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Elementary School Teachers' Perspectives of Instructional Strategies to Enhance Reading for African American Male Students

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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EDS, South Carolina State University, 2008

MA, South Carolina State University, 2005

BS, South Carolina State University, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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February 2022

Abstract

Some state mandated tests showed that many African American male students are not proficient readers. Teachers need to understand how to implement instructional strategies that will help enhance African American male students to read proficiently. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students in second through fifth grades. The conceptual framework for this study consisted of Ladson-Billing's culturally responsive teaching and the theory of social constructivism. The focus of the research questions explored elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies they use to improve African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades. Data were collected by one-on-one semistructured interviews with 11 elementary school teachers, by telephone or through Zoom, to determine teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies to improve African American male students' reading achievement. Data analysis included a priori coding, open coding, axial coding, and thematic analysis. Four themes emerged from the data analysis process: (a) building relationships improve African American male students' reading achievement, (b) increasing student engagement increases reading engagement, (c) developing language skills improves reading abilities, and (d) more funding and resources to support reading achievement. This study may contribute to positive social change by providing elementary school teachers with information to enlighten their decisions about instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Jeremy Foreman. Thank you for helping me complete this task while never allowing other areas in our lives to go lacking. I could not have reached this goal without your unwavering support, love, and understanding. I appreciate your understanding that we had to relinquish on a few outings an trips just so I could spend time with my computer and a multitude of articles and data. I am still amazed by your willingness to be a listening ear, helping hand, and sometimes a shoulder to cry on. I love you always and forever.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Learning to read is important, and once children fall behind in this skill, it can become difficult for them to catch up (Austin et al., 2017). According to national assessment reports from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2018), there is a gap in reading proficiency between African American male students and White male students. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2018) reported that African American male students score the lowest reading score compared to students in other racial and ethnic groups.

Students who exhibit severe reading difficulties in the primary grades are likely to continue to struggle with reading throughout school (Schwartz & Sparks, 2019). Students who experience difficulties with reading during early elementary grades are more likely to develop behavior problems and experience ongoing challenges that persist throughout their education (Garwood et al., 2017). Teachers have implemented strategies to help bring African American male students' reading achievement up to grade level (Essien, 2017); however, more instructional strategies are needed. In this research study, I sought to gather perspectives from 11 elementary school teachers regarding their experiences with effective reading instructional strategies for African American male students in grades second through fifth grades. Stakeholders may use the information gathered to make improvements in curriculum and professional development for the implementation of successful reading strategies for African American male students in grades second through fifth grades.

Implementing the right instructional strategies can help learners engage in reading (Brun-Merer, 2019). Instructional strategies may include scaffolding information, differentiated instruction, personalized instruction, inquiry-based learning, and abbreviated lessons (Essien, 2017). Instructional strategies can have a direct impact on student success (Whitney & Bergin, 2018). Gaining an understanding of instructional strategies that teachers believe enhance student success may provide educators with information that can help improve reading achievement for African American male students. The results of this study may contribute to positive social change by providing elementary school teachers with information to inform their decisions about instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students.

In this chapter, I provide background information on the research literature related to instructional strategies to help African American male students read more proficiently. The problem statement includes a context that frames the purpose of the study on instructional strategies. This chapter contains information about the nature of the study, key terms, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study.

Background

The scope of this study focuses on elementary school teachers and instructional strategies that enhance African American male students' reading in the United States. Researchers have investigated the educational experiences, environmental factors, and outcomes contributing to the gap between African American male students and their peers (Blume Oeu, 2018; Essien, 2017; Wright & Counsell, 2018). Little research has

focused on strategies to help enhance African American male students in reading (Husband & Kang, 2020). To close the achievement gap, teachers need to implement effective strategies to help African American male students become accomplished readers (Bowman et al., 2018). When minority children do not read on grade level, the achievement gap grows. With only 15% of fourth grade African Americans *r*eading on a proficient level (NCES, 2018), there is need for remediation strategies. By not addressing the problem, the achievement gap will continue to widen causing fourth-grade African American male students to fall behind academically (Hanushek et al., 2019).

Several studies have provided data to show that African American male students are failing in reading without interventions. Different interventions, such as diversified instructional strategies in elementary school, have enhanced students' reading abilities (Haymon & Wilson, 2020). According to Coleman (2019), there are about 8 million African American students in U.S. elementary schools, and only a low percentage of them are receiving reading interventions to enhance their reading levels. Students who receive effective instructional strategies in reading will have a positive learning outcome (Mahmoud-Raha, 2017). According to Wexler (2020), only 18% of African American fourth graders scored proficient or above in reading; among White fourth graders, however, 45% scored proficient or above in reading.

Elementary school teachers' perspectives on instructional strategies that enhance the reading abilities of African American male students are essential to understanding how to address this phenomenon. Teachers' perspectives influence their instruction in the

classroom, which impacts the educational attainment of their students (Matsumoto & Tsuneda, 2018). Teachers' perspectives are their personal views or accounts of a phenomenon (Boylan et al., 2018).

There is a gap in practice evidenced by the gap in reading achievement between current practice and understanding how to implement instructional strategies to enhance African American male students' reading abilities in grades second through fifth grades. Pratt and Martin (2017) stated that teachers play a significant and irreplaceable role in guiding students using instructional practices that further effect their reading development. Yurko and Protsenko (2021) focused on student cognitive development through instruction. They reported that the key efficient strategy for reading comprehension development comprise the instructional strategy of previewing, reviewing, resuming, and discussion of the reading material. Essien (2017) outlined a need for more research that focused on teaching and learning practices concerning instructional strategies for African American male students. In more recent studies, Mahmood (2020) found that using a variety of instructional strategies will help to create an interactive atmosphere and enhance student learning. Establishing more than one instructional strategy will allow students to enhance their learning abilities through a variety of learning tools. The current study addressed a gap in elementary school teachers' practices as related to instructional strategies that enhance the reading abilities of African American male students in second through fifth grades.

Problem Statement

The problem is that many elementary school African American male students in the United States are not reading on grade level (Husband & Kang, 2020). The NCES (2017) reported that African American male students scored the lowest reading score compared to students in other racial and ethnic groups throughout the United States. African American male students scored a basic score of 206, Hispanic male students scored a basic score of 209, White male students scored a proficient score of 232, and Asian male students scored a proficient score of 237 (NCES, 2018). Elementary school teachers try to implement strategies to help bring African American male students' reading achievement up to grade level (Essien, 2017). However, there has been little research on effective instructional strategies that help African American male students read more proficiently (Husband & Kang, 2020). To enhance elementary African American male students' reading ability, there is a need for increased understanding of effective instructional strategies.

The development of adequate reading skills at an early age influences the educational outcomes of children (Gao et al., 2019). In elementary school, students transition from learning to read to reading to learn, and students who do not have the skills to become proficient readers may experience negative long-term consequences (Lathouras et al., 2019). Because using effective instructional strategies can be beneficial to student growth and reading achievement (Essien, 2017), elementary school teachers must be able to share their perspectives about instructional strategies that enhance

reading. Information obtained from this study has the potential to provide elementary school teachers a variety of perspectives on instructional strategies that can enhance African American male students' reading in second through fifth grades. Teachers are expected to monitor the progress of African American male students in elementary to measure growth and see their deficiencies in reading. African American male students are still falling behind others in comparable grade levels in reading achievement (Husband & Kang, 2020). Gaps in reading proficiency occur when students are not provided with instructional strategies that help them become proficient readers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies that improve African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades and the supports teachers believe might help them increase African American male students' level of reading proficiency. Elementary school teachers who have had success with instructional strategies that improve African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades were recruited to participate in this study. Allowing elementary school teachers to provide insight on effective instructional strategies enabled them to speak out and share their experiences about beneficial instructional strategies. The findings in this study may be used for a better understanding of what teachers perceive to be effective instructional strategies to increase the reading ability of African American male students.

Research Questions

In this study, I explored elementary school teachers' perspectives on instructional strategies to enhance reading ability for African American male students in second through fifth grades. The research questions were:

RQ1: How do elementary school teachers describe the instructional strategies they use to improve African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades?

RQ2: What supports do elementary school teachers believe might help them increase African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades?

Conceptual Framework

For this study, I explored elementary school teachers' perspectives on instructional strategies for African American male students to enhance reading proficiency utilizing two theories that formed the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework that grounded the study was based on Ladson-Billings (1995a, 1995b) culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and Vygotsky's (1986) social constructivism theory. Ladson-Billings CRT (1995a, 1995b) stems from the theory culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) which is a constructivist theory that has been implemented in education. According to Ladson-Billing's (1995b), the CRP concepts believe that African American students should experience academic success, develop, or maintain cultural competence, and develop critical consciousness through which they challenge the status of current

social order. These practices are the foundation of CRT. According to Ladson-Billings (1995a), when teachers develop practices that involves their students' communication, background knowledge, learning styles, and cultural norms, the students are impacted academically. Vygotsky's social constructivism is a variety of cognitive constructs that emphasize the collaborative nature of different types of learning. Social constructivism is comprised of *c*ognitive structures that are still in the process of maturing, but that *c*an only mature under the guidance of or in collaboration with others.

CRT is the basis of the conceptual framework for this study. CRT encourages educators to incorporate their students' culture into the curriculum which allows African Americans to become successful (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b). CRT in education is utilized to implement certain strategies in the classroom that help educators find success in educating African American students so they can achieve (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). The CRT was used to examine elementary school teachers' perceptions of instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students.

Ladson-Billings (1995a) suggested that educators must have high expectations and demand academic excellence when teaching African American students. In CRT, Allen et al. (2017) expressed that culturally responsive educators must understand themselves and others while internalizing that their students' experiences exist with past, present, and future struggles. CRT also encourages educators to engage their students in the world and each other. A more thorough explanation of the logical connections between the key elements of the study's conceptual framework is presented in Chapter 2.

Social constructivism is also part of the conceptual framework of this study. Constructivists believe that learners must have the opportunity to make meaning from what they are learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Social constructivism learning is a collaborative process, and knowledge develops from individuals' interactions with their culture and society (Vygotsky, 1978). Most educators in schools are encouraged to teach constructively in their classrooms. According to Vygotsky (1978), language usage in the classroom is important in a social constructivist setting for effective language usage and the development of efficient communication. Students learn most effectively by engaging in carefully selected collaborative problem-solving activities, under the close supervision of instructors (Mnkandla & Minnaar, 2017).

In this study, the conceptual framework was used to explore elementary school teachers' perspectives on their instructional practices when teaching African American male students to read in second through fifth grades. Ladson-Billing's (1995) work addressed students' cultures, language, and life experiences and how these affect African American students in education. The theory of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) was used to frame the interview questions, the answers to which may provide information about interactions that involve cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. Using Vygotsky's theory may allow me to socially construct new knowledge from the teachers' one-on-one, semistructured interviews in this study.

The conceptual framework provided a foundation to explore elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies to enhance African American male

students read proficiently. The participants' perspectives of instructional strategies to enhance African American male students to read was documented using the theories CRT and social constructivism. Both theories were used to identify a priori codes for thematic analysis.

Nature of the Study

This study was a basic qualitative research design. Researchers use qualitative research when they want to provide data from the viewpoint of the participants to gain a comprehensive and descriptive detail of the phenomenon under study (Babbie, 2017). The intent of this qualitative study was to explore elementary school teachers' perspectives about instructional strategies that enhance reading abilities for African American male students. The study sample consisted of 11 elementary school teachers who teach African American male students. I used a one-on-one semistructured interview protocol to collect the data. The interview questions helped explore elementary school teachers' perspectives on instructional strategies that aid African American male students read more proficiently. Interviews were conducted one-on-one by telephone or through Zoom. I recruited participants from the Walden University Participant Pool and elementary teacher social media groups. The participants were reading teachers who teach African American male students at the elementary school level in the United States. I used snowball sampling, which allowed me to ask participants for recommendations of others who could provide different or confirming perspectives regarding the topic (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Each interview was audio recorded. After I interviewed the

participants, I recorded my thoughts and views in a reflective journal and used the information during data analysis to keep a check on my biases.

I used the conceptual framework comprised of the culturally responsive teaching and social constructivism theory to begin the a priori coding process. A priori coding is a process of coding qualitative data whereby the researcher develops the codes ahead of time based on a theoretical framework, the interview question, or pre-existing knowledge (Saldaña, 2016). A priori codes include goals, cultural, awareness, understanding, honesty, strategies, socioeconomic disadvantage, gaps, exposure, and discipline.

Following a priori coding, I used open coding to analyze the data from the interviews. I read the text three times first, and then color-coded words and phrases as I went through open coding. Open coding provides opportunities for the researcher to discover ideas and concepts through the analysis of the written text (Saldaña, 2016). I used axial coding to create categories. Axial coding is the process of examining raw data and open codes for relationships and sub-themes among the codes called categories (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I then looked for emerging subthemes and themes. As the primary instrument of this research, I used thematic analysis to construct and actively develop themes. Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that it is the first qualitative method that should be learned because it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analyses. Once I read all the coded data and grouped and combined codes, I documented themes by how the participants

answered the research questions. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) stated the goal of the thematic analysis is to use the themes to address the research questions.

Definitions

Definitions of key concepts used throughout the study are the following:

Instructional strategies: Concepts, guidelines, approaches, or main ideas to conduct instruction, measure, and evaluation (Seechaliao, 2017).

Perspectives: Feedback on perceived impact of teaching and student learning, areas of strength, and areas needing improvement. Perspectives offer insight into ongoing intervention efforts that have cumulative effects on student achievement over several years (Lee et al., 2017).

Reading Engagement: Reading engagement characterizes an individual's actions, interactions, and strategies related to reading activities and tasks, including behavioral, cognitive, motivational, and social dimensions (Cantrell et al., 2017).

Skills: A organized ability that is composed of one or more components under the control of an individual (Ayoub et al., 2006).

Assumptions

Some assumptions are necessary for scholarly research. One assumption is that all participants were open and honest while answering all the interview questions. It was assumed that participants would give honest responses since it would take a considerable amount of time and effort to validate the answers of each participant. The second assumption was that my past employment in education would not negatively impact the

study. I do not have any professional relationships with any of the participants in this study. I do not have any affiliation at their schools. The third assumption is that participants' answers would reflect their own experiences and not mention practices used by other teachers. The fourth assumption was that participants had a sincere interest in participating in this research and did not have any other motives, such as impressing their job supervisor because they agreed to be in the study. This was assumed to be true because there was no offer of incentives for participating in the study.

