experiences, attitudes, and presumptions that are related to colleges and universities of education curricula or fourth-grade teachers' of Chicago Public Schools literacy expertise (Moustakas, 1994).

Limitations

There were several limitations to this research study as this was a small study of 10 participants. All of the participants were fourth-grade teachers who work for the Chicago Board of Education. This study did not employ teachers from charter, catholic, or private elementary schools in Chicago. The researcher only interviewed fourth-grade teachers and only teachers who were White and Black. The researcher relied on teachers, to be honest, forthright, and comprehensive in their responses and cannot prove that their responses are not valid. Time constraints that the researcher placed on conducting the study were based on having access to the gatekeeper who was directly responsible for providing access to the participants, namely the teachers.

Having a gatekeeper who was connected to the teachers helped the researcher gain access to them, however because the gatekeeper served as a go-between the researcher had some

difficulties contacting the participants. Consequently, when she needed to resend recruitment letters to the teachers to encourage additional participation, the researcher had to contact the gatekeeper via email and or by leaving a message with his secretary. If these efforts were met with negative results, the researcher, with no other alternative, had to reach out to other coworkers with whom she previously worked with at the Chicago Board of Education. This method of gathering participants is referred to as convenience sampling and is different from the purposeful sampling of the original design of the study. This is a specific type of non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in a study (Lavrakas, 2008).

Delimitations

The delimitation of this study was that it was a phenomenological design that directly affected the sample size. According to Creswell (2007), phenomenological studies do not require large sample sizes because the goal of the design is to acquire rich descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants. This study was delimited by a small sample size of 10 participants, which kept the results from being generalizable to larger populations. To participate in the study, the teachers had to be a fourth-grade teacher (Leung, 2015).

The study only examined the literacy scores of fourth-grade, African American boys who attend Chicago Public Schools. The study did not include private, catholic, or charter schools in Chicago. The schools of the participating teachers only represented 3 of the 17 Networks within CPS including: Network 11, Network 9, and Network 2. nine of the ten schools are located on the south side of Chicago and has a classification of a Title 1 school. This classification means that there is a high population of minority students and or low-income students who receive free or reduced lunch.

While the researcher sought to limit the schools to the South Side, she encountered difficulties in finding the teacher demographics required for this study with those restrictions and was forced to venture into outside networks. This population of teachers was selected as a means to unearth the phenomenon of why the literacy rates of fourth-grade African American boys are continuously below average and how or if teachers feel that they received adequate literacy teacher preparation during their undergraduate career. The researcher only interviewed fourth-grade Chicago Public School teachers who were White and Black, but both male and female. The researcher did not examine any other demographics than those listed above.

Summary

As further support to justify the need to conduct research about teachers who are responsible for teaching literacy to fourth-grade African American boys, this chapter seeks to provide an overview and insight into the circumstances of the importance of effective instruction of foundational reading skills. This research was intended to look at the evidence of poor literary performance in African American boys through the lens of inferior education, suspensions, expulsions, and their relationship to these boy's future incarceration. The context and history sections ascertain the significance and need to understand the historical implications of the evidence for African American boys' literary fluency in comparison to their peers as historically African Americans have been denied the freedom to read.

Still today, African American Boys score the lowest in literacy on standardized tests, and this study aimed to unearth if and or how the literacy curricula of colleges and universities of education may have some responsibility for producing less than effective teachers (NEA, 2016). In Derrick Bell's (1976) Serving Two Masters, he provides a blueprint of how Critical Race

Theory was designed and implemented to improve the lives of African Americans through writings about remedial education, equal employment, racial remediation, and school litigation. Bell speaks about how, despite the landmark victory Board of Education vs. Brown 347 U.S. 483 (1954), racism remains a driving factor among educating African Americans and how their education is often ignored or denied.

Bell's (1976) critical race theory provided the framework to synthesize teachers' perceptions of their experiences with literacy among African American boys in the fourth grade as well as their perceptions and experiences of their undergraduate literacy curricula. The Intersectionality theory was useful for analyzing the marginalization of African American boys in public schools (Crenshaw, 1991), along with the processual nature of oppression and privilege and the social workings of power (Staunaes, 2003; Lykke, 2010).

Chapter 2 will review current literature focusing on the dilemmas that African American boys are plagued with as they emerge through their often, arduous time in elementary school. This arduous road often leaves them hopeless and disinterested in school, especially literacy. Chapter 2 will also focus on teacher preparedness courses and how or if their undergraduate literacy courses adequately prepared them to teach literacy to fourth-grade African American boys by incorporating culturally competent instruction techniques adaptable and relevant to their classrooms and if there is a commonality between the two: below average literacy scores of fourth-grade African American boys and inadequate literacy course work of undergraduate teachers. Chapter 3 will review the methods used in this study. Chapter 4 will present the result of the study, explanations, and discussion; and Chapter 5 will synthesize the results and provide recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to the Literature Review

The following literature review identifies dilemmas currently plaguing African American boys and possible solutions for thwarting the devastating impact illiteracy has on their educational development and their lives. In tandem, the researcher also examined the negative impact poor literacy curricula at colleges and universities of education have on the teachers whose responsibility it is to teach this student population how to read.

In this chapter, the researcher began with a literature review of the specific dynamics that affect Chicago Public Schools fourth-grade African American boys. Beginning with an examination as to why these youth scored the lowest in literacy of any demographics who took standardized tests, the researcher noted countless impediments to these youth' success in literacy. These impediments included suspensions, expulsions, being routed to special education classes, poverty, socioeconomic status, the environment inside and outside of their homes, and the consistent implications and projections of race and gender for African American boys.

The research revealed that the obstacles that plague their path to literacy in school are of no fault of their own, but instead a product of a lack of access to experienced and proficient teachers, culturally competent and engaging curriculums, and reading materials that reflect their own lived experiences. This research examined the impact of constructive mentors and representation in classroom leadership. It looked at the influence that having at least one teacher of color has on African American boy's development in grammar school, including motivating them to be better students. It is possible that the impact of this kind of representation can be directly correlated to these students not only graduating from high school but continuing to college.

While representation is important and should not be understated in potential for impact, the most crucial of all aforementioned scenarios is having teachers who genuinely connect, engage, address, acknowledge, serve, and who have resolve. Teachers having proper education and training in literacy along with possessing these skill sets assist in removing many impediments that are placed on these boys by faulty social and educational systems before they even begin school.

The education field is inundated with research surrounding African American boys' literacy scores along with a barrage of reasons for the decline. Research indicated that lack of parental involvement, lack of books in the home, along with race, poverty, socio-economic status, drugs, lack of health care, nutrition, and the environment inside and outside of the household are many of the culprits that have hindered African American boys from successfully learning how to read.

However, this study does not seek to re-examine these previously mentioned barriers but sought to shed light on the literacy curricula of universities and colleges of education. Scholarly research suggested that institutions of education have fallen short of delivering effective literacy curricula to student teachers and for this reason this study sought to answer the question of why (Salinger, et al., 2010; Pimentel, 2018; Hanford, 2018). Additionally, this study examined the holistic approach to teaching and in doing so the researcher used intersectionality as a part of critical race theory.

Search Engine

The computerized literature search was conducted to identify and collect applicable research using the EBSCO host on DePaul University's online library. Published manuscripts that appeared in peer reviewed journals, along with books from various authors, were collected

as the primary sources of data.

Theoretical Framework

This study explored the utility of intersectionality as an aspect of critical race theory (CRT) in education.   It drew from pre-existing research on fourth-grade African American boys failures in literacy and their teachers whose responsibility it is to instruct these youth on how to read. CRT is the theoretical framework used in most of the articles and books for this literature review. CRT contends that race and its meaning are socially constructed and function as a powerful aspect in social life (Ladson-Billings, 1995 & Tate, 1997).

Intersectionality is a concept that enables us to recognize the fact that perceived group membership can make people vulnerable to various forms of bias, yet because we are simultaneously members of many groups, our complex identities can shape the specific way we each experience that bias (Gillborn, 2015). Scholars working within CRT place emphasis on the experiential knowledge of people of color and challenge common assumptions about "meritocracy" and "neutrality" as a camouflage for the interests of dominant groups (Tate, 1997, p. 235).

This study used CRT as a framework for examining race and how the meanings attached to race influence the educational context for students of color (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). In applying CRT schools of education must make sure that their students studying to be educators are aware of the influences that they have on their students and how systemic racism and sexism, is a part of the CPS educational system. In adopting this approach, CRT scholars attempt to understand how victims of systemic racism are affected by cultural perceptions of race and how they are able to represent themselves to counter prejudice (Tate, 1997).

Closely connected to such fields as philosophy, history, sociology, and law, CRT

scholarship traces racism in America through the nation's legacy of slavery, and the Civil Rights Movement. In doing so, it draws from work by writers like Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois, Martin Luther King, Jr., and others studying law, feminism, and post-structuralism. CRT developed into its current form during the mid-1970s with scholars like Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado, who responded to what they identified as dangerously slow progress following Civil Rights in the 1960s (Delgado, p. 5, 2017).

Adopting a CRT approach to literature or other modes of cultural expression includes much more than simply identifying race, racism, and racialized characters in fictional works. Rather, it broadly emphasizes the importance of examining and attempting to understand the socio-cultural forces that shape how we and others perceive, experience, and respond to racism. These scholars treat literature, and other cultural works as evidence of American culture's collective values and beliefs. In doing so, they trace racism as a dually theoretical and historical experience that affects all members of a community regardless of their racial affiliations or identifications (owl.purdue., p. 1, 2021).

Most CRT scholarship attempts to demonstrate not only how racism continues to be a pervasive component throughout dominant society, but also why this persistent racism problematically denies individuals many of the constitutional freedoms they are otherwise promised in the United States' governing documents (owl.purdue., 2021, p.2). This enables scholars to locate how texts develop in and through the cultural contexts that produced them, further demonstrating how pervasive systemic racism truly is. CRT scholars typically focus on both the evidence and the origins of racism in American culture, seeking to eradicate it at its roots (owl.purdue., 2021, p.2).

When thinking about the constructs of Henry Giroux's cultural pedagogy and Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy both of their theories speak to the institutional struggles surrounding education, politics, and oppression which connects to CRT and intersectionality. Freire is one of the most important critical educators of the twentieth century. Not only is he considered one of the founders of critical pedagogy, but he also played a crucial role in developing a highly successful literacy campaign in Brazil before the onslaught of the junta in 1964.

He suggested that education cannot be divorced from politics; the act of teaching and learning are considered political acts in and of themselves. Freire defined this connection as a main tenet of critical pedagogy. Cultural pedagogy describes the struggle over culture, a struggle that is also about the formation of society and its institutions, public values, and public discourse from which individuals and groups draw their conceptual inventories. There are, in short, high social stakes in the ways that teachers make meanings and work to form culture.

Review of Literature

Why Can't I Read?

African American boys in the fourth grade are among the lowest scoring groups in reading of all students who take standardized tests (NCES, 2010). From pre-kindergarten through to third grade, these youth show signs of diminished reading skills, but the decline is even more significant once they reach the fourth grade. In fact, this group of youth is suspended, expelled, and routed to special education at disproportionate rates and more than any other ethnic group (Boykin & Franklin, 2000). Researchers cite an array of reasons for this issue, including race, poverty, socio-economic status, drugs, lack of health care, nutrition, and the environment inside and outside of the household (Ginwright, 2016; Kunjufu, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Wright & Counsell, 2018).

These youth must also deal with negative stereotypes in and out of school, a scarcity of positive role models, and a lack of culturally competent instruction and direction in the classroom (Yeakey & Henderson, 2003). Many of them experience problems associated with low socioeconomic status and high-risk neighborhoods. Students in such neighborhoods are often too consumed with concern about mortality and safety to seriously think about either schooling or their uncertain futures (Tatum, 2006). Converging in multiple sources of stress and dissonance, these factors characterize African American boys' experiences as they begin the tumultuous work of self-definition (Fashola, 2005).

The education field is saturated with studies documenting African American boys' poor performance and achievement deficits. National reading achievement data continues to indicate that as a group, African American boys are not performing well (Tatum, 2006). Educators need to enhance African American boys' resilience, particularly those struggling readers attending public schools in low-income areas by identifying texts that can shape positive life outcome trajectories for them. It is important for the curricula to be exciting for both the student and the teacher, to serve as a roadmap and provide apprenticeship, to challenge students cognitively and help boys apply literacy skills and strategies. More specifically, the curriculum should:

- "Engage boys in authentic discussions where they can analyze their realities in the context of the curriculum and discuss strategies for overcoming academic and social barriers.

- Address boys', cognitive and effective domains, taking into account their cultural characteristics.

- Connect the social, the economic and political to the educational.
  Acknowledge that developing skills, increasing test scores, and nurturing students' identities are fundamentally compatible.

- Resolve the dilemma of focusing on skill development versus developing intelligence by offering challenges that satisfy both requirements.

- Serve as soft role models in the absence of physically present male role models by providing motivation, direction and hope for the future and suggesting what is worthwhile in life" (Tatum, 2006, p. 48).

Teacher Preparation Programs – Good, Bad, and the Ugly

As previously stated, the education field is saturated with studies documenting African American boys' poor performance and achievement deficits, however, there is a lack of studies that have examined the literacy curricula of colleges and universities of education programs. How is it possible that schools of education are not designing literary curricula around sound and proven data about literacy development even though they are responsible for the development of aspiring teachers? How is it possible to graduate from a college or university of education never having the necessary coursework to teach literacy?

Based on data from the (2016) National Assessment of Educational Progress Report and Louisa Moats (2000) book Speech to Print poor-quality literacy curricula in many colleges and universities of education is at the root of reading problems because reading as a science is not generally taught to elementary teachers whose responsibility it is to teach children how to read (NAEP, 2016 & Moats, 2000). Perhaps, the lack of instruction of the science of reading is partly responsible for why only 14 percent of African American fourth-grade boys are proficient in reading (NEA, 2016).

Science of reading. What is the Science of Reading? Over the past 2 decades leading reading experts, cognitive scientist, and reading researchers have conducted studies on how human beings learn to read. This research has been labeled The Science of Reading. Because there is an actual "science" to teaching reading, this science and research-based reading instruction should be used in every classroom however many teachers have never heard of the Science of Reading. Research suggests if teachers do not learn these scientifically proven strategies for

teaching reading, many of their students will continue to struggle with reading throughout their lives (Lyon & Chhabra, 2004).

Why reading is not a natural process according to the science of reading. Acquiring the ability to speak is a natural process for children but learning to read is not (Wolf & Stoodley, 2008). Reading needs to be taught explicitly (NRC, 1998). Children need to learn the different sounds in spoken language and be able to connect these sounds to written letters and make meaning out of print.   Children also need background and vocabulary knowledge so that they comprehend what they are reading. Over time, children need to recognize words automatically and read text fluently while at the same time attending to grammar, sentence structure and punctuation. Additionally, decades of scientific research have shown that reading does not come naturally, and the human brain is not wired to read (Wolf & Stoodley, 2008).

The reading brain. There are 3 areas of the brain that involve reading (Sandak, et al., 2004; Houde, et al., 2010). These areas include the phonological processor, which is located towards the front of the brain on the left side and is responsible for spoken language (Wagner & Torgesen, 1987). The orthographic processor is towards the back of the brain on the left side, and it is responsible for visual images (Ehri, 2014). The phonological assembly region connects vision and speech and is the system that enables reading. Both the phonological processor and the orthographic processor are hard wired into almost everyone's brain at birth. However, the phonological assembly region is not, and no one is born with this neural system that connects both vision and speech. This system must be built through instruction experiences (Ziegler, et al., 2014; Hruby & Goswami, 2011; Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2004; Shaywitz & Shaywitz 2008).

Basic view of reading. If reading were a math problem, it would consist of a formula that has two basic components including word recognition (decoding) and language comprehension.

Children need both. African American boys need strong decoding and language comprehension if they are to ever reach the ultimate goal of obtaining good reading comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). The Science of Reading has proven that a structured literacy approach is a necessary foundation for reading success and teaching whole word memorization is limited. Learning phonics empowers students with an exponential effect. "If a child memorizes ten words, then the child can read ten words. But, if the child can learn the sounds of ten letters, the child can read (IMSE, 2021).

Why Aren't Kids Being Taught to Read? Is Emily Hanford's (2018) radio documentary, on science-based-teaching. She suggests that children are not being taught to read in a manner that is line with what scientists have discovered about how children actually learn. She goes on to say, "It's a problem that has been hiding in plain sight for decades" (Hanford, 2018, p. 1). But, more importantly, Hanford and Moats point out that deans and faculty of colleges of education must begin requiring that reading science be taught in teacher's preparation programs because children's futures depend on it (Hanford, 2018).

How do we know that a large part of the problem is how children are being taught to read? The answer to this question is in the study of classrooms and clinics that researchers have explored and scrutinized. The data shows that, taking everything into account, children can learn to read if they are taught with approaches that use what scientists have discovered about how the brain does the work of reading (Hanford, 2018 & Lyon, 1998).

Nearly four decades of scientific research on how children learn to read support an emphasis on phoneme awareness and phonics in a literature-rich environment. These findings challenge the belief that children learn to read naturally (Ehri, 1991; Lyon, 1998, & Hanford, 2018). Unfortunately, many teachers do not know this science. One may ask, what have

scientist figured out? Scientific research points out that learning to talk is a natural process that occurs when children are surrounded by a spoken language, however learning to read is not a natural process.

To become readers, children need to learn how the words they speak connect to print on the page. They need explicit, systemic phonics instruction (Walsh, et al., 2006; Hanford, 2018). There are hundreds of studies that support this including: The Importance of Phonics Instruction for All Students (2016) by Dr. Reed of Iowa Reading Research Center. Synthetic Phonics and the Teaching of Reading (2006) by Dominic Wyse and Usha Gosami. Systematic Phonics Instruction: Findings of the National Reading Panel (2003) by Linnea Ehri. Phonics Exposed: Understanding and Resisting Systemic Direct Intense Phonics Instruction (2001) by Rick Meyer. These four studies represent over 15 years of research, all of which suggest that Phonics and Phonemic awareness are crucial elements for early learners to achieve the ability to read.

During Hanford's many studies with teachers, she suggested that teachers say that they learned something completely different or nothing at all about how children learn to read in their teacher preparation programs (Hanford, 2018). Jennifer Rigney-Carroll, who completed her master's degree in special education in 2016, reports that she was taught that children "read naturally if they have access to books" (p. 2). Jessica Root, an intervention specialist in Ohio, reports that she learned "you want to get children excited about what they're reading, find books that they're interested in, and just read, read, read" (p. 2). Kathy Bast, an elementary school principal in Pennsylvania, learned the same thing, "It was just put literature in front of kids, teach the story and the children will learn how to read through exposure" (p. 2).

These ideas are rooted in beliefs about reading that were once commonly called "whole language" and that gained a lot of traction in the 1980s. Whole-language proponents dismiss the

need for phonics. Frank Smith, one of the intellectual leaders of the whole-language movement wrote, "reading is the most natural activity in the world; it is only through reading that children learn to read. Trying to teach children to read by teaching them the sounds of letters is literally a meaningless activity" (2006, p. 23).

By the early 2000s, these ideas were refuted (Fordham, 2000). It may seem as if children are learning to read when they are exposed to books, and some children do pick up sound-letter correspondences quickly and easily, but the science clearly shows that to become a good reader, you must learn to decode words (Fordham, 2000; Kelly, 2014, 2020; Hanford, 2018). Many whole-language proponents added some phonics to their approach and rebranded it as "balanced literacy" (Tankersley, 2003 & Cox, 2019).

But they did not give up on their core belief that learning to read is a natural process that occurs when parents and teachers expose children to good books. So, while there is a likelihood to find some phonics lessons in a balanced-literacy classroom there is also the likelihood to find a lot of other practices rooted in the idea that children learn to read by reading rather than by direct instruction in the relationship between sounds and letters (Hanford, 2018).

Many teachers learn these approaches in their teacher preparation programs. Publishers perpetuate these ideas and school districts buy in. But the colleges of education which should be at the forefront of pushing the best research have largely ignored the scientific evidence of reading. Helping teachers get better earlier is among the most pressing needs in American schooling especially in places where schools are struggling (Hanford, 2018). A mounting body of evidence demonstrates that strong teachers make a huge difference in educational outcomes for children and that much of the current curricula to preparing them amounts to weak teachers (Schorr, 2013).

The Demise of Literacy Among African American Boys

One may ask, is the demise of literacy among African American boys by design? In many African American writers and educators' minds, they believe the answer to be yes. They also believe that the lack of funding by the government is a well-thought plan. Even Nel Noddings, who is not African American, discussed the injustices in this society regarding education. She described in detail in her book, Philosophy of Education (2016), how the power of a few affects the educational path of many and those many are usually people of color and people who are poor.

Her theory of "knowledge as cultural capital," (Noddings, 2005, p. 176) is a concept in which those in power decide which knowledge they value and thus exclude groups of people, often minority groups, people in poverty and generally underprivileged people from educational resources. Noddings argues, "it is reasonable to recommend that all students have access to the privileged knowledge once reserved for a few and the power of opportunity" (Noddings, 2018, p. 114). Historically and still today, different groups of people have access to different sources and forms of knowledge because of ones' socio-economic status. Yet, this access heavily depends on other variables like race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, religion and even age.

Critical race theory is a lens that enables a discourse about race, class and gender to be the centerpiece for an analysis of African American boy's underachievement (Howard, 2008). Blair (2009) states that, "CRT is a means to unveil the deep-rooted barriers encountered by people of color" (p. 9). Schools have many policies and practices in place that are supposed to help all students but many of these practices center around race. Hence, this theory is important to and for education as it relates to the classroom dynamics, academic testing, and curriculum biases (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

This theory examined or shed light on the way educational institutions marginalize people of color. It is used to look at the normative acceptance of Whiteness. In the educational system, White stories are privileged in educational contexts and the stories of people of color are distorted and silenced (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). However, this qualitative study attempted to counteract racism and advocated for African American boys who are often unheard. It also attempted to give student-teachers a voice via interview when their complaints as college students of curricula inadequacies in literacy instruction fell upon deaf ears. These inadequacies in literacy instruction show up in the classroom, which often result in low performance among students when it comes to literacy (Darling-Hammond, 2001).

Black feminist theorist, Patricia Hill Collins (1990, 2000) developed the concepts of the matrix of domination, proposing intersectionality as a concept that operates through four interrelated domains of power: structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal. Hill Collins (2002) contends, "Each domain serves a particular purpose. The structural domain organizes oppression, whereas the discipline domain manages it. The hegemonic domain justifies oppression, and the interpersonal domain influences everyday lived experience and the individual consciousness that ensues" (p. 276).

Pre-School-to-Prison Pipeline

Every year 50,000 preschoolers are suspended from public preschool programs and another 17,000 are expelled (NSCH, 2016). African American boys face overrepresentation in both suspension and expulsion rates in pre-school. These youth represent the very beginning of the school-to-prison-pipeline. The term school-to-prison pipeline has become a powerful metaphor to capture the processes by which children, typically low-income children of color, are pushed out of school and into the criminal justice system (Crawley & Hirschfield, 2018). Some

believe using the term school-to-prison pipeline regarding three and four-year-olds is an overstatement. However, statistics show that this age is the beginning for African American boys' over-representation with the criminal system (Anderson, 2017).

This is consequential because suspending a student during this important development period creates a negative relationship with school that is more likely to last throughout the child's education. Once they are suspended, boys may no longer feel supported or understood in the classroom as they can lose interest in class, receive lower grades due to missing class instruction and display more behavioral problems (Anderson, 2017). There are ways to halt this pipeline. Some states and cities such as Illinois, New Jersey, California, Washington D.C. and New York City have passed laws to prevent preschoolers in a publicly funded program from being suspended or expelled (Anderson, 2017).

Changing school policies is a start to rectifying inequity in schools as is providing educators with implicit bias training, so they understand and negate some of the biases they often exhibit in their classrooms (Scialabba, 2017). Schools should also move away from zero-tolerance policies and move toward restorative practices that are more proactive in preventing suspension and expulsions. Now is the time to disrupt these disciplinary practices that have been ineffective and reimagine what is possible for African American boys (Skiba & Losen, 2016).

Systemic Racism

Suspension and expulsion rates in pre-school along with zero tolerance policies are examples of what a lack of inclusion looks like and is often referred to as systemic racism. Systemic racism consists of institutional systemic policies, practices, economic and political structures that place minority and ethnic groups at disadvantages and disparities regarding

wealth, income, criminal justice, employment, housing, health care, political power, and education (Hanks, Solomon & Weller, 2018).

African American boys are suspended at a rate three times more often than their White counterparts and their infractions are more often deemed criminal in comparison to other students (DOE, 2014). 27 percent of African American students are referred to law enforcement as well as 31 percent of them are subject to arrest, yet African American students represent 19 percent of total enrolled students (ocrdata.ed.gov., 2014). Numerous students of color as well as those economically disenfranchised are being failed by the public school system because these numbers are not just data these numbers represent human lives who suffer despite the decades of educational reforms designed to correct the enduring disparities (Sanders, 2013).

The question that duly arises is simply: why? Why are the schools in this country not confronting the very systems that fail children of color, particularly boys, by failing them more? The solution is not an obstinate fervor for suspension and expulsion in the instance of trivial violations. The consequences of these policies move students into vulnerable spaces and such spaces are not constructive (Canty-Barnes, 2015).

It has been 60 years since the Brown v Board of Education 347 U.S. 483 (1954) verdict, yet African American students are still more likely to receive out-of-school suspensions for minor violations. As a result, they are more likely to drop out of school or enter the juvenile justice system. This kind of isolation borders on inhumane treatment and demands a resolution. The impact from this sort of mistreatment produces a life of poverty or incarceration, which continues to perpetuate a cycle of failure (Canty-Barnes, 2015).

Given the persistence of achievement gaps, educators must be willing to move beyond political correctness, stop rehashing approaches that have not worked for decades and stop

pretending to support meeting the needs of African American boys without changing practices, acknowledging the differences between African American boys and their counterparts and enacting "reality pedagogy" is a real first step (Emdin, 2016, p. 27). "Reality pedagogy" is teaching that is inclusive of all the students in the room by incorporating the difference of children's ethnicity and sex by finding ways to tap into their interest and by developing multiple ways for African American boys to learn and multiple ways for their teachers to instruct.

