NAVIGATING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES FOR READERS: STORIES OF

TWO HIGH-PERFORMING URBAN ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

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NAVIGATING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES FOR READERS: STORIES OF

TWO HIGH-PERFORMING URBAN ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Reading proficiency rates for elementary students in the United States are extremely concerning, especially for students in urban contexts (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017). Due to accountability pressures and high-stakes testing, low-performing urban schools often take measures such as narrowing the curriculum (Rentner et al., 2006), relying on skills-based instruction (Hollins, 2017; Kohn, 2011), and test-focused instruction (Jennings & Sohn, 2014; Maniates, 2017; Zoch, 2017a) in an attempt to increase test scores. Research shows, however, the social-emotional experience of reading is a powerful influence in a child's reading development (Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, 2017; Francois, 2013; McLean, Sparapani, Toste, & Connor, 2016; Miller, 2015; Pianta, Belsky, Vandergrift, Houts, Morrison, & NICHD, 2008). This study utilizes narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to investigate the navigation of social-emotional experiences for readers by two urban elementary teachers identified as high-performing based on their students' reading test scores. Using Dewey's (1938) concept that experience equates to education and Bronfenbrenner's (1976) ecological human development theory as the framework, this study examined the question: What are the behaviors, actions, and beliefs of high-performing urban elementary teachers in navigating social-emotional experiences for

readers? Findings provide insight about the two teachers' behaviors, actions, and beliefs in navigating social-emotional reading experiences in their contextualized stories, as well as the unique driving forces and ecological systems of that navigation for each teacher.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, have examined a dissertation titled "Navigating Social-emotional Experiences for Readers: Stories of Two High-performing Urban Elementary Teachers," presented by Hilary McNeil, candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

What does someone say to acknowledge others when the words cannot adequately express the level of sincere gratefulness? This is a very real dilemma for me. I worked over the course of four years to accomplish this degree, and although it sounds cliché, none of this would have been possible without significant individuals along the sidelines.

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CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION: STORIES WORTHY OF STUDY

Some of my earliest memories about reading involve adults sitting beside me, impatiently telling me to "sound it out" or to "*just* read the words that are written on the page." They became frustrated with me as I stumbled over words, guessed at the written words, or uttered isolated letter sounds in a desperate attempt to read. I wanted to stop. I was completely discouraged and viewed reading as a miserable task. Then during the summer after first grade, a private tutor changed things for me. She energetically pulled me close on her reading couch, with shoes off, of course, because "you want to be comfortable when you read," and she patiently read with me. She understood who I was, she developed a relationship with me, and she held high expectations for me. She used positive words to encourage me and displayed a constant excitement for reading and for teaching me to read. Slowly I became a reader and developed a confidence that I had never possessed before.

I start with this story because it is my hope that throughout this document you hear my voice on this topic about which I am so passionate. I want to be very transparent with you, a reader and consumer of this narrative inquiry study. I want you to feel like I am sitting next to you over a cup of coffee, having a conversation with you. I desire that you too will understand the need to be passionate about this topic if you have not already come to this conclusion.

Perhaps as a result of those experiences, as an elementary teacher dedicated to urban schools, I strove to create positive and beneficial reading experiences for my students— experiences that made them feel enjoyment and cared for as readers. Now that my professional career involves working to prepare elementary teachers, I continue to question

why I had to depend on this one individual instead of my teachers, and why any child should be short-changed of enthusiastic teachers who share their love of reading and who provide positive interactions to promote joy in reading. Working in many urban elementary schools, I have too often observed teachers enacting reading instruction void of enjoyment, connection to students, and authenticity but instead focusing on skills needed to complete a test. These behaviors, actions, and extending beliefs make me cringe, and they fuel my personal perspective on the need for beneficial social-emotional experiences in reading.

The Broader Context: Beyond My Story

While the story of my reading tutor reflects what can happen when students who struggle with reading have positive social-emotional experiences, data about reading proficiency, particularly students of color who most often attend urban schools (Gadsden & Dixon-Román, 2017; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017), suggest that too many students are not receiving such experiences. An enormous number of elementary students are struggling to read today: In 2017, only 32% of urban fourth grade students read proficiently, compared to 42% of their suburban and 35% of their rural peers (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017); thus the urgency to shift from my story to the story of other struggling readers.

It is important to contextualize the low reading proficiency of students of color in urban schools within the context of the U.S. education system, which was originally founded in the 1600s on the core values of the White European, middle-class, Protestant population (Pai, Adler, & Shadiow, 2006). This resulted in a schooling system that normalizes European, Western ideals and norms of competition, individuality, and achievement orientation (Howard, 2016; Pai et al., 2006; Paris, 2012). Over the last 400 years, this

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country has become increasingly ethnically, religiously, and socio-economically diverse, yet the dominant norms have continued to be reified in our society and schools (Pai et al., 2006). However, educational policies that impact instruction, assessment, and curriculum are often made with little regard to that diversity (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Heilig, Khalifa, & Tillman, 2014; Howard, 2016; Irizarry & Welton, 2014). As Heilig et al. (2014) stated, specifically of No Child Left Behind policies, "the reforms were constructed and enforced largely outside of the communities they sought to effect, while purposely ignoring the…structural issues in the educational system" (p. 527). In research about urban schooling, such as my study, it is critical to understand the context and dynamics of power in urban schools (Gadsden & Dixon-Román, 2017; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017). If these dynamics are not acknowledged, the domination of Whiteness is perpetuated by researchers. Bartolome (1994) reiterates this in saying, "Any discussion having to do with the improvement of subordinated students' academic standing is incomplete if it does not address those discriminatory school practices that lead to dehumanization" (p. 176).

Urban schooling has been the focus of educational policy, practice, and research for many years now. In fact, one factor used today to report data on the Nation's Report Card (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017) is school location, including city, suburban, town, and rural regions. Unfortunately, the city, or urban, location historically underperforms when compared to other regions, as reading proficiency in urban contexts has been lower than that in suburban and rural schools since this data was first gathered in 2007 (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017). Urban contexts are characterized by social and cultural wealth, resilience, agency, and racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity (Gadsden & Dixon-Román, 2017; University of Missouri, Kansas City, 2011; Yosso, 2005).

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Urban schools cannot build on students' and families' cultural wealth, resiliency, agency, and diversity through teacher-centric, decontextualized instruction that views literacy as a series of discrete skills "associated with the transmission and mastery of a unitary Western tradition" (Giroux, 2015, p. 149).

Statement of the Problem: Getting to the Issue

The U.S. educational system has undergone many changes over the years, including changes in approaches to handling influxes of immigrants, adjustments in response to war or societal movements, and initiatives to compete with rival countries' education systems (Pai et al., 2006). More recently, in an attempt to raise the bar for students' reading proficiency in the United States, government-led initiatives such as the Reading First grant program and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) have been implemented (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Following NCLB's implementation in 2002, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law in 2015 (Every Student Succeeds, 2015). As the name suggests, ESSA is a law that addresses the need for every student in the United States to succeed in the learning of determined standards. With these initiatives, enforced by White, middle-class politicians and leaders (Heilig et al., 2014; Howard, 2016; Pai et al., 2006), came high-stakes testing to monitor the impact of the initiatives and hold school districts, schools, and teachers accountable for the learning they are providing our students (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). High-stakes assessments, which are yearly tests that intend to hold schools accountable on the government-established academic standards, are mandated by federal educational policy and adopted legislation (Heilig et al., 2014). These assessments are high-stakes because if adequate performance is not demonstrated, federal sanctions and penalties are applied (Heilig et al., 2014). Reform in this manner, "despite being consistently framed

as social justice-oriented, was destined for failure due to its punitive and paternal approach to educational reform" (Heilig et al., 2014, p. 527). Notably, such mandates do not call for teachers to create social and emotional experiences that promote reading proficiency (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017; National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

As previously noted, low reading proficiency in urban schools is commonplace: Urban contexts had only 32% of fourth grade students and 32% of eighth grade students reading proficiently (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017). Due to these low test scores, teachers in urban schools are under the microscope of district or school recommendations or mandates measured by continued legislated high-stakes assessments such as those resulting from the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2002) and now the Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015) (Heilig et al., 2014; Jennings & Sohn, 2014; Kohn, 2011; Rentner et al., 2006).

As a result of the NCLB high-stakes testing pressure, teachers in urban contexts have attempted to make adjustments to their instruction, in addition to allowing more time for reading and math instruction (Rentner et al., 2006). Despite adjustments, student proficiency in reading has not changed across the board (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017). What *has* changed is that instruction has become more teacher-centered, rote, and focused on measures for test preparation. There is a lack of hands-on, authentic instruction that incorporates equitable attention to all students, in all subject areas, for a well-rounded education. For example, a study based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress shows African American children, who are often overrepresented in urban areas, much more likely to be taught with worksheets or workbooks on a daily basis than white students (Kohn,

2011). Kohn (2011) reaffirmed the notion that urban students of color are receiving an education that lacks depth and authenticity due to their urban educational setting, eloquently saying, "The rich get richer, while the poor get worksheets" (p. 33).

Furthermore, a study in the urban Houston Independent School District (Jennings & Sohn, 2014), found that teachers focused their instruction on the students closest to the proficiency score on pre-tests, rather than all students. The students with scores higher than the proficiency score or scores too low to become proficient, in their opinion, demonstrated limited growth since instruction was not directed to their specific needs. Teachers also gave more attention to content and question types more likely to be on high-stakes tests (Jennings & Sohn, 2014). Additionally, Hollins (2017) said that rote, code-based literacy instruction being used, where phonics is the prerequisite for reading, hinders the reading growth of underserved student populations. In fact, teachers in schools not classified as "in need of improvement" by federal authorities were doing 100% more hands-on activities than were schools labeled as needing improvement (Srikantaiah, Zhang, & Swayhoover, 2008). W. Au (2011) even compared the current approach to education in the U.S. to the scientifically-managed strategy for increasing factory production in the 1900s known as "Taylorism." Current classroom practices are influenced by efficiency-based, Taylor-like reforms (Heilig et al., 2014), using high-stakes testing in a way that narrows curriculum, focuses on teacher-centered instruction, relies on test drills, and often mandates the use of pre-packaged curricular materials (W. Au, 2011; Center on Education Policy, 2006; Hollins, 2017; Kohn, 2011; Maniates, 2017; Zoch, 2017a). Schools essentially become factory assembly lines (W. Au, 2011). This kind of schooling is not only failing kids who are struggling to read; it sets them up for failure in life.

In a 2015 address at Columbia Law School, Deputy Attorney General Sally Quillian Yates stated,

> It's disturbing but true: reading failure is the common thread among many of our social ills—academic failure, delinquency, violence and crime. When a person cannot read, many of the daily tasks that we take for granted, like reading a job application, are much harder if not impossible. When a person cannot read, they become frustrated, vulnerable and isolated. (para. 22)

She went on to say that 70% of American inmates cannot read above the fourth-grade level (Yates, 2015). Additionally, adult low-level readers often lack the skills needed to read medical directions or prescription labels and therefore suffer more health issues (Read "Write" Adult Literacy Program, 2010). Illiteracy in America costs a staggering $240 billion every year in areas such as welfare, crime, and poverty (Read "Write" Adult Literacy Program, 2010). At the root of this issue for urban students is the power of Whiteness that founded the U.S. education system and still prevails in the current system. Many urban schools face "inadequate teaching practices, inadequate funding, poor administrative decisions, underdeveloped counseling and psychological services as well as curricular opportunities that are unchallenging for and unresponsive" to the diverse urban students they serve (Milner & Lomotey, 2014, p. xv). How can educators settle for setting our students up for these outcomes of illiteracy? We must attend to components of reading beyond the cognitive component, which adjustments of instructional strategies and curriculum have not improved. Hence, this study focuses on the social-emotional experience of reading.

Although curriculum reading standards and accountability measures do not take social-emotional experiences into account, extensive research demonstrates the power of social-emotional experiences in reading. Carbo (2008) stated, "Research indicates that when students' environmental preferences are met, they are more likely to associate reading with

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pleasure, to read for longer periods, and, overall, to achieve higher scores in reading" (p. 60). There is also research that demonstrates that high-achieving classrooms function with more joy (Haberman, 2005) and that positive teacher-student relationships typically lead to increased academic achievement (Liew, Chen, & Hughes, 2010; Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006; Zee, Koomen, & Van der Veen, 2013). For instance, Split, Hughes, Wu, and Kwok (2012) found a significant correlation between increasing teacher-student conflict and less academic growth in a study including 657 diverse first graders with below-average literacy skills over a five year period. Additionally, Slavin, Lake, Davis, and Madden (2011) investigated the effectiveness of 97 different programs for struggling readers and found classroom approaches that incorporated cooperative learning, which leverages social-emotional experiences for learning, to have positive effects for low achievers.

Despite concrete evidence attesting to the importance of teachers' facilitation of social-emotional experiences (Liew et al., 2010; Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006; Zee et al., 2013), a focus on the social-emotional experience of reading is lacking, and there are no measures for teachers' implementation of social-emotional practices in an attempt to directly impact reading proficiency.

Additionally, a majority of the recent research that investigates improved reading proficiency focuses on the cognitive aspects of reading or instructional and curriculum resources, strategies, and English Language Arts standards (Kohn, 2011; Nash, Hollins, & Panther, 2016; Peck, 2010; TeachingWorks, 2017; Yatvin, 2000). However, a vital piece of the puzzle is missing when analyzing what is happening in high-performing urban classrooms today: the non-instructional role a teacher plays in navigating the social-emotional experience that occurs in classrooms with students reading proficiently (Dudley-

Marling & Lucas, 2009; Routman, 2014; Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006; Wepner, Strickland, & Quatroche, 2013).

At the same time, the present literature on social-emotional approaches to reading instruction focuses on isolated approaches (Francois, 2013; Hill, 2013; Keller, Hoy, Goetz, & Frenzel, 2016; Liew et al., 2010; Peck, 2010; Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006). Thus, there is a gap in the literature needing to be filled. Since standardized tests determine the level of students' reading proficiency in our country, policymakers and educators at all levels need to investigate what is going on in the classrooms where marginalized urban students *are* reading proficiently according to these standardized tests. Determining what will produce more proficient readers in our urban schools is critical. Thus, studying high-performing urban teachers in reading was my purpose in this study. I specifically investigated the holistic social-emotional experiences navigated by teachers in urban elementary classrooms that promote reading proficiency. The holistic investigation included a wide-angle lens of all social-emotional elements during the reading block and attempted to understand factors, influences, and contexts of the teachers' navigation of these experiences through their lived and told stories. I propose these findings may reveal insight for increasing reading proficiency for more urban elementary students in a way that other literature overlooks.

Research Purpose and Question: Taking the Emotional Pulse

The purpose of this narrative inquiry study was to understand the social-emotional experience for readers that high-performing elementary teachers navigate in two urban classrooms. Gaining a deeper understanding of a teacher's navigation of social-emotional experiences for readers was accomplished by learning the story of each teacher. To narrow and strengthen my focus, I limited my inquiry to only two teachers. As a narrative inquirer, I

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entered into the midst of these two teachers' stories, allowing me to gather insight about their behaviors, actions, and beliefs in the school landscape (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin, 2006, 2013b). Teachers' stories are shaped by their experiences, knowledge, and lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Their stories are then made visible in their teaching practices (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Additionally, the stories are influenced by the three-dimensional space of past, present, and future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I make the teachers' stories known to my readers by *restorying* (Clandinin, 2013b), or narratively sharing, the findings to the following research question in Chapter 4:

- What are the behaviors, actions, and beliefs of high-performing urban elementary teachers in navigating social-emotional experiences for readers?

If the United States values testing enough that the teaching implemented in classrooms, specifically urban classrooms, is significantly changing, then I contend it is important to understand the type of teaching occurring in urban classrooms that are successful on these tests. This narrative inquiry contributes research that addresses the problem of urban students' struggle with reading proficiency by studying what two high-performing teachers are doing that counteracts this struggle, with a focus on the social-emotional experience. Thus, this study should inform teachers, schools, school districts, teacher preparations programs, and even governmental policy agencies on the type of social-emotional experiences navigated in urban classrooms that produce higher than normal reading scores that may influence the reading experience that other urban teachers navigate, the manner in which standardized reading tests are utilized, and the type of preparation offered to teachers.

Definitions of Terms: Intended Meanings in this Study

To get on the "same page" and allow the reader to truly understand this study, the following definitions of key terms are necessary. Explicitly defining these terms provides clarity in how these terms were applied in this study, avoiding misinterpretation or false assumptions.

Actions

This study defines actions as intentional, planned "doings" by the teachers. Actions may include approaches of instruction or management in the reading block, also explained as "proactive acts" in this context. The teacher typically has a goal in mind for these planned-out acts.

Behaviors

When studying the teachers' behaviors, this refers to in-the-moment interactions and reactions, unlike proactively-planned actions. Behaviors can be intentional but cannot always be anticipated or planned for, given the reactionary occurrence. These may include the way a teacher responds to a student or the body language displayed by the teacher. Overall, this is the way the teachers conduct themselves towards others in natural, unplanned ways. It is important to note that behaviors and actions overlap at times.

Beliefs

The teachers' beliefs refer to the internal personal views and perspectives that teachers possess. For the purpose of this study, I aimed to understand the teachers' beliefs about areas such as their teaching, their influence, their students, the urban context, and reading. At times, assumptions may be possible to make about a teacher's beliefs based on

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their behaviors and actions. For this study, beliefs were also directly confirmed through the teachers' interviews and reflections.

High-Performing Teachers

Teachers were identified as high-performing as a result of their students having higher standardized reading test scores than those students in classrooms of similar contexts and demographics. High-performing teachers were also recognized by school principals and the district English Language Arts coordinator as teachers who consistently provide high-quality reading instruction to meet the needs of students.

Minoritized Students or Populations

The term "minoritized" (McCarty, 2002) refers not to simply being a minority but also to experiencing treatment that signals inferiority. In this study, being a minority could involve an individual's race, culture, or language that does not align with the White, European, English-speaking population. The implicit or explicit treatment, as well as any stigma or stereotypes these students or populations endure categorize them as *minoritized*.

Reading

In the context of this study, reading is referring to the actual components of literacy, including reading, writing, listening and speaking, which occur during the reading block in these two classrooms. Critical literacy also plays a significant role in how those four components of literacy are experienced. Critical literacy recognizes the connection of language, text, and discourse to power and social order, knowing "all texts and practices are positioned and they work to position us" (Janks, 2017, p. 132). Within the daily schedule of these classrooms, separate blocks of time are designated for reading and writing. Within the reading block, there is typically engagement in all areas of literacy in conjunction with

reading texts. The social-emotional experience in *reading* refers to the literacy components

that occurs during the reading block filtered through a critical lens.

Social-emotional Experience in Reading

In this study, the social-emotional experience in reading means the way high-

performing teachers are attending to students' social-emotional well-being in the context of

reading instruction. Research (Bandura, 2001; hooks, 1994; Immordino-Yang, 2016; Nieto,

2012) demonstrates that cognitive development cannot be isolated from social and emotional

elements. In fact, Immordino-Yang (2016), a neuroscientist who studies the bond between

emotions and learning, explained that learning occurs due to emotions and that thinking is

naturally emotional and cognitive simultaneously. Immordino-Yang explained that teachers

need to work towards classrooms that promote and support emotions for the select discipline,

including interest, curiosity that prompts sustained participation, and feelings of satisfaction

through achievement.

Ultimately, the social-emotional well-being of a student refers to the feelings a child

has that determines the level in which he or she feels cared for, efficacious, safe, valued, or

worthy. Concepts of self-confidence and self-esteem (Gay, 2010) are part of a student's

social-emotional well-being. The state of a student's social-emotional well-being in school is

a product of the interactions with teachers, other students, the environment, resources, and

other components within the classroom context, both physically present and implicitly

present within the classroom context. Given this information, the definition of *social-

emotional experiences* also recognizes that cultural and linguistic connections shape literacy

experiences (Dyson, 2013; Nash, Panther, & Arce-Boardman, 2018).

Urban Schools

While many definitions exist for *urban schools*, I use a definition for *urban* in this study that is adapted from Gadsden & Dixon-Román (2017), Nash et al. (2016), and University of Missouri, Kansas City (2011). That definition is as follows:

> Urban includes social and geographic contexts characterized by social and cultural capital, resilience, agency, and racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity. In addition, urban connotes population density, extremes of socio–economic status, mobility, and immigration, including inequitable conditions around education, housing, employment, healthcare, technology, safety, and access to other needed resources. (Adapted from Gadsden & Dixon-Román, 2017; Nash et al., 2016; University of Missouri, 2011).

In this study, *urban schools* are schools positioned within these urban contexts and are recognized as spaces of resiliency in an environment of test score pressures and structural inequalities, rather than dim, heartless, and hopeless places that other narratives portray.

Theoretical Framework: Perspectives Driving My Research

Dare I say that I am an emotional or relational type person? No, I do not cry at Hallmark commercials (I may get a lump in my throat) nor do I want to hug everyone with whom I come in contact. I do believe, however, that humans have emotional needs, and that everything we do and learn involves an influential environment that directly or indirectly involves socialization with other people. My own personal experiences, both in school and in life, helped develop this perspective. I am well aware that the environments I have been a part of and individuals who have surrounded me, influenced me and continue to influence me. For example, my personal experience as a young struggling reader, shared in the opening, influenced who I am today and drove my desire to conduct this study.

As Dewey (1938, 1986) concluded, our experiences lead to learning that shapes us. He stated, "All genuine education comes about through experience" (1989, p. 247) and

"every experience lives on in further experiences" (p. 248). I believe the same is true for the high-performing teachers in this study. Their navigation of social-emotional experiences for readers is a product of their past and present environments, their interactions with others, and who they have become as a result of those experiences. Then, the teachers impact the students, who also develop through their environments and interactions with others, including their reading experiences. In fact, I concur with literature asserting teachers have the most influence on their students' learning (Gadsden & Dixon-Román, 2017; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004; Schlein & Schwarz, 2015), but I was curious about the social-emotional reading experiences navigated by teachers. The search for what type of social-emotional experiences are navigated by high-performing teachers spurred this study. That is the unknown that I desired to know; the narrative that I aimed to understand.

Although this section is labeled as the "theoretical framework," this causes tension in the methodology of narrative inquiry. Maxwell (2013) explained that the theoretical framework, or conceptual framework, gives insight about what a researcher thinks is going on in a phenomenon. He explained that it is *created* by the researcher by pulling pieces from other theories and concepts together with his or her experiential knowledge (Maxwell, 2013). However, this notion of theoretical framework conflicts with the approach that narrative inquirers set out to take. Inquirers hold "autobiographically oriented narratives" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 41) that elicit responses and reactions to the field. They also hold that using theory to structure a study in a formalistic manner makes assumptions rather than letting the stories guide the outcomes. JoAnn Phillion (2002), working under the mentorship of Michael Connelly, a co-creator of narrative inquiry, published work about this very issue. Her own personal experiences and learning from theory and literature about culture and the

multicultural landscape of schools contributed to her fictitious identity of *Ms. Multicultural*.

As Phillion (2002) stated, "I had read the expanding and complex literature of multiculturalism, much of it critical, much of it programmatic, and was excited about its potential to help me think through issues in multicultural education" (p. 24). Calling herself *Ms. Multicultural*, she took on the persona of an individual all-knowing in the area of multicultural contexts and education. This identity of *Ms. Multicultural* led Phillion to assumptions and theory of multicultural classrooms and teaching that did not surface in the research participant or site as expected, however. She believed she found "the perfect place, the perfect participant, and the perfect study of multicultural practices," but after her multicultural teacher participant, Pam, did not align with what literature framed as good multicultural teaching, Phillion realized, "As the literature fenced in my thinking, I attempted to fence in Pam" (2002, p. 26). Ultimately, she explained the tension of sharing stories the way they are (guided by theory) rather than the way they are expected to be (filtered through theory): "Can you imagine my shock when I began to realize that Pam did not follow my script?" (2002, p. 26).

To avoid issues like Phillion's, in the narrative inquiry method I employed, I utilized a theoretical framework to investigate the understanding of the teachers' stories and the landscape of this study rather than to make interpretations in the study as other qualitative studies use theoretical frameworks. My theoretical framework was comprised of Dewey's (1938) framework of experience as education and Bronfenbrenner's (1976) ecological human development theory. These two framing concepts coincide with the need for narrative inquirers to understand their studies "inward and outward, backward and forward" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50) through interaction, continuity, and situation (Clandinin &

Connelly, 2000). This study aimed at capturing an understanding of the experiences through an ecological approach, which ultimately went hand in hand with narrative inquiry. The ecological human development theory prompted my literature review and research methods to gain a deep, yet wide, understanding of the teachers' stories and experiences. There was a graceful intertwining of narrative inquiry, experience, and ecological human development theory.

Experience

Dewey's work is the backdrop for narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A major view held by Dewey (1938) was that life *is* education. Life is filled with experiences that teach and prompt revelations, so therefore experience is education. Dewey believed that educational research should be the study of experience. The interweaving of life, experience, and education prevents us from teasing one away from the others. He went on to say that "all genuine education comes about through experience" (p. 247) but all experiences are not necessarily equally educative. Sometimes experiences are mis-educative, disconnected, or ill-producing. The quality of education depends on the quality of the experience. Therefore, experience needs to be considered when determining subject matter, methods of instruction and discipline, materials, and social frameworks in a school. Also, all experiences live on in future experiences. These beliefs and philosophical views held by Dewey fostered the development of narrative inquiry. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the founding fathers of narrative inquiry, developed the methodology, the nature of experience was a cornerstone in their inquiries. Narrative inquiry endeavors to understand experience and was originally designed to make meaning of children, learning, teachers, and classrooms. The methodology adopted Dewey's notions of experience being personal and social, as well as contextualized

in the past, present, and future. Hence, with the desire to understand the teachers' stories, the narrative inquiry methodology was adopted and the theoretical concept of experience runs as the lifeline in this study.

Ecological Human Development Theory

Bronfenbrenner's work on the ecology of human development is grounded in claims that humans develop as part of an ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1976, 1977). This perspective also aligns with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1986) that assumes that individuals develop in a way that cannot be pulled away from their social and cultural contexts, and they develop cognitively through their participation in sociocultural activities (Rogoff, 2003). Bronfenbrenner explained that there are multiple systems, also thought of as settings or contexts, in which an individual functions. These systems range from immediate direct contexts to secondary indirect context. As represented by Bronfenbrenner, the systems are nested within each other, and the individual is at the center. Thus, as connected to Dewey's (1938) theory of experience as education, the experiences within all of these systems develop and provide learning experiences for the individual intentionally and unintentionally. The systems include the micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, macro-system, and chrono-system.

Micro-system. The sphere closest to the individual is the *micro-system,* which includes the specific personal settings of an individual. Setting refers to a place such as home, school, work, church, and so on. Within these settings, an individual holds a role and participates in some type of activity for a set period of time, all contributing to the development occurring in this micro-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1976).

Meso-system. The *meso-system* is simply the interactions between all the elements within the micro-system. The compiled and connected interactions that occur between all micro-systems include the dynamics of role, activity, and time for each. The encompassed alignment, tension, or conflict between these dynamics create the meso-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1976).

Exo-system. Beyond the meso-system is the *exo-system* that includes social structures that influence the major settings of the individual. These social structures are both formal and informal, including structures such as government, the economy, educational institutions, religious institutions, neighborhoods, informal social networks, or the media (Bronfenbrenner, 1976).

