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Teachers' Perceptions of Reading Comprehension of Black Boys in Grades 3–5

Chastity G. Baccus
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Chastity Griffin Baccus

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Felicia Blacher-Wilson, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. Terri Edwards, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2024

Abstract

Teachers' Perceptions of Reading Comprehension of Black Boys in Grades 3–5

by

Chastity Griffin Baccus

MA, Salem International University, 2017

MA, Walden University, 2005

BS, Coker College, 2001

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

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Abstract

Black boys in grades third through fifth are not developing reading comprehension skills compared to their peers in an urban southeastern school district. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore perceptions of third through fifth grade reading teachers on reading comprehension of Black boys in this district. The conceptual framework was culturally relevant pedagogy. Research questions involved teachers' perceptions of why Black boys in grades 3-5 struggle with reading comprehension skills and what they felt was needed to support them for success. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of 10 reading teachers with at least 5 years of experience in this district. Incorporating thematic analysis, key findings were that participants perceived Black students to struggle with reading comprehension due to lack of interest, home life problems, and lack of interest in reading among role models. Findings indicated instructional strategies and differentiations based on student needs are necessary to best meet the needs of this population of students. Participants claimed additional cultural-related classroom resources, more engagement tools, diverse text, and extra time were needed to be effective in meeting the reading comprehension needs of reading comprehension for -this population of students. Further recommendations for research regarding specific engagement tools, cultural-related resources, and diverse texts could improve reading comprehension for this population. Recommendations from findings will help teachers enhance their instruction of reading comprehension skills so Black boys gain a deeper understanding of reading with hopes of performing at a level that is equal with their peers.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my grandparents, Calamus and Annie Ruth Wingate. They have always pushed me to be the best I can be. Even when times were hard, and I did not know how I was going to make it, they continued to encourage me and would not allow me to give up. I remember sitting at the dining room table, struggling to do my homework. My grandmother would be in the kitchen cooking dinner and sending up prayers for me to overcome the struggle and accomplish the task set before me. Mama and Cooter never made it to 10th grade because they had to work the fields. Their educational level was just at an eighth- and ninth-grade level. Interestingly, that motivated them to push me harder to graduate high school. Not even knowing what college was, I was instructed to go on to further my education. So, when the time came for me to yet pursue another degree, my mind went back to my grandparents and their role in my life. Although they are no longer here and will not see the finished product, it is because of them that I took the leap of faith to further my educational career by pursuing a doctoral degree. Obtaining this degree will make my grandparents in heaven smile, knowing they have nurtured a scholar striving to change the world. Mama and Cooter, I hope that I have made you proud. This degree is for you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Student reading comprehension scores have indicated racial disparities, particularly among Black male students. Literature has highlighted themes related to understanding of these students, including reading achievement and growth, texts and curriculum, masculinity in literacy, and identities. In this study, I explored challenges among reading teachers to help Black boys in grades 3-5 improve their reading comprehension skills. I explored teacher perceptions of reading comprehension challenges of this population, promoting positive social change by providing findings regarding teachers' perceptions of successful strategies and challenges.

Chapter 1 includes a summary of the background literature and describes the practice gap. The problem statement and purpose of the study as well as research questions are presented. The conceptual framework and nature of the study are described. I also define key terms and clarify critical aspects of the study. Scope and delimitations, study limitations, and the study's significance are also addressed. Finally, Chapter 1 ends with a summary and transitions to Chapter 2.

Background

Black boys continue to demonstrate low reading comprehension skills throughout elementary school (Thomas, 2019). They score at lower rates on reading tests compared to their White peers (Kang & Husband, 2020), with disparities between White and Asian students compared to Black and Hispanic students in grades 1-5 in terms of reading competence (Sewasew & Koester, 2019). According to Moore and Phelps (2021), Black boys' reading proficiency scores lag behind White, Latino, and Asian male students. The

achievement gap between Black and White students has continued with little change since 2004 (Hanushek et al., 2019). Black male students struggle with literacy development and growth compared to their Black female or White peers (Thomas, 2019). Griffin et al. (2021) claimed achievement gaps between Black male students and their White peers were due to inadequate support, mitigating positive outcomes for academic success. Specifically, Black boys in grades 3-5 in an urban southeastern school district are not developing reading comprehension skills as compared to their peers.

According to Walker and Hutchison (2021), Black boys can accomplish needed skills to succeed in reading using culturally relevant pedagogy. Henderson et al. (2020) found a lack of diverse literary books with Black male characters in elementary classroom libraries. This might be one reason Black boys lose interest in reading.

Problem Statement

In an urban southeastern school district, Black boys in grades 3-5 are not developing reading comprehension skills compared to their peers. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (2022) reported from 2011 to 2019, Black male fourth graders performed consistently lower in terms of reading comprehension skills on the National Reading Standardized Assessment compared to White and Black female students (see Table 1).

Table 1

Percentage of Fourth Grade Students Scoring Below Basic on the National Reading Standardized Assessment by Race and Gender

Year	Black		White	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
2019	57	47	26	20
2017	54	45	24	19
2015	53	44	23	18
2013	55	44	23	18
2011	57	45	24	19

Note. Data from the NAEP.

Based on an assessment of 2017-2021 reading comprehension scores that were conducted by the southeastern school district, Black students in the district in grades 3-5 scored significantly lower than their peers of other ethnicities. At the study site, in 2021 54% of Black male fourth graders scored unmet (meaning they did not meet grade level standards in reading) compared to 39% of all male students and 33% of all fourth graders. Consistent across years and grade levels, higher percentages of Black boys in elementary school did not meet proficiency levels on the state assessment compared to all boys and students (see Table 2).

Table 2

Percentage of Student Group Scoring Not Met on State College- and Career-Ready Assessment of Reading

Year and grade	Black boys	All boys	All students
2021			
Grade 3	45	34	30
Grade 4	54	39	33
Grade 5	42	32	28
2019			
Grade 3	42	34	27
Grade 4	49	34	30
Grade 5	47	35	33
2018			
Grade 3	39	27	23
Grade 4	45	33	28
Grade 5	46	34	28
2017			
Grade 3	41	29	24
Grade 4	43	31	26
Grade 5	42	29	23
2016			
Grade 3	40	30	24
Grade 4	41	28	22
Grade 5	43	29	23

Based on research, reading teachers are challenged to help Black boys in grades 3-5 improve their reading comprehension skills. The problem is that this population in an urban southeastern school district is not developing reading comprehension skills compared to their peers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of grade 3-5 reading teachers on the reading comprehension of Black boys in an urban southeastern school district. Reading teachers for grades 3-5 in the district were interviewed for this

study. Experienced reading teachers with more than 5 years of experience were able to provide thoughtful insights regarding their perceptions of Black boys and reading comprehension skills. Study findings may provide insights regarding helping Black boys become more successful in terms of developing reading comprehension skills.

Research Questions

The study was guided by two research questions:

RQ1: What are perceptions of third through fifth grade teachers regarding Black boys' reading comprehension skills in an urban district in the Southeast?

RQ2: What do third through fifth grade teachers believe is needed to improve reading comprehension skills of Black boys in an urban district in the Southeast?

Conceptual Framework for the Study

The conceptual framework that informed my study was the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy by Ladson-Billing. This theory was used to explore ways teachers use or do not use culturally relevant pedagogy to engage Black boys in grades 3-5 in terms of reading. The theory of culturally relevant pedagogy is a logical approach to address this topic because instruction is developed around cultural needs and interests of children. Culturally relevant pedagogy suggests learners should experience academic success, develop cultural competence and positive ethnic identity, and develop critical consciousness to challenge the current social order in order to grow academically and socially (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Teachers demonstrating cultural competence can improve academic success among diverse learners by connecting instruction to students' lives. This type of pedagogy has become widely used in education to ensure success

among Black male students with reading comprehension skill difficulties by attaching cultural relevance to daily instructional practice (Lim et al., 2019).

This theory helped me organize research, guide interview questions, and analyze data as I examined this topic. A more detailed description of this framework appears in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

For this study, a basic qualitative design was used. Qualitative researchers gain an understanding of participants by looking for structures and patterns while learning how they operate in specific settings (Keenan, 2022). Via the basic qualitative design, researchers gather data using a single instrument such as interviews to develop an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saracho, 2017). I conducted semistructured one-on-one interviews with 10 reading teachers in grades 3-5 in an urban southeastern school district. I used the five-step model of qualitative data analysis outlined by Castleberry and Nolen which involved compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. Qualitative data coding and thematic analysis were used to understand this topic. A priori codes were used from literature.

Definitions

This section includes standard definitions of terms in order to understand this research:

Cultural competence: Understanding one's culture and being able to understand and relate to cultures and values of diverse others (Kaihlanen et al., 2019).

Culturally relevant pedagogy: A teaching model in which students experience academic success, develop cultural competence and positive ethnic identities, and develop critical consciousness to challenge the current social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Culturally relevant texts: Reading texts that reflect diverse students' background knowledge (Tan & Mante-Estacio, 2021).

Culturally responsive teaching: Culturally responsive teaching involves aligning curriculum with ethnically and racially diverse students' cultural and experiential perceptions for more effective teaching (Monyai, 2021).

Decoding: A basic part of reading instruction that involves the ability to produce sounds that correspond to printed letters of a word (White et al., 1990).

Fluency: Fluency in reading means readers automatically and accurately decode words, thus freeing up attention for higher levels of comprehension and meaning (Nichols et al., 2009).

Reading comprehension: The ability to learn from context and synthesize information (İlter, 2022).

South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessment: A statewide assessment in English language arts and mathematics that is administered to students in grades 3-8 as required by the Education Accountability Act (South Carolina Department of Education, 2023).

Assumptions

While conducting research in this study, I made a few assumptions. Assumptions

are aspects of the study that are believed but cannot be demonstrated to be true (Carrillo-Durán, 2022). I assumed participants were comfortable speaking with me. This assumption was based on my experience as an elementary teacher and ability to have rapport with interviewees; however, I did not interview teachers from my school. Another assumption was that participants were honest with their responses and shared their accurate perceptions of interactions with Black male students. The third assumption was that participants were interested in the study topic. This study was voluntary, and participants self-selected.

Scope and Delimitations

In this qualitative research study, I interviewed 10 third through fifth-grade reading teachers in an urban southeastern school district about their perceptions of reading comprehension. This study only included certified reading teachers with at least 5 years of teaching experience. Experienced and certified reading teachers should be able to provide adequate and reliable information and explanations based on their professional perceptions of the subject matter, thus making information more meaningful. Their responses to interview questions are essential to research because participating teachers should be considered experts in their field. Administrators and other school staff were excluded from this study because they do not directly teach reading comprehension skills or maintain classrooms.

Finally, transferability in qualitative research is defined as the degree to which results of an investigation can be applied or transferred beyond the bounds of the project (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I included detailed data so readers can determine potential

transferability to other contexts. The potential transferability of this study can help teachers and educational leaders understand similar issues in other districts.

Understanding reading teachers' perceptions could help develop better instructional supports to improve the reading comprehension of Black boys.

Limitations

Limitations are possible areas for improvement in studies that could cause issues (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). A possible limitation of this study was the lack of direct participation and time with participants. Because of the variation of questions, I analyzed many data points with accuracy, which can be time-consuming. The objective was for in-person interviews, but some were conducted via Zoom. Zoom interviews make reading interviewees' body language and facial expressions difficult. The goal was to reach data saturation, meaning the point where continued interviews do not reveal new information. I gave each participant a \$10 gift card and sent out repeat reminders if needed to gain participants.

A limitation of the study is the potential influence of researcher bias. Analysis can be subjective based on my views. I left my biases out and selected themes based on evidence from interviews. To do so, I reflected on my biases that were related to the topic before data collection to avoid letting my personal beliefs influence the process of data collection and analysis via journaling my thoughts and feelings.

Significance

This study is significant because it provided information for reading teachers, administrators, and policymakers to understand why Black boys in grades 3-5 struggle to

develop reading comprehension skills and possible support to address this problem.

Exploring perceptions of reading teachers in this study may contribute to teacher professional development involving helping Black boys improve reading comprehension by building consistency, confidence, and a love for reading. Findings of my study may provide reading teachers insights, new strategies, and recommendations for support to overcome challenges Black boys experience when learning to read. Finally, the school, district, and state may benefit from this research. The district's goal is to improve reading comprehension among Black boys in elementary schools in the study district and nationally. Based on study results, educational strategies and instruction may improve. Also, this study can be used to document teachers' insights regarding this problem to provide an understanding of how to help support Black boys in terms of developing reading comprehension skills.