The word pedagogy and pedagogue come from the Greek Paidos, which amazingly enough means "boy child" and agogos means leader (Merriam-Webster.com, 2021). As educators, it is important to produce boys who can learn and lead and be African American while doing so. Education in America should consist of educated boys of color who can lead themselves and others out of and into places and spaces that have been restricted in the past.

Political Policy

Political policy is a national problem. The faces and voices currently leading the education reform movement in the United States are appointees and self-proclaimed reformers who, while often well-meaning, lack significant expertise or experience in education: Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, billionaire Bill Gates, Michelle Rhee (whose entrance to education includes the alternative route of Teach for America and only a few years in the classroom), Sal Khan and Betsy DeVos, for example (Thomas, 2012).

As government policy and practice, bureaucracy is unavoidable, of course. But the central flaw in that development has been a trickle-down effect reaching from presidents and governors to state superintendents of education and school board chairs and members: people who have no or very little experience or expertise as educators or scholars attain leadership positions responsible for forming and implementing education policy (Thomas, 2012).

Bureaucracy bestows authority and a hierarchy on education that allows and perpetuates leadership without expertise or experience. The consequences include the two most vivid examples of why education reform has failed and will continue to fail: (1) Inexpert leadership is ideologically committed to solutions and thus implements solutions without identifying and clarifying the problems first, and (2) inexpert leadership that is in constant flux, with the perpetual changes in administrations, is apt to implement the same solutions over and over with different outcomes expected (Thomas, 2012).

Since the 1970's advocates across the country have filed dozens of school finance lawsuits because in nearly half of all states, affluent districts still receive more funding from state and local governments for their schools and students than poorer districts (Morgan & Amerikaner, 2018). In some states, the issue is particularly egregious; for instance, high-poverty districts in Illinois receive 22 percent less in per-pupil funds in state and local dollars than the wealthiest school districts (Morgan & Amerikaner, 2018).

When it comes to equity conversations, dollars must be the starting point. Funding is a significant factor in providing a high-quality education and often leads to improved outcomes such as the hiring of master teachers, purchasing of supplies and current technology. A 2016 study by the Washington Center for Equitable Growth found that, between 1990 and 2011, that reformed school finance policies so as to allocate more funding to high-poverty school districts narrowed the achievement gap by an average of one-fifth (Lafortune, et al., 2016). However, allocating equal funding for every student does not guarantee that all students will have equitable and quality educational experience (Lafortune, et al., 2016). School finance reform must focus on the quality of every school, from the excellence of the instruction to the rigor of classes.

The efforts to resolve inequities through the courts or with legislation need to move beyond funding (Lee & Burkam, 2002). In *The Souls of Black folks* (1903), DuBois explains the urgency of how political and social equality must come first before African Americans could hope to have their fair share of the economic pie. Furthermore, reforms must focus on both funding levels and equal access to resources, which are two fundamental factors that must be present in a quality education (DuBois, 1903).

True educational equity will require two central reforms. First, there needs to be additional resources to meet the needs of at-risk students (Lee & Burkam, 2002). Second, there should be accountability frameworks to ensure that the key ingredients to student success, through early access to early childhood programs, effective teachers, and rigorous curriculum— are available to students irrespective of their race, zip code, or economic status (Lee & Burkam, 2002).

The Three B's – Big, Black or Boy

The isolation of a minority for any reason warrants a study and further investigation as to why. Especially, when the isolation hinders a specific group of children based upon their race and gender and prevents them from being literate, while their illiteracy often leads to incarceration. This occurrence among African American boys happens so frequently that it has a name, known as "School-to-Prison-Pipeline", which is a systemic practice of a disproportionate tendency of minority minors being incarcerated and punished harshly for minor infractions (Canty-Barnes, 2015).

In 2005, Dr. Walter Gilliam of Yale University conducted a study which was based on how the isolation for African American boys begins as early as 3, 4 and 5 years of age (Gilliam, 2016). The study explains that the best three predictors of preschool expulsion are the three B's:

"big, black or boy". In the text, the word 'Big' does not always refer to size, but it refers to the actions of these youth because their actions are sizeable when measured against girls. Big refers to boys being too fidgety, too hyperactive, and too disruptive (Lahey, 2013). An additional study released by Yale in 2016 and Dr. Gilliam examined implicit racial bias among early educators, suggesting it is a large reason for the disproportionate punishment received by African American boys (Gilliam, 2016).

Implicit Biases

Implicit biases can be described as automatic and unconscious stereotypes that influence judgments and decisions regarding others (Berghoef, 2018). In Dr. Gilliam's 2017 study, teachers watched a video of preschoolers and were asked to identify potentially challenging behaviors. The participants were unaware that the video did not display any behavior reasonably deemed inappropriate. Yet, the educators surveyed the African American boys' behaviors in the video more closely on average and sometimes labeled those behaviors challenging. These findings indicated that flaws in adults' decision-making, not a child's own behavior, are at the primary fault for many of the covert causes of preschool discipline (Gilliam, 2017).

Discipline that utilizes a zero-tolerance framework enact more of the same harms. In fact, research has agreed that suspensions and expulsions of students not only has shown no promising behavioral results, but such policies also reinforce the challenges that these students, and their families already face. To note, the first stage of the "preschool-to-prison pipeline" is discussed among these terms (Adamu & Hogan, 2015).

Early Childhood Education

Dr. Hakim Rashid of Howard University (2009) research study, From Brilliant Baby to Child Placed at Risk: The Perilous Path of African American Boys in Early childhood Education

suggests that African American boys begin school with brilliant minds, like most of their counterparts. They exhibit the same amount of enthusiasm and interest that is characteristic of their age group (p. 347). Even more than that, these African American babies often reflect the psychomotor precocity, (which also means skills achieved much earlier than usual involving the arms, hands, fingers, and feet) that has been well-documented in infants of color (Werner, 1972).

Rashid believes that early childhood education represents the time frame from preschool through third grade. This period is normally composed of youth from ages three to eight and during this time they are undergoing a series of transformations that show an immense amount of growth and development in the cognitive, social, and emotional realms (p. 347). Rashid and Kunjufu share the same belief that African American boys begin school excited and ready to learn, but they require master teachers who are supportive of their learning styles (Kunjufu, 2005; Rashid, 2009).

Researcher Ihemona Iruka of the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill analysis of data from the Institute of Education Sciences - National Center for Education Statistics, unearthed new statistics. The analysis of the study, An Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999 revealed that among African American boys, there exists a learning gap as early as nine months and this gap widens by the time they reach 24 months. Long before formal schooling begins, the study shows, African American boys are behind and by the fifth grade, these youth are behind by nearly two full years (ETS, 2011, p. 3). Astonishingly, a gap exists for Black boys of all income levels, which indicates that poverty alone is not the problem (Iruka, 2017).

Word Gap

Perhaps, there is not a learning gap in terms of ability but a word gap. Speech, unlike books or housing or health care — is free. If somehow poor parents speak to their children more, could it make a huge difference in fixing stubborn inequities in society? (Kamenetz, 2018). In their ground-breaking study of the verbal interactions of children in 42 families over a two-and-a-half-year period, Betty Hart and Todd Risley (1995) found striking differences between children in affluent families and low-income families.

They found that poor children heard as few as 3 million words in their first three years of their life, compared to the 11 million words that children from wealthier families heard—a verbal gap that predicted a gap in academic achievement by the time children reach the age of 9 or 10 (Hart & Risley, 1995). The "word gap" drove expanded federal investments in Head Start and Early Head Start. Hart and Risley's work inspired early intervention programs, including the citywide effort Providence Talks in Rhode Island, the Boston-based Reach Out and Read, and the Clinton Foundation's Too Small to Fail (Kamenetz, 2018).

The researcher looked at an array of barriers that have adversely affected fourth grade African American boys and has caused an epidemic around these youth and them learning how to read including; systemic racism: pre-school-to-prison pipeline; political policy; the three B's – Big, Black or Boy; implicit bias; and early childhood education. These barriers all play a role in the epidemic of literacy among fourth grade African American boys. Below the researcher explains how this epidemic affects these youth' literacy scores and recommendations to special education classrooms.

The Literacy Epidemic among 4th Grade African American Boys

Despite federal investments for early intervention programs to improve literacy among African American youth there are alarming statistics that suggest only 14 percent of African American fourth-grade boys are proficient in reading (NEA, 2016). What's more, 80 percent of students who are recommended for special education placement are below the eighth-grade level (Kunjufu, 2013). The problem and the solution for the disproportionate placement of African American boys in special education begin with the classroom teacher (Kunjufu, 2005, Ladson-Billings, 2009).

In the next sections the researcher provided data that supported that the effective training of teachers could serve as the necessary catalyst to push African American boys over the mounting hurdles that many of them face. Despite these hurdles data suggested that have one teacher with whom youth can connect to greatly improved their success rate in school and in literacy. This is why the researcher concentrated on teaching training. The other seeming insurmounted hurdles will probably always remain as society is a complicated place.

Teacher Training and Pedagogy

The classroom teacher serves as not only someone who disseminates information to the student and follows a prescribed curriculum and lesson plan; this individual is also responsible for maintaining order and decorum. Classroom management is often over-looked; however, it is an intricate tool that facilitates effective learning and allows the freedom of a safe learning environment (Marzano et al., 2003). Teachers who lack a sense of control and power in their rooms jeopardize successful outcomes for their students' learning. What happens in the classrooms, happens in the halls, in the lunchroom, in the bathroom and even at dismissal (Marzano et al., 2003; p. 1).

Research from the Cornell University Center for Teaching Innovation

(teaching.cornell.edu, 2012) shows that educational experiences that are active, social,

contextual, engaging, and student-owned, lead to deeper learning. The benefits of collaborative

learning include:

- "Development of higher-level thinking, oral communication, self-management, and leadership skills;
- Promotion of student-faculty interaction;
- Increase in student retention, self-esteem, and responsibility; and
- Exposure to and an increase in understanding of diverse perspectives" (p. 1).

Collaborative learning is preparation for real life social and employment situations

While the subject matter for this review was fourth graders, it would be remiss not to

mention that any child who is five months or more behind in reading at the end of first grade

only has a 20 percent chance of reading on grade level by the 12th grade (Kunjufu, 2011). These

profound numbers emphasize the desperate need for improvement in literacy and teachers.

Culturally Responsive

The need for a teaching force prepared to handle and address issues of race, equality and

pedagogy is more urgent than ever (Knight-Manual & Marciano, 2018). Ongoing racial turmoil

between law enforcement and communities of color, political rhetoric, shifting migration

patterns, global migration patterns, and increase in student population are some of the reasons for

the demand in Cultural Relevant Education (CRE) (Knight-Manual & Marciano, 2018).

In the early 1990s, culturally relevant teaching was made popular by Dr. Gloria Ladson-

Billings, the term she created was defined as one "that empowers students to maintain cultural

integrity, while succeeding academically" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 465.) Culturally relevant,

education is a conceptual framework that encompasses all aspects of teaching and learning

within the classroom as it recognizes the importance of including students' cultural backgrounds,

interests and lived experiences into their classroom experience (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2009; Milner, 2016). CRE is a comprehensive teaching approach that empowers all students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impact knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2009; Gay, 2010; Paris and Alim, 2017).

Culture is central to learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). It plays a role not only in communicating and receiving information, but also in shaping the thinking process of groups and individuals. A pedagogy that acknowledges, responds to and celebrates fundamental cultures offers full, equitable access to education for students from all cultures. Culturally Responsive Teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings,1994; Gay, 2010; Paris and Alim, 2017).

Teaching Styles

In *Dreamkeepers* (2009), Gloria Ladson-Billings describes teachers in the following six categories: custodians, referral agents, tutors, general contractors, conductors, and coaches:

- "Custodians do not believe that much can be done to help their students and do not look to others to help them maintain classes.

- Referral agents do not believe that much can be done to help their students improve and they shift their responsibility to other school personnel by sending children to the school psychologist or the special education teachers" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 24).

Unfortunately, we find custodians and referral agents are often the kinds of teachers that African American boys encounter in their school environment. One wonders what might happen if these youth had the privilege of being taught by a teacher who was a conductor or a coach:

- "Conductors believe that students are capable of excellence, and they assume the responsibility for ensuring that their students achieve that excellence.

- Coaches believe that students are capable of excellence, but they are comfortable sharing the responsibility of helping them achieve with parents, community members and students" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 26).

Custodians and referral agents certainly are not helping our African American boys. Kunjufu (2005) suggests that "most referrals are not made by the principal, psychologist, social worker, or physician. Twenty percent of regular classroom teachers made 80 percent of the referrals" (p. 37).   The future of these youth is in the hands of custodians and referral agents, and that is why 80 percent of them have been routed to special education (Kunjufu, 2005).

Dynamics of a Culturally Effective Classroom for African American Boys Kindergarten through Third Grade

According to Haynes (1993), "all children, in the absence of a debilitating physical or psychological impairment, can learn." Ethnicity and low socioeconomic status are not common impediments to high achievement; but poverty, prejudice, insensitivity, and low expectations often diminish the chances of success for some minority children, in particular African American boys (Haynes, 1993). African American boys are considered at a disadvantage academically when compared to their white peers and even compared to African American girls. African American boys are not born with an academic disadvantage, so at some point in their academic careers something must occur to create the disproportionate achievement gap that currently exists (Riddick, 2010).

Based on Howard Gardner's (1983) published work entitled *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences and Neil Fleming's* (1987) VARK model, these two gentlemen both provide pertinent resources that supply guidance and other avenues on how to teach when traditional measures are not successful. Most importantly their work provides insight into how

children learn. Life is multimodal; thus, we can expect learning styles to be. They are a popular concept in psychology and education and are intended to identify how people learn best. The Vark model of learning styles suggest that there are four main types of learners. These four key types are visual, auditory, reading/writing and kinesthetic learners (Fleming, 1987).

To address the low achievement of African American boys, schools must be willing to accept that there are ways of looking at the world, modes of communication, and approaches to teaching and learning that are unique to African American boys (Emdin, 2012). At the same time, educators must also acknowledge that these unique ways of being are just as complex as those of other students. The tie that binds all students is the desire to be academically successful (Emdin, 2016). African American boys need educators who meet them where they are academically by assessing each student and using Vark allows the student's individual style of learning to be tapped into. For example, if a student is a visual learner. If the student is more audibly competent, then the teacher will allow that student to use his headphones to hear the lessons directed by a computer program.

Too often, educators are afraid to acknowledge that differences exist between African American boys and other students. This is due to a commonly held misperception that educators who acknowledge such differences are in some way supporting a racist agenda. They are not. Instead, part of the collective failure to meet the needs of African American boys is a fear of acknowledging that they are always being compared to a white middle-class norm from which they often differ. This culture of fear, stoked by political correctness, only serves to hamper efforts to meet their needs. Once the difference is fully acknowledged, educators can equip themselves with tools that can be used to encourage African American boys to become more interested and effective learners (Emdin, 2012).

Different is Not Deficient

It is important to understand the differences between African American boys and their peers, is not a genetic or developmental difference, but the social and psychological baggage that youth bring to the classroom (Emdin, 2012). The often, inescapable public image of African American boys does not include a desire or ability to be academically successful. A wide array of black male images in media—music, movies, and television programs—take characteristics of black culture, tie them to anti-school identities, violence, and misogyny, and use them as forms of entertainment (Emdin, 2012). This means the world is inundated with scenarios that leave a false perception of African American boys that these youth must deal with when they enter classrooms. Such images do not affect the academic performance of nonblack boys nor how they interact with school. However, African American boys are socially typecast and face constant internal dilemma of fitting into expectations embodying these false characteristics or finding spaces where they can engage in practices that are counter to the perceptions (Emdin, 2012).

This constant preoccupation with who they should be when they are in academic spaces results in a battle to find oneself in the classroom. That diminishes their availability to fully engage in teaching and learning. This is most evident in scenarios where African American boys are rude and disruptive in school, yet quiet, attentive, and responsible in spaces like church or in the community where their true selves are welcome. They are constantly in a search to find themselves and to perform versions of these selves based on the expectations of those within these spaces (Emdin, 2012).

Getting Boys to Read

Why do boys struggle more with literacy? Harry Morgan, an early childhood development professor at the State University of West Georgia who has spent more than 29 years training teachers and conducting research on classroom behavior and learning styles, believes that "around third and fourth grade, there's a shift in the way teachers instruct kids" (Fremon & Hamilton, 1997). In the earlier years, teachers encourage social interaction, but by the fourth grade, classrooms become more of a static lecturing environment. This change in teaching approach, from an informal, learning-by-doing style to the more structured sit-down-and-listen setup, is toughest on male students, who tend to be more active than girls in the elementary grades (Fremon & Hamilton, 1997). And for African American boys, "a teacher's reaction to these high energy levels may be compounded by racism" (Fremon & Hamilton, 1997).

Brain research further supports the importance of movement in learning (Jensen, 2005). Because children's movement activates thinking, the more we encourage children to move during projects, the more we support and promote young children's ability to think, learn and remember (Wright & Counsell, 2018). In fact, African American boys especially thrive in social settings that allow them to explore and investigate in great depth any topic of interest that is compelling for them and therefore worth the pursuit (Wright & Counsell, 2018).

Reading to learn and learning to read. Too often, African American children, especially boys quickly lose interest in reading. Many of them complain of finding little relevance in books. This hinders their identity and sense of self as learners (Wright & Counsell, 2018).   But "If we can get it right before age eight or nine, if we give children a solid foundation, they'll be on firmer footing," suggests Kristie Kauerz, (ets.org, 2011, p. 6). Program Director for pre-Kindergarten to third grade at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The academic shift

between learning to read and reading to learn happens right around third grade and students need solid skills by then (Prager, 2011).

During the 1990s, research led by Harvard professor Jean Chall described how children learn to read, and the instruction supporting reading success was translated into a short, catchy phrase: "In K–3 children are learning to read, and in 4 –12 children are reading to learn" (Chall, Jacobs & Baldwin, 1990; Chall and Jacobs, 2003).

"However, this distillation of reading acquisition and proficiency greatly oversimplified the complexities of reading development and fostered misunderstandings within the education world. Although reading does become an increasingly important skill in helping students expand their knowledge after 3rd grade, learning to read hardly comes to an abrupt halt at end of 2nd or 3rd grade. Reading experts have referred to this oversimplified statement as a myth and asserted that buying into this allegory will not promote long-term, ongoing reading development in children" (Houck & Ross, 2012).

What many researchers have now shown is that for all children, learning to read and reading to learn should be happening simultaneously and continuously, from preschool through middle school—and perhaps beyond (Robb, 2011). Assigning to early primary teachers the responsibility of teaching children to read resulted in a lack of reading instruction from grade 4 on and an intensive focus on narrow skill development. Teachers after 3rd grade viewed the statement as permission to abandon reading instruction in all content areas, believing that it was the primary teachers' job to teach reading. This outlook greatly diminishes the reading potential of our nation's children (Houck & Ross 2012).

The most dramatic changes in reading proficiency occur from preschool through third grade, and students falling behind during that time face an arduous journey to catch up.

Therefore, it is essential that reading instruction in these early years be strategic and effective so that is establishes a foundation for continued success (Musen, 2010). This requires that educators must always be mindful that while teaching finite skills, those that can be mastered within a prescribed period of time, they are also planting the seeds to nurture the lifelong development of comprehension.

The transition from finite skills, which should be mastered by second or third grade, to higher order comprehension skills, which are developed over a lifetime, is where many children especially African American boys fall through the cracks. When readers go from print, phonemic awareness, phonics and the alphabetic code, and word analysis strategies to the more intellectually challenging concepts of fluency and automatic word recognition, vocabulary development, comprehension acquisition, and strategy development (Shujaa, 1996; Stahl, 2011). These proverbial cracks are representative of how African American boys are misunderstood in the classroom, how their learning styles and social skills are misconstrued and how they are not receiving the most effective forms of discipline, lessons, and peer interactions possible. How they are not learning or reaching their full potential levels as readers (Lynch, 2017).

Fellow researchers, McNamara, Scissions, and Gutknecth examined 382 children from kindergarten through third grade when they conducted a longitudinal study in 2011 on struggling readers (McNamara, et al., 2011). These youth were screened with a battery of phonological awareness measures. Percentile rank scores were collected, and children were identified as having poor, average, or strong phonological awareness. As children moved through Grades 1, 2, and 3, reading-based data were collected in the spring of each year. Results indicated that, in general, as children progressed from kindergarten to Grade 3, those in lower ranks of reading achievement were likely to remain in the lower ranks, and furthermore, at each progressing data

collection point struggling readers fell further behind their grade-level reading peers. In other words, as each year passed the variance between strong and struggling readers increased significantly.

Fourth grade failure syndrome. Dr. Kunjufu (1983) also believes in the shift and the racial inequality that Harry Morgan spoke of; however, he took it a step further when in 1982, he organized a national debate, and he called it genocide – the deliberate and systematic destruction of the African American male. He argued and is still a proponent of what he explains as the "fourth grade failure syndrome" for African American boys. He details the phenomenon in his book, Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys, (1983) as he describes his longitudinal study of test scores, general attitude toward school and self-image in a group of 80 boys, all in the same school, and all in the same class (Kunjufu, 1983).

What he found was alarming. Through the first grade, the African American boys in his study express positive feelings about themselves and school. These feelings make a shift for the worse in second grade and by fifth grade the boys are outright cynical about the schooling process, and their sense of self has degraded correspondingly. This shift in attitude correlates with a shift in performance. Dr. Kunjufu refers to this drop in enthusiasm and academic performance as Fourth Grade Failure Syndrome, the "poor transition boys make between the primary and intermediate division" (p. 33).

The causes of Fourth Grade Failure Syndrome can also be identified as teachers not understanding "Black Male Culture" (p. 86) which leads to boys feeling as if they are marginalized in class, that they exist outside of the culture of the classroom. "Black Male Culture is described as:

- "Ego   Larger and more sensitive than most of the girls

- Macho   Prefers handling problems physically rather than emotionally

- Athletic   Values athletic more than academic pursuits

- non-communicative   Less emotional, accent on being "cool"

- risk   Peer group uses risk as their rite of passage" (Kunjufu, 2004, p.86).

The teachers in the study became less encouraging academically and more inclined to pushing African American boys disproportionately toward athletics. This is reinforced by the media and the fact that African American boys have limited access to positive images of African American men (Kunjufu, 1983).

Second through fifth grade is a crucial time in these youth' lives. They are building ideas of self at this time while trying to reconcile the different ways that people view them. If teachers positively reinforce athletic achievement in African American boys more than academic achievement and the idea that academic achievement being akin to "acting White" among African American schoolchildren, then they have a confluence of pressure from teachers and peers to find success outside of the schoolbooks at an early age. To achieve academically then is to reconfigure ideas of self that are not consistent with those that society tends to impose on African American boys (Kunjufu, 1983).

By the time young Black youth enter the intermediate stage of their schooling, they are left confused by notions of success and have constructed negative images of self. Dr. Kunjufu believes, that this is the real Fourth Grade Failure Syndrome. The fact that Black boys enter the school system on par with their peers shows that there are no at-risk kids, only at-risk situations. If the situations can be remedied, then perhaps steps can be taken toward improving the current condition of African American boys (Kunjufu, 1983).

White Teachers and Racial Categories

African American boys are categorized by their blackness and their maleness. The challenges faced by them at the intersection of these identities must be addressed in such a manner that recognizes how United States society distinctly encounters them. Disproportionate rates of special education placement, suspensions, expulsions, dropouts, and juvenile incarceration documents a communal conditioning amongst African American boys (Holzman, 2006).

To emphasize the relevant statistics while ignoring specific nuances of identities is to be, in effect, unproductive in understanding and addressing what would be best for African American boys (Holzman, 2006). But to better understand and address the specific needs of African American boys, we must not simply highlight the United States national statistics and fail to deal with the complexity and confluence of identity categories. This action would certainly be counterproductive.

Researchers have examined several factors that serve as barriers to achievement for African American boys (Brinkley, 2013). Internal factors include self-concept and identity issues (Brinkley, 2013). Previously noted in Kunjufu's book entitled *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys* (2004) he spoke of "Black Male Culture" as how these youth often exhibit various cultural-specific coping mechanisms, such as acting tough, refusing to withdraw from violent confrontations, eluding self-disclosure and disassociating themselves from school (Bringkley, 2013; Kunjufu, 2011; Tatum, 2006). Unfortunately, the backdrop for a large portion of urban schools, that these youth attend, sit in under-served communities. However, the demographics of the teachers usually do not represent these youth. The United States public school system is comprised of 85 percent White teachers. This is not an indictment. It is a fact

about categories, racial categories in the United States that are loaded with meaning (Moore, et at., 2017).

An overwhelming percentage of White Americans grew up in segregated environments and thus lack familiarity with African American people as well as African American culture. As a result, their ability to teach and engage with African American students is hindered by the pervasive stereotypes and negative messaging about these students (Moore, et at., 2017). One cannot divorce this knowledge from the African American boys' floundering in the school system. A solution is to attract more African American teachers. However, African American teachers are so scarce, that it is more feasible to build cultural competency within the population of the already active, predominantly White teachers. Furthermore, it is imperative that these teachers be trained not only to deal with students of different racial backgrounds, but also to understand the nuanced needs of students who occupy multiple identities at once (Moore, et al., 2017).

Implicit Biases in Early Elementary White Teachers

Many White teachers are unaware of the particular needs of students of different ethnic backgrounds, and they are equally unaware of the privilege they themselves wield at the head of the classroom (Collins, 2018). If the question is can White teachers teach African American students, then the answer is of course. The more germane concern becomes whether or not these teachers can teach African American students effectively (Ladson, 2009).

Moreover, it is important to know if White teachers who are statistically noted to recommend African American boys to special education programs will continue to use special education recommendations as a response to these students' manner of conduct. Teachers should always consider their own societal advantages in their educational strategy to reduce

possible harms that their unawareness could inflict on the student (Wood & Jocius 2013). In the book, The Guide for White Women Who Teach Black Boys, the authors suggest three comprehensive approaches:

I.   **Understand Yourself**

Like African American boys, White female teachers also display behaviors and norms that stem from social segmentation. Research entitled, *Do Early Educators' Implicit Biases Regarding Sex and Race Relate to Behavior Expectations and Recommendations of Preschool Expulsions and Suspensions?* concludes that White people more often see a White child's face and misidentify an accompanying image of a gun as a toy whereas they more readily misidentify the image of a toy as a gun after seeing an African American child's face (Finnerty, 2017). Research also indicated that White teachers are less able to distinguish between black faces. This lend credence to the fact that black boys are often thought to be almost 5 years older than their age when identified by other racial groups (Gilliam, et. al., 2016). Furthermore, White teachers associate failure with students who have a "Black cultural style" of walking (Finnerty, 2017). Understanding the nuanced self must first be prioritized if White teachers are to deconstruct the biases that inform how they view African American students, particularly African American

boys, in a variety of circumstances.