Macro-system. The *macro-system* is the sphere that involves overall culture of "economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems" (Bronfenbrenner, 1976, p. 6). The concrete structures of the other systems are established in the macro-system, which comprises elements of customs, norms, and ideology.

Chrono-system. The all-encompassing sphere is the *chrono-system* that is recognized to impact each of the other systems. This system was not in Bronfenbrenner's original theory but through reflective practice, Bronfenbrenner adjusted the original theory to include the chrono-system (Leonard, 2011). This addition emphasizes "that historical events and situations impact development" (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009, p. 205) and that nested systems are situated in time and can change over the course of time (Leonard, 2011).

As Patton (2015) explained, "often the answer to why people do what they do is found not just within the individual but, rather, within the systems of which they are a part:

social, family, organizational, community, religious, political, and economic systems" (p. 8). Obviously, Patton agreed with Bronfenbrenner's theoretical ideas. Bronfenbrenner's (1976) understanding of human development cannot be ignored in educational settings.

Ecological theories of human development are important for understanding the development of urban students if there is a desire to improve their education and development (Back, Polk, Keys, & McMahon, 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1976; Fletcher, Grimley, Greenwood, & Parkhill, 2013; Lee, 2017). For instance, a recent study by Back and colleagues (2016) investigated different areas of the school environment with an ecological perspective in order to understand impacts on students in urban high schools. These researchers identified the classroom and its management as the microsystem, the interactions and relationships between school staff, teachers, and principals as the mesosystem, and the resources, knowledge, and beliefs about the educational setting, specifically the school's climate, as the macrosystem. All elements they studied, including classroom management, staff relations, and school climate, were statistically significant at $p < .05$ as predictors for standardized ACT performance.

A study by Leonard (2011) also utilized Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory to understand student development and school improvement. Recognizing students as part of an ecological system, where experience and relationships matter, Leonard studied community partnerships as part of the system influencing their development. By looking at each system in the ecological model, there was deeper understanding about student development and school improvement over decades of varying relationships with community partners. These findings strongly suggest that being able to understand the influences of ecological spheres of urban students in terms of the school environment can support the improvement of education.

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Ecological theories of human development are also useful for examining teacher development (Gutiérrez & Penuel, 2014; Lee, 2017; Maring & Koblinsky, 2013). For example, Maring and Koblinsky (2013) analyzed the needs of 20 middle school teachers from three urban schools in communities that had experienced high levels of violence. Analysis reviewed multiple levels as needed in an ecological approach. Through in-depth interviews with these teachers, researchers identified spheres of support individually, with family and friends, within the school, and through the community. Specifically, in these different systems, they were able to find themes in the challenges the teachers faced, the coping strategies teachers used, and the needed support teachers identified. Findings such as these provide insight and guidance on how to prepare teachers, improve teachers' effectiveness, and support teachers in day-to-day struggles. In turn, these teachers are within students' ecological systems, influencing their students' development and learning.

In this study, I explicitly used ecological human development theory to understand the schools and teachers through an ecological perspective as well as understand teachers as part of the ecological system of students' development. In this way, there was an understanding of the teachers' stories, which in turn impact the students' stories. The entire study is based on this concept. I acknowledge that teachers are influenced by students but for this study, I specifically attend to the impact and influence the teacher has on the students. Many factors in the ecological systems may impact the practices of urban elementary teachers' navigation of the social-emotional experiences of reading, including the U.S. education system, urban schools and leadership, reading in urban elementary classrooms, teacher as curriculum, and the teacher-navigated social-emotional reading experience. This

is represented in Figure 1.1, utilizing dotted lines from system to system to demonstrate the fluidity of influences across systems and contexts.
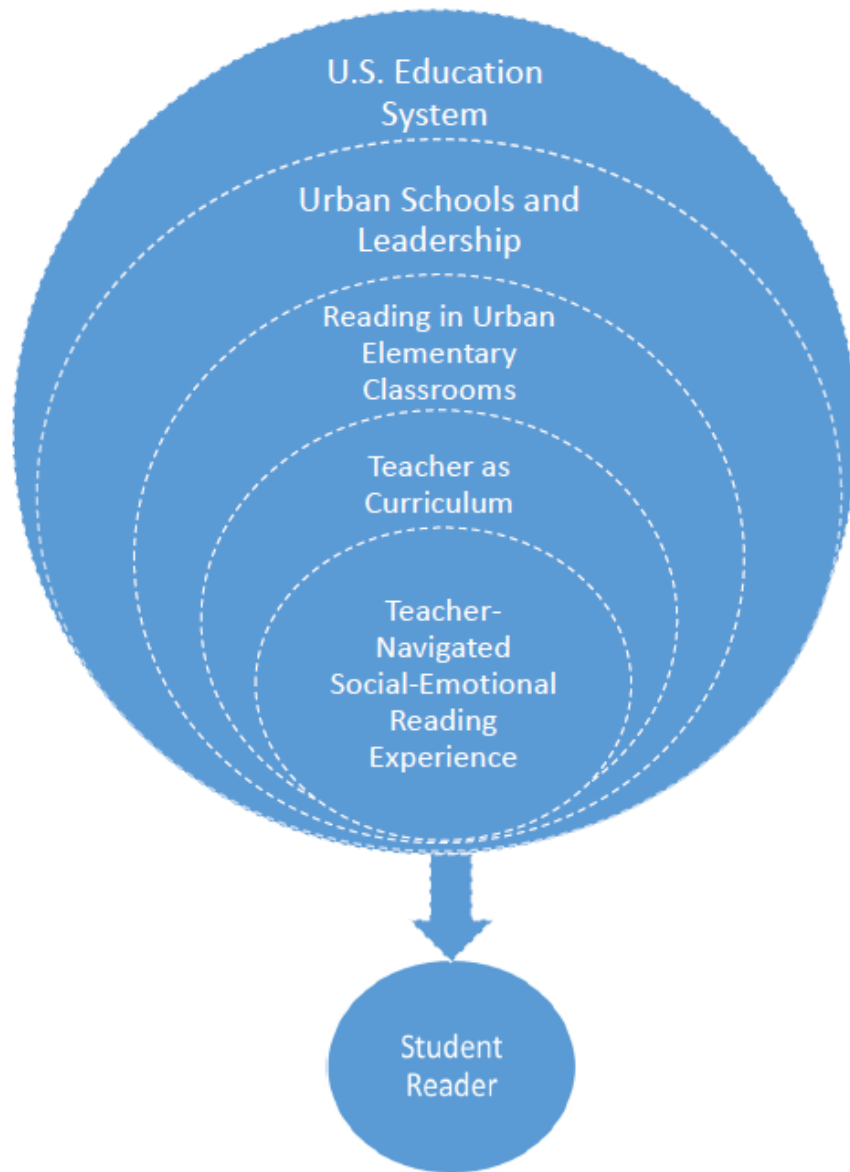
Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework: A Visual to Work Through

This study is nested within the context of multiple influential spheres. As previously explained, narrative inquiry methodology calls for the inquirer to understand the stories

"inward and outward, backward and forward" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). To gain a deep understanding of this specific study and what was being examined, it is critical to peel back the layers of this complex setting to review what is imbedded in each of these layers. The layers described will work from outermost to innermost, slowly closing in on the exact issue studied without removing it from its context. Those layers include: (a) the U.S. educational system, (b) urban schools and leadership, (c) reading in urban elementary classrooms, (d) teacher as curriculum, and (e) the teacher-navigation social-emotional experience during reading. I invite the reader to notice how all of the spheres that encompass the teacher's navigation of social-emotional experiences in reading are collectively centered upon the student reader. Ultimately, this centering emphasizes the role and responsibility of the teacher within all these other spheres in navigating students' reading experiences (Bean, 2013; Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009; Fisher, Aguirre, & Frey, 2013; Haberman, 2005). The topics included in this concept map are discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2 to understand the possible influences of each sphere on the two teacher participants.

Significance: Finding Answers for Others

A deep investigation of high-performing urban elementary reading teachers, using narrative inquiry, allows interested and invested individuals to see the role of teachers in classrooms where students experience success in reading. As Howard and Milner (2014) explained,

> What teachers know and believe impact what P-12 students have the opportunity to learn in school…and influences what happens in the classroom—the curriculum and instructional decisions teachers make, how they interact with students, how they manage the classroom, and how they assess students' learning and progress (p. 211)

This emphasizes that teachers have a choice in the experiences they navigate for students (Gadsden & Dixon-Román, 2017; Wepner et al., 2013); therefore looking at the choices these two urban teachers make within the reading block may encourage other teachers to navigate successful reading in their own students. Additionally, the understanding gained from this study should influence administrative or policy decisions in terms of teacher expectations or teacher professional development. Teacher preparation programs can also benefit from the results in determining concepts that are beneficial in preparing future teachers. There is an ongoing search for what qualifies as quality teaching (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005), core practices (Forzani, 2014; Hollins, 2017), or high-leverage practices (Cohen, 2015; Hlas & Hlas, 2012; Nash et al., 2016; TeachingWorks, 2017) to determine what needs to be included in teacher education and development. Findings about the social-emotional experiences of successful reading are significant in those considerations.

Current research lacks attention to the holistic social-emotional experiences of reading. While there are isolated studies in areas such as teacher-student relationships (Haberman, 2005; Liew et al., 2010; O'Connor, Cappella, McCormick, & McClowry, 2014; Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006), culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010), culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995b), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012), collaborative and social interactions in reading (Slavin et al., 2011; Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006), and teacher enthusiasm (Applegate et al., 2014; Cecil, 1987; Gambrell, 1996), inclusive research of the whole social-emotional picture during reading, specifically in urban elementary classrooms, is missing. Understanding the teachers' stories related to this topic in these high-performing urban elementary classrooms fills this void. My study focuses on adding to and expanding on the literature regarding the social-emotional experience of

reading for teachers to implement with urban elementary students for increased reading proficiency. As Milner and Lomotey (2014) stated, "We have spent too little time highlighting strategies that have been shown to be effective in urban schools" (p. xviii). This study is one of many needed to change this reality.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH: PEELING BACK THE LAYERS

Chapter 1 highlighted the multiple spheres that influence the narratives of the teachers I lived alongside in this study. Peeling back the layers in these spheres provides a deep understanding in this specific study. As stated in Chapter 1, the layers of literature describe work from outermost to innermost, slowly closing in on the exact phenomenon studied without removing it from its context. Those layers include: (a) the U.S. educational system, (b) urban schools and leadership, (c) reading in urban elementary classrooms, (d) teacher as curriculum, and (e) the teacher-navigated social-emotional reading experience.

With all that said, a literature review for a narrative inquiry study has the same tension as it has with a theoretical framework. Relying on a literature review can narrow an inquirer's focus by looking specifically for what previous literature concluded instead of striving to understand the story for what it is. Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the inquirers who initiated narrative inquiry, even support dissertations without literature review chapters. Instead, literature can weave throughout the research report to support the practice of inquiry.

The participants in this study had, and will always have, their own stories to share. Those stories sometimes aligned with current literature and other times did not align. Because high-performing urban teachers teach in schools contextualized within a larger history of colonialism and White dominance (Howard, 2016) and carry out their careers in settings and under circumstances that are unique from other teachers, it was crucial to understand the context before conducting research in these spaces. Urban settings are different than other settings, just like urban schools are different than other schools, which is thoroughly explained in this chapter. Without knowing the context, it is difficult to

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understand different perspectives. By understanding the context, a narrative inquirer has the

ability to explore the study with a wide-angle lens, obtaining the big picture as well as the

explicit stories, rather than isolated snapshots that produce lingering questions or

misinterpretation. My ultimate goal is to share the stories of these two teachers' facilitation

of social-emotional experiences in reading, which both aligned and conflicted with the

findings of researchers who have come before me.

Additionally, while I include a review of literature, I do so "understanding life stories

and stories to live by requires an attentiveness and wakefulness" (Caine et al., 2013, p. 581).

I tuned in to detail as I was observing the teachers' words, interactions, and body language. I

watched for reactions and responses, facial expressions, and silences. I focused on what was

present and what was absent. So, even though I include literature that tells of research

findings and concluded recommendations, every study is different. In my study, I attempted

to be attentive and wakeful to what was in front of me, in addition to being informed by the

literature.

The U.S. Educational System

The educational system in our country is a historical tapestry that has a story of its

own. The story includes changes that influence the color, pattern, or focal point of the

tapestry, as well as many facets retained over time, giving the tapestry a worn, broken-in

backdrop. My point in the following section is not to provide a lengthy history lesson of the

school system in the U.S., but to provide an overview of schooling in the U.S. since its

inception, to gain an overarching context for this study. To really understand the stories in

my research, an understanding of where the educational system has been, where it is today,

and where it seems to be going is necessary. The understanding of past, present, and future

gives insight and continuity in the three-dimensional space of this narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The three-dimensional space, which includes *interaction* between personal and social conditions, *continuity* of past, present, and future, and finally, circumstantial *situation*, recognizes that stories are dynamic; they have always been in motion and will continue to be in motion. Three-dimensional space is further discussed in Chapter 3. The U.S. educational system possesses these dimensions within its story and influences the dimensions of my teacher participants' stories.

The nation's schooling system was originally formed in the 1600s by the Anglo-American population (Pai et al., 2006) settling in a new location. These Founders, as Gary Howard (2016) refers to them, revolted from the classist superiority of England and desired to establish a new society of equality. This Protestant group viewed the schools they started as a means for Americanization (Pai et al., 2006), where they could live with and regenerate equality and freedom in this new land. The system was founded on their core values which Spindler (1963) noted to be: (1) Puritan morality, (2) work-success ethic, (3) individualism, (4) achievement orientation, and (5) future-time orientation (as cited in Pai et al., 2006, p. 24). Through these core values, concepts such as respectability, delayed gratification, the need for individuals to work hard in order to become successful, and always striving for a better tomorrow, were foundational in these schools and in the expectations of the students. As it turns out, however, the new society founded on equality ended up being another hegemonic system where the illusion of Americanization became power-dominated colonization (Howard, 2016).

Colonialism is when one population aims to dominate a different geographical area, including all of the resources, for benefit in the dominating power (Gandhi, 1998). As Patel

(2016) stated, colonialism is "about the stratification of beingness to serve accumulation of material and land" (p. 7). From the very beginning, this group was not *settling* into a new land but was *colonizing* this land that already had inhabitants. White dominance controlled Indigenous children in schools as well. To colonize these children, they were removed from their homes and were required to attend boarding school. Boarding schools were often far away from the children's families and had the goal of civilization (Reyhner & Singh, 2010). Families did not see their children for years, punishment was harsh, and the curriculum was created for White benefits, training the children for labor and servitude (Howard, 2016). Not only did they exhibit dominance over the Indigenous people groups, or American Indians, Blacks were enslaved and land was taken from Mexico (Howard, 2016). Once suffering from hegemonic foundations, the Founders were now establishing a hegemonic system from which they could benefit.

With immigration increasing and different cultures pouring into the United States from Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe in the late 1800s and early 1900s, schools stood firm in colonizing diverse students, even though this conflicted with the democratic society it claimed to be (Pai et al., 2006). Colonizing continued through later immigration from places including Mexico, Latin America, and Asia (Olneck, 2004). Other historical factors and events taking place through the 1970s, such as war, the space race, mandated desegregation, the Civil Rights Movement, and attempts to fight the war on poverty (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003), had impacts on the educational system, but Eurocratic foundations still persisted (Pai et al., 2006). The "melting pot" concept that set out to combine such diverse peoples to gain a new national identity instead ended in a pot requiring everyone to melt into a White, European identity. As Alim and Paris (2017) contended, "So-called educational 'integration'

has always framed success in terms of a unidirectional assimilation into whiteness" (p. 3) rather than any sort of blending.

The students in American schools were expected to conform to these norms academically and socially. Dominant norms challenged the often different values of the minoritized students. As Paris (2012) stated:

> The dominant language, literacy, and cultural practices demanded by school fell in line with White, middle-class norms and positioned languages and literacies that fell outside those norms as less-than and unworthy of a place in U.S. schools and society. Simply put, the goal of deficit approaches was to eradicate the linguistic, literate, and cultural practices many students of color brought from their homes and communities and to replace them with what were viewed as superior practices. (p. 93)

Throughout the late 1900s and into the 2000s, however, education leaders recognized the need for multicultural education in order to compete in educating the diverse U.S. students at the level that other countries were educating their students. In 1990 in the U.S., the student population of color was 30% and continued to increase to 40% by 2002 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003). With increased diversity and cultural groups taking a stand for voice, education, and power (Lee & Slaughter-Defoe, 2004; Olneck, 2004), there was no choice other than to acknowledge the diversity and make this shift to multicultural education to reinforce democratic pluralism (Howard, 2016), although some would argue this was not the case and still is not the case (Delpit, 2012; Hollins, 2012; Irizarry & Welton, 2014). The reality of school curriculum, schooling practices, and educational outcomes make it difficult to claim the U.S. fully grasps this approach.

In an attempt to understand groups' cultural uniqueness and to increase student learning, educators began to utilize what was called the difference approach (Paris, 2012) or cultural styles approach. Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) defined these approaches as

"characterizing cultural ways of different groups in terms that are respectful, attempting to describe them without making value judgments that suggest value hierarchies in cultural practices" (p. 19). This included characterizing behaviors, communication patterns, and learning styles of different cultural groups. As Paris (2012) explained, however, "the goal here was to bridge toward the dominant with little attention to maintaining the heritage and community practices of students and families" (p. 94). Influenced by grassroots efforts at the local level, many reforms were initiated both at the state and national level in an attempt to improve schools and raise the bar for all. Legislation that required services for students with limited English proficiency (Bilingual Education Act, 1968), charter schools, school vouchers, and federal goals for the education system (Pai et al., 2006) were just a few of these initiatives that attempted improvement.

One of the most influential attempts to improve the U.S. school system was the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act that was signed into law in 2002. Mandates for teacher qualification, testing, and yearly academic progress for students were all embedded into this law as a means for accountability. While this act aimed to guarantee all students' proficiency in reading and math, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, or ethnicity, the reform failed to do this (Dutro & Selland, 2012; Kohn, 2011; Pai et al, 2006). According to Zhao (2018), "NCLB caused massive damage to American education. It did little to solve the problems as intended and forever changed the landscape of the spirit of American education, for the worse" (p. 2). Some schools continued to achieve, while other schools continued to struggle. Some schools were restructured within districts or entire teaching staffs were moved from school to school when adequate yearly progress was not met. The focus had been set on using high-stakes tests to drive school and student performance.

These reform efforts of holding schools accountable to academic standards through high-stakes testing perpetuate colonization. The dominating White decision-makers of the nation hold the power of "defining, controlling, and regulating knowledge" (Heilig et al., 2014, p. 530). The goal of narrowing the measure of knowledge in this way is to standardize learning for all students under terms set by the dominant group; the education system, still functioning under hegemonic practices, was (and is) once again enforcing White dominance over all others in the country (Heilig et al., 2014; Howard, 2016). As Coffee, Stutelberg, Clements, and Lensmire (2017) explained, schools, classrooms, and teachers function under the White gaze. They state, "Within this gaze lies the power and authority related to normalization and control regarding patriarchal capitalism, knowledge, and sexuality—all key components of the historical construction of race in the United States" (Coffee et al., 2017, p. 52). Ultimately, this gaze works to perpetuate the historical foundations of the middle-class White educational system. As a result, schooling became commodified, corporatized, and privatized.

With a continued focus on *standardizing* the educational experience for all students in the United States in this colonizing manner, the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) worked from 2007 to 2010 to develop the Common Core Standards for college and career readiness grade by grade (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2018). NGA and CCSSO "launched this effort to ensure all students, regardless of where they live, are graduating high school prepared for college, career, and life" (para. 1). The standards were released in 2010, and states engaged in their own reviewing process to determine whether to adopt the standards as a state or not. Currently, 41 states have adopted the Common Core Standards. Then in 2015, another federal law, the

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), was created to replace NCLB. With claims to give

more authority back to the state governments and to focus less on testing, we are currently in

the midst of determining how the U.S. education system will be impacted. Zhao (2018)

warned, "Without seriously considering the side effects of NCLB, the ESSA undoubtedly

will have results similar to those of NCLB" (p. 23). In a 2017 analysis of three different

reports through the Center on Education Policy (2017), the overall theme was that teachers

and district leaders believe the move to more rigorous standards has been mostly positive for

students' college and career readiness, but guaranteeing that all students achieve these

standards has been challenging. The consensus was that too much time is spent taking tests

(Center on Education Policy, 2017). So, here we stand with an education system focused on

standardization, or actually *colonization*, and high-stakes testing, continuing to stand firm in

the Eurocratic norms that founded the system over 300 years ago.

Urban Schools and Leadership

Zooming in further to the urban schools that are a part of the greater U.S. educational

system, Gadsden and Dixon-Román (2017) pointed out that the term "urban" is rarely

neutral. The widespread term can reference the issues of poverty, hardship, crime, and harsh

circumstance. Nieto (2014) explained that "poverty and its attendant ills—inadequate

housing, lack of proper nutrition and medical care, parents' joblessness, and a pervasive

sense of hopelessness, not to mention persistent racism and neglect—are part of the larger

context in which schools exist" (p. 14). Researchers and teachers claim that despite the

realities of urban contexts, there is a need to realize that these coded meanings of urban can

increase the marginalization or even compound any risk for the students and their families.

As Ladson-Billings (2017) said, the "culture of poverty" view assumes that those living in

these settings are "so dysfunctional that they do not know how to operate in mainstream society" (p. 81).

The realities of urban schools cannot be understood without the previously discussed context of the U.S. educational system, as well as the U.S. political system and society. Highlighting the words of Jean Anyon (2014),

> Low-achieving urban schools are not primarily a consequence of failed education policy, urban family dynamics, underprepared teachers, or too few tests—as mainstream analysts and public policies typically imply. Failing public schools in cities are, rather, a logical consequence of the U.S. political economy—and the federal and regional policies and practices that support it. Teachers, principals, and urban students are not the culprits—as reform policies that target high stakes testing, educator quality, and the control of youth assume. Rather, an unjust economy and the policies through which it is maintained create barriers to educational success that no teacher or principal practice, no standardized test, and no "zero tolerance" policy can surmount for long. (p. 5)

In the following sections, attention is given to specific dynamics within urban schools that set them apart from other schools.

Structural Inequalities

Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) painted the perfect picture of how structural inequalities impact urban schools:

> Let us begin by rethinking the position that urban schools are failing. Given the overwhelming body of evidence that reveals decades of funding and structural inequalities between schools in high- and low-income communities…it is illogical to compare schools across these communities and then decry urban schools as failures. When one set of schools is given the resources necessary to succeed and another group of schools is not, we have predetermined winners and losers. In this scenario, failure is not actually the result of failing…On the one hand, urban schools are producing academic failure at alarming rates; at the same time, they are doing this inside a systematic structural design that essentially predetermines their failure. Urban schools are not broken; they are doing exactly what they are designed to do. (p. 1)

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Structural inequalities in urban schools are ever-present. Urban areas, characterized by population density, extremes of socioeconomic status, mobility, and immigration, experience inequitable education, housing, employment, healthcare, technology, and safety (University of Missouri, Kansas City, 2011). These are inequalities that come from functioning in a system that favors the dominant culture through economic, political, and social structures (Anyon, 2014; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). As a result of these structures, urban schools suffer all the way down to the resources that are used and the teachers standing at the front of classrooms.

Economy and politics. The relationship between the U.S. economy and the U.S. educational system, specifically urban education, is undeniably fused. Unemployment, low-paying jobs, poor housing, and other undesired realities are often viewed as results of poor performance in school (Anyon, 2014; Anyon & Greene, 2007; Gadsden & Dixon-Román, 2017). However, students who live with unemployed or minimally-paid parents or in inadequate housing are commonly victims of public policies that prevent the escape of poverty (Anyon, 2014; Anyon & Greene, 2007; Gadsden & Dixon-Román, 2017).

Additionally, getting a better education or going to college to get out of poverty is not always guaranteed or possible; hence this belief is called the *myth of meritocracy* (McIntosh, 2004; Milner, 2012, 2013). First, many low-income students do not attend college due to lack of funds or other supports needed to complete degrees (Anyon, 2014; Anyon & Greene, 2007). Even if a student is able to go to college, it may not make a difference. In fact, of the Black students who enrolled in a four-year institution in 2010, only 39.7% graduated, even after six years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Only 54.4% of Hispanic students graduated. Anyon (2014) additionally pointed out that 53% of college graduates

were unemployed or underemployed in 2011. To compound the issue, there is a significant

job shortage. While millions of jobs are needed to fulfill the shortage, a majority of the jobs

available are poverty-wage jobs (Anyon, 2014; Anyon & Greene, 2007). Race

discrimination is also present in our current economy, working against poor people of color

(Anyon, 2014; Anyon & Greene, 2007).

Additionally, economic policies and structures define urban education. The structure

for school funding results in less funding for urban, poor schools. In the United States,

districts serving the largest number of students of color receive $1,100 less per student from

state and local governments than districts not serving highly minoritized students (Hall &

Ushomirsky, 2010). Without necessary funds, the perpetual cycle of poverty continues.

Resources are lacking, teachers leave, and the quality of education suffers (Hollins, 2012;

Nieto, 2014). This cycle describes the social reproduction theory, which claims the structures

of society keeps the social class consistent for its members. Moving between upper-, middle-

, and lower-class systems is extremely difficult given the economic structures and policies in

place. Additionally, as Irizarry and Welton (2014) pointed out, "Because class and race are

interrelated variables—people of color are overrepresented in the lower socioeconomic

strata—social reproduction takes on a racial as well as economic tenor" (p. 247). Ironically,

people of color are underrepresented in the political system, making economic and political

change difficult. For instance, with about 13% of the U.S. population being Latinx and about

20% of U.S. students being Latinx, less than 2% of the elected officials making decisions in

our country are Latinx (Irizarry & Welton, 2014). Numbers are just as concerning for other

minoritized groups. Bottom line: The economy and politics play a significant role in the

definition of urban education.

Resources. Per-pupil spending for urban schools is at the lower end of the U.S. public school range (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Jean Anyon (2014) wrote extensively about the resources, or lack of resources, urban education receives. With districts serving the largest number of students of color receiving $1,100 less per student from state and local governments than other districts (Hall & Ushomirsky, 2010), as explained earlier, this leads to subpar resources in comparison to other schools. Adequate school facilities, books, and technology are common disparities between urban education and education elsewhere (Anyon, 2014; Dolph, 2017). Another dilemma "often facing urban schools is old buildings and infrastructure in poor repair" (Dolph, 2017, p. 368). Air quality, lighting, leaks, heating and cooling systems, security systems, and fire safety are often compromised in urban schools (Dolph, 2017).

Despite challenges with financial resources, Hollins (2012) discussed human and material resources that are not always recognized in urban schools. She highlighted resources in urban communities that include organizations, elected representatives, and parents. Community organizations are often founded to improve social issues, yet schools lack partnership with these organizations to leverage resources or programs to bolster school and academic improvement (Hollins, 2012). Likewise, Hollins explained that elected representatives and parents are not embraced as resources for enhancing urban schools. Community organizations, government officials, and parents are all resources urban schools have access to, and collaboration with these resources "can enable teachers, parents, and students to work together to enrich the school curriculum, to create extra-curricular activities that are more meaningful for students, and to develop a more democratic and participatory governance structure for the school" (Hollins, 2012, p. 9).