Summary

Black boys in grades 3-5 are not developing reading comprehension skills compared to their peers in one school district. I explored a gap in practice in that reading teachers are challenged to help these students improve their reading comprehension skills. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the perceptions of participants on the reading comprehension of this population. Test scores from the specific school district, national data, and correspondence between the reading specialist and principal from the local school indicated Black boys in grades 3–5 score lower on reading comprehension assessments than their White or female peers. Research questions were used to address ways to engage Black boys in reading, challenges to developing reading

comprehension among this population, and teachers' recommendations to develop reading comprehension for this population. Interview data were collected from third through fifth grade reading teachers in the local school district who were certified with at least 5 years of experience.

Culturally relevant pedagogy was the theoretical framework guiding the study. In Chapter 2, I expound upon the conceptual framework and explain how I applied this theory to research. I described the literature search strategy and databases to gather pertinent information related to the topic. An exhaustive literature review is presented of recent peer-reviewed articles.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Black boys in grades 3-5 are not developing reading comprehension skills compared to their peers in an urban southeastern school district. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of their reading teachers regarding reading comprehension in this district. The proposed study was designed to address a gap in practice in that reading teachers are challenged to help Black boys in grades 3-5 improve their reading comprehension skills. The literature review consists of studies on standardized academic testing, including factors affecting student test scores in general and specifically Black male students. I address strategies from literature to prepare students for standardized tests. This is followed by a discussion of reading comprehension, including teaching strategies, interventions, and factors and challenges affecting this type of comprehension. I then focus on Black male students and reading comprehension. Achievement gaps involving reading for Black male students and culturally relevant teaching are described. I reviewed literature involving strategies for enhancing reading comprehension skills by incorporating culturally relevant texts and providing opportunities to build relationships based on Black cultural experiences.

Chapter 2 includes information about the literacy search strategy I adopted for the study. I described databases and keywords to find literature related to the problem. I describe the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy by Ladson-Billings followed by a review of research on reading comprehension skills and challenges among Black boys in grades 3-5. The chapter includes an exhaustive study of current literature from peer-reviewed articles and journals. The chapter ends with a summary.

Literature Search Strategy

This chapter includes current research on struggles experienced by Black male students in the U.S. to develop reading comprehension skills. I used Walden University's online library to search for relevant articles. I used the following databases: ERIC, Education Source, SAGE Journals, and EBSCOHost. I used the following key words: *Black males, state standardized tests, academic assessments, elementary teachers, gender, teacher perspectives, reading comprehension, reading strategies, reading struggles, literacy, reading comprehension struggles, primary years of schooling, elementary, and grade*. I researched and read articles with information on my topic as well as articles with information that was indirectly related to my topic. For example, I found some articles involving African American females in grades 3-5 but not males. After an extensive search of articles related to my topic of study and reaching saturation, I found 139 articles. However, I only used 72 articles to complete the literature review due to reaching saturation related to key areas and concepts. I used research questions as a guiding factor to select articles for my study.

Conceptual Framework

Ladson-Billing's theory of culturally relevant pedagogy supported this study. The theory is that learners should experience academic success and cultural competence while developing critical consciousness to challenge the current social order. Incorporating the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy into daily teaching likely will allow Black learners to achieve at a level that is comparable to White students. Robinson (2019) defined culturally relevant pedagogy as teachers implementing instructional programs and

practices that reflect students' cultural heritages, experiences, and perceptions. Ladson-Billing (1995) described culturally relevant pedagogy as students experiencing academic success, establishing cultural competence, and developing awareness to question the current social order.

Mitton and Murray-Orr (2021) observed pedagogical practices of middle school teachers who taught students in poverty and found using culturally relevant pedagogy as a foundation enabled students to become risktakers. Teachers can effectively center Black students' lives and history within literature. Kelly (2023) investigated two White teachers who disrupted the perpetuation of Whiteness through literature instruction that explicitly grappled with race and structures of oppression and showed, through culturally relevant pedagogy, these teachers decentered their knowledge to allow non-White students to critically engage with literacy based on their-perceptions of their worlds.

Culturally relevant literature can be essential for the academic success of Black male students. Reading teachers should provide Black male students with culturally relevant literature that mirrors their experiences (Sciurba, 2015; Scullin, 2020). Scullin (2020) found teachers strongly preferred characters whose race, personal characteristics, and age were similar to theirs, and preferred authentic events and experiences. Scullin encouraged teachers to extend opportunities for Black male students to read culturally relevant texts daily. Moore and Phelps (2021) found reading teachers using culturally relevant teaching strategies help Black male students become more academically successful in terms of reading comprehension skills. Walker and Hutchison (2021) found pedagogy that reflects students' cultural values, beliefs, and lifestyles empowered them in

ways that improved literacy. However, Meier (2015) stated some teachers add Black books to their class content as supplementary instead of selecting books that are relevant to the lives of Black boys within their class. If books are relevant to Black lives, they have more appropriate use in the classroom.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

Teacher Perspectives

Teacher reports are largely used to measure behaviors in schools (Garcia et al., 2019). Views and perspectives of teachers are important when creating strategies for professional development. Through observations, data recording, and interviewing, recommendations were that teachers could benefit from professional development in terms of recognizing race, class, culture, language, and other differences.

Standardized Tests

A common way to measure reading achievement is through standardized testing. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (2022) reported that 53%–57% of Black males scored below grade level in reading comprehension skills on the National Reading Standardized Assessment from 2011 to 2019. According to South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessment data (South Carolina Department of Education, 2023), from 2017 to 2021, Black male students at my local study site in grades 3–5 scored significantly lower than their peers; for example, in 2021, 72% of all students in Grade 5 in the district scored at grade level or better, compared to just 58% of Black male fifth graders in the district (see Table 2).

Factors Affecting Standardized Test Scores

The lack of social acceptance is a factor that could lead to underperformance on standardized assessments. Li and Wang (2022) investigated the association between peer acceptance and academic achievement, measuring within-person and between-person associations. The results showed a correlation between peer acceptance and academic achievement on standardized tests. A student who feels socially accepted among peers will tend to score higher on standardized tests. Wang and Zhou (2019) also reported that male students with peer difficulties correlate with poor academic performance, which leads to poor performance on standardized academic tests.

Other factors can affect how well students perform on standardized assessments. Keilow et al. (2019) reported that students' emotional and behavioral problems are related to their performance on standardized tests. The study consisted of students ages 7-11 assessed using the Strength and Difficult Questionnaire (SDQ). The research showed that the more emotional and behavioral problems students have the worse they perform academically. Bleiweiss-Sande et al. (2019) studied the impact of diet on academic performance. The researchers tested 868 diverse students to examine the relationships between healthful versus less healthful food group intake and the effect on academic achievement. The study showed that students with a greater intake of salty and sugary foods performed poorer academically.

Some researchers have suggested that home life and outside influences can help improve the results of standardized tests. Huguley et al. (2018) conducted a study that resulted in Black students' success by way of their parent's expectations. The research

showed that Black students' grades and standardized academic assessments increased because of their parent's expectations. However, the study was conducted with students from middle-class to upper-middle-class families (Huguley et al., 2018). How the results affect those with a low socioeconomic status has yet to be determined. Gordon et al. (2022) found that Black male students with mentors performed better on standardized academic tests than those without mentors. Redding (2019) researched the perceptions of Black students having a Black teacher and the impact of their learning and success on standardized academic assessments. The results indicated that Black students excelled when educated by someone of their race. Their behavior, theoretical achievement rate, and test scores improved.

Strategies to Prepare Students for Standardized Tests

Research has shown that early assessments and reading instructional best practice strategies can improve performance on standardized tests. Many teachers can diagnose students for reading discrepancies before the standardized assessments are taken (Iisik et al. (2022). Sulik and Obradovic (2018) compared teacher reports to the results of standardized academic tests, finding teachers were accurate at predicting test results in reading achievement. With this knowledge, teachers can adopt interventions targeting students they suspect will not pass the state-standardized assessment based on classroom data. Stormont et al. (2019) investigated kindergarten through first-grade students in a school readiness assessment. These students were selected from six urban elementary schools. The results predicted that the tested students would not attain academic and

social growth. The data collected provided teachers with options for seeking out students needing additional help and resources to succeed in their later school years.

Instructional strategies such as the backward design approach can help students excel in standardized academic assessments. Brown and Prendergast (2020) conducted a research study on three components of the backward design model. The components included zeroing in on standards and teaching practices weekly, guaranteeing teachers have a clear understanding of their weekly objectives and providing more significant attention to detail during the planning phase. Brown and Prendergast (2020) established that a unique and systematized version of weekly curriculum planning and documenting led to significant gains in student performance on standardized tests. The researchers called for more focused instructional practices to improve learners' academic performance.

Reading Comprehension

Students often activate prior knowledge when reading material to comprehend the text. Hattan and Dinsmore (2019) researched the effect of students using purposeful and ancillary learning when reading grade-level texts. The results showed that intentional prior knowledge activation did not significantly affect reading comprehension. However, students with higher levels of ancillary activation had higher reading comprehension scores. Based on the results, teachers should give opportunities for students to infer, predict, analyze, and synthesize texts to promote higher reading comprehension scores. When students can discuss and have conversations about their thinking, improvements and better comprehension of the knowledge can occur. Mercier et al. (2019) examined a

group of students working on an assignment. They stated that the teachers did more talking than students in classes with a high rate of impoverished students. However, the students spoke and shared their thinking in their investigation, and their learning increased. Regarding reading comprehension, students should be allowed to share their thinking and review the reading to improve their understanding.

Vega et al. (2020) researched the effects of using the internet to increase reading comprehension among students in the fourth grade. The researchers believed that using technology has not been studied enough and wanted to show the impact technology and collaboration have on reading comprehension. The students were tested using eighth-grade texts, reading independently and collaboratively, and reading fourth-grade texts independently. The findings indicated the students improved reading comprehension by incorporating technology and collaboration into the learning experiences. The researchers concluded that technology and collaboration with peers should show growth in reading comprehension of higher-level text. Adding physical exercise has been shown to help with reading comprehension. de Bruijn et al. (2019) studied the importance of adding aerobic fitness and motor skill exercises to students' daily routines to increase academic reading comprehension. The results showed that the motor skill exercises significantly impacted reading comprehension, and aerobic fitness substantially affected spelling.

In contrast, Bilgin et al. (2020) used the Fitnessgram Test Battery, a national standardized academic achievement test, and the academic self-concept subdomain of the Self-Concept Inventory to show a positive but weak correlation between physical activity, academic achievement, and academic self-concept. The findings showed the

significance of the relationship between health-related physical fitness parameters and academic achievement scores. According to the research, adding physical exercise should help increase reading comprehension.

Students need help to understand what is being read for many reasons. These reasons are followed with interventions and effective evidence-based practices to improve their reading comprehension skills. Dahl et al. (2021) studied how differences in materials affected students' reading comprehension. The researchers assessed students reading two types of science-related texts and found that the materials offered to students affected how they learned. The findings showed that students made significant progress on text with more elaborative information and connecting inferences when reading a text with deep cohesion, simple syntax, and concrete words. Students made more evaluative and metacognitive comments and paraphrased when reading a text with referential cohesion, complex syntax, and abstract terms. Text with more straightforward, concrete terms affects struggling readers significantly when providing reading interventions. In comparison, text with more abstract and complex syntax prepares students to be more critical thinkers (Dahl et al. (2021). Some readers may need help with word recall and spelling. Peng et al. (2019) stated that at-risk students must be able to recall word reading consisting of vocabulary and nonverbal reasoning and reading comprehension.

Based on a study by Murphy and Justice (2019), spelling plays a significant part in reading comprehension. The researchers determined the correlation between spelling and reading comprehension; directly impacts reading comprehension. Capin et al. (2021) also stated that students with reading difficulties struggle with word reading and listening

comprehension. Research has shown that reading comprehension increases when incorporating spelling into the instruction.

Interventions for Reading Comprehension

Researchers have examined other strategies in interventions to help improve reading comprehension. Padeliadu et al. (2021) researched and examined three second-grade students with severe reading difficulties using an intervention plan of 16 sessions. The intervention included model reading, assisted repeated reading, self-monitoring, and reinforcement. Pre- and post-test results showed a significant improvement in reading comprehension. However, reading fluency was not measured. Language and fluency are critical when trying to understand what is being read. Jiang and Logan (2019) studied language interventions' effects on reading comprehension. In a study of 938 students from four different geographic regions, Jiang and Logan found that the interventions provided a positive outcome on the language portion of reading and an indirect positive impact on reading comprehension. Based on their study, teachers should continue instructing language skills to improve language and reading comprehension. Silverman et al. (2020) also examined the effectiveness of language comprehension interventions and their outcome on reading comprehension. The purpose of language comprehension is to ensure that the readers understand the meaning of the text rather than solely decoding the words. Silverman et al. (2020) examined 43 elementary schools and reported positive results that the students improved in reading and language comprehension. However, further research is needed to address the underprivileged population. Understanding what is being read is hard for students who struggle with reading. Enforcing reading fluency

will help students with reading comprehension. The research has shown that language development is essential in improving reading comprehension (Silverman et al., 2020).