II.   **Respect the Racialized Context in which you are Teaching**

There is no way to escape the radicalized context in which you teach and in which African American boys learn. Respect the variety that encompasses black boyhood even as

stunted opportunities, stereotypes, and low societal expectations seek to usher African American boys into a socially compliant black manhood. Respect the abundance of African American boys' experiences and the diversity in their families. Respect that they are fun, sensitive, bold, afraid, imaginative, dynamic, and shy among other traits and can be so all at one time, in one body. Respect that they are gay, straight, transgender, asexual. Respect that African American boys are and need many different things, just as any other group, but also unlike any other group. Give African American boys the space to develop their identity organically and without fear (Williamson, 2017).

III.   Connect

Know barriers like the "undermatch" system where students are pushed to attend colleges that will not challenge them. Know that those same students tend to underperform for lack of rigor (Smith, 2017). Learn and support lessons about positive racial identity and associations that will uplift black students (Michael, 2017). Learn about the reasons that black boys do not tend to take advantage to experiences like study abroad although such experiences could be affirming and productive (Crushshon, 2017).

Know the abysmal rate of literacy among black boys in the 3rd grade, but do more than know. Recognize that this and other unfortunate rates results from a larger system that underserves black boys who yet play a small role. Further, recognize that success and failure for black male students cannot be detangled from the fact that the system in which they attend was not created for their benefit. To acknowledge and tackle the systemic inequality that oppressed black boys is to open the door to changing their outcomes. The entire education force, particularly the 85 percent of white teachers, necessarily must lend a hand in enacting the change.

African American Teachers and Success in the Classroom – truth or myth

According to The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers, a study co-authored by a Johns Hopkins University economist--Nicholas Papageorge, economically poor African American students are more likely to graduate high school if they have at least one African American teacher in elementary school (Gershenson, et al., 2018). Furthermore, the probability of dropping out decreases by 29 percent for African American students when they have at one African American teacher between the third and fifth grade. For low-income African American boys their chances of dropping out decreased 39 percent (Gershenson, et al., 2018).

The short-term benefits of having classrooms where the teachers are the same race as the students is demonstrated in prior research, but a new working paper from the Institute of Labor Economics, details that there can be lasting, positive results from these pairings. According to Papageorge,

> "Black students matched to black teachers have been shown to have higher test scores, but we wanted to know if these student-teacher racial matches had longer-lasting benefits. We found the answer is a resounding yes. We are seeing spending just one year with a teacher of the same race can move the dial on one of the most frustratingly persistent gaps in educational attainment — that of low-income black boys. It not only moves the dial, it moves the dial in a powerful way" (jhu.edu, 2018, p. 2).

In North Carolina Public Schools, 100,000 black students entering the third grade were studied between 2001and 2005. About half graduated high school with no plan to attend college while about 13 percent dropped out. However, those who were assigned at least one black teacher in third, fourth, or fifth grade were 18 percent more likely to be interested in pursuing college when they graduated although there was no reported difference in the likelihood for dropping out of high school. If assigned at least one black teacher, black boys who got free or reduced-priced lunched through grade school were 29 percent more likely to consider attending college (Gershenson, et al., 2018).

Having more than one black teacher improved outcomes for these students, but not significantly more than having only one, the researchers found. About half the pool of students ended up having at least one black teacher in grades three to five. The researchers replicated their findings by looking at black students in Tennessee who entered kindergarten in the late 1980s and participated in the Project STAR (Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio) class-size reduction experiment. There, they found that students who had at least one black teacher in kindergarten through grade three were 15 percent less likely to drop out. Having at least one black teacher in those grades also increased a student's chances of taking a college entrance exam by 10 percent (Chetty et al., 2010).

This "race match effect" is sometimes called "the role model effect," a term that gets at why the researchers think a period with an African American teacher can be so lastingly beneficial for African American students (Papageorge, 2017). Papageorge (2017) calls it "a story about the power of expectations and the way people make investments in themselves" (p. 3). In a study published last year, Papageorge and co-authors found that race played a big part in how teachers judged a student's abilities. When an African American teacher and a White teacher looked at the same African American student, the White teacher was about 40 percent less likely to predict the student would finish high school. According to Papageorge:

> "If having a teacher with high expectations for you matters in high school, imagine how much it matters in the third grade. Many of these kids can't imagine being an educated person and perhaps that's because they've never seen one that looks like them. Then, they get to spend a whole year with one. This one black teacher can change a student's entire future outlook" (p. 4).

In the meantime, Papageorge hopes school policymakers consider how they could change a student's chance at success by getting him into a classroom with a teacher of the same race. "This is not a situation where students need two, three or four black teachers to make a

difference. This could be implementable tomorrow," he said. "You could literally go into a school right now and switch around the rosters so that every black child gets to face a black teacher" (jhu.edu, 2017, p. 2).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This research was a qualitative, phenomenological, non-experimental study that sought to understand the phenomenon surrounding literacy rates of fourth-grade African American boys. What's more, the study sought to uncover how revisions to the curricula of colleges and university's education programs could improve teacher effectiveness in teaching literacy and thus increase literacy scores of African American boys in particular.

In qualitative research, the data is usually nonnumerical and therefore cannot be analyzed using statistical techniques (Maxwell, 2010). The goal of phenomenology is to develop an understanding of a phenomenon through the specific human experiences of the phenomenon, in an attempt to better understand that experience of being in that 'life-world'. It serves to understand a person's experiences rather than to provide a causal explanation of those experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). Non-experimental research is research that lacks the manipulation of an independent variable, random assignment of participants to conditions or orders or conditions or both (Chiang, 2015).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this qualitative study and helped to illuminate the issues behind the phenomenon of low literacy scores of fourth-grade African American boys. These questions were also used to seek to answer and describe how the experiences of teachers during their undergraduate literacy instruction at colleges and universities of education may have negatively impacted the literacy scores of African American boys. The following questions guided the research:

RQ1: Why do African American boys in the fourth grade score the lowest of all youth who take

Standardized test with a 14 percent literacy rate (NAEP, 2015)?

RQ2: How do teachers learn how to teach reading effectively during their collegiate careers?

RQ3: Do teachers feel comfortable with their ability to teach children how to read when the encounter non-readers or students who have difficulties?

Research Methodology

This research study was qualitative and aimed to understand the phenomenon surrounding literacy rates of African American boys in the fourth grade. The study also took a deep dive into the experiences and perceptions of teachers' undergraduate literacy curricula during their teacher preparation courses. There were 10 participants and each of them are fourth-grade Chicago Public School teachers of African American boys.

A phenomenology study design is most appropriate for this proposed research specifically for its ability to make an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context (Patton, 1990). The main characteristic of qualitative research is that it is mostly appropriate for small samples, while its outcomes are not measurable and quantifiable (Miles & Hubberman, 1994). Its basic advantage, which also constitutes its basic difference with quantitative research, is that it offers a complete description and analysis of a research subject, without limiting the scope of the research and the nature of a participant's responses (Collis & Hussey, 2003).

It is an in-depth and detailed investigation of the development of a single event, a situation or an individual over a period of time (Hasa, 2017). Phenomenology studies are often used to explore and unearth complex issues such as social issues including drug addiction, unemployment, and poverty (Hasa, 2017). The other aspect of the research drew on

phenomenological elements with the intent to understand the subjective, lived experiences and participants' perspectives.

The effectiveness of qualitative research is heavily based on the skills and abilities of the researcher. The outcomes may not be perceived as reliable because they mostly come from the researcher's personal judgments and interpretations. Although it is more appropriate for small samples, it is also risky for the results of qualitative research to be perceived as reflecting the opinions of a wider population (Bell, 2005).

Research Design

This was a qualitative, phenomenological, non-experimental study that used interviews to collect data to better understand the undergraduate, literacy curriculum experiences, of fourth grade teachers who work at Chicago Public Schools. The study was intended to determine if there was a commonality between the literacy curricula that teachers receive during their undergraduate teacher preparation courses, and the dismal literacy scores of fourth-grade African American boys. Archival data from CPS annual report card was used to examine the literacy scores of fourth-grade African American boys. Ultimately, the study sought to uncover if enhancements to colleges and universities of education literacy curricula could improve teachers' effectiveness in teaching literacy thus improving literacy scores of African American boys in particular.

The study focused on providing descriptive results. Descriptive research is a study of status and is used in education, nutrition, epidemiology, and behavioral sciences (Koh & Owen, 2000). The goal of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics of a population. This research was more concerned with the how, and the why as opposed to what extent, which is what quantitative research seeks to answer (Austin & Sutton, 2014).

For example, this study's interest laid in how teachers' literacy undergraduate teacher preparation courses prepared them and why African American boys score the lowest of all students who take standardized test. Although descriptive research acknowledges the causal variable and its effect on the dependent variables, it does not measure how, or the variables change. There are 3 main types of non-experimental research including single-variable, quasi-experimental and qualitative. As previously stated, this study was qualitative. Nonexperimental research is research that lacks the manipulation of an independent variable, random assignment of participants to conditions or orders or conditions or both (Chiang, 2015). It is believed that this design is the most heterogeneous and has the least amount of scientific rigor of the three classification categories: experimental, quasi-experimental and non-experimental.

Most non-experimental designs are retrospective in nature and are sometimes called "ex post facto" (after the fact) research. The Archival data from CPS is an example of after the fact data because it has already been compiled. Because a retrospective study is examining activities that have already occurred, the manipulation of independent variables and randomization is not possible. In addition, the dependent variable, also known as the outcomes, has occurred prior to the study initiation. This is an example of the fourth-grade African American boys test scores as well as the teachers' undergraduate preparation experiences. Consequently, retrospective designs also generally lack the element of control over the study setting, making it difficult to restrict potential extraneous variables. For this reason, non-experimental designs are the most prone to bias (Thompson et al., 2007).

The researcher strengthened the validity of this study and remained unbiased by relying on field notes and memos. Field notes were taken during the interviews of each teacher. Field notes provided a record of observational data produced in the field during collection, thus

prevented the researcher from relying on personal thoughts and subjective meanings of the

teachers' statements (Montgomery & Bailey, 2007; Tessier, 2012). During the interviews of

each teacher the researcher also maintained memos to maintain records of the researcher's

developing ideas about codes and their interconnections (Montgomery & Bailey, 2007).

Interviews serve as the instrument that was used. The main advantages of interviews

are that they are useful to obtain detailed information about personal feelings, perceptions, and

opinions.   As well as meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, and symbols

and description of things and not their counts or measures (Aspers & Corte, 2019) Interviews

allow more detailed questions to be asked, and they usually achieve a high response rate

(Lavrakas, 2008). Because of the complexity of the research questions, interviews were used

as opposed to surveys in order help draw out the many concepts and categories in play and how

they interact with one another.

Population and Sample Selection

The population for this study were recruited by Dr. Alfred Tatum, Dean of Education at

the University of Illinois, Chicago campus. He acted as the gatekeeper. A gatekeeper is a person

who acts as an intermediary between the data collector and potential participants (Andoh-Arthur,

2019).   In layman's terms, this individual provides access to a particular population that the

researcher would not explicitly have access to. Furthermore, gatekeepers may also be

individuals in charge of formal institutions (e.g., heads of institutions such as headmasters and

principal officers of organizations) whose permissions are required to attain access to key

documents or persons under their formal care (Andoh-Arthur, 2019).

Dr. Tatum had access to teachers in Network 11 which includes both the Englewood, and

Auburn Gresham south side communities. His involvement with this network stems from his

research entitled Literacy Development of African American Boys Grades 3 - 5 multi-dimensional reading model. The sample of this study were Chicago Public School teachers' who taught the fourth-grade African American boys. This type of participant selection is also referred to as purposeful sampling. In this type of sampling, participants are selected or sought after based on pre-selected criteria (Crossman, 2018). The criteria are based upon selecting individuals who have direct contact and experiences with literacy among fourth-grade African American boys, and who teach for the Chicago Public Schools.

The study required 10 fourth-grade CPS teachers: two white females, two white males, two African American males and four African American females. The researcher selected ten participants in order to achieve a full but limited spectrum of experiences among fourth-grade teachers. The researcher hoped to reach saturation with the 10 participants that she interviewed. Based on Morse's (1995) The Significance of Saturation, "saturation is the key to excellent qualitative work," but at the same time consider that "there are no published guidelines or tests of adequacy for estimating the sample size required to reach saturation" (Morse, 1995). Saturation occurs when redundancy is reached in data analysis and signals to researchers that they may cease data collection. Therefore, saturation was useful in this study because the researcher was able to identify when it was unnecessary to delve any further because the same responses were being duplicated (Saunders et al., 2018).

Description of the Setting and the Participants

This study was conducted in Chicago Illinois, which is an urban city of 2.7 million residents located in the mid-west (Novara & Khare, 2017). The teachers that were used in this study work in three out of the 77 different communities in Chicago (chicago.gov., 2021). The

communities include Englewood with 25,075 residents, Auburn Gresham with 45,842 residents, and Rogers Park with 54,402 residents (Illinois.gov., 2017).

Chicago Public Schools are broken down into 17 networks and this study used 3 of those networks and nine elementary schools. The teachers that were used in this study work in Network 11, Network 9, and Network 2 (CPS., 2020). The grammar schools that the teachers are employed with has no relevance to the study other than the researcher needs teachers who teach fourth-Grade African American boys. Nine of the ten teachers work at different schools. Nine of the ten schools have Title I status. Title I services target children who are failing, or at the most risk of failing, to meet state academic standards. What's more, Title I programs are for schools in which the poverty rate is 40 percent or higher. Low-income students are determined by the number of students enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program (IRC., 2021).

The participants of the study provided the researcher with a wealth of knowledge and information based on their ages which were 25 to 60 and their years of service ranging from seven months to 32 years as Chicago Board of Education teachers. Their demographics provided a full scope of experiences that 4th grade elementary school teachers, who were employed by the Chicago Board of Education, experience on a daily basis.

Sources of Data

Chicago Public School teachers' who teach the fourth-grade African American boys served as the source of data collection. Participant selection is referred to as purposeful sampling. In this type of sampling, participants are selected or sought after based on pre-selected criteria (Crossman, 2018). The criteria were based upon selecting individuals who have direct contact and experiences with literacy among fourth-grade African American boys, and those who

teach for the Chicago Public Schools.

The population for this study was recruited by Dr. Alfred Tatum, Dean of Education at the University of Illinois, Chicago campus. He acted as the gatekeeper. As the gatekeeper he was directly responsible and provided access to the participants. Dr. Tatum contacted each teacher in Network 11 via email and asked that they contact the researcher directly if they were interested in participating in the study.

The study required 10 fourth-grade CPS teachers: two white females, two white males, two African American males and four African American females. Interviews were used as a way to collect data. The researcher chose this demographic of teachers to provide a lens into White and Black teachers experiences within the Chicago Board of Education. Based on research, over 75 percent of teachers within the public school system are White and women (Washington, 1981). The researcher sought to examine if the two ethnicities would have similar experiences or very different ones as well as would the experiences of the teachers be different across the sexes.

The participants were 10 fourth-grade Chicago Public School teachers of African American boys. Each interview was 60 minutes long and consisted of 22 questions. During the ten interviews, opened and closed ended questions were asked and pseudonyms used in order to maintain participants confidentiality (Saunders, et al., 2015).

The researcher used a non-engaged performance site. Kennedy King College Library, which is in the Englewood community, served as the venue where interviews took place. This site was selected based on its locality to the participants schools and served as an unbiased site to conduct interviews. The researcher received authorization from Dr. Adam Carey who is the department chair of the library. Dr. Carey provided a reserved, designated quiet room inside of

the library which ensured privacy, protected participants confidentiality, and provided an atmosphere conducive for audio- recordings of interviews.

I followed the Illinois State Law Illinois Eavesdropping Act 720ILCS 5/142 (1961) that covers the recording of conversation. Should a participant not agree to being recorded at any time during the interview, I would stop, end the conversation and the recording, and delete any recorded data (offices.depaul.edu., 2016).

Validity

All research requires validity (Nayab, 2020; Winter, 2000). "Field work that only has a single researcher invites the question, why should we believe it" (Bosk, 1979, p. 193)? Validity is a fundamental problem, which causes controversy around the legitimacy of qualitative research: if qualitative studies cannot consistently produce valid results, then it cannot be relied on (Huberman & Miles, 2002). The burden of qualitative research is to figure out and recognize patterns between words to build up a meaningful picture without compromising its richness and nuances (Leung, 2015).

Qualitative Research stresses the "why" and "how" of things rather than the "what," "where," and "when" of things. It seeks to understand the concepts, illuminating reality, and extrapolation of the situation to other similar situations, rather than effect predictions, generalize, or make causal determination (Navab, 2020). Validity in qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher because the researcher is the instrument (Nayab, 2020; Patton, 2001).

As the instrument of this research study, I developed a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena of illiteracy among fourth-grade African American boys. I used triangulation as a means of multiple methods of data sources (Patton, 1999). Using a variety of methods to

collect data on the same topic helps assure the validity or research, which involves different types of samples as well as methods of data collection (Carter, et al., 2014).

However, the purpose of triangulation is not necessarily to cross-validate data but rather to capture different dimensions of the same phenomenon (Patton, 1999). Triangulation is also viewed as qualitative research strategy to enhance and strengthen validity through the convergence of information from different sources (Denzin, 1978). I interviewed and I maintained field notes and memos. I journaled as a way of monitoring my assumptions based on my 'insider' knowledge as a previous Chicago Public School administrator as mentioned in chapter one. The difference between memos and journaling is that memos are accumulated as written ideas or records about concepts and their relationships. They are notes by the researcher to herself or himself about some hypothesis regarding a category or property and especially relationships between categories.

Reliability

Although the term 'Reliability' is a concept used for testing or evaluating quantitative research, the idea is often used in various types of research. If one looks at the idea of testing as a way of abstracting information, then the most important test of any qualitative study is its quality. A good qualitative study can help one to "understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing" (Eisner, 1991, p. 58). This relates to the concept of good quality research when reliability is a concept meant to evaluate quality in a quantitative study with a "purpose of explaining, while quality concept in qualitative study has the purpose of generating understanding" (Stenbacka, 2001, p. 551).

The qualitative researcher needs to explain how dependability and credibility are assured and in the research methodology and documented in the data that is collected (Simon & Goes,

2015). The difference in purpose when evaluating the quality of studies in quantitative and qualitative research is one of the reasons that the concept of reliability is irrelevant in qualitative research. According to Stenbacka, (2001) "the concept of reliability is even misleading in qualitative research. If a qualitative study is discussed with reliability as a criterion, the consequence is rather that the study is no good" (p. 552). It is important to understand that dependability is to qualitative research as reliability is to quantitative research. There must be credibility to have dependability (Simon & Goes, 2021).

On the other hand, Patton (2001) states that validity and reliability are two factors, which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analyzing results and judging the quality of the study. This corresponds to the question "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). To answer the question, Healy, and Perry (2000) assert that the quality of a study in each paradigm should be judged by its own paradigm's terms. For example, while the terms Reliability and Validity are essential criterion for quality in quantitative paradigms, in qualitative paradigms the terms Credibility, Neutrality or Confirmability, Consistency or Dependability and Applicability or Transferability are the essential criteria for quality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To ensure creditability and neutrality the researcher selected teachers from nine different schools in order to maintain a sense of individualism and unskewed responses to the interview questions. Additionally, the researcher utilized a non-engaged performance site to conduct interviews. By conducting interviews off campus of the individual participants schools the researcher provided a neutral environment and eliminated the bias of participants being at their own schools.

Data Collection

For this study, data collection consisted of audio-recorded individual interviews with 10 fourth-grade Chicago Public School teachers. These interviews were used to assist with helping the researcher understand the teachers' perceptions of their literacy curricula during their undergraduate teacher preparation courses; along with teacher's perceptions on their literacy instruction of fourth-grade African American boys. The demographics of the teachers include 4 African American female teachers, 2 African American male teachers, 2 White male teachers, and 2 White female teachers.

The interview questions were semi-structured and the interview was 60 minutes in length. During the individual interview, the researcher observed the fourth-grade teacher for facial clues and body language. Ray Birdwhistell, (1952) book entitled Introduction to Kinesics: An Annotation System for Analysis of Body Motion and Gesture and founder of kinesics. This work informs the researcher about the study of human movement as culturally patterned visual communication.

Birdwhistell coined the term Kinesis, which is Greek for movement as a positive alternative to non-verbal communication (Birdshistell, 1952). The observations of facial clues and body language were noted in reflective and descriptive notes intended to aide in the development of codes and themes that emerged in the initial interview (Draplin, 2017). Interviews were the main method of data collections. The experiences of the participants and the information relied heavily on the interviewing skills of the researcher (Hasa, 2017).

Data Analysis, Procedures

Upon completion of the interviews, the audio recordings were uploaded by the researcher into Trent, an online service, and the recordings were transcribed. After the audio recording

transcriptions were complete, initial coding occurred along-side the process of assigning meaning to data. The participants responses were used to produce the codes and the researcher then clustered the codes, which resulted in the emergence of themes. From these themes, sub themes emerged (Fox, 2009). The researcher hoped to answer the research questions via the personal experiences of the educators who participated in the study.

As qualitative research becomes increasingly recognized and valued, it is imperative that it be conducted in a rigorous and methodical manner to yield meaningful and useful results. To be accepted as trustworthy, qualitative researchers must demonstrate that data analysis has been conducted in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner through recording, systematizing, and disclosing the methods of analysis with enough detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible.

For this study, the researchers used thematic Analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that can be widely used across a range of epistemologies and research questions. It is a method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set (Braun & Clark, 2006). Boyatzis (1998) describes thematic analysis as a translator for those speaking the languages of qualitative and quantitative analysis, enabling researchers who use different research methods to communicate with each other (Nowell at el., 2017).

Ethical Considerations

The researcher of this study received an Internal Review board (IRB) authorization prior to the commencement of any research. Once IRB authorization was received, the researcher then contacted the Gatekeeper of this study. The Gatekeeper, Dr. Alfred Tatum, Dean of Education at the University of Illinois, Chicago campus served as a conduit by providing the researcher access

to the potential teacher participants. To ensure confidentiality, each participant who agreed to participate in the study was assigned a pseudonym.

All interviews were conducted at Kennedy King Library which is a non-engaged performance site. A non-engaged performance site is a location where the research is conducted, where data are gathered from subjects or records, where subjects are recruited for the research, and/or where subjects provide consent for research participation. These sites are considered performance sites whether or not the research activities are funded or unfunded.

The researcher sought authorization from the department chair of Kennedy King College Library and once authorization was received from Dr. Adam Carey, the department chair of the library, she began to schedule interviews. Dr. Carey provided a reserved, designated quiet room inside of the library which ensured privacy, protected participants confidentiality, and provided an atmosphere conducive for audio- recordings of interviews.

The researcher followed the Illinois State Law Illinois Eavesdropping Act 720ILCS 5/142 (1961) that covers the recording of conversation. Should a participant not agree to being recorded at any time during the interview, the researcher would stop, end the conversation and the recording and delete any recorded data (Kaiser, 2009). Information was recorded via an electronic voice recorder. Participant's information was attached to a pseudonym that would be assigned at the onset of the interview. The recordings were downloaded and stored on a secured computer under password protection and with encrypted files.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this research study. This was a small study of 10 participants all of which are fourth-grade teachers and who only work for the Chicago Board of Education. This study did not employ teachers from charter, catholic, or private elementary

schools in Chicago. The researcher only interviewed fourth-grade teachers and only teachers who are White and Black. Teachers had to be honest, and the researcher could not prove that their responses were not valid. Time constraints that the researcher placed on conducting the study were based on having access to the gatekeeper who was directly responsible for providing access to the participants namely the teachers.

Having a gatekeeper who is connected to the teachers helped the researcher gain access to them however because the gatekeeper served as a go between the researcher may have had some difficulties contacting the participants. Consequently, if she needed to resend recruitment letters to the teachers to encourage additional participation, the researcher would have to contact the gatekeeper via email and or by leaving a message with his secretary. If these efforts were met with negative results the researcher, with no other alternative, would have to reach out to other coworkers with whom she previously worked with at the Chicago Board of Education. This method of gathering participants is referred to as convenience sampling. This is a specific type of non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in a study (Lavrakas, 2008).

Delimitations

The delimitation of this study was that it would be a phenomenological design which will directly affect the sample size. According to Creswell (2007), phenomenological studies do not require large sample sizes because the goal of the design is to acquire rich descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants. This study was delimited by a small sample size of 10 participants, which kept the results from being generalizable to larger populations. In order to participate in the study, the teachers had to be a fourth-grade teacher (Leung, 2015).

The study only examined the literacy scores of fourth-grade, African American boys who attend Chicago Public Schools. The study did not include private, catholic, or charter schools in Chicago. The schools of the participating teachers only represent 3 of the 17 Networks within CPS including: Network 11, Network 9, and Network 2.

This population of teachers was chosen as a means to unearth the phenomenon of why the literacy rates of fourth-grade African American boys are continuously below average and how or if teachers feel that they received adequate literacy teacher preparation during their undergraduate career. The researcher only interviewed fourth-grade Chicago Public School teachers who are White and Black, but both male and female. The researcher did not examine any other demographics than those listed above.

Summary

Chapter Three introduces the methodology that was be used to answer the research Questions of this qualitative study. A discussion of the procedure, study participants, data collection and interview questions outline the specifics of how the study was conducted and who the participants were. This phenomenology study of fourth-grade Chicago Public School teachers described the lived experiences of their undergraduate literacy instruction; and it described teachers' daily literacy instruction experiences with fourth-grade African American boys. Individual interviews were the method in which the researcher extrapolated data from the participants. The goal of Chapter Four is to provide the study results and demonstrate that the methodology described in Chapter Three will follow.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

Chapter Four introduces the participants, reexamines the interview questions, and provides the data analysis for the research study. The objective of this study was to pose questions to discover the concepts and essential structures of lived experience, concept, or phenomenon (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). This study focused on the perception of fourth-grade Chicago Public school teachers lived experiences during their undergraduate student literacy preparedness courses, and their experiences teaching literacy to fourth-grade African American boys.