Scope and Delimitations

I explored elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students by asking them to share what they believe to be effective instructional strategies they practice within the classroom. Only certified elementary school teachers licensed to teach as indicated by the department of education of the state they teach in were asked to participate in the study. The scope of this research included elementary school teachers who teach reading to African American male students in the United States. I chose elementary grades because most state mandated testing begins at an elementary school level. I left out preschool grade level because that curriculum focuses on letter sounds and not reading skills. Secondary level did not participate because it would make the study too broad. Delimitations narrow the scope of a study.

The study was delimited to certified elementary school teachers who teach African American male students. Administrators were not invited to participate in the

study because instructional strategies are given by the teachers. During one-on-one semistructured interviews, teachers answered questions regarding their perspectives on what they believed to be effective instructional strategies used to enhance reading for African American male students. The purpose of the interviews was to understand the viewpoints and perspectives of the participants.

I considered using the teachers' thought processes theory created by Clark and Peterson (1986). Teachers' thought processes can determine and dictate their behaviors in the classroom (Clark & Peterson, 1986). Researchers use the theory to assess how teacher behavior, student behavior, and student achievement are connected. I decided not to use the theory because I wanted to focus only on the perspectives of teachers, not the behaviors of teachers or the students.

Limitations

The first of several limitations of this basic qualitative study was that data collection and analysis of qualitative studies are considered time consuming (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I set aside ample time for collecting and analyzing data. The second limitation was that the low number of participants, 11, may limit the perspectives collected. The small number of potential participants in this study may limit transferability to other populations.

The third limitation may be the participant's unwillingness to share their perspectives honestly. Some elementary school teachers may have been unwilling to share their perspectives because the instructional strategies being used may not be

researched based practices. A reasonable measure to address this limitation was to help participants feel comfortable and assure them that I did not evaluate their teaching style and strategies.

I ensured that the schools and the participants remained confidential by using numerals and letters to identify each such as T1, T2, T3, or A1. I reassured participants that my role was that of a researcher and not an administrator in this study. Participants were not coerced to participate in the study. I reiterated that all responses will be kept confidential.

My personal biases may affect the outcome of this study. As a former reading teacher, I have firsthand experience with instructional strategies for African American male students. This is one reason I decided to exclude teachers from my school and only recruited from the Walden University Participant Pool and elementary teacher social media groups. To help participants feel safe and secure in answering the interview questions openly and honestly, I conducted individual interviews by telephone or through Zoom. The participation of the teachers was confidential. Reflexivity requires the researcher to be keenly aware and to constantly check his or her position and subjectivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using a reflective journal helped me to identify my own biases. I used a reflective journal to write my thoughts as I went through each process of the study data collection and analysis.

Significance of the Study

According to Mahmoud-Raba (2017), the results of effective teaching refer to learning outcomes that are durable, flexible, meaningful, generalizable, and application oriented. Effective *ins*tructional strategies may include scaffolding information, differentiated instruction, personalized instruction, inquiry-based learning, and abbreviated lessons (Essien, 2017). This study included perspectives from elementary school teachers who were currently teaching reading to African American male students. The results in this study may provide insight to the elementary teacher community about diverse methods and effective instructional strategies that help with closing the achievement gap for African American male students.

Effective instructional strategies can have a direct impact on student success (Whitney & Bergin, 2018). Knowing how effective instructional strategies can relate to student success may provide teachers with variable information. Exploring teachers' perspectives of effective instructional strategies for African American male students to enhance reading has the potential to contribute to positive social change by providing teachers with information on how to elevate African American male students in reading. This study may contribute to positive social change by providing information to educational leaders regarding teachers' perspectives on effective instructional strategies for African American male students to enhance reading. The information may be used by stakeholders for the implementation of successful strategies for reading and professional development.

Summary

In Chapter 1, the problem of African American male students not reading proficiently in elementary schools was identified. I connected the importance of using instructional strategies and reading proficiently. The research questions for this study focused on exploring elementary school teachers' perspectives on what they believe to be effective instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students. This study has a basic qualitative design. Data were collected using one-on-one semistructured interviews by telephone or through Zoom. Thematic analysis was used to identify emerging themes and subthemes.

The study was delimited to certified reading elementary school teachers who teach African American male students. Potential participants were recruited from the Walden University Participant Pool and elementary teacher social media groups. This study may be relevant to early childhood professionals and administrators by providing them with information that might be useful when creating instructional strategies in reading to close the achievement gap for African American male students.

Chapter 2 includes information on research literature that supported the need for this study. I expound on the conceptual framework of the study, culturally responsive teaching, and the social constructivism theory. I explain current related research that includes studies documenting the importance of using instructional strategies and studies related to how to enhance reading for African American male students.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I examined the research applicable to the focus of elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies to enhance African American male students' reading in second through fifth grades. Teachers and other school officials in the United States often report difficulties engaging African American males in reading (Husband & Kang, 2020). Reading is a fundamental skill needed to participate in society. Teachers try to implement strategies to help bring African American male students' reading achievement up to grade level (Essien, 2017). However, there has been little research on effective instructional strategies that help African American male students read more proficiently (Husband & Kang, 2020).

To enhance African American male students' reading ability, there is a need for increased understanding of effective instructional strategies. It is important that teachers focus on what African American male students know, understand, and can do when figuring out what instructional strategies are effective for them to become proficient readers. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies that improve African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades and the supports teachers believe might help them increase African American male students' level of reading proficiency in second through fifth grades.

Chapter 2 includes a review of previous literature based on the achievement gap and reading engagement of African American males. After describing the search

strategies used to conduct the literature review, I explain the historical review of African Americans as it relates to the achievement gap. Following the historical review, I explore instructional strategies, reading engagement, factors relating to academic success, African American reading gap, and teachers' perspectives. I also explain the conceptual framework to provide the basis for the proposed study using culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and the theory of social constructivism. Chapter 2 concludes with a summary.

Literature Search Strategy

For this literature review, I searched for materials on reading skills, reading among African Americans, and teachers' perspectives from a variety of sources, including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, the internet, and dissertations. Throughout my coursework at Walden University, I maintained my interest in the topic of instructional strategies to enhance African American male students' academic performance, and many of my papers and assignments focused on this topic. As a result, I reviewed many articles on the subject of instructional strategies and elementary school teachers' perspectives on how they encourage students to read. Through the Walden University Library, I found a variety of databases: Academic Search Complete, EBSCO ebooks, Education Research starters, Education source, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Google Scholar, ProQuest central, SAGE journal, and Taylor and Francis Online. I used Walden University's ProQuest Dissertations site to access dissertations and used their reference lists as a guide to find further articles. I searched each database

using a variety of terms and key phrases related to the topic. I read the articles, keeping the research question in mind to gather information that would be relevant to the study.

I collected both primary and secondary sources from books, websites, and journals through search engines and online databases from Walden University Library. Specifically, searches using the terms *reading instructional strategies, teachers' perspectives of African American males, teacher's instructional strategies for reading* and *strategies to enhance reading* yielded the literature detailed in this literature review. I also searched literacy journals.

I began the literature review for this study by researching the historical achievement gap of African Americans. This section provides insight into how the achievement gap for African Americans became a problem. Understanding the history behind the African American achievement gap will demonstrate why this topic is relevant and why the achievement gap continues.

Conceptual Framework

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Ladson-Billings (1995a, 1995b) CRT is part of the conceptual framework for this study. To develop an understanding of how culturally responsive teaching impacts learning, the history of CRP is examined. CRP forms the theory behind CRT. The history of CRP has its foundations from the civil rights movement; however, there were also crucial educational court cases over the years that further inspired cultural responsiveness. In 1974, the Supreme Court case *Lau vs. Nichols* decided that San

Francisco school system violated the civil rights of 11,800 Chinese ELL students (U.S.

Department of Education, 2018). The *Lau vs. Nichols* case led to the Lau remedies, which

are policies for ELL students. As a result of Lau remedies, Cazden and Leggett (1976)

coined the term "culturally responsive." Being culturally responsive is being able to

understand and respect people from all cultures. Culturally responsive appears to refer to

a more collaborative relationship between home, community, and school culture (Ladson-

Billings, 1995a, 1995b). In education, cultural responsiveness brings the students'

cultural background into their learning.

      CRT was defined by Gay (2018) as using the cultural characteristics, experiences,

and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as a means for teaching them more

effectively. By being aware of how the cultural characteristics impact the students,

teachers can learn how to use effective instructional strategies be using the students'

natural way of learning. Teachers who embrace CRT, know how to foster student success

while validating their students' cultural background (Gay, 2018). CRT supports the

notion that all students could achieve academic success. Hodge and Collins (2019) found

that students are empowered by having successful learning experiences. When students

experience successful learning, they develop a sense of accomplishment (Seriki &

Brown, 2017).

      Ladson-Billings (1995b) associated three critical concepts with CRT: academic

success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. The three critical concepts

foster a deeper understanding of other cultures to improve interaction with people from

ethnic backgrounds. Bunner (2017) added that CRT is allowing for more space for

students to have a voice by embracing their culture and being aware of other cultures.

Seriki and Brown (2017) suggested that CRT allows teachers to examine and modify

their classroom instructional practices to effectively teach all children, particularly

students of color. Seriki and Brown also stated that CRT relies on teachers having a

connection with all their students so they can incorporate academic success, cultural

competence, and critical consciousness within their lessons. Through the three critical

concepts, CRT validates and embraces the student's ethnic background, which leads to

empowerment, increases social justices, and creates successful learners (Borrero, 2018).

By validating the students' cultures, teachers move students toward successful learning

(Drevdahl, 2017). Thus, educators play a key role in CRT.

CRT was used for my study because it sets the tone for how African American

male students utilize culture as successful tool of learning in the classroom (see Ladson-

Billings, 1995a, 1995b) and what teachers need to be able to do promote a successful

classroom for their students (Bryan et al., 2018). CRT has created an urgency around

promoting equitable opportunities that help all students thrive. Different research on CRT

has shown African American students are successful through its theory. According to

Griner and Steward (2013), this approach has been shown to be effective, and teachers

who have adopted these approaches have been agents of change in their schools. Fraise

and Brooks (2015) found that acknowledging a student's cultural will prompt them to

become more engaged in a lesson. CRT has resulted in a positive effect on student

learning by increasing student engagement, developing more in-depth understanding of subjects, and improved test scores (Banerjee, 2018). CRT can be used to support teachers' implementation of utilizing students' cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives during lessons as an effective instructional strategy to help better teach African American students.

Social Constructivism

The theory of social constructivism was used to socially construct new knowledge from the responses of the semistructured interviews in this study. The theory of social constructivism traces back to Vygotsky (1978) as an approach that proposed that people construct new knowledge and meanings from their experiences (Elliott et al., 2000). Social constructivism is the theory of knowledge of "how," "why," and "what" is known and learned, "in what conditions," and "how it evolves" (Nitulescu & Rotaru, 2012). Vygotsky (1978) explained that a child follows an adult's example and gradually develops the ability to do specific tasks without help. Vygotsky was a Russian psychologist who had a profound influence on educational thought. Vygotsky posited that individuals are active participants in the creation of their own knowledge (Schreiber & Valle, 2013). Vygotsky believed that learning takes place primarily in social and cultural settings rather than solely within the individual (Schreiber & Valle, 2013). Social constructivism suggests that successful teaching and learning is heavily dependent on interpersonal interaction and discussion, with the primary focus on the students' understanding of the discussion (Vygotsky, 1978). The theory of social constructivism is

used in understanding instructional strategies for African American male students to read because of its relevance for teaching and learning.

Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism provides the most accurate understanding that conceptual development is driven only by the instruction that promotes the child's formation of meanings (Clarà, 2017). Instead of searching for ways to coerce students into learning what someone else prescribed, social constructivist teachers are likely to focus their efforts on helping their students find their passions, create their learning agendas, and connect who they are to what they do in school (Oldfather et al., 1999). Teaching in the constructivist mode is collaborative. The collaboration can extend beyond the individual and their interaction with information resources and ideas, to others in the learning community (Vygotsky, 1978).

The theory of social constructivism is described as a variety of cognitive constructivism that emphasizes the collaborative nature of much learning. The basic principle is that students learn most effectively by engaging in carefully selected collaborative problem-solving activities, under the close supervision of instructors (Mnkandla & Minnaar, 2017). According to Nitulescu and Rotaru (2012), social constructivism is the model of knowledge and learning by co-operation and collaboration. Social constructivism is a socially negotiated product; simply stated, Vygotsky's theory maintained that knowledge is constructed through cooperating and understandings with others and not solely generated by individuals (Hyslop-Margison & Strobel, 2008).

According to Aminah and Asl (2015) with social constructivism, prior knowledge must be linked to new knowledge through meaningful social interactions.

One of the core constructs of Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism is the zone of proximal development (ZPD), emphasizes the role of the instructor in an individual's learning. ZPD delineates the difference between what a learner can do without help and what a learner can do with help. The ZPD suggests that with the help of an instructor, students can understand and master knowledge and skills that they would not be able to on their own (Schreiber & Valle, 2013). According to Armstrong (2015), this concept was a realm in which learning conditions could be optimized through the identification of competencies that the learner could mature if only with the right assistance. The child's development begins with instruction, which is a type of child-adult collaboration (Vygotsky, 1978). The theory of social constructivism in this study was used to construct new knowledge from teachers about instructional strategies for African American male students to read.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

Historical Review of African American Achievement Gap

The need to explore instructional strategies to enhance African American male students' reading has been a topic of interest for several years. The lack of educational achievement and progression of African American males in U.S. schools began receiving national attention in the mid-to-late 1980s (Garibaldi, 2007). This situation has not changed over the past decade, and there remains a significant need to understand the

reading dilemma facing many African American males. As the 19th century approached, America began to understand the growing reading concern. Before southern African Americans were free to attend school, the enrollment numbers of African Americans in school reflected a small percentage of northern African Americans (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1993). For the southern states, many African American children, particularly male students, were needed to assist with the share cropping of the land. By the 1900s, the situation had slightly improved. African Americans were enrolling in school at a greater rate and were afforded a better opportunity to obtain a basic education. However, 40% of African Americans continued to lack functional literacy skills (Kirsch et al., 1993).