Retaining what was read is another crucial factor in reading comprehension. Wanzek et al. (2019) researched the retention effects of a reading intervention. The researchers assessed 269 fourth-grade students across one district who struggled with reading comprehension. The students received the multicomponent reading intervention from the Passport Program. The intervention included phonics, word recognition, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency instruction over 6 weeks. Findings showed that the students who participated in the program improved their reading comprehension and retained the skills through the fifth grade. Summer reading programs are needed to strengthen retaining capabilities and enhance reading comprehension skills. Beach and Traga Philippakos (2021) conducted a study that showed the impact of summer reading programs on students' performance at the mastery level in reading comprehension. The researchers tested students who participated in the summer reading programs and students who did not participate. The students who participated were instructed to use evidence-based best practices on foundational skills, sentence writing, and shared reading. Students who participated in the program showed significant improvements compared to those who did not.

Intensive aligned instruction can be used to improve reading comprehension skills. Stevens et al. (2020) examined the effectiveness of using extensive Tier 2 interventions aligned to Tier 1 instruction, compared to a group where Tier 2 interventions were not aligned and a group that was instructed as usual. Tier 1 instruction

is basic classroom instruction for all students; Tier 2 instruction is targeted to students experiencing difficulties. The test was conducted on fourth-grade students. The results show significant growth for the students who received intensive aligned instruction compared to the other two groups. From the results, struggling readers would benefit from small-group instruction with extensive reading strategies and practices across the curriculum. Truckenmiller and Brehmer (2021) also found that Tier 2 instruction helped struggling readers gain reading comprehension skills. Wanzek et al. (2021) investigated the outcome of an intensive reading intervention using mindset and reading intervention tested against reading intervention without the mindset intervention and compared that to students who received the usual instruction. Findings showed that the students who received reading and mindset intervention outperformed those who received traditional instruction. However, there was no significant difference in reading improvement between both groups receiving the intervention. Therefore, Wanzek et al. (2021) concluded students receiving intensive reading interventions should improve their reading comprehension skills more than those receiving only traditional instruction.

Offering peer tutoring to students may increase an understanding of reading comprehension. Wexler et al. (2020) stated that some students need help decoding and understanding complex vocabulary. The authors suggested that incorporating peer-mediated instruction will help struggling students with differing needs achieve understanding in content-area classrooms. The researchers studied the peer-mediated instruction routine where students work together to achieve mastery of content vocabulary and comprehension. Along with peer tutors, small-group activities as an

intervention are helpful with reading comprehension skills. Young et al. (2020) conducted a study using reader's theatre and the effect on reading comprehension skills. They selected a group of second graders to use the reader's theatre as an intervention; the other group received traditional instruction. The authors used a pre-and post-test and established that incorporating reader's theatre into small-group instruction can motivate and inspire young male students to build their reading comprehension skills, hoping to continue the upward trend throughout their elementary years.

Factors and Challenges Affecting Reading Comprehension and Challenges

Troyer et al. (2019) showed that intrinsic or extrinsic motivation affects later reading comprehension. The researchers studied 4,000 elementary school students' intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, reading comprehension, and reading amount. The authors found that neither intrinsic nor extrinsic motivation played a significant role in reading comprehension; however, the control factors, such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status, along with motivation, were associated with improved reading comprehension. A study by Rosalina and Nasrullah (2019) showed a significant correlation between self-esteem and reading comprehension. The researchers assessed 35 students who took part in a reading course. The researchers aimed to identify, analyze, and describe the correlation between self-esteem and reading comprehension. The Pearson product-moment analysis results from the reading test and questionnaire indicated a significant correlation between self-esteem and reading comprehension.

Researchers have studied possible reasons why students experience reading challenges. Roberts et al. (2021) found that students with behavioral problems tend to

have more difficulty with reading comprehension skills. The researchers emphasized the need for more inquiry into the effects of behavior problems and reading comprehension skills through school-wide response-to-intervention programs. Sparks (2019) noted reading comprehension involves more than decoding and listening comprehension. The component model of reading posits that reading ability is influenced by cognitive skills and factors in the ecological and psychological domains (Sparks, 2019). Behavioral problems and ecological and psychological domains are just a couple of examples of the challenges for students who struggle with reading comprehension skills.

Students who experience trauma report reading comprehension difficulties.

Vaughn et al. (2022) studied a group of third- and fourth-grade students with reading comprehension difficulties. The researchers organized the students into three groups with and without anxiety management: a small group with reading intervention and anxiety management, a reading group with math fact practice, and a control group with traditional teaching. Findings showed that the students who participated in the small group with anxiety management significantly outperformed the control and small reading groups with math fact practice. Reading teachers must understand the needs of their students both academically and mentally to help improve their reading comprehension.

Parents play a significant role in students' ability to succeed with reading comprehension. Huguley et al. (2018) studied how parental expectations and student involvement with reading programs throughout the year help students become successful readers. Another researcher, Villiger et al. (2019), investigated the effectiveness of extracurricular programs for struggling readers. The program consisted of parents and

volunteer tutors who read with students over 20 weeks. The results showed that students who worked with the volunteer tutors outperformed those who worked with the parent tutors. The struggling readers made some growth, but it was not long-lasting—the students who were fluent readers maintained growth and improved in reading comprehension.

Research also has indicated that poverty plays a part in children's struggle with reading comprehension. Caughy et al. (2018) suggested that children exposed to poverty during early childhood are more likely to show a deficiency in self-regulating behaviors when entering school, which places children at risk for academic failure. Spencer and Wagner (2018) studied children in an urban school who struggled with reading comprehension and found that the deficiency can sometimes be related to developmental delays versus a learning norm, which situations of poverty can cause. Hung et al. (2020) suggested that economic inequality, racial inequality, and household adult education attainment are strongly associated with Black/White student achievement gaps.

Black Male Students and Reading Comprehension

Achievement Gap

Researchers identified strategies to break comprehension barriers and understand how to help close the gap between Black boys struggling with reading comprehension skills and their peers. Washington et al. (2019) conducted a quantitative study comparing Black girls to Black boys in grades 1–5, assessing them on (a) language, (b) letter-word identification, (c) passage comprehension, (d) decoding, (e) reading fluency, (f) reading vocabulary, and (g) intelligence. They suggested that Black boys would grow and

improve in language and reading throughout their elementary years but still at a slower rate than White boys. Additionally, von Hippel et al. (2018) stated that Black male students faced fundamental reading inequalities before starting school according to the results of the study. The investigation reported that during the preschool years the inequities of African American boys were due to socioeconomic and racial gaps.

Dialect is essential to understanding why Black males struggle with reading comprehension skills. Researchers have studied the dialect of Black English to learn how to increase the reading comprehension skills of Black male students in grades 3–5. Washington et al. (2018) conducted a study examining the impact of dialect density on the growth of oral language and reading skills in a sample of Black-English-speaking children reared in urban communities. They studied dialect density, oral language, reading, and the relationships between these variables. They found that Black boys' reading comprehension rates decreased yearly during the third through fifth grades.

From past research, Black male students still lag behind their peers in reading comprehension skills. The problem could come from phonological awareness. Russell and Drake Shiffler (2019) studied Black boys in elementary school. Two groups were tested over 4 weeks of intervention to understand the differences between Black English and academic English. The groups were exposed to low and average phonological awareness, respectively. The findings suggested that Black males were underrepresented in successful academic achievement due to their dialect or phonological awareness of English. Teachers should implement strategic instruction, including phonemic

manipulation and verbal scaffolding, while encouraging students to understand the phonological differences between Black English and academic English.

Studies have shown that the racial and gender gap is significant for Black boys regarding reading comprehension. Griffin et al. (2021) reported Black male students struggled with closing the achievement gap between them and their White peers due to inadequate educational opportunities. Findings showed that if the school counselor supported Black male students by promoting equity-focused school–family–community partnerships that provided a strong network of support, resources, and increased educational opportunities, Black males would have a more favorable opportunity to excel and overcome racial barriers.

Because research has shown that Black males are not developing at a rate comparable to their peers in reading comprehension, teachers must find a way to reach these students to ensure they are successful. Whaley et al. (2019) established that solid relationships, educator collaboration, and high expectations could help improve reading comprehension. Although reading can be challenging to comprehend and decode, students can connect their reading to their personal experiences to help them learn. Teachers must find a way to engage students through observations, build relationships, and understand the needs of students. Motivation and engagement play a huge part in the student’s interest in their achievement. Allowing Black male students to connect with the reading to become engaged and motivated will enable them to succeed in reading comprehension.

Beal and Small (2020) showed how Black students who struggle with reading could learn to understand reading concepts by making personal and cultural connections from reading to their own experiences. Those connections helped enhance the student's reading skills and assisted the teacher with reading instruction. The study suggested that if Black males can make a personal connection between what was read to their personal life experiences, they should show an increase in reading comprehension. Ellis (2020) also conducted a study to find out how to help Black students gain a desire to become proficient in reading. The study findings indicated that Black students must be motivated to want to read.

Thomas (2019) noted that reading teachers are responsible for providing and implementing reading strategies to meet the needs of all students by motivating them to read and incorporating their backgrounds into the literature. One way of incorporating the student's background is by offering a culturally responsive approach and including culturally relevant text that positively influences student perception. By adopting a culturally responsive practice, teachers may motivate Black male students to engage in reading and increase reading comprehension performance.

Culturally Relevant Teaching

Researchers have studied how using culturally relevant teaching, texts, and learning impacts Black male students' struggle with reading comprehension in grades 3–5. Perry (2018) interviewed Alfred W. Tatum, dean of the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Tatum was asked about advice he might have for teachers who teach urban middle school students, particularly Black male students,

regarding literacy instruction. He responded that instructors should engage the students to lead meaningful conversations in the classroom and expand their writing opportunities. Telesman et al. (2019) examined Black students who participated in Reading RACES, a computer program designed to deliver a repeated reading intervention with culturally relevant passages. The students were assessed for oral reading fluency and comprehension gains, whereby they demonstrated significant improvements in these domains. Kang and Husband (2020) studied the effects of White teachers providing culturally relevant teaching related to reading comprehension. The findings suggested that teachers could improve students' reading comprehension through culturally relevant education and consciously understanding Black male students' backgrounds.

Everett and Moten (2022) highlighted the importance of interacting with fourth-grade Black boys to find their interest in reading culturally related texts to enhance their curiosity and build comprehension. The researchers found that providing Black boys with culturally relevant texts caused them to experience joy and feel as competent as others. In addition, Walker and Hutchison (2021) suggested that if the pedagogy mimicked their beliefs and lifestyles, Black boys in grades 3–5 would show improvement in literacy achievement. Similarly, Kelly et al. (2021) examined recent qualitative studies on best practices to improve the reading comprehension of Black male students. They found that the students reacted and achieved more when exposed to culturally relevant or responsive instruction.

In addition to providing culturally relevant literature, the teacher should promote sociopolitical awareness. Based on the research from La Serna (2020) on cultural

competence and culturally relevant literature, sociopolitical awareness should be present when following the complete conceptual framework of culturally relevant pedagogy. According to LaSerna, of the nine teachers who participated in the study, one classroom had two lessons reflecting the students' culture, and only three provided culturally reflective literature. All data observed showed no evidence of sociopolitical topics relevant to students.

Husband and Kang (2020) explored the strategies for improving reading comprehension among Black male students. The researchers established six approaches for promoting reading comprehension success in the elementary classroom among Black male students. The strategies included using culturally responsive texts, critical literacy, choice and collaboration, disciplinary supports, explicit instruction in specific areas, and unified effort. These strategies supported students and yielded a positive outcome for students to succeed in reading.

Furthermore, offering diverse literary texts may provide an opportunity to enhance the engagement of Black males in reading. Henderson et al. (2020) conducted a study evaluating elementary school classroom libraries. They found that many libraries lacked transitional chapter books with Black male characters. The researchers also stated that creating a diverse classroom library supports readers' identities and motivates students to read and understand the world in which they live.

Kang and Husband (2020) also studied a White male teacher and his interactions with his fourth-grade Black male students. The researchers aimed to determine how to move this group of students from below the marginal line of success to be successful in

reading comprehension. The researchers analyzed the teacher's perceptions using semistructured interviews and observations. The study established that teachers must establish interpersonal connections, be caring and respectful, and show humor to meet the needs of their Black male students. Once the relationships were formed, the teacher used inquiry-based and discussion-based learning strategies to reach the students. The students responded positively and achieved reading success. Similarly, Kelly (2023) studied White teachers who used culturally relevant pedagogy to allow ethnic minority students to engage critically with literature based on the students' lives.