The research questions below guided the semi-structured interviews, and the results were paired with the pre-determined cluster of questions: Basic demographics, collegiate curricula, student teaching preparedness courses, and literacy in the classroom.

RQ1: Why do African American boys in the fourth grade score the lowest of all youth who take standardized tests with a 14 percent literacy rate (NAEP, 2015)?

RQ2: How do teachers learn to teach reading effectively during their undergraduate careers?

RQ3: Do teachers feel comfortable with their ability to teach children how to read when they encounter non-readers or students who have difficulties?

Teaching Experience – Demographics: Closed-ended questions

1. Did you attend a historically black college/university, predominant white institution, or an ivy league institution?
2. What is your ethnicity?
3. What gender do you identify as?
4. How long have you been teaching?
5. Where did you begin your teaching career?
6. Can you describe the demographics of the schools where you taught previously and now?

7. How long have you been teaching fourth grade inner city African American boys?

Collegiate Curricula: Open-ended questions

1. How did the curriculum at your college and or university effectively prepare you to teach reading to your students? If not, then why and what do you feel was missing in the curriculum?
2. In what ways did the curriculum include the science of reading? If not, do you know what the science of reading entails?
3. How did the curriculum include instruction on culturally responsive pedagogy?
4. Can you explain what culturally responsive teaching means to you?
5. Based on your response, does culturally responsive instruction play a role in engaging African American boys in literacy?

Student Teaching Preparedness Courses

1. Describe your student teaching experience in schools in socioeconomically deprived communities where African American students attended? How did teaching literacy in these spaces affect the way you perceived African American students and boys in particular?
2. Describe how your teacher preparedness courses helped you to teach African American boys.
3. Describe your later experiences with teaching literacy to African American boys.
4. Explain why you think African American boys score the lowest of any demographic of student who take this test standardized literacy tests.
5. Explain in a few sentences what you think can be done to improve literacy among African American boys.

Literacy in the Classroom

1. Explain how you felt teaching literacy as a new teacher.
2. Describe your teaching style when engaging in literacy instruction as a new teacher and later.
3. How did you utilize the literacy instruction that you received during your college career at the beginning of your teaching career? Was it effective in teaching literacy to African American boys?
4. If it was not effective, what alternative literacy plan did you institute? Did it render positive results, and if so, how?
5. What interests you about teaching this student population?

Participant Profiles

As outlined in Chapter three, 10 educators were identified through purposeful and convenience sampling and each of them participated in a 60-minute interview. Nine of the 10 participants who satisfied the criteria for this study were interviewed face to face in a semi-structured interview format. However, in light of the CoVid 19 virus the 10th participant was interviewed via Zoom. The semi-structured interview format allowed the researcher to gain access to information on specific questions and to maintain focus on the topic being investigated, while also allowing space for the conversation to stay open and relaxed as topics took different turns. The interview questions were both closed and opened-ended and each interview was transcribed verbatim to facilitate data coding and to tease out themes. See table 4.1: Demographics of Participants Profile on page 152.

All of the participants are employed by the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and all except one of the schools are located on the southside of Chicago. Each of the southside schools has a 99.5 percent African American population and each holds a designation of Title I status. Title I classification means that there is a high population of minority students and or low-income students who receive free or reduced lunch. The single northside school has a 5.8 percent African American population and is not classified as a Title I school. The participants of the study whose ages ranged from 25 to 60 and their years of service ranged from seven months to 32 years provided the researcher with a wealth of knowledge and Information.

Descriptive Findings

Qualitative research required the assignment of codes or labels to newly gathered data in order to provide the researcher an opportunity to make sense of unprocessed or raw data. DeCuir-Gunby and Marshall (2011) and Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that codes

should be assigned to a block of data to derive or to develop the meaning. The researcher

carefully read each interview several times and this process resulted in the researcher being able

to thoughtfully code and categorize the data and conceptualize the content from the

transcriptions.

To properly analyze the data, the researcher chose two types of qualitative coding:

Patterning Coding – for frequency, is used so that the researcher can evaluate the frequency and

saliency of particular words or phrases in a body of original text data in order to identify

keywords or repeated ideas (Dey, 1993). Additionally, In Vivo Coding was used. It places

emphasis on the actual spoken words of the participants. In Vivo Coding is advocated by many

for its usefulness in highlighting the voices of participants and for its reliance on the participants

themselves to give meaning to the data (Manning, 2017).

After carefully reading and coding the interview transcripts the researcher was able to
tease out four major themes and three emerging themes. Major themes are ideas that are
repeated and significant in qualitative research. On the other hand, emerging themes refers to
ideas that show up in data on and off and not as frequently. Listed below are the major and
emerging themes of the study:

Major Themes
- Connect
- Curricula
- Teacher Perceptions/Literacy and Professional Development
- Cultural Competency

Emerging Themes:
- Attrition/Non-Traditional Teaching Programs/Second Career
- Male Role Models
- Teacher Mentors
  After the transcriptions were read and the codes generated, the researcher realized that by

creating a chart for frequency she would then be able to provide a visual account of the spoken

words of the participants. Once the themes were actualized each was placed in the chart and

used to answer the research questions. However, after the chart was created the researcher was

then able to make note of the concepts that stuck out or needed to be addressed based on their frequency. After analyzing the chart above 4 major themes stood out, which included connect, curricula, Teacher Perceptions/Literacy and Professional Development, and cultural competency.

What the researcher found of interest was that while, Ms. Y. had the least amount of experience as a teacher, she had far more professional development experiences then the other 9 participants. Ms. Y. is currently enrolled in a national non-traditional teaching program where she had the benefit of culturally responsive pedagogy, the science of reading modules, implicit biases instruction, and video analysis, which is termed *microteaching*.   Microteaching is where a teacher is recorded teaching a short lesson to his/her peers. S/he then reviews this lesson for proficiencies and deficiencies and reteaches the lesson. In a review of the use of video for teacher preparation in the past 25 years, Tochon (2008) noted that microteaching is now practiced throughout the UK, Europe, North America, Asia, and Oceania, solidifying the use of video as a valid method for teacher improvement (Tripp & Rich, 2011).

This is not an indication or a suggestion that a non-traditional teaching program is the answer to solving the woes of the teacher preparedness programs at colleges and universities. It is simply an observation that perhaps colleges and universities of education could benefit from instituting some of these same curricula when preparing students to become teachers.

Ms. C's undergraduate teacher preparedness was quite different from the typical student teaching experiences. She was engaged in student teaching at the very beginning year of her undergraduate education. As a result, she obtained 900 hundred student teaching hours by the time she graduated. She stated, "so that part was phenomenal," meaning the 900 hours of student teaching. "And that's the part I really liked because I really felt like a lot of the initial questions I had had been answered through some of the exposure piece. And then when I'm

coming back to class, I have more meaningful, you know, feedback conversation, because now I can say, hey, we read chapter five. I went and did this part of it. It went all the way left, you know, I noticed that certain kids did this, and certain kids did that."

Ninety percent of the participants in this study recalled that their student teaching lasted either one or two semesters and occurred during their senior year. In Illinois teaching certificate applicants must complete a student-teaching experience or clinical. Depending on the program, practicum or fieldwork prior to the student-teaching will vary. Practicum hours are part of a course, like methodology, but the clinical is an actual course (bestcolleges.com). Student teaching is full-time work with the student spending 30 to 35 hours in a classroom per week. These numbers mean that these student teachers spent between 360 – 420 hours in practicum. Many of the participants spoke about how they felt uncomfortable in their first class. Perhaps this speaks to a lack of exposure during their teacher preparedness courses.

Below are the Major themes from Table 4.2 on page 156. This table provided a visual aide to the teachers' responses on the importance of connecting to students, the curricula of colleges and universities of education, Teacher Perceptions/Literacy and Professional Development, and finally, curricula competency:

Connect

As previously stated in Chapter Two, Tatum (2006) suggests that it is important to connect the social, the economic and political to the educational, acknowledging that developing skills, increasing test scores, and nurturing students' identities are fundamentally compatible. Tatum believes that you should, "connect with students and their outside communities and families. Connect the difficulties in the school system facing African American boys to the fact the school system itself was meant to tend to the concerns of the white middle class" (p. 48).

"Those lower performers, especially the boys, when they get it, they got it, but you have to nurture. You have to show them that you're caring, concerned, like you can do this. So, you have to give them a lot of motivation." – **Ms. J.**

"I'm very rigid and linear, so it's something I had to learn, you know. I'm the teacher, you're here to hear me speak. You know, I'm the King in here. So, yeah, I tried to pepper my lessons with things for Black boys and even my teaching assistant. He does the same thing." – **Mr. G.**

"As a first-year teacher, I think it's great for me in the way as it has given me a lot of opportunity to build relationships because students often come in with so many more personal connections and like that is a skill that I try to teach connections to the text and connections between texts. So, when that is utilized in our reading, it gives a lot more opportunities to engage. I think one of the biggest things I've learned is that the students that I have maybe immediately thought to be reluctant readers, it's often just because they have yet to engage with what they're reading. And so even though there are certain texts that we have to read or certain content that we need to cover, I found ways to at least get them reading and try to loop them back in with things that they're interested in and trying to find ways to connect them, connect their lives to what we are learning about." – **Ms. Y.**

"I did spend a year in a 99 percent African American school with like 95 percent low income school and so I think that a lot of times that African American boys are not addressed or not pushed. That's why I started the group and the girls were like, "what about us? I'm like you'll be next. I really think is important for them to know that it's ok for you guys to read. You don't always just have to play sports. So, I think that is something I push within myself and a lot of people always say "your favorite students are always the boys" because, I don't know I just feel like they need that positive attention." – **Ms. M.**

"I've had really good success with the African American male population. Like I said at KIPP we went from, they were at 35 percent to ISAT ratings to 100 percent in four years. It's the fastest I was acknowledged by the mayor. It was the fastest rise in test scores in the history of the city because of Harriet Ball and her methods. You've got to entertain everybody nowadays. You know what I mean? And to get your point across you have to entertain. You have to be an entertainer to be a teacher. Yeah, oh definitely and what entertains them is what you have to use to reach them."
Why didn't it catch on? – Interviewer
"Because it's success and they don't want it to be. They don't want Black men to be successful. I shouldn't be saying this but It's part of keeping him down. If you find out what works. I really think that's historically what goes on in education. Once you find something that works for a certain population that's not popular, it's not looked at. Like SFA is primarily a white program for white kids. It just so happened that we took it and made it culturally relevant for our population when I was in Ashbury Park." – **Mr. J.**

Above are the responses of four of the 10 fourth grade CPS teacher participants. These responses represent their lived experiences with fourth-grade African American boys and produced the theme of connect. Teachers rendered detailed descriptions regarding the importance of connecting with African American boys. While each teacher offered a different submission in terms of verbiage each of them still managed to create a picture of a true experience and these experiences mirrored each of the other participants.

What the teachers shared indicated that for African American boys to be successful in the classroom teachers must connect with them--connect with them by pushing them, giving them positive attention, motivating them, showing that you care about them as a person, and preparing a lesson that includes their interests. Their responses coincide with fellow educators/researchers such as Tatum, (2006) Kunjufu, (1983), Milner (2011), and Ladson-Billings, (2009). Milner says it best when he said, "At its root, building relationships with students is about meeting students where they are, attempting to understand them, and developing connections with them" (p.1).

Curricula – College/University

In Emily Hanford's (2018) Why Aren't Kids Being Taught to Read? there is a radio documentary on science-based-teaching. She suggests that children are not being taught to read in a manner consistent with what scientists have discovered about how children actually learn. She goes on to say, "It's a problem that has been hiding in plain sight for decades" (Hanford, 2018, p. 1). But, more importantly, Hanford and Moats point out that deans and faculty of colleges of education must begin requiring that reading science be taught in teacher preparation programs because children's futures depend on it (Hanford, 2018).

Below is a table that provides the participants responses about how they felt as new

teachers providing literacy instruction. Ninety percent of the participants indicated that they had

a negative experience.

 "So, one of my professors was teaching English and the way he came in the first day he
was like look, you're not going to teach this in school. So basically, I'm just going to fly
through this and I'm just gonna teach you the basics and everybody's going to get a
passing grade, that's basically what he came and told us because he was like they don't
teach English in schools no more." – **Mr. F.**

"So, my program was unique because I was going for both my Sp. Ed. License and my
general education license at the same time. So, I was in a dual program. With that being
said, they had a very much inclusive focus. So, we received the same training that a
general education teacher would receive in isolation in terms of literacy. It was actually
the major sore part of my education. I remember complaining to the department about
our literacy team. I didn't feel like that in other areas or subjects such as math or social
studies and science. I felt like there was a huge emphasis on like practical in the
classroom usage, on culturally relevant teaching on increasing student engagement and
involvement. However, my literacy courses were very textbook driven. I didn't feel like
a lot of the information was practical to me as a teacher. A lot of theory around reading,
but not a lot of like how do I teach a kid phonics? But there was not a lot of technical
training on teaching of literacy of reading and that was a huge issue for me." I took two
courses, both on primary literacy, which is grades K through three and then upper grades
three to six in both classes were very much driven by like the textbooks and up and not a
lot of practical information. I definitely do think that there was a huge, huge, area of
opportunity for schools to really go deeper on literacy instruction for youth." – **Ms. C.**

In Chapter Two, Tatum (2006) discussed that it is important for the curricula to (1) be

exciting for both the student and the teacher; (2) serve as a roadmap and provide apprenticeship;

(3) challenge students cognitively; and (4) help boys apply literacy skills and strategies. More

specifically, the curriculum should "Engage boys in authentic discussions where they can

analyze their realities in the context of the curriculum and discuss strategies for overcoming

academic and social barriers" (p. 48).

Ms. C. speaks of how her how undergraduate school did not hit the mark in terms of

literacy curriculum and nor did the grammar school where she is employed. Her response

supports the research, which indicates that if teachers are not engaged in the curriculum and

or properly taught the scientific methods of teaching then it is difficult for them to move the lesson off the pages of the book and into the minds of fourth-grade African American boys. Ms. C's collegiate experience helps explain why 90 percent of the teacher participants rendered a negative response when asked about their experience in teaching literacy for the first time.

In Arthur Levine's (2006) study, Educating School Teachers, over 100 teachers complained that they were not adequately prepared during their undergraduate career to effectively teach literacy, nor did they receive adequate hands-on training for classroom management. To add credibility to these teachers' complaints, a 2010 study conducted by the Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance found that teachers do not feel comfortable teaching literacy (Salinger, et al., 2016).

As previously mentioned in Chapter Two, teachers' confidence and ability are contingent on their education, training, and professional development (Day, 1999). This fact is an aggregate to the already stressful environment that teachers work in where they are poorly prepared for the sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and cultural disparities they will encounter in the classroom yet are evaluated on their ability to produce results through their students standardized test scores regardless

To add insult to injury, the University of Missouri's study entitled Empirically Derived Profiles of Teacher Stress, Burnout, Self-Efficacy, and Coping and Associated Student Outcomes indicates that 93 percent of elementary teachers report high stress. Thus, it is safe to conclude that primary teachers consistently feel overwhelmed and more stressed than secondary school teachers (Herman, at el., 2018). Below are the responses of the study participants regarding literacy perception as well as professional development of teachers in literacy. Additionally,

teachers shared feelings about the lack of professional development that they received from the

grammar schools that they are employed by:

"She was taught in kindergarten first and second grade with phonemic based curriculum which they got rid of, which I can't believe. If I ever go back to first grade, which I request every year on my teacher request form I would teach it phonetically, I wouldn't teach this sight word, learn at your own speed. And it's really funny cause I'm teaching fourth grade now and I say to my kids. Well, sound it out. They have no idea how to do it because they're like. Well we were told to look for smaller words in the bigger word that we knew. I'm like. What? That's not phonics. That's not sounding out. Oh, I was I was flipping. I was like, really? I mean, to read a math problem where, you know, the names of the people don't matter. We call them by their initials, so we don't get bogged down. Like Juanita so we just call it J. So, it doesn't get in the way of understanding the problem and there's some words like collected they don't know. I was like sound it out and they couldn't." – **Mr. J**.

"Like I have a lot of experience with fourth-grade boys at this point or I'm gaining a lot of exposure and where their minds are, where their interests are. We're not tapping into that. The curriculum isn't. I've already went to my principal like? I'm not, like, this curriculum is doing nothing for me as an adult. I can only imagine, you know, how do I really push kids to want to read this? I don't want to read this, so I don't know now I'm going to convince them to read it." – **Ms. C.**

Whatever we do, we have to bring in our own materials because materials don't support what African American boys need, even down to the novels like I try to make it where even if they have different interests, so that they can see beyond the sports field, they always want to do the sports. So, like I try to bring in things like Ziggy's which is African American boys – **Mrs. J.**

I decided my senior year that I wanted to be a teacher. So it was like, ok what alternative certification programs are there? I knew there was, FTA but I wanted to stay in Chicago, and I knew that the LSUA is based in Chicago. So that's why I went through them. I was at an AUSL school for all my ten years of teaching. And so, I am just now really learning that I didn't know. Like, I'm learning stuff now and I'm doing research now about reading in these Common Core standards. You couldn't have told me last year that I didn't know what I was doing and now I'm very honest about that. But I'm a very reflective person so even though people would say that I'm an experienced teacher I've always taken feedback very well. I always want to improve my craft. So even when I came here, you know, it was like dang I didn't even know that. But I would talk to the principal and I talked to everybody. What do I need to do? Tell me. She gave me a coach and you know this is helping me. So, it just really made me think back. Like I felt like I was doing well, but I just imagine how much better I could have done because I'd never had like bad scores or anything like that. I'm just like, if I just knew some more of the stuff that I'm learning now, they probably would have been so much more because I'm very passionate and I put in a lot of work." – **Ms. M.**

Cultural Competency

In Chapter Two, the study explains the importance of teachers being culturally competent. In the early 1990s, culturally relevant teaching was made popular by Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings. The term she created was defined as one "that empowers students to maintain cultural integrity, while succeeding academically" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 465.) Culturally relevant education (CRE) is a conceptual framework that encompasses all aspects of teaching and learning within the classroom as it recognizes the importance of incorporating students' cultural backgrounds, interests and lived experiences into their classroom experience (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2009; Milner, 2016).

CRE is a comprehensive teaching approach that empowers all students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impact knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2009). Below are the responses of teachers on what they each think cultural competency is.

> "Being empathetic, understanding what their backgrounds are. Having perspective, listening as much as speaking. Being careful not to editorialize, which is an editorial in itself, you know very, very aware of that." – **Mr. L.**

> "Having gone to an all-white college, there was really no diversity at all. In fact, I didn't really become culturally aware until I started my work on my Master's and I had to read a lot of literature like *Why Do Blacks Kids Sit Alone in the Cafeteria*? I had to read that. I had to read one really cool book. I see the cover, but I can't remember its title. Cultural. Culturally, something teaching. But it changed my world. It really did. It made me aware of wow, this is so right. So, when I started working in Asbury Park, where the population was not diverse, but very African-American, I really had a lot to learn. And I learned about reading to culturally diverse people and how to use their culture. But I didn't realize how to use the culture until many years later, until I started work on my Master's. Then I read these culturally relevant books and I was like, wow that's why it didn't work. There was no connection at all." - **Mr. J.**

> "To me that means providing my students with literature or things that they can relate to. So, seeing themselves in books, seeing themselves in an article or whatever they read, but also exposing them to other cultures. Because we're not the only culture so them

knowing that there are different cultures out there because we may not always get that exposure." – **Ms. M.**

"I want to say that you're aware of the children's cultures and you address that in your lessons. You got to do that basically on a weekly basis. You have to know where they're from, what they believe. I would say because they definitely are more interested in stories from African Americans. I let them pick, you know, most of the time. You know, for their free read, they get to pick their chapter books and they definitely go for those books." – **Ms. S.**

"Understanding the culture you're teaching, to have their best interest. Yeah, like making sure that you help them see themselves in the lesson and using their social environment. What they have going on with them personally as an individual." – **Mr. F.**

Culture is central to learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). It plays a role not only in communicating and receiving information, but also in shaping the thinking process of groups and individuals -- a pedagogy that acknowledges, responds to and celebrates fundamental cultures and offers full and equitable access to education for students from all cultures. Culturally Responsive Teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings,1994).

Attrition/Non-Traditional Teaching Programs/Second Career

The influence of attrition, non-traditional teaching programs, and teaching as a second career were not intended to be a part of the original research. These themes presented themselves after the interviews were conducted, coded, and analyzed. The researcher found that 20 percent of the teacher participants were second career teachers and 20 percent of the teacher participants came from local and national non-profit teaching organizations where they received a Master's of Education degree with restrictions. Restrictions refer to the grade levels that a teacher, based on their training, can teach.   Mrs. M. states, "So I can't teach middle school because I don't technically have a reading endorsement."

Other teachers like Ms. Y. are working under what is referred to as an emergency certificate. An emergency certification is a temporary employment status assigned by districts to address local shortages of certified teachers. It helps to expedite the entry of candidates without an education degree into the teaching profession (Childs, 2012). Emergency certification requirements vary from state to state, but most states require a bachelor's degree. This certification usually lasts for one year and may not be renewable unless the teacher is working toward traditional certification and/or the teacher shortage continues.

However, emergency certification has been heavily criticized for allowing under-qualified individuals to teach without adequate preparation (Childs, 2012). This criticism has some merit because based on Ms. Y's. statement that, "all teachers go to work in low-income and diverse school populations, so in Chicago, we're in the south side and west side."

Attrition

> "Well, the big question I think, like most things, has to do with such a terrible compilation of problems like thinking about Chicago independently, the way the city has become so segregated and resources have been shifted away from schools towards other schools. And so often kids are not given the same opportunities and thinking about my kids here. They had multiple teachers walk out on them. They haven't had consistent literacy instruction. They haven't had the structures in place." **– Ms. Y.**

> "Yes and they have like maybe eleven schools in all of these schools they want to be the same. It's a lot of mixed reviews about it because, and they haven't done it in maybe four or so years, but at first what they were doing was going to underperforming schools, taking all the teachers out of the schools, and they replaced them with us who they trained for that year. And we were called their turnaround schools. We were turning the school around. And then the whole culture climate and all of that changed and so it was a lot of pushback because a lot of teachers lost their jobs principal and lost their jobs. Every year they used to get like two to three schools that was low performing and they would fire all the teachers and replace them because they were training us to go into these schools." So now they train students and they go into the schools that they have because they have a lot of turnover, because people are not prepared for what they think. They like "oh I want to help these black kids" and then they learn like woah this is a lot of work."

Non-Traditional Teaching Programs

"I went through an alternative certification program, I feel like their goal is just getting us like the basic things just so we can get through in a year. So, I don't know if you heard of Non-traditional Teaching Programs (NTTP) but I went through NTTP alternative certification program to get my degree in education. It's only a year, well maybe a little less."

And then that was it? Interviewer

"And that was it. So, at the same time we were going to school for a year, we were also in the classroom at the same time. So, all of the summer we went to school and then on Fridays, we went to class. Monday to Thursday, we were in the actual schools. So, like a year-long internship but also going to school at the same time. That's how they do it."

So, you didn't get any specialized reading or anything?

"No. Some people do the program who already went to school to be a teacher so they can get their masters through there. So, they get a different type of master's than we did who didn't go to school to be a teacher. So, a lot of them were able to get specialized things like special-ed or reading endorsement. So, I can't teach middle school because I don't technically have a reading endorsement." – **Ms. M.**

"So, I am in a unique teacher training program. I'm in NTTP. So, I'm currently enrolled in graduate school and I have my emergency educator license to teach. At this school and my curriculum. So, I graduated with a Bachelors of Arts and Art History. So, I do not have an undergraduate degree in education. Currently I'm in an intensive course focused on elementary education."

And in those courses, do they focus or concentrate on literacy at all? – Interviewer

Yes, so it goes because elementary education is focused on general education. It goes back and forth between math modules and literacy modules. So, this summer especially, we were very focused on it because NTTP, all teachers go to work in low-income and diverse school populations. So, in Chicago, we're in the south side and west side. And I think select schools on the north side. I think it has been ninety five percent low income or both schools and because of that, like the first couple of weeks of the fall graduate course, we are reading culturally responsive teaching the brain. So yeah, that was like our focus text and we're applying that with our curriculum learning as well." – **Ms. Y.**

Second Career

"I was a career changer. In undergrad I was a management major and I was a stockbroker for 14 years. Then I became a teacher, and I went back to Teachers College in Toronto, Ontario where they taught me the basics to teach K through nine." – **Mr. L.**

"So, I did undergrad in economics, and I was in the financial industry for 21 years until I got laid off during a recession. I went back to grad school. I am thinking about my math classes, but thinking about reading and teaching reading. I don't think I was really taught how to teach reading. We talked about, you know, phonemic awareness and we kind of

went over the definitions of what reading is and how kids learn. But I don't think I was given the tools kinda to teach that." – **Mr. G.**

The quality of preservice coursework and learning experiences is directly related to reductions in teacher attrition after the first year of teaching. Attrition has produced a shortage of teachers nationwide, but particularly in Chicago where this study was conducted and where the researcher lives. Research shows that schools with higher populations of poor students and students of color tend to have a harder time hiring and holding on to teachers, and often have higher concentrations of inexperienced teachers compared with majority-white schools (Emmanuel, 2019).

The Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute authored a 2009 study entitled, *The Schools Teachers Leave - Teacher Mobility in Chicago Public Schools.* On average, teacher stability rates in Chicago are not substantially different than the rates seen nationally; about 80 percent of CPS teachers remain teaching in their school from one year to the next. This is only slightly lower than the national average of 84 percent. However, these one-year stability rates hide a sobering statistic—within five years, the typical CPS school loses over half of its teachers. Many schools turn over half of their teaching staff every three years. A focus on one-year stability rates obscures the enormous challenge that exists for many schools as they implement school improvement initiatives and professional development programs, and as they try to sustain program continuity (Allensworth, et al., 2009).