Little improvement has taken place over the past century. The U.S. Census of 1900 showed that 57% of African American males were illiterate. According to the 2000 Census, 44% of African American males were reported as illiterate. Even though slight progress has been made, the question remains as to why it took 100 years to increase the rate of reading for African American males by 13% (Jenkins, 2016). While some may try to dispute these claims but the data are consistent, Alvarez (2004) noted that race gaps in test scores are undisputed facts. The gap between African American male literacy and that of their peers has a deep historical origin. To address this critical issue, attention needs to be focused on the reasons for its existence.

Even though African Americans are approximately 150 years removed from the Emancipation Proclamation, the effects of slavery in the centuries that have followed

have proven to be oppressive and damaging to African Americans (Jenkins, 2006). More than 200 years of slavery has had a lasting, negative effect on African Americans that still exists today. This negative effect is especially seen in African American males. Douglas (2007) argued that African American males in this country have encountered an experience unlike any other immigrants, in that they were likely to be treated as inferior based solely on skin color. The effects of slavery left ongoing stereotypes, stigmas, and hatred that has caused some African American males to internalize these negative stereotypes about themselves and their abilities (Bell, 2010).

These lingering effects have a direct impact on the success of contemporary African American students. Steele and Aronson (1995) looked at the effect stereotypes have on academic achievement when they are present during testing conditions. In their experiment, African Americans and Whites were grouped according to ability level to complete difficult items from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). African Americans underperformed in comparison to their White counterparts, while African Americans in the control group performed commensurate with their White counterparts (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Historically-rooted prejudice continues to have damaging effects on the academic success of many African American communities.

The trails of Plessy v. Ferguson and Brown v. Board of Education show the overwhelming injustices African Americans have suffered historically (Orfield, 1996). The injustice of African American males is especially noticeable in the educational arena. In many schools and districts in the United States, there is an overrepresentation of

African American male students in educational categories that are associated with failure and less than academically successful performance. In this manner, a clear achievement gap exists between African American students and their classmates. Ongoing data gathered by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has shown a steady achievement gap between African American and their peers. This gap often manifests in terms of standardized scores and performance discrepancies among African American and Hispanic students as compared to their White peers. Scholars of education and minority student bodies must attend to this gap in order to improve the issue of African American male literacy.

Instructional Strategies

Identifying the right instructional strategies are imperative for educators to discover how to help African American male students read. Instructional strategies can have a direct impact on student success (Whitney & Bergin, 2018), and implementing the right instructional strategies can help learners engage in reading (Brun-Merer, 2019). Instructional strategies may include scaffolding information, differentiated instruction, personalized instruction, inquiry-based learning, and abbreviated lessons (Bannan et al., 2020). Teachers using an instructional strategy need to consider many instructional components before it is implemented. Things to consider are different types of learners, learning objectives, contents, learning context, overall context, conditions, and lecturers' skills in selecting learning principles, techniques to accomplish the learning objectives

they specified (Seechaliao, 2017). Using instructional strategies are a crucial component of accomplishing instructional goals.

African American males need to receive educational opportunities through instructional strategies and approaches that makes learning meaningful to them (Bowman et al., 2018). They must be engaged and affirmed by their teachers and see all students treated equally. Individual learning needs should be placed at the forefront when determining curriculum choices and approaches (Duggins & Acosta, 2017). Educators should note the learning styles and needs of African American students to determine the best pedagogical practices for each student (Adamek & Darrow, 2018). Some teachers have implemented an inclusive teaching strategy. Inclusive teaching strategies refer to any number of teaching approaches that address the needs of students with a variety of backgrounds, learning styles, and abilities. All students benefit from multiple approaches to teaching and learning (Capp, 2017). Inclusive and diverse teaching strategies are two valuable possibilities for more meaningful and successful instruction of African American pupils.

Another strategy highlighted in previous research emphasized creativity and individual subjectivity. Instructional strategies that help learners to create new ideas have an everlasting effect on students (Seechaliao, 2017). Instructional strategies should focus on student learning and should be implemented in lessons that contains hands-on projects. Although understanding the various instructional strategies that will lead to the reading success of African American male students is challenging, it is important and

necessary to understand individual learners so that they can become efficient readers.

Implementing differentiated instruction (DI) will allow teachers to understand individual

learners (Bondie et.al., 2019). DI involves working with groups of students and

individualizing the curriculum for those within the group. Differentiated instruction

promotes student learning, with both initiatives established to embrace student

differences and to ensure students have every opportunity to learn in ways that best suit

their individual needs (Darrow & Adamek, 2017).

Ferguson's (2016) report on effective instructional strategies for achieving better

educational outcomes for males and men of color emphasized the importance of the

"person-environment fit," in which teachers and students are well prepared to meet each

other's expectations in the classroom. Teacher training and professional development

programs must ensure that teachers have the training and tools they need to succeed,

particularly in classrooms where students are not well prepared or where there is a mix of

abilities (Gallagher & Chingos, 2017). Identifying specific instructional strategies that

will best promote children's academic and reading interest (Käsper et. al., 2018).

Reading Engagement

For students to obtain reading skills during their early childhood educational

years, is found to be critical for their future academic and personal growth. Reading

engagement is one of those needed reading skills to ensure students' success. The lack of

engagement is often discussed and associated with the achievement success of African

American male students in reading (Bowman et. al., 2018). Many scholars and

organizations have spent decades researching how to engage African American male students to read and increase their educational performance (Foord, 2021). Teachers are expected to ensure African American male students are reading on grade level. African American male students are still falling behind (H*usband* & Kang, 2020). There is little research regarding increasing the reading level in African American male students in elementary contexts (Ladd et., al. 2017). When African American male students do not master reading skills in the early grades, gaps in literacy development form and widen throughout their academic careers (Bowman et. al., 2018).

Cho et. al. (2019) explored the mindset and achievement goals to understand struggling readers' engagement. It was found that it is highly important to include motivational variables in understanding sources of individual differences in reading comprehension for struggling readers. Petscher et. al., 2017, conducted a study that presents a direct connection between mindset to standardized reading outcomes in a sample of 195 fourth-grade students. The findings suggested the potential importance of assessing general and reading-specific mindset linked to reading. In the mindset theory, growth mindset could explain why some students fulfil their potential and others do not (Gouëdard, 2021).

Factors Relating to Academic Success

When examining factors related to student academic outcomes, many scholars agree that there are a variety of factors that could contribute. Family background, family socioeconomic status, resources available for children's education, school environment,

and parent support are imperative factors to student success (Chiang, 2018). Students'

motivation to learn reflects class-based differences, such that advantaged families are

able to instill high levels of learning motivation in their children by providing high levels

of social-emotional support as well as class-based opportunities and resources at home

(Li, 2019). For example, children from privileged backgrounds are encouraged to value

learning and therefore develop higher motivations to master academic subjects compared

to their disadvantaged peers (Bowman et al., 2018).

Teachers are also key factors to African American male students' academic

success. Some may argue that teachers play an independently crucial role in students'

learning process. For example, Chiang (2018) found that parents often take a hands-off

approach in children's schooling and instead rely on teachers to prepare children for

exams. Teachers and the relationships that they build with students are key components

that shape students' learning (Fries-Britt, 2017). Each day teachers interact with students

who possess multiple personalities and each carry with them their own unique challenges

(Miller, 2021). Teachers can guide a student to a positive academic outcome (Claessens

et al., 2017). The relationship between students and teachers are important because both

are equally in charge of the successful realization of the instructional and learning

process (Delos Reyes & Toria, 2020).

African American Reading Gap

The reading gap for African American male students is continually widening

(Hamshek, 2019). Many researchers have investigated the educational experiences,

environmental factors, and outcomes contributing to the gap between African American male students and their peers (Blume Oeu, 2018; Essien, 2017; Wright & Counsell, 2018). This gap starts once a child enters pre-kindergarten. Children enter prekindergarten with experiences and knowledge from their family, childcare, and prekindergarten environments. Because these experiences vary by race and family income, many children enter school lagging behind their peers (Gallager & Chingos, 2017). Evidence suggested that children from low-income households are exposed to fewer words than their peers, placing them at a disadvantage for building vocabulary and comprehension (Shing et al., 2017).

In the United States, the gaps between African Americans and their white peers consistently grows. The NAEP (2018) reported that African American male students scored the lowest reading score compared to students in other racial and ethnic groups. African *A*merican male students scored a basic score of 206, Hispanic male students scored a basic score of 209, White male students scored a proficient score of 232, and Asian male students scored a proficient score of 237 *(*NCES, 2018*)*.

Reading is an important function for African American male students because it develops mental cognition for their future academic success. Reading also strengthens students' reading attitudes, fluency, and comprehension. Proficient reading comprehension is crucial for success in every academic domain, and specifically in courses focused on reading and literature (Wigfield et al., 2016). Recent research has shown that the technical skills of reading are important, but they are not enough. Young

children must be taught reading for comprehension, which pairs instruction on decoding letters and words with instruction on how to derive meaning from the content (Gallagher & Chingos, 2017). Flowers (2016) conducted an integrative review of the research literature to explore plausible explanations of the achievement gap between African American males and White males. In the study, Flowers (2016) found that researchers may want to consider focusing on research partnerships with local schools and other local area educational agencies to motivate and strengthen the foundational language skills of African American males. Mastery of these skills allows students to learn independently and access new content with ease, establishing a foundation for learning through elementary and secondary school. Reading can unlock the potential of children in the lower elementary grades to learn content in math, science, social studies, and other subjects (Gallergher & Chingos, 2017).

Teachers' Perspective

Teachers' perspectives are their personal point of view or account of a phenomenon (Boylan et al., 2018). Teacher perspectives are the thoughts or mental images teachers have about themselves, their profession, and their students (Kotaman et al., 2018). Teachers background knowledge and life experiences shaped their perspectives (Clark, 2020). Understanding teachers' perspectives is important regarding their teaching practices (Halali et al., 2017).

Perspectives of teachers are essential because they identify the basis behind teachers' actions as they performed their duties and responsibilities. Teachers'

perspectives are critical to creating an efficient and successful learning environment (Gundogmus, 2017). Yılmaz and Turan (2020) posited that teachers' views are related to the learning and teaching process, methods, and strategies they use in class, classroom management, and class participation. Boylan et al. (2018) found that identifying teachers' perspectives can benefit policymakers, teachers, and children, to develop skills in children that will enable them to be successful learners, equipped for the 21st century.

In the United States, a curriculum is in place to help guide teachers to teach the standards to their students. Some teachers have decided to teach what they think is best for their students. They do not allow the curriculum to demand what or how they teach (Duggins & Acosta, 2017). According to Duggins and Acosta (2017), teachers have very little control over their choice of literature due to curriculum constraints. By following the prescribed plan and material choices, teachers are often required to teach every child and every class the same. The review of literature on teachers' perspectives supports the theory of social constructivism by focusing on the interdependence of social and individual processes in the construction of new knowledge.

Summary and Conclusions

This literature review contains some of the issues directly associated with reading among African American male students. Previously identified research studies have pointed out that African American male students are not reading on grade level. The historical review shows how it gap started with African American males and it issue continues. Reading engagement in African American male students becomes

predominant when they do not master reading skills in the early grades. While researching race in education, African American male students' reading performance continues to cause concern for communities, school systems, and policymakers (Bowman et al., 2017). This is due to the achievement gap between African American male students and their White peers. Various internal and external factors attribute to this difficulty including the lack of motivation and interest of African American males in learning and reading, and teachers' perspectives. The issues that teachers associate with African American male students and reading proficiency may be resolved by understanding teachers' perspectives on instructional practices that can be used to help African American male students read. This literature review indicates that little qualitative research exists. There remains a gap in the literature that instructional strategies need to be investigated from the perspective of teachers who teach reading to African American male students. By uncovering new knowledge, this study is designed to explore teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies for African American male students to read using semistructured interviews. Chapter 3 includes a full description of how the gap in literature was investigated through basic qualitative research, designed specifically to find a deeper understanding of instructional strategies by interviewing elementary school teachers who teach reading to African American male students.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary school teachers' perspectives on instructional strategies to enhance African American male students' proficiency *in* reading. Teachers provide direct reading instruction to students and can identify instructional strategies to help African American male students read proficiently. Encouraging teachers to share their perspectives on instructional practices may help identify their understandings, feelings, and concerns regarding African American male students when learning to read proficiently. In this chapter, a description of the research methodology for the study is provided, including details of the research design, rationale, and the role of the researcher. Explanations of the participant selection process, sampling, and instrumentation are also included. Data analysis, measures of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures conclude the chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

The following questions guided this basic qualitative research study:

RQ1:   How do elementary school teachers describe instructional strategies they use to improve African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades?

RQ2:   What supports do elementary school teachers believe might help them increase African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades?

To address these research questions, I used a basic qualitative research design to explore elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies that will enhance African American reading using an interview format. A basic qualitative research design is appropriate for this study because I intended to find knowledge of perspectives and techniques (Kozleski, 2017). By interviewing current elementary school teachers, I gained a deeper understanding of instructional strategies that enhance African American male students' ability to read. Interviewing is a data collection method used in qualitative research that provides information from participants who are knowledgeable of the phenomenon under study (Babbie, 2017; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). A qualitative approach was the most applicable method for this study because it allowed me to acquire detailed information and understanding of elementary school teachers' perspectives. Understanding these perspectives would not be accomplished through a quantitative approach because I did not seek numeric descriptions of views of a population. A quantitative approach lacks the in-depth perspectives that I intended to ascertain.

Given the focus of this study, I contemplated using several other research designs before choosing basic qualitative research. I considered a case study, wherein a researcher attempts to describe the interactions of a bounded unit concerning a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The case study also requires multiple sources of data to ensure validity. In my study, I only used data from interviews; a case study was not appropriate for my study design. I also considered using the phenomenological research design for my study. The phenomenological research design allows researchers

to explore lived experiences. This design did not support my intent to identify elementary school teachers' perspectives on instructional strategies to enhance African American male students' reading proficiency in second through fifth grades. A phenomenological study is aimed at understanding the essence of an experience (Kruth, 2015), not at examining processes. Another theory that was considered was grounded theory. However, grounded theory was not applicable because it is not as descriptive as a basic qualitative design using one-on-one semi structured interviews, and the purpose is mainly to develop a theory (Creswell, 2013). In a study with a grounded theory research design, the major data collection method is through interviews of 20 to 30 participants or until data saturation is reached (Yin, 2014). My study focused on a smaller number of participants.