Many teachers may still need help addressing Black male students to gain their interest in reading to promote reading achievement. Robinson (2020) found that exposing Black male students to culturally relevant graphic novels helped increase reading engagement. Robinson stated that Black students, particularly boys, will benefit from more culturally responsive, authentic texts in their literacy environment. Similarly, Christ et al. (2018) found that allowing students to read texts that are culturally relevant to their lives helps improve their grasp of concepts and their reading comprehension.

Researchers have suggested that meaningful text is critical to increasing the reading achievement of Black male students. Tatum et al. (2021) conducted extensive literature research on the state of Black male students and the issues of their being underserved in literacy. The researchers analyzed multiple research projects from the previous 20 years and reviewed over 266 publications. They found three related themes: reading achievement and growth; texts and curriculum; and masculinities, literacies, and identities. Black male students benefited from explicit instructions, interventions, and

research-based practices. Tatum et al. (2021) found that Black male students need more meaningful interactions with texts to connect with the material. Finally, Black boys and men should be able to express their feelings in literature without being labeled angry or inappropriate.

Researchers have suggested that instructors can improve reading comprehension among Black male students by engaging students and creating a diverse learning environment. According to Wang et al. (2020), students who attended a diverse school scored higher on reading comprehension skills assessments than students who participated at an isolated school with mostly minority students. Walker and Hutchison (2021) researched how to help improve Black male students' reading literacy through engagement. The qualitative findings from the 17 Black male students showed that literacy achievement improved when the pedagogy represented their culture, values, beliefs, and lifestyles.

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter, I addressed existing literature regarding standardized assessment, reading comprehension, teaching strategies and interventions, achievement gaps in reading among Black male students, and use of culturally relevant instruction. I found commonalities in articles that helped me to categorize themes. Common themes were diverse and involved strategies ranging from reading culturally relevant texts to building positive relationships to promoting reading comprehension skills growth among Black male students. From existing literature, findings and strategies could help teachers increase reading comprehension for Black boys in grades 3-5. Teachers should know

their students in order to provide differentiated instruction based on their needs and interests. Collaborative grouping is a way that can promote an increase in Black male students' reading comprehension skills by showing students how to learn and grow from each other via thinking through processes together. Setting high expectations is critical. Also based on literature, providing opportunities for students to add physical exercise to their daily routine is another way to help promote success with reading comprehension skills. Black male students learn better from someone of their race and content to which they can relate (Redding, 2019). Success should be evident when Black boys in grades 3-5 are engaged by teachers who are incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy into their learning.

From my review of the literature, I found a gap involving teacher perceptions of why Black boys in grades 3-5 are performing lower than their peers in terms of reading comprehension skills. Using information from literature and this study, I hope to develop concrete evidence regarding strategies to engage Black male students and overcome their challenges with reading comprehension skills. I hope to change my immediate surroundings positively, including my classroom and community.

Chapter 3 includes the research method for the study. In this chapter, I discuss the research design and rationale as well as my role as the researcher, in addition to explaining the methodology, procedures for selecting participants and collection of data, trustworthiness, ethical practices, and a summary.

Chapter 3: Research Method

I explored perceptions of grade 3-5 reading teachers on reading comprehension of Black boys in an urban southeastern school district. The qualitative research methodology was used to address research questions. I used a basic qualitative design. Researchers gather data using a single instrument such as interviews to develop an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saracho, 2017).

The data collection process involved interviewing 10 reading teachers about their perceptions of barriers that could be causing reading difficulties of Black boys in grades 3-5 in one school district, as well as effective strategies. According to Castleberry and Nolen (2018), qualitative data analysis involves five steps: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. Thematic analysis was used to understand elementary teachers' perceptions of reading comprehension among Black boys in grades 3-5.

This chapter includes information about the research design and rationale, my role as the researcher, methodology, trustworthiness, ethical issues, and a summary. I explain the participant selection process, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, and the data analysis plan. In this chapter, I also discuss the trustworthiness of the study, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I describe ethical procedures, including participants' treatment, data storage, and handling. I end this chapter by summarizing what was discussed and transitioning to Chapter 4.

Research Design and Rationale

Two research questions were used to guide this research:

RQ1: What are perceptions of third through fifth grade teachers regarding Black boys' reading comprehension skills in an urban district in the Southeast?

RQ2: What do third through fifth grade teachers believe is needed to improve reading comprehension skills of Black boys in an urban district in the Southeast?

The conceptual framework for this study was the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy by Ladson-Billings;. I aimed to determine teacher perceptions of ways to engage Black boys in reading, challenges to reading comprehension, and supports that could help to develop reading comprehension in this population. I used interviews to gather data.

I considered using other research designs before I chose the basic qualitative design. I started out intending to conduct a case study. Burkholder et al. (2016) stated case study research involves emphasizing a specific event, person, or organization. Burkholder et al. stated a case study is more than just getting someone's perceptions regarding a topic; the design requires collecting varied types of data that are bounded by a case or system. I also considered using the mixed methods approach. This design would not have worked because I had no need for quantitative data. My research is not about testing the ability of students or effects of an intervention. This research is about understanding reading teachers' perceptions of reading comprehension among Black boys in grades 3-5, including successful engagement strategies, challenges, and resources that are needed.

I considered the ethnographic research design. Black et al. (2021) stated with this design, researchers study other groups or cultures. The approach includes observations and field notes. However, teachers in the study were not part of a single ethnic or cultural group. I also considered phenomenology. However, I was not studying teachers' meaning-making, personal beliefs, motivations, or consciousness based on their experiences. A basic approach seemed more appropriate to gain reading teachers' perceptions as education experts in their field.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I was responsible for all facets of the study. I have served as an educator for 23 years. I served as a second, fourth-, and fifth-grade teacher and taught reading. I served as grade-level chair, professional development facilitator, president of the teachers' union, and a youth empowerment counselor for foster care youth. Serving and participating in these roles prompted my interest in conducting this study. I have experienced issues with Black boys in grades 3-5 who struggle with reading comprehension. I wanted to perform an extensive study to understand perceptions of other reading teachers related to this topic.

My role as an elementary school educator had potential for bias while conducting the study and analyzing data. I have a relationship with the district, but participants were not selected from the school where I teach. Ravitch and Carl (2020) suggested researchers should not be familiar with the participants. I had no relationship with and did not know any participants personally or professionally. I maintained neutrality to ensure I was ethical and provided a fair analysis in this role. I remained aware of my cultural

assumptions. Therefore, I disregarded my personal experiences, managed them by using a reflective journal, and relied on participants' words and perceptions. I analyzed information thoroughly by transcribing participants' words verbatim, participating in member checking, and keeping a reflective journal.

Methodology

Participant Selection

The population was reading teachers in grades 3-5 from one school district who were certified and had at least 5 years of experience. I used purposeful sampling to determine which participants had the appropriate experience and expertise to answer the research questions. Patton (2014) stated purposeful sampling involves the selection of information-rich cases, where researchers can learn information about matters of central importance.

I gathered contact information for participants from the district's Human Resources database. I invited participants by email asking for participation and listing study criteria. These criteria were essential because information from interviews was more meaningful from teachers who were certified in their field and had experience. In qualitative studies, small numbers of participants are used to gather rich data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Braun and Clarke (2021) noted sample sizes can vary from six to 16 interviews to achieve data saturation. Data saturation is when continued interviews do not reveal additional concepts or findings (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

First, I sought permission from my district to send an invitation email to reading teachers in grades 3–5 to participate in the study. Participation was completely voluntary

as well as confidential. I attempted to target teachers who meet the criteria; the invitation email will also include the criteria for participation. Those teachers interested in the study contacted me, at which point I answered any questions and forward the informed consent form.

Instrumentation

As the researcher, I interviewed the study participants to determine their perceptions regarding the performance gap in reading comprehension skills among Black males in grades 3-5. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), a researcher plays an instrumental role in data collection and analysis. I created interview questions aligned with the research questions. The interview questions are found in Appendix A. To achieve content validity, I ensured the interview questions were directly related to the study's research questions. Interview questions were also based on the conceptual framework and literature review.

Research Question 1 asked about ways to engage Black boys in reading. Interview Questions 1–3 asked about Black male students' reading likes and dislikes, books and texts about Black boys, and teaching strategies that work. These questions were based on research indicating the importance of culturally relevant texts and engagement (Ladson-Billings, G. 1995; Lim et al., 2019; Moore & Phelps, 2021; Scullin, 2020; Whaley et al., 2019). Interview Question 8 asked about literacy or reading skills the students struggle with most. The literature has offered different types of reading challenges, including vocabulary, spelling, phonemics, and more (Capin et al., 2021; Murphy & Justice, 2019; Peng et al., 2019). Interview Questions 4-8 asked about

challenges in general, in broad questions designed to gather teacher input. The literature has outlined a wide range of factors and challenges including diet, poverty, parent expectations, emotional and behavioral problems, and trauma (Bleiweiss-Sande et al., 2019; Huguley et al., 2018; Keilow et al., 2019; Roberts et al., 2021; Vaughn et al., 2022).

Research Question 2 asked about supports teachers recommend to develop reading comprehension among Black boys in grades 3–5 in the district. Interview Question 9 asked about professional development that may be needed and other resources in a broad question designed to elicit teachers' perceptions without leading them. Teachers may need training on understanding Black masculinity, culturally relevant pedagogy, and specific ways to engage Black male students (Lim et al., 2019; Tatum et al., 2021). Research has shown that resources such as community partnerships and strong support help Black students succeed (Griffin et al., 2021). Moreover, libraries may lack texts with Black male characters (Griffin et al., 2021). The open-ended questions will allow the teachers to use their experience and reading knowledge to answer each question.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment

I gained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Walden University before any data collection. A detailed letter was sent to the district office asking for permission to conduct the study, explaining the study's purpose, and ensuring that the data and participant information will not be identifiable. The district representative will

sign the partner organization agreement. I used the district list of email addresses to send an invitation to reading teachers in grades 3–5 in the district (except for my school) and use my Walden University email address using the invitation template. Interested teachers will respond to the email and afterward, will receive the Informed Consent Form. The form will explain the expectations of time commitment, how the information will be used, assurances of privacy and confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of the study. Their name, school affiliation, and district will not be released. The participant will be able to opt out of the study at any time.

If I receive interest from fewer than 10 respondents, I will send reminder emails a week later. If I receive interest from more than 10 respondents, I will endeavor to purposefully select interviewees to ensure a diverse sample from various schools, grades, and ethnicities.

Interviews

Then, interviews were scheduled. Each interview was held at the local library outside of school hours or at a setting chosen by the interviewee. The interviews lasted up to an hour. Each participant received a reminder email about their appointment time two days before the interview. The entire interview process took up to 6 weeks, and each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Before each participant arrived, I reviewed the documentation to refresh my memory of something notable about them. This was done to build a rapport between the interviewee and myself. I greeted the participants with a smile, reviewed the interview and informed consent details, and asked if there were any questions before we started.

After the interview, I asked the participants if they had any questions for me. At that point, I answered any specific questions and reiterated that their responses were safe and secure. Participants were thanked for their time, interest, and commitment to the study. I concluded the interview process by reminding participants about member checking. Member checking, also known as participant or respondent validation, was a technique for exploring the credibility of results (Birt et al., 2016). Once the data was analyzed, participants received a draft of the findings for input and accuracy. They were able to comment on the findings.

Data Analysis Plan

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defined data analysis as an interactive process that allows the researcher to produce believable and trustworthy findings. The data analysis plan was to review and analyze each interview immediately after receiving the transcript, making notes and observations as I listened to the participant. I used Rev.com to complete the transcriptions. Merriam and Tisdell suggested that data analysis and collection should be done simultaneously.

I first interviewed the participants. Immediately after the interview, I debriefed and thoroughly assessed the results through a written analysis. The results were analyzed by research question, coding and thematic analysis based on the interview data received from each participant. Thematic analysis involved searching for patterns of meanings in qualitative data and organizing them into themes. I used the five-step model of qualitative data analysis outlined by Castleberry and Nolen (2018) and Yin (2016): compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. I read and reread each

transcript and organized the data. The analysis process started with open-minded reading to attain familiarity with the data. This was followed by coding, or disassembling, in which I identified significant statements or words about the phenomenon under investigation.

In disassembling, I coded the transcripts, assigning a code to recurrent (or discrepant and unusual) concepts or phrases by participants. A priori codes were used from the literature (see Saldaña, 2016), such as culturally relevant pedagogy, collaborative grouping, texts with Black male characters, and engagement. Additionally, descriptive codes were assigned to indicate concepts. I listed codes in a table to help with the next step, reassembling. Codes changed during the analysis process.