More recent data suggests that retention is better for individuals who complete a master's degree and worse for individuals who complete an alternative certification program (Huitt, 2007). Based on a University of Chicago study, age, and experience, were greater factors in predicting teacher mobility, while background, race/ethnicity and gender are weakly associated with mobility. The study suggested that a teacher's age is directly related to stability rates. It was highest among teachers in their late thirties to early fifties, and then declined among those who were 55 years and older. In both elementary and high schools, teachers under 30 and those 55 or older had stability rates of 70 to 75 percent.

Male Role Model

In *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys* (1982) Kunjufu states that "positive role models can do much to change this disparaging situation of African American students who find themselves ill-prepared to survive a racist educational system" (p. v).   He suggests that

"more African American male teachers be assigned to the primary grades because it is during the formative years that children shape these values and begin to identify with role models. But the public school ignores this fact and does little to encourage males to teach in primary grades" (p. v).

Below is the response of Ms. Y. who is a White female fourth-grade teacher with seven months of experience. She succinctly states why she thinks that African American role models would be an asset to African American boys. When asked what she felt could be done to improve literacy among African American boys? She said:

> "Well, one thing I mean, I'm happy to be here and I think I'm doing the best I can. But I think also black boys need so many more role models and teachers that look like them and so even though I feel like I'm doing good for them, I know they would – it would do them a lot of good to have more black teachers or teachers from their community in front of them. I think a male would be really important because it's also it's been interesting to learn how different kids react differently and it's true for kids of all races to females vs. men. And yes, some kids just will not interact with me in the same way that they would with a male teacher. When they are surrounded by so many women, I think some of them aren't engaging in class and engaging with me in the same way. So, I'm curious, like if they did have literacy instruction from another source, if it would improve it. – **Ms. Y.**

Mrs. S, a White female fourth-grade teacher with 30 years of teaching experience answered the same question as follows:

> "The biggest culture change I had when I went over was that they don't have the same last name as their mom. You see a lot more angry boys. You know, as far as they don't have that male role model. You know, the moms are having a lot of trouble with them at this age, you know versus when they're younger.
> **So why do you think that they're angry? Why do you think you see it in this grade? – Interviewer**
> "I see it more in this grade, you know, they're more mature. You know, my first graders I didn't see a lot of anger in them at such a young age. I still think this is such a young age to have all that anger. You know, or talking back, you know I see more of that. But I'm not saying that's because they don't have a dad at home. But they have no role model. No male role mode. Their parents are doing wonderful jobs, you know, the single parents. I do see a difference though with those boys that do have that male role model."

What's the difference in them? – Interviewer
"The biggest thing that I see is that they don't fly off the handle like at a drop of a pin. You know they're not as wound tight or on the defensive, I guess. I have a partner next door, he's a male and he comes in, they don't say anything to him."
Is he African American? – Interviewer
Yeah. Maybe that's it. I don't know.

In Chapter Two, according to *The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers*, (2017) a study co-authored Nicholas Papageorge a John Hopkins University economist, the research indicates that:

"Black students matched to black teachers have been shown to have higher test scores, but we wanted to know if these student-teacher racial matches had longer-lasting benefits. We found the answer is a resounding yes. We are seeing spending just one year with a teacher of the same race can move the dial on one of the most frustratingly persistent gaps in educational attainment — that of low-income black boys. It not only moves the dial, it moves the dial in a powerful way" (jhu.edu, 2018, p. 2).

The findings of other researchers and educators regarding male role models in general and the importance of positive male role models for African American boys in particular, including, Kunjufu, in *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys* (1982), Yeakey & Henderson, (2003) Tatum, (2006) and Papageorge, (2017) are confirmed by the teachers' lived experience responses in this study. Additionally, their responses also support the belief shared by the same educators and researchers that these youth could benefit from having a same race teacher. This theory is based on observation of the behavioral differences observed when African American students are in front of African American teachers. This "race match effect" is sometimes called "the role model effect," a term that defines why the researchers think a period with an African American teacher can be so lastingly beneficial for African American students (Papageorge, 2017).

Teacher Mentor

Unlike the careers of physicians, attorneys, police officers, electrician, engineers and carpenters, who receive direct mentoring following the completion of the educational portion of their training, too often, teachers matriculate from the college classroom to a classroom of their own without the proper support or guidance from a qualified veteran. It would seem reasonable to assume that those who are directly responsible for teaching the youth of this great nation and city would be afforded a mentor upon entering the classroom. Unfortunately, extreme expectations are placed upon these new teachers. When they reach the classroom, they are expected to render sound instruction. Below are the participants' responses to their exposure or lack of exposure to mentoring.

> As a teacher period I definitely was. You know, new teachers they say it takes about five years to really connect with that.
> **Did you feel that? That it took you about five years to feel like you were in a good space. - Interviewer**
> "It did or even longer because, you know, being older for me I never had a mentor. So, I think the younger teachers, if they had the people, they would assign a mentor. So, I was really winging it, but I think because I'm older and being a parent. I'm assuming and I didn't know any better to say I need someone to help me." – **Mrs. H.**

> "I walked into a school. They used the particular literacy curriculum that I had no prior experience with. And I got one training at the beginning, of the year before the kids came in. And it was like, ok, lesson plan, you know, for, you know, produce. Produce a lesson plan. Teach the kids. Literacy was the one I dreaded literacy. And my very first year, I taught first grade. And so it's even more important at that age that I'm teaching proper instruction because they're learning how to read. So, I felt really embarrassed, really stressed out that year. I remember feeling really like helpless, like not really knowing who I could turn to, not really knowing where to go. Luckily, my AP eventually we figured out some type of synergy to give me more support in that area, but in particular. It was it was difficult." **Ms. C**

> "Your first five years, it's like trial and error where you get better as the years go on because of that. Yeah, like I always got to build on my years because I was in it for so long. Next year, I think I would be so much more effective because I'm not like, my nose isn't in that teacher's manual all the time because I don't know

what I'm doing. And that's kind of like your first couple years teaching, you're like glued to those manuals. So, I hope I can stay next year because I think I'll be a lot better after going through it for one year." – **Ms. S.**

"I think ultimately the pitfall of the program is that I'm getting my learning while I'm teaching. So, yes, as I have a module this spring, I'll probably learn a lot of lessons that would have been useful for me to have known at the start of the year. But the positive of the program in theory is that I'm here teaching at school, that maybe other teachers don't want to be at. So that is the nature of the program. But yeah, I think what's nice about it is that I'm kind of in this constant professional development in a sense, whereas other teachers might get ingrained in their methods and might not think to change and update. I'm constantly pushed to. And so every day when I have class on or every week of class Monday or Thursday each week, I have a new lesson I'm learning that I can implement." **Ms. Y.**

"So even when I came here, you know, it was like dang I didn't even know that. But I would talk to the principal and I talked to everybody. What do I need to do? Tell me. She gave me a coach and, you know, this is helping me. So, I'm not like one of them "oh, I've been teaching for ten years and I know what I'm talking about and I'm going to do it the way that I know it." – **Ms. M.**

"I can tell you my first day teaching was well, when you have all the stimuli being thrown at you at one time, I wasn't prepared for that. You make lots of mistakes, but that's what experience is. The more experience you have you just learn not to do certain things. I don't get a lot of help. I don't get help because I've been told I don't need it. But it's ironic. It's an oxymoron. It's anything you want to call it." – **Mr. L.**

"Oh, yeah and I think she was around the same age as me because she knew what I was going through. She was like oh man you go to school and your work? Man I did the same thing. So she was trying to tell me, you know this is not gonna be easy. But she was like, this is what you have to do. This how your lesson plans had to be laid out. Organize your stuff, you know, do math in the morning. No, she said, you do reading in the morning because, you know, reading is probably the most strenuous thing you don't want to do reading when they get tired because they don't want to do it. So, she said, you do reading in the morning, and math, is more, you can put more motion in math and have them move around in math. – **Mr. F.**

My principal was African-American so I went to her and she was like, "you just gotta teach them. You got to reach them and teach them, you know? That was it. That was the only guidance. I'm just like, well, that doesn't help me a hell of a lot. But I learned from other teachers on staff of how to handle the discipline. Classroom management was a big, big part of maintaining their attention. But eventually I learned to assimilate into the community. I learned from a woman called Harriet Ball, fabulous mentor. She was this older Black lady. She was fabulous teacher. She knew how to do cultural relevance

like she says, God gave her this gift and then she said to me, "there's a little black girl inside just fighting to get out."– **Mr. J.**

Description of the Sample

See Table 4.5 on page 158, which is a chart of the 10 fourth-grade Chicago Public School teachers who were participants in this study. The study examined each teacher's lived experience in literacy instruction during their undergraduate teacher preparedness courses. In particular, the researcher sought to gain the teachers' perspectives on providing literacy instruction to fourth-grade African American boys.

Data Analysis Procedures

In qualitative studies, data analysis does not take place at the end of the study, but is an ongoing process (Mertens, 2005). Qualitative data analysis has been described as a puzzling process in which the findings slowly develop from the data through some type of magical correlation between the research and the source of data (Mertens, 2005). The researcher applied the Miles and Hubermann (1994) model of qualitative analysis.

In their book entitled *Qualitative Data Analysis*, they define analysis as, "consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification" (p.10). In this study, data reduction involved extracting relevant portions coding and identifying themes from each teacher's interview transcription. The researcher used the online transcription service Trint to transcribe the audio recordings from a Sony digital voice recorder into Microsoft Word documents. All interviews were conducted individually and were performed over a four-week period.

In the analysis of all data, grounded theory was used as the framework to develop an understanding of the experiences of the teachers. The use of this theory requires that the

researcher perform multiple readings of the data to discover concepts and relationships that exist within the context of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). To begin the process of generating theory from data, the researcher used open coding to identify the emerging patterns categories and themes.

The researcher chose open coding which served as the first level of analysis. After each interview, every word and sentence of the transcript from the recorded interviews was read and reread by the researcher to determine the overriding meaning of the data. The researcher also used field notes that were taken during the interviews. After the initial codes were defined, the research used more specific coding referred to as axial coding. Axial coding helped the researcher to condense the categories which have similar responses for a particular question (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In order to categorize the data, the researcher utilized Patterning Coding – for frequency, in order to evaluate the frequency and saliency of particular words or phrases in a body of original text data in order to identify keywords or repeated ideas (Dey, 1993). Additionally, In Vivo Coding was used because it (1) places emphasis on the actual spoken words of the participants; (2) highlights the voices of participants; and (3) relies on the participants themselves for giving meaning to the data (Manning, 2017). After carefully reading and coding the interview transcripts the researcher was able to tease out four major themes and three emerging themes.

The researcher identified major themes and emerging themes related to the research questions of: How do teachers learn how to teach reading effectively during their undergraduate careers? and do teachers feel comfortable with their ability to teach children how to read when they encounter non-readers or students who have difficulties? These informed the main research

question of Why do African American boys in the fourth grade score the lowest of all youth who take standardized test with a 14 percent literacy rate (NAEP, 2015)? The data was constructed and placed in charts in order to reveal the direct quotes from teachers during the individual interviews.

Results

Below are the research questions that guided this phenomenological qualitative study. The responses of the teacher participants illuminated the experiences they shared about undergraduate literacy instruction adds credence to existing research.

Additionally, their responses helped to qualify that the phenomenon of low literacy scores of fourth-grade African American boys have a direct correlation because teachers believe that their lack of exposure to real life literacy instruction during their collegiate studies has had a negative impact on the development and literacy scores of the African American boys they teach.

RQ1: Why do African American boys in the fourth grade score the lowest of all youth who take standardized tests with a 14 percent literacy rate (NAEP, 2015)?

RQ2: How do teachers learn how to teach reading effectively during their undergraduate careers?

RQ3: Do teachers feel comfortable with their ability to teach children how to read when they encounter non-readers or students who have difficulties?

The data is based on direct quotes from the 10 participants. The highlighted portion of the responses have been compiled and summarized to answer each research question. The data suggests that African American boys' homes, their environment, maturity levels and parental involvement all play a significant role in their education. Parents don't respond to calls and the teacher said, "I couldn't get any buy in to education." It was also suggested that the "entire

educational system needs to be fixed." Meaning, "figuring out why there are these gaps is the most important part. Why these kids are not given the same opportunities as other kids and how they have had multiple teachers walk out on them and they haven't had consistent literacy instruction." African American boys leave the fourth grade on a second grade reading level and their vocabulary is so limited and weak. The best way to get them to read is vocabulary, the more words they know, when they come across it they understand it. Focus on vocabulary and see the test scores go up. Data also suggested that standardized testing is culturally bias and racially bias. Fourth-grade boys shut down and display anger issues, however data supports that when they come from a two-parent home where an African American male is present the boys don't seem to fly off the handle as much. Teachers are competing against technology. They (African American boys) don't read and culturally it's a thing not even like, you know, educationally. African American boys are kind of cuddled by their mothers, so I think it starts in the culture first. Girls mature faster while African American boys need additional support, I don't know if it's speaking, reading, and writing is culturally biased or if we haven't accepted vernacular as a norm or if test are written in a biased fashion. Or if reading is enjoyable to them or if it's been emasculated. They (African American boys) are so aware of what they don't know and that has a lot to do with their self-esteem and self-pride. The media only show negative images of them.

Summary of RQ - #2
How do teachers learn how to teach reading effectively during their undergraduate careers?

"The way our courses were organized is that we had both written assessments and video assessments we submitted teaching videos to show that we were enacting with what we were learning in class. We also did read alouds, intensive learning on read alouds and best practices. We also had a small group guided reading lesson that included teaching vocabulary and learning all the different skills for teaching literacy. – **Ms. Y.**

"Major sore part of my education is that I remember complaining to the department about our literacy team. I felt like there was a huge emphasis on like practical in the classroom usage, on culturally relevant teaching, on increasing student engagement and involvement. However, my literacy courses were very textbook driven. I didn't feel like a lot of the information was practical to me as a teacher. A lot of theory around reading, but not a lot of like how do I teach a kid phonics? But there was not a lot of technical training on teaching, of literacy, of reading. And that was a huge issue for me because like kids have to learn how to read. I'm going to be expected to teach kids how to read. I don't how, I'm graduating and I don't know how to do that. So, yeah, I think it was an area of growth. I expressed that several times throughout my time there. I took two courses, both on primary literacy, which is grades K through three and then upper grades three to six in both classes were very much driven by like the textbooks and up and not a lot of practical information." – **Ms. C.**

"I don't think I was really taught how to teach reading. We talked about, you know, phonemic awareness and we kind of went over the definitions of what reading is and how kids learn. But I don't think I was given the tools kinda to teach that." – **Mr. G.**

"First day he was like look you're not going to teach this in school. So basically I'm just going to fly through this everybody's going to get a passing grade, that's basically what he came and told us. Because he was like they don't teach English in schools no more. Like you know how we did back in school, we had the noun, the verb. They don't teach that anymore. You get it through reading. So it's all-encompassing reading. So you know how we were in school, we had a reading book and English book, English book taught you how to construct a sentence, noun, pronoun, diagram sentence. All that's included in the reading book now. So when I went to my reading class, that's when I understood why he said that because we don't teach English no more. It's all encompassing reading so when you read, when the kids read, they pick up all those, supposedly, they pick up all those skills." – **Mr. F.**

"I went through an alternative certification program, I felt like their goal was just getting us like the basic things just so we can get through in a year. So I can't teach middle school because I don't technically have a reading endorsement." – **Ms. M.**

"They taught me the basics to teach K through nine. I had one professor who was very candid and said, you know, there wasn't any science to teaching that." – **Mr. L.**

"It did not, to me, effectively teach reading. I was older when I went to school, I went back to school and I was like 35. So I hadn't been in school in years. So. Just. I don't know. I was so sad. I had to bring what I knew, but there was a lot that I had to catch up on. So I was kind of, they didn't provide, well they may have provided for somebody who just came out of college. You know that was kind of making that connection to remember what you learned in the past. But for me, again, I just remember I was in there on a mission. I was going to, you know, make it through. So they may have provided the classes but to me I didn't come out as a strong reading teacher." – **Mrs. H.**

"Yeah it prepared you to work with Illinois state standards, but now that the standards have changed to the Common Core standards it's totally different. So the skills and strategies have changed even with the standardized testing have changed. So it prepared us to just give the children like a book and we teach them the skills in order to be better prepared to become a life long learner." – **Mrs. J.**

I learned most of my stuff the first five years and of course, like the student teaching. I learned a lot more than I would have to say in my classes as far as the philosophies of teaching. That theory may work for you, but every year it changes with the kids you have. You change you. You know, as the years have gone on, you got to adapt and change with these kids. This is definitely a video age, you know. You have to make everything so animated and keep their attention. You can't really learn that in a classroom. – **Ms. S.**

Summary of RQ - #3

Do teachers feel comfortable with their ability to teach children how to read when they encounter non-readers or students who have difficulties?

"At the beginning I was really stressed about it because it was heavily focused on like culturally responsive teaching and classroom culture and relationships. And I knew in theory that those were all important. But in my mind, I'm so type-A and a planner as like I need to know exactly how to teach like this reading skill and like how to plan for this. But I'm reflecting I think I wouldn't to be able to teach what I've taught if I hadn't had a solid understanding of how to approach the classroom." – **Ms. Y.**

"The narrative for boys is its boring, whereas math B again, B, just because of the ways design is structured, you kind of get. Chances to start over, so to speak. So, like, let's say you're not really good at multiplication. Great. We better hit a geometry unit. You're already doing shapes. There's no in for reading? It's the same strategies. Just about if you cannot read its going to feel equally as challenging no matter what the topic that we're discussing. Unless I make the text more appropriate, so I do like that I've seen Online a lot more curriculums that are differentiating their text to give. So, there's like an on grade, level text and a above grade level and there is for kids who are below. But its getting kids comfortable with that. You try to make them look as similar as you can, but sometimes so ultimately different text and that's ok. But getting them to feel OK and wherever they end up in their space. So which is why I think small group is like a huge going to be a huge leverage for African-American males. Teaching, from a small group perspective or another word their using that is personalized learning." – **Ms. C.**

"I would say it was a mixed bag. Boys were just immature. I would say twenty five percent were really serious about learning. They were not serious about class and they were playing. I think it was because it Because parents, they don't want a new teacher. A fresh teacher. But, yeah, the boys were not that serious about learning." – **Mr. G**.

"They have phonics stopping at like second, second, maybe third grade. But after that, you still need to know the parts of a sentence and how can I created a paragraph if I don't even know how to create a sentence at all? I don't know how to make my sentences a complete thought because I

don't know about the predicate and all of that. Like all that stuff I remember, they don't get taught that. Like we really are not preparing them for high school or for college. I try to do as much as I can but I still have all this other stuff that I have to teach. At my old school I had a lunch room reading group for boys. I have books about boys and African-American boys and things that they went through and we would read those books during lunchtime." – **Ms. M.**

"Through modeling. I've learned so much in 24 years. I didn't know what "finna" was when I first moved to Chicago. I had no idea. I just, I had no idea about the migration from the south to Chicago. Because they don't say "finna" in New York or New Jersey, but it was fascinating to me. So I opened up a book of language and I started reading about vernacular and it taught me a lot."- **Mr. L.**

"Well they really have come to a point where they need small groups. It depends on their score from the NWEA. You group them together based on their score. Then you'll call them over and then you'll have some type of teaching material that addresses their skill base. What they need and sometimes we have these books like this and you listen to them. Everybody has to read and they kind of see where they're deficient and things like that. So try to address that." – **Mrs. H.**

"So, it's almost like you've been teaching this long always have to go back for professional development. And when I had taken Dr. Tatum's class, it gave me an opening lens to working with the African American boys because they are academically challenged." – **Mrs. J.**

"Well, I think I'm a lot smarter about how to approach it and how to give them wait time, how to find things that are interesting for them that they will stay interested in. I've taken a lot of classes on the struggling reader. There's always a lot of stuff for struggling readers, not so much for gifted, but I did take a whole gifted course a few years ago, and I did teach the gifted class for a while. So I've tried a whole range but I think just experience makes me better." – **Ms. S.**

Summary

In summary, Chapter Four presents the findings of this qualitative phenomenological study of Why African American boys have the lowest literacy scores on standardized tests than any other demographic. First, the researcher outlined the participants and their relevance to the study. Included in the outline was a detailed description of each using a pseudonym for their name only, race, gender, age, and years of service as a teacher.

The 10 fourth-grade Chicago Public school teachers shared their perceptions and experiences. Both participants and researcher hope that by shedding light on teachers lived

experiences it will open new doors in educational research that will add to the gaps in scholarly

literature. The hope of the researcher is that it will provide student teachers access to meaningful

literacy instruction during their undergraduate studies thereby closing the gap of illiteracy among

fourth-grade African American boys. The researcher summarized the varying experiences of

each participant to give attention to the multifaceted teaching perceptions. Finally, the

researcher paired the study's findings with the central research questions so that connections

could be made in hopes of filling the relevant gaps in the scholarship. The themes which grew

out of the participant stories are listed below, however there is a detailed illustration in Table 4.2.

page 156.

Major Themes
- Connect
- Curricula
- Teacher Perceptions/Literacy and Professional Development
- Cultural Competency

Emerging Themes:
- Attrition/Non-Traditional Teaching Programs/Second Career
- Male Role Models
- Teacher Mentors

Chapter 5: Summary and Recommendations

The researcher brought closure to this phenomenological study that examined the possible relationship between the low reading proficiency of fourth-grade African American boys (NEA, 2016), the quality of literacy curricula in colleges and universities of education, and the lack of focus on teaching reading as a science to elementary teachers whose responsibility it is to teach children how to read (NAEP, 2016; Moats, 2000).

The researcher discussed the implications, the results, and the limitations of the study and the recommendations for future research on why African American boys in the fourth grade are among the lowest scoring groups in reading of all students who take standardized tests (NCES, 2010) and why teachers are not adequately prepared during their undergraduate career to effectively teach literacy (Levine, 2006).

Introduction and Summary of Study

The primary goal of this phenomenological study was to perform a thorough examination of the perception of fourth-grade teachers in the Chicago Public School System as it relates to their lived experiences in (1) undergraduate student literacy preparedness courses, and (2) teaching literacy to fourth-grade African American boys. The purpose of examining the literacy curricula and teacher preparedness courses was to see if there was a possible link between African American boys' poor literacy scores and teachers' literacy preparedness coursework. The researcher was interested in exploring the lived experiences of fourth-grade Chicago Public School teachers who had direct contact with fourth-grade African American boys and had responsibility for teaching them literacy.

The interest in this topic emerged as a result of a group project that focused on literacy the scores of fourth-grade African American boys. The researcher's prior experiences as a Board

of Education administrator in both grammar schools and high schools enhanced her understanding of the lived experiences of African American boys, how teachers respond to them and how this interaction is sometimes harmful. However, after the researcher reviewed relevant literature on the topic of African American boys' literacy scores and noted the subsequent gaps in the literature surrounding literacy curricula of colleges and universities of education, the researcher needed to answer the *'so what'* of this phenomenon. To answer the 'so what' the researcher sought to begin a conversation around the literacy curricula of colleges and universities of education because there is insufficient research and scholarly literature surrounding the topic.

The study explored the lived experiences of 10 Chicago Board of Education fourth-grade teachers who shared in a thoughtful, personal and transparent way. After nine in-person interviews and one zoom interview, the researcher discovered four major themes (*connect, curricula, teacher perceptions/literacy and professional development, cultural competency*), which paved the way for more detailed, and richer descriptions of these participants lived experiences. Below are the research questions that drove the study:

Research Questions

RQ1: Why do African American boys in the fourth grade score the lowest of all youth who take standardized tests with a 14 percent literacy rate (NAEP, 2015)?

RQ2: How do teachers learn how to teach reading effectively during their undergraduate careers?

RQ3: Do teachers feel comfortable with their ability to teach children how to read when they encounter non-readers or students who have difficulties?

Connection to the Literature

There is a tremendous amount of scholarly literature that speaks to the phenomenon of illiteracy among fourth-grade African American boys and how these youth standardized test scores tank once they reach the fourth grade. Yet very little research has been done on the literacy curricula of colleges and universities of education. These learning institutions have the charge of developing the young minds of students who enter their teaching programs with the expectation of gaining all the educational knowledge that they need to be proficient in their careers as educators; but all too often they exit various schools of education without the ability to teach literacy.

Historically, African Americans have had severe limitations placed upon them when it comes to learning to read. Despite these limitations many of the children who came from enslaved great-grandparents and parents still learned how to read and later became educators, lawyers, and doctors. The teacher participants who shared their lived experiences of their undergraduate literacy coursework and their engagement with teaching fourth-grade African American boys speak to their belief that phonics is a key to children learning how to read and comprehend effectively. The participants also shared their perception that they did not receive the necessary skills during their undergraduate studies and found it difficult to teach literacy once they reached the classroom.

Connection to Theme One. *Connect* – the theme that many of the teacher participants agreed upon as being extremely important to get African American boys to read especially those who are low performers. What the teachers shared indicated that for African American boys to be successful in the classroom teachers must connect with them--connect with them by pushing

them, giving them positive attention, motivating them, showing that they care about each as a unique person, and preparing a lesson that includes their interests.

> "As a first-year teacher, I think it's great for me in the way as it has given me a lot of opportunity to build relationships because students often come in with so many more personal connections and like that is a skill that I try to teach connections to the text and connections between texts. So, when that is utilized in our reading, it gives a lot more opportunities to engage. I think one of the biggest things I've learned is that the students that I have maybe immediately thought to be reluctant readers, it's often just because they have yet to engage with what they're reading. And so even though there are certain texts that we have to read or certain content that we need to cover, I found ways to at least get them reading and try to loop them back in with things that they're interested in and trying to find ways to connect them, connect their lives to what we are learning about." – **Ms. Y.**

The teacher-participants' responses coincide with fellow educators/researchers such as Tatum, (2006) Kunjufu, (1983), Milner (2011), and Ladson-Billings, (2009). Milner said it best: "At its root, building relationships with students is about meeting students where they are, attempting to understand them, and developing connections with them" (p.1). In the words of Tatum, "connect with students and their outside communities and families, connect the difficulties in the school system facing African American boys to the fact that the school system itself was meant to tend to the concerns of the white middle class" (p.48).

Connection to Theme Two. *Curricula* – Many of teacher participants reflected on the effects that an ever-changing curriculum placed on their ability to adequately teach literacy, which caused them to have a negative lived experience surrounding the delivery of literacy instruction to their students. Common core, whole language, blended learning, direct instruction, and personalized instruction are the curricula that was discussed. Of the mentioned curricula all 10 of the teachers felt that direct instruction provided a more comprehensive delivery of the important aspects of teaching literacy.