After evaluating the different designs and theories, I decided to use a basic qualitative study. A basic qualitative study can be used to uncover strategies, techniques, and instructional practices of highly effective teachers. A basic qualitative study using one-on-one semi structured interviews was used to explore elementary school teachers' perspectives on instructional strategies to enhance African American male students' reading proficiency in second through fifth grades.

Role of the Researcher

As the sole researcher, I was responsible for all aspects of the study. I served as an elementary school teacher for 15 years. Within those 15 years, I served as a first grade, third grade, and fourth grade reading teacher. During my years as a classroom teacher, I

was a professional development facilitator, data analysis team member, teacher leader, and grade chairperson. These experiences prompted my interest in developing this study.

I recognize that some biases formed through my experience as an early childhood reading teacher. Researchers are a significant part of qualitative research and must be able to describe relevant biases, assumptions, expectations, and experiences when conducting a study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Biases can have an impact on a research study, and reflexivity is a systematic assessment of the researcher's identity, positionality, and subjectivities aimed to reduce the impact of biases (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To minimize and manage cultural bias, I showed unconditional positive regard and was cognizant of my cultural assumptions. I minimized wording bias by transcribing the participants' words verbatim. I made a conscious effort to disregard my experiences as a teacher to thoroughly examine and understand the perspectives of the participants for this study. I also used a journal to constantly self-reflect on my biases, theoretical preferences, research settings, the selection of participants, personal experiences, relationships with participants, and the data generated and analyzed (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Methodology

Participant Selection

Participants selected for this basic qualitative study were elementary school teachers who teach African American male students in second through fifth grades. To better understand elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies to

enhance African American male students' reading proficiency in second through fifth grades, I conducted one-on-one semistructured interviews with current elementary school teachers who teach reading to African American male students. Participants were recruited from the Walden University Participant Pool and elementary teacher social media groups.

I used a purposeful sampling strategy to invite 11teachers to participate, as well as snowball sampling to obtain more participants if necessary. Sampling refers to the process of identifying individuals who can provide data for the study (Burkholder et al., 2016). A purposeful sampling technique involves selecting participants based on specific criteria (Patton, 2015). The criteria for participant selection for this study was that participants (a) teach in an elementary setting, (b) teach African American male students in the subject of reading, and (c) were certified to teach in their state. Using snowball sampling allowed me to ask participants for others who could provide different or confirming perspectives regarding the topic (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Babbie (2017) noted that it is appropriate to choose a sample based on the knowledge of a population, its elements, and the purpose of the study. In qualitative studies, the sample size is not as relevant because depth is more important than breadth (see Burkholder et al., 2016). Recruiting 11 elementary school teachers who meet the criteria for participation ensured that I reached saturation during data analysis.

Instrumentation

The researcher is usually the primary research instrument in qualitative studies (Houghton et al., 2013), and such was the case for this doctoral study. In this basic qualitative study, I conducted one-on-one semistructured interviews with each teacher participant by telephone or through Zoom. Prospective participants received an invitation to participate, followed by a consent form if eligible to participate. I designed the interview questions (Appendix A) to answer the research questions. Interview Questions 1 through 5 were used to answer RQ 1, and Interview Questions 6 through 8 were used to answer RQ 2. I asked follow-up questions as necessary throughout the interview process. I used the interview protocol guide (Appendix B) as the instrument to collect data. This form was used to gather demographic data, to record minor details, to inform the participants of study expectations, and to ask interview questions.

Interviews are the center of many qualitative studies because they provide a focused insight into individuals' lived experiences, and they assist in understanding how participants make sense of and construct reality concerning the phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The primary data came from the interview responses of the participants which were recorded on a telephone or through Zoom (only the audio portion of Zoom was recorded). Recording interviews ensured the accuracy of responses (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I asked the questions in the same order for each participant to ensure consistency. If responses to the questions were vague, I prompted the participants to further explain their answers by asking follow-up questions.

I used the conceptual framework and the related literature to create the interview questions. I created the interview questions to assist in understanding elementary school teachers' perspectives on instructional strategies that enhance African American male students in reading. I used my own interview protocol guide (see Appendix B) to gather demographic data, record minor details, inform the participants of the study expectations, and ask interview questions.

I established validity assuring that the interview questions measured the research questions content. To address content validity, I asked two nonparticipating elementary school teachers to review the interview questions for clarity and to ensure that the design of the questions would answer the research questions. I received positive feedback and a few small suggestions to help with wording. I also conducted a mock interview with one elementary school teacher who fit the study criteria to become familiar with the lay out of the interview protocol guide and the technology.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The study consisted of 11 elementary school teacher participants. The participants were recruited based on teaching elementary school to African American male students. Participants were recruited from the Walden University Participant Pool and elementary teacher social media groups. Snowball sampling was used to obtain more participants. Participants came from across the United States and provided a broad range of backgrounds and teaching experiences.

Recruitment

Once I posted information in the Walden University Participant Pool and elementary school teacher social media groups, 11 participants were recruited. A description of the study was posted, along with the requirements to participate. Participants who volunteered to take part in the study were given a participation invitation. Once participants expressed interest, a consent form was emailed to explain the background, procedures, risks, benefits, privacy, and voluntary nature of this study. I instructed potential participants to respond to my email with the words "I consent" in the subject line if they chose to move forward with participating in this study. I collected data from one-on-one semistructured interviews. All the interviews took place through telephone or through Zoom. I attempted to conduct each interview within a 45 to 60 minute time frame but allowed for extra time as needed. Interviews were audio recorded. Interviews took place outside of regular school hours.

Participation

After approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), I posted information on my study in the Walden University Participant Pool and elementary teacher social media groups. Then I was informed of possible participants. I verified each potential participant to meet the criteria and then provided the consent form to give them the opportunity to review the details of the study before they agreed to participate. Teachers who agreed to participate responded to my email with "I consent" in the email subject line. I sent all teachers who agreed to participate a thank you email that

included an interview protocol guide (Appendix B) and a list of interview appointment

options for them to select the most convenient date and time slot. Rubin and Rubin

(2012) indicated that the interview protocol may be shared with participants before the

interview. I conducted the interviews as scheduled using specific interview questions

from the interview protocol guide (Appendix B).

Data Collection

Qualitative interviews are a data collection method used by the researcher to seek

a deeper understanding of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data collection for this

study was conducted using one-on-one semistructured interviews. One-on-one

semistructured interviewing provided me with flexibility and gave me the opportunity to

explore topics that arose during an interview session (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Interviews provide researchers a mode to uncover people's perspectives, their

constructions, and reflections on their experiences (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Two days prior to scheduled interviews, I sent a courtesy email reminding the

participants of the upcoming scheduled interview. To be prepared on the day of the

interview, I reviewed the interview protocol. Interviews were conducted at a mutually

agreed upon date and time by telephone or through Zoom. Before the interviews began, I

greeted the participants to make them feel comfortable. I reviewed the informed consent

letter, confidentiality terms, participants' rights, the purpose of the topic, why it needs to

be studied, who it might help, and the importance of the interviewee's participation (see

Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I orally asked the participant's permission to use the telephone or

Zoom software to record the audio of the interview sessions. Recording the interviews allowed me to go back to review responses to the interview questions. I let participants know that they could quit or withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason with no repercussions. I then asked each participant if they had any questions prior to beginning the interview. After questions were answered or if there were no questions, I stated that the recording will begin.

To achieve the objectives of the study, I conducted interviews with 11 elementary school teachers who teach African American male students in second through fifth grades. Their responses may provide detailed descriptions of their perspectives of instructional strategies to enhance African American male students to read. During the interview, interview questions were asked one question at a time. I established trust and rapport by being flexible and engaging with each participant. I made the participants feel comfortable and was open to clarifying questions that they had during the process. Each participant was interviewed one time. Each interview lasted 45 to 60 minutes. I documented my thoughts in my reflective journal during the interviews. *I* used the responses to the interviews to clarify and bring depth and understanding of the teachers' perspectives of the instructional strategies they use to enhance African American male students to read proficiently.

As the interview came to an end, I immediately debriefed each participant. I reminded the participant that the interview responses will remain confidential. I asked the participant whether they had any questions regarding the interview process. I answered

any question and if the participant did not have any questions, I thanked them for their time and participation. I documented each step of the data collection process in detail in case there was a need to verify the data with the participants and to monitor and maintain the thoroughness and quality of data collection. I used member checking for trustworthiness and dependability. Member checking is a process of sharing a brief two-page summary of the findings with the participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This process is used for trustworthiness and dependability. The data collection process took three to six weeks.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis includes organizing and preparing data, reading, and reflecting on overall meaning, conducting analysis based on method, producing a description of the people, and identifying emerging themes, representing data, and interpreting the larger meaning of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I closely examined the data to identify common themes, topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly. After completing the interviews, I sent the audio recordings to Transcribe, which is an online software program to transcribe the audio part of the interviews into written text. I reviewed the written transcripts to confirm accuracy. The written transcript allowed me to analyze the data line by line of each participant. A word-by-word account of each participants' interview assisted with data analysis. Data analysis in qualitative research is primarily textual to help researchers make sense of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

I used a hybrid approach of deductive and inductive reasoning. After I received the written transcripts of the participants' audio responses from the interviews, began data analysis. I used deductive reasoning by reviewing a priori coding that were developed ahead of time based on the theoretical framework, the interview questions, and pre-existing knowledge (see Saldaña, 2016). A priori codes for this study included goals, cultural, awareness, understanding, honesty, strategies, socioeconomic disadvantage, gaps, exposure, and discipline. I added to the coding as I examined the data inductively by identifying open codes.

In open coding, I read the data line by line and coded keywords and phrases that stood out (see Saldaña, 2016). All significant statements or phrases were organized and coded (see Creswell, 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I manually used different colored highlighters to distinguish the open codes. In subsequent rounds of coding, I focused specifically on aspects of the research questions until I all data was coded (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I used open codes to help me organize the data into manageable units or chunks to help me discover ideas and concepts through the analysis of the written text (see Saldaña, 2016).

Once I established the open codes, I used axial coding, which is the process of grouping codes with other codes that share similar meanings into categories (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It is a process of going from coding chunks of data to starting to see how these codes come together to form categories from which I developed findings (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

I examined categories and looked for emerging themes. I examined the initial themes and identified any themes that collapsed into each other to become one theme. I then reviewed data until the point of saturation, which occurs when continued data collection does not add new themes or patterns but instead reinforces what has already been derived from prior data analysis (see Burkholder et al., 2016). Reading the written text to the point of saturation, gave me the opportunity to analyze the data line by line. I reviewed the data set to determine if the themes accurately reflected the data, and I recoded data if necessary. I continued to scrutinize the themes by checking and rechecking my interpretations against the data.

Member checking is the process of exploring the interpretations by returning a summary of study findings to the participants for validation. All participants were given the opportunity to review a summary of the data findings for correctness of my interpretations of the data (see Creswell, 2013). I provided a two-page summary and asked participants to make comments to me through email. I read all comments and reached out if there was any comment that required further explanation. I sought clarification and worked to identify any discrepancies which were reported. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that researchers should look for alternative explanations, possible misinterpretations, and discrepant findings. Discrepant findings can point a researcher to potential flaws in the construction of instruments, flaws such as unintended ambiguity or insufficient depth in participants' responses (DiLoreto & Gaines, 2016). I identified and discussed any discrepant findings in detail. I also included quotes of participants'

responses from the interviews in the results to provide insight into the lived experiences of the participants.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness and validity of qualitative research depends on what the researcher sees and hears. Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are important in establishing trustworthiness. One of the ways to ensure credibility and transferability is to ensure that those interviewed have the experience to discuss the subject matter the researcher seeks to explore (Birt et al., 2016). I used the audio-recordings from the interview and viewed body language as a form of credibility. Credibility is the establishing of results from qualitative criteria that are credible from the perspective of the participant in the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Dependability refers to the stability of findings over time (Burkholder et al., 2016). I gained dependability by implementing member checking. Member checking is a process of sharing a brief two-page summary of the findings with the participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I asked participants to take about 15-20 minutes to read the summary and email me within 48 hours if they had any questions or concerns. If participants had questions, we took 15- 20 minutes to discuss their questions via the telephone. If the participants needed more time, it was given. If I did not hear from participants within 48 hours after emailing the two-page summary, I concluded that the participants had no questions or concerns. Member checking is a strategy used to ensure

that content in the study is trustworthy and to rule out misinterpretation of the participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Member checking contributed to dependability.

Transferability is the extent that qualitative studies can apply or transfer to broader contexts even though the purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize from a sample to a population (Burkholder et al., 2016). I provided a thick description, which is the process of providing an extensive detailed description of the data and the context. Through my thick description, readers will be able to judge the appropriateness of transferring my findings to future research, or to make comparisons to other contexts using extensive detailed description of the data (see Creswell, 2013).

Confirmability refers to the degree that a study is confirmed or corroborated by other researchers and that data and interpretations of the findings derive from the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). One goal of confirmability is to acknowledge the ways that researchers use data to interpret personal biases and prejudices and to mediate those through structured reflexivity processes. I achieved confirmability through reflexivity by documenting in a journal a self-critical analysis of my biases, my role in and responses to the research process, and adjustments made to the study based on ongoing analysis (see Burkholder et al., 2016). I also used Transcribe, which is a computer program to transcribe the interview responses and manually coded them to gain a deeper understanding of the intent of the participants. The goal was to ensure that there was no researcher bias by interpreting the data in an unbiased way (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Ethical Procedures

I sought approval of this study and followed ethical requirements according to the Walden University IRB which was needed to ensure the study included only ethical procedures. Ethical concerns related to recruitment materials and processes were put into place. Universities have established IRBs to review research proposals and to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects involved in research activities conducted under its authority (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I completed the National Institutes of Health Office of Extramural Research course in "Protecting Human Research Participants." I followed the ethical requirements of Walden University's IRB. In the event I had ethical concerns related to recruitment materials or data collection, I completed an Adverse Event Reporting Form and will send it to Walden University's IRB.

A letter of participation invitation and consent form was emailed to participants who volunteered to take part in the research that was posted in Walden University's Participant Pool and elementary teacher social media group. Potential participants from the snowball sampling process also received a letter of participation and consent form. The email described the procedures for data collection, confidentiality protection, and time required for the interview. Participants were asked to reply to indicate their consent. A follow-up email was sent after 24 hours if there was no response to the initial request to interview. A third and final request was sent by email for response to the interview request after 48 hours if there was no response to initial request.