Teachers. Research demonstrates that schools with minoritized, high-poverty student populations commonly have temporarily-certified teachers, teachers who are not certified in the area in which they are teaching, and teachers with limited experience (Ladson-Billings, 2017a; Rahman, Fox, Ikoma, & Gray, 2017). In fact, more new teachers are hired in city schools with more students of poverty and diversity than in other locations (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Rahman et al., 2017). Additionally, teachers in schools with more students of color and students living in poverty are also absent more often than in other schools (Hollins, 2012).

Urban schools also face the issue of teacher attrition. Teacher attrition, or turnover, can negatively contribute to a school's capacity to meet diverse students' needs. From year to year, urban schools face increased teacher attrition. In fact, in Chicago Public Schools, it is typical for a school to lose more than half of their teachers every five years (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009). There are multiple identified reasons for teacher turnover, including teachers seeing urban, low-performing schools as extra work (Le Floch, Garcia, & Barbour, 2016), pressures of reforms (Crow & Scribner, 2014), and a lack of desirable working conditions (Allensworth et al., 2009; TNTP, 2012). In their research in Chicago Public Schools, Allensworth, Ponisciak, and Mazzeo (2009) found "desirable working conditions" to include "fostering a collegial and trusting, team-based, and supportive school culture; promoting ethical behavior; encouraging data use; and creating strong lines of communication" (p. 4). Regardless of the reasons for teacher attrition, there are also consequences of teacher attrition. When teachers leave there is an obvious lack of consistency for school staff and students. Schools and their leaders struggle to create organizational trust and create climates and cultures that foster community (Crow &

Scribner, 2014). With high rates of teacher attrition, urban schools are at a disadvantage to consistently meet the students' needs. The lack of consecutive years for teachers to get to know and build relationships with colleagues and students causes urban students to suffer.

Student and Teacher Demographics

Within urban public schools across the United States, the student population consists of 20.7% White, 41.4% Hispanic, and 26.5% Black (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Additionally, Bohrnstedt, Kitmitto, Ogut, Sherman, and Chan (2015) found that 67% of all "high density" schools, schools having 60-100% Black students, were located in cities, with smaller proportions in suburbs, towns, and rural areas. Specifically in the Midwest, 84% of the high density schools are in cities. These numbers demonstrate a significant population of minority students in comparison to rural and suburban schools. Statistics show that 54.9% of public schools in these large urban cities have over 75% of their students qualify for free and reduced-priced lunch (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Needless to say, urban schools are serving large numbers of high-poverty students of color, and this alone provides further context of urban schools in our U.S. education system. Race, gender, culture, immigrant status, and poverty are very relevant when attending to urban contexts, schools, or schooling (Gadsen & Dixon-Román, 2017). The clash of norms and values between minoritized students and those of the White population presents clear challenges.

The differences in culture between urban school teachers and their students is another element to consider. Research shows that a majority of urban public school teachers are middle-class, White females, which does not reflect the cultural demographics of the students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). In fact, schools in urban settings admit to

having difficulties in handling the diversity of students in aligning students' families and communities with the learning and test performance expectations of the school, school personnel, and stakeholders (Gadsden & Dixon-Román, 2017). Without cultural commonalities, researchers claim there is a risk that teachers will not understand the culture of their students which is so critical in effective teaching (Pai et al, 2006). In fact, a common result is teachers taking a deficit view of their students based on the students' linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity that does not align with the dominant culture (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009). Rather than viewing these differences as assets to build on, urban teachers often view these as deficiencies to be fixed.

The Impact of High-stakes Testing

The value the U.S. educational system places on high-stakes testing uniquely impacts urban schools due to their historically common underperformance on these tests in comparison to other schools. Required high-stakes testing, with penalties if adequate yearly progress is not made, has produced an environment in low-performing urban schools that is not conducive to teaching and learning. In fact, laws such as No Child Left Behind that rely on high-stakes testing have led to overt cheating, corruption of quality teaching and learning that narrows the curriculum, a focus on high-achieving students, and outcomes that are concerning for some students such as increased dropouts (Au & Gourd, 2013; Berliner, 2011; Dutro & Selland, 2012; Zhao, 2018). As Au and Gourd (2013) stated,

> On the whole we know that high-stakes testing is controlling both what and how subjects are taught: untested subjects are being reduced in the curriculum and teachers nationwide are also moving toward more teacher-centered, lecture-based pedagogies that encourage rote learning in response to the pressures of the tests. (p. 17)

Teachers feel constrained in their teaching of rich learning experiences. Worksheets, rote practice, and memorization are relied on in these urban classrooms (Kohn, 2011; Zhao, 2018). These "test-based changes in classroom instruction negatively affect non-white students disproportionately and pressures of high-stakes standardized testing are greatest in states with high populations of students from low-income families and students of color" (Au & Gourd, 2013, p. 17). Dr. Martin Haberman coined the phrase "pedagogy of poverty" to name this unfortunate teaching that occurs for urban students (Haberman, 2005). According to Au and Gourd, "High-stakes tests are asinine. They are rooted in racism and classism" (2013, p. 18). In education, Whiteness is a framework under which schools, administrators, teachers, and students function—a construct that may not be explicitly revealed or recognized but that dominates the decisions, functions, and practices within districts or schools. Because White policymakers possess the power to determine what needs to be learned and how learning needs to be measured (Margolis, Meese, & Doring, 2016, McTighe & Brown, 2005; Nieto, 2014), urban teachers are guided in a way that disregards the cultures and needs of their diverse student populations.

Margolis, Meese, and Doring (2016) contributed to the literature on the impact of high-stakes testing on urban schools and teachers. With an explanation of the past 30 years of educational policy, including *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, the Improving America's School Act in 1994, No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, Race to the Top program in 2010, and now the Every Student Succeeds Act, it is very clear that the educational system is mandating more structure for urban schools and teachers. They also explained the debate about whether urban teachers need more *structure* or more *freedom*. Increasing *structure* refers to "policies and practices that seek to standardize curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and place strict

limits on the latitude teachers have to make independent decisions" (Margolis et al., 2016, p. 784). Teaching with *freedom*, or having autonomy and flexibility in the school and classroom decisions, on the other hand, involves:

> Policies and practices that seek to develop the decision making capacity of individual and groups of teachers; and encourage teachers, within a broad framework, to adapt and individualize their instruction based on local needs and contextual conditions within urban schools. (Margolis et al., 2016, p. 784)

Based on the way the brain functions for learning and the pedagogical methods for effectively teaching diverse students, freedom benefits teachers and students rather than structure (Gay, 2010; Haberman, 2005; hooks, 1994; Kohn, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2017a; Paris, 2012; Ullucci, 2009); but instead, structure is being mandated for urban teachers. As a result, highly-qualified knowledgeable teachers are leaving the classroom, significantly from struggling urban schools (Crow & Scribner; 2014; TNTP, 2012). Zoch (2017a) additionally reported about how high-stakes testing can divide urban schools. The pressure of high-stakes tests resulted in one urban elementary school splitting into two schools—a primary and intermediate school. The yearlong ethnographic study of the urban Texas elementary school revealed the intermediate tested grades to be privileged with additional money, resources, and staff, while primary grades were marginalized, leading to a division into two schools. As demonstrated, the effects of high-stakes testing on urban schools run deeply.

Deficit Views and the "Achievement Gap"

As stated before, the term *urban* is rarely neutral (Gadsden & Dixon-Román, 2017). In fact, the terms urban and urban education are often associated with deficit views (Gadsden & Dixon-Román, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2017a). According to Valencia (1997), deficit views or deficit thinking is the belief that low-income students of color fail in school due to

student and family deficiencies such as a lack of intelligence, inadequate socialization in the home, or lack of motivation. He also stated, "Deficit thinking is tantamount to the process of 'blaming the victim'" (p. x). Urban spaces are often negatively viewed as poor and dangerous, with nothing to contribute to society (Hollins, 2012; O'Connor, Mueller, & Neal, 2014). Populations of color and poverty in these urban contexts are viewed as dysfunctional, unintelligent, without motivation, a hindrance to the country's tax dollars, and conflicting with society (Ladson-Billings, 2017a). This deficit view seeps into urban schools as well. With over eight million students in urban contexts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017), this is extremely problematic. Under these views, urban education represents failing achievement, students not capable of learning, and families who do not care. Additionally, students in urban schools are viewed as lacking basic skills and needing support to fix their deficiencies in order to become successful (Delpit, 2012). According to Gadsden and Dixon-Román (2017), "Attention to urban schools is dominated by language that points out student deficits and schools' limitations in creating pathways to student achievement" (p. 438).

The talk alone about the "achievement gap" perpetuates the deficit view (Alim & Paris, 2017; Milner & Lomotey, 2014). Referring to the differences of test performance between Black students and White students as an "achievement gap" infers that the Black students are lacking in knowledge. It views students of color "through the glass of amused contempt and pity" (Alim & Paris, 2017, p. 2). It also does not acknowledge that the measure of achievement comes from what White, middle-class policy-makers deem as achievement (Heilig et al., 2014, Howard, 2016). Yes, there are concerning performance discrepancies between high-poverty, minoritized students in urban schools and their counterparts. When using specific identifiers to look at certain student groups, outcomes are

continuously concerning. Discrepancies in performance between students of different

race/ethnicity and as well as students of different socio-economic status are worth noting,

given the demographics of students of color and poverty in urban education. Results

demonstrate that students of color and low socio-economic students perform poorer than their

White and higher socio-economic counterparts (National Assessments of Educational

Progress, 2017). These contrasting results can be seen in Tables 2.1 and 2.2.

Table 2.1

Percentages of Proficient or above for Race/Ethnic Subgroups in 2017

Content	4th Grade White	4th Grade Black	4th Grade Hispanic	8th Grade White	8th Grade Black	8th Grade Hispanic
Reading	47	20	23	45	18	23
Math	51	19	26	44	13	20

Table 2.2

Percentages of Proficient or above for Socio-economic Subgroups in 2017

Content	4th Grade Eligible	4th Grade Not Eligible	8th Grade Eligible	8th Grade Not Eligible
Reading	22	52	21	48
Math	25	57	18	48

Note. Eligible or Not Eligible refers to whether students are eligible for the National School
Lunch Program, meaning those Eligible are categorized as low socio-economic.

Despite these statistics, it is necessary to recognize these gaps as "opportunity gaps" (Milner, 2012), given the preceding context of urban settings and schools. While literature and society discuss the achievement gap in standardized assessment scores, Milner (2012) stressed that we need to understand the opportunity gap of instruction and learning opportunities for diverse students. Accepting test score differences as achievement gaps implies that White students are the norm while minoritized students are inferior (Milner, 2012). This view does not recognize the "inequitable, racist, and sexist structures, systems, contexts, policies, and practices that lead to perceived achievement gaps" (Milner, 2012, p. 696). Coinciding with this, Ladson-Billings (2006) claimed an "education debt" (p. 5) owed to these students due to society's "historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies" (p. 5) that caused the differences in achievement. I stayed alert to opportunity gaps and the education debt while investigating teachers and classrooms going head-on against the accusations of achievement gaps.

Leadership

Research consistently demonstrates that although teachers have the most influence on student learning and achievement, school leaders have a significant impact on school success (Crow & Scribner, 2014; Dolph, 2017; Fullan, 2015; May & Sanders, 2013; New Leaders, 2009). These roles can either damage schools, sustain the current state, or improve schools. In school leadership, there is the dichotomy of leadership approaches or styles. There are transactional leaders and transformational leaders (Fullan, 2015; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). While transactional leadership works to make adjustments and decisions in order to maintain the status quo, transformational leaders work for change through personalizing attention to those they lead, inspiring others to think differently, motivating

with high expectations, and being a model in achievement, character, and behavior (Fullan, 2015; Marzano et al., 2005). Fullan (2015) provided insight on effective leadership through transformational leadership, regardless of the type of school or demographics. He stated that successful principals have an "inclusive, facilitative orientation" (p. 128) rather than an exclusive, authoritative orientation. Fullan (2015) stated the approach to professional development needs to be one of collaboration and shared learning, rather than school leaders pushing knowledge on teachers in a unidirectional manner:

> The principal who makes the biggest impact on learning is the one who attends to other matters as well, but, most important, "participates as a learner" with teachers in helping move the school forward. Leading teacher learning means being proactively involved with teachers such that principals and teachers alike are learning. (p. 133)

Research specific to urban school leadership aligns with Fullan's (2015) insights, acknowledging that urban schools require reform through transformational leadership (Allensworth et al., 2009; Dolph, 2017; Lane, Unger, & Souvanna, 2014). The urban context and the need for reform are factors in effective urban leadership. As Dolph (2017) said, urban school principals need a wide range of skills and abilities because school-related requirements, changes in curriculum and standards, and increased accountability make leadership and reform in urban schools more and more complex (Dolph, 2017).

In the literature specific to successful urban leadership, the following characteristics in principals are emphasized:

1. Principals are instructional leaders
2. Principals facilitate safe and respectful environments
3. Principals are learners who collaborate and share responsibility
4. Principals are change leaders (Dolph, 2017).

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To begin with, urban schools typically have the unique factor of low student achievement in comparison to other schools, hence the importance for principals to be instructional leaders. In a review of urban leadership making positive changes in standardized student achievement scores and graduation rates, one key leadership skill consistently highlighted was principals being instructional leaders (Dolph, 2017). Specifically in Chicago Public Schools, research shows "teachers stay in schools with inclusive leadership, where they feel they have influence over their work environment and they trust their principal as an instructional leader" (Allensworth et al., 2009, p. 2). As Dolph (2017) pointed out, this does not mean that principals have to be experts in all content areas. Instead, "Instructional leadership refers to principals recognizing, prioritizing, and modeling the centrality and importance of teaching and learning in schools" (p. 379). Chenoweth (2015) stressed the need for principals' attentiveness to student learning needs by supporting teacher collaboration in planning, curriculum mapping, and assessment. Through these practices, principals can become instructional leaders for increased student achievement.

The environment an urban principal facilitates for teachers and students is also highlighted in the literature. Studies on successful school turnaround across the country investigate the role, characteristics, and practices of principals. Successful school turnaround involves "dramatic and comprehensive intervention in low performing schools that produce significant gains in student achievement within two academic years…and readies the school for the longer process of transformation into a high-performance organization" (Kutash, Nico, Gorin, Rahmatullah, & Tallant, 2010, p. 4). One significant leadership practice found in school turnaround in Massachusetts included facilitation of a safe, respectful, and collegial climate for teachers and students (Lane, Unger, & Souvanna, 2014). Dolph (2017) echoed

this in saying that effective urban principals understand connections between school culture and school success.

Research in Chicago Public Schools found that collaboration between teachers and principals increased retention of teachers, which supported school reform (Allensworth et al., 2009). The previously discussed turnaround schools in Massachusetts also found that successful principals shared responsibility and professionally collaborated with teachers (Lane et al., 2014). Given the context of urban schools, Crow and Scribner (2014) additionally emphasized that urban school leaders need to collaborate with the community for school improvement. They stated, "The demands of and opportunities for school-community partnerships is a growing arena within which urban school leaders must navigate in order to raise material, human, social, political, and cultural resources for the schools they are leading" (p. 291).

One final skill found in urban leadership making positive changes in standardized student achievement scores and graduation rates, is principals being change leaders (Dolph, 2017). As Dolph (2017) stated, "In any reform effort, there is need to alter the status quo to foster improvement; this suggests principals must serve as organization change agents to improve instruction and culture" (p. 376). Building a shared vision is often how these leaders bring about change (Dolph, 2017; Le Floch et al., 2016). Additionally, these principals need to have the right teachers and staff with whom to share the vision (Le Floch et al., 2016; TNTP, 2012). These leaders need autonomy to make change so they can become the change leaders urban schools need (Lane et al, 2014; Le Floch et al., 2016; TNTP, 2012).

There is one more point about effective urban leadership that I believe worthy to include. May and Sanders (2013) explained that evaluating the success of leadership in schools trying to make turnarounds takes time and should not be based solely on standardized test scores. Their research, including 510 teachers and 16 principals in K-8 schools in Cleveland Metropolitan School District, matched eight turnaround schools with eight demographically similar traditional schools. With turnaround schools experiencing transformation in leadership personnel and support, the traditional schools still performed better on standardized test scores. However, leadership was rated higher by teachers, teachers felt more appreciated and energized, and teachers and principals rated school climate higher in turnaround schools. May and Sanders (2013) believed these factors may be more influential in long-term turnaround of these schools.

Overall, research confirms that urban schools call for transformational leadership. It is clear that although effective school leadership can be generalized, urban contexts and the need for reform debunk any one-size-fits-all approach. The four characteristics of urban leaders just noted are the characteristics that urban principals need to possess to create change, but unfortunately, this type of leader is not in every urban school. In fact, studies by the National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER) demonstrated that "the most disadvantaged schools are the least likely to have effective principals" (Rice, 2010, p. 4). Often times, urban schools experience the same type of challenges in securing and retaining high-quality, experienced principals as they do teachers (Rice, 2010). While characteristics of effective urban principals were noted here, this type of principal is uncommon in urban schools.

Reading in Urban Elementary Classrooms

Peeling back another layer in the context of this study, reading in urban elementary classrooms is the next focus. In the urban school context, structural inequalities and contextual challenges trickle down to impact reading in these classrooms. As Kirkland (2019) stated, "Children do not lack literacy because they are black or brown or poor but because of the structural forces that impede opportunities for them to gain literacy or lead productive lives absent bars" (p. 11). Additionally, with pressures of high-stakes testing looming over these classrooms, reading instruction in urban elementary classrooms often plays out differently than in other classrooms. Accountability tests typically measure concepts like word understanding, the ability to recognize text details, and comprehension that is text-based (Applegate, Turner & Applegate, 2010). Due to the lower-level thinking that is required in these skills, teachers often mirror this type of low-level instruction. The tests fall short in identifying whether a student can deeply think about the message of an author, relate to that message, or learn about life and the world around them as a result of reading, so teachers do not teach in this way, either.

Generally, literature on effective reading instruction includes practices that are student-driven, connected to students' interests and lives, and authentic (K.H. Au, 2011; Pearson & Hiebert, 2015; Routman, 2014; Taberski, 2011). With many struggling readers in urban elementary schools, though, urgent and test-focused approaches are often taken in an attempt to make reading improvements. As Allington (2013) stated, there is often an over-reliance on phonics instruction with limited strategies instruction; a lack of student-chosen writing in favor of decoding worksheets; use of commercial core reading programs; use of paraprofessionals who lack instructional expertise to work with struggling readers; use of

texts that are too difficult; reduced time for independent reading; and less time spent engaging in actual reading opportunities. Hollins (2017) told of the increased use of rote literacy instruction with a specific focus on phonics to promote reading growth in underserved students, rather than holistic, balanced literacy instruction that focuses on all components of reading. Common practices of "diminished choices, isolation of students from teachers, and the estrangement of reading from real-world interactions make major contributions to disaffection with reading and learning" (Unrau, Ragusa, & Bowers, 2015, p. 110). Direct instruction and reading interventions with scripted plans are often adopted to produce short-term achievement outcomes but do not transfer to long-term benefits (Zhao, 2018). All of these attempts are often worthless or damaging (Allington, 2013; Margolis & McCabe, 2006; Kohn, 2011; Unrau et al., 2015; Zhao, 2018). Students' motivation and engagement suffer (Margolis & McCabe, 2006), academic achievement does not improve (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017; Zhao, 2018), and teachers are devalued (Allensworth et al., 2009; Craig & Ross, 2008). In addition, such drastic measures do not lead to increased literacy proficiency (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017). Research also demonstrates how teachers feel discouraged to retain autonomy in their teaching with curriculum requirements and the testing focus (Hill, 2013; Kohn, 2010). Kohn (2010) explained the common practices of teaching that kill reading motivation. These include telling students how many pages or minutes to read, avoiding interactions about texts, offering extrinsic rewards for reading, emphasizing tests, and restricting students' choice of what to read.

Despite the literature that focuses on ineffective practices that are occurring in urban elementary reading contexts, extant literature discusses practices or pedagogies that claim to

be effective for all students, some specifically for urban, diverse learners. This includes

literature on high-leverage practices (Nash, Panther, & Hollins, 2016; TeachingWorks,

2017), evidence-based best practices (Malloy, Marinak, & Gambrell, 2019; U.S. Department

of Education, 2012), and asset-based pedagogies (Alim & Paris, 2017; Gay, 2010; Gutiérrez

& Rogoff, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Paris, 2012).

High-leverage Practices

TeachingWorks (2017) of the University of Michigan has identified high-leverage

practices that span subject areas, grade levels, and contexts. These 19 identified practices

include:

1. Leading a group discussion
2. Explaining and modeling content, practices, and strategies
3. Eliciting and interpreting individual students' thinking
4. Diagnosing particular common patterns of student thinking and development in a subject-matter domain
5. Implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work
6. Coordinating and adjusting instruction during a lesson
7. Specifying and reinforcing productive student behavior
8. Implementing organizational routines
9. Setting up and managing small group work
10. Building respectful relationships with students
11. Talking about a student with parents or other caregivers
12. Learning about students' cultural, religious, family, intellectual, and personal experiences and resources for use in instruction
13. Setting long- and short-term learning goals for students
14. Designing single lessons and sequences of lessons
15. Checking student understanding during and at the conclusion of lessons
16. Selecting and designing formal assessments of student learning
17. Interpreting the results of student work, including routine assignments, quizzes, tests, projects, and standardized assessments
18. Providing oral and written feedback to students
19. Analyzing instruction for the purpose of improving it. (para. 3)

Although these practices may seem appropriate and there may be benefits that occur

from these practices, critics say the focus on race, class, and culture for combating racism

and injustice in our society is missing (Kinloch, 2018). Kinloch (2018) called for teaching

and education to be justice-centered to question structures that sustain hierarchies in our

country. For example, she critiqued the second high-leverage practice, *explaining and*

modeling content, practices, and strategies:

> The high-leverage practice of explaining and modeling content, practices, and
> strategies is not limited to work that happens inside of classrooms and schools, and is
> not limited to the curriculum or content area we teach. It is equally important for us
> to always remember who we teach (students) and how they teach us about ourselves
> and our practices. I believe that we can connect this high-leverage practice to events,
> moments, and situations that have happened and continue to happen in the world—
> situations that impact all of us, and particularly our children and young adults within
> and beyond the space of schools. (Kinloch, 2018, p. 19)

Smagorinsky (2018) is also a critic of high-leverage practices being effective for all

students in all contexts. He stated, "In my view, promoting effective practices without

emphasizing the contexts in which they are used overlooks the elephant in the room: the

contextualized, relational, situated nature of all human commerce" (p. 3). As demonstrated,

there is not consensus that these high-leverage practices are truly high-leverage for urban

students who may have different cultures or experiences than the dominant culture. These

high-leverage practices lack perspective of what occurs beyond the classroom.

High-leverage literacy practices (HLLPs) in urban elementary schools have

specifically been studied as well. Nash, Panther, and Hollins (2016) attempted to bridge gaps

between high leverage practices in teaching and practices that sustain the cultures of

culturally and linguistically diverse students (Hollins, 2006; King & Swartz, 2016). Two

foundational questions are involved with HLLPs: (1) What does the practice mean in terms

of supporting a child's learning? and (2) How is the practice connected to learning theory?

The focus on individual student growth above all else and the understanding that theory

becomes practice are reflected in HLLPs. Despite the attention given to high-leverage literacy practices, there is the call to move away from these practices as a result of critique and further reflection and investigation of this topic (Nash & Panther, in press). Nash and Panther (in press), who set out to research HLLPs, came to criticize high leverage practices for their true effectiveness for urban, diverse learners. As Nash and Panther (in press) state,

> High leverage practices view instructional moves as universal and discrete…[which] do not account for teachers' philosophical stances and theories of learning…and also ignore students' or teachers' cultural, linguistic, familial and other assets and/or ways of being and knowing or position it as one small aspect of teaching.

Evidence-based Best Practices

Evidence-based best practices are also included in the literature about reading instruction. As Malloy, Marinak, and Gambrell (2019) recently explained:

> While no single instructional program, approach, or method has been found to be effective in teaching all students to read, *evidence-based best practices* that promote high rates of achievement have been documented. An "evidence-based best practice" refers to an instructional practice that has a record of success in improving reading achievement and is both trustworthy and valid. (p. 5)

Literature includes evidence-based best practices for comprehensive literacy instruction (Malloy et al., 2019), as well as evidence-based best practices for specific students and components of reading or literacy. For example, there are best practices for early literacy (Morrow, Dougherty, & Tracey, 2019), dual language learners (Domínquez & Gutiérrez, 2019), motivating students to read (Guthrie & Barber, 2019), fluency instruction (Kuhn, Rasinski, & Young, 2019), and so on. Ten identified evidence-based best practices by Malloy, Marinak, and Gambrell (2019) for comprehensive literacy instruction that "are characterized by meaningful literacy instruction that encourage students to become

proficient, persistent, passionate, and prepared to meet the literacy challenges of the 21st century," include:

1. Implement practices that invite students to be active, contributing members of a literacy community.
2. Understand that maintaining an engaged community requires that ongoing monitoring and adjustment of literacy practices.
3. Promote engagement in your community of learners by planning and delivering literacy instruction through the ARC (access, relevance, and choice).
4. Provide students with small-group differentiated instruction that reflects the complex nature of literacy: reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing.
5. Utilize a wide variety of text (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, digital, periodicals, etc.) within and across all content areas.
6. Promote close reading and critical thinking, engaging students in annotation, text-based discussions, and writing with evidence.
7. Use formative and summative assessments that reflect the complex and dynamic nature of literacy.
8. Replace less relevant guided practice (worksheets, repetitive center-based drills) with more authentic, inquiry-based opportunities to experiment and apply evolving literacy strategies.
9. Ensure that all voices are heard and honored by reducing teacher talk and prompting more student-led discussions.
10. Provide instruction in and practice with technologies that expand concepts and modes of communication. (p. 10)

Since many urban, low-income, students of color are identified as *struggling readers* because they perform below the standardized bar set by the U.S. educational system, it is appropriate to turn to what the literature says about best practices for struggling readers. According to Risko and Walker-Dalhouse (2019), best practices for struggling readers include continuous and multiple assessments, providing rich contexts for learning, providing explicit instruction, teaching to students' capabilities and cultural and linguistic histories, providing multiple opportunities to build students' identities as readers and writers, problem solvers, and producers of knowledge, embedding skills and strategies within larger contexts,

drawing on multiple forms and complexity levels of texts, and differentiating instruction to support identities as readers and writers.

The case study of "an 'at risk,' low socioeconomic, multicultural intermediate school" (Fletcher et al., 2013, p. 149), found that best practices to improve reading achievement included school-wide standardized assessment of reading used to guide school planning and goal setting, keeping parents informed, and explicit teaching of reading skills. The descriptors of "at risk," low socioeconomic, and multicultural alone could be influential in the cited best practices, due to the misconceptions, stereotypes, and deficit views these loaded terms often carry. Musti-Rao and Cartledge (2009) found that best practices for urban readers involve balanced reading instruction that is explicit, logical, and systematic, identifying risks early, providing supplemental instruction, implementing strategies for active student response, teaching in small groups, facilitating peer-mediated learning, and helping parents help their children. Carbo (2008), on the other hand, claimed that best practices for reading achievement for any reader involve a focus on comprehension and reading enjoyment. She highlighted the need for students to read voluntarily and to find pleasure in reading.