Teachers reported that students are tested and based on their test results the teacher then can ascertain which skills they have mastered and which ones they need to work on. Then students are grouped together with other students who are deficient in the same skills. These groups are organized by the level of the program that is appropriate for the student, rather than the grade level the students are in. The program's structure is designed to ensure mastery of the content. Instruction is modified to accommodate each student's rate of learning.

The teacher participants shared that when they used direct instruction they noticed that the children were on board, there was no fighting, no teasing, no laughing at each other when someone did not know a word because everyone was on the same level.   All the teachers seemed to agree that small groups provided the greatest results and children were actually learning. Additionally, the participants reported that through collaboration with the teacher and the students in their groups it helped to build the children's confidence.

National reading achievement data continues to indicate that as a group, African American boys are not performing well (Tatum, 2006). Educators need to enhance African American boys' resilience, particularly those struggling readers attending public schools in low-income areas by identifying texts that can shape positive life outcome trajectories for them. It is important for the curricula to be exciting for both the student and the teacher, to serve as a roadmap and provide apprenticeship, to challenge students cognitively and to help boys in particular apply literacy skills and strategies. According to Mrs. J.,

> "It was still fun because we were doing direct instruction and that's when we were teaching children how to read with corrective reading and direct instruction. They took it away because a lot of, I feel personally, a lot of the children were learning how to read, but how to self-correct themselves to read and it's like wait a minute now, because it originated in Eugene, Oregon with the direct instruction reading program and it was good. It was corrective reading. Students couldn't read, you teach them how to read. How to blend words and sound. I'm talking about older boys 6, 7, 8th grade. You teach them because when they get that old you have to still be respective to their age--around their

peers. You pull them in a small group and its just like "ok, let's get ready to read these words a fast way" and the boys are so into it as it's a fast-paced program. I think the faster you teach to children then the more they retain."

Mrs. J.'s observations are supported by Tatum's *Engaging African American Males in Reading* (2006). By providing meaningful reading material and encouraging honest debate, teachers can help African American adolescent males embrace the power of text.

Connection to Theme Three. *Teacher Perceptions/Literacy and Professional Development* - Teachers were asked to simply give one adjective that represented their perception of literacy as a new teacher. Ninety percent of the participants rendered a negative response. Below is a list of the responses:

- Very difficult
- Scared
- Daunting
- Embarrassed
- Stressed Out
- Helpless
- Clueless
- Ill-prepared
- Exasperated
- Excruciating
- Fun

In Emily Hanford's (2018) Why Aren't Kids Being Taught to Read? there is a radio documentary on science-based-teaching. She suggests that children are not being taught to read in a manner consistent with what scientists have discovered about how children actually learn. She goes on to say, "It's a problem that has been hiding in plain sight for decades" (Hanford, 2018, p. 1). Mr. F shared that:

> "So, one of my professors was teaching English and the way he came in the first day he was like. Look, you're not going to teach this in school. So basically, I'm just going to fly through this and I'm just gonna teach you the basics and everybody's going to get a passing grade. That's basically what he came and told us because he was like. They don't teach English in schools any more." – **Mr. F.**

Unfortunately, for teachers who have only learned the basics of teaching reading without the science, mediocre classroom instruction is most often the outcome. Mediocrity has produced a group of young African American boys who are illiterate. Mediocrity has forced these youth into special education classes and they have been administered drugs for conditions they do not have, simply because they have failed to master the ability to read (Kunjufu, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2016; Noddings, 2016). Being the product of a mediocre education is often synonymous with being labeled 'at risk' which is like "being voted least likely to succeed. For where there is no faith in your future success, there is no real effort to prepare you for it" (Day, 2013, p. 10).

According to Ms. C's her lived experiences, her undergraduate studies made her question the delivery of literacy instruction at her university because the literacy curricula did not provide her with an adequate skill set that would have enabled her to teach literacy proficiently. She describes her experience this way:

> "So, my program was unique because I was going for both my Sp. Ed. License and my general education license at the same time. So, I was in a dual program. With that being said, they had a very much inclusive focus. So, we received the same training that a general education teacher would receive in isolation in terms of literacy. It was actually the major sore part of my education. I remember complaining to the department about our literacy team. I didn't feel like that in other areas or subjects such as math or social studies and science. I felt like there was a huge emphasis on like practical in the classroom usage, on culturally relevant teaching on increasing student engagement and involvement. However, my literacy courses were very textbook driven. I didn't feel like a lot of the information was practical to me as a teacher. A lot of theory around reading, but not a lot of like how do I teach a kid phonics? But there was not a lot of technical training on teaching of literacy of reading and that was a huge issue for me." I took two courses, both on primary literacy, which is grades K through three and then upper grades three to six in both classes were very much driven by like the textbooks and up and not a lot of practical information. I definitely do think that there was a huge, huge, area of opportunity for schools to really go deeper on literacy instruction for youth." – **Ms. C**

Based on Mr. F's and Ms. C's perceptions of their undergraduate literacy studies as well as their classroom instruction abilities, their responses supported that some teachers have not received the proper instruction or support at colleges/universities or adequate training from their present school administration, thus preventing them from providing the best literacy instruction possible.

Professional Development.   The significance of this study emphasizing teachers' perception of preparatory work surrounding literacy instruction in collegiate courses and once teachers reach the classroom is that teachers' confidence and ability contingent on their education, training, and professional development (Day, 1999).

The participants shared that they were offered very limited professional development in literacy.

> "So, it's almost like you've been teaching this long--always have to go back for professional development. And when I had taken Dr. Tatum's class, it gave me an opening lens to working with the African-American boys because they are academically challenged." **Mrs. J.**

Mrs. J has been a teacher for 29 years and she admits that within the last year she just took a professional development class with Dr. Alfred Tatum that enhanced her knowledge and understanding of how to educate African American boys in the fourth grade. Teachers who do have the benefit of professional development recognize its importance and how it keeps them current and prevents them from learning bad habits that they would later have to unlearn.

> "I think what's nice about it is that I'm kind of in this constant professional development in a sense, whereas other teachers might get ingrained in their methods and might not think to change and update. I'm constantly pushed to. And so every day when I have class on or every week of class Monday or Thursday each week, I have a new lesson I'm learning that I can implement." **Ms. Y.**

Connection to Theme Four. *Cultural Competency – Why Do Black Kids Sit Alone in the Cafeteria*? Tatum (2017) explains that, "one reason students from similar racial backgrounds

may gather together is that connecting with peers who are having a similar experience as your

own serves as a buffer, as a protective force. It is also a way of affirming your identity." So, it is

important that African American boys connect with their teachers. However, if their teachers do

not look like them and with 85 percent of CPS being White the chances are great that their

teacher may not look like them then the teacher must be culturally competent (Moore, et at.,

2017). Below participants share why being culturally competent is crucial if they are to be

effective teaching literacy to the African American boys in their classrooms.

> "Having gone to an all-White college, there was really no diversity at all. In fact, I didn't really become culturally aware until I started my work on my Master's and I had to read a lot of literature like *Why Do Blacks Kids Sit Alone in the Cafeteria*? I had to read that. I had to read one really cool book. I see the cover, but I can't remember its title. Cultural. Culturally, something teaching. But it changed my world. It really did. It made me aware of wow, this is so right. So, when I started working in Asbury Park, where the population was not diverse, but very African-American, I really had a lot to learn. And I learned about reading to culturally diverse people and how to use their culture. But I didn't realize how to use the culture until many years later, until I started work on my Master's. Then I read these culturally relevant books and I was like, wow that's why it didn't work. There was no connection at all." - **Mr. J.**

> "Providing my students with literature or things that they can relate to. So, seeing themselves in books, seeing themselves in an article or whatever they read, but also exposing them to other cultures. Because we're not the only culture so them knowing that there are different cultures out there because we may not always get that exposure." – **Ms. M.**

> "I want to say that you're aware of the children's cultures and you address that in your lessons. You got to do that basically on a weekly basis. You have to know where they're from, what they believe. I would say because they definitely are more interested in stories from African Americans. I let them pick, you know, most of the time. You know, for their free read, they get to pick their chapter books and they definitely go for those books." – **Ms. S.**

> "Understanding the culture you're teaching, to have their best interest. Yeah, like making sure that you help them see themselves in the lesson and using their social environment. What they have going on with them personally as an individual." – **Mr. F.**

Culturally relevant education (CRE) is a conceptual framework that encompasses all aspects of teaching and learning within the classroom as it recognizes the importance of incorporating students' cultural backgrounds, interests and lived experiences into their classroom experience (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2009; Milner, 2016). CRE is a comprehensive teaching approach that empowers all students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impact knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2009).

Colleges and universities of education would be wise to add culturally relevant education to their existing curricula. By doing so these institutions could eliminate the years of misconnections between student and teacher. Based on Mr. J's response, "I didn't realize how to use the culture until many years later, until I started work on my Master's. Then I read these culturally relevant books and I was like, wow that's why it didn't work. There was no connection at all." Mr. J's lived experience speaks to how significant awareness of ethnic cultures in the classroom is to enabling teachers to reach the diverse students' populations.

Theoretical Implications. Chapter Two included descriptions of critical race theory (CRT) and intersectionality. Henry Giroux's cultural pedagogy and Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy are both theories which speak to the institutional struggles surrounding education, politics, and oppression which connects to CRT and intersectionality. How the study fits this theory and concept will be discussed in the following section.

This study explored the utility of intersectionality as an aspect of critical race theory (CRT) in education.   Drawing on pre-existing research of fourth-grade African American boys failures in literacy. CRT contends that race and its meaning are socially constructed and function as a powerful aspect in social life (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Tate, 1997).

Intersectionality is a concept that enables us to recognize that perceived group membership can make people vulnerable to various forms of bias, yet because we are simultaneously members of many groups, our complex identities can shape the specific way we each experience that bias (Gillborn, 2015). Thus, it is crucial for teachers whose responsibility it is to instruct African American boys on how to read; have awareness of their own biases, the ethnic group that they are members of, and how their identity and behavior can aid and abet a negative literacy experience for African American boys. Scholars working within CRT place emphasis on the experiential knowledge of people of color and challenge common assumptions about "meritocracy" and "neutrality" as a camouflage for the interests of dominant groups (Tate, 1997, p. 235).

When applying CRT to the data we see that not much has changed for African American boys who find themselves grouped by multiple identities, and based on the data from this study, these identities are usually associated with negativity. When the researcher looked at RQ #1 Why do African American boys in the fourth grade score the lowest of all youth who take standardized test with a 14 percent literacy rate (NAEP, 2015)? the results from this study suggest that reading programs that are effective with African American boys of any age are replaced with ones that are not as affective. Eighty percent of the participants related that they believed that the removal of successful reading problems was done intentionally.

If we look back nearly sixty years ago in a piece entitled *My Dungeon Shook: A Letter to My Nephew on the Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation*, James Baldwin (1963) wrote: "You were not expected to aspire to excellence; you were expected to make peace with mediocrity" (p. 7). Baldwin's more than half-a-century old warning to his nephew about making

peace with mediocrity still rings true for African American boys trapped in America's sub-par educational system.

Mediocrity has produced a group of young African American boys who are illiterate. Mediocrity has forced these youth into special education classes and they have been administered drugs for conditions they do not have, simply because they have failed to master the ability to read (Kunjufu, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2016; Noddings, 2016). Politics and oppressive educational curricula are at the root of many of the literacy problems that African American boys encounter during their educational journey.

> "Institutional Racism consists of the collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their color, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behavior which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people" (Macpherson, 1999, p. 321).

Using critical race theory (CRT) as a framework is useful for examining race and how the meanings attached to race influence the educational context for students of color (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). In applying CRT, schools of education must make sure that their students studying to be educators are aware of the influences that they have on their students and how systemic racism and sexism is a part of the educational system. In adopting this approach, CRT scholars attempted to understand how victims of systemic racism are affected by cultural perceptions of race and how they are able to represent themselves to counter prejudice (Tate, 1997).

Over two hundred years ago Senator Blair tried to eradicate illiteracy in the south by introducing the *Blair Bill* where he allocated 70 million dollars to be distributed to the Southern

states which had the greatest amount of illiteracy in the nation. Even after many efforts to get the bill passed through Congress. Blair was never able to convince his party and others of the importance of helping to reduce literacy in the South. Critical race theorists would argue that the majority of racism remains hidden beneath a veneer of normality, and it is only the more crude and obvious forms of racism that are seen as problematic by most people. Politicians have control of the monies that would have helped all illiterate individuals in the south but in order to help Whites they would have had to help African Americans as well.

Neutrality by definition means, "the state of not supporting or helping either side in a conflict" (Merriam-Webster, 2021). However, when examining the effects of being illiterate and how illiteracy has adverse effects on a certain populations, schools of education should take a stand and give voice to those with no voice. Institutions of higher learning need to determine what actions they need to take to minimize the number of student teachers who leave their doors without the benefit of being taught the science of reading. Those in power can no longer refuse to make their voices heard because we have a nation of youth who are counting on them.

When a group of individuals is being underserved, mistreated, and locked out of a societal human necessity of being a literate citizen they will lack the benefit of having a good life. A life that allows them to be self-sufficient and productive citizens. Freedom from systemic and political ploys within the school system and society. Critical race theory is a lens through which intersections of power, framing and perceptions can be examined. Critical race theory views racism as a fundamental presence engrained in nearly every social and formal institution in the United States whether we chose to believe it or not (Bonilla-Silva, 2014).

African American boys are affected because they are often the recipient of a sub-par education because African American boys in urban areas are often only privy to teachers with a

limited skill set which prevents teachers from adequately being able to teach literacy. As reflected in the teacher participants lived experiences some teachers who are currently teaching are still in school themselves -- learning how to be a teacher. Others expressed that after many years of teaching they just realized that they were doing it wrong.

Adopting a CRT approach to literature or other modes of cultural expression includes much more than simply identifying race, racism, and racialized characters in fictional works. Rather, it broadly emphasizes the importance of examining and attempting to understand the socio-cultural forces that shape how we and others perceive, experience, and respond to racism. As mentioned in chapter two, scholars like Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado treat literature, and other cultural works as evidence of the American culture's collective values and beliefs. In doing so they trace racism as a dually theoretical and historical experience that affects all members of a community regardless of their racial affiliations or identifications (owl.purdue,, p. 1, 2021).

Most CRT scholarship attempts to demonstrate not only how racism continues to be a pervasive component throughout dominant society, but also why this persistent racism problematically denies individuals many of the constitutional freedoms they are otherwise promised in the United States' governing documents (owl.purdue., 2021, p.2). This enables scholars to locate how texts develop in and through the cultural contexts that produced them, further demonstrating how pervasive systemic racism truly is. CRT scholars typically focus on both the evidence and the origins of racism in American culture, seeking to eradicate it at its roots (owl.purdue., 2021, p.2).

When thinking about the constructs of Henry Giroux's cultural pedagogy and Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy both of their theories speak to the institutional struggles surrounding

education, politics, and oppression which connects to CRT and intersectionality. They

suggested that education cannot be divorced from politics; the act of teaching and learning are

considered political acts in and of themselves. Freire defined this connection as a main tenet of

critical pedagogy. Cultural pedagogy describes the struggle over culture, a struggle that is also

about the formation of society and its institutions, public values, and public discourse from

which individuals and groups draw their conceptual inventories. There are, in short, high social

stakes in the ways that teachers make meanings and work to form culture.

Practical Implication. In addition to the theoretical implications, this study has also

revealed some practical ones. Qualitative approaches have proven to be a rich foundation for

analyzing the results of this study and bring to the forefront how poor literacy preparedness

coursework at colleges and universities of education have a direct connection to how effective

literacy is taught in grammar schools.

Ninety percent of the teachers who were interviewed had a negative experience with

teaching literacy for the first time. Many shared how cultural pedagogy was not a part of their

undergraduate curricula and how it would have been helpful when they needed to connect with

their students but did not know how to accomplish that feat nor the knowledge of what being

culturally competent really meant or its benefits. It is important that colleges and universities of

education reexamine the curricula that they have in place for student teachers.

A simple tweak to introduce the science of reading, culturally responsive teaching, and

student teaching that begins at the on-set of their education would be a good place to start.

Student teaching that helps to shape instruction around what they are actually encountering in the

classroom. This will help them develop the skill set needed to be productive and instrumental in

teaching children how to read and African American boys in particular, who consistently lag behind.

Limitations of the Research. There were several limitations in this research study due in part to the small sample size. All the participants were fourth-grade teachers who work for the Chicago Board Public Schools. This study did not employ teachers from charter, parochial, or private elementary schools in Chicago. The researcher only interviewed fourth-grade teachers and only teachers who were White and Black. The researcher relied on teachers to be honest, forthright, and thorough in their responses and cannot prove that their responses were not valid. Time that the researcher had for data collection was dependent on the availability of the gatekeeper, who controlled access to the teacher-participants.

The gatekeeper, Dr. Alfred Tatum, Dean of Education at the University of Illinois, Chicago (UIC), was connected to the teachers and helped the researcher gain access to them. However, because the gatekeeper served as a liaison, the researcher encountered some difficulties contacting the participants. Consequently, when the researcher needed to resend recruitment letters to the teachers to encourage additional participation, the researcher contacted the gatekeeper via email and or left a message with his secretary. When these efforts failed, the researcher, had to reach out to former coworkers with whom she previously worked with at the Chicago Board of Education.

This method of gathering participants is referred to as *convenience sampling* and differs from the *purposeful sampling*, which was the original methodology planned for use in this study. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in a study (Lavrakas, 2008).

Suggestions

Suggestions for Teachers

- "Early identification of children at risk of reading failure.
- Daily training in linguistic and oral skills to build awareness of speech sounds, or phonemes.
- Explicit instruction in letter sounds, syllables, and words accompanied by explicit instruction in spelling
- Teaching phonics in the sequence that research has found leads to the least amount of confusion, rather than teaching it in a scattered fashion and only when children encounter difficulty.
- Practicing skills to the point of "automaticity" so that children do not have to think about sounding out a word when they need to focus on meaning.
- Concurrently with all the above, building comprehension skills and vocabulary knowledge through reading aloud, discussing and writing about quality children's literature and nonfiction topics.
- Frequent assessment and instructional adjustments to make sure children are making progress" (Walsh, et. al., 2006).

Suggestions for Colleges and Universities in Preparing Teachers

- Begin student teaching at the freshmen year – this would allow teachers to experience book instruction and real-life instruction simultaneously
- Incorporate the science of reading curricula, which includes six basic components of reading which are: phonemic awareness, phonics, writing, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. See Appendix A.
- Incorporate culturally competent teaching methods– learning within the context of culture, culturally-responsive curriculum, teachers as facilitators, student-centered instruction and positive perspectives on parents and families (NEA., 2016).

Suggestions for the Future

- The future implications of this study are that subsequent research into the literacy of African American boys should be conducted in tandem with research on student teaching literacy preparedness curricula. Not one without the other because directly or indirectly the two are related.

Regardless of social class, race, or income, roughly a third of all kindergartners require an

explicit, systemic approach to learn how to read. A skill as important as reading should not be

left up to a principal's discretion. Unfortunately, CPS allows principals to make these

curriculum decisions and based on the participants lived experiences this is exactly why almost every other grammar school in Chicago teaches reading differently. Consequently, if a teacher or a child transfer from one school to another then both the teacher and the student must figure out this new method of literacy instruction.

CPS must look at the science of how a child learns to read. Administrators need to examine the data that supports how children learn to read and then implement this type of instruction into their reading curriculum. As a result of this study the researcher has made the following suggestions for future research which would fill in the gaps of the limited scholarly literature surrounding the introduction of the science of reading in grammar schools.

Based on current research this type of reading curriculum should begin as early as kindergarten (Walsh, et. al., 2006). It is the researcher's recommendation that teachers who are in primary grades should be required to have a reading endorsement. Having such an endorsement would arm teachers with the necessary skills to teach children at the beginning of the educational journey the six basic components of reading including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Walsh, et. al., 2006).

The curricula in grammar schools should incorporate the six basic components of reading to help support principals. Teachers can no longer teach a "one size fits all" literacy curriculum (Tomlinson, 1999, p. viii). One of the most effective ways to make any kind of improvements in teaching literacy to African American boys is to require a multifaceted approach (2017). Additionally, it would assist in reducing attrition and stresses that are associated with teaching in urban settings where teachers often have limited skills.

It is crucial for primary teachers to have a skill set that enables them to identify those children who show diminished literacy skills. To do so, elementary classrooms must incorporate

certain researched-based practices, which the researcher has included in the recommendations section.

Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the possible relationship between African American boys' poor literacy scores and the lived experiences of undergraduate student teachers and the literacy curricula at their colleges and universities of education. Based on the results of this study it is important to note that teachers' experiences with literacy could be greatly improved. Part of this improvement should begin with schools of education and the incorporation of literacy curricula that includes the science of reading. This improvement could possibly move the literacy needle for African American boys so that nationwide these youth can obtain a literacy skill set that for far too long has been out of reach for many.

Classroom settings must change. Based on the results from this study these youth do not have the benefit of time—meaning if it takes 11 years for a teacher to become proficient in literacy imagine how many students have come across a teacher's threshold and left it either further beyond in reading than when they entered or on the same level. A classroom must contain a skilled educated literacy teacher. However many classrooms within CPS are void of an experienced teacher. The data pointed out that teachers want to be proficient and they realize it when they were not. Unfortunately, they did not know how or whom to ask for help without risking their employment.

During the four weeks of this study the teachers shared their lived experiences responding to the research question about how they felt teaching literacy for the first time and 90 percent of their responses were negative. Even with those negative experiences the participants did speak about how curricula are important for the teacher and the student. Direct instruction

was mentioned multiple times and data supports the fact that this kind of instruction helps African American boys learn how to read. Ideally, colleges and universities of education seek to send qualified and skilled teachers out into the educational realm. However, too often these new teachers, as the data showed, teach for at least five years before they actually become proficient.

Unfortunately, the results of this study indicated that even after five years of teaching some teachers are "winging it" without the benefit of a skilled veteran teacher as a mentor to help lead, support, and assist them in their professional development. Based on the results of this study, 90 percent of the teacher-participants concurred that they entered the classroom without the knowledge they needed to teach literacy effectively. The participants noted that they did not receive proper undergraduate instruction or formal mentoring from a veteran teacher once they reached the classroom. Seventy percent of the teacher-participants were left to their own devices to try and figure out how to take the literacy lesson from the pages in the book to the minds of their fourth- grade boys.

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TABLES

Table 4.1: Demographics of Participants Profile

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4 African American Female Chicago Public Schools Fourth Grade Teachers - Demographics

- Name: Ms. C.
- Institution: PWI – East Coast
- Age Group: 25-30
- Years of Service: 4 years

- Name: Ms. M.
- Institution: PWI & Midwest/Chicago based Non-profit Teaching Program
- Age Group: 30-35
- Years of Service   11 years

- Name: Mrs. H.
- Institution: PWI - Midwest
- Age group: 60-65
- Years of Service: 25 years

- Name: Mrs. J.
- Institution   PWI – Midwest
- Age Group: 45-50
- Years of Service: 29 years

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2 White Female Chicago Public Schools Fourth Grade Teachers - Demographics

- Name: Ms. Y
- Institution: Ivy League – East Coast & National Non-profit–Teaching Program
- Age Group: 40-45   Emer. Educator License
- Years of Service: 7 months

- Name: Ms. S.
- Institution: PWI – Midwest
- Age Group: 55-60
- Years of Service   30 years

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2 African American Male Chicago Public Schools Fourth Grade Teachers - Demographics

- Name: Mr. G.
- Institution: PWI – Midwest
- Age Group: 50-55

- Years of Service   5 years
- Name: Mr. F.
- Institution: HBCU/PWI - Midwest
- Age Group   40-45
- Years of Service   9 years

2 White Male Chicago Public Schools – Fourth Grade Teachers Demographics

- Name: Mr. L.
- Institution: PWI – Prairie Provinces, Canada
- Age Group: 55-60
- Years of Service   24 years

- Name: Mr. J.
- Institution: PWI – East Coast
- Age Group: 55-60
- Year of Service: 32 years

Table 4.2: Major Themes

Teacher Participants Yrs. Of Service	Race	Gender	Age Group	Connect	Curricula	Teacher Perceptions/Literacy and Professional Development		Cultural Competence
						MAJOR THEMES		
Ms. Y. – 7 months	W	F	40-45	6	3	14	12	5
Ms. C. – 4 Years	B	F	25-30	13	11	59	3	6
Mr. G. – 5 Years	B	M	50-55	1	1	10	3	4
Mr. F. – 9 Years	B	M	40-45	8	4	50	1	5
Mrs. M. - 11 Years	B	F	30-35	2	7	29	3	6
Mr. L. – 24 Years	W	M	50-55	3	4	11	4	4
Mrs. H. 25 Years	B	F	55-60	4	4	5	3	2
Mrs. J. 29 Years	B	F	50-55	4	7	14	4	6
Ms. S. 30 Years	W	F	50-55	2	2	16	3	3
Mr. J. 32 Years	W	M	50-55	4	8	14	4	5
TOTALS	4 W 6 B	6 F 4 M	25-55	47	51	222	40	46

Chart of frequency – *with exact wording or similar wording*
M = male F = female W = white B = black

Table 4.3: Emerging Themes

Teacher Participants Yrs. Of Service	Race	Gender	EMERGING THEMES			TOTALS
			Attrition/Non-Traditional teaching Prog. 2nd Career	Male Role Models	Teacher mentors	
Ms. Y. – 7 months	W	F	Attrition/Non Traditional Teaching Prog.	X	X	3
Ms. C. – 4 Years	B	F		X	X	2
Mr. G. – 5 Years	B	M		X	X	2
Mr. F. – 9 Years	B	M	2nd Career		X	2
Ms. M. – 11 Years	B	F	Attrition/Non Traditional Teaching Prog.	X	X	3
Mr. L. – 24 Years	W	M	2nd Career	X	X	3
Mrs. H. – 25 Years	B	F		X	X	2
Mrs. J. – 29 Years	B	F			X	1
Ms. S. – 30 Years	W	F		X	X	2
Mr. J. – 32 Years	W	M		X	X	2
TOTALS	4 W 6 B	6 F 4 M	2nd Career –20% Attrition – 20% Non Trad prog	8 = 80%	10=100%	22

M = male F = female W = white B = black / X indicates participants suggest a need

Table 4.4: Interview Question

Interview Question: Can you explain how you felt teaching literacy as a new teacher in one word?					