I established ethical concerns related to data collection and possible intervention activities. I informed participants that they may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice or penalty. Interviews could be terminated by a participant if at any time they refused to answer questions, had a desire to discontinue the interview, or if the interview was interrupted. Data from any discontinued interviews was erased or shredded unless the participant agreed to allow the information provided to be used in the study. Participants had the option to take breaks or reschedule the interview if they became anxious or had the need reschedule.

All personal identifiers were removed and replaced with words, letters, or numbers to protect the identity of the individual, such as A1, A2, A3, or B1. The identifiers were used in describing the findings. I am the only person with access to the data. Participants' information and data shared between me, and each participant will remain confidential. I will keep data for a period of at least five years, as required by the university, and to avoid future risks to confidentiality. Recorded materials will be erased after 5 years following final approval by the research committee to minimizing any future risks related to confidentiality.

Summary

In this chapter, I explained the method I used in the research study and the rationale for selecting a basic qualitative research design. I described the role of the researcher as well as the criteria I used for finding and selecting participants. This chapter included a rationale for data collection and analysis, as well as the types of data and

procedures that were used to collect, store, and analyze data. This chapter also included

strategies to improve the trustworthiness of the study. I identified the measures for the

ethical protection of the participants and the data. In Chapter 4, I share the results,

including the data collection, data analysis, results, and evidence of trustworthiness.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies that will enhance reading for African American male students. I used a purposeful sampling strategy as well as snowball sampling to interview 11 elementary school teachers. Participants were recruited from the Walden University Participant Pool and elementary school teacher social media groups. Once participants expressed interest, a consent form was sent to them via email for their review before agreeing to participate in this study. Potential participants who desired to continue responded to the email with "I consent." I then sent available days and times for the interview so that potential participants could see what worked best for them. Interviews were conducted by telephone and Zoom. I used Zoom's audio record function to record all Zoom interviews with the participants' cameras turned off to maintain confidentiality. Phone interviews were recorded using an audio recorder. Each interview was transcribed using an online software program to analyze the interview data for codes, categories, and themes.

In Chapter 4, I describe how participants were selected, the participant demographics, and how data were collected and analyzed. The research questions that guided this study were:

RQ1:   How do elementary school teachers describe the instructional strategies they use to improve African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades?

RQ2: What supports do elementary school teachers believe might help them

increase African American male students' reading achievement in second

through fifth grades?

Setting

I conducted one-on-one, semistructured interviews from my home by telephone

and Zoom. At the time of the interviews, participants were teaching in an elementary

setting, teaching African American male students in the subject of reading, and were

certified to teach in their state. A total of 11 elementary school teachers participated in

this study. There were no unexpected circumstances that affected the analysis of the data

collected. Six interviews were conducted by phone, and five interviews were conducted

via Zoom. Each interview was transcribed word for word using a transcription online

service before the coding and analysis process began.

Demographics

I conducted this study with 11 elementary school teachers from different regions

of the United States. All 11 participants were teaching African American male students,

second through fifth grades, in the subject of reading and were certified to teach in their

state. Participants' years of teaching experience ranged from 1 to 22 years. I assigned

each participant an alphanumeric code: T1 through T11. Table 1 summarizes

participants' years of teaching experience in an elementary school setting, current grade

being taught, number of years teaching reading, and their gender.

Table 1

Research Participants

Research Participants	Years of Teaching Experience	Current Grade Being Taught	Number of years teaching reading	Gender
T1	1	3, 4,5	1	F
T2	5	2	5	F
T3	17	3	17	F
T4	17	3, 4, 5	17	F
T5	19	2	19	F
T6	22	3, 4, 5	13	F
T7	19	4	10	F
T8	11	3, 4, 5	11	F
T9	9	5	5	M
T10	22	3, 4, 5	12	F
T11	10	2	10	M

Data Collection

The data collection process commenced once approval was obtained from Walden

University's IRB. The IRB approval number was11-22-21-0349571. I used purposeful

sampling and snowball sampling to recruit participants for this study. I began by posting

information in the Walden University Participant Pool and elementary school teacher

social media groups. Once participants expressed interest, a consent form was emailed to

explain the background, procedures, risks, benefits, privacy, and voluntary nature of this

study. I instructed potential participants to respond to my email with the words "I

consent" if they chose to move forward with participating in this study.

The data collection process took three weeks. Six participants chose to do a phone

interview, and five participants chose to do Zoom interview. Each participant emailed me

with a date and time that worked best to participate in the interview. I interviewed each

participant once. The length of each interview was between 45-60 minutes. I asked each

participant the same interview questions to guarantee reliability in the data. At the

beginning of the interview, each participant was reminded of the purpose of the study, the

interview process, and elements of the consent form. Each interview began with three

demographic questions to understand how long the participant had been teaching at an

elementary school setting, how long the participant had been teaching reading, and what

grade they were teaching. During each interview, I kept a reflective journal to document

my thoughts and feelings and manage potential bias. Zoom interviews were recorded

using the record feature on Zoom. I ensured that participants' cameras were off during

the recording of the interviews to maintain confidentiality. I used an audio recorder on

the computer to record the six phone interviews.

After completing each interview, I thanked the participant and expressed my

appreciation for their willingness to be interviewed. I informed the participants that they

would receive a two-page summary of the study's findings once I analyzed all the

interview data. I concluded each interview by asking the participants if they had any

questions and informing them that if they had any questions later regarding this study,

they could reach out to me anytime.

The audio recordings from the telephone and Zoom interviews were all

transcribed word for word. I stored all digital audio recordings and transcripts in a

password-protected folder on my personal computer. There were no unexpected

circumstances that took place during the data collection process. I made sure to follow all the steps of the data collection process described in Chapter 3 explicitly.

<p style="text-align:center">Data Analysis</p>

In this basic qualitative study, I explored elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies of African American male students in reading in the United States by conducting one-on-one semistructured interviews. Each participant was asked the same open-ended questions in the same order. After completing the interviews, I sent the audio recordings to Transcribe, an online software program to transcribe the audio part of the interviews into written text. I reviewed the written transcripts to confirm accuracy. The written transcripts allowed me to analyze each participant's data line by line. A word-by-word account of each participants' interview assisted with data analysis. Data analysis began with setting a priori codes that aligned with the study's conceptual framework. A priori codes include goals, cultural, awareness, understanding, honesty, strategies, socioeconomic disadvantage, gaps, exposure, and discipline. As inductive analysis of the data convened, more codes were added through open coding. Finally, I used axial coding to relate the codes to each other to create categories. I explored the categories by broadening and collapsing them to identify emerging themes.

Phase 1: Familiarizing Myself With the Data

To confirm the accuracy of the data, I compared each audio recording with the written transcript. I printed each interview and organized them based on the order of the interview. Each participant was given an alphanumeric code to ensure privacy. I read and

reread the transcripts being observant and aware of repetition in the data. As I reread each transcript, I took notes.

Phase 2: Generating Codes

A priori code, opening coding, and axial coding were used to analyze the interview data. A priori codes were identified in advance as potential codes. A priori codes for this study included goals, cultural, awareness, understanding, honesty, strategies, socioeconomic disadvantage, gaps, exposure, and discipline. The study's framework was used to identify the a priori codes. As inductive analysis of the data convened, more codes were added through open coding.

I used open codes to analyze the data from the interviews. I read the text three times first, and then color-coded words and phrases as I went through open coding. I analyzed each line of the transcripts, hand coding and identifying key concepts and repeated segments relevant to the conceptual framework and research question. Key concepts were underlined using a variety of colors to represent each identifying code. Colored pens were used to complete the color coding. The pen colors included blue, red, green, pink, and orange. Using different colors allowed me to rearrange data into codes by resemblances and other shared features. From the data analysis, 42 open codes emerged, which included some of the a priori codes. Table 2 shows an example of 10 of the open codes, participant identifiers, and examples of excerpts from the data to demonstrate where the code came from.

Table 2

Examples of Open Codes

Code	Participant	Excerpt
Small group	T3 T9	"I use small groups and flex groups where students are doing activities to enhance those skills and practices." "I use small groups to gain an understanding of what my students struggle with."
Pull out student	T3 T1	"Pull that student aside for a one-on-one conference and find out what's going on." "I'll pull him for a one-on-one to read a page or two to me."
Lack of trust	T2 T5	"If they don't like you or don't trust you, then they won't even try." "Majority of my parents were African American when I first started teaching and I felt like there was a barrier because they didn't trust me."
Getting to know your students	T7 T10	"Teachers must understand their students and meet them where they are. I try to learn what their good at, I build from there." "Other than looking at data, teachers need to take the time to really get to know their students to teach them effectively."
Diverse reading literature	T7 T4	"We need diverse literature. I never saw myself in a book when I was little." "We need text with diversity so it can provide them with an opportunity to be able to identify with the text.
Motivating	T11 T4	"Making students feel like they can do it is half the battle." "I love seeing the excitement in their faces when they know you are rooting for them."
Parent involvement	T3 T5	"Even though parents are not allowed in the buildings, I do zoom conferences where parents can look in to see what I am teaching. They can still be involved." "Make sure the parents realize that we need to work together and figure out how to do this for their child is the key to a good relationship."
Poor	T4 T11	"It's tough to get through to them because I know that a lot of our African American students have generational poverty." "When I got hired, my district thought it was necessary to see the community. The community was improvised."
Lack of funding	T6 T1	"Teaching in a Title 1 school is difficult to get community buy-in because the area is so poor." "I have to buy a lot of my resources because funding is limited."
Vocabulary	T7 T9	"To build up their vocabulary, you have to draw, visualize, and define the word." "Just having a conversation with my students will build up their vocabulary."

After the open coding phase, I used axial coding to examine the initial codes and develop categories. I then began grouping codes together that were similar. If codes had the same meaning, they were combined or condensed. I did this until all the codes were in groups based on similarities. Once codes were grouped, these groups became the categories. I named each category based upon the types of codes that the category contained. After the axial coding phase, there were a total of 15 categories. Microsoft Word was used to list all the codes that were generated from the open coding phase. Table 3 shows a sample of the open codes, categories, and the participants' identifiers, and quotes from the data.

Table 3

Examples of Open Codes and Categories

Category	Code	Participant	Excerpt
Groups	Small group Flex group	T2 T6	"I have pull out groups where I'm able to focus on a specific skill or strategy. Sometimes they get lost in a whole group." "I have flex groups where I am able to focus on a specific skill."
Student Conferencing	Pull out students Getting to know your students Individual students	T3 T4	"To understand my student's instructional level, I have one-on-one conferences with them." "I pull individual students over to me to get clarity of their understanding because they don't speak up in class."
Understanding your students	Motivating students Relatable Lack of trust	T6 T8	"African American males lack trust. We have to find a way to gain trust from the students and everything else will fall into place." "Even though we're not necessarily reading texts that incorporate them, you could always hook them by relating it to something that they do or say."
Cultural relevant teaching	Interest level Literature in the classroom Diverse reading resources	T4 T1	"None of us are the same but we have different texts in my classroom that cover an array of different topics." "I'm not saying you can't have books about turtles, but you need to have books that represents every population that you serve."
Building parent relationships	Parent Involvement Parent awareness	T7 T1	"I don't think parents are aware of how important their roles are, and we have to help them understand that they play an important part in their child's education." "Students draw to me not because I'm African American but because I start with building a relationship with them first."
Socioeconomic disadvantage	Poor Poverty Lack of funding	T8 T6 T9	"The importance of reading or even education is not that important in this community when they are living in poverty." "Some of their situations are unfortunate and just sad." "My school has 100% free or reduced lunch."
Standard Language	Vocabulary Exposure Definitions	T5 T11	"When I expose my African American male students to new high frequency vocabulary, I have them define the word and write a sentence, so they won't forget it." "I have to have a word wall in the classroom to showcase all of the vocabulary we have learned throughout the year. My students become familiar with the words, and it becomes a part of their language."

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

After completing axial coding, I reviewed the 15 categories for emerging themes. I grouped categories that shared similar meanings or similar characteristics. I identified emerging themes for each group of categories. There were four themes that surfaced from the analysis: (a) building relationships improve African American male students' reading achievement (b) increasing student engagement increases reading engagement, (c) developing language skills improves reading abilities, and (d) more funding and resources to support reading achievement. I used thematic analysis to evaluate the generated four themes with the categorical data, refine the themes, and verify relationships between the themes and the research questions.

Phase 4: Reviewing the Themes

At this stage I reviewed the themes to refine them. I removed the themes which did not have enough data to support them and collapsed some of the themes to form one theme. I also separated some themes into separate themes to ensure that there were clear and identifiable distinctions between the themes. To do this, I read all the collated extracts for each theme and considered whether they seemed to form a clear pattern. I reviewed the themes several times to ensure that each category truly correlated with them under which it was categorized. I was also attentive to if the themes answered the research question Next, I reread all the transcripts to explore whether the themes fit well with what is in the data. I also coded any additional data related to the themes which I missed in the earlier stages of coding.

Phase 5: Defining and Labeling Themes

No revisions were made to the themes in phase five. The results of the data analysis revealed four themes related to the study's research questions. Three themes emerged for Research Question 1 and one theme emerged for Research Question 2 (see Table 4). After a complete analysis of the data, I used the emergent themes to answer the research questions of the study.

All participants identified that building a trusting relationship with an African American male was a contributing factor for improving African American success in reading. Participants also described one-on-one instruction, groups, culturally relevant teaching, and motivating the students were essential instructional strategies to help in the reading achievement of African American students. They also mentioned the importance of language development and it was imperative to reading proficiently. Lastly, participants discussed how more funding and resources to enhance reading for African American male students. Table 4 shows a representation of the categories and themes that emerged during thematic analysis related to each if the study's research questions.

Table 4

Categories and Themes

RQ1: How do elementary school teachers describe the instructional strategies they use to improve African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades?	
Categories	Themes
Getting to know your students/ Building parent relationships.	Theme A: Building relationships improve African American male students' reading achievement.
Groups/Student conference/culturally relevant teaching/Motivation	Theme B: Increasing student engagement increases reading engagement.
Standard language/Vocabulary development	Theme C: Developing language skills improves reading abilities.
RQ2: What supports do elementary school teachers believe might help them increase African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades?	
Categories	Themes
Socioeconomic disadvantage/ Title 1 Schools	Theme D: More funding and resources to support reading achievement

Phase 6: Producing the Report

The last phase was to complete a concluding analysis of the themes and write about the results. After I completed the data analysis, I verified that the four themes answered the research questions. I found no evidence of inconsistent findings in the data, so I presumed that no added analysis was needed. The four themes were used to provide information on the research questions: RQ1: How do elementary school teachers describe the instructional strategies they use to improve African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades? RQ2: What supports do elementary school teachers believe might help them increase African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades?