In reassembling, codes were combined into like categories. I found patterns in the data (see Yin, 2016). Categories were connected to the research questions. In interpreting, categories were combined into themes by research question. I also looked for discrepant data that did not conform to the emerging categories and themes and reported such data in the interpretation. Concluding involved concluding the findings. I presented findings supported by quotes from the participants. The themes were integrated into an exhaustive description of the research problem (Shosha, 2012). From the data analysis and creating appropriate themes, I hoped to better understand the perspectives of teachers on why Black males in grades 3-5 struggle with reading comprehension.

Trustworthiness

Credibility

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), research should ethically contain valid and reliable knowledge. Internal validity or credibility relates to the relationship between the research questions versus reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Credibility was established through member checking. As the researcher, I asked ~~for~~ participants to review the draft analysis to ensure my interpretation was accurate. Saturation was a strategy used to establish credibility. I know I have reached saturation once interviews began to divulge the same insights from different participants.

I also increased credibility through the use of a reflective journal to acknowledge my bias (see Yin, 2016). As a Black educator who has taught reading comprehension skills to Black boys in grades 3–5, I had some biases on what I thought would work to help the problem. However, as the researcher, I based my findings on the interview evidence, not personal experiences. The last strategy for creating credibility was peer review. I asked a colleague, an expert in the field, to review the data to see if the results are acceptable.

Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which the findings of a study can transfer to other situations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Based on the data, I provided enough detail in the analysis that readers should be able to determine whether the context of this study applies to another context. I provided a thick description of the study by presenting in-depth data

from the interviews. The participants were able to provide rich data, as they were chosen for this study based on their educational background in reading and years of teaching.

Dependability

Dependability is a way to show trustworthiness throughout the study in terms of consistency and reliability of reporting of findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used the same semi-structured interview with all participants. I had an outside researcher, an expert in the field, review my research to ensure that the data collection, analysis, and findings are appropriate and valid for my research. Using a diverse group of participants, collecting accurate data, strategically analyzing the data, and outlining all the procedures in data collection and analysis through an audit trail helped create trustworthiness.

Confirmability

To obtain confirmability in my research, I used member checking to ensure the findings were interpreted correctly and represented the participants' views. I also considered my interview notes and observations in addition to the transcripts. The use of an outside researcher to review the findings also increased confirmability. Interview questions were open-ended. I documented any discrepancies throughout the study and conducted a data audit after completion.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures for qualitative research are related to the recruitment of participants, the materials used to recruit them, and the processes to address them. I gained Walden University IRB approval before recruiting participants and followed all IRB requirements throughout the study. I addressed ethical concerns related to

recruitment and data collection. The participants were informed that participation in the study was voluntary, and they were free to withdraw from the process at will.

Additionally, the participants signed an informed consent form (or reply to the email with “I consent”) outlining the purpose of the study, their role in the study, and the measures adopted to protect their privacy and confidentiality. The study did not mention the study site, participant names, or identifying details. A pseudonym was used to identify the school district. Teachers involved in the study were assigned a numerical ID, which was used for all transcripts and data. Any hard copies of informed consent forms were stored separately from interview data. I stored the data in a locked file cabinet and was the only person with access to it. After 5 years, the data will be destroyed. Interviews occurred at the public library to ensure the participants were comfortable; participants could choose another site if they wished. Participants chose not to answer certain interview questions. I offered participants a small token of appreciation for their time, such as a \$10 Visa or gift card to a local restaurant.

Summary

Chapter 3 included an overview of the research design and rationale for the study, my role as the researcher, including any personal or professional relationships that I may have with participants, and the methodology. I used a basic qualitative design to collect data regarding teachers’ perceptions and lived experiences. Through purposive sampling, I recruited a sample of 10 reading teachers in grades 3–5 in the study school district. I developed an interview protocol that was aligned with the research questions. Data were collected through one-on-one interviews and analyzed using qualitative coding and

thematic analysis. Measures were adopted to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Ethical standards were observed by ensuring informed consent, protecting participants' privacy, and maintaining confidentiality of collected data. After IRB approval, data were collected. Chapter 4 includes results of data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

This qualitative study involved exploring perceptions of grade 3-5 reading teachers on reading comprehension of Black boys in an urban southeastern school district. After meeting with the deputy superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of Support Services, they approved my study. I sent email invitations to all principals within the school district. I received 10 emails from reading teachers who agreed to participate in one-on-one semi-structured interviews. They responded with the words “I consent” to reply to the email. I was able to set up times that were convenient for both participants and me. Face-to-face interviews were held at the public library in a small room on the second floor of the library. I audio-recorded each interview and uploaded recordings into Rev.com for transcriptions. When transcriptions came back, I reviewed them for accuracy. I added each transcribed line to an Excel document for coding. I manually searched and analyzed data using open coding. Two research questions guided the study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of third through fifth grade teachers regarding Black boys’ reading comprehension skills in an urban district in the Southeast?

RQ2: What do third through fifth grade teachers believe is needed to improve the reading comprehension skills of Black boys in an urban district in the Southeast?

Chapter 4 includes results of data collection from semi-structured interviews. The setting and participant demographics are discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter also includes data collection and data analysis as well as code categories and themes, along with results of the study. Data from each research question were presented to support each finding. I also address evidence of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability,

dependability, and confirmability. Chapter 4 ends with a summary of answers to each research question.

Setting

There were no conditions that influenced participants' experiences that may affect interpretation of stud results. Ten elementary reading teachers from across a southeastern urban school district in grades 3-5 with at least 5 years of teaching experience of Black boys were interviewed. All interviews were in-person and audio-recorded at the county's public library. After the interview, each one was transcribed word for word using Rev.com (see Table 1).

Table 3

Participants

Research Participant	Race	Gender	Grades Taught	Years of Experience
T1	W	F	5	24
T2	B	F	3	22
T3	B	F	4,5,6	8
T4	W	F	3,4,5	32
T5	B	F	3,4	22
T6	B	M	2,3,5	6
T7	W	F	3	7
T8	B	F	3,4	21
T9	W	F	3	10
T10	W	F	3	8

Data Collection

Before collecting data, I had to receive IRB approval through the Walden University IRB committee. The IRB approval number is 01-23-24-0018599. I used purposeful sampling to gain participants with appropriate experience and expertise to

answer the research questions. I sent emails to all elementary principals throughout the district asking them to send invitations for interviews to all teachers in grades 3-5. Ten teachers replied and responded to my email with the words, "I consent." From there, I contacted each teacher to ensure they were eligible to participate in the study and set up times and dates to conduct interviews.

During data collection, I conducted 10 semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. Interviews were held in an enclosed room at the county's public library. I completed all interviews within a 3-week timeframe. Each interview was audio recorded and then uploaded to REV.com to be transcribed. Once transcribed, audio records and transcribed documents were downloaded to a file to be kept secured. Once data were analyzed, participants received a draft of findings for input and accuracy. They were able to comment on the findings. There were no unusual circumstances. All data collection went as planned with no variations from what was previously mentioned in Chapter 3.

Data Analysis

This qualitative study was designed to explore the perceptions of grade 3-5 reading teachers on the reading comprehension of Black boys in an urban southeastern school district. While collecting this data, I interviewed 10 elementary reading teachers with at least 5 years of teaching experience who taught Black boys. After each interview, I uploaded it for transcription. Afterward, I read and verified with participants for accuracy. I then began the coding process. I assigned each participant a code ranging from T1-T10. I printed out each transcript and reviewed each line by line, looking for

open codes. I analyzed and hand-coded each participant's statements word by word and line by line and listed nouns that related to interview questions based on the conceptual framework. I color-coded similar and repeated words from transcribed interviews. There were 85 open codes from the first analysis. I read each transcript twice and grouped codes into open codes (see Table 4).

Table 4

Examples of Open Codes Based on Interview Questions

Open Codes	Repeated words	Participant	Excerpt
Students' interests in reading	Nonfiction, interest, connections, sports, relevant	T1 T4	"For example, if they're reading about football statistics in a magazine, they can tell me everything they've read" "people that they're interested in and things that they can relate to their interest in their life experiences."
Cultural relevancy to what is being read	can't see themselves, no relevance, no connections	T1 T8	"anything where they can't put themselves or don't have that immediate connection." "things that they're not connected to"
Genre and topics of interest	graphic novels, nonfiction, athletics, picture books	T5 T9	"Well, graphic novels are the hit right now, so those are the ones they tend to go to," "I think that I see a lot of comprehension in nonfiction text with that group of students."
Student Grouping	Whole group, small group, groups based on interest, MAP data, groups based on comprehension skills, reading levels	T5 T7	"Well, graphic novels are the hit right now, so those are the ones they tend to go to," "I try to really think about, okay, what interests do they have?"
Building connections for comprehension	Cultural stories, personal experiences, African American characters, intentional questioning, asking questions	T3 T7	"I'll stop and I just ask questions to make sure they're engaged and understanding" "so trying to select books that they see themselves in and trying to do that whole group as well so that all of my classes exposed."
Reading Strategies	Read alouds, conversation with peers, graphic organizers, interests	T2 T3	"Modeling, I think modeling, and then showing your excitement for reading." "My boys comprehend best in small groups"
Obstacles that deter comprehension	fluency, decoding, vocabulary, home language	T3 T6	"I would say fluency. It is not like they can't, they just read at a slower pace" Fluency is a big struggle, but it's also vocabulary. And I think that those two are taught together in a very big sense because a lot of the texts they're reading are written in a way that they speak.

Reasons for reading struggles	home life,	T3	“They don't want to show that they are comprehending or show that they're too smart” “I think home life is huge. but some of it is socioeconomic as well, like their exposure to books before they start school.”
	popularity, being exposed to reading, lack of interest	T4	
Instructional tools	engagement tools, more resources,	T2	“Time” “I think it's huge to understand the cultural aspect of it with the African-Americans and sometimes things you interpret as misbehavior”
	diverse text, time	T4	

After analyzing data and narrowing down codes based on interview questions, I grouped codes into categories. Again, I used interview questions as a guide to analyze open codes further into axial codes (see Table 4).

Table 5

Examples of Open Codes and Categories

Category	Code	Participant	Excerpt
Reading Interests	Students' interests in reading, Nonfiction, interest, genre	T4	“I think they tend to be more interested in the nonfiction tech, sports figures, people that they're interested in and things that they can relate to their interest in their life experiences..” “They read graphic novels.”
		T8	
Problems/Struggles	Obstacles that deter comprehension, fluency	T3	“Texts that they cannot make connections to” “I would say fluency. It is not like they can't, they just read at a slower pace.”
		T4	
Cultural Relevancy	can't see themselves, have no relevance, or relatable, cultural material.	T3	“I do incorporate stories with black children..” “I feel like they don't like reading about characters that don't look like them or don't have similar life experiences.”
		T10	
Differentiation	Student Grouping, Whole group, small group, reading levels	T1	“We pull small groups based on their needs according to maps data and their weaknesses as well as their f and p.” “I might do it based on their reading level.”
		T3	
Incorporations	Building connections for comprehension, Cultural stories, asking questions	T8	“We have a lot of diverse books about culture, African-American culture.” “I will pick read-alouds that are very culturally open.”
		T9	
Strategies	Reading strategies, Read alouds,	T1	“Conversation, talking about the text.” “allowing them to converse with their peers.”
		T9	

	conversation with peers		
Beliefs of why the struggle	Reasons for reading struggles, home life, popularity,	T1 T7	“They don't see men talking about books and texts.” “I've seen that it's the opposite from African-American males where it's kind of reading is boring, it's not cool.”
Additional Support	time, engagement tools, diverse text, more resources,	T5 T6	“Finding more diverse text that interests African American males.” “I want high-quality texts that are interesting to black boys.”

I reread open-and axial codes to find possible themes to help understand and simplify categories. I grouped categories into similar groups that best answered research questions. Based on this information, I identified four emerging themes: Theme 1 was that instructional strategies based on student needs are necessary in order to increase reading comprehension for Black boys in grades 3-5. Theme 2 was that Black boys in grades 3-5 struggle with reading comprehension due to lack of interest, home life problems, and role models' lack of interest in reading. Theme 3 was that additional cultural-related classroom resources are needed to effectively meet needs involving reading comprehension for this population . Theme 4 was more engagement tools, diverse text, and extra time are needed within the classroom as additional supports to better meet the needs of this population in terms of reading comprehension (see Table 5).