Participants	Yrs. Serv.	Race	Gender	Negative Response	Positive Response
Ms. Y.	7 months	White	Female	Very Frustrated	
Ms. C.	4 years	Black	Female	Embarrassed	
Mr. G.	5 years	Black	Male	Exasperated	
Mr. F.	9 years	Black	Male	Difficult	
Ms. M.	11 years	Black	Female	Daunting	
Mr. L.	24 years	White	Male	Excruciating	
Mrs. H.	25 years	Black	Female	Ill-prepared	
Mrs. J.	29 years	Black	Female		Fun
Ms. S.	30 years	White	Female	Scared	
Mr. J.	32 years	White	Male	Helpless	

Table 4.5: Description of the Sample

NAME	RACE	GENDER	Degree Program	YRS. SER.
Ms. Y.	White	Female	Emergency Teaching Certificate	7 months
Ms. C.	Black	Female	Teaching Degree PWI	4 years
Mr. G.	Black	Male	Teaching Degree PWI Second Career	5 years
Mr. F.	Black	Male	Teaching Degree PWI	9 years
Ms. M.	Black	Female	Certificate Teaching Program – Masters w/restrictions	11 years
Mr. L.	White	Male	Teaching Degree PWI Second Career	24 years
Mrs. H.	Black	Female	Teaching Degree PWI – Second Degree	25 years
Mrs. J.	Black	Female	Teaching Degree	29 years
Ms. S.	White	Female	Teaching Degree	30 years
Mr. J.	White	Male	Teaching Degree PWI	32 years

Table 4.6: RESEARCH QUESTIONS - #1

Teacher Participants Yrs. Of Service	Race	Gender	Why do African American boys in the fourth grade score the lowest of all youth who take Standardized test with a 14% literacy rate
Ms. Y. – **7 months**	**W**	**F**	The way that each year their growth targets get bigger and bigger almost and their attainment, like with our students here, their growth has been pretty much phenomenal for most of them. But the attainment is not there. So, figuring out why there are these gaps I think is the most important part. ***But I don't know if it will be fixed until the whole system as a whole is fixed***. And so often kids are ***not given the same opportunities*** and thinking about my kids here. They had multiple teachers walk out on them. ***They haven't had consistent literacy instruction.***
Ms. C. – **4 Years**	**B**	**F**	Yeah, I mean, I don't know ***if the test is always built to have their best interests in mind***. But speaking strictly on the literature we come back to this conversation of it's not an even playing field. And ***most of our African-American males are not able to read at the grade level*** that you are assessing them at and therefore ***their chances of actually succeeding are already lower.***
Mr. G. – **5 Years**	**B**	**M**	***I think it's the family***. I say family all the time, you know, when I go back to the boys I was teaching English to when I first got here, we were ***calling parents.*** We would have meetings and ***they didn't buy in to the education***. I think ***it's a maturity thing***. The ***girls mature faster***. And I just ***couldn't get any buy in.*** You know, we read different books and they just couldn't care less. Most of them. I mean, the others, you know, they were into it but they just.
Mr. F. – **9 Years**	**B**	**M**	Obviously, because ***vocabulary.*** I mean, the sixth grade teacher Ms. S. she will always tell me that Mr. F., ***the best way to get them to read is vocabulary.*** She was like the ***more words they know, when they come across it, they understand it.*** She was a big proponent. I mean when I was teaching fifth grade, she paired me. Ms. M. paired me with Ms. Sams. And so her first 20 days, she did nothing but vocabulary. She's like Mr. F. we didn't crack a reading book because it doesn't matter if they don't have vocabulary, vocabulary is so important. And she was like once you ***focus on vocabulary you see your test scores go up*** because that's the key
Mrs. M. - **11 Years**	**B**	**F**	Well, I think because they don't read. They're not pushed to read so they don't. I feel like culturally it's a thing not even like, you know, educationally. In households and growing up, our mothers raised women to want to get things. We want to achieve but we don't need that push. We don't need that extra pat on the back. We just do it. But, then mothers kind of coddle their boys more. So, it's like, oh, I'm gonna help you with

			this. I'm going to I got to give you so much more so they don't have that kind of thing. ***So I think it starts in the culture first.*** It's like that for me personally.
Mr. L. – 24 Years	**W**	**M**	That's an excellent question. I just, you know, I love to research on my own. I don't know if it's ***speaking, reading, and writing is culturally biased*** or if we ***haven't accepted vernacular as a norm*** or ***if the tests are written in a biased fashion***. Everybody takes a standardized test. I don't know if the boys aren't reading at the same level, ***if reading is enjoyable*** to them, ***if it's been emasculated***. You know, I don't know what the answer is.
Mrs. H. 25 Years	**B**	**F**	You know what I'm seeing now, ***especially in fourth-grade*** somehow ***the boys shut down.*** I don't know if it's because ***I'm a woman***, because I can shut a boy down really quickly by calling them out. You know, stop that talk and whatever. Get this right. I mean, do this over and they'll shut down. They won't do anything or ***they'll get mad***. You know, they hold that and it's not all of them so ***I'm thinking it might be a home based too.***
Mrs. J. 29 Years	**B**	**F**	They don't have a background knowledge. They don't have that ***real connection***. Their ***vocabulary is so limited and weak***. They don't understand the difference between street talk and professional talk. Everything is street talk to them. We are ***competing against technology***. These cellphones and they go "I don't have to know how to spell. I could just put it in my phone and it'll tell me what to do." You have to know how to spell when you go and apply for scholarships. You've got to go to a middle school, college, high school. You have to know how to write. You have a majority, and I told them yesterday, you have a majority of you guys ***leaving fourth grade still at a second grade reading level***. When you get to sixth grade, you still write on a fourth-grade level. You don't even understand how to put together a sentence. You want somebody to just continue to read to you. ***It's not all African-American males*** who are like this. You have ***some African American boys who are sharp*** but again, they ***have different parental support.***
Ms. S. 30 Years	**W**	**F**	I don't know. I guess maybe it could be a lot of their ***background***, maybe ***of their environment.*** Maybe learning, school, is not put as the top priority. I would say that. I don't get a lot of homework. I make them do their homework, a lot of times they do their homework in school because they don't do their homework at home. ***There's not that extra parent support***, I guess, at home making them do their homework even though they're getting bigger and older. A lot of them need ***still need that extra*** help and that ***extra push and I guess it's not there.***
Mr. J. 32 Years	**W**	**M**	Well, I think the ***tests themselves are racially biased***. They don't have no idea. Like the classic example is a cup in a saucer. <u>They have no idea what a saucer</u> is. They don't drink tea, you know their parents don't have tea sets at home. You're

			lucky if when the girls are little they get a tea set. You know what I mean? ***It's not a historically African-American toy***, a tea set, you know. So I think things like that and they see it and they're not stupid. ***They are so aware of what they don't know and I think that has a lot to do with their self-esteem*** and ***their self -esteem goes into their learning***. Because if they don't feel good about themselves, ***you can stand on your head and spit out gold nuggets, they're not going to learn***. If they have ***no self-pride*** and I think, you know, <u>the media has done nothing to promote</u> that. ***We only see the negative of young African American men.***
TOTALS	**4 W** **6 B**	**6 F** **4 M**	The 10 fourth grade Chicago Public School teachers provided an array of reasons why they believe that African American boys score the lowest on standardized test than all other demographics of children who take it. The researcher has provided an accumulation of the data below.

Summary of RQ - #1
Why do African American boys in the fourth grade score the lowest of all youth who
 take Standardized test with a 14 percent literacy rate (NAEP, 2015).

Table 4.7: RESEARCH QUESTIONS - #2

Teacher Participants Years of Serv.	Race	Gender	How do teachers learn how to teach reading effectively during their undergraduate careers?
Ms. Y. – 7 months	W	F	Yes. So, the way our courses are organized is that we have both ***written assessments and video assessments***. So, we submit <u>teaching videos</u> to show that we are enacting what we're learning in the class. So one of our fall part of our fall final was a <u>read aloud</u>. So we had ***intensive learning on read aloud and best practices***. We also ***had a small group guided reading*** lesson that included ***teaching vocabulary***. So we've been ***learning all the different skills for teaching literacy.***
Ms. C. – 4 years	B	F	So my program was unique because I was going for both my Sp.Ed. license and my general education license at the same time. So I was a dual program. With that being said, they had a very much inclusive focus. So we received the same training that a general education teacher would receive in isolation in terms of literacy. It was actually the ***major sore part of my education***. I remember ***complaining to the department about our literacy team.*** I didn't feel like in other areas or subjects such as math or social studies and social study, social studies and science. I felt like there was a huge emphasis on like practical in the classroom usage, on culturally relevant teaching, on increasing student engagement and involvement. However, ***my literacy courses is very textbook driven. I didn't feel like a lot of the information was practical to me as a teacher. A lot of theory around reading, but not a lot of like how do I teach a kid phonics***? Like let's sit at a table and really talk about how that happens. Now I know we read a lot and books on like, you know, kids have to go through this process. It's a step. ***But there was not a lot of technical training on teaching, of literacy, of reading. And that was a huge issue for me, because like kids have to learn how to read.*** You know, if I get a job, ***I'm going to be expected to teach kids how to read. I don't how I'm graduating and I don't know how to do that.*** So, yeah, ***I think it was an area of growth. I expressed that several times throughout my time there***. ***I took two courses, both on primary literacy, which is grades K through three and then upper grades three to six in both classes were very much driven by like the textbooks and up and not a lot of practical information.***
Mr. G. – 5 years	B	M	Okay, so I did undergrad in economics and then when I went back to grad school. I am thinking about my math classes, but thinking about reading and teaching reading, ***I don't think I was really taught how to teach readin***g. We talked about, you know, ***phonemic awareness*** and we kind of went over the ***definitions of what reading is*** and how kids learn. ***But I don't think I was given the tools kinda to teach that.***
Mr. F. –			Well, at college level, they taught us how to basically, how could I put this. They basically taught us how to ***do small group identify or***

9 years	**B**	**M**	*identify by vocabulary words basically teach the kids how to, on the grade level they were doing how to read.* So one of my professors was teaching English and the way he came in the **first day he was like look you're not going to teach this in school.** So basically I'm just going to fly through this and I'm just gonna teach you the basics and *everybody's going to get a passing grade,* that's basically what he came and told us. Because *he was like they don't teach English in schools no more.* Like you know how we did back in school, *we had the noun, the verb*. **They don't teach that anymore**. You *get it through reading*. So *it's all-encompassing reading*. So you know how we were in school, we had a **reading book and English book** and so the *English book taught you how to construct a sentence, noun, pronoun, diagram sentence*. All that's included in the reading book now. So when I went to my reading class, that's when I understood why he said that because *we don't teach English no more*. It's all encompassing reading so when you read, *when the kids read, they pick up all those, supposedly, they pick up all those skills*
Ms. M. – 11 years	**B**	**F**	I would say because I went through an *alternative certification program*, I feel like *their goal is just getting us like the basic things just so we can get through in a year.* It's only a year well, maybe a little less. Some people do the program who already went to school to be a teacher so they can get their masters through them. So, they get a different type of master's than we did who didn't go to school to be a teacher. So a lot of them were able to get specialized things like special ed or reading endorsement. *So I can't teach middle school because I don't technically have a reading endorsement*
Mr. L. – 24 years	**W**	**M**	In undergrad I was a management major and I was a stockbroker for 14 years. Then I became a teacher and I went back to Teachers College in Toronto, Ontario, where *they taught me the basics to teach K through nine*. I had one professor who was very *candid and said*, you know, there *wasn't any science to teaching that.*
Mrs. H. – 25 years	**B**	**F**	Well for me PWI was more of a hands-on type of school. *It did not, to me, effectively teach reading.* **I was older when I went to school, I went back to school and I was like 35**. So I hadn't been in school in years. So. *Just. I don't know. I was so sad*. *I had to bring what I knew, but there was a lot that I had to catch up on*. So I was kind of, they didn't provide, well they may have provided for somebody who just came out of college. *You know that was kind of making that connection to remember what you learned in the past*. But for me, again, I just remember I was in there on a mission. I was going to, you know, make it through. So they may have provided the classes but to me *I didn't come out as a strong reading teacher.*
Mrs. J. – 29 years	**B**	**F**	*Yeah it prepared you to work with Illinois state standards*, but now that the standards have changed to the Common Core standards it's totally different. *So the skills and strategies have changed even with the standardized testing have changed*. *So it prepared us to just give the children like a book and we teach them the skills in order to be better prepared to become a life long learner*. But now, especially with

|			
			African American boys they don't have the real world experience. See, when I first started teaching years ago, the children had wisdom. They had parental support and the knowledge and the help was there. Now a lot of our boys don't have that background knowledge from home. The real world experience. Just only what's around in the neighborhood. So it's like we're building from ground up.
Ms. S. – 30 years	**W**	**F**	I can honestly say, which I tell all these new teachers, is that you can learn about certain methods and theories and practices, but being in the classroom and hands on. I think ***I learned most of my stuff the first five years and of course,*** like the student teaching. ***I learned a lot more than I would have to say in my classes as far as the philosophies of teaching.*** That theory may work for you, but every year it changes with the kids you have. You change you. ***You know, as the years have gone on, you got to adapt and change with these kids***. This is definitely a video age, you know. You have to make everything so animated and keep their attention. You ***can't really learn that in a classroom.***
TOTAL	**4 W 6 B**	**6 F 4 M**	

Table 4.8: RESEARCH QUESTION - #3

Teacher Participants Years of Serv.	Race	Gender	Do teachers feel comfortable with their ability to teach children how to read when they encounter non-readers or students who have difficulties?
Ms. Y. – 7 months	White	Female	Yeah. So, I think the way that they have organized our learning has been really important because ***at the beginning I was really stressed about it because it was heavily focused on like culturally responsive teaching and classroom culture and relationships***. And I knew in theory that those were all important. But in my mind, I'm so type-A and a planner as like ***I need to know exactly how to teach like this reading skill and like how to plan for this***. But I'm reflecting I think I wouldn't to be able to teach what I've taught ***if I hadn't had a solid understanding of how to approach the classroom***
Ms. C. – 4 years	Black	Female	***The narrative for boys is its boring***, whereas math B again, B, just because of the ways design is structured, you kind of get. Chances to start over, so to speak. So like, let's say you're not really good at multiplication. Great. We better hit a geometry unit. You're already doing shapes. There's your in for reading? It's the same strategies. Just about ***if you cannot read its going to feel equally as challenging no matter what the topic that we're discussing***. Unless I make the text more appropriate so I do like that I'll seen Online a lot more ***curriculums that are differentiating their text*** to give. So ***there's like an on grade level text and a above grade level and there is for kids who are below.*** But its getting kids comfortable with that. You try to make them look as similar as you can, but sometimes so ultimately different text and that's ok. But getting them to feel OK and wherever they end up in their space. So which is why ***I think small group is like a huge going to be a huge leverage for African-American males***. Teaching, from a small group perspective or another word their using that is ***personalized learning***.
Mr. G. – 5 years	Black	Male	So, ***I would say it was a mixed bag***. I would say most of the boys were not. Most of the ***boys were just immature***. I'm thinking back to when I first started because I've always been with the 4/ 5 group. Very few, I would say ***twenty five percent were really serious about learning***. I was talking to the dean the other day about a behavior issue with a kid. He was the class clown. Another kid, he was a problem and he ended up leaving. I just remember he ended up leaving and going over to Murray. I was like, really? I mean, you know, but I remember those boys. They were not serious about class and they were playing. I think it was because it's my first year, also, and I got a lot of pushback. ***Because parents, they don't want a new teacher. A fresh teacher. But, yeah, the boys were not not that serious about learning***.
Mr. F. – 9 years	Black	Male	***The teacher taught us how to basically do small groups, how to identify the kids who couldn't read or identify the levels of their reading because they got a reading test that you're supposed to give them and it'll scale them at different levels***. So that's one thing I did learn at National Louis was they taught us how to do small group and

			how to use different basals for the kids who were lower, higher, or middle. So they did teach me how to teach reading to the kids, but not teach kids how to read. So if I got a nonreader who came in, me not being a specific reading teacher I would have to get resources from like kindergarten or first grade teacher to understand. That's what I usually did because I didn't really know how to work with a nonreader. So when I get a nonreader, I used to go to kindergarten or first grade to see what I'm supposed to do. And she was like "Mr. Fant, make sure he got his sounds, make sure he got his phonetic sounds down and then once he has phonetic sound, you can introduce him to the dolch list."
Ms. M. – 11 years	**Black**	**Female**	***They have phonics stopping at like second, second, maybe third***. But after that, ***you still need to know the parts of a sentence and how can I created a paragraph if I don't even know how to create a sentence at all?*** I ***don't know how to make my sentences a complete thought because I don't know about the predicate and all of that***. Like all that stuff I remember, they ***don't get taught that***. ***Like we really are not preparing them for high school or for college***. ***I try to do as much as I can but I still have all this other stuff that I have to teach***. At my old school ***I had a lunch room reading group*** for boys. I ***have books about boys and African-American boys and things that they went through and we would read those books during lunchtime*** because, you know, the curriculum was set for what it was set for. So the time that I had was lunch so we would have book club during that time and it was an option. So you can come if you want to come. And so a lot of them would come and they will want to read the books and we'll be talking about them and they were interested in them
Mr. L. – 24 years	**White**	**Male**	***Through modeling***. I've learned so much in 24 years. I didn't know what "finna" was when I first moved to Chicago. I had no idea. I just I had no idea about the migration from the south to Chicago. Because they don't say "finna" in New York or New Jersey, but it was fascinating to me. ***So I opened up a book of language*** ***and I started reading about vernacular and it taught me a lot***
Mrs. H. – 25 years	**Black**	**Female**	***Well they really have come to a point where they need small groups.*** It depends on their score from the NWEA. ***You group them together based on their score.*** Then you'll call them over and then you'll have some type of ***teaching material that addresses their skill base***. What they need and sometimes we have these books like this and you listen to them. ***Everybody has to read and they kind of see where they're deficient*** and things like that. So try to address that
Mrs. J. – 29 years	**Black**	**Female**	So it's almost like you've been teaching this long always have to go back for ***professional development.*** And when I had taken Dr. Tatum's class, it gave me an opening lens to working with the ***African-American boys because they are academically challenged.***

| Ms. S. – 30 years | White | Female | Well, ***I think I'm a lot smarter about how to approach it and how to give them wait time, how to find things that are interesting for them that they will stay be interested in. I've taken a lot of classes on the struggling reader.*** There's always a lot of stuff for struggling readers, not so much for gifted, but I did take a whole gifted course a few years ago, and I did teach the gifted class for a while. ***So I've tried a whole range but I think just experience makes me better.*** |

FIGURES

Teacher Perceptions/Literacy and Professional Development
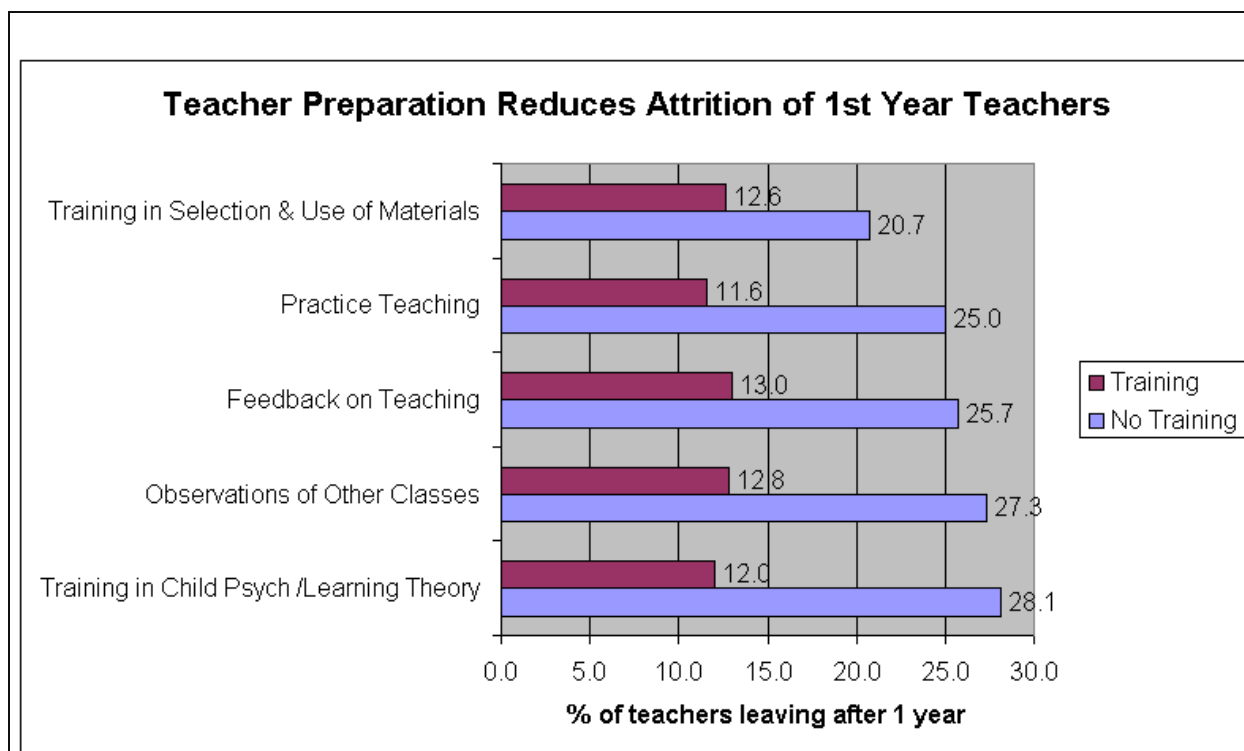
Source: Darling-Hammond, L., & Sykes, G. (2003, September 17). Wanted: A national teacher supply policy for education: The right way to meet the "Highly Qualified Teacher" challenge. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 11*(33). Retrieved September 2003, from http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v11n33/

Figure 4.1: Teacher Perceptions/Literacy and Professional Development

**AVERAGE RETENTION RATES FOR
DIFFERENT PATHWAYS INTO TEACHING**

% completed program   % entered teaching   % remaining after 3 years
1 Five-year program (B.A. in subject field and M.A. in education)
2 Four-year program (B.A. in subject field or in education)
3 Short-term alternative certification program (B.A. and summer training)
Source: L. Darling-Hammond (2000). *Solving the dilemmas of teacher supply, quality, and demand*. NY: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF).
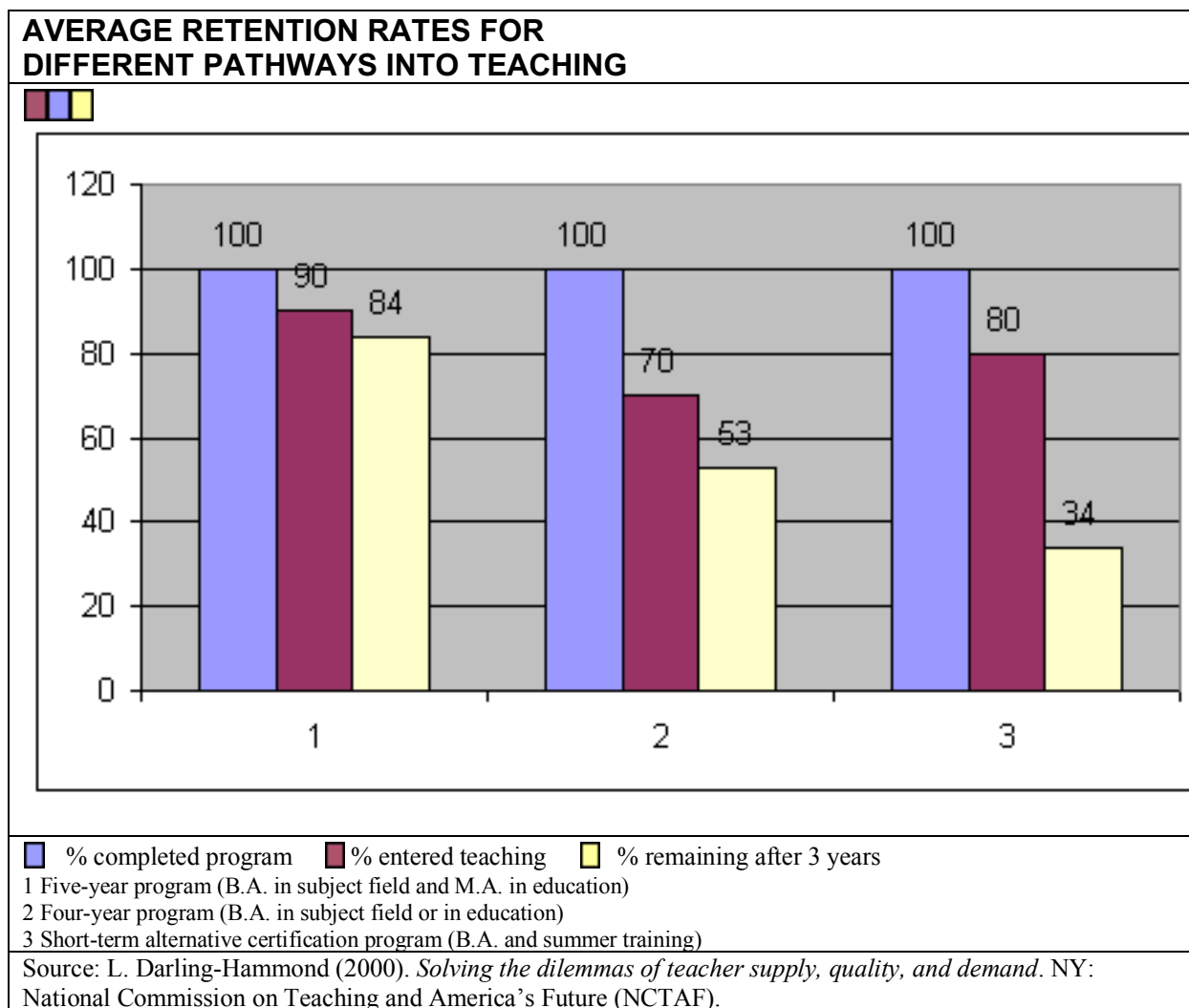
Figure 4.2: Average Retention Rates for Different Pathways into Teaching
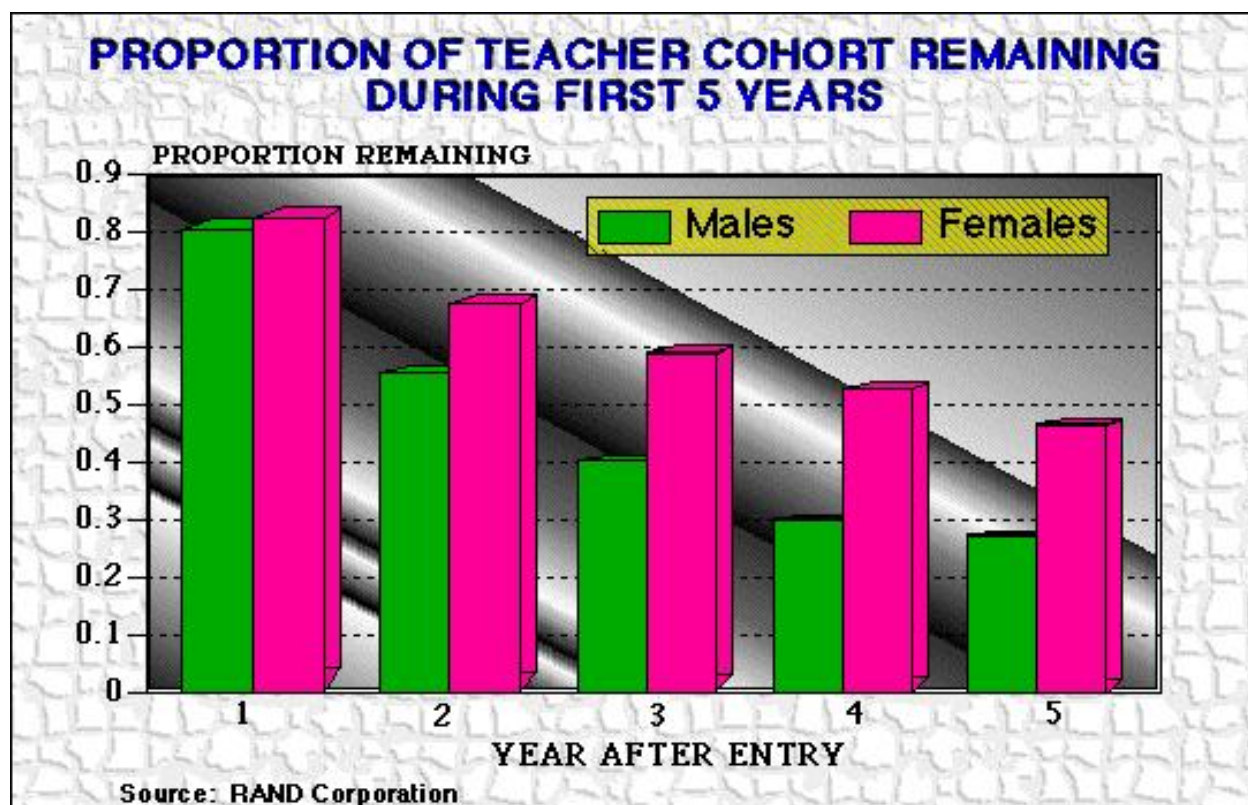
Figure 4.3: Proportion of Teacher Cohort Remaining During First 5 years