However, literacy best practices also have critics. Nash, Panther, and Hollins (2016) stated that best practices view urban students, who often are students of color living in poverty, as possessing deficits in learning and reading. Similar to critiques of high-leverage practices ignoring student and teacher diversity, Smagorinsky (2018) claimed, best practices "are not universal, but those that are suitable to local contexts, cultures, and worldviews" (p. 19). So, although literature notes some practices as "best practices" for reading and literacy, there is no clear consensus.

Asset-based or Resource Pedagogies

Specific asset-based pedagogies, which highlight the interaction of culture and learning, also play a role in urban elementary classrooms, including reading instruction. Asset-based pedagogies refer to approaches that view diversity as assets rather than deficits. These pedagogies are also referred to as *resource pedagogies* (Paris, 2012), recognizing that an individual's diversity is a teaching and learning resource. As Alim and Paris (2017) stated, asset-based pedagogies are those "demanding explicitly pluralistic outcomes that are not centered on White middle-class, monolingual/monocultural norms and notions of educational achievement" (p. 12). These pedagogies began to emerge in the 1970s. Prior to this, deficit pedagogies were utilized, viewing factors that did not align with White, middle-class norms as "deficiencies to be overcome" (Paris, 2012, p. 93). Ultimately, the goal was to strip individuals of their culture and languages if these cultures and languages did not fall in line with those of the dominant group. Beginning in the 1970s, a shift occurred in the field of social language and literacy, even though much of the work focused simply on cultures being different but equal. Asset or resource pedagogies have continued to evolve.

Current asset-based pedagogies are theoretically rooted in Moll and Gonzalez's (1994) *funds of knowledge* and the *third space* concept of Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejeda (1999). Funds of knowledge stems from the research of Moll and Gonzalez (1994), which refers to "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133). Third space recognizes the necessity for teaching and learning to not only involve home, community, and school, but also the forward-looking space. Work is still being done to understand, conceptualize, and promote these asset-based pedagogies. Influential pedagogies falling into

this work include: culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995b), culturally

responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010), and most recently, pushing against the term asset-based,

culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012).

Culturally relevant pedagogy. The landmark pedagogy called *culturally relevant*

pedagogy was initiated into literature by Gloria Ladson-Billings in 1995. The elements of

culturally relevant pedagogy came from her study of eight effective teachers in an almost all

African-American, low-income elementary school in Northern California. Parents and

principals identified these excellent teachers based on criteria such as respect shown to

parents, student enthusiasm toward school and academic tasks, student attitudes towards

themselves and others, excellent classroom management skills, student achievement, and

principal observations of teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Over the course of two years,

teacher interviews, classroom observations with debriefing, videotaping of teachers, and

collaborative teacher research were carried out. The findings of this research led to the

teaching approach Ladson-Billings called culturally relevant pedagogy.

The core tenets of this pedagogy include teachers' conceptions of self and others,

their social relations, and their conceptions of knowledge. Within teachers' conceptions of

self and others, teachers using this pedagogy believe that all students are capable of academic

success, they view their pedagogy as an art, they see themselves as members of the

community, and they see teaching as a way to give back to the community (Ladson-Billings,

1995b, p. 478). In terms of social relations, culturally relevant teachers maintain fluid

student-teacher relationships, connect with all students, create a community of learners, and

encourage collaboration and responsibility among students (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

Finally, in the last tenet of culturally relevant pedagogy, teachers' conceptions of knowledge,

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teachers believe knowledge is not static and that knowledge must be examined critically; they are passionate about knowledge; they know learning needs to be scaffolded and that assessments need to be multifaceted. In the end, the theorized approach of culturally relevant pedagogy led the students in Ladson-Billings' research to academic success, maintained cultural competence, and the ability to critique social inequities. This pedagogy was and is still embraced by educators since its release. Others have built on the work of Ladson-Billings in an attempt to improve the educational experience and results of diverse student populations even further. Despite initiating this revolutionary, widely cited pedagogy over 25 years ago (Ladson-Billings, 2014), in the last few years Ladson-Billings has recognized the more recent culturally sustaining pedagogy work of Paris and Alim (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014).

Culturally responsive pedagogy. With the foundations of culturally relevant pedagogy set by Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay (2010) compiled the work of multiple researchers to establish what she calls *culturally responsive pedagogy*. The work of Gay and culturally responsive pedagogy did not displace the work of Ladson-Billings, but simply joined forces to more thoroughly discuss the pedagogy and emphasize the need for this pedagogy. Gay (2010) wrote, "Culturally responsive teaching can be defined as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 31).

Descriptors of this pedagogy include: validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory. More specifically, culturally responsive pedagogy validates or affirms students' culture through instructional strategies that connect

to the students' backgrounds, is comprehensively "woven together into an integrated whole

that permeates all curriculum content and the entire modus operandi of the classroom" (Gay,

2010, p. 32), and is multidimensional in a way that involves academic content, the classroom

context and climate, relationships between students and the teacher, instructional strategies,

management, and assessment. Likewise, this pedagogy "enables students to be better human

beings and more successful learners" (p. 34) in an empowering manner, it transforms

teaching from the traditional approaches in a variety of ways, and is emancipatory in a way

that liberates and frees students from being held back by mainstream teaching and learning.

Additionally, central features running through culturally responsive pedagogy are

cooperation, community, and connectedness. In Gay's (2010) discussion of culturally

responsive teaching she stated, "Students are expected to work together and are held

accountable for one another's success. Mutual aid, interdependence, and reciprocity as

criteria for guiding behavior replace the individualism and competitiveness that are so much

a part of conventional classrooms" (p. 38).

Culturally sustaining pedagogy. The most recent iteration of asset-based pedagogy

comes from the work of Paris (2012) and Alim (Alim & Paris, 2017) in *culturally sustaining*

pedagogy (CSP). The new pedagogy was initiated as Paris (2012) explained:

> I have begun to question if the terms "relevant" and "responsive" are really
> descriptive of much of the teaching and research founded upon them and, more
> importantly, if they go far enough in their orientation to the languages and literacies
> and other cultural practices of communities marginalized by systemic inequalities to
> ensure the valuing and maintenance of our multiethnic and multilingual society.
> (p. 93)

Paris (2012) coined culturally "sustaining" pedagogy rather than using culturally

"relevant" or "responsive" to capture the need for sustaining, or perpetuating and fostering,

"linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (p. 93). He agreed with Alim (2007) that the terms relevance and responsiveness "do not guarantee in stance or meaning that one goal of an educational program is to maintain heritage ways and to value cultural and linguistic sharing across difference, to sustain and support bi- and multilingualism and bi- and multiculturalism" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). The stance of CSP is to jettison the approach of getting students of color to measure up to the middle-class White students, but rather open up the world of learning, focusing on the students' cultural and linguistic practices (Alim & Paris, 2017). As Nash, Polson, and Glover (in press) explain,

> A key difference from culturally relevant and responsive teaching is the focus on sustaining practices—not merely teaching a culturally relevant lesson or unit of study, but institutionalizing this kind of teaching as the pedagogical norm and in so doing, moving toward sustaining cultural and linguistic strengths in the lives of students and society. (n.p.)

This causes tension with the U.S. education system that is centered on White norms, which will be further discussed in this chapter. Public school teachers are taking risks with CSP if the knowledge students of color demonstrate does not match the White-centered goals, although CSP has shown to improve academic achievement. Ultimately, as Alim and Paris (2017) stated, "CSP positions dynamic cultural dexterity as a necessary good, and sees the outcome of learning as additive rather than subtractive, as remaining whole rather than framed as broken, as critically enriching strengths rather than replacing deficits" (p. 1).

As previously mentioned, Alim and Paris (2014) pushed back against CSP being categorized as an asset-based pedagogy. They explained, while asset pedagogies "repositioned the linguistic, literate, and cultural practices of working-class communities—specifically poor communities of color—as resources and assets to honor, explore, and

extend," (p. 87) these pedagogies tend to oversimplify cultural practices without considering both the heritage and contemporary practices of the students and their communities. CSP attends to "both past-oriented heritage dimensions and present-oriented community dimensions" (p. 90).

Although these pedagogies are inclusive of all schooling, they are evident in research specifically demonstrating academic achievement in reading in urban elementary schools. Interestingly though, asset-based pedagogies involve both the instructional side of teaching and learning as well as the social-emotional experience of teaching and learning. Later in this review of literature, I give more attention to the social-emotional experiences that can be navigated through the most current, culturally sustaining pedagogy.

Teacher as Curriculum

Discussion of different practices and approaches is very important when considering the reading experience of elementary students. Understanding teachers as curriculum themselves is essential. Schlein and Schwarz (2015) viewed teachers as curriculum. They stated, "The curriculum is what happens in classrooms among teachers and students. It is shaped by teachers with students in connection with their experiences, interests, and interactions" (p. 12). These views are aligned with John Dewey's (1938) perspective that experience is education. Education is more than *what* is taught; it is also *who* is teaching and *how* it is taught. Curriculum is nonexistent without teachers (Schlein & Schwarz, 2015), which explains the microscope on teachers in this study. When considering teachers as curriculum, attention is given to who the teacher is, what they believe, what experiences they have had, and what influences them. Sometimes teachers are conscious that these factors are

at play, and other times the teachers are influenced subconsciously (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988).

Connelly and Clandinin's book, *Teachers as Curriculum Planners* (1988), focused specifically on the impact teachers have on the experience, or teaching and learning, that goes on in classrooms. With the understanding of curriculum as *experience*, they explained, "the teacher is the most important agent, after the students of course, in a curriculum situation from the point of view of its planning and development" (p. 13). Others recognize the power of the teacher as the curriculum in the classroom as well. As Bean (2013) stated, "Teachers' own lives and school experiences as well as their cultural backgrounds influence their beliefs and actions" (p. 17). These beliefs and actions of teachers become curriculum and can have a strong impact on students.

Ladson-Billings (2017) stated that factors of "segregated housing, substandard schools with inexperienced and underprepared teachers, health threats, lack of access to healthy food, and inadequate healthcare" (p. 86) work against poor urban students. This debunks the assumption that these students' "culture of poverty" is chosen and that "grit" can alleviate their issues. However, she stated that high-quality teachers who foster culturally relevant curriculum believe that all children have the ability to learn, and that belief will overcome these structural and institutional barriers. Ladson-Billings suggested that specifically for African American students, teachers demonstrating student learning, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness prove effective in teaching.

Interestingly, with pressures of doing well on tests in urban schools, a study of 2.5 million urban students demonstrated that teachers with higher student test scores significantly impacted students' long-term outcomes. These included higher probability of college

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attendance, higher career earnings, reduced likelihood of having a child as a teenager, an increased quality of neighborhood as an adult, and higher 401(k) retirement savings (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2012). Clearly, this demonstrates the acknowledgement of teachers as curriculum, which influences the experiences, teaching, and learning in the classroom. Teachers' experiences as learners, experience in teaching, personal reading habits, and overall beliefs are key elements in the idea of teachers as curriculum.

Teachers' Experiences as Learners

Teachers' personal learning experiences contribute to their enactment of curriculum. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) referred to these experiences as *personal practical knowledge*. They claimed that personal practical knowledge "is in the person's past experience, in the person's present mind and body, and in the person's future plans and actions" (p. 25). In a study focusing on stories of five White female teachers in a large urban school district who were successful in developing relationships with low-income students of color, the teachers' experiences or personal practical knowledge were influential in their success (Schauer, 2018). Results demonstrated that the teachers' early childhood experiences of "colorblindness" (seeing all individuals equally regardless of color) or their parents' communication or view about racial differences influenced their views of diversity accordingly. Additionally, their teacher preparation curriculum was not explicitly supportive in their development to work with urban students, but actual experience in the classroom prepared them for success with urban students and families.

Specifically, in the area of reading, literature demonstrates teachers' experiences during their own "learning to read journey" is one area influencing them as curriculum. In a qualitative study of six beginning urban teachers and the influence of their own childhood

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literacy teachers, all participants reported modeling one or two specific teachers from their own school experiences (McGlynn-Stewart, 2014). The three participants who struggled with aspects of literacy learning had "few memories of positive experiences with literacy teachers upon which to draw" and "chose to emulate teachers who helped them to see school and themselves differently, and who formed positive relationships with them" (p. 80). The three participants who had "enjoyable and successful literacy learning experiences" had "many positive memories of literacy learning experiences and role models from which to draw" and "chose to follow the example of teachers whose teaching approach was particularly enjoyable and engaging" (p. 80). Additionally, they focused on teaching students who were similar in needs to themselves as students.

Research by Applegate et al. (2014) also demonstrates how teachers' experiences as students influence the teachers they become. The findings in their research highlighted the recursive cycle of students who are uninspired to read becoming teachers who are non-influential in their students' reading and produce more uninspired students. They stated, "Those teachers without an enthusiasm for reading would seem to have very little chance to transcend their experiences and make positive impacts on their students unless schools and professional development providers recognize their needs and address the importance of enthusiasm for reading" (p. 199). Overall, teachers' approaches to teaching is heavily impacted by the educational experience they had when they were students. Teachers as curriculum can positively or negatively contribute to their students' educational experiences.

Teachers' Experience in Teaching

The previous section focused on learning experiences in childhood; this section gives attention to teachers' learning experiences in their teaching careers. The experiences in

which teachers engage while teaching and the years of experience they hold also have proven to impact them as teachers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Kunter et al., 2013; Rockoff, 2004). In fact, this could actually be a continuation of teachers' experiences as learners since even in their experience in teaching, they are still learning. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) stated, "Teachers tell us that much of what they learn about teaching and what it means to teach is learned through being a teacher" (p. 203). Teachers learn through the process of teaching, from students, from other teachers, and through the school and curricular milieus (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Kunter et al. (2013) conducted research on factors of teacher quality on student achievement. Findings in their research revealed "that simply being a smart student does not make somebody a good teacher—it is the profession-specific aspects of competence that matter" (p. 816). Specifically, the knowledge and competence that teachers gained through their experience in teaching, including "in-depth PCK [pedagogical content knowledge], constructivist beliefs, an intrinsic disposition toward their work, and self-regulatory abilities" (Kunter et al., 2013, p. 807), coincided with higher student achievement. This clearly shows that teachers' experience in teaching impacts the teachers as curriculum.

Years of experience in teaching can also show an influence on teachers as curriculum. In a correlational study between student test scores and teachers' years of teaching experience, reading score differences were statistically significant between the students with beginning teachers and the higher scoring students of teachers with ten or more years of experience (Rockoff, 2004). This study exhibits how years of experience impact the teacher as curriculum, since the written curriculum remained the same from teacher to teacher. However, not all research finds years of experience as significant in correlation with curriculum implementation. Bingham and Hall-Kenyon (2013) did not find years of

experience or additional certification as factors influencing the implementation of balanced literacy. Vandevoort, Amrein-Beardsley, and Berliner (2004) did not identify years of experience as influential either but found professional experiences of National Board Certified teachers (NBCTs) to be significant in comparison to non-NBCTs. Of the 34 NBCTs studied, 88% had master's degrees, 80% had taken additional coursework after their highest degree, and 97% participated in professional growth activities regularly, all highlighting experience in teaching likely contributing to their students' higher achievement in comparison to their counterparts.

Teachers' Personal Reading Habits

Given the specific content area of reading in this study, it was vital to review literature regarding how teachers' personal reading habits relate to teachers as curriculum. The ecological development framework in this study recognizes that teachers develop based on the systems in which they function. Therefore, the system that includes personal habits and roles as readers outside of school could impact their approach to teaching reading. McKool and Gespass (2009) investigated this concept in a study looking at the relationship between teachers' personal reading habits and their instructional practices. One key finding was that all teachers who personally read for more than 45 minutes per day used intrinsically motivating instructional practices such as discussing books, recommending books, and letting students choose reading materials. Additionally, teachers who claimed to value reading in their own lives more frequently used best practices for literacy learning according to literature, such as providing opportunities for independent reading, incorporating literature circles, sharing insight from their own reading, and recommending titles to the class (McKool & Gespass, 2009).

However, research by Burgess, Sargent, Smith, Hill, and Morrison (2011) did not conclude a correlation between teachers' reading habits and their implementation of literacy best practices. The study of 160 kindergarten through fifth grade teachers looked at both teachers' leisure reading habits and their knowledge of children's books. The data were analyzed in connection to the teachers' use of literacy best practices in their teaching. Findings revealed that the teachers' reading habits were not statistically significant in correlation to the level of best practice implementation. On the other hand, "Teachers who evidence greater average knowledge of children's literature [reported] using many of the best practice techniques more often" (p. 93). Given conflicting reports like these, there is no clear consensus on the impact of teachers' own reading habits on teachers as curriculum.

Teachers' Beliefs

Extant literature explains teacher beliefs have a direct impact on their teaching and the educational experience they provide their students. For instance, research shows that teachers of low-income students of color often have pity for these students' social and economic circumstances and therefore have lower expectations for their academic achievement (Rojas & Liou, 2017). On the other hand, teachers viewing their students' circumstances as a social injustice have been shown to hold high expectations with warmth and care to prepare students "for a reenvisioned future" (Rojas & Liou, 2017, p. 30). Hollins (2015) summed up the influence of teacher beliefs very clearly:

> The system of beliefs which teachers enact in their teaching practice has a powerful influence on the growth and development of children academically, intellectually, psychologically, and socially. Teachers' beliefs are central in shaping who children become, how individuals function in the society, and how the society is transformed by the next generation. (p. 173)

Additionally, beliefs are often difficult to change (Bean, 2013). Teachers' beliefs often stem from personal experiences or cultural norms. Therefore, the beliefs often go unnoticed, unanalyzed, or uncontested (Howard, 2016). Explicit attention and reflection on beliefs needs to occur in order to determine the impact they have on students and the outcomes they produce (Hollins, 2015; Howard, 2016).

The concept of teachers as curriculum, envisioned by Schwab (1978), Dewey (1938), Clandinin and Connelly (1992), and the like, is challenged with federally mandated policies (Craig & Ross, 2008). Teachers are often not recognized as knowers. Instead, they take on the identities of:

> the teacher defined as a purveyor of codified content knowledge, teacher whose knowledge base is determined by policymakers and bureaucrats and influenced by university professors, the teacher perceived as an implementer of others' reform strategies, the teacher enmeshed in the politics of inquiry, the teacher devoid of agency who struggles to gain authority, and the teacher for whom the extremes of technical rationalism encroach on classroom practice, narrowing the space within which lived curriculum can be instantiated. (Craig & Ross, 2008, p. 296)

However, while I agree that teachers are often not viewed as knowledgeable or are not granted autonomy in their classrooms, I also agree with Ayers, Quinn, Stovall, and Scheiern (2008), who stated that intended curriculum is "accepted or resisted, brought to life and changed by specific individuals in particular classrooms" (p. 310). Ultimately, curriculum within a classroom comes down to the teacher.

Teacher-navigated Social-emotional Reading Experience

While the types of reading resources and teaching strategies in urban elementary classrooms can indicate improvement of student literacy proficiency, this study aimed to look beyond these. Research supports that to improve students' proficiency, the social-emotional aspect of learning must be addressed, in additional to the instructional aspect (Center for

Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, 2017; Francois, 2013; McLean, Sparapani, Toste, & Connor, 2016; Miller, 2015; Pianta, Belsky, Vandergrift, Houts, Morrison, & NICHD, 2008). In fact, a significant correlation exists between early recollections of positive childhood reading experiences and future enjoyment of reading (Benevides & Stagg Peterson, 2010).

Getting students to increase their reading proficiency and demonstrate that increase on high-stakes tests may be a goal, but creating students who enjoy reading is the ultimate goal if there is a desire for them to engage in reading, succeed in reading (Guthrie, 2004), and become lifelong readers who have the power of literacy on their side in adulthood (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Milner, 2013). I contend the social-emotional experience navigated during the reading block in these classrooms is equally influential to the instruction. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Carbo (2008) stated, "Research indicates that when students' environmental preferences are met, they are more likely to associate reading with pleasure, to read for longer periods, and, overall, to achieve higher scores in reading" (p. 60). She also explained how the two goals for reading achievement need to be comprehension and enjoyment: "Students who voluntarily read for their own pleasure improve their reading skills and their test scores at a much faster rate than those who do not" (p. 58).

Yeager, Walton, and Cohen (2013) agreed, saying, "changing students' subjective experience in school" (p. 63) can raise student achievement. To make reading more pleasurable, it is important to reduce factors that are seen as negative by the students in the reading experience which can then help increase reading achievement. This type of positive and pleasurable experience does not just happen. The role of the teacher is the most critical

factor to ensure that this positive and pleasurable experience does, in fact, happen (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009; Routman, 2014).

As literature reveals, the role of the teacher is critical. Teachers matter. As Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges (2004) stated, "The knowledge, skills, and dispositions of teachers are likely to be the most important predictors of success a student has in learning" (as cited in Wepner et al., 2013). Within the U.S. educational system, urban schools, and elementary classroom context, the teacher's role in facilitating social-emotional aspects of reading is essential to specifically study. As Gadsden and Dixon-Román (2017) stated:

> Teachers (and school administrators) have the ability to make choices about the degree to which students' experiences in schools reflect, criticize, respond to, represent, or are oppositional to their surroundings; how well they respond to the needs and problems of the families and communities that constitute schools; or whether they understand and build upon the knowledge, strengths, and expectations of families and communities to ensure that children not only learn but excel. (p. 441)

In studying teacher-navigated social-emotional reading experiences, it is essential to understand what is meant by social-emotional reading experiences. As defined in Chapter 1, social-emotional reading experiences refer to the attention to students' social-emotional well-being in the reading context. In this study, social-emotional well-being focused on the well-being of the student that can be facilitated in a classroom during reading. This did not include the social-emotional well-being of students at home and other environments outside of school. Additionally, social-emotional well-being or experience is something that is typically very important to students (Shultz & Cook-Sather, 2001), whether they specifically articulate it using these terms or not. For instance, when students are asked about their overall school experience, they typically focus on relationships rather than physical or curricular areas of school (Shultz & Cook-Sather, 2001). Three themes that dominate student

responses about overall school experience include: students wanting more human and humane interactions in school, wanting to be able to be themselves in school, and wanting school to be engaging (Shultz & Cook-Sather, 2001). Noddings (2005, 2012) explained, that adult perceptions of social-emotional experiences, specifically caring, may be different than what a child perceives: "It is not enough to hear the teacher's claim to care. Does the student recognize that he or she is cared for?" (Noddings, 2005, p. 1). This is required for a truly caring relationship.

Ultimately, the social-emotional well-being of a student refers to the feelings a child has that determines the level at which he or she feels cared for, efficacious, safe, valued, or worthy (Haberman, 2005; Hachey, 2012; hooks, 1994; Noddings, 2012; Ormrod, 2012; Shultz & Cook-Sather, 2001; Ullucci, 2009). Concepts of self-confidence and self-esteem (Gay, 2010) also demonstrate a student's social-emotional well-being. The state of a student's social-emotional well-being in school is a product of the interactions with teachers, other students, the environment, resources, and other components within the classroom context, both physically present and implicitly present within the classroom climate or culture (Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, 2017; Hachey, 2012; Noddings, 2012; Ormrod, 2012; Shultz & Cook-Sather, 2001).

I must stress here that social-emotional well-being is not a "warm and fuzzy" feeling that I simply think is nice to have in every classroom. In fact, "high levels of emotional support are associated with growth in reading and math achievement from kindergarten through fifth grade" (Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, 2017, p. 2). Neuroscientist Mary Helen Immordino-Yang (2016) explained, "Emotions are like the shelves that give cognitive glassware support, [rather than] toddlers running amok in a china

shop" (para. 2). I contend that value and urgency need to be given to students' social-emotional well-being.

Variations in individuals and contexts influence what is needed for social-emotional well-being. Students in urban schools are no different. In general, a common misconception exists that urban students need more elaborate reward and punishment systems (Ullucci, 2009). As Ladson-Billings (2017) explained, there is a belief "the major responsibility of teachers and the school is to discipline and bring order to their chaotic lives" (p. 82). The institutional-like setting that schools or teachers assume urban students need is actually opposite to the warm, positive, community-based experiences that are effective in urban classrooms (Haberman, 2005; Ullucci, 2009).

In addition to urban students' circumstances outside of school, their circumstances in school may influence their social-emotional needs in the classroom and more specifically in the reading context. Given the status of reading proficiency, or lack of, for urban students, many of these students self-identify as being poor readers or are labeled as "at risk." Some of these students have displayed emotional behaviors such as anger towards reading or rejection of the printed word (Luker, 2005). Research has shown, however, that lower-achieving students placed in classrooms offering more support have higher achievement than those placed in less supportive classrooms (Hammond, 2015; Hamre & Pianta, 2005, May & Sanders, 2013; Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2009). This clearly reflects the importance of the social-emotional experience in the classroom for urban students who may be seen as "at-risk" or who are not proficient readers.

The following sections will explain what literature says about the role teachers need to take to improve the reading proficiency of their students through navigating positive

social-emotional experiences for their students. It is important to note here that these areas are divided into distinct but overlapping sections. There are very close ties between components of the classroom's social-emotional reading experience.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

A prominent topic in current literature that attends to urban students' social-emotional reading experience due to their racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity is that of culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). CSP evolved from a long lineage of legal reforms, sociopolitical movements, and other asset-based pedagogies such as culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 2009) or culturally responsive pedagogies (Gay, 2010). Alim and Paris (2017), who developed ideas of CSP, posed the question:

> What if the goal of teaching and learning with youth of color was not ultimately to see how closely students could perform White middle-class norms, but rather was to explore, honor, extend, and, at times, problematize their cultural practices and investments? (p. 3)

Current writings about CSP do not conflict with earlier pedagogies but instead critique, extend, and negotiate earlier pedagogies through centering heritage and community practices (Paris & Alim, 2014). Specifically, Paris and Alim (2014) stated, "We believe equity and access can best be achieved by centering pedagogies on the heritage and contemporary practices of students and communities of color" (p. 87). Thus, I intentionally streamline aspects of culturally relevant and culturally responsive pedagogies into this literature review of CSP in cases where those aspects are still upheld by this current pedagogy.

One qualitative ethnographic study of four urban elementary teachers in a predominantly Latino/a community looked at the co-existence of CSP and the standardization of learning for racially and linguistically diverse students. The study captured the approaches taken by the teachers to maintain CSP amid the expectations of preparing students for high-stakes tests (Zoch, 2017b). While other classrooms were using workbooks, test-like passages with questions to answer, minimal dialogue, and independent work, these teachers incorporated small group instruction to get to know students, texts that were pertinent to the students' lives and cultures, texts involving social issues, student conversation about texts that involved critical thinking, whole group use of graphic organizers, and examples of role models from minoritized backgrounds.

While Zoch (2017b) contended that some may critique the four teachers' approaches for imperfect alignment to CSP, she also highlighted optimism for sustaining cultural approaches to teaching despite the pressures of testing. Given this study's focus on teachers' facilitation of social-emotional reading experiences, the following content covers teacher dispositions and abilities through CSP that could navigate students' social-emotional well-being in the reading experience. Understanding and leveraging students' learning experience based on their racial, cultural, and linguistic identities supports the ability to address students' social-emotional well-being, which will be elaborated on throughout the following sections.