Table 6

Themes Based on Categories

Categories	Themes
RQ1: What are the perceptions of third through fifth-grade teachers regarding Black boys reading comprehension skills in an urban district in the Southeast?	
Incorporations	Theme 1: Teachers perceive that instructional strategies and differentiations based on

Strategies Reading Interests Differentiations	student needs are necessary to increase reading comprehension for Black boys in grades 3-5.
Beliefs of why the struggle Problems/Struggles	Theme 2: Teachers perceive Black boys in grades 3-5 struggle with reading comprehension due to lack of interest, home life problems, and role models' lack of interest in reading.
<hr/> RQ2: What do third through fifth-grade teachers believe is needed to improve the reading comprehension skills of Black boys in an urban district in the Southeast? <hr/>	
Cultural Relevancy Additional Support	Theme 3: Teachers believe that additional cultural-related classroom resources are needed to be effective in meeting the needs of reading comprehension for Black boys in grades 3-5.
Time Engagement Tools Diverse Text	Theme 4: Teachers believe that more engagement tools, diverse text, and more time are needed within the classroom as additional support to better meet the needs of Black boys in grades 3-5 in reading comprehension.

The final part of the data analysis was to write about the results. I found no discrepancies in the findings that would factor into the analysis. I ensured that the themes that were found answered the research questions in my study. The themes answered:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of third through fifth-grade teachers regarding Black boys' reading comprehension skills in an urban district in the Southeast? RQ2: What do third through fifth-grade teachers believe is needed to improve the reading comprehension skills of Black boys in an urban district in the Southeast?

Results

This qualitative study aimed to explore the perceptions of Grade 3–5 reading teachers on the reading comprehension of Black boys in an urban southeastern school district. I interviewed ten elementary reading teachers with at least five years of experience teaching Black boys in reading comprehension in grades 3-5. All interviews were one-on-one with the participant and me. I created nine interview questions for each participant (See Appendix A). Each interview was audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to answer research questions about my study. Questions 1-8 addressed RQ1, and question 9 answered RQ2. From those research questions inspired by the conceptual framework, four themes emerged that provided results to my study.

When deciding on categories and themes, I analyzed the data of the answers given by the participants. Interview questions 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 addressed the first theme incorporating the use of instructional strategies and differentiations based on student needs to help support Black boys in grades 3-5 with reading comprehension. The categories that helped arrive at this theme were incorporations, strategies, reading Interests, and differentiation.

Interview questions 2, 7, and 8 discussed the second theme of how teachers perceive Black boys in grades 3-5 struggle with reading comprehension due to lack of interest, home life problems, and role models' lack of interest in reading. The categories appropriate for theme 2 were the specific problems that the teachers witnessed in their experience, their perceptions of why some of these issues existed, and the struggles Black boys face when reading for comprehension.

Theme 3 represented what teachers believed additional cultural-related classroom resources are needed to effectively meet the needs of reading comprehension for Black boys in grades 3-5. Interview questions 1, 2, 3, and 5 answered allowed me to arrive at Theme 3. These questions centered on successful cultural relevancy and additional support. Although some of the questions overlapped with other themes, they were placed where they best fit based on the participants' responses.

I concluded the fourth theme with teachers believing that more engagement tools, diverse text, and more time are needed within the classroom as additional support to better meet the needs of Black boys in grades 3-5 in reading comprehension. The responses were from question 9. Question 9 answered Research Question 2. RQ2 asked what the participants believed was needed to help Black boys improve in reading comprehension. This question led me to want to know more about what they felt they needed to help further enhance the success of reading comprehension for Black boys in reading comprehension in grades 3-5.

Theme 1

Analyzing the interview data, the second theme I discovered was teachers perceive that instructional strategies and differentiations based on student needs are necessary to increase reading comprehension for Black boys in grades 3-5. As I was making observations and notes based on the responses to the interview questions, I found that the participants used similar strategies, incorporations in the classroom, differentiations in their instruction, and noted similar interests in a particular genre of text that Black boys are receptive to and enjoy the most when reading for comprehension.

Strategies

Several teachers stated that a strategy they used in the classroom for building understanding when Black boys are reading is to allow conversations about the reading.

T1 stated:

Conversation. Talking about the text. It's not answering questions on a worksheet. It's not watching me make an anchor chart. It's having conversations about what is that, what does that mean? It's building that vocabulary through communication conversation and applying it through conversation to other things. And then that way we can refer back to that conversation later.

T6 expressed, "I'll either do that through questioning, or I'll just talk to 'em and let them build understanding themselves." T9 also stated, "allowing them to converse between their peers."

Another strategy was to use graphic organizers or visuals to engage Black boys to read for understanding. T7 and T10 both stated that using graphic organizers was helpful in engagement. T10 added that using the graphic organizer on paper and digitally helps provide understanding and choice. T7 stated, "Providing those at first, I think are really helpful. And then helping them to draw them on their own has been really impactful in my classroom."

All 10 participants incorporate stories about Black children in their instruction to ensure that a connection was made with their students and the characters in the book. T1 stated, "I do that intentionally every day. I don't choose a text unless I know that maybe

children can connect.” T3, T4, T5, and T9 incorporate stories about Black children through Read Alouds.

Differentiations

Another form of best practice was differentiating instruction. As I reviewed and analyzed the participants' responses, they all differentiated their instruction to try to meet the individual needs of Black boys as they read for comprehension. All 10 participants stated that they use whole and small-group instruction as a form of differentiation. Most of the participants said that one way they grouped their students was according to their specific reading levels. T5 stated:

Well, first reading groups are based on students' reading levels, and those levels are obtained by listening to them read, listening to their fluency, how they decode words, and how they process a text. And so, once I have them in their reading levels, then we meet with books, both fiction and nonfiction. I try to alternate genres and differentiate. Again, within that group, all those kids are on the same level, so their work is pretty much different based on their reading levels. So, my lower reading level kids are working more on summarizing, retelling, just pulling those recalling facts from the book. But my higher group are working more on those higher order thinking skills, like creating things to go with their book or designing something from their book, more past the comprehension piece. But we still incorporate comprehension.

T8 expressed that sometimes, her group is differentiated by reading topics or topics of interest. T1 and T7 stated that they also used Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) or

Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) scores to differentiate their individualized instruction to their students. T9 commented:

Usually, I teach a whole group lesson based off the state standards, and I follow a predetermined content map for that from the district, and we use a whole group lesson. So right now, I'm teaching about theme and the big idea. I'll do that whole group, but then I also do independent content groups where they're actually learning something from the reading that they're doing. But then I also do independent reading groups where they're learning some type of reading strategy or reading a topic in a way to understand the text better.

Another way of differentiation that the participants stated was to provide topics or genres that interest their Black boys. Most teachers noted that the Black boys they serve would prefer nonfiction texts. They also said Black boys love graphic novels and books about sports, athletes, and musicians. The participants also stated that they like reading books with characters that resemble them. T2 stated, "I'll say the Athletic anything with athletes with the boys." T4 commented, "Graphic novels and nonfiction texts are of high interest." T5 also responded.

Well, graphic novels are the hit right now, so those are the ones they tend to go to, which makes it hard for a teacher to test their understanding because they don't have a plot to them. So, I guess the books that they really comprehend the most for me would be nonfiction texts or texts that have topics that they're interested in. Football books, of course, books about athletes, not a lot of fiction fantasy type

books. Mostly books where it has some interest connected to them. I guess that would be higher interest books.

T10 said, “Graphic novels and nonfiction specifically. I think if it's about musicians or athletes, those are more enjoyable for them.”

Theme 2

Problems

The overall common problem from the responses gained from the interviews was that Black boys struggle with making connections to what they are reading or that the text is not relevant to them. T1 responded that Black boys struggle with reading when they “don't have that immediate connection.” T4 stated that “Black boys struggle with texts that they cannot make connections to and can't relate to.” T8 also said that “Black boys struggle with things they are not connected to or things that are not relevant to their life.” From the responses, the participants stated that Black boys do not see themselves in the text, and this causes a lack of reading comprehension. T10 responded, “I feel like they don't like reading about characters that don't look like them or don't have similar life experiences.”

Struggles

The teachers added that Black boys struggle with fluency, decoding, vocabulary, and home language. T3 stated, “I would say fluency. It is not like they can't, they just read at a slower pace”. T6 expressed:

Fluency is a big struggle, but it's also vocabulary. And I think those two are taught together in a very big sense because many of the texts they're reading are written

in a way that they speak. They are having a struggle, like code-switching what they're reading. So, it's kind of like I can read fluently, or I can understand it. So, they're not doing both.

T7 also stated:

I think some of it is decoding, so I think some of it is the sounds are complex.

Some of my boys in the past struggled because the way they may have spoken at home or spoken in the classroom might be different than what the sounds they see in the text. So, trying to help them understand dialect impacts how we see some of those letters, and trying to help bridge that gap, too.

T9 responded:

I think the vocabulary because I don't think it is words they hear in their homes. I think the vocabulary differs from what they see in books and what they hear in their neighborhoods in their homes. I think that's a big part of it—also, the fluency. I don't think they have many opportunities to read out loud and hear themselves reading. So that becomes a big part of them not being able to read fluently. Vocabulary is a big piece to them, not understanding what they're reading because they don't hear those words in their homes.

Beliefs Regarding Reasons for Struggle

The teachers responded to their perceptions of other challenges that are a factor in why Black boys struggle with reading comprehension. Their responses were similar in that they referred to Black boys' home lives, reading is not popular, lack of interest in reading, and not being exposed to reading in the home. Half of the participants stated in

their responses that, from their perception, Black boys' home life is a challenge for them when it comes to reading comprehension.

T9 expressed:

They're not reading at home. And I think the home support is something that students could benefit from as far as reading, hearing their parents read, their parents reading to them, reading to their parents. So, with many students, especially at a Title One school, their parents are working multiple jobs and so they're not necessarily always in the house, but even just reading is not seen as something beneficial necessarily in the home either. And I feel like they could have more success at reading if reading was put higher up on the priority list at home.

Based on the results, the teachers stated that Black boys have a lack of interest in reading because it is seen as not being cool. It is not popular for them to be seen reading. T6

expressed:

The popularity of it. Whereas, I see that especially for Caucasian males. It's cool to read. They can sit with their friends and talk about their books. It's a part of their culture. I've seen that it's the opposite of African-American males, where it's kind of like reading is boring. It's not cool. It's not action-packed. So, it's even my boys who are interested in reading as they're caught up in the zeitgeist. They're losing that interest because they want to fit in with their peers more.

Theme 3

Cultural Relevance

When analyzing the data by looking at the categories, open codes, and incorporating the conceptual framework of culturally relevant Pedagogy, Cultural relevancy came up in many of the interview responses. Some of the repeated words that kept reappearing were students can't see themselves, there is no relevance, and no connections were being from the text to their personal lives. All the participants stated that they attempt to incorporate some type of cultural story with Black boys as characters to connect with their students.

This information led to incorporating additional support through cultural relevancy to improve the reading comprehension of Black boys in grades 3-5. T4 stated that Black boys would benefit from reading about “things that they can relate to their interest in their life experiences.” T6 responded that the Black boys “interest levels tend to be culturally driven.” T 5 replied, “I like to choose books that are culturally based.” T8 expressed that Black boys would strive with reading comprehension when “things that are relevant to their life.” and “diverse books about culture, African-American culture, things like that to pique interest for our students at our school.” T10 “feels like they don't like reading about characters that don't look like them or don't have similar life experiences.” T3 stated, “I do incorporate stories with black children.” T4 said, “I try to incorporate texts from different cultures to relate to the different cultures.”

Theme 4

When I asked the participants, the question referring to what they need help with in further instructing Black boys with reading comprehension, they all responded with

more diverse text. T5 replied, “Finding more diverse text that interests African American males.” T6 also stated:

The help that I need is not so much comprehension strategies. I need materials. I want high-quality text that is interesting to Black boys and that fits those needs that are not written in paragraph pros but written in different mediums. I need those rich, rich texts.

T7 explained her answer further, stating, “I think more resources where they see themselves in the text but not just in my classroom, but on standardized tests as well.” In addition to diverse texts, T2 and T10 stated that they needed extra time with the students and other colleagues collaborating to better assist Black boys in grades 3-5 with reading comprehension. T8 and T9 had a different outlook on her needs for helping Black boys improve in reading comprehension. T8 responded:

I feel like because I am a female and I don't know how Black boys think, I would like to hear from a male educator's point of view and what they went through as a child. I want to know from an African-American male educator's point of view to see what their struggle was, and if they feel the same way. Did they struggle with comprehension and what did they think we needed to do to fix it because it is a problem? I feel like if I had their perspective, I know what I try to do to fix it, but it may not be what they need. I might be doing something completely wrong.

T9 stated:

I would say that I struggle with sometimes the connection because being a white female, I struggle connecting to them or they don't understand that we have things

in common. I also coach basketball and some of my students love to play basketball, and that's something we have in common, but they don't see me as that because they're on a team with kids that are not white or things like that. And then the neighborhood that they live in doesn't necessarily have a lot of white women, and so they don't see me as connecting with them. So I think one of my biggest struggles is just the connection, making that connection so that they trust me and they realize that I can teach them something and I can be helpful to them.