Results of the Study

I explored elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students in second through fifth grades and what supports they believe might help them increase African American male students' reading achievement through a basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews. In this section, I present the results of the data that I collected from 11 interviews with elementary school teachers in which I asked eight open-ended questions. I designed the interview questions (see Appendix A) to answer the research questions. Interview Questions 1 through 5 were used to answer RQ 1, and Interview Questions 6 through 8 were used to answer RQ 2.

The first research question focused on instructional strategies they use to improve African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades. Interview questions 1 through 5 addressed this research question. Three themes emerged from the data collected from these interviews regarding the first research question. The themes were: (a) building relationships improve African American male students' reading achievement, (b) increasing student engagement increases reading engagement, and (c) developing language skills improves reading abilities.

The second research question focused on what supports elementary school teachers believe might help them to increase African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades. Interview questions 6 through 8 addressed this research question. A fourth theme emerged from the data collected from these

interviews regarding the second research question. The fourth theme was: more funding and resources to support reading achievement. I also asked follow-up questions as necessary throughout the interview process.

Theme 1: Building Relationships Improve African American Male Students'
Reading Achievement

Getting to Know Your Students

Many participants mentioned that having a relationship with their students was a critical factor in enhancing African American male students in reading. T6 stated:

It's important to have somebody that can connect with them on so many different levels. That doesn't mean that I can relate to every scenario that they come from, but I can build a relationship to understand. I truly know that I can't relate to everything that they've got going on in their lives but building a relationship will allow me to try hard to be present for them.

T5 expressed, "I feel like building relationships with the kids is what it's all about." T7 asserted," "Teachers must understand their students and meet them where they are. I try to learn what their good at, and I build from there." T10 communicated, "Other than looking at data, teachers need to take the time to really get to know their students to teach them effectively." T11 revealed:

Relationship is the key to success for African American male students. In order to understand where they are going, we need to understand where they have been. I

have that understanding of their strengths and weaknesses so I can push them

towards success.

Building Parent Relationships

Eight out of the 11 participants expressed that parent relationships were essential

for academic achievement. T5 expressed, "Make sure the parents realize that we need to

work together and figure out how to do this for their child is the key to a good

relationship." T4 mentioned that it is important to involve parents in their child's

learning. T7 expressed, "I don't think parents are aware of how important their roles are,

and we have to help them understand that they play an important part in their child's

education." T6 declared:

 I have conversations with the parents during open house or the first day of school

to understand how to get their support. They can do more at home with their

children than I can at school. Therefore, it is imperative that the students see me

working with the parents for their success.

T3 commented on how important it is to get parents involved with their child's education.

T2 stated:

Some parents are afraid to connect with the schools because all they hear is bad

news. Allowing the parents to understand that we are on the same team and

gaining that trust will give the parents a sense of ease.

T2 also expressed the importance of letting parents know what is going on in the

classrooms. T5 stated:

Since Covid-19, parents are not allowed in the building. I still keep that line of

communication open by phone calls, folders, and emails. I have recently started

recording a few of my lessons so parents can have an understanding of what I am

teaching and how I am teaching it. It has been a success so far. I think next

semester I am going to roll out zoom meetings during a lesson so they will be able

to see me teach and ask questions during real time.

T11 asserted, "I make sure I touch base with each parent the first week of school and let

them know who I am." T6 commented, "Parents appreciate the teachers that reach out

and let them know what's going on in school. It's our jobs to include parents." T7

commented that parents should never feel intimidated when they talk to their children's

teacher.

T8 stated:

I give my parents my personal phone number so they can feel comfortable with

me. I do have conditions with my cell phone number but most of the time the

parents text me to get a quicker response.

T10 stated:

It is very important to have parents on our side. Letting the parents know that we

are all in this together and actually meaning it, is the beginning of a good

relationship. The first time a parent hears your voice, it shouldn't be to complain

or even discuss failing grades. It should be about making a connection with the

family.

T7 stated:

> Before Covid 19, I had an open-door policy where parents were allowed in the classroom at any time. I feel that if the parents are comfortable, then the child is comfortable. There are so many times, even with my own personal children, kids go home and talk bad about the teacher. And how they are feeling about a certain class or subject. I'm sure that child doesn't feel supported by the teacher. They don't know if the teacher has their best interest. They need to know these things. And feel it too.

Theme 2: Increasing Student Engagement Increases Reading Engagement

Groups

Many participants discussed the importance of utilizing groups to enhance African American male students in reading. T3 mentioned that she incorporates small groups for 45 minutes every day. T9 discussed how she always conducts small groups to ensure she is covering the weakness of every individual student. T2 stated:

> I have pull-out groups where I'm able to focus on a specific skill or strategy. Sometimes they get lost in a whole group. My students are more comfortable when I have a pull-out group. I've noticed that they are more willing to ask and answer questions.

T3 and T11 discussed that they look at the data from the year before to group their students. T3 stated, "I already have my groups done by the first day of school. Yes, they can move groups throughout the year once I receive more data on them, but the first

group is the beginning to understanding where they are academically." T11 mentioned that she uses a lot of data to help her group her students.

Participants also discussed the importance of having the time to do groups effectively. T1 stated:

A sure way to get African American boys to read is to have small groups. Small groups really work if teachers do them effectively. Teachers cannot have small groups for 10 minutes and then switch. It doesn't work that way. To have a small group work effectively, teachers must understand that groups struggle, reteach, and then assess. That should take up to 20-5 minutes. The real question is, do we have that type of time?

Student Conferencing

Several participants mentioned that student conferencing is a key resource for enhancing reading for African American male students. T10 asserted that it is important to conference with students on a one-on-one level to gain a better understanding of what he is struggling with. T3 stated:

To understand my students' instructional level, I have one-on-one conferences with them. I can see a sign of relief when it's their time to conference one-on-one because it's just us. I get a chance to elaborate on their strengths and gain an understanding of their weaknesses. And that's important. To focus on one student is personal to them. They're happy to know that they have all of their teacher's attention.

T4 asserted:

I pull individual students over to me to get clarity of their understanding because they don't speak up in class. I can even use hands-on materials like highlighters, magnifying glasses, and sticky notes. And they are able to focus more. Even though my classroom is like a home, the African American males will not speak up in during whole group. I have even noticed that even when I pull my males for a one-on-one conference, they are still looking around to see if anyone is listening or watching.

T9 stated:

I conference with my students after a test or quiz to gain an understanding of the strategy they've used when answering a question or writing an answer. We normally would go through it and discuss what they did right and wrong. By the next test or quiz, they soar and if they don't, I will conference with them again until they get it.

Culturally Relevant Teaching

Eleven out of 11 participants described culturally relevant teaching as a contributing factor to enhancing reading for African American male students. T8 stated:

You know having diverse literature in the classrooms is needed. I never saw myself in books when I was little, you know. I'm Mexican American. There weren't characters that looked like me or lived like me. I used to try to see and imagine and relate to what was happening in the story, but it never worked. That

made me feel horrible on the inside because I couldn't relate so now, I really try

my best to have a variety of diverse literature in the class so students can see

themselves inside of a book.

T1 and T9 both expressed that it was important to have literature that students can relate

to. T4 also shared that she oftentimes would bring culture inside of the classroom by

playing different types of background music while students worked quietly. T8

explained:

Every morning during a large group, my students have a quick 5-minute writing

assignment about the picture of the day. The pictures are culturally different every

morning. This will give me a chance to discuss different cultures and expose them

to something different. I allow the students to read their writing after their done

writing.

Motivating Students

T2, T10, and T7 expressed that motivating their students aided in enhancing

reading for African American male students. T10 stated:

Every morning, my class states our class mission statement. They made up every

word of the mission statement during the first week of school. This mission

statement is like our starter. They get so pumped and motivated to start their day

because they believe every word they are saying.

T9 explained, "I think it's more of a motivation thing. I have to motivate my students to

make them feel like they can conquer anything that is set in front of them." T1 also

expressed, "I started my classroom on 100% turn up. The students feed off my energy. I motivate them to do their best and I will teach them the rest." T3 discussed that set realistic goals for the students so when they meet their goals, they are motivated to do more.

Theme 3: Developing Language Skills Improves Reading Abilities

Standard Language

Participants expressed that using and being exposed to standard language had a considerably impact on enhancing reading for African American male students. T1 and T2 shared that speaking the correct standard language will allow students to hear and understand it. T9 express:

> Most of the time teachers think students are exposed to correct English but if they
> listen closely, their students may have a different way of speaking that's not
> Standard English. This is one of the reasons why African American males are
> behind. They don't understand or even hear correct English. They are thrown off
> by it. We must teach it to them instead of assuming they know it.

T8 and T11 expressed that Standard English is not a part of African American male students' everyday vocabulary and they should be taught how to use Standard English correctly. T1 stated:

> We are currently living in the age of cellphones and other advanced technology.
> They are texting as a means of communication. The text messages are short and
> abbreviated. I actually need someone to explain what something means. Students

are no longer communicating verbally. They text incorrectly and that's the way they speak and write. This is the main reason I have to speak and write correctly in hopes I show them the right way of speaking and writing.

Vocabulary Development

Participants described the importance of vocabulary development and how it aids in enhancing reading for African American male students. T3 stated, "I think vocabulary is the biggest stumbling block for them so that's why I spend more time, weekly, going over new and old vocabulary." T8 mentioned that she has a vocabulary word wall in her classroom. T5 mentioned, "When I expose my African American male students to new high frequency vocabulary, I have them define the word and write a sentence, so they won't forget it." T6 stated:

> I must pull everything out of my hat to get my students exposed to new vocabulary. The first week of school, the district's diagnostic test showed me that the African American male students were very low in vocabulary. It was then I started to introduce three words a week. We do activities like drawing it, defining it, writing about it, and using it in our everyday language. Also, I read aloud every day, and they get to see if I read one of their new vocabulary words. They get so excited when they hear it.

T3 and T6 expressed the importance of having a conversation with their class because it gives her a chance to introduce new words. T7 stated:

When I speak to my class, I must use correct English and use new words. They

like to clown me and say she's using big words y'all. And I tell them, not big

words just fancy words. They ask the meaning of the word and I tell them to look

it up and use it another way. By the next day, the whole class tried to use the new

word. They like to be fancy.

T7 also stated:

It's hard to build on student's vocabulary when they only have base level

understanding. I must start from the beginning. New words, pictures,

pronunciation, and definition. That's why I started using the fancy word wall. It's

a motivation tool to get my students excited about new vocabulary words.

T8 encourages parents to have a conversation with their children to help build their

language and vocabulary. T9 suggests teachers to have an open conversation with their

students to gain an understanding of how they speak and how they formulate their words

into sentences.

Theme 4: More Funding and Resources to Support Reading Achievement

Socioeconomic Disadvantage

Participants explained that more funding and resources to help support reading for

African American male students. Some African American males can be at a

socioeconomic disadvantage. T3 explained, "Some teachers don't realize how being in

poverty can affect student success. Most of the students I teach are in poverty. That's what makes me go even harder to help bridge this gap." T6 stated:

> Materials such as books and even computers are considered a luxury to students that don't even have clothes to wear. I try to purchase books with highlighters so my students can take them home to write in the books and underline vocabulary words. I want my students to be able to get what they need to finish their work. No teacher should worry about students not having. But we do.

T3 explained, "I am working with at-risk students with very few of the necessary resources to support them." T11communicated, "A classroom of 25 plus students teaching reading and not having enough of the books for the book study, is not a productive learning environment." T5 and T8 expressed how the importance of reading education is not that important in the community that they teach in because they are living in poverty. T6 explained, "Some of their situations are unfortunate and just sad." T9 stated:

> Well, I'm just going to say it. Teaching in a low-income area does effect children's reading abilities. Think about it. Parents aren't able to help their child because they don't have the resources that's needed to help with assignments. I remember doing a book study with my class and each student needed to complete a foldable about the book study. Most students needed construction paper, markers, and other materials to complete the assignment. They don't have these

things at their home. So, if they don't have basic materials at home, what makes

you think books are at the top of that list?

T1 commented, "The lack of funding creates a shortage of resources and because there is

a lack of resources there is a gap. The gap is widening because these children don't have

the resources that they need. It's sad but true." T4 commented, "It's tough to get through

to them because I know that a lot of our African American students have generational

poverty." T8 mentioned, "The importance of reading or even education is not that

important in this community when they are living in poverty."

Title 1 Schools

Participants explained how the lack of funding in a Title 1 School is a

disadvantage to African American male students.

T11 expressed:

When I taught in a Title 1 school, I can remember being hired and the principal

told me to take a drive in the surrounding neighborhoods. Even though what I saw

was unspeakable and disheartening, it made me aware of what I was walking into.

I appreciate the fact that those kids were able to come to school and give their

best. It made me give my best plus more.

T1 stated:

Teaching in a Title 1 school doesn't necessarily have the resources I need to

expose the students to different things I would like to expose them to. I find

myself buying more and more stuff to help bridge the gap because the community

doesn't have.

T9 commented, "My school has 100% free or reduced lunch. We are a Title 1 school.

Many of these students only ate meals at school. Students that have to worry about their

safety and basic needs will not be able to focus on schoolwork." T9 explained, "With all

the circumstances students in Title 1 schools face, many are not able to learn due to not

having their basic needs met.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness

Frey (2018) described trustworthiness as a concept in qualitative research that

indicates the procedures researchers utilize to ensure the quality, rigor, and credibility of

a study. A peer debriefer who had a sound understanding of the phenomena assessed the

interview questions for content validity. This was done to establish trustworthiness. The

peer debriefer was an informed and trustworthy collaborator who gave instructive

feedback that aided in deciding details of the interview questions that needed to be

reconsidered. The peer debriefing allowed for reflexivity of any biases that may have

existed within this study. I generated evidence of trustworthiness for this study by using

credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility is the way a researcher establishes confidence in the truth of the

findings of a particular study (Frey, 2018). Credibility was important in this research

study. I kept a reflective journal to document any biases that evolved while collecting data. This guaranteed creditability and provided reflectivity. I was able to elevate the level of self-reflection and uphold trustwhiness during this study by maintaining a reflective journal. I used member checking to further confirm the credibility and validity in this study. The participants in this study were presented with a two-page summary of the analyzed interview data and findings. The participants in this study had no disagreements or remarks regarding the findings of this study. To establish creditability in this study, all participants had two or more years of teaching experience in third through fifth grade in an elementary school setting. A peer debriefer who was well informed on the research subject also rendered me feedback on the interview questions. The peer debriefer yielded reflexivity of any biases in this study.