Teacher dispositions and perceptions. One way teachers may navigate social-emotional well-being of their students as readers is through their dispositions and perceptions. Although these dispositions are internal, many of these are exhibited in behaviors or actions in the classroom. While some of these dispositions and perceptions

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pertain to all happenings in the classroom and play a role in the reading block naturally, others are specific dispositions and perceptions about the teaching or learning of reading. There are four dispositions and perceptions that reflect CSP and attend to students' social-emotional reading experience.

Care "for" the students. The first disposition specifically connects with what Gay (2010) calls culturally responsive caring, which is also a concept sustained in CSP. Culturally responsive caring:

> Focuses on caring *for* instead of *about* the personal well-being and academic success of ethnically diverse students, with a clear understanding that the two are interrelated. While caring *about* conveys feelings of concern for one's state of being, caring *for* is active engagement in doing something to positively affect it. (Gay, 2010, p. 48)

Concern, compassion, commitment, responsibility, and action are all involved when teachers care *for* their students.

This type of care for the students is a state of mind. It is not just something that a teacher thinks about every once in a while. It is a way of life in the classroom, always considering what is best for the students and being committed to that. In fact, Nieto (2012) stated that "true teaching must be accompanied by a deep level of care in order for learning to take place" (p. 29). Sandilos, Rimm-Kaufman, and Cohen (2017) stated, "Caring teachers, by definition, establish a classroom climate in which students feel emotionally safe and sense that their teacher is concerned for their well-being and future success" (p. 1324). This specific disposition is one that actually drives all of the other dispositions and abilities. With this overarching, ever-present mindset, all of the other dispositions and abilities fall into place and have purpose.

High expectations. The next perception is the belief that all students can learn. Culturally sustaining teachers believe in high expectations not only academically but in all areas. Rojas and Liou (2017) wrote that "teachers cannot have high expectations for students without caring about their academic success, and vice versa" (p. 31). This demonstrates the driving force of the *cared for* disposition. Multiple researchers focusing on urban populations, populations of color, and students living in poverty reveal that high expectations lead to students' perception of teacher care (Rojas & Liou, 2017; Shealey, 2007), students' self-confidence (Gay, 2010), and student achievement (Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Shealey, 2007). When Shealey (2007) thoroughly examined the work of four urban teachers who were identified as successful in implementing high-quality teaching in reading and addressing the diverse needs of students and families, key elements of culturally responsive teaching (now culturally sustaining teaching) were found. Caring and high expectations were two of the major culturally responsive tenets revealed.

Specifically in the reading classroom, high expectations can come in many forms. The belief that every student can read and become successful literate beings is first and foremost. Other ways reading teachers may hold high expectations for their students is through expectations of focus, participation, and effort. Finally, even when teachers work to identify students' reading strengths and challenges, or identify students' reading levels, students are not seen as levels. Rather, teachers using CSP engage students in a multitude of literacy experiences with a variety of texts so positive reading identities can be formed (Abodeeb-Gentile & Zawilinski, 2013).

One study of more than 600 teachers and their students in five large school districts throughout the U.S., revealed that the teacher's demand is significant in students' academic achievement (Sandilos et al., 2017). In fact, the researchers stated that *demand*, meaning the challenge and expectation of the teacher, is "a particularly important construct as it is significantly and positively related to students' academic growth" (p. 1330) on both high- and low-stakes math and reading assessments. Additionally, the factor of challenge appeared to be more beneficial for African American elementary students than for non-African American students in terms of academic growth.

Understands literacy learning as a social process. Belief that literacy learning is a social process (Kirkland, 2014) also characterizes a teacher implementing CSP in the facilitation of social-emotional reading experiences. There is an understanding that individuals learn literacy as social beings within their cultures (Gregory, Long, & Volk, 2004; Moje & Lewis, 2007; Rojas & Liou, 2017). These social processes take place at home, in communities, and at school. These social processes of learning literacy come through social acts and interactions with others in authentic ways.

Given this perception, reading teachers who facilitate experiences that address the students' social-emotional well-being leverage students' literate lives inside and outside of school and "place a high value on students' identities and cultural history" (Rojas & Liou, 2017, p. 38). They acknowledge their linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1977). This may include a teacher incorporating reading resources or practices from students' culture, utilizing discourse with authentic student voice in response to reading, or placing value on reading that students and their families engage in for cultural practices. Work by Tatum and Muhammad (2012) with African American male students suggests the need for culturally

responsive teaching like this to enhance engagement. The approach of looking at how African American males engaged in literacy throughout history, demonstrated a need for connecting reading instruction to the students' culture. Using a more cultural or sociocultural approach to literacy development, choosing literature that is meaningful to their culture, and legitimizing literacy as a tool for human development were all recommended.

A team of teachers at one urban elementary viewed literacy as a social process when they helped form pen pals between their students and community members from local businesses, organizations, and government agencies (Teale, Zolt, Yokota, Glasswell, & Gambrell, 2007). Student-community pen pals read books, wrote back and forth about the books, and engaged in meaningful learning across contexts together. The real-world, social experience aligned with the students' community and social lives. Ultimately, this aligns with the views of Tatum and Muhammad (2012), in reference to literacy for African American male youth, when they stated that literacy must be viewed as a "cultural practice" (p. 456) to improve reading achievement.

Teacher as facilitator. Power and control over students is not a priority for teachers who are facilitating a social-emotional experience under CSP. Instead, these teachers provide choice for students and allow them to have a formative role (Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012). The relinquishing of power over the students allows students to possess autonomy in their learning. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) stated that "autonomy support and student motivation appear to be reciprocal" (p. 412). This reflects teachers' disposition of caring *for* students with a priority of doing what is best for students. Teachers aligned with CSP are well aware that their role is a facilitator, not a dictator. There is a deep understanding of the

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dynamics of power in everyday interactions with students, and they have a belief that they do not need to exhibit a dominant force over students (Moje & Lewis, 2007).

In the reading context, teacher as facilitator can be conceptualized through student choice in texts to read or how to respond to or interact with texts. The students are not just allowed but are encouraged to voice their thinking and reactions about texts and guide the reading experience. Teachers using CSP understand the importance of student ownership in reading and strive for this (K.H. Au, 2011). Ultimately, there is regard for students' perspectives, and teachers favor students' interests and motivations over their own (Pianta et al., 2012).

Teacher abilities. I now turn to teacher abilities. These abilities include things teachers explicitly *do* or knowledge they possess to make them capable of *doing*. Some may call these skills. I explain four abilities that teachers utilizing CSP may possess as they facilitate the social-emotional experience in their classrooms and reading blocks.

Knowledge of students' lives. Teachers committed to CSP deeply know their students and use that in fostering the students' social-emotional well-being and leverage learning. They have the ability to learn and recognize cultural capital of students to use in teaching to honor and value students (Bourdieu, 1977; Lareau, 1987). This ability to acquire knowledge about their students is not done passively. Instead, these teachers are attentive by watching and listening to students. They actively listen to students' ideas or listen in on small group discussions and join in or respond (Dorman, 2012; Noddings, 2012). Haberman (2005) did extensive research in urban contexts and concluded that "star teachers" of diverse children and youth in poverty held common characteristics. He stated that star teachers have effective communication skills with children, adults, and the school community through truly listening

and using that information to gain understanding. He also noted that star teachers find

energy and motivation from their work with children, enjoying the time so much that it

cancels out the exhausting and irrational demands of the system.

In addition to

the ability to learn about students, these teachers learn about themselves. They not only

thoroughly understand their students' perspectives and experiences through their listening

and attentiveness, they have the ability to gain deeper understanding about their own

perspectives and experiences as well (Gay, 2010; Nieto, 2012). Gathering, reflecting, and

making meaning of all this information is a regular practice.

These teachers have strong abilities to determine interesting texts in the reading

environment for students as a result of their gathered knowledge about them. Through CSP,

teachers choose literature that is meaningful to students' culture (Tatum & Muhammad,

2012), and they know students well enough to match them with books based on interest.

This not only sends the message that teachers value the students' lives but also helps students

find appreciation of their own history, culture, and traditions (Ladson-Billings, 2017a). In

turn, this influences students' desire to engage (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000) and facilitates

their social-emotional reading experience.

In a qualitative study of two elementary literacy teachers' effectiveness in knowing

their students and their students' literacy knowledge, the following strategies were identified:

(a) engaging in meaningful responsive literacy conversations, (b) knowing themselves and

beliefs deeply, and (c) structuring multimodal experiences in a variety of contexts (Dorman,

2012). They continually worked to know their students more deeply in these ways. In fact, the researcher stated,

> When they sense that distance between themselves and their students is getting in the way of understanding student thinking, both [participant teachers] note that they reflect back to their childhoods or to times when they experienced something similar to what the child is experiencing. (p. 79)

Additional research conducted by O'Connor, Cappella, McCormick, and McClowry (2014) demonstrated that when an intervention was applied that required teachers to understand their students' temperament and use that information to approach the students and their parents, reading achievement improved. These teachers clearly recognized knowing their students as important.

The literature on departmentalizing, as well as looping, in elementary schools also supports the benefits of teachers knowing their students. Recently a study involving 46 elementary schools in Houston, Texas revealed that when 23 departmentalized schools, sending students from teacher to teacher for different subject areas, were compared to the 23 traditional schools, fewer academic gains on high-stakes tests were seen in the departmentalized schools (Fryer, 2018). Additionally, schools that departmentalized also had increased numbers of student suspension and decreased attendance rates. On the other hand, traditional schools, where students stayed with the same teacher throughout the entire day, attained higher academic gains, higher attendance, and fewer suspensions. Likewise, empirical evidence from a study by Hill and Jones (2018) showed that looping, or repeated student-teacher matches for consecutive school years, improved academic achievement in elementary students, with even greater gain for minoritized students. Despite research supporting looping, there is also literature that warns that looping should be used wisely

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(Hitz, Somers, & Jenlink, 2007). In addition to advantages of looping, there are also possible concerns or negative outcomes. Potential problems include teacher-child personality conflicts, children being placed with ineffective teachers for multiple years, and poor cooperation among students (Hitz et al., 2007). Therefore, looping decisions need to be carried out wisely. All of this demonstrates potential benefits of teachers truly knowing their students and leveraging that knowledge effectively.

Critical text-selection. Teachers facilitating CSP and positive social-emotional experiences for their students match students to appropriate texts as well as select texts for critical purposes, through their understanding of the students' heritage and community practices (Paris & Alim, 2014). These teachers have the ability to critique children's literature and select literature in which students can see themselves as normal kids. This concept is specifically challenging in urban contexts with high populations of students of color. In fact, 90% of children's books that contain human characters are about White people (Welch, 2016). Books that do feature characters of color often are limited to historical books that cover topics of civil rights and slavery. Children of color need to see themselves through books "in a variety of contexts, both ordinary and extraordinary" (Welch, 2016, p. 375). Teachers devoted to CSP know this and act upon this knowledge.

> When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part. Our classrooms need to be places where all the children from all the cultures that make up the salad bowl of American society can find their mirrors. (Bishop, 1990, para. 4)

Additionally, these teachers use literature as a way to help students "confront social injustices, visualize racial inequities, find solutions to personal and political problems, and vicariously experience the issues, emotions, thoughts, and lives of people otherwise

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inaccessible to them" (Gay, 2010, p. 158). Studies show that children understand sameness and difference in connections they make with characters (Nussbaum, 2000), and these teachers then use this to prompt students' critical literacy (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Ultimately, CSP teachers have the ability to assess texts for cultural accuracy and authenticity (Gay, 2010) and work to develop these abilities in their students as well. As a result of teachers' ability in critical text-selection, students are left with feelings of ownership, pride, confidence, and power.

Intentional discourse. The next ability teachers may have when utilizing CSP involves the intentional use of discourse in the classroom and in the reading context. First of all, these teachers exhibit teacher sensitivity by "being attuned and responsive to the individual cues and needs of students in their classrooms" (Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, 2017, p. 373). From there, they have an ability to regulate interactions and discourse. Teachers working through CSP consider what is talked about, how it is talked about, what to ignore, and what to attend to, all while considering the impact on students' social-emotional experience or well-being (Gay, 2010). They encourage students to express their ideas (Gay, 2010) but ultimately have the goal of developing a community of learners. A balance between professional and personal orientation to students (Ladson-Billings, 2017b) is necessary for teachers under this pedagogy. They have the ability to maintain their teacher identity while also sharing in more personal moments with students. They use intentional discourse to foster positive relationships among students in the classroom community as well. Not only do strong classroom communities support students' well-being, research shows that peer acceptance positively impacts academic achievement (Kiuru, Aunola, Lerkkanen, Pakarinen, & Poskiparta, 2015).

In reading, CSP regularly incorporates discourse through responses to reading. These teachers have real, meaningful conversations with students about reading and books, as well as sharing about being readers themselves, which has proven to be beneficial (Dorman, 2012). Additionally, they may utilize partner or small group learning in reading to encourage natural discourse between select students. Attentiveness is used to determine when to step in and when to listen, based on the students' social-emotional and cognitive needs. Overall, teachers utilizing CSP foster environments for discourse and facilitate that discourse for the well-being of students and their academic achievement.

Persistence. One last ability that teachers exhibit to foster students' social-emotional well-being in the classroom and in reading is persistence. CSP teachers have the ability to persist emotionally and physically, never giving up on students (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2017b). They have the ability to persist through trauma or difficult circumstances that may surface in their work with urban students or within the school or education system. Given the state of urban schools, these teachers persist as they deal with bureaucracy.

> [These] teachers make strategic decisions about which part of the bureaucracy they will attend to. They realize that no one can be fully responsive to a bureaucracy and any attempt to do so takes away from so many other things they need to do. (Ladson-Billings, 2017b, p. 446)

They persist as a result of care *for* students and students understand this. When students witness their teachers' persistence in them and in their education, it directly impacts the students' social-emotional well-being. Specifically in reading, it is easy for urban teachers to fall into the bureaucracy of mandates, policy, and test scores. Reading teachers who embrace CSP do not get bogged down with those dynamics but persist in doing what is right and best for the students. They do not fall into the trap of viewing their students as failures as the

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system often does. As Rojas and Liou (2017) stated, "Teaching is an act of love, one that actively challenges the inequitable schooling structures and conditions that students of color encounter" (Rojas & Liou, 2017, p. 38). This represents the persistence that CSP teachers have for all students.

When considering the dispositions and abilities of urban teachers that influence the facilitation of students' social-emotional well-being in classrooms and in reading, I come back to Martin Haberman's (2005) work in urban schools. For years he studied the practices of *star teachers* in urban education, and most of his findings involved the social-emotional domain of teaching rather than the cognitive. He understood the importance of students' social-emotional well-being and encouraged teachers' attention to this. Culturally sustaining pedagogy calls for this as well.

Beyond culturally sustaining pedagogy. While literature on culturally sustaining pedagogy consistently highlights the dispositions, perceptions, and abilities discussed above, topics in the literature beyond CSP also involve or represent teachers' navigation of social-emotional reading experiences for their students. That does not mean that the following topics are not aligned with or inclusive in CSP, but they are not consistent in the literature on CSP. In fact, some degree of overlap exists between these topics and those of CSP. The major difference in the following topics is they do not necessarily leverage students' diversity or explicitly view students' race, culture, or language as an asset. They have the potential to influence the social-emotional reading experience of students in positive and negative ways, according to the literature.

Teacher-student relationships. Hammond (2015) explained that learning partnerships, or teacher-student relationships have two key components: rapport, which

involves teachers' established trust that comes through validating and affirming students' experiences; and alliance, which captures the shared mission between student and teacher in achieving goals that were collaboratively set. As Noddings has made clear through her care theory, when a caring relationship between a teacher and student is established, cognitive learning can flourish (Hachey, 2012; Noddings, 2005, 2012). In fact, the caring of a teacher directly affects students' academic and social attitudes and goals (Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006), and when students believe their teachers care for them they respond with greater engagement and effort. Research conducted by Liew, Chen, and Hughes (2010) found that students with self-regulatory struggles benefit academically from positive, supportive teachers where there is low conflict. Additional findings implied that struggling students who have difficulties on academic tasks that require fine motor skills, accuracy, and paying attention to details and instruction, would benefit from positive teacher-student relationships.

On the other hand, students who view their teachers as harsh and cold typically demonstrate lower academic achievement than their peers (Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006). "Poor relationships with teachers thwart children's basic need for relatedness and diminish children's feelings of belonging at school and perceived academic competence, thereby obstructing motivational processes that drive academic achievement" (Split et al., 2012, p. 1180). What is most concerning is research by the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) (2017), which shows that students coming from low-income families and from less-educated mothers are less likely to be involved in effective teacher-student interactions than their middle-income peers. Thus, it is essential to ask how these teacher-student relationships are fostered in the classroom and how they evolve. As

Duncan-Andrade (2009) asserted, "At the end of the day, effective teaching depends most heavily on one thing: deep and caring relationships" (p. 191).

Teacher responsiveness. Extending the topic of teacher-student relationships, research specifically supports the need for teachers to respond to their students in beneficial ways. Pianta, Hamre, and Allen (2012) referred to this concept as _teacher sensitivity_. They described teacher sensitivity as "being attuned and responsive to the individual cues and needs of students in their classrooms" (p. 373). The qualifiers for exhibiting teacher sensitivity include teachers anticipating problems, assisting in resolving issues, providing reassurance and assistance, and acknowledging students' emotions (Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, 2017). These all demonstrate the responsiveness of a teacher to his or her students.

In the study by Hill and Jones (2018) involving looping, which was discussed previously, it was concluded that teachers getting to know their students on deeper levels allows them to be more responsive to their students.

> If minority students are more likely to come from more challenging family environments (such as single parent households), then teachers with better understandings of their specific backgrounds may be able to more adequately or appropriately address needs arising outside the classroom. (p. 7)

Responsiveness does not only involve the care or warmth provided to the students but also the structure or discipline. In a study by McLean, Sparapani, Toste, and Connor (2016), the researchers measured the warmth and responsiveness of the teacher, along with the control and discipline, to determine classroom quality. Their findings revealed that high levels of both warmth and control correlated with higher classroom quality where students produced higher average test scores on the Woodcock-Johnson III Test of Achievement.

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Additional findings surfaced in a study by Kiuru, Aunola, Lerkkanen, Pakarinen, and

Poskiparta (2015) involving 625 kindergarten to fourth grade students. Overall, findings

revealed that teacher response or affect towards students positively related to the students'

peer group acceptance, and both positive teacher affect and positive peer acceptance

correlated with positive student academic achievement. Therefore, the manner in which

teachers respond to students and students' needs seems to be essential to understand in this

study.

   Teacher-student match. Research over the last two decades reveals that racial match

between teacher and student can be significantly beneficial. These benefits can be seen

directly in students' academic achievement (Easton-Brooks, 2014; Easton-Brooks, Lewis, &

Zhang, 2010) as well as in their attitudes and perceptions (Egalite & Kisida, 2018; Irizarry &

Welton, 2014).

   In a study by Easton-Brooks, Lewis, and Zhang (2010), African American students

who had at least one African American teacher between kindergarten and fifth grade scored

1.50 points higher in reading than students who did not have an African American teacher

during that time frame. Later, Easton-Brooks (2014) presented evidence showing that when

students are matched ethnically to their teachers, it can account for a 17% difference in

academic achievement. Interestingly, Gershenson, Holt, and Papageorge (2016) found that

"non-black teachers have significantly lower educational expectations for black students than

do black teachers" (p. 222). In fact, they found that White teachers were nearly 30% less

likely to predict Black students would earn a college degree than Black teachers.

   Racial match between teacher and student also demonstrates improved student

perceptions of and attitudes towards academics (Egalite & Kisida, 2018; Public Impact,

2018). There is an understanding that matching teachers and students of like races can lead to a deeper understanding of students' home culture to make the bridge to school culture (Easton-Brooks, 2014). It is argued that Latinx students' academic struggles are often in part connected to the lack of Latinx teachers and staff who may be better equipped in meeting this group of students' needs (Irizarry & Welton, 2014; Villegas & Clewell, 1998).

On the contrary, the previously mentioned study by Sandilos, Rimm-Kaufman, and Cohen (2017) involving over 600 teachers and their students revealed that teacher-student ethnic match or mismatch was not significant in association with academic growth. Their research used ethnic match or mismatch as a variable in analyzing student academic growth, which did not prove to be relevant. In my research, this literature prompted my attention to the racial mismatches between the two White teachers and their diverse students and the manner in which it possibly impacted the social-emotional reading experience.

Reading motivation and engagement. One major element in the reading experience for students is the motivation and engagement that teachers foster in their students. However, it is often difficult to delineate between reading motivation and reading engagement. As explained in the definition of terms section in the opening chapter, these terms are often commingled and can be difficult to observe (Unrau & Quirk, 2014). Guthrie (2004), along with colleagues Wigfield (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000) and Humenick (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004), have extensively researched and written about reading motivation and engagement. Reading motivation actually facilitates reading engagement, with motivation activating behavior that manifests as engagement. This manifested school engagement is a critical factor in whether children from poverty even stay in school (Finn & Rock, 1997).

Specifically in reading, engagement can overcome traditional obstacles to achievement (Guthrie, 2004). Research by Guthrie (2004) demonstrated that "9-year-olds whose family background was characterized by low income and low education, but who were highly engaged readers, substantially outscored students who came from backgrounds with higher education and higher income, but who themselves were less engaged readers" (p. 5). Guthrie and Barber (2019) explained, however, that general motivational approaches are applicable for all students regardless of "age, ethnicity, background, ability, and currently existing motivation" (p. 57). As Lee (2017) emphasized, "Black and Brown youth and youth living in poverty" (p. 261) need to be understood ecologically so instruction can be efficacious and relevant, which is possible if motivational approaches attend to their diversities.

Additionally, Tatum (2014), who has done extensive research on literacy of African American male youth, calls for the texts and literacy experiences to be meaningful and relevant to these students' lives in order to intrinsically motivate and increase engagement in reading, which is aligned with motivational approaches for any student. For this study, the focus was on the teachers' attempts to motivate, which can be internally and externally driven, and engage their diverse students in reading. I present what the literature says about teachers' eliciting reading motivation and engagement in their students, with an understanding that the practices would be applicable in personalized ways for the students in this study.

When discussing the teacher's role in promoting reading motivation, the dispositional and emotional aspects the teacher brings to the classroom during the reading block are key. According to Unrau and Quirk (2014), facilitators of reading engagement include contextual

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elements, self-beliefs, and intrapersonal factors. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) explained,

"Reading motivation is the individual's personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading" (p. 405). Motivation can be intrinsic, stemming from excitement, interest, enjoyment, and a desire to interact with an activity. Motivation can also be extrinsic, driven through the desire to receive external recognition, rewards, or incentives. Self-efficacy in reading can influence reading motivation too. Finally, Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) explained that reading motivation can also be influenced by social interactions such as sharing books with peers or participating in learning communities. Notice that much of this motivation is not observable in students other than in the degree and ways they engage in reading. Teachers can attempt to increase students' motivation and then theoretically, results would reveal themselves observationally through reading engagement.

The processes and contexts that influence engagement and reading outcomes according to Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), as well as Guthrie and Humenick (2004) include: (a) utilizing learning and knowledge goals, (b) engaging in real-world interactions, (c) providing autonomy support and student choice, (d) incorporating interesting texts, (e) implementing strategy instruction, (f) applying praise and rewards, (g) leveraging evaluation, (h) infusing teacher involvement, (i) ensuring collaboration for reading, and (j) coordinating instructional processes coherently. More recently, Guthrie and Barber (2019) identified collaboration, relevance, choice, success, emphasizing importance, and thematic units as best practices for motivating students to read. For this study, the focus was on the social-emotional experience in reading, and tweezing out the elements that are social-emotionally focused rather than instructionally focused was important yet difficult due to overlap. The literature divulges major themes for motivating, and therefore engaging

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students in reading, which highlight these social-emotional points. These themes included

the classroom environment; incorporating student interest, choice, and autonomy; the

utilization of cooperative interactions; and the level of teacher enthusiasm for reading.

Classroom environment. Early work by Nancy Cecil (1987) claimed the need for an

affective approach to reading instruction. What she meant by this was that reading

classrooms need to be happy environments where students feel valued and accepted, which

can be fostered through teacher-student relationships. She stated that the most inviting

classrooms had plenty of praise and appreciation, teachers and students frequently laughed

together, there was eye contact between individuals speaking to each other, inside jokes were

shared between teacher and pupils, and there was a spirit of cooperation rather than

competition.

In a 2008 large-scale study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human

Development (NICHD), instructional and emotional aspects of reading and math were

investigated to determine the impact on achievement and achievement trajectories of over

1,300 students (Pianta et al., 2008). The results highlighted the importance for students to

feel emotionally comfortable and supported in the classroom. The researchers of the study

called for a change in practices and policies adopted in our schools and classrooms:

> That emotional quality of the classroom setting—the warmth of adult-child
> interactions, as well as the adults' skill in detecting and responding to individual
> children's needs—was a consistent predictor of both reading and math skill growth
> confirms theoretical frameworks emphasizing the importance for child development
> of relationships with adults—even beyond early childhood—and frame the need for
> practices and policies that emphasize not only instruction but also relationships, a
> conclusion that has both theoretical and empirical support. (Pianta et al., 2008,
> p. 393)

Creating an atmosphere of joy during the reading block has also proven to be beneficial for students. In Miller's (2015) work with urban, diverse fourth grade students, she found that when she worked to create an environment in which joy was experienced by students as readers there was increased reading enjoyment based on the students' written and oral reflections and discussions of their reading perceptions. Student progress as readers will be limited if we are not explicitly promoting joy in reading (Routman, 2014). As previously discussed in the section describing reading in urban elementary classrooms, Kohn (2010) argued that focusing on high-stakes testing through test prep, extrinsically rewarding reading, and quantifying reading kills students' motivation to read. In contrast, when students enjoy reading, they typically score higher on reading proficiency tests (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017) and that should be the aim. As Routman (2014) claimed, "If the joy is there, we can teach just about anything to our students" (p. 117).

In the research that developed the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, 2017), researchers highlighted this concept as the positive climate and negative climate observable in the classroom. Positive climate involved elements such as the physical proximity between the teacher and students, smiling and laughter displayed by the teacher, positive comments made by the teacher, and respect given to the students through language, voice, and listening. On the other hand, negative climate included factors such as the teacher displaying irritability or anger, yelling or threatening, and using derogatory language or humiliation. The creators of this teacher assessment tool concluded after thorough research that effective classrooms with student achievement exhibit positive climates. Elements of positive and negative climate were focused upon in this study to understand the social-emotional experience facilitated by the teacher participants.

Student interest, choice, and autonomy. When considering motivation, most first think of interest (Guthrie & Barber, 2019). Overall, students are more motivated and engaged in reading when student choice, based on personal interest, is incorporated (Francois, 2013; Guthrie & Barber, 2019; King-Dickman, 2013; Kohn, 2010; Miller, 2015; Peck, 2010). Factors identified by Guthrie and Humenick (2004) that influence text interest for students include visual layout, anticipating difficulty, relevance to students, and connection to activity in the classroom. The International Literacy Association (2018) stated, through students' "agency for selecting books of personal relevance and interest, we increase students' motivation for reading as a practice" (p. 5) and therefore, encourage students' independent reading in classrooms.