Another take on the improvement that the participants feel they needed to help Black boys become successful in reading comprehension is finding relevant text that they can relate to. T1 expressed her concerns by responding, "I would love to find a way to ignite the spark for wanting to read. I don't know how to do that things other than what they can relate to." T4 stated, "Find books they can relate to and make that personal connection."

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility was established through member checking. Participants reviewed the draft analysis via email to ensure that my interpretation and the transcripts were accurate. I reached saturation when the interviews began to divulge the same insights from different participants. I used a reflective journal to acknowledge my bias and based my findings on the interview evidence, not personal experiences.

Transferability

Based on the data, I provided enough detail in the analysis so that readers could determine whether this study's context applies to another context. I provided a thick description of the research by presenting in-depth interview data. The participants provided rich data, as they were chosen for this study based on their educational background in reading and years of teaching.

Dependability

I used the same semi-structured interview protocol with all participants. I had an outside researcher, an expert in the field, review my research to ensure that the data collection, analysis, and findings were appropriate and valid for my research. I used a diverse group of participants, collected accurate data, strategically analyzed the data, and outlined all the data collection and analysis procedures through an audit trail to help create trustworthiness.

Confirmability

To ensure the findings were interpreted correctly and represented the participants' views rather than mine I used member checking. I also considered my interview notes and observations in addition to the transcripts. The outside researcher reviewed the findings to increase confirmability. Interview questions were open-ended. There were no discrepancies throughout the study, and a data audit was conducted after completion.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I explored perceptions of grade 3-5 reading teachers on reading comprehension of Black boys in an urban southeastern school district. During this

qualitative study, I conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with 10 elementary reading teachers in these grades with at least 5 years of teaching experience. Interviews were held at the public library and focused on research questions.

Interview questions 1-8 were related to RQ1. Interview question 9 was designed to provide insights regarding RQ2.

Interviews were audio recorded. After the interviews, audio recordings were uploaded to Rev.com for transcription. Each participant received a copy of their interview transcription to check for accuracy. Once participants checked their transcripts and agreed they were accurate, I began the coding process. All data were hand-coded. I started with analyzing data using open or inductive coding and repeated words. I moved from open to axial coding to identify categories in order to help determine appropriate themes to answer the research questions. After continuous reading, analyzing, and notetaking, four themes were found that most accurately represent data collection and answer the research questions. Themes 1 and 2 address RQ1 and themes three and four address RQ2.

Theme 1 was that instructional strategies and differentiations based on student needs are necessary to increase reading comprehension for Black boys in grades 3-5. Participants used best practices to meet individual needs of Black boys in reading comprehension by encouraging students to have conversations about text, using graphic organizers and visuals during reading lessons, and differentiating instruction. Participants stated they differentiated instruction by conducting whole and small group sessions. Groups are based on reading levels, content topics, academic scores, or topics of interest.

They also commented that they provide books of interest that Black boys enjoyed, such as nonfiction texts about sports, music, athletes, and graphic novels.

Theme 2 was that Black boys in grades 3-5 struggle with reading comprehension due to lack of interest, home life problems, and role models' lack of interest in reading. I addressed problems that participants observed Black boys experience when reading for comprehension, specific struggles they had while attempting to read for comprehension, and perceived problems they witnessed during their experience working this population. Participants' main problems were that Black boys struggled to connect to the text, build fluency vocabulary, and be interested in what was being read. They perceived another issue that keep Black boys from comprehending what they read was they are not exposed to reading at home, and there is a lack of interest in reading.

Theme 3 was additional cultural-related classroom resources are needed to be effective in meeting the needs of reading comprehension for Black boys in grades 3-5. Participants said cultural relevancy plays a vast role in the success of these students. Cultural relevance was addressed in many interview responses. Black boys being able to see themselves in the text, the relevance and relatability of the text, and providing cultural material to Black boys were significant in terms of answering RQ2.

Theme 4 was that more engagement tools, diverse text, and extra time are needed within the classroom as additional supports to better meet the needs of Black boys in grades 3-5 in terms of reading comprehension. Participants expressed their need for additional resources to help this population. Each participant stated they needed more

diverse choices of text for Black boys to read. They expressed their text needed to be interesting in terms of characters and topics they could relate to.

Chapter 5 includes interpretations of findings, limitations, recommendations, implications, and a conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore perceptions of grade 3-5 reading teachers on reading comprehension of Black boys in an urban southeastern school district. For this study, I used a basic qualitative design to gain an understanding of reading teachers' perspectives regarding why Black boys struggle with reading comprehension. Four themes emerged from this study. Theme 1 was that instructional strategies based on student needs are necessary to increase reading comprehension for this population. Theme 2 was this population struggles with reading comprehension due to lack of interest, home life problems, and role models' lack of interest in reading. Theme 3 was that additional cultural-related classroom resources are needed to be effective in terms of meeting the needs of reading comprehension for this population. Theme 4 was that more engagement tools, diverse text, and extra time are needed within classrooms as additional supports to better meet the needs of this population in terms of reading comprehension. In Chapter 5, I discuss interpretations of findings, limitations, recommendations, implications, and a conclusion.

Interpretation of the Findings

The conceptual framework that informed my study was the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy by Ladson-Billings. This framework was used to support interview questions. The theory is that learners should experience academic success and cultural competence while developing critical consciousness to challenge the current social order. Also, incorporating Ladson-Billings' theory of culturally relevant pedagogy into daily

teaching likely will allow Black learners to achieve at a higher level, comparable to the level of other male students.

Whaley et al. (2019) found by incorporating the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy and Vygotsky's social and cognitive constructivism theory, students gain a deeper understanding of reading comprehension skills. Reading teachers should provide Black male students with culturally relevant literature that mirrors their experiences (Sciurba, 2015; Scullin, 2020). Scullin (2020) found Black male students strongly preferred characters whose race, personal characteristics, and age were like theirs, and they preferred authentic events and experiences. Scullin also encouraged teachers to extend opportunities for Black male students to read culturally relevant texts daily. Moore and Phelps (2021) found reading teachers using culturally relevant teaching strategies help Black male students become more academically successful in terms of reading comprehension skills.

I interviewed 10 grade 3-5 reading teachers 5 about their perceptions of reading comprehension among Black boys in an urban southeastern school district. I wanted to examine their perceptions regarding the performance gap in reading comprehension skills among this population. I found they perceived instructional strategies based on student needs were necessary to increase reading comprehension. They also said Black boys struggle with reading comprehension due to lack of interest, home life problems, and role models' lack of interest in reading. Additional cultural-related classroom resources, more engagement tools, diverse texts, and more time are needed to be effective in terms of meeting reading comprehension needs for this population. Four themes from this study.

Theme 1

Robinson (2019) defined culturally relevant pedagogy as teachers implementing instructional programs and practices that reflect students' cultural heritages, experiences, and perceptions. Participants shared the same thoughts and interests.

Hattan and Dinsmore (2019) showed intentional prior knowledge activation did not significantly affect reading comprehension. However, students with higher levels of ancillary activation had higher reading comprehension scores. Based on results, teachers should give opportunities for students to infer, predict, analyze, and synthesize texts to promote higher reading comprehension scores. When students can discuss and have conversations about their thinking, improvements and better comprehension of knowledge can occur. T1 said, "I do that intentionally every day. I don't choose a text unless I know that my children can connect."

Mercier et al. (2019) stated teachers did more talking than students in classes with high rates of impoverished students. Regarding reading comprehension, students should be allowed to share their thinking and review reading to improve their understanding. T1 stated:

Conversation, talking about the text. It's not answering questions on a worksheet. It's not watching me make an anchor chart. It's having conversations about what is that, what does that mean? It's building that vocabulary through communication conversation and applying it through conversation to other things.

Wexler et al. (2020) stated some students need help decoding and understanding complex vocabulary. Incorporating peer-mediated instruction will help struggling

students with differing needs achieve understanding in content-area classrooms. T9 explained, “I think the strategy that works the best, at least for third graders at this time, is reading aloud and allowing them to converse between their peers.”

Green et al. (2020) indicated the need to continue supporting teachers using evidence-based practices. Some strategies that participants used were modeling and using graphic organizers or visuals to meet needs of the Black boys in their classrooms. T7 stated:

I think visuals and so graphic organizers are really helpful. Providing those at first I think is really helpful. And then helping them to draw them on their own been really impactful in my classroom.

T10 expressed, “I think having some sort of graphic organizer, whether it's digitally or on paper helps my students.”

Beal and Small (2020) showed Black students who struggle with reading could learn to understand reading concepts by making personal and cultural connections from reading to their own experiences. Those connections help enhance student reading skills and assist teachers with reading instruction. If Black males can make personal connections with what is read to their personal life experiences, this could lead to an increase in reading comprehension. Ellis (2020) indicated Black students must be motivated to want to read.

Whaley et al. (2019) established that solid relationships, educator collaboration, and high expectations could help improve reading comprehension. Although reading can be challenging to comprehend and decode, students can connect their reading to their

personal experiences to help them learn. The research participants stated ways that they help Black boys in classroom become engaged with reading.

T2 and T3 stated how they incorporate personal stories about Black boys into their reading lessons. They also stated that they frequently ask questions during the reading to ensure understanding. T4 said, “When we have mentor texts, I try to incorporate texts from different cultures to relate to the different cultures in my class.” T5 responded, “I like to choose books that are culturally based.” Tatum et al. (2021) found that Black male students need more meaningful interactions with texts to connect with the material.

Another form of best practices that was identified from the research differentiations within the instruction. Stevens et al. (2020) found that struggling readers would benefit from small-group instruction with extensive reading strategies and practices across the curriculum. Truckenmiller and Brehmer (2021) also found that Tier 2 instruction helped struggling readers gain reading comprehension skills.

Many of the participants referred to the grouping of their students as a way to differentiate the reading instruction. They stated that they group their students based on reading interests, reading levels, and scores based on state-wide reading assessments. T1 stated:

Well, we do whole group fifth grade level and then when I pull small groups, we pull small groups based on their needs according to MAP data and their weaknesses as well as their F and P.

T3 said, "I might do it based on their reading level. Then also kind of based on interest as well." T4 expressed:

Well, I'll do a whole group lesson based on the standard of the strand we're studying and then I pull small groups and use text that is maybe on their level, maybe a little bit above that I can use with scaffolding with them to help them grow vocabulary, making sure they understand the vocabulary words, content vocabulary, things like that.

T8 said:

I try to do it by groups and so I pull by reading level, but when I'm choosing the books for that group, I try to really think about, okay, what interests do they have? What kind of books have maybe they not enjoyed before that I can try to help them enjoy? And so differentiation by interest as well. I'm also doing right now with comprehension heavy on vocabulary, so my lowest strain for map testing is vocabulary. So, I'm trying to look at map data to try to differentiate as well.

T8 expressed that:

Mainly on level by levels. Leveled instruction differentiate that way. Sometimes I differentiate by topic. You got to have some interest. The kids have to have interest in what you're trying to teach them. So sometimes by sports, sometimes by what they like, maybe cooking, whatever they're interested in. Sometimes we do an interest survey. Sometimes it's about levels. Those are the main two.

When asked what type of books Black boys in your class enjoy reading, they all shared that the Black boys in their classes enjoy reading nonfiction books and graphic novels.

They enjoy reading books about sports figures, and people they can relate to. Robinson (2020) found that exposing Black male students to culturally relevant graphic novels helped increase reading engagement. Robinson stated that Black students, particularly boys, will benefit from more culturally responsive, authentic texts in their literacy environment.

Theme 2

Henderson et al. (2020) found that many classroom libraries lacked transitional chapter books with Black male characters. T1's statement aligned with the researcher's findings. She stated that Black boys struggle with anything where they can't put themselves or don't have that immediate connection. T4 responded that her students, "struggle with texts that they cannot make connections to and can't relate to." T8 stated, "things that are not relevant to their life."

Enforcing reading fluency will help students with reading comprehension. The research has shown that language development is essential in improving reading comprehension (Silverman et al., 2020). Reading fluency was a problem that the participants found with the Black boys in their class. T3 stated, "I would say fluency. It is not like they can't, they just read at a slower pace." T6 said:

Fluency is a big struggle, but it's also vocabulary. And I think that those two are taught together in a very big sense because a lot of the texts they're reading are written in a way that they speak.

Some readers may need help with word recall and spelling. Peng et al. (2019) stated that at-risk students must be able to recall word reading consisting of vocabulary

and nonverbal reasoning and reading comprehension. Based on a study by Murphy and Justice (2019), spelling plays a significant part in reading comprehension. The researchers determined the correlation between spelling and reading comprehension; directly impacts reading comprehension. Capin et al. (2021) also stated that students with reading difficulties struggle with word reading and listening comprehension. Research has shown that reading comprehension increases when incorporating spelling into the instruction. T7 replied:

I think some of it is decoding and so I think some of it is the sounds are really hard. Some of my boys in the past because the way that they maybe have spoken at home or maybe they've spoken in the classroom might be different than what the sounds that they see in the text.