Transferability

The extent to which the findings of a study have applicability in other contexts is referred to as transferability (Frey, 2018). I strengthened transferability by presenting details on the study's conditions, setting, sample population, sample size, inclusion criteria, sampling strategy, demographic characteristics, interview procedures, and excerpts from the interview guide. Participants varied in years of teaching experience. All 11 participants had 2 or more years of teaching experience in third through fifth grade. Readers and scholars will find relativeness among this study's findings and their experiences and environment due to the use of thick descriptions and complete details of participant interactions, perspectives, context, and ideas. Readers will consider the

appropriateness of transferring the findings to later or equivalent situations or environments.

Dependability

Consistency, or how the researcher can determine whether the study's findings would be duplicated if the study were replicated with like participants refer to the study's dependability (Frey, 2018). I maintained rich notes and continuous practices throughout the interview and data collection process to establish dependability. One-on-one Zoom and phone interviews were utilized to establish rich, deep, personalized, and contextualized data. To reduce inconsequential conversations, I utilized open-ended questions that were focalized on the topic of this study. I assured that the sequence and reading of the interview questions were the same for every participant. The findings and explanations within the study remained steady and supported the data throughout the data analysis phase. I notated personal beliefs, motives, and theories through rich documentation using a reflective journal and preserved this throughout the research process. An extensive audit trail was utilized throughout the research process and included reflective views, development of the findings, and research resources used for this study.

Confirmability

The degree to which the study's findings are determined by the participants and not the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the researcher is referred to as confirmability (Frey, 2018). A reflective journal and audit trail were kept to help me

maintain the ingenuity of the data in this study. The reflective journal comprised detailed predispositions, self-reflections, and practices carried out during the research process. This helped me remove personal biases. I was able to initiate precise methods for data analysis and data collection by utilizing the audit trail. I was also able to consider the research path and evaluate the transparency within this study through the audit trail. I utilized a peer debriefer familiar with the phenomena to acquire instructive feedback and inspiration to explore extensively into the data to gain a better perception of each participant's perspective. A justification was presented for each decision that was made

Summary

In Chapter 4, the data analysis and findings of this study are reviewed. This study was formed from two research questions and explored elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students. One-on-one semistructured interviews were utilized during the data collection process to acquire the perspectives of 11 elementary school teachers that taught African American male students. Thematic analysis was used to identify emerging themes and subthemes. Four themes emerged. These themes indicated elementary school teachers' perspectives on instructional strategies used to enhance reading for African American male students. The proof of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability was established during this study's data collection and data analysis process.

Completing the data analysis allowed me to answer the research questions: RQ1: How do elementary school teachers describe the instructional strategies they use to improve African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades? RQ2: What supports do elementary school teachers believe might help them increase African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades? Three themes emerged from RQ1 and one theme emerged from RQ2. Following the coding processes, four themes emerged in the data: (a) building relationships improve African American male students' reading achievement (b) increasing student engagement increases reading engagement, (c) developing language skills improves reading abilities, and (d) more funding and resources to support reading achievement.

The first theme reflecting RQ 1 was (a) building relationships improve African American male students' reading achievement. Participants shared that building positive relationships with students had a huge impact on their academic skills. Participants also expressed that building relationships with students should be initiated at the beginning of the school year. They discussed the importance of building a relationship to understand their strengths and weaknesses without the data. Participants also mentioned that parent support was a contributing factor in aiding in African American male students' success. Many participants focused on the importance of being honest and personable with the student's parents. They stated that students succeeded more when parents and teachers work together. Participants expressed the significance of allowing the parents to know

what is going on in the classrooms. Lastly, participants explained the importance of making parents feel comfortable when communicating about their child's academics.

The second theme reflecting RQ 1 was (b) increasing student engagement increases reading engagement. Participants expressed that groups were significant in aiding in African American male students' achievement. They discussed how they used data to formulate a group to meet the needs of the students. They mentioned that students get lost in a whole group and a small group will allow them to be more comfortable to ask and answer questions. Participants also mentioned student conferencing as a key resource for enhancing reading for African American male students. They discussed that it is important to conference with students on a one-on-one level to gain a better understanding of what he is struggling with. Participants also explained how culturally relevant teaching is a contributing factor to enhancing reading for African American male students. They all communicated the importance of having a diverse library for the students to relate to inside of the classroom. Lastly, several participants expressed that motivating their students aided in enhancing reading for African American male students. They expressed that motivating their students made them feel like they can conquer anything that is set in front of them.

The third theme reflecting RQ 1 was: (c) developing language skills improve reading abilities. Participants expressed that using and being exposed to standard language had a considerable impact on enhancing reading for African American male students. They shared that speaking the correct standard language will allow students to

hear and understand it. Participants also communicated the importance of vocabulary development and how it aids in enhancing reading for African American male students. They shared that vocabulary can be presented through word wall words, book studies, and writing skills. They explained the importance of using new vocabulary throughout the week.

The fourth theme reflecting RQ 2 was: (d) more funding and resources to support reading achievement. Participants explained that more funding and resources to help support reading for African American male students. Some African American males can be at a socioeconomic disadvantage. Many participants expressed that they had to fund their own resources to help students in the classroom. Lastly, participants also discussed how some students experience generational poverty that enables them to succeed. In Chapter 5, I will review an interpretation of the results, limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications. I will provide an in-depth analysis of the results for each theme and explain how they are linked to the research questions. I will also give a detailed explanation of the limitation of this study. I will present recommendations for managing the topics and limitations for further research. Lastly, I will review the study's implication and the description of the potential for positive social change. I will close Chapter 5 with a reflection of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students in second through fifth grades. I gathered data from one-on-one semistructured telephone and Zoom interviews with 11 elementary school teachers who taught reading in an elementary school setting to African American male students in second through fifth grades. Using a qualitative approach, I acquired a thorough understanding of elementary school educators' perspectives on instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students. Four themes emerged from the data analysis process: (a) building relationships improve African American male students' reading achievement, (b) increasing student engagement increases reading engagement, (c) developing language skills improves reading abilities, and (d) more funding and resources to support reading achievement.

In Chapter 5, I explain the findings and explore how the results provide a better comprehension of elementary school educators' perspectives on instructional strategies to enhance African American males reading. Gaining an understanding of instructional strategies that teachers believe enhance student success may provide educators with information that can help improve reading achievement for African American male students. This study focused on addressing this gap in practice. In Chapter 5, I compared the research findings with current literature and the conceptual frameworks of CRT and

the theory of social constructivism. The study implications, limitations, and recommendations are also incorporated.

Interpretation of the Findings

I initiated the data collection process after acquiring Walden University IRB approval. The interpretations and findings for this basic qualitative study were derived from 11 one-on-one semistructured interviews, the literature review, and the conceptual framework of CRT and the theory of social constructivism. This study addressed two research questions:

RQ1:   How do elementary school teachers describe the instructional strategies they use to improve African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades?

RQ2:   What supports do elementary school teachers believe might help them increase African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades?

Four themes emerged based on both research questions?

During the interviews, I asked the participants eight open-ended questions about their perspectives of instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American and what supports do they need to increase African American male students' reading achievement in second through fifth grades. Four themes emerged from the responses received from these questions as well as any follow up questions asked during the one-on-one individual, semistructured interviews. The findings of this study indicated that

building relationships with students and parents were imperative to make an academic

connection, groups were essential to aid students, standard language impacts reading

success, and more funding and resources to support reading achievement.

Themes one through three: (a) building relationships improve African American male

students' reading achievement, (b) increasing student engagement increases reading

engagement, and (c) developing language skills improves reading abilities; were directly

connected to Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory. I used the theory of social

constructivism in this study to socially construct new knowledge from the semistructured

interviews conducted. The findings supported social constructivism as a theory of

knowledge that enables teachers to promote meaningful learning through building

relationships, student engagement, and developing language skills. According to the

theory of social constructivism, all knowledge develops because of social interaction and

language use. Social constructivism suggests that successful teaching and learning is

heavily dependent on interpersonal interaction and discussion, with the primary focus on

the students' understanding of the discussion (Vygotsky, 1978). I applied the theory of

social constructivism to instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American

male students in second through fifth grades because of its relevance in teaching and

learning.

Theme 4: (d) more funding and resources to support reading achievement; were

directly connected to CRT. CRT is a student-centered approach to teaching that includes

cultural references and recognizes the importance of students' cultural backgrounds and

experiences in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b). Theme 4 from this study aligns with CRT because teachers are aware that more funding and resources are needed to support teaching cultural competence and establish high expectations. CRT is meant to promote engagement, enrichment, and achievement of all students by embracing a wealth of diversity, identifying and nurturing students' cultural strengths, and validating students' lived experiences and their place in the world. More funding and resources will help teachers empower students to achieve better academic outcomes while embracing their cultural diversity. Many participants in the study overwhelmingly suggested that more funding and resources will give them a better chance to impact their second through fifth grade African American male students to achieve academic success. I applied CRT to elementary teachers' perceptions of instructional strategies for African American male students in second through fifth grades because of its relevance in the collaborative nature of learning and success. Findings in this study helped to expand and substantiate information concerning instructional strategies to enhance reading for second through fifth grade African American male students.

Theme 1: Building Relationships Improve African American Male Students' Reading Achievement

Relationship is an essential component in enhancing reading for African American male students. Brown (2020) suggested that implementing strategies to welcome students into the classroom and creating an environment with which students want to be a part will build relationships. Mosely et al. (2021) expressed that high-quality

teacher-student relationships are nurtured when teachers demonstrate care, trust, and respect for students. T11 revealed:

> Relationship is the key to success for African American male students. In order to understand where they are going, we need to understand where they have been. I know we hear this often, but it is the truth! Students don't care about how much you know until they know how much you care.

Similarity, T6 stated:

> It's important to have somebody that can connect with them on so many different levels. That doesn't mean that I can relate to every scenario that they come from, but I can build a relationship to understand. I truly know that I can't relate to everything that they've got going on in their lives but building a relationship will allow me to try hard to be present for them.

Walker and Graham (2021) asserted that the quality of teacher-student relationships contribute to students' academic skills and achievement throughout school and can strongly contribute to children's social and behavioral adjustment. T10 communicated, "Other than looking at data, teachers need to take the time to really get to know their students to teach them effectively." Himestra et al. (2019) stated the importance of using effective instructional by gaining an understanding of student's strengths and weaknesses what instructional strategies to use. T7 asserted:

> I tell my class that I am not trying to be their parents, but we can have a family atmosphere. I will be firm yet fair and understanding. Just like a family, I need to

have that understanding of their strengths and weaknesses so I can push them towards success.

Goetz et al. (2021) asserted that student-teacher relationships are more important than most people really think; they can not only impact academic outcomes, but how students perceive themselves and school generally. T7 asserted, "Teachers must understand their students and meet them where they are. I try to learn what their good at, I build from there." T8 stated:

Understanding a student's background and building a relationship with them is number one. Without fully understanding that student, I am not able to push them to their potential.

Building relationships with parents is also crucial to enhancing reading for African American male students. Susnara et al. (2021) expressed that positive parent teacher relationships and increased parent involvement can improve student achievement. T5 expressed, "Make sure the parents realize that we need to work together and figure out how to do this for their child is the key to a good relationship." T6 declared:

I have conversations with the parents during open house or the first day of school to understand how to get their support. They can do more at home with their children than I can at school. Therefore, it is imperative that the students see me working with the parents for their success.

Lang et al. (2020) expressed that parents and teachers benefit from mutually positive interactions because it allows both to be more informed about the child's current development and life contexts, ultimately benefiting the child. T2 stated:

Since Covid-19, parents are not allowed in the building. I still keep that line of communication open by phone calls, folders, and emails. I have recently started recording a few of my lessons so parents can have an understanding of what I am teaching and how I am teaching it. It has been a success so far. I think next semester I am going to roll out zoom meetings during a lesson so they will be able to see me teach and ask questions during real time.

T6 commented, "Parents appreciate the teachers that reach out and let them know what's going on in school. It's our jobs to include parents." Brown et al. (2018) stated that teachers should maintain a good relationship with parents by any means possible for the success of the students. Leenders et al. (2019) stated parent-teacher relationships can be challenging but necessary to become partners within the student's educational journey. T10 stated:

It is very important to have parents on our side. Letting the parents know that we are all in this together and actually meaning it, is the beginning of a good relationship. The first time a parent hears your voice, it shouldn't be to complain or even discuss failing grades. It should be about making a connection with the family.

Similarly, T7 stated:

Before Covid 19, I had an open-door policy where parents were allowed in the classroom at any time. I feel that if the parents are comfortable, then the child is comfortable. There are so many times, even with my own personal children, kids go home and talk bad about the teacher. And how they are feeling about a certain class or subject. I'm sure that child doesn't feel supported by the teacher. They don't know if the teacher has their best interest. They need to know these things. And feel it too.

Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey (2018) asserted that relationships between teachers, students, and parents strongly influenced learning and academic outcomes. The findings of this study indicated that relationship building was important in enhancing reading of African American male students in second through fifth grade. Participants shared their perspectives on how building positive relationships with students and their parents aided in enhancing reading outcomes for these students. The evidence of this theme was also observed in the literature review in Chapter 2.

Theme 2: Increasing Student Engagement Increases Reading Engagement

Groups can enhance reading for African American male students. Rezaeian (2019) stated that small group instruction will give extraordinary opportunities for teaching and learning. Malacapay (2019) stated that identifying students' learning styles will help group students. Brigandi et al. (2019) asserted that the ultimate aim of differentiated instruction is to ensure groups are practiced, ensuring success. T2 stated:

I have pull-out groups where I'm able to focus on a specific skill or strategy. Sometimes they get lost in a whole group. My students are more comfortable when I have a pull-out group. I've noticed that they are more willing to ask and answer questions.