Student interest, choice, and autonomy also involve what Pianta, Hamre, and Allen (2012) describe as *regard for student perspectives*. This occurs when teachers favor students' interests and motivations over their own, when teachers follow the students' lead, and when students have a formative role in the classroom. Factors indicating regard for student perspectives by a teacher are showing flexibility, encouraging student ideas, connecting content to students' lives, allowing choice and opportunities for leadership, and holding a relaxed structure for movement (Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, 2017).

In one study, Quest, an urban elementary school that underwent reform work in order to improve their reading and academic achievement, experienced drastic increases in student motivation and engagement in reading through the use of inquiry-based lessons and units (Peck, 2010). The freedom for students to choose the topics of lessons and units, and furthermore what they were reading, prompted a struggling school in reading to become an

award-winning school. Allowing choice can be very powerful. On the other hand, "Students who have almost nothing to say about what happens in class are more likely to act out, tune out, burn out, or simply drop out" (Kohn, 2010, p. 19).

Cooperative interactions. Social experiences about reading consistently demonstrates beneficial outcomes. As the International Literacy Association (2018) reported, teacher-facilitated opportunities for students to meaningfully discuss, evaluate, and reflect on their independent reading are essential in effective utilization of independent reading. The association stated, "When students talk around text and confer with the teacher and each other, independent reading becomes accountable and authentic" (p. 6). Additionally, expansive work by Slavin, Lake, Davis, and Madden (2011) reviewed and synthesized 97 different studies that were conducted on the effectiveness of programs for struggling beginning readers. Their work had specific criteria for qualifying studies which included studies with an experimental group and a control group, a duration of at least 12 weeks, and involving at least 15 students and two teachers or tutors in each treatment group. The synthesis of all these studies concluded that the most successful programs were ones that either involved one-on-one work or programs that worked to improve classroom instructional processes in the regular classroom. One element that was included in the classroom improvement programs was cooperative learning. The one-on-one programs may be successful due to the individualized attention and close relationship that is developed between teacher/tutor, which would align with the teacher-student relationship topic discussed above. The classroom improvement programs with the inclusion of cooperative learning points to an additional element. It is clear that incorporating cooperative learning means getting students more engaged with each other and the activity of reading (Guthrie &

Humenick, 2004; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Strommen & Mates, 2004; Turner & Paris, 1995).

Multiple studies have shown that incorporating small groups that talk about texts leads to further student reading engagement (Francois, 2013; Hill, 2013; King-Dickman, 2013; Miller, 2015). A study that focused on fourth graders in a high-poverty school demonstrated that students' reading engagement was sustained through the use of book clubs and student discourse about books (Hill, 2013). While this school felt confined to curriculum requirements and a focus on testing, the implementation of these cooperative learning practices allowed them to beat the odds. In another study of urban high-poverty secondary students, multiple practices were implemented that led to their improved reading scores as well (Francois, 2013). The implemented practices enhanced the students' reading engagement through book discussions, social engagements around texts, and book recommendations, which are supported in other literature as well (Francois, 2013; Hill, 2013; King-Dickman, 2013; Kohn, 2010, Miller, 2015). The principal also held monthly book clubs. Over time, students began seeing reading as a time to relate to each other and shape their identities. When students can have meaningful social interactions with classmates about the texts they read (Miller, 2015), engagement in reading can flourish. The power of cooperative interactions on increasing reading engagement is very obvious here. Guthrie and Barber (2019) suggested the following possibilities to implement collaboration in reading: "(1) reading as partners or in small groups, (2) exchanging ideas and sharing expertise, (3) student-led discussion groups, (4) book talks, (5) team projects such as a poster-making activity, and (6) peer feedback" (p. 57).

Teacher enthusiasm for reading. As Kunter, Frenzel, Nagy, Baumert, and Pekrun (2011) explained, enthusiasm is "an affective, person-specific characteristic that reflects the subjective experience of enjoyment, excitement, and pleasure" (p. 290). The level of a teacher's enthusiasm for reading has demonstrated an increase in students' reading motivation and engagement, leading then to increased achievement. In alignment with Bandura's (1971) social learning theory and the concept of learning through what is modeled, the significance of the teacher's model in reading is highly influential, according to the literature. In fact, there is statistical significance in students who had inspiring teachers in reading going on to become enthusiastic readers themselves (Applegate et al., 2014). As explained in the definition of enthusiasm used for this study, enthusiasm can be categorized as displayed enthusiasm or experienced enthusiasm. Displayed enthusiasm involves the teacher's energy, teaching style, gestures, and facial expression. Experienced enthusiasm is demonstrated through an expressed enjoyment or excitement for something or through a teacher's habits or routines. Research supports both of these types of enthusiasm in prompting students' motivation and engagement.

Displayed enthusiasm encompasses the teacher's overall emotion in the classroom. This can also be viewed as *teacher affect*, as labeled in the CLASS teacher assessment tool (Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, 2017), which defines teacher affect as the teacher's smiling, laughter, and enthusiasm. One dilemma in research regarding the impact of teachers' displayed enthusiasm on students' motivation, enthusiasm, or academic achievement is that younger students are not always cognizant of the impact of the teacher's enthusiasm in relation to their own emotions, behaviors, or efforts. Therefore, research in this area of enthusiasm is lacking for elementary students. However, in older students there

are significant findings that correlate positive displayed enthusiasm with educational achievement.

Patrick, Hisley, and Kempler (2000) reviewed two studies in this area. One study involved a questionnaire given to students which revealed that students report high intrinsic motivation towards a subject matter when the teacher is portrayed to have an enthusiastic, energetic teaching style. The second study utilized a controlled experiment in which half of the participants received information or instruction without nonverbal enthusiasm and the other half had instruction with nonverbal enthusiasm. Nonverbal enthusiasm in this study included: (a) vocal delivery with variation in pace, volume, and intonation, (b) eyes that open wide and "light up," (c) demonstrate gesturing, (d) frequent large body movements, (e) facial expression of emotion, and (f) a high level of overall energy and vitality. Findings demonstrated that the students with the teacher applying displayed enthusiasm consistently reported greater intrinsic motivation toward learning, and after instruction incorporated with high enthusiasm, the students reported more feelings of being energized and alert than students with the less enthusiastic teacher. These findings reveal the possible impact of displayed enthusiasm on students. As they concluded, "Strong, consistent evidence, from both the laboratory and the classroom, [suggests] that when a teacher exhibits greater evidence of enthusiasm, students are more likely to be interested, energetic, curious, and excited about learning" (p. 233).

Experienced enthusiasm is reflected in Gambrell's (1996) statement, "One of the key factors in motivating students to read is a teacher who values reading and is enthusiastic about sharing a love of reading with students" (p. 20). The concept of the teacher being an enthusiastic reader and demonstrating that to his or her students is very important, but it is

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concerning that statistics demonstrate low percentages of education majors are classified as enthusiastic readers (Applegate et al., 2014). It is vital that we understand the importance of the teacher's role in modeling a love for reading and how this can be done.

Literature suggests that this happens when teachers share their own experiences of reading and emphasize the way reading enriches their lives (Gambrell, 1996; Routman, 2014). Demonstrating enthusiasm about reading and reading aloud to students are other ways teachers can demonstrate a positive model for reading (Applegate et al., 2014; Benevides & Stagg Peterson, 2010). As the International Literacy Association (2018) explained, "When teachers read aloud, their actions demonstrate that they value reading; a key component in motivating students to read is a teacher who uses the read-aloud to demonstrate enthusiasm for reading and to model reading practices" (p. 4). Teachers can also encourage students to make text content deeply rewarding by modeling behaviors of curiosity, seeking to understand a text richly (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). When teachers demonstrate this enthusiasm and model their enjoyment of reading, students too can be motivated to read enthusiastically.

Keller, Hoy, Goetz, and Frenzel (2016) found that factors of teachers' lives and school context influence teachers' enthusiasm overall. Some of these factors are controllable while other factors are not. These researchers also identified that teacher enthusiasm correlates with quality of instruction and student outcomes. This relates to what McKool and Gespass (2009) had found when they stated, "It is important to understand that our own personal reading attitudes and beliefs do influence our instructional practices in the classroom. Knowing this, teachers must make a greater effort to establish their own

connection to and passion for reading" (p. 273). It is critical that teachers are cognizant of these factors and how they influence their own enthusiasm.

Anticipated Relevant Theories

Although narrative inquirers have to be alert to theories skewing or placing blinders on a study before and during the data collection and analysis, there are theories that related to the literature which I anticipated to be relevant as I prepared for this study. These theories included care theory, critical sociocultural theory, and social learning theory. In Chapter 4, after sharing the findings of this study, I discuss the actuality of the theories' relevance to the results.

  Care theory. One theory connected to the literature and anticipated in this study was Nel Noddings' care theory. In general, care theory outlines the need for moral orientation in our interactions with others. Years ago, this morality funneled through religious perspectives and norms; now it is viewed as elements of good citizenship and development of good character (Noddings, 1988). This theory identifies the "cared-for" and the "carer" who are involved in the caring relationship (Noddings, 2005, 2012). While there is a need for the cared-for to identify the act or relationship as caring, once this is established these relations with a caring teacher set a foundation for everything the teacher and student do together; without this care the fundamental needs that are critical for cognitive processing are not met (Hachey, 2012; Noddings, 2005, 2012). As Noddings (2012) stated, a climate of care needs to be "underneath all we do as teachers. When that climate is established and maintained, everything else goes better" (p. 777). Whether teachers realize it or not, they are moral educators and have an impact on meeting students' basic needs (Noddings, 2012).

As previously mentioned, the cared-for individual needs to view the relationship as caring in order for the care to be influential (Noddings, 2005). Research by Zee, Koomen, and Van der Veen (2013) focused on how the quality of student-teacher relationships affects students, specifically looking at the relationships as viewed by students. In a study investigating 8,545 sixth grade students throughout 395 schools in 1,001 different classes in the Netherlands, findings demonstrated that in positive relationships, the motivational beliefs of students fully aligned with the closeness of the relationship that they reported. Urdan and Schoenfelder (2006) also found that "teacher 'caring' had a direct effect on student attitudes towards academic and social goal pursuits" (p. 340).

In a caring relationship the carer is attentive and receptive to the needs of the cared-for, which, for teachers, means looking beyond the curriculum to hear and understand their students' needs. Nieto (2012) stated, "True teaching must be accompanied by a deep level of care in order for learning to take place" (p. 29) and hooks (1994) held the same position in stating, "To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin" (p. 13). This coincides with the work of Ormrod (2012) explaining the fundamental human need for people to gain love and respect of others for relatedness and belonging. I anticipated that care theory might be relevant to this investigation given the focus on the teachers' facilitation of social-emotional aspects during the reading blocks in their classrooms.

Critical sociocultural theory. The second theory aligned to the literature and considered as a possibility in this research was critical sociocultural theory. In my study, this theory mostly connected with the perspective of student learning. Before entering the

specific classrooms in my study, I knew the students were racially, culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse. Unfortunately, literature explains diverse students are often served in environments that do not take these factors into consideration and are even more unlikely to leverage their diversity for learning. In fact, as Irizarry and Welton (2014) stated,

> Most often, school reform policies target urban schools without ever consulting the students and families the institutions serve. Without the perspectives of youth of color we can never really know anything about their schooling experiences or respond appropriately to meet their educational needs. (p. 251)

Instead, these students are typically viewed as problems that need to be fixed. Furthermore, the purpose of schooling from the perspective of communities of color typically reflect the power of the state, which is run by Whites, to assimilate students and families into the dominant culture by asking them to forfeit "their languages, literacies, cultures, and histories in order to achieve in schools" (Alim & Paris, 2017, p. 1).

With all that said, critical sociocultural theory stands up to deficit views and dominance of Whiteness. There is an understanding that students bring their histories to learning, and the learning that occurs shapes histories to come as well as future learning. Researchers and theorists Moje and Lewis (2007) established the critical sociocultural perspective, which reflects what Dewey (1986) said about experience being education. Asset pedagogies such as culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995b), culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012) all align with critical sociocultural theory through an approach to teaching that uses students' lives as strengths for learning.

Additionally, critical sociocultural theory and these pedagogical approaches foster a positive social and emotional experience. When a child's culture is acknowledged and

honored, that child generally feels welcome and safe in the environment. It also leads to a sense of pride and agency. Bourdieu's (1977) work on cultural capital, which also captures the essence of this theory, similarly recognizes the home's cultural experiences as facilitator to not only a child's academic achievement, but also adjustment to school.

This background on critical sociocultural theory led me back to the students in the classrooms I would enter into and the possible influence of this theory on my study. As an inquirer within this setting, I embarked in the research with an understanding of what the literature says about how diverse students need to learn. I understood that this theoretical stance and these pedagogical practices enhance diverse students' learning, as well as social-emotional experiences, making it clear why I believed this theory might play a role in my study.

Interestingly enough, after conceptualizing critical sociocultural theory as possibly relevant for my research, I discovered Lee's (2017) work calling for an ecological framework through culturally sustaining pedagogy. As demonstrated above, culturally sustaining pedagogy is encompassed in critical sociocultural theory. Lee emphasized the need to merge these pedagogies and theories. She also explained that individuals learn and develop in environments and in cultural communities. Educators need to recognize that the classroom is one of those environments and communities. Understanding of the historical and current cultures of our students and their environments beyond our classrooms is also required. This confirmed my anticipation of critical sociocultural theory playing a role, in addition to using ecological human development theory as a theoretical framework to approach this study.

The words of Moje and Lewis (2007) left me hopeful to observe critical sociocultural theory in my study:

Critical sociocultural perspectives may be the only available tools for demonstrating how children's opportunities to learn are both supported and constrained by the role of power in everyday interactions of students and teachers and by the systems and structures that shape the institution of schooling. (p. 16)

Social learning theory. Albert Bandura's social learning or social cognitive theory is pertinent to the social-emotional aspects of learning, leading me to anticipate social learning theory in this study. Bandura stated that learning is socially constructed based on an individual's interactions and experiences rooted in social systems. The notion of efficacy drives this theory and focuses on three forms of efficacy or agency (Bandura, 2001, 2002; Kim & Baylor, 2006). Those include personal agency, proxy agency, and collective agency. Each of these modes are active every day in individual's lives as they develop and function in social contexts.

Personal agency. The idea of personal agency includes the control that a learner has over his or her learning. As individuals pursue their personal agency, they can increase their self-efficacy. Cognitive, motivational, affective, and decisional process can all be influenced by self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 2002). Varying levels of self-efficacy influence the way individuals thinks about themselves, self-regulate, motivate themselves, and make choices. In addition, "In social [learning] theory efficacy beliefs are not confined solely to judgements of personal capabilities" (Bandura, 2002, p. 271). Bandura explained learning and development to come bidirectionally from social structure and personal agency (Bandura, 2001). This leads to the explanations of the following two agencies.

Proxy agency. We do not always have control of our learning and development. As Bandura (2001) stated,

In many spheres of functioning, people do not have direct control over the social conditions and institutional practices that affect their everyday lives. Under these

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circumstances, they seek their well-being, security, and valued outcomes through the exercise of proxy agency. (p. 13)

Sometimes the learner is aware of their proxy agency, and other times one's proxy agency can be unconscious. Learners are in environments where they may not be as competent as others. They search for models in their social settings to gain knowledge, skills, or strategies in order to accomplish what they desire (Kim & Baylor, 2006).

Collective agency. This type of agency comes through group involvement. Individuals are constantly involved with others around them in their everyday lives. Collaborative knowledge, skills, and resources are pulled together, and groups of people develop collective efforts and goals within a social system. Through collective experiences, individual beliefs are influenced in ways that guide their future efforts, collaboration, and endeavors (Bandura, 2002).

> The findings taken as a whole show that the stronger the perceived collective efficacy, the higher the groups' aspirations and motivational investment in their undertakings, the stronger their staying power in the face of impediments and setbacks, the higher their morale and resilience to stressors, and the greater their performance accomplishments. (Bandura, 2001, p. 14)

Social learning theory in the classroom. Students in classrooms are no different. They too learn through social settings and modeling (Roblyer, 2016). There is an understanding that students in classrooms have their own personal agencies, but the social system of the classroom also ignites students' proxy and collective agencies. The proxy agency is demonstrated through students' turning to teachers as models. The collective agency developed through students' group dynamics and cohabitating in a classroom's social setting cannot be denied. Bandura's implications for teachers are to recognize the importance of their modeling and to realize that students often imitate what teachers do rather

than doing what teachers say. In fact, "most of the behaviors that people display are learned, either deliberately or inadvertently, through the influence of example" (Bandura, 1971, p. 5).

Specific to reading, research demonstrates that teachers who love reading have students with higher reading achievement than those students of teachers who do not have those feelings about reading (Lundberg & Linnakyla, 1993). As supported by social learning theory, the modeled motivation and engagement of a teacher in the area of reading can be very influential. Additionally, the social learning theory is reflected in the study by Applegate et al. (2014), which explains the recursive cycle of students who are uninspired to read becoming teachers who produce more uninspired students. The love of reading is never gained due to what they call "The Peter Effect," which refers to a Bible story about not being able to give what you do not have. Statistics are presented that demonstrate low percentages of education majors who are classified as enthusiastic readers. Those who are enthusiastic readers recall teachers reading aloud to them, having choice in reading, and teachers who encouraged discussion of books. Specifically, 64.6% of students who had inspiring, enthusiastic reading teachers went on to become enthusiastic readers (Applegate et al., 2014). At this point, the rationale for why social learning theory was anticipated should be obvious. Research demonstrates that individuals learn through modeling and examples set before them, as this theory explains. I anticipated that high-performing reading teachers may exhibit their own social-emotional aspects of reading, promoting these aspects in their students for proficient reading.

Conclusion

As the summary of literature comes to a close, it is important to understand the research that leads up to this current study. However, the narrative inquiry methodology

used in this study is guided by the participants' stories, not the previous literature or theory. As the inquirer, I gained knowledge of this foundational literature but was committed to being open-minded and wakeful in this research journey. In the following chapter, the research methodology for examining this topic in a meaningful, appropriate manner is further explained.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY: MAPPING OUT THE STUDY

In 2003, the United Nations General Assembly launched 2003 to 2012 as the Literacy

Decade ("United Nations Literacy Decade," 2003). It was stated that, "Through literacy, the

downtrodden could find their voice; the poor could learn how to learn; and the powerless

could empower themselves" (United Nations, 2003, para. 5). This demonstrates the global

quest of literacy for all. The U.S. education system measures literacy abilities through high-

stakes reading assessments. As previously discussed, in 2017, urban cities across the country

had only 32% of fourth grade students and 32% of eighth grade students reading at or above

the proficiency level on these assessments (National Assessment of Educational Progress,

2017). While it is problematic to base notions of proficiency on high-stakes assessments

(Applegate et al., 2010; Jennings & Sohn, 2014; Zhao, 2018), our country values these

standardized tests, and it is obvious that a majority of students in urban cities are not

demonstrating reading success. With legislation passing in recent decades that aim to hold

teachers and schools accountable for student performance on these tests, classrooms have

changed.

> Today, growing numbers of classrooms are dreary places where tests have become
> the only arbiters of excellence, and where teachers have become little more than
> technicians not trusted to use their imagination, creativity, and education. It is rare
> these days to speak of the joy of teaching and learning, and even more rare to speak
> of teachers as intellectuals. Rather than *learning, joy*, and *imagination*, the most
> common words in teaching today have become *test prep, scores, DIBELS, data walls*,
> and *AYP*. (Nieto, 2014, p. 3)

Despite adjustments by teachers, schools, and school districts over these years,

student proficiency rates in reading are still not revealing improvement (National Assessment

of Educational Progress, 2017). Not only is this concerning for urban students in U.S.

classrooms today, it is also concerning for these students' lives in coming days, months, and years. As Layne (2009) stated, "Literacy skills have always been a precursor to success" (p. 5). The low literacy proficiency rates of urban students in our country is not acceptable, consistently scoring lower than suburban subgroups. Overall, the U.S. education system seems to be setting urban students up for failure rather than success.

Like Ladson-Billings (1995b), who established the culturally responsive pedagogy through her work investigating eight exemplary teachers of African American students, I believe we need to learn from the teachers who are being successful. The purpose of this narrative inquiry study was to understand the experiences of two urban elementary teachers defined as high-performing by their students' standardized reading test scores. Specifically, this study investigated the ways in which teachers facilitated and navigated social-emotional experiences for readers.

The two teacher participants in this study did not fall into the norm. They were set apart because their students' standardized reading assessment scores demonstrated reading success above classrooms and students in similar circumstances. As Hollins (2012) stated, "In low performing urban school districts and single low performing urban schools, there are individual classroom teachers who provide meaningful high quality learning experiences for their students and whose students perform well on multiple assessments" (p. 12). As a narrative inquirer, I lived alongside these participants to understand the stories of teachers (Clandinin, 2006) like those Hollins (2012) was referring to.

I proceeded with an understanding that teachers' stories are shaped by their experiences, knowledge, and lives, with their stories made visible in their teaching practices (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). The understanding of these stories may disclose teacher

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practices that lead to proficient reading performance by students on standardized assessments. As highlighted in Chapter 2, literature reveals that the social-emotional experience of reading is critical for reading achievement (Francois, 2013; Kohn, 2010; Routman, 2014; Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006). However, literature does not adequately investigate the holistic social-emotional experience in classrooms of high-performing classrooms. Thus, I specifically focused on the teachers' role in the overall social-emotional experience during the reading block.

As stated in previous chapters, the task of understanding the meaning of their stories and experiences was guided by one central question:

- What are the behaviors, actions, and beliefs of high-performing urban elementary teachers in navigating social-emotional experiences for readers?

The ultimate purpose was to learn from high-performing teachers with students who demonstrate higher reading success than others in similar contexts. With such concerning reading scores of urban elementary students in the U.S., educators need to identify what the successful teachers are doing. As a researcher, I understand there is a real need for finding these answers in order to improve the reading proficiency rates of all urban elementary students. Additionally, this knowledge can foster teaching practices, drive further research, and reshape current educational and societal policy. Narrative inquiry can play an important role in shaping such policies, as Clandinin (2006) stated,

> We must be able to answer the 'so what' and 'who cares' questions that all researchers need to answer in their work. Narrative inquirers, too, must join the conversations in which there can be educative dialogue between research, practice and policy. (p. 52)

In the following section I discuss why a qualitative, narrative inquiry approach was chosen for this study. Then I present the design of the study, including the setting, participants, and data sources used, and how the data was managed, organized, and analyzed. I close with limitations and ethical considerations in this study.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

As Creswell and Poth (2018) stated, qualitative research is used

> when a problem or issue needs to be explored…when we need a complex, detailed understanding of an issue…when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study. (p. 45)

Regardless of whether a study is qualitative or quantitative, a researcher needs "to do what makes sense and report fully on what was done, why it was done, and what the implications are for findings" (Patton, 2015, p. 92). Qualitative research is characterized by the natural setting, the researcher positioning themselves in the study, gathering several data sources, gaining participants' multiple perspectives and meanings, and seeking to understand the issue or topic holistically (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In my case, qualitative research made sense in order to truly understand this topic and the work of high-performing urban elementary reading teachers' navigation of social-emotional reading experiences for students. The in-depth examination of phenomena afforded by narrative inquiry was the only way to understand the daily, ongoing experiences of high-performing teachers. A snapshot would not suffice, but a long-term research experience in these classrooms would reveal authentic data that can inform and transform. Unlike quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers delve into the lives of people, making it personal. In the attempt to understand the practice

and navigation of teachers, it is necessary to get personal. These teachers' work in their classrooms is driven by their personal lives and therefore, I made it personal.

Working within a qualitative transformative research paradigm, which seeks to address social oppression and advocate for marginalized populations (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018) in order to change the world in positive ways (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), I investigated social-emotional reading experiences in two classrooms of marginalized students in urban elementary schools with high-performing teachers. In doing so, I aimed to understand teachers' roles in creating favorable experiences of reading in these contexts. Reflecting elements of the constructivist paradigm (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018) as well, this research encompassed the view that reality is socially constructed, emphasizing the importance of the participants' points of view (Mertens, 2015).

As the narrative inquirer, I was positioned as part of the research landscape (Clandinin, 2006, 2013a), leading to a product that both participants and I molded (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017). This collaborative approach accepted the call for research to be humanizing, described as relational and valuing people's stories, especially those of marginalized communities of color (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017). For marginalized populations, narrative inquiry is a liberating approach, giving them a voice through their stories (Irizarry & Brown, 2014; Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014). I concur with Irizarry and Brown (2014) that, "the education offered to many youth of color…can be aptly described as dehumanizing and oppressive" (p. 63). Humanizing and liberatory approaches are necessary, where the researchers believe those involved are the knowledge experts about their experiences and stories (Irizarry & Brown, 2014). I intentionally pursued the narrative inquiry methodology to leverage a transformative study in urban schools that are often

dehumanized. I further elaborate on the specific qualitative methodology applied in this study, narrative inquiry in the following section.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry aims to understand teachers' lived experiences and shares stories of those experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Narrative inquiry is a research methodology that was created by Clandinin and Connelly when other methodologies were not capturing what they set out to do: thoroughly understanding teachers and teaching experiences through time and contexts. It is different from simply using narrative techniques to represent or present findings. In fact, Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) definition stated:

> Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people's lives, both individual and social. (p. 20)

This methodology interweaves narrative ways of thinking about phenomena with the actual narrative story of the observed phenomena (Caine et al., 2013; Clandinin, 2006). As a narrative inquirer, this approach requires researcher and participant to enter into relationship alongside each other (Caine et al., 2013). As with any social research, there are no final truths, only research claims that are culturally and contextually bonded (Carspecken, 2013) and that come through experience (Dewey, 1938). As modeled by Connelly and Clandinin (1999), Clandinin et al. (2006), and other narrative inquirers (Caine et al., 2013; Clandinin & Murphy, 2009; Gutiérrez & Penuel, 2014; Phillion, 2002), narrative inquiry's primary function involves facilitating understanding about teachers' stories.

In this study, narrative inquiry methodologies have aided in sharing teachers' stories of navigating the social-emotional experience of reading. Since stories are composed through the teachers' lives, knowledge, and experiences, and then made visible in their practices (Clandinin et al., 2006), exploring the teachers' behaviors, actions, and beliefs aids in understanding their stories. Living alongside these teachers through a narrative inquiry approach was the most meaningful way to deeply understand their stories and to get at the heart of understanding the social-emotional reading experience they navigate. As the inquirer, I felt and experienced within the authentic context through this approach, which led to the ability to understand and make meaning. In alignment with Dewey's (1986) notion of "the organic connection between education and personal experience" (p. 247), experience was the essence of my research. As narrative inquirers live alongside their participants and experience stories together, narrative inquiry must be recognized as a relational methodology.

A Relational Methodology

As Dewey explained, experience involves people in relation contextually and temporally (Dewey, 1986), and narrative inquiry is the study of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Relationships are unavoidable and are actually the goal of this methodology. Without relationships, this methodology is nonexistent. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) very clearly pointed out, "Narrative inquiry is an experience of the experience" (p. 189).

Understanding relationships. One side of narrative inquiry calls for inquirers to search for an understanding of relationships. These relationships are naturally occurring around us within a three-dimensional landscape. Wakefulness to these relationships and the

landscape is necessary. In the field there are the stories of our participants and stories of others in relation with them. These lives play out side-by-side in relation, and the inquirer needs to gain an understanding of these lives and stories. Simply gaining an understanding of others' relationships is just a sliver of narrative inquiry. In fact, "Narrative inquiry is people in relation studying people in relation" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189), meaning the inquirer is also in relation.

Being in relationship. To reiterate, not only do narrative inquirers strive for an understanding of relationships within the experience and stories they observe, they are also a part of the relationship as a researcher. Narrative inquiry requires a relational stance. Living alongside participants necessitates relationship between the inquirer and the participants. Being close to participants may allow inquirers to understand and relate, but it can also bring tension. There is an ethical responsibility to respect and honor the participants' stories throughout the inquiry process and beyond, but there are times when there may be stories that bump up against each other. The inquirer has his or her own stories. I had and will continue to have my own stories as the inquirer of this study. I was aware of that. I knew that my stories might bump up against the participants' stories or the stories in the classrooms.

As noted in Chapter 1, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discussed the research of JoAnn Phillion, who had her own personal stories conceptualizing multicultural teaching. Her stories bumped up against what she was seeing in her research of a multicultural teacher. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated, "Phillion's experience of tension at the boundaries is important to all of us as we think through our narrative inquiries and become autobiographically conscious of our own reactions to our work" (p. 46). Being in relationship means that I needed to be *autobiographically conscious*, to see how stories

merged or bumped, while maintaining the relationship with my participants. More about my own autobiographical consciousness is explained in the section explaining my positionality as the researcher.

Lave and Wenger (1991) proposed *legitimate peripheral participation* as learning situated within communities of participants. For educational and schooling purposes, they hoped that this approach would "inform educational endeavors by shedding a new light on learning processes, and by drawing attention to key aspects of learning experience that may be overlooked" (p. 41). The relational methodology chosen for this study aligns with these hopes of Lave and Wenger. My participation with these teachers and their classrooms allowed an intimate relationship to develop so that aspects of learning experiences could be studied. Kinloch and San Pedro (2014) extended this idea in projects with dehumanized populations which they call *Projects in Humanization* (PiH). Through critical listening and storying co-created narratives, they explain their projects are "*with* and not *on* or *about* youth participants" (p. 22). My involvement in the context of the classroom community allowed me to speak about the stories of these teachers and their navigation of social-emotional experiences for their readers *with* these teachers in a humanizing manner.

Stories

Importantly, narrative inquiry recognizes that we live in stories and we live by stories (Clandinin, 2013a; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lave & Wegner, 1991). Stories are shaped by us, and we are shaped by stories. There are plotlines that we are impacted by and plotlines that we impact. Narrative inquiry involves the understanding of these stories. Individuals are living in a variety of stories, two of which I discuss in the following section.

Institutional stories. Institutional stories involve the stories of school (Clandinin, 2013a; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The experiences of school impact the plotlines and stories of those involved in schools. School leaders, teachers, support staff, students, and student families are all part of the school or institutional stories. While these individuals are influenced by the stories that play out within schools, they are also involved in the creation of these stories. Institutional stories also include the school system, structural hierarchy, political dynamics, and bureaucratic influences. These stories are ones that I was alert to in this study as they played a role in the plotlines of the teachers' stories.

Personal stories. Experiences and individuals also have personal stories. These personal stories come from early experiences, current living, or where we are going (Clandinin, 2013a). Not only do participants have personal stories, but inquirers also have personal stories. Narrative inquirers have to be wakeful to their own personal stories and how their stories are evolving throughout a study, while also focusing on the personal stories of their participants. The interweaving of the participants' and inquirer's stories tells more about each person's personal story and illuminates further understanding about how stories are constantly changing and have no end. This emphasizes the relational essence of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013a; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This unfolding of intertwined stories was also something about which I was constantly cognizant and reflective as my time in the field played out.

Three-Dimensional Space or Commonplaces

Narrative inquiry incorporates a three-dimensional space of *interaction*, *continuity*, and *situation* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), which are also named commonplaces, labeled as *sociality*, *temporality*, and *place*, respectively (Clandinin, Pushor, & Murray Orr, 2007). All

of these dimensions are involved in the observed experiences (Clandinin, 2006, 2013a;

Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), whether explicitly seen or waiting to be discovered. In fact,

awareness of these commonplaces directly aligns with the theoretical framework of

ecological human development theory, which guided this study. The necessity of

understanding the bigger picture rather than isolated fractions of life or stories requires

inquirers to understand the three-dimensional space. Each dimension within this three

dimensional space is explained in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Three-dimensional Space

Dimension in the Three-Dimensional Space	Explanation of Dimension
Interaction or sociality	Includes personal and social conditions that are ever-present (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin et al., 2007). Personal conditions could include desires, fears, reactions, dispositions, and the like. Social conditions include the context and environment, outside forces, and dynamics between participants and inquirers.
Continuity or temporality	Includes influences of the past, present, and future. Recognizes that people, places, and events are always in transition (Clandinin et al., 2007) and inquirers enter in the midst of stories (Clandinin, 2006).
Situation or place	Sees stories in the context of a place or circumstance (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Takes special note of the location and the impact it has on the experience (Clandinin et al., 2007).

Any study involves temporal dimensions, with personal and social influences, which

are carried out within a place. Within this three-dimensional space there are tensions of

context, temporality, people, action, and certainty. Collaboratively, interaction, continuity,

and situation create the landscape for the experience, and it is important to recognize that the

inquirer is positioned in this landscape as well. The landscape is shaped by the inquirer, and the inquirer is shaped by the landscape.

Following this explanation of narrative inquiry, I continue with the design of this study. The purpose of narrative inquiry and its founding perspectives allowed the design to naturally evolve. This design honored the approach of learning from others' stories and experiences through three-dimensional space and the closely aligned theoretical framework of experience and ecological development.

Field Texts: Methodological Tools of Narrative Inquiry

The methodology of narrative inquiry uses field texts as the tools for gathering data. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) avoid the term *data*; instead they called them *field texts* "because they are created, neither found nor discovered, by participants and researchers in order to represent aspects of field experience" (p. 92). The creation aspect explains how field texts are saturated with interpretation. What shows up in the field texts is influenced by the conscious and unconscious interests and intentions of the inquirers and participants. Ultimately, the narrative inquirer decides what field texts to collect, making some aspects visible and others invisible (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Kinds of field texts can include journal writing, field notes, letters, conversations, research interviews, documents, photographs, and beyond (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These different types of field texts are not isolated from each other but are intertwined and provide a deeper, more thorough view of the experiences and stories.

Even when an inquirer consciously makes the decision about what field texts to gather, there may or may not be an awareness of what is specifically attended to in those field texts. As diligent as an inquirer may be, everything cannot be attended to in field texts. The

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relationship between inquirers and participants, as well as the negotiations throughout the research also influence the field texts. Given the collaborative approach to narrative inquiry, "what is told, as well as the meaning of what is told, is shaped by the relationship" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 95). Field texts also assist in understanding the three-dimensional inquiry space. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated, "in making field texts, researchers need to be aware of where they and their participants are placed at any particular moment—temporally, spatially, and in terms of the personal and the social" (p. 95). Finally, inquirers must understand their position in the field texts because how their field texts are positioned influences the final research texts. Understanding the positioning allows inquirers to respond to questions and critiques about their findings and conclusions.

Use of Narrative Inquiry in Classrooms

The narrative inquiry methodology has significant value in the classroom setting, including the ability to deeply understand stories and experiences, to understand elements of power that run through classroom stories, and to promote deeper reflection of classroom practices by readers. A study by Bien and Selland (2018), which utilized narrative inquiry, allowed them to investigate the narratives two teachers told and how the state and national educational systems might have influenced those narratives. Over the course of months, the researchers gathered data from observations of whole and small group reading instruction, interviews with students, teachers, and the district literacy coach, teacher-written blogs, audiotapes of weekly teacher planning times, and documents including student work, district planning guides, and curricular materials. Through the narrative inquiry elements of extended time in the field and a variety of data sources, they were able to gain insight

unattainable by other methodologies, which tend to have isolated time spent with participants or limited data points.

This study also demonstrated the benefit of narrative inquiry in understanding the relations of bigger stories that impact the stories of teachers, often stories of power and dominance. As Bien and Selland (2018) explained, "Ultimately, our analysis allowed us to see how teaching and learning in [these teachers'] classrooms were linked to the school and district contexts all of which were shaped by grand narratives" (p. 88). The narrative research allowed understanding of the dynamics and interplay between teachers' out-of-classroom and in-classroom stories, as well as stories of professional knowledge and public or inherited contextual stories of teaching. Summed up by Bien and Selland (2018), "narrative inquiry can provide a compelling tool for wresting power from dominant storylines…to cut open 'reality' and examine it from different perspectives" (p. 87).

A narrative inquiry study by Puzio et al. (2017) portrays the value of this methodology in prompting others to reflect on their own classroom practices. Their narrative study explored the stories of five language arts teachers, each trying to implement culturally sustaining lessons but failing in some way. The researchers solicited stories to make meaning of creative failures in culturally sustaining teaching and then determined themes or commonalities among the stories. As Puzio et al. (2017) stated, "Our hope is that these narratives will inspire reflection, debate, and dialogue about how to incorporate and respond to students' cultural, linguistic, and historical backgrounds" (p. 223). They also said, "We offer these stories as a way to invite our readers to reflect on the meaning these stories hold for them and as a means of transforming mistakes into wisdom" (p. 225). With an

understanding that experience is education (Dewey, 1938), narrative inquiry allows researchers, participants, and readers to learn from the shared experiences and stories.

Narrative inquiry has the potential to make a difference through the understanding of stories. As Huber, Caine, Huber, and Steeves (2013) explained, "narrative inquiry embodies potential for shaping extraordinary pedagogy in education…to remake life in classrooms, schools, and beyond" (p. 213). In the following section, I outline the design of this narrative inquiry study which aims to make a difference.

Design of Study

By making the methods of this research explicit, the results lend credibility (Smagorinsky, 2008) and others can use these findings to guide their own practice or research. It is also critical to note that narrative inquiry does not follow a strict, laid-out plan from beginning to end. The narrative inquirer negotiates the inquiry as it unfolds with the goal of *storying* and *restorying* the phenomenon of the participants and the researcher's living within that story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Following an emergent design, meaning "the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed and that all phases of the process may change or shift after the researchers enter the field and begin to collect data" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 44), I anticipated shifts and changes. The design needed to be fluid from the start, recognizing that stories can be told and found in unpredictable ways. Therefore, I describe the changes that needed to occur as the study unfolded (Creswell, 2014).

Setting

The setting for this study was two classrooms in public elementary schools in an urban Midwestern city. Public elementary schools are contextualized within the U.S.

education system and are faced with the mandates of government and testing. The two schools and classrooms utilized for this study also had student demographics that reflected typical urban demographics in the U.S. school system, including populations of color and poverty. These contextual aspects were necessary in order to investigate the proposed topic.

Based on the 2017 School Report Card (State Department of Education, 2018), the first school in the study, Greenwood Elementary School, had an enrollment of over 500 students. Using the race/ethnicity categories of the State Department of Education, of the 500 students, 11.2% identified as Asian, 21.2% Black, 48.2% Hispanic, and 16.3% White. Additionally, 100% of the students at this school were eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. The second school, Harrison Elementary School, enrolled over 300 students, which included 70.3% Black, 10.5% Hispanic, and 9.3% White. This school also had 100% of its students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Although there were variances in student racial demographics, both of these schools were representative of urban schools serving high populations of students of color and students living in poverty.

Participants

In order to find the two high-performing urban elementary teachers, district personnel and school administration were utilized for identifying the participants through purposeful, deviant case sampling (Mertens, 2015). According to Mertens (2015), deviant case sampling is when specific criterion is used for selecting a case that is unusual. In this study, that unusual criterion was an urban teacher who produced higher than normal reading proficiency in his or her students, since this population is typically known for low reading proficiency rates. As previously stated, a teacher qualified as "high-performing" based on student standardized test scores that demonstrated higher reading levels than similar classrooms. It

was also important to identify teachers teaching in public schools in grades 3-6 to obtain participants that fit the big picture demographics of urban schools and who participate in state-level standardized testing. Demographics of these classrooms needed to include minoritized student populations in terms of race or ethnicity and socio-economic status. School administrators were also utilized in identifying teachers who meet the needs of their urban students. By studying high-performing teachers with these criteria, shared information from these deviant cases had potential to lead to improvement in the "typical" cases (Mertens, 2015).

As the narrative inquirer, I pursued this study with an understanding of the relational commitment necessary for this methodology (Caine et al., 2013). Facilitating a supportive and safe environment with these participants, where they could be themselves, was critical (Carspecken, 2013). This could only be done by understanding the teachers' cultures and personal norms as we negotiated our relationship in this joint work. Both participants were treated ethically and respectfully in terms of confidentiality and anonymity. Pseudonyms of their choice were used for both participants, and I used ethical guidelines to determine if any content needed to be avoided in this research product.

Ms. Jonas is a White female who has been teaching six years, all of which have been at Greenwood Elementary School. Ms. Jonas began teaching sixth grade during the 2018-2019 school year, after teaching five years at the first grade level. Her students' test scores on school and district assessments have consistently been higher than those of other teachers in the district; she was highly recommended for this study by her principal and district curriculum personnel. The sixth grade team is departmentalized, so the sixth grade students move between three different teachers for different subject areas. Ms. Jonas is the English

Language Arts teacher. Additionally, the three classrooms of students are leveled by the students' English Language Arts proficiencies. The beginning of the year reading assessment concluded that 77% of the 74 sixth grade students who started the year at Greenwood Elementary School were reading two or more grades below their grade level, and 16% of the students were reading one grade below grade level. Furthermore, 4% were reading at an early sixth grade level, while 3% were reading at the middle or end of the sixth grade level.

Mrs. Dabney is also a White female. She has been teaching for 32 years and has spent her entire teaching career in this urban district. Mrs. Dabney is one of two teachers at Harrison Elementary School who teaches fourth grade. The fourth grade students at Harrison Elementary repeatedly exhibit higher reading test scores than other fourth graders in the district with similar demographics. Mrs. Dabney was a good fit for this study, given the purposeful criteria in selecting participants. Just like Ms. Jonas, Mrs. Dabney was highly recommended by her principal and was a top recommendation by district personnel. The beginning of the year reading assessment showed that 37% of Mrs. Dabney's 27 fourth graders were reading two or more grades below the fourth grade level, and 52% were reading one grade below grade level. Additionally, 7% of the students were reading at the beginning of fourth grade level and 4% were reading at the mid-fourth grade level. With 89% of Mrs. Dabney's students reading below grade level at the beginning of the school year, according to the district assessment, it is interesting to note that Mrs. Dabney and the other fourth grade teacher at Harrison Elementary School have strategically placed students in each class with the higher level readers with Mrs. Dabney.

The approaches of departmentalizing subject areas, as well as placing students in classrooms based on their reading levels, demonstrate measures schools and teachers are taking given the focus on test scores in our current education system. In both schools, these approaches were adopted in an attempt to provide students what they need. School principals described these needs in terms of level of instruction and knowledge of the English language. In searching for and determining the teachers to work alongside me in this study, I became very aware of the adjustments schools were making in response to test scores. In fact, it initially caused tension for me, since I anticipated working with elementary classroom teachers who taught all subject areas and had a diverse, randomly-assigned group of students. I came to realize these types of approaches or adjustments are realities in urban elementary schools today, and obtaining realistic contexts for my study was a priority.

Data Sources

Narrative inquiry is an intimate study of an individual's experience over time and in contexts (Caine et al., 2013). I engaged in multiple data collection methods to carry out this intimate study. Collectively, the data sources compose what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to as field texts. Specifically, "field texts are the records, including, for example, field notes, transcripts of conversations, and artifacts, such as photographs and writings by participants and researchers" (Clandinin, 2013a, p. 46). The specific data sources in this study included observations, interviews and conversations, and participant reflections. Throughout all of this data collection, I utilized personal responses and memos to transparently acknowledge myself as part of the stories and experiences, influencing the interpretation of what was gathered. Using multiple field texts, or data sources, so that crystallization (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) could be achieved in the analysis of the data,

trustworthiness increased. Crystallization refers to the vivid clarity that is produced due to the overlapping of data sources, multiple perspectives, and patterned instances that confirm conclusions in the analysis process. Additionally, through transparency and being highly explicit with my methods of data collection, I prompt readers to trust my findings (Smagorinsky, 2008).

Observations. The narrative inquiry approach gains life from living alongside participants. Through this living alongside each other, stories are understood and stories are experienced (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Observations were a driving force in this study, in addition to the analysis of interviews and participant reflections. As Maxwell (2013) stated, "Although interviewing is often an efficient and valid way of understanding someone's perspective, observation can enable you to draw inferences about this perspective that you couldn't obtain by relying exclusively on interview data" (p. 103). Observations may reveal perspectives that the participant is too reluctant to share in an interview (Maxwell, 2013). Through these observations of the two urban elementary reading teachers, I came to a deep understanding of their stories being lived out in a real context.

Given narrative inquiry's recognition of the three-dimensional space of (1) interaction, both personally and socially, (2) continuity of the past, present, and future, and (3) situation or place (Clandinin, 2006), observations cannot be taken and analyzed in isolation. This would result in stories' meanings being lost. All influences and dimensions must be taken into consideration, which is very similar to Patton's (2015) point that, "The ideal observation captures context, the unfolding events over time, and critical interactions" (p. 27). That was exactly the goal of my observations.

Observational field notes were gathered over a sustained time as characterized by relational narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013a). Observations in these classrooms were conducted over a four-month time period. As the researcher, I observed weekly in each classroom during the reading block. As recommended by Carspecken (2013), I made sure that I was present in the classroom consistently enough to not only truly understand the everyday stories, but also to make sure the participants and their students became accustomed to me.

Observations were recorded in two-column field journals (Carspecken, 2013) with one column to record observations and the other column for personal interpretations. Specific details such as teacher behaviors and actions, teacher-student interactions and communication, and teacher interactions with individuals other than students were all included in these field journals. Collecting thick description was necessary in order to deliver a deep understanding for readers so they can be responsible for transferability of this study (Mertens, 2015). Thick description refers to "sufficient description and direct quotations…to allow the reader to enter into the situation observed and the thoughts of the people represented in the report" (Patton, 2015, p. 605). The observational notes included details such as the setting, participant characteristics, mood in the classroom, tone of voices, gestures made, and exact words spoken in order to produce this thick description.

Given the purpose of this study and the established research question, I engaged in *focused observation*, "where the researcher looks only at material that is pertinent to the issue at hand" (Angrosino, 2005). My focus was on the story of the teachers and the social and emotional experience present during their reading blocks. The theoretical framework and

reviewed literature, in Chapters 1 and 2, guided but did not limit what I aimed to observe. These aspects were captured in the specific research question:

- What are the behaviors, actions, and beliefs of high-performing urban elementary teachers in navigating social-emotional experiences for readers?

Interviews and conversations. In an attempt to achieve crystallization in the analysis and findings, interviews and conversations were also used to gather data in my narrative study, in addition to observations and participant reflections as documents. As Maxwell (2013) stated, interviews can be used to check the accuracy of what is observed, enhancing the crystallization and trustworthiness. In general, "qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful and knowable and can be made explicit. We interview to find out what is in and on someone else's mind to gather their stories" (Patton, 2015, p. 426). Interviews may be a primary data source in narrative studies and through researcher and participant dialogue, stories emerge (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The engagement of formal interviews with these two participants aimed to gain a deeper understanding of their stories and the influences creating their stories. In fact, interviews allow researchers to understand additional information that may be missed in an observation (Maxwell, 2013) and to learn the nature of the participant's everyday life experiences (deMarrias, 2004).

The first planned, formal interview, which I called the *initial interview*, was conducted two months into the study, to ensure there was a foundational relationship before the interview. The second formal interview, the *follow-up interview*, was conducted at the end of the study, four months after the study's initiation. The questions prepared were designed in an emergent approach based on what was gathered leading up to each interview

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and to gain insight about the research question. The initial and follow-up interview protocols are included in Appendices B and C. These formal interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed using transcription services by Rev at www.rev.com (n.d.) for analysis.

In narrative inquiry, researchers spend extended periods of time with their participants in order to understand their stories through experiences over time and in contexts (Caine et al., 2013). If a researcher has developed an intimate relationship with the participants, as I did, interviews often become conversations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 110). While the formal interviews felt more like conversations, I also engaged in regular informal conversations with the two teacher participants. As noted by Clandinin (2013a), "Conversations create a space for the stories of both participants and researchers to be composed and heard. Conversations are not guided by predetermined questions, or with intentions of being therapeutic, resolving issues, or providing answers to questions" (p. 45). This data collection strategy is built on the notion that the researcher and participant live alongside each other in narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013a) and therefore will be conversing naturally. Over time, participants do not just see inquirers as researchers but as "people in relation with them" (Clandinin, 2013a, p. 51). These ongoing conversations were recorded as field notes for analysis and, at times, were audio-recorded for transcription when natural conversation would not be sacrificed and authenticity could be maintained. Patton (2015) stressed the importance of establishing rapport, being nonjudgmental, and being authentic and trustworthy in qualitative interviewing, which was accomplished through achieved intimate relationships.

Participant (teacher) reflections. Creswell (2014) differentiated documents as either public or private. Public documents include sources such as newspapers or minutes

from a meeting. Private documents may involve letters, journals, or diaries. Bogdan and

Biklen (2007), on the other hand, categorized documents into personal documents, official

documents, and popular culture documents. They describe personal documents as those that

self-reveal the view of an individual's experiences, official documents as papers that can give

researchers "official perspective," and popular culture documents as sources in one's culture

that influence how they make sense of everyday living (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Documents, regardless of how they are categorized, allow a researcher to capture the specific

language of the participants and also data which participants have attended to (Creswell,

2014). As Patton (2015) described, documents could include letters from a family member, a

suicide note from an individual who committed suicide, schoolwork of a student, or financial

records from a business or organization. No matter the document type, "they can reveal

aspirations, arrangements, tensions, relationships, and decisions that might be otherwise

unknown through direct observation" (p. 376).

In this study, participant reflections were collected as private or personal documents.

Both teachers were asked to keep ongoing reflections after each observed session. These

reflections originally requested the teachers to respond to each session in an open-ended,

teacher-driven, and authentic manner with a general reminder of my definitions for teacher

behaviors, actions, and beliefs. However, the teachers did not have time immediately after

each observation to reflect and would often forget if I did not remind them or further prompt

them. Additionally, one teacher was not sure exactly how to respond. So a change,

anticipated in the emergent design, came into play, and I began providing the teachers a few

reflective questions that were aligned to what occurred during the observation. The goal of

these questions was to gain deeper insight or understand the teachers' behaviors, actions, and

beliefs played out during the time I was present. For instance, I provided questions or prompts such as: (1) Tell me about your decision to give the students the choice of completing the questions alone or with a partner, and (2) Can you tell me more about your article and video selection for today's lesson?

Although these reflections were not as open-ended as originally planned, they provided great insight into the teachers' decision-making and perspectives. Each teacher chose whether they kept hand-written journals or reflected by typing into an email or document. Both teachers chose to type these reflections; Ms. Jonas submitted her reflections through Google Docs, and Mrs. Dabney sent reflections via email. Through this form of field texts, I secured an additional source for understanding the teachers' stories over time and in different circumstances (Caine et al., 2013; Clandinin, 2013a).

Inquirer response and memos. It is also important to note that entering a classroom as a neutral observer is impossible (Clandinin, 2013b; Creswell & Poth, 2018). My own personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 2013b) and experience interacted with the teachers' stories as true for any narrative inquiry. To capture my own stories, personal knowledge, and responses as data in this study, I included transparent notes in the right-hand column of my field notes. Additionally, after each classroom session I immediately typed memos so that the data were fresh in my mind. These memos, using my personal knowledge and experience, helped shed light on the occurrences of the session using my own "sharp, sunlit moments of clarity or insight—conceptual epiphanies" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013, p. 99). Memos go beyond summarizing the data and move into the analytics of data using personal reaction and interpretation. As Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2013) said, "They are one of the most useful and powerful sense-making tools at hand" (p. 96).

Data Organization and Management

In an ongoing manner throughout the data collection process, data were organized and managed strategically. First of all, resources that were not electronic were converted to electronic sources through transcription or by scanning the documents. Online transcription services by Rev (www.rev.com, n.d.) were utilized for the formal interviews and I transcribed additional informal conversations that I had audio-recorded. Observations, formal interviews, conversations, and participant reflections collected during each session were labeled and organized so that all data from one data collection session could be analyzed from all angles. For instance, the observational field notes from one session were clustered with any interview, conversation, or participant reflection that involved that observation, so when it was time to analyze that specific data, it could be analyzed holistically using multiple data sources centered on the same classroom session. Electronic data files were backed up and stored in multiple places, include a laptop and a hard drive, to avoid any issues with loss of data. At the end of this study, the data were secured by the chair of this dissertation for safe and confidential storage.

Data Analysis

Like the data collection process, the data analysis process for this study was guided by the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000). Determining common narrative themes and holistic understandings of the teachers' stories drove the data analysis process in a constant comparative design, meaning there was back and forth between data collection and data analysis. Along with the data sources listed above, my reflective thoughts, insights, and experiences were also captured in these field texts through the observational responses and memos. My reflective responses and data analysis came in a variety of forms, but could not

be determined in advance. Instead, this study incorporated an emergent design in both data collection and data analysis (Creswell, 2014), so the stories and experiences within the stories guided my reactions, responses, and analysis, which came through word analysis, poetry, personal connections, and metaphor. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe the data analysis process as moving from field texts to interim texts to research texts. Through this process, inquirers are trying to make meaning of the extensive amounts of field texts gathered. To get to research texts, a variety of interim texts are created to interpret the field texts with the purpose of sharing with participants. Word analysis, found poetry, personal connections, and metaphor were included in my interim texts which reflected Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) point that "interim texts take on different forms and vary according to the circumstances surrounding the life of the inquiry and particularly the research and scholarly life of the inquirer" (p. 133).

My reflexivity was just as important as the collected descriptive data in the data analysis component of this study. I continuously reflected on why I responded or reacted in certain ways or why I felt camaraderie or tension at specific times in the study. It was necessary to understand who I was and the conscious or subconscious views I held at all times. I considered my own schooling and reading experiences, my elementary teaching experiences, my experiences in teacher preparation, my race and gender, and my experiences in urban schools in a back-and-forth manner. I had to come face to face with my opinions about "effective" teaching, urban schools, and what was best for elementary readers, knowing that all of this influenced these narratives and my interpretations. Further elaboration of this is provided in the Positionality and Role of the Researcher section.

During this analysis, it was important to consider how my close relationship living the stories in the field would shift to close relation in retelling the stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This is the process of turning field texts into research texts for intended audiences. Through this data analysis, as the inquirer, I analyzed the field texts with the aim of finding meaning and social significance. The first process was *narratively coding* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) all of the field texts, which included looking for themes, events, story lines, gaps, tensions and any other narrative elements. This also could be considered holistic coding (Miles et al., 2013), where coding captures overall contents and possible categories rather than line-by-line coding. Reading and rereading field texts, including the descriptive and reflective content, was essential in this. I repeatedly returned to the quest of finding meaning and significance in the data through this coding.