Washington et al. (2018) conducted a study examining the impact of dialect density on the growth of oral language and reading skills in a sample of Black-English-speaking children reared in urban communities. They studied dialect density, oral language, reading, and the relationships between these variables. They found that Black boys' reading comprehension rates decreased yearly during the third through fifth grades.

Language and fluency are critical when trying to understand what is being read. Jiang and Logan (2019) studied language interventions' effects on reading comprehension. In a study of 938 students from four different geographic regions, Jiang and Logan found that the interventions provided a positive outcome on the language portion of reading and an indirect positive impact on reading comprehension. Based on their study, teachers should continue instructing language skills to improve language and

reading comprehension. Silverman et al. (2020) also examined the effectiveness of language comprehension interventions and their outcome on reading comprehension. The purpose of language comprehension is to ensure that the readers understand the meaning of the text rather than solely decoding the words. Enforcing reading fluency will help students with reading comprehension. The research has shown that language development is essential in improving reading comprehension (Silverman et al., 2020).

Parents play a significant role in students' ability to succeed with reading comprehension. Huguley et al. (2018) studied how parental expectations and student involvement with reading programs throughout the year help students become successful readers. From the research participants' perspectives, parental involvement is an ongoing problem that Black boys continue to experience. T4 expressed:

I think home life is huge. I think, and it might not necessarily be African-American boys, black boys, but some of it is socioeconomic as well, like their exposure to books before they start school. Those foundational literacy skills that are missing and they come to school behind.

Vaughn et al. (2022) studied a group of third- and fourth-grade students with reading comprehension difficulties. The researchers organized the students into three groups with and without anxiety management: a small group with reading intervention and anxiety management, a reading group with math fact practice, and a control group with traditional teaching. Findings showed that the students who participated in the small group with anxiety management significantly outperformed the control and small reading

groups with math fact practice. Reading teachers must understand the needs of their students both academically and mentally to help improve their reading comprehension.

T8 said, “being exposed to literature in their homes.” T9 replied, “I think the home support is something that students could benefit from as far as reading, hearing their parents read, their parents reading to them, and them reading to their parents.”

T10 stated:

There's not much of an appeal to reading sometimes, and so it's not something that they want to do at home. I also don't know if families know what to ask them when they're reading at home, but it's also like we don't want to ask the teacher because I think there's some pride there. Maybe they didn't have a good experience at school either.

In addition to Black boys struggling with home life situations and a lack of role models reading in home, they also struggle with finding an interest in reading. Christ et al. (2018) found that allowing students to read texts that are culturally relevant to their lives helps improve their grasp of concepts and their reading comprehension. Kelly et al. (2021) examined recent qualitative studies on best practices to improve the reading comprehension of Black male students. They found that the students reacted and achieved more when exposed to culturally relevant or responsive instruction. T2 shared, “Black boys get kind of bored with those books back in the day that they can't relate to anything in a book.” T2 responded, “I think it, again, goes with the content if they can relate to it, they will read and comprehend it.” T6 stated, “My African American boys in general is interested in people that interest them. So they want to know more about

people, and they want to know about things that have happened historically or scientifically.

Theme 3

Everett and Moten (2022) highlighted the importance of interacting with fourth-grade Black boys to find their interest in reading culturally related texts to enhance their curiosity and build comprehension. The researchers found that providing Black boys with culturally relevant texts caused them to experience joy and feel as competent as others. In addition, Walker and Hutchison (2021) suggested that if the pedagogy mimicked their beliefs and lifestyles, Black boys in grades 3–5 would show improvement in literacy achievement. T3 shared, “I guess maybe finding more texts that they're able to connect with other than buying sports books or things like that.”

Kang and Husband (2020) studied the effects of White teachers providing culturally relevant teaching related to reading comprehension. The findings suggested that teachers could improve students' reading comprehension through culturally relevant education and consciously understanding Black male students' backgrounds. T4 shared:

Well, I think it's huge to understand the cultural aspect of it with the African Americans and sometimes things you interpret as misbehavior, not necessarily misbehavior. Some of the things are cultural and I think if you learn about other people and where they're coming from that that helps you understand them better and you can relate and make that personal connection. I think bonding and making that relationship with them is huge.

T7 stated, I think more resources where they see themselves in the text but not just in my classroom.”

Two of the research participants stated that because they were of a different race and gender, they may need to find ways to connect more with Black boys. Kelly (2023) studied White teachers who used culturally relevant pedagogy to allow ethnic minority student to engage critically with literature based on the students’ lives. Kelly (2023) also investigated two White teachers who disrupted the perpetuation of Whiteness through literature instruction that explicitly grappled with race and structures of oppression. The findings showed that, through culturally relevant pedagogy, the teachers de-centered their knowledge to allow the non-White students to critically engage with literacy based on their perceptions of their worlds.

T9 shared:

I would say that I struggle with sometimes the connection because being a white female, I struggle connecting to them or they don't understand that we have things in common. I also coach basketball and some of my students love to play basketball, and that's something we have in common, but they don't see me as that because they're on a team with kids that are not white or things like that. And then the neighborhood that they live in doesn't necessarily have a lot of white women, and so they don't see me as connecting with them. So, I think one of my biggest struggles is just the connection, making that connection so that they trust me and realize that I can teach them something and I can be helpful to them.

T4 expressed, “Making sure they can relate to the text. They're interested in the text, scaffolding based on what they already know and building upon that.”

Theme 4

Troyer et al. (2019) showed that intrinsic or extrinsic motivation affects later reading comprehension. The researchers studied 4,000 elementary school students’ intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, reading comprehension, and reading amount. The authors found that neither intrinsic nor extrinsic motivation played a significant role in reading comprehension; however, the control factors, such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status, along with motivation, were associated with improved reading comprehension.

Offering diverse literary texts may provide an opportunity to enhance the engagement of Black males in reading. Henderson et al. (2020) conducted a study evaluating elementary school classroom libraries. They found that many libraries lacked transitional chapter books with Black male characters. The researchers also stated that creating a diverse classroom library supports readers’ identities and motivates students to read and understand the world in which they live.

Thomas (2019) noted that reading teachers are responsible for providing and implementing reading strategies to meet the needs of all students by motivating them to read and incorporating their backgrounds into the literature. One way of incorporating the student’s background is by offering a culturally responsive approach and including culturally relevant text that positively influences student perception. By adopting a culturally responsive practice, teachers may motivate Black male students to engage in

reading and increase reading comprehension performance. T5 wants a more diverse selection of text for Black boys. T6 also stated, “I want high quality text that are interesting to black boys that fit those needs, so they're not written in paragraph pros or they're written in different mediums.”

T10 replied, “I think that we need a more diverse selection of books to choose from. For small groups, a lot of the books are outdated.”

The participants also feel that more time and engagement tools are needed to help support Black boys with reading comprehension. T2 and T10 expressed their concern for needing additional time with Black boys with reading comprehension. While T3, T6, and T7 stated that they needed more engagement tools to connect, keep the interest and build confidence of Black boys with reading comprehension. A study by Rosalina and Nasrullah (2019) showed a significant correlation between self-esteem and reading comprehension.

Model reading, assisted repeated reading, self-monitoring, and reinforcement are strategies to create engagement and build self-confidence among Black boys within the classroom. Padeliadu et al. (2021) researched and examined three second-grade students with severe reading difficulties using an intervention plan of 16 sessions. The intervention included model reading, assisted repeated reading, self-monitoring, and reinforcement. Pre- and post-test results showed a significant improvement in reading comprehension.

Another way to offer additional support to better meet the needs of Black boys is provide reading interventions. Wanzek et al. (2019) researched the retention effects of a

reading intervention. The researchers assessed 269 fourth-grade students across one district who struggled with reading comprehension. The students received the multicomponent reading intervention from the Passport Program. The intervention included phonics, word recognition, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency instruction over 6 weeks. Findings showed that the students who participated in the program improved their reading comprehension and retained the skills through the fifth grade.

Wanzek et al. (2021) concluded students receiving intensive reading interventions should improve their reading comprehension skills more than those receiving only traditional instruction.

Young et al. (2020) conducted a study using reader's theatre and the effect on reading comprehension skills. They selected a group of second graders to use the reader's theatre as an intervention; the other group received traditional instruction. The authors used a pre-and post-test and established that incorporating reader's theatre into small-group instruction can motivate and inspire young male students to build their reading comprehension skills, hoping to continue the upward trend throughout their elementary years.

Limitations of the Study

There were two possible limitations in this study. The first one was the need for me to have more direct participation and time with the participants. I was able to accomplish this goal. I interviewed 10 participants over three weeks. Each interview lasted about 45 minutes. During this time, I was able to gather a wealth of information

and data from the interview questions. I was able to reach saturation with the time allotted and the number of participants.

The last limitation was the influence of researcher bias. I was able to reflect on my biases related to the topic before data collection to avoid letting my personal beliefs influence the process of data collection and analysis by journaling my thoughts and feelings. I also based the findings solely on the evidence gathered from the participants.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the research participants on their perceptions of why Black boys struggle with reading comprehension, I suggest further research on specific support of cultural-related classroom resources that are needed to be effective in meeting the needs of reading comprehension for Black boys in grades 3-5. Further suggestions could include digital or inquiry-based classroom resources needed to help enhance the comprehension of Black boys. There are many culturally related resources, however, further research can direct reading teachers to successful classroom resources.

The findings also showed that teachers believe that more engagement tools, diverse text, and more time are needed within the classroom as additional support to better meet the needs of Black boys in grades 3-5 in reading comprehension. I would recommend additional research should be conducted to discover different types of engagement tools needed to best meet the needs of Black boys in reading comprehension. Teachers should have access to many resources. At the same time, maneuvering through the multiple resources could be time-consuming which can take away from strategic planning to meet the individual needs of the Black boys in the classroom.

Brown and Prendergast (2020) established that a unique and systematized version of weekly curriculum planning and documenting led to significant gains in student performance on standardized tests. The researchers called for more focused instructional practices to improve learners' academic performance. With specific engagement tools, cultural related resources, diverse text, and time could improve the reading comprehension of Black boys in grades 3-5.

Implications

The results of this study were to explore and understand teacher's perspectives of the struggle of Black boys in reading comprehension in grades 3-5. Positive social change from this research implied that recommendations from the findings would help teachers enhance their instruction of reading comprehension skills, allowing Black boys to gain a deeper understanding of reading with hopes of performing at a level equal to their peers.

Based on the findings in the qualitative study, reading teachers indicated instructional strategies and differentiations based on student needs are necessary to increase reading comprehension for Black boys in Grades 3-5 through classroom incorporations, instructional strategies, select reading interests, and differentiation. They also perceive Black boys in grades 3-5 struggle with reading comprehension due to problems such as lack of interest, home life situations, and role models' lack of interest in reading. This study's findings indicated ways that the research participants believed that additional support in culturally relevant resources in addition to, extra time, engagement tools, and diverse text are needed to improve the reading comprehension of Black boys in grades 3-5.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of grade 3–5 reading teachers on the reading comprehension of Black boys in an urban southeastern school district. The study’s findings may provide insight into helping Black boys become more successful in developing reading comprehension skills. The conceptual framework that informed my study was based on the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy by Ladson-Billings. This study is significant because the perceptions of grades 3-5 reading teachers regarding possible reasons and solutions to why Black males in grades 3-5 are not developing reading comprehension skills compared to their peers in an urban southeastern school district were explored.

Further recommendations for research on specific engagement tools, cultural-related resources, diverse text, and time could improve reading comprehension of Black boys in grades 3-5.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Name _____

Date _____ Participant # _____

Time Start _____ Time Finished _____ Total _____

RQ1: What are third through fifth-grade teachers' perceptions of Black boys reading comprehension skills in an urban district in the Southeast?

1. In your experience, what have you observed that Black boys comprehend the most when reading?
2. In your experience, what have you observed that they like least when reading for understanding?
3. What genre of books have you observed that Black boys in Grades 3–5 read when comprehending the most?
4. How do you differentiate instruction when teaching reading comprehension?
5. When teaching reading, how do you incorporate stories about Black children and check for understanding as you deliver instruction?
6. What strategies work well to engage and teach Black boys reading comprehension?
7. When they are reading, what parts of reading do you feel Black boys struggle with the most, and why? [Probe: comprehension, fluency]
8. Explain your perceptions of other challenges Black boys have that affect their reading comprehension.

RQ2: What do third through fifth-grade teachers believe is needed to improve the reading comprehension skills of Black male students in an urban district in the Southeast?

9. What do you need help with regarding helping Black boys perform successfully in reading comprehension?