Appendix A: Literacy Conceptual Map

Achievement Of Literacy Among African American Boys In The Fourth Grade
Literacy Conceptual Mapping of Elementary Teacher Preparedness During Their Undergraduate Studies

Copyright © 2019 Kimberly Lloyd
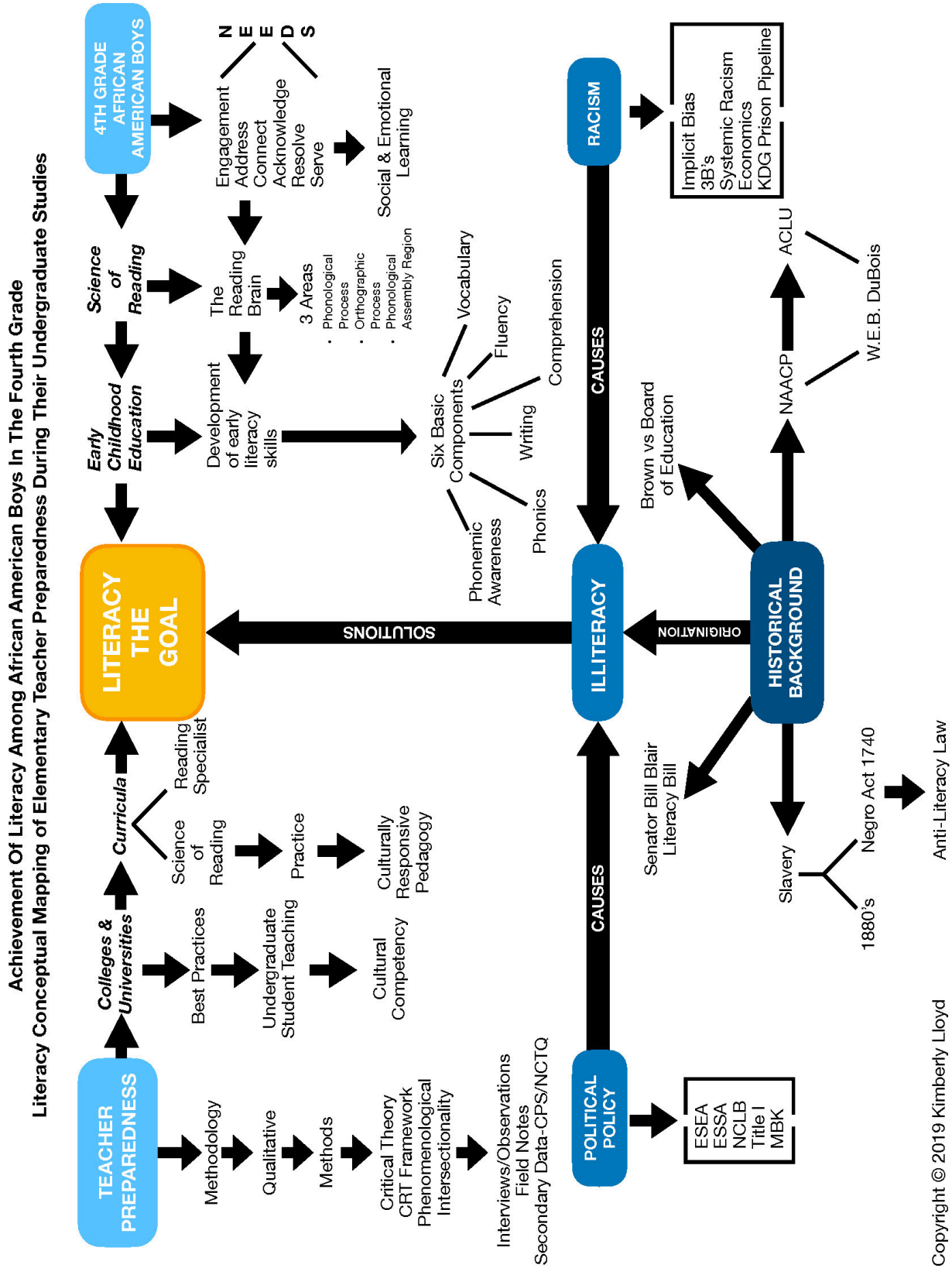
Appendix B: Codes/Categories/Themes Chart

THEMES >> / CATEGORIES>>	Connect / Student Teacher Relationship	Curricula / Instruction	Self-Respect / Boy behavior	Non-traditional teaching Programs Second Careers / Teaching	Teacher Perceptions Literacy / Teaching literacy	Male Role Models / Needs	Attrition / School takeovers	Illiteracy / Boys Behavioral Issues	Cultural Competency / Pedagogy	Engagement / Exposure	Teacher mentors / Professional guidance
Codes>>>>>	Nurturing	Common Core	Acting touch	Teach for America	Very difficult	Boys need Black male teachers	Later career	Embarrassment	Implicit bias	Giving them literature that they actually enjoy reading	Support
Codes>>>>>	Lower performers	Whole language	Sagging pants	Academy for Urban School /AUSL	Scared	Outside role models	School Takeover underserving schools	Talk back	Cultural differences	Opportunities to engage more technical subjects like math.	Competent information
Codes>>>>>	Validating their feelings	Direct instruction		1-year program	Daunting	All white teachers mentioned that African American boys need Black male role models and teachers	High turnover rate for	Loud	Address		Lack of Professional development
Codes>>>>	Caring	Guided reading		2-year program	Embarrassed	They respond to Black male teachers	Lack of Teacher Mentor	Anxious	Needs		5 years to get better on your own
Codes>>>>	Concerned	Small group		Emergency certificate	Stressed out	Calmer	Inexperienced teachers	Busy	Acknowledge		No assistance lonely process
Codes>>>>	Supportive	Updated curriculum		South-side West-side Schools	Helpless	Connect	Poor Administration		Connect		Seasoned teacher guidance
Codes>>>>	Encourage	More Interesting			Clueless	Emotional			Books		No help from Admin.
Codes>>>>	Needy	Corrective reading			Ill prepared				Interact		
Codes>>>>	Removal of implicit biases				Exasperated				Attitudes		
Codes>>>>	Create equitable environment										

Themes emerged from the use of the open coding method-- phrases were coded and categorized.
Themes - Connect *Curricula*Non-traditional teaching programs*Teacher perceptions*Male role models*Attrition*Cultural competency*Teacher mentor

Appendix C: IRB

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

Research Involving Human Subjects
NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

To: Kimberly Lloyd, Graduate Student, College of Education

Date: February 6, 2020

Re: Research Protocol #KL011320EDU

"Why Can't I Read? – The Demise of Literacy Among African American Boys in the Fourth Grade, Exploring Effective Change Within the Schools of Education at Colleges and Universities on the Implementation of Teaching the Science of Reading for Student Teachers During Their College Career."

Please review the following important information about the review of your proposed research activity.

Review Details
This submission is an initial submission. Your research project meets the criteria for Exempt review under 45 CFR 46.104 under the following category:

> *(2) Research that <u>only</u> includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:*
> *(i)   The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;*
> *(ii)   Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or*
> *(iii)   **The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by 45 CFR 46.111 (a)(7). (REQUIRES LIMITED IRB REVIEW OF PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY)***

Approval Details
Your research was originally reviewed on January 23, 2020 and revisions were requested. The revisions you submitted on January 27, 2020 were reviewed and approved on February 6, 2020.

Number of approved participants: 10 Total

> *You should not exceed this total number of subjects without prospectively submitting an amendment to the IRB requesting an increase in subject number.*

Funding Source: 1) None

DePaul IORG#0000628, FWA#00000099, IRB Registration#00000964   Page **1** of **2**

Approved Performance sites: 1) DePaul University; 2) non-engaged recruitment site University of Illinois at Chicago; non-engaged performance site Kennedy King College

Reminders

- Under DePaul's current institutional policy governing human research, research projects that meet the criteria for an exemption determination may receive administrative review by the Office of Research Services Research Protections staff. Once projects are determined to be exempt, the researcher is free to begin the work and is not required to submit an annual update (continuing review). As your project has been determined to be exempt, your primary obligation moving forward is to resubmit your research materials for review and classification/approval when making changes to the research, but before the changes are implemented in the research. **All changes to the research must be reviewed and approved by the IRB or Office of Research Services staff.** Changes requiring approval include, but are not limited to, changes in the design or focus of the research project, revisions to the information sheet for participants, addition of new measures or instruments, increasing the subject number, and any change to the research that might alter the exemption status (either add additional exemption categories or make the research no longer eligible for an exemption determination).

- Once the project is complete, you should submit a final closure report to the IRB.

The Office of Research Services would like to thank you for your efforts and cooperation and wishes you the best of luck on your research. If you have any questions, please contact me by telephone at (312) 362-7593 or by email at sloesspe@depaul.edu.

For the Board,

Susan M. Loess-Perez

Susan Loess-Perez, MS, CIP,
CCRC Director of Research
Compliance Office of Research
Services

Cc: Leodis Scott, EdD, Faculty Sponsor, College of Education

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Research Study

This qualitative phenomenological study will be driven by a fundamental research question: Do teachers learn how to effectively teach reading skill set during their teacher preparedness courses in their undergraduate studies. In exploring this question, the researcher wants to know if there is a correlation between teacher literacy preparedness and reading achievement among fourth grade African American boys.

Objective

- Improve the curriculum for schools of education to include the science-of-reading. Schools of education can improve teacher candidate outcomes by improving curricula which is at the root of underachievement in reading (Pimentel, 2018).

- Integrate culturally responsive pedagogy, and thus enhance student preparedness, which provides teachers with a road-map on how to navigate with useful learning techniques classroom of students that have different ethnicities in order to tear down unconscious biases about African American boys through self-reflection during student teaching.

- Provide viable options for student teachers to utilize for making their classrooms a more welcoming and supportive learning space.

- Identify legitimate experts in the field early education and hire them to develop and write reading textbooks for teacher preparedness. (No seminal authors)

- Improve the literacy rate of fourth grade African American boys, considering effective reading skills should be developed by the end of third grade.

- Reduction of suspensions, expulsions and special education recommendations for African American boys via culturally responsive teaching, the implementation of the science of reading and their improved literacy health.

Qualitative Interview Questions

The following questions are designed to unearth experiences and perceptions of teachers who provide literacy instruction to fourth grade African American boys and to discover if the curricula of teachers' college or university adequately prepared them to teach literacy.

Teaching Experience – Demographics: Closed-ended questions

1. Did you attend a historically black college/university, Predominant white institutions, or an ivy league institution?

2. What is your ethnicity?
3. What gender do you identify as?
4. How long have you been teaching?
5. Where did you begin your teaching career?
6. Can you describe the demographics of the schools where you previously taught and now?
7. How long have you been teaching fourth grade inner city African American boys?

Collegiate Curricula: Open-ended questions

1. How did the curriculum at your college and or university effectively prepare you to teach reading to your students? If not, then why and what do you feel was missing in the curriculum?

2. In what ways did the curriculum include the science of reading? If not, do you know what the science of reading entails?

3. How did the curriculum include instruction on culturally responsive pedagogy?

4. Can you explain what culturally responsive teaching means to you?

5. Based on your response, does culturally responsive instruction play a role in engaging African American boys in literacy?

6. Describe your student teaching experience in schools in socioeconomically deprived communities where African American students attended? How did teaching literacy in these spaces affect the way you perceived African American students and boys in particular?

7. Describe how your teacher preparedness courses helped you to teach African American boys.

8. Describe your later experiences with teaching literacy to African American boys.

9. Explain why you think African American boys score the lowest of standardized literacy test of any demographic of student who take this test.

10. Explain in a few sentences what you think can be done to improve literacy among African American boys.

Literacy in the classroom

1. Explain how you felt teaching literacy as a new teacher?
2. Describe your teaching style when engaging in literacy instruction as a new teacher and later?

3. How did you utilize the literacy instruction that you received during your college career at the beginning of your teaching career, and was it effective in teaching literacy to African American boys?
4. If it weren't effective, what alternative literacy plan did you institute, and did it render positive results, and if so, how?
5. What interest you about teaching this student population

Appendix E: Recruitment Letter
Recruitment Letter

DATE: January 8, 2020

My name is Kimberly D. Lloyd and I am a doctoral student who is currently working on my dissertation at DePaul University in the College of Education. I am conducting a qualitative phenomenological non-experimental research study on how the curricula of schools of education provide instruction to teachers in the discipline of literacy.   Additionally, I want to know if the science of reading was a part of their teacher preparedness courses in their undergraduate studies. The purpose of this study is to see if there is a possible correlation between poor literacy instruction of student teachers during their undergraduate studies and poor literacy attainment of African American boys in the fourth grade. I am interested in this possible phenomenon because as a group, African American boys have the lowest scores in literacy of all ethnic groups who take standardized test.

Dr. Alfred Tatum, Dean of the University of Illinois is the gatekeeper for this study.   He will contact you directly if you meet the criteria and demographics required. The study is looking for fourth-grade Chicago Public School teachers. 10 teachers are needed 7 female and 3 males, African American and White. The researcher will conduct one individual interview with each participant for 60 minutes in length.

If you agree to participate in this study, more information regarding the study will be included in the information sheet, which is attached to this recruitment letter.

If you have any questions, please contact me at klloyd9@mail.depaul.edu

Thank you for your time and consideration. As teachers your time is extremely limited. I appreciate your support and I would be grateful for your involvement in this study because as we know literacy attainment for African American boys is crucial.

If you have any questions, please contact me at klloyd9@mail.depaul.edu

Sincerely,

Kimberly Darlene Lloyd

Kimberly D. Lloyd
Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership
773 263-9506
Klloyd9@mail.depaul.edu

Appendix F: Information Sheet for Research Study

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY

The Demise of Literacy Among African American Boys in the Fourth Grade. Exploring Effective Change within the Schools of Education at Colleges and Universities on the Implementation of Teaching the Science of Reading for Students Teachers during their Undergraduate Career

Principal Investigator: Kimberly D. Lloyd (Graduate Student), DePaul University/College of Education

Institution: DePaul University, USA

Faculty Advisor: Leodis Scott, EdD, Leadership, Language and Curriculum, Doctoral Program

I am conducting a qualitative, phenomenological, non-experimental research study because I am trying to learn more about undergraduate student teachers' experiences in literacy instruction and how or if the science of reading was a part of the curriculum at the college or university of education that they attended. Scholarly research suggests that not having this course for student teachers as a part of their undergraduate studies could adversely affect how teachers teach reading. Additionally, this study seeks to address the possible correlation between teachers' poor literacy instruction and the poor literacy attainment of African American boys in the fourth grade. The study aims to improve the curricula of schools of education by illustrating the importance of incorporating the science of reading in all undergraduate teaching programs. Preexisting data from the National Council on Teacher Quality provides indicators that the science of reading promotes improved literacy if five components of effective reading instruction are taught. The components of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension can potentially reduce current failure rates of literacy from 30 to 20% to 10 to 2%. Additionally, as a researcher I am interested to know if culturally responsive pedagogy was a part of the student teaching experience.

I am asking you to be in the research because you are a fourth-grade teacher who is employed with the Chicago Public Schools, are a male or female and are African American or White. This criteria qualifies you to participate in this study. This qualitative study is approved for fourth-grade Chicago Public School teachers. It is not approved for administrators, career service employees or children.

Research data collected from you will be attached to a pseudonym, and I will not record identifiers with your information, your information will remain confidential.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview that will be 60 minutes in length and consist of 22 questions. The interview will be conducted at Kennedy King Library in the Englewood community. I will examine teaching experience, collegiate curricula and literacy in the classroom. I will focus on general literacy instruction however I am particularly interested in literacy engagement with African American boys in the fourth grade. I will also collect some personal information about you such as race, gender, type of collegiate institution attended, years of teaching experience, origination of teaching career, demographics of students previously taught, length of time teaching fourth grade and what are the participants interest in this particular demographic. If there is a question you do not want to answer, you may skip it.

This study will take a total of about one hour of your time.   Since your information will be attached to a pseudonym and I will not record identifiers with your information, your information will remain confidential. I will not try to re-identify the information or contact you. I have put some protections in place such as storing the information in a secured computer under password protection and with encrypted files. The data will be kept confidentially for an undetermined period; since there should be no risk to you should someone gain access to the data.

Your participation is voluntary, which means you can choose not to participate. There will be no negative consequences if you decide not to participate or change your mind later after you begin the study. Once you submit your responses to me directly, I will be able to remove your data if your request is received before the data has been transcribed and coded, at which time the data is merged with a pool of other data thus making it impossible to determine which responses belong to a particular individual. You can withdraw your participation at any time before

the data has been transcribed and coded, by contacting me at: Kimberly D. Lloyd, klloyd9@mail.depaul.edu (773) 263-9506.

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this study or you want to get additional information or provide input about this research, please contact the researcher, Kimberly D. Lloyd (773) 263-9506 klloyd9@mail.depaul.edu or my faculty sponsor Leodis Scott, Assistant Professor at DePaul University, Leodis.scott@depaul.edu (773) 325-4526

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Susan Loess-Perez, DePaul University's Director of Research Compliance, in the Office of Research Services at 312-362-7593 or by email at sloesspe@depaul.edu. You may also contact DePaul's Office of Research Services if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.

You may keep [or print] this information for your records.

Appendix G: Interview Reminder Letter

Interview Reminder Letter

Date:

Dear Participant,

I want to take this opportunity to remind you of your upcoming interview and to thank you in advance for your time and your cooperation with this qualitative, phenomenological, non-experimental research study. As I have mentioned before, my study seeks to learn more about undergraduate student teachers' experiences in literacy instruction with fourth grade African American boys and how or if the science of reading was a part of the curriculum at the college or university of education that they attended.

Our interview on your prescribed day will last approximately one hour during which time I will ask you about your perceptions of literacy instruction to fourth grade African American boys and if the curricula of your college or university adequately prepared you to teach literacy.
Please understand that your input is invaluable.

When: (include date and time of interview)

Where: Kennedy King College Library 747 W. 63rd Street Chicago Illinois 60621

Free Parking: Englewood Square Mall 850 W. 63rd Street (half a block from the library)

Should you need to contact me prior to your interview, or for any reason, I can be reached by cell at 773 263-9506 or email klloyd9@mail.depaul.edu

Sincerely,

Kimberly D. Lloyd
DePaul University
Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership

Appendix H: Gatekeeper Form

Gatekeeper/Agency Information sheet and Consent form

TITLE OF STUDY: The Demise of Literacy Among African American Boys in the Fourth Grade. Exploring Effective Change within the Schools of Education at Colleges and Universities on the Implementation of Teaching the Science of Reading for Student Teachers during their Undergraduate Career

I would like to invite you to assist me in conducting a research study. Before you decide you if you would like to participate, it is important to understand why the research is being done and what requirements are necessary to participate. Kindly take a moment to thoroughly read the information that follows. Feel free to ask any questions you may have and/or for clarification of information regarding you and the participants. Upon completion of reading the information below, please inform me if you plan to facilitate this research.

WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT:

My name is Kimberly D. Lloyd and I am a doctoral student who is currently working on my dissertation at DePaul University in the College of Education. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological non-experimental study is to examine if educators learn to effectively teach reading during their teacher preparedness courses in their undergraduate studies. Additionally, the study seeks to determine if there is a correlation between literacy curricula in colleges and universities of education and if these curricula adversely affect the reading achievement among fourth grade African American boys.

The study aims to improve the curricula of schools of education by illustrating the importance of incorporating the science of reading in all undergraduate teaching programs. Preexisting data from the National Council on Teacher Quality (2006), provides indicators that the science of reading promotes improved literacy if reading instruction incorporates five specific components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension can potentially reduce current failure rates of literacy from 20 to 30% to 2 to 10%.   Moreover, it is critical that the curricula of colleges and university's of education include the instruction of culturally responsive pedagogy in tandem with the science of reading. Culturally responsive teaching instruction has the potential to provide beginning teachers with the tools necessary to educate students specifically those housed within inner-city schools. This pedagogy offers mechanisms that provide a blueprint for beginning teachers on how to engage, connect, motivate, challenge and serve their students, thus enhancing their cultural competence. New teachers who are culturally competent are more effective in teaching students from different ethnic backgrounds, encounter significantly less stress in the classroom and are able to improve current retention rates and teacher expertise of inner-city teachers.

The ultimate goal is to improve the literacy scores of African American boys who, as a demographic score the lowest on standardized test and to produce a viable, literacy curricula that

can seamlessly be incorporated without disruption to current curricula at universities and colleges of education.

The gatekeeper will disseminate the recruitment letter and the information sheet to potential research participants. The gatekeeper will personally select the participants who meet the criteria of the study. These participants will be a total of 10 Chicago public schools fourth-grade teachers, 3 male and 7 female, African American and White, all who work in the Englewood community.

WHAT TAKING PART IN THE RESEARCH WILL INVOLVE?

This study will involve one audio-recorded semi-structured interview of 10 participants with a total of 22 questions. These questions aim to understand the exposure to literacy instruction and teacher preparedness courses on literacy during student teachers' undergraduate years. Questions will be both open and close-ended, with each interview being approximately 60 minutes in length. Each interview will be conducted off site at a local Starbucks in the Englewood community. This site was selected for the convenience of the participants who work in the above-mentioned community.

The interview will consist of questions that provide the researcher with basic demographic information about the participant including; race, gender, type of collegiate institution attended for (i.e.: HBCU, Ivy League, PWI institutions), years of teaching experience, origination of teaching career, demographics of the previous students taught, length of time teaching fourth grade and what are the participants' interest in this particular demographic, teaching experience, collegiate curricula and literacy in the classroom.

Your participation is voluntary, which means you may choose not to participate. There will be no negative consequences if you decide not to participate or change your mind. You may withdraw your participation at any time by contacting me at: Kimberly D. Lloyd, klloyd9@mail.depaul.edu (773) 263-9506.

WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO DATA FROM RESEARCH?

The transcription company, Rev.com, my department chair and myself will have access to the data however all data will be confidential, as participants will receive a pseudonym at the onset of the interview. Each participant's identify will remain confidential and I will not record identifiers with participant's information. There will not be any circumstances that would obligate me to break confidentiality.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

At this time the only plans for this research study's results are for submission to DePaul University for dissertation purposes.

Appendix I: Letter of Support
LETTER OF SUPPORT

February 19, 2020

To: DePaul University – IRB

From: Dr. Alfred Tatum, UIC College of Education

Re: Research Protocol #KL011320EDU

This correspondence serves as my letter of support as the gatekeeper of Kimberly D.

Lloyd's doctoral research #KL011320EDU. Should you have any additional questions I can

be contacted at (312) 996-5641.

Respectfully,

Alfred W. Tatum,

Ph.D. Dean and

Professor

APPENDIX J: Letter of Support
LETTER OF SUPPORT

February 12, 2020

To whom it may concern,

I hereby authorize permission for Kimberly Lloyd to use space inside the

Kennedy-King College Library to conduct her doctoral research. Please contact me if

there are any additional questions.

Thank you,

Dr. Adam Carey

Professor ofLibrary and Information

Literacy Department Chair,

Kennedy-King College

Library Acarey8@ccc.edu

1-773-602-5457