As I narratively coded the field texts, I read portions of the text and stepped back to reflect on what occurred in those instances. I worked diligently to stay aligned to the research question, being attentive to the teachers' behaviors, actions, and beliefs in relation to the social-emotional experience within the reading classroom. If a field text seemed to impact the social-emotional experience of the readers I further analyzed the content to understand the teacher's behavior, action, or belief within that text. If a field text did not involve the social-emotional experience of reading, I moved on. Additionally, I referenced the literature shared in Chapter 2 about teacher-navigated social-emotional reading experiences. I closely examined the field texts to determine whether the content related to any of the existing literature. As I found relevant stories or chunks of field texts according to the goal of this inquiry, I provided a narrative code that named the behavior, action, or belief.

As I continued to analyze the data, pattern coding (Miles et al., 2013) followed the narrative, holistic coding. In pattern coding I worked to group holistic codes or summaries into smaller themes. The analysis of narrative inquiry from here is not a series of steps. Pulling out themes and meaning from these field texts are unique from one narrative study to the next. One consistent element of narrative inquiry analysis that I applied was analyzing the field texts within the three-dimensional space. This included interaction, continuity, and situation. *Interaction* includes the personal and social dimension of the story, *continuity* involves the factor of passing time through past, present, and future, and *situation* is the place in which stories occur (Clandinin, 2006). Understanding this positioning allows the researcher to derive deeper meanings that are viewed from all directions in the research landscape.

Throughout the narrative and pattern coding, I also became cognizant of my own positioning and reactions. I knew that my own responses to what I heard and observed left lingering feelings as I stepped away from the classrooms and teachers. Those included feelings of hope, admiration, and joy, as well as feelings of concern and tension. I needed to attend to those feelings and discover why I felt the way I did but I also needed to understand the teachers' stories as presented in the context and from the teachers' perspectives. I needed to listen to the field texts, not to my own feelings or reactions, to identify the teachers' behaviors, actions, and beliefs. This allowed the themes to reveal themselves after coding. The themes captured patterns in the teachers' navigation of social-emotional reading experiences. These themes regularly occurred in the teachers' stories as enacted during teaching, spoken in interviews, and written through reflections.

As these findings were pulled out, the main themes were *restoried* and interim texts

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) were created. These interim texts served as drafts to share

with the participants so that further collaboration could be conducted in developing the final

research text. The data analysis and data findings in narrative inquiry are co-constructed just

as the stories in the field are co-constructed between inquirer and participants. As Brayboy

and Deyhle (2000) stated, "Because the same events are often 'seen' and interpreted by their

participants in very different ways, analyzing data with participants allows the researcher to

illustrate the range and variation in how events are interpreted" (p. 164).

Upon sharing the interim texts with each participant, I experienced that "negotiating

interim research texts is necessarily tension-filled work" (Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, &

Murray Orr, 2010, p. 84). Upon sharing the interim texts with the participants, I felt anxiety

and nervousness about what the participants would think and how they would react

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state,

> The fear behind this concern ranges from a fear over losing a research site to a fear
> that a friendship between researcher and participants may be lost. A researcher in an
> intimate relationship with a participant does not want the research document to be
> hurtful to the participant. (p. 135)

Co-constructing the research text and experiencing tension in conflicting interpretations

makes narrative inquiry relational (Clandinin et al., 2010). In my case, the portrayal of

things in the interim text sometimes seemed inaccurate when the teachers and I worked to co-

construct the text. I understood interim texts as starting points that undoubtedly held

misinterpretations or misconceptions due to my inability to be neutral (Clandinin, 2013b).

Introspective reflection, open processing with the teachers, and collaborative meaning-

making resulted in confirming accurate stories. Through this practice, a final research text

was created that provided meaningful and significant findings of these stories in response to the research question.

Positionality and Role of the Researcher

In narrative inquiry, it is expected that the field texts and the published research is collaboratively constructed between inquirer and participant. My role was to be attentive and receptive to what was going on around and within me, while communicating in an ongoing manner to stay in relation and in tune with the two teacher participants. My role in the school and classroom setting was one of observer as participant (Creswell & Poth, 2018), where I watched and gathered field notes without getting too involved in the classroom practices but getting completely involved with the teachers and in understanding their stories. As Patton (2015) explained, the level of participation in the field is a continuum from full participation to spectator-observer. While my goal was mainly to understand the story within these classrooms, I was aware that I became part of the story once I began this research. My presence alone impacted the things that occurred in the two classrooms, and I anticipated participating at times, while observing concurrently. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained the tension for narrative inquirers in balancing participation with being a researcher. Since narrative inquiry is relational,

> They [inquirers] must become fully involved, must "fall in love" with their participants, yet they must also step back and see their own stories in the inquiry, the stories of the participants, as well as the larger landscape on which they all live. (p. 81)

I also knew that as a researcher I needed to be aware of my own perspectives, opinions, and biases. I continued to realize how my own experiences, ethnicity, age, and education influence my interpretation and stance in my research. I knew I came to this

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research as a White, middle-class female, who taught for nearly a decade in urban elementary classrooms. I had a heart for minoritized student populations and desperately wanted schooling experiences for them that resulted in joy and future success. I had experience in working with preservice teachers in an urban setting and in developing their abilities to teach literacy to elementary students. I knew I personally agreed with balanced literacy approaches and the importance of student motivation and engagement in reading. I also came from a household with a mother and father present and Christian values. Hard work and high achievement in school were priorities in my upbringing. These values filtered into my beliefs about necessary teacher characteristics. Additionally, I was an individual who struggled in childhood reading but now understood the importance of reading and specifically the social-emotional experience of reading in my own story. I knew all of this made me who I was, and I worked to be extremely reflexive and transparent in my inquiry. As Grbich (2013) stated:

> The researcher and the researched are no longer identifiably separate, they interweave their constructed meanings in a delicate dance of recognition and interpretation as the same narratives are told and re-told, presented and re-presented for the reader to become involved with. (p. 113)

> While trying to understand the teachers' perspectives, behaviors, and interactions, I knew that the product of this research would be shaped by my own personal experiences, cultural experiences, and values as the researcher (Creswell, 2014; Mertens 2015). Clandinin (2013) expressed my understanding of this precisely:

> As a researcher, I cannot enter into a teacher's classroom as a neutral observer and try to give an account of her reality. Instead, I enter into the research process as a person with my own personal practical knowledge. My knowledge of teaching interacts with that of my participants. Inevitably, that data collected reflects my own participation in the classroom and my own personal practical knowledge colors the interpretations offered. (p. 72)

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It was necessary to be transparent with my own reactions and interpretations of the data I was

collecting, which is infused into the findings of this study. In humanizing research, it is

necessary for the researcher to deconstruct any feelings of hierarchy in their views or stances

in comparison to what they are learning from participants. Souto-Manning (2014) explained

this perfectly:

> So, when researchers do not seek to understand what participants are trying to say and
> pursue, we act ethnocentrically. Instead of standing for democracy and freedom, we
> become colonizers imposing our own understandings and critiques onto others
> people's lives (even if unknowingly). As we seek to humanize research, we need to
> move away from such ethnocentric positionings: from thinking that our own
> practices—as an organization, as a person—are positioned as better than others'
> practices. (p. 202)

Being completely honest, I struggled at times to recognize my critiques about what I

observed and learned from my two teacher participants. I fought to simply learn from the

teachers and not position my opinions about what should occur in a classroom as superior.

As a teacher educator and university supervisor I regularly visit classrooms and provide

feedback to the teacher candidate. It is my job to provide teacher candidates with positive

reinforcement and constructive criticism in order to prompt the candidates' development.

Sitting down in Ms. Jonas' and Mrs. Dabney's classrooms required me to put my supervisory

role to the side. There was no right or wrong in this inquiry; simply stories to learn from and

to learn through. This fight became easier as the study unfolded. Further examples of the

fight to recognize my own opinions and perspectives and to avoid those responses from

tainting my understanding of the two teachers' stories are include in Chapter 4.

Verification of Quality Research

To produce high-quality qualitative research, trustworthiness and transferability received extensive attention in this study. Below, each of these components are discussed.

Trustworthiness. In research, validity and reliability are common terms but in qualitative studies and especially in narrative inquiry, these terms are not traditionally recognized (Golafshani, 2003; Maxwell, 2013; Mertens, 2015; Skrtic, 1985). In quantitative studies, validity is typically measured by the accuracy of the research instrument. Since the researcher is the instrument in qualitative research, the study is dependent on "the ability and effort of the researcher" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 600). Additionally, the use of story, the interpretive nature, and the co-constructed research report of narrative studies (Clandinin, 2013a) make validity even more irrelevant (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Similarly, the term reliability is often more associated with quantitative research (Mertens, 2015). Reliability refers to the ability to rely on the results of a study, accepting that they would be the same if multiple researchers analyzed and reported the same study. Again, this term does not connect with the essence of qualitative or narrative research that involves researcher interpretation and individualized stories with boundaries of interaction, time, and situation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Instead, qualitative research focuses on trustworthiness (Maxwell, 2013). This term trustworthiness encompasses the ability for readers to trust what the researcher has done to carry out the study, as well as the results that are reported.

In being trustworthy, it was my desire to help my readers believe the findings I reported as authentic and accurate. Researcher bias and reactivity are topics that can deny trustworthiness in a study if a researcher is not cognizant and transparent in these areas. Narrative inquiry stands on the notion that the researchers bring their own stories to their

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studies (Clandinin, 2006, 2013a). The personal experiences, perspectives, and biases play a role in this type of study (Clandinin, 2013b; Clandinin & Murphy, 2009), and that was true for my study as well. If these personal perspectives and biases of the inquirer are not transparent, the findings reported lose their trustworthiness. Reactivity, which is also referred to as reflexivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018), is critical for trustworthiness in qualitative research. Reactivity or reflexivity refers to the influence the researcher has on the setting, the participants, and the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). My simple presence in the classrooms and involvement with the teachers in the researcher-participant relationship undoubtedly impacted the study. I know that and used this understanding in my interpretations throughout the study.

In an attempt to maintain trustworthiness, I took multiple measures. First of all, as discussed when describing my data collection methods, I pulled data from a variety of sources to provide crystallization (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) for the readers. As data were merged from different sources, it strengthened and confirmed the codes, themes, and ultimately the accuracy of the findings. As Golafshani (2003) stated, "Engaging multiple methods, such as, observation, interviews and recordings will lead to more valid, reliable and diverse construction of realities" (p. 604). The rich, thick description (Creswell & Poth, 2018) produced in my observations added to this crystallization and proactively addressed threats to trustworthiness. Creswell and Poth (2018) also stressed the importance of writing reflexive comments in response to the data collected in an ongoing manner. My responses and reactions were captured in my field notes and memos completed after each observation. I included these reflexive perspectives in the stories and this final report as a way to make my position in the study explicit (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and thus build trustworthiness.

Prolonged and persistent engagement (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2013; Mertens, 2015) in the teachers' classrooms also supported my study in being trustworthy. Entering the classrooms of these two teachers on a weekly basis over a four-month period allowed me to build a strong rapport with the participants, as I became very familiar with students and gained a deep understanding of the real stories of these two teachers (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). As Maxwell (2013) stated, this long-term involvement can "rule out spurious associations and premature theories" (p. 126). As my time in the two classrooms went on, I was able to check and confirm the ongoing data and my inferences and interpretations to strengthen the credibility or trustworthiness. To "stay long enough to get it right and observe in sufficiently diverse situations to get a full and accurate picture" (Mertens, 2015, p. 269) was my ultimate goal.

Using member checks (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014; Maxwell, 2013; Mertens, 2015) was another strategy utilized in this study to maximize trustworthiness. As previously discussed, a critical feature of narrative inquiry is collaboration in the story-writing. As Clandinin (2013b) stated, "The meaning created in the process of working together in the classroom, of offering interpretations and of talking together, is a shared one. Neither teacher nor researcher emerges unchanged" (p. 72). Member checking is the general qualitative term used for verifying with the participants that the data and conclusions are accurate (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2013; Mertens, 2015). In my narrative inquiry approach, I continuously obtained the views and contributions of each teacher, aligning with humanizing research (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014), to verify my data, interpretations, and conclusions were not just agreed upon but were co-constructed. There were ongoing opportunities for the teachers to elaborate, clarify, or

edit the collected data, analysis, or interpretations. Engaging in what Kinloch and San Pedro (2014) call dialogic spirals, or back and forth conversations where each person takes on both roles of listener and speaker, also facilitated humanizing member checking for co-creation and accuracy. This was done with observations, interview transcripts, inferences about participant reflections, and in the restorying of the findings. The collaborative aspect of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2006, 2013b), engaging in member checking, can also be called inquiry auditing (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mertens, 2015). Narrative inquiry naturally provides an inquiry audit, or check for accurate occurrence, interpretation, and reporting, between the researcher and participants along the way. This inquiry audit (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mertens, 2015) process allowed the two teachers to audit or confirm that the codes, themes, and conclusions or final stories were supported by the data. Soliciting their contributions and negotiating accurate findings fostered further trustworthiness.

As stated previously, narrative inquiry does not have a structured system for coding and analyzing data (Creswell & Poth, 2018), like some other types of research. Through the use of detailed field notes and high-quality transcription (Creswell & Poth, 2018) through Rev (rev.com, n.d.), with 99% accuracy rate and trusted by over 100,000 customers, I verified that the information I was analyzing was what was said and what occurred in my presence. In narrative inquiry "there is no final telling, no final story," and it will not be "satisfying for those who want to see truth" (Clandinin, 2013a, p. 205). Transparency in my thinking, decision-making, and personal reactions as I coded, determined themes, and restoried my findings is presented in Chapter 4 and allows the readers to trust what I report. All of these measures collectively established trustworthiness in this study.

Transferability. Finally, given the fact that this narrative inquiry involved only two participants, transferability was appropriate over generalizability. Typically, qualitative studies lack the ability to generalize results for larger populations or other possible participant groups because it is common to study only small numbers of participants or settings (Maxwell, 2013). The term *transferability* is more appropriate for qualitative research (Mertens, 2015; Polit & Beck, 2010). Firestone (1993) referred to this concept as case-to-case translation. I am well aware that my study was of just two urban high-performing elementary teachers, and transferring my findings may or may not be appropriate for other researchers. As Mertens (2015) explained, "the burden of transferability is on the reader to determine the degree of similarity" (p. 271). Polit and Beck (2010) concurred, saying, "the researcher's job is to provide detailed descriptions that allow readers to make inferences about extrapolating the findings to other settings" (p. 1453). This level of detail is defined as thick description (Polit & Beck, 2010; Tracy, 2010). Thick description shows rather than tells (Tracy, 2010). Readers need to ultimately see the context, participants, and findings in order to determine the transferability to their own contexts. I strived to provide detailed, thick description about the teacher demographics, school and classroom information, and other necessary contextual information so that the reader could determine the level of transferability of my findings.

Ethics

As I implemented this study, my understanding of the phenomena emerged from being-in-relation with participants; I had to be sensitive to the relational orientation of this narrative inquiry. Caine, Estefan, and Clandinin (2013) explained, "The first responsibility of narrative inquirers is always to participants. The negotiations of entry and exit, as well as

the representation of experience, are central ethical concerns" (p. 579). Further, there is a

requirement of being attentive and wakeful in these relationships. As Clandinin (2006)

stated, "We [narrative inquirers] need to learn how to make these stories of what it means to

engage in narrative inquiry dependable and steady. We must do more than fill out required

forms for institutional research ethics boards" (p. 52). Narrative inquiry is meant to lead to

narrative unities between researchers and participants. I maintained an ethical commitment to

the two teacher participants relationally and regarding truth as I compiled the research and

drafted the initial findings. I knew when co-constructing the stories and final research report,

negotiations may need to occur for both the researcher and the participants to be heard. In

my case, misinterpretation occurred in what was seen and storied, as explained in the data

analysis section. In the end, there needed to be transparency in how the participants and

researcher interpret findings. This requires an explanation of different perspectives or

interpretations in the findings; in essence, agreeing to disagree or coming to a common

understanding, while all voices are acknowledged.

     Included in the ethical commitment to the participants is the protection of their

identity. The protection started from the very beginning of this study, as it was planned,

conducted, analyzed, and presented (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mertens, 2015). First the

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) exam was completed and filed at the

institutional level, which verified my understanding of human research subject protection.

Then, the research proposal submitted to the institutional review board (IRB) explained the

commitment to keeping all participant names confidential by using pseudonyms (Creswell &

Poth, 2018). As mandated by part B in The Belmont Report (Office for Human Research

Protections, 1979), basic ethical principles include: (1) respect for persons, (2) beneficence,

and (3) justice. In accordance with these principles, participants were told that this was a voluntary study and that they had autonomy in the study. I was transparent about my commitment to respect the participants and their well-being (Clandinin, 2013a). In doing this, an explanation of narrative inquiry was provided so they knew the methodology was a collaborative one that would be shared between participant and inquirer. My research proposal highlighted the desire to understand the teachers' stories, not involving any interactions that would bring harm. The only possible harm that was anticipated from this study was if reports of the teachers' stories provided a negative portrayal. However, given the fact these teachers were identified as high-performing teachers, this was unlikely. Additionally, with the use of teacher-chosen identity-protective pseudonyms and member checking, in which the participants verified the truthfulness of the data and reports, possible harm was counteracted.

Interest and willingness to participate was also gained from the two urban teachers. This measure was taken according to The Belmont Report part C (Office for Human Research Protections, 1979). Participants understood the nature of the research. I explained the goal was to use classroom observations, interviews and conversations, and participant reflections to understand the reading experience navigated by the high-performing teachers in these two classrooms. Again, the only anticipation of risk was if the teachers exhibited negatively-viewed behaviors, beliefs, or actions that may lead to a negative portrayal of the teachers. In terms of benefits, the two teacher participants may indirectly become more reflective of their practice or undergo positive change as a result of being involved in the study and being "under the microscope."

I was also aware of the potential ethical issue of power imbalance (Creswell & Poth, 2018) between the two teachers in this study and myself. Spending extended time with these teachers, developing a relationship as equals, and being receptive to the teachers' stories and perspectives in a respectful manner worked to reduce power imbalances (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Given my own elementary teaching experience, engaging in conversation about common experiences, as well as occasionally conversing about our families and life outside of teaching, aided in breaking barriers of power. As characteristic of narrative inquiry, the goal was to co-construct the final stories and to negotiate the research collaboratively, so avoiding any feeling of power or influence over another was critical (Clandinin, 2013a). Respect for the environment and being unobtrusive in the school and classroom setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was also a potential ethical issue that needed attention. In response to this issue, I communicated with each school and teacher about processes and procedures that would be optimal for minimizing disruptions. This included ideal times to enter or exit the classroom, where to position myself when I was in the classroom, how I responded to students who approached me, and convenient times to conduct interviews and engage in conversations. Overall, the regularity and consistency of my presence in these study sites helped minimize disruption and the impact of my presence (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2013).

Limitations

Every study has limitations; this study was no different. Narrative inquiry is compared to the task of putting shards and slivers of a broken mirror back together again (Downey & Clandinin, 2010). This is an impossible task. There will always be pieces missing and difficulty trying to get every piece to fit back together again as it once was. This

is a real limitation in narrative inquiry. It cannot be avoided, but the more wakeful and thoughtful an inquirer is, the closer those stories are to reality, creating a mirror that reveals meaningful truths. I strived for wakefulness (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), but I knew I would never see and understand everything. When an inquirer enters a research context, there are stories from the past and stories that are currently playing out. There are also stories on the verge of occurring and further future stories that will emerge as lives progress. Even when inquirers gain understanding of stories, they may not be aware of the stories that encouraged the ongoing stories or the stories that bump up against or restrict certain stories. No story is ever fully known, complete, or finished (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Another limitation was present due to the fact that this study involved only two teachers as participants. One may ask how findings from two teachers on this topic could be meaningful to others. The response to this goes back to the transferability of qualitative research and specifically, narrative inquiry. Given the context and details provided, it is up to readers to determine whether the teachers' stories in this study are transferable to their own contexts. These stories will not be applicable to all other teachers. That is how narrative inquiry is characterized. Additionally, in this narrative inquiry study, I was an outsider trying to understand the "normal" happenings in these classrooms. However, my presence alone interrupted the normalcy of the classroom. The teachers and students possibly modified their "normal" behaviors and dialogue with an onlooker present. Temptations to impress, fit in, or become invisible could have surfaced in the teachers or students as a result of my presence. Other limitations in this study also revolved around the fact that this was a qualitative study with a researcher who had personal experiences as a struggling reader and involvement in schools with struggling readers. Not only does

qualitative research refrain from controlled experimentation, but there is researcher bias and reaction involved. Ultimately, the trustworthiness and transferability was established so that these limitations could be minimized and attended to as effectively as possible. Awareness of these limitations was critical to provide the transparency I desired in this study.

Table 3.2

Data Collection and Analysis Timeline

Timeline	Data Collection	Data Analysis
November-December	Weekly observations with teacher reflections Physical context data gathering	Narrative, holistic coding of observations and reflections Weekly analytic memos
January	Weekly observations with teacher reflections; initial interview of each teacher	Narrative, holistic coding of observations, reflections, and interviews Weekly analytic memos Member checking interviews
February	Weekly observations with teacher reflections	Narrative, holistic coding of observations and reflections Pattern coding of collective data Weekly analytic memos
March	Weekly observations with teacher reflections; follow-up interview of each teacher	Narrative, holistic coding of observations, reflections, and interviews Pattern coding of collective data Weekly analytic memos Member checking interviews

In the following chapter I explain the findings of this narrative inquiry study. Narrative inquirers believe that people live and tell stories, and we work to retell and relive stories (Clandinin, 2013a). My participants lived stories, currently live stories, and tell stories. By living alongside those participants, it was possible for these stories to be retold and relived.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Drastically low reading proficiencies of all students in the United States, and of elementary students who live in urban contexts in particular (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017) spearheaded the urgency of this study. In order to understand how this problem may be overcome, this study investigated two high-performing urban elementary reading teachers and their classrooms. The guiding research question in this study was:

- What are the behaviors, actions, and beliefs of high-performing urban elementary teachers in navigating social-emotional experiences for readers?

Specifically, I sought understanding of the stories of these two teachers' social-emotional approach to reading through a narrative inquiry approach (Clandinin, 2006, 2013a; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The social-emotional aspect of reading was investigated because research demonstrates that this component is critical for reading achievement (Francois, 2013; Kohn, 2010; Routman, 2014; Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006), but is under-studied in urban contexts (Heilig et al.; Kirkland, 2014). While the findings are not meant to be generalized across all teachers, students, or classrooms, details about the teachers, context, and classroom demographics are provided so readers can determine whether transferability to another similar teacher or context is appropriate. Narrative inquiry allows for a deep understanding of the stories; the findings of these stories are interpretations co-constructed by the inquirer and participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). If readers verify transferability, the findings could reveal what may need to occur in other urban elementary classrooms with

regard to socio-emotional approaches to reading instruction so those children have the opportunity to become proficient readers.

This chapter presents findings about the behaviors, actions, and beliefs in navigating social-emotional experiences for readers of two high-performing teachers, Ms. Jonas and Mrs. Dabney. I focus on one teacher at a time to communicate this is not a comparative study. In other words, this study shares the stories of the teachers, but not in a manner that compares or measures one against the other. Instead, the organization of the findings illustrates that individual's stories are personal and contextual. No two stories are the same.

In order to attend to the research question, it was impossible to share one narrated story of each teacher from the beginning of my presence to the end. That story from beginning to end would be entirely too long and it still would never be complete (Downey & Clandinin, 2010). I faced the challenge of determining what to include in the findings, knowing everything could not be included and the stories would never be pieced together perfectly, but shards and slivers would always be missing (Downey & Clandinin, 2010). Consistent with narrative inquiry methodologies, it was more important to emphasize the *daily stories* or narratives that specifically elucidate common themes within each teacher's overall story of navigating social-emotional experiences for their readers. Common narrative themes in each teacher's overall story are linked together with daily stories that meaningfully flow one into another. Embedded within these stories are researcher memos, poetic compilations of field notes, photographs, artistic representations, and quotes that assist in telling the stories and the influences of ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1976, 1997) on the stories. Relevant theories and literature related to the stories and specific findings are synthesized to elucidate and explain findings. I must remind you that as the narrative

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inquirer, the narratives I share are also my own stories of reaction and interpretation; my own *personal practical knowledge*, or personal and professional experiential history, impacted the data I gathered and the interpretation of that data (Clandinin, 2013b).

With thorough detail and layers of daily stories to evidence the common narrative themes, I aimed to crystallize the primary findings of this study, which are provided for each teacher. Before I share each teacher's storied findings, I provide a snapshot introduction of teacher, summarizing details from Chapter 3.

Ms. Jonas: A Snapshot

Ms. Jonas (all person and place names are pseudonyms) is a sixth grade teacher at Greenwood Elementary School, a neighborhood school in an area of the city where many immigrant families reside. Ms. Jonas identifies as White. She has six years of teaching under her belt, with Mrs. Carrington as principal. The student population of over 500 students at Greenwood Elementary comprised multiple races and ethnicities including 11.2% Asian, 21.2% Black, 48.2% Latinx, and 16.3% White. The students in Ms. Jonas' class reflect the school population. Ms. Jonas' story reveals the following common narrative themes shared through daily stories, quotes from interviews, teacher reflections, and researcher memos:

- A love for reading

- Classroom environment promoting reading

- Knowledge of students' lives

- Literacy learning as a social process

- Critical text choice

- Facilitator of student learning

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- Student interest, choice, and autonomy

- High expectations

- Persistence

These themes overlap and the stories portraying one theme may also portray another. Ms. Jonas' story of navigating social-emotional experiences for readers follows.

Ms. Jonas' Story

> I remember reading to my dolls and stuff, playing school with my sisters. I think just growing up with books....One book that sticks out is the...It was shaped as a squirrel, and it's called Sleepy Squirrel. It's like a purple book. We read it every night before we went to bed. And then I read Laura Ingalls when I was in third and fourth grade, like obsessed, had every single book. My mom still has them in her basement. (Ms. Jonas, Initial interview, January 9, 2019)

A Love for Reading

Ms. Jonas' story of navigating social-emotional experiences for readers started years ago. She proclaimed a love for reading as a child. One of four children raised by a single mom, Ms. Jonas embraced a caretaker role to her younger twin sisters, often reading to them and her dolls. Although I entered into her classroom in her sixth year of teaching—Ms. Jonas wearing t-shirts that said things such as, "Reading is Lit" and "Love conquers Hate"—I was aware that I entered in the midst of her story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Consistent with the research of McGlynn-Stewart (2014) discussing how high-performing teachers share the importance and positive influence of their childhood literacy experiences, Ms. Jonas shared her love for reading from a young age, and this clearly impacted her reading instruction: her enthusiasm for reading in the classroom and her desire for students to love reading. This insight provided understanding of continuity, or influences of past, present,

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and future, within the three-dimensional space (which involves the interaction, continuity, and situation contextualizing stories) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As her current story progresses, that love continues. Ms. Jonas explicitly shared this current love for reading:

> Just to like read at night is so great...I love to just fall asleep reading. And then I've told my kids that, and they're like, "Oh, so it's boring." I'm like, "No, but it relaxes you," You know? I mean, I love to read. I love to read. (Ms. Jonas, Initial interview, January 9, 2019)

Ms. Jonas' love for reading is also reflected in the classroom interactions: Ms. Jonas explicitly tells her students she loves reading, but her actions in her