T3 stated, "I already have my groups done by the first day of school. Yes, they can move groups throughout the year once I receive more data on them, but the first group is the beginning to understanding where they are academically." Diller (2021) asserted that working with a few kids at a time provides guidance for closing the achievement gap. T1 stated:

A sure way to get African American boys to read is to have small groups. Small groups really work if teachers do them effectively. Teachers cannot have small groups for 10 minutes and then switch. It doesn't work that way. To have a small group work effectively, teachers must understand that groups struggle, reteach, and then assess. That should take up to 20-5 minutes. The real question is, do we have that type of time?

Puzio et al. (2020) expressed that differentiated small group instruction is the commitment to modifying content, process, and or products in response to individual student differences in readiness, learning profiles, and interests. T9 asserted that how she always conducts small groups to ensure she is covering the weakness of every individual student.

Conferencing with students will aid in enhancing reading in African American male students. Lambert (2018) asserted that conferencing contributes beneficial support for students. Bradberry and De Mario (2019) affirmed that using active learning methods during student-teacher conferences are often considered more effective in building their skills. T4 asserted:

I pull individual students over to me to get clarity of their understanding because they don't speak up in class. I can even use hands-on materials like highlighters, magnifying glasses, and sticky notes. And they are able to focus more. Even though my classroom is like a home, the African American males will not speak up in during whole group. I have even noticed that even when I pull my males for a one-on-one conference, they are still looking around to see if anyone is listening or watching.

Similarly, T9 stated:

I conference with my students after a test or quiz to gain an understanding of the strategy they've used when answering a question or writing an answer. We normally would go through it and discuss what they did right and wrong. By the next test or quiz, they soar and if they don't, I will conference with them again until they get it.

Peterson (2018) stated that conferencing with students will allow them to set attainable goals and to be responsible for the completion of these goals. T10 asserted that

it is important to conference with students on a one-on-one level to gain a better understanding of what he is struggling with.

All participants described culturally relevant teaching as a contributing factor to enhancing reading for African American male students. Bonner (2017) explained that with culturally relevant teaching, teachers must have classroom that provides diversity and anticipation of positive outcomes. Henderson et al. (2020) stated diverse classroom libraries are an important component of elementary classrooms. T8 stated:

> You know having diverse literature in the classrooms is needed. I never saw myself in books when I was little, you know. I'm Mexican American. There weren't characters that looked like me or lived like me. I used to try to see and imagine and relate to what was happening in the story, but it never worked. That made me feel horrible on the inside because I couldn't relate so now, I really try my best to have a variety of diverse literature in the class so students can see themselves inside of a book.

Similarly, T8 explained:

> Every morning during a large group, my students have a quick 5-minute writing assignment about the picture of the day. The pictures are culturally different every morning. This will give me a chance to discuss different cultures and expose them to something different. I allow the students to read their writing after their done writing.

Nair and Good (2019) stated that student success comes from exclusionary

practices that inhibit diversity in the classrooms. Robinson (2020) asserted that African

American students could become active participants when they are provided the

opportunity to read realistic and authentic books or graphic novels that mirror their lived

experiences. T4 also shared that she oftentimes would bring culture inside of the

classroom by playing different types of background music while students worked quietly.

Lastly, motivation plays a significant role in enhancing reading for African

American male students. Ginja and Chen (2020) stated that educators must consider what

motivates students and how lessons can be appropriately structured to meet these diverse

interests. Interests can include personal experiences and strengths, cultural background,

and areas of need. T10 stated:

> Every morning, my class states our class mission statement. They made up every
>
> word of the mission statement during the first week of school. This mission
>
> statement is like our starter. They get so pumped and motivated to start their day
>
> because they believe every word they are saying.
>
> Hornstra et al. (2018) stated that students' motivation and engagement will come

from teacher expectations. T3 discussed that set realistic goals for the students so when

they meet their goals, they are motivated to do more.

The findings that increasing student engagement increases reading engagement

aided in enhancing reading for African American male students arose during the

interview process of this study. Participants shared their perspectives on how groups,

conferencing, culturally relevant teaching, and motivation were important in increasing student engagement. Participants expressed that these factors also contributed to enhancing reading for African American male students. The evidence of this theme was observed in Chapter 2, along with new evidence that emerged.

Theme 3: Developing Language Skills Improves Reading Abilities

Standard language is essential to enhancing reading for African American male students. Cushing (2020) stated the importance of the usage and understanding of the standard language is to students. Pittas and Nunas (2018) stated that understanding children's dialect will give teachers an understanding of how they read words and spell their words. T9 express:

Most of the time teachers think students are exposed to correct English but if they listen closely, their students may have a different way of speaking that's not Standard English. This is one of the reasons why African American males are behind. They don't understand or even hear correct English. They are thrown off by it. We have to teach it to them instead of assuming they know it.

Similarly, T1 stated:

We are currently living in the age of cellphones and other advanced technology. They are texting as a means of communication. The text messages are short and abbreviated. I actually need someone to explain what something means. Students are no longer communicating verbally. They text incorrectly and that's the way

they speak and write. This is the main reason I have to speak and write correctly in hopes I show them the right way of speaking and writing.

Lastly, vocabulary development is significant in enhancing reading for African American male students. Gallagher and Anderson (2016) affirmed that vocabulary is essential to reading and achievement, and overall success. McQuillan (2019) suggested that the best way to improve reading comprehension and academic achievement is through some form of direct, systematic vocabulary instruction. T6 stated:

> I have to pull everything out of my hat to get my students exposed to new vocabulary. The first week of school, the district's diagnostic test showed me that the African American male students were very low in vocabulary. It was then I started to introduce three words a week. We do activities like drawing it, defining it, writing about it, and using it in our everyday language. Also, I read aloud every day, and they get to see if I read one of their new vocabulary words. They get so excited when they hear it.

Loftus-Rattan et al. (2016) stated that storybook reading provides a natural and practical context for vocabulary instruction with young children, particularly in the school setting. T5 mentioned, "When I expose my African American male students to new high frequency vocabulary, I have them define the word and write a sentence, so they won't forget it." Manyak and Manyak (2021) expressed that vocabulary knowledge is critical to students' long-term academic achievement regarding reading comprehension.

The findings that developing language skills improves reading abilities aided in enhancing reading for African American male students arose during the interview process of this study. Participants shared their perspectives on standard language and vocabulary development were important in developing language skills to improve reading skills. Participants expressed that these factors also contributed to enhance reading skills for African American male students. I did not observe this perspective in the literature that I reviewed in Chapter 2.

Theme 4: More Funding and Resources to Support Reading Achievement

The impact of socioeconomic disadvantage could hinder African American students' reading achievement. Millett et al. (2020) stated lower-income neighborhoods and Title 1 schools can impact a teacher's teaching quality, schools' curriculum, and additional extracurricular activities. T1 stated:

Teaching in a Title 1 school doesn't necessarily have the resources I need to expose the students to different things I would like to expose them to. I find myself buying more and more stuff to help bridge the gap because the community doesn't have.

Similarly, T6 also stated:

Materials such as books and even computers are considered a luxury to students that don't even have clothes to wear. I try to purchase books with highlighters so my students can take them home to write in the books and underline vocabulary

words. I want my students to be able to get what they need to finish their work. No teacher should worry about students not having. But we do.

Yousif (2020) stated that there is a connection between African American males that are in poverty and low academic performance. T1 commented, "The lack of funding creates a shortage of resources and because there is a lack of resources there is a gap. The gap is widening because these children don't have the resources that they need. It's sad but true." T4 commented, "It's tough to get through to them because I know that a lot of our African American students have generational poverty." T8 mentioned, "The importance of reading or even education is not that important in this community when they are living in poverty."

The findings in this study indicated that more funding and resources to support reading achievement for African American male students is necessary. Participants explained that the lack of funding and resources hinder reading achievement. The evidence of this theme was observed in Chapter 2, along with new evidence that emerged.

Limitations of the Study

Possible limitations in this study included participant availability and researcher bias. Due to the recent crisis caused by COVID-19 and the transition to virtual learning, teachers face unique situations (Lepp et al. (2021). Due to COVID-19, teachers are managing their normal duties, along with teaching in person, virtual and quarantined students; therefore, limiting their availability. To address this limitation, participants were

provided a wide range of interview times. For participant convenience, I also provided a choice between Zoom or telephone interviews.

I had my personal views regarding instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students. I am an African American and have teaching experience in an elementary school where the student population was predominantly African American. To address researcher bias, I maintained a reflective journal throughout the data collection and analysis process to avert inferring biases and assumptions. Being reflexive allowed me to set aside my own biases and direct my attention solely to the collection and interpretation of the data. To ensure trustworthiness, I kept a reflective journal of participant's perspectives. Thematic analysis was used to identify and ensure the dependability of all themes. A comprehensive audit trail was kept throughout the research process and included reflective views, development of the findings, and research resources used for this study. By keeping an audit trail, I was able to ensure my interpretation of the findings remained unbiased. Through this study, I was able to confirm some of the research results and theories from the conceptual framework concerning teachers' perspectives of enhancing reading for African American male students.

Recommendations

I explored elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students. Participants included in this study identified relationships, student engagement, language development, and lack of funding

and resources as important strategies that will contribute to enhancing reading in African American male students. Participants expressed the importance of relationships with students and parents to promote African American student achievement in reading. Participants communicated that trusted their intrinsic motivation when reflecting or contemplating leaving the classroom. Participants communicated that student engagement was important with helping to enhance reading for African American male students. Participants also stressed the importance of language development to promote student achievement. Lastly, participants explained that more funding and resources to help support reading for African American male students. Some African American males can be at a socioeconomic disadvantage. The study's findings support the gaps in practices regarding elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students. I have included the following recommendation for future research.

I recommend a follow-up study that includes more participation. More participation could reveal more findings that could help improve the understanding of teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies that will enhance reading for African American male students. Another recommendation would be to study strategies used to enhance reading for African American male students.

Finally, administrators, district leaders, and instructional coaches can have professional development opportunities to assist elementary school teachers in building a relationship with their students and their student's parents. The professional development

opportunities can also address ways to promote student engagement and utilize different strategies to aid in language development. These professional development opportunities can focus on how to promote reading without spending money.

Implications

This study may contribute to positive social change by providing elementary school teachers with instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students. This study may also provide school administrators, district leaders, and instructional coaches professional development opportunities to assist elementary school teachers in building strategies to help enhance reading for African American male students. This study may also prompt leaders and elementary school teachers to share their successful strategies and practices that aid in African American male student success in reading.

Participants

Participants in this study shared strategies used to enhance reading for African American male students. The most repeated strategies amongst most participants in this study were relationships, student engagement, language development, and lack of funding and resources. Participants discussed these strategies as helping to enhance reading for African American male students. Researchers also discussed the importance of relationship, student engagement, language development, and the lack of funding and resources as it relates to African American success in reading (Brown, 2020; Crushing, 2020; Malacapay, 2019; Millett et al. 2020). Suggestions for positive social change

include educators leading professional development sessions to share strategies on relationship, student engagement, language development, and the lack of funding and resources.

Administration

Administration could use the findings from this study to develop professional learning opportunities that focus on instructional strategies used to enhance reading for African American male students. The professional development opportunities could focus on relationships, student engagement, language development, and more funding and resources. Elementary school teachers could also lead these professional development opportunities. Research supports the importance of teachers leading professional development. Balta and Eryilmaz (2019) expressed that teachers are one of the core elements of education, they are the actors in the class, and they manage the learning process in the classroom. Suggestions for positive social change include discovering more strategies that aid in enhancing reading for African American male students and fostering the strategies mentioned in this study through professional development opportunities.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students. Limited research exists on elementary school teachers' perspectives on instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students. I

interviewed 11 participants and explored their perspectives on instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students. Participants also shared their beliefs on instructional strategies that they believe have contributed to their African American male students' success.

Four themes emerged from the data, including: (a) building relationships improve African American male students' reading achievement, (b) increasing student engagement increases reading engagement, (c) developing language skills improves reading abilities, and (d) more funding and resources to support reading achievement. The findings of this study focused on the gap in practice by contributing to an increased understanding of elementary school teachers' perspectives of instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students.

Elementary school teachers' have preserved and utilized instructional strategies that aid in enhancing reading for African American male students. This study provided new knowledge on these instructional strategies. The data and results of this study may provide administrators and district leaders with an understanding of instructional strategies that may aid in enhancing reading for African American male students.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions for Participants

Interview Questions

1) How would you describe a typical reading session in your classroom working with African American male students?

2) What is your understanding of the impediments African American male students face in learning to read?

3) What instructional strategies have you tried to increase African American male students to read that were successful for those students? How have these strategies helped the students?

4) What resources do you keep in your classroom to enhance African American male students to read? How have these resources helped the students?

5) What reading program(s) or interventions do you feel are effective to support African American male students' success in reading? Why?

6) What types of support do you get from your school administration to assist with increasing African American male students' reading achievement?

7) What supports do you need that will help you with increasing African American male students' reading achievement?

8) Is there any additional information that you would like to add concerning African American male students and reading?

Possible follow up prompts that I will keep visible as I interview each participant:

What did you mean by…….?

Tell me more about…….

You mentioned……

What do you mean by…...?

Please give me an example of when that…. worked/did not work.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol Guide

Interviewee: _____Location: _____

Date: _____Time: _____

School: _____ Grade level: _____

Several studies provided data to show that African American male students are failing in reading without interventions. Gaining an understanding of instructional strategies that teachers believe enhance student success may provide teachers with information that will help them to improve reading achievement for African American male students. The results of this study may contribute to positive social change by providing elementary school teachers with information they might use to inform their decisions about instructional strategies to enhance reading for African American male students. The results of this study may contain information that could benefit students, teachers, and professionals in other communities experiencing African American male students that are falling behind in reading. My goal is to gain a deeper understanding of instructional strategies that can enhance African American male students in reading.

You have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about the perspectives of instructional strategies that enhance African American male students to read. Your participation in this interview is important and voluntary. This means that I will respect your decision of whether or not you want to participate. If you decide to participate now, you can still change your mind later. If you feel uncomfortable during the interview, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal. I do not intend to inflict any harm. This audio only recorded interview is scheduled to last about 45-60 minutes.

Introduction and Background Information: Thank you for volunteering to share your insights and experiences concerning instructional strategies for African American male student to read. I would like to begin by asking you some background questions to get to know you better.

A. Participant's Background

How long have you been teaching? _____

How much time do you spend teaching reading each day? _____

What other grades have you taught and how many years in each grade? _____

How many years of experience do you have with reading curriculum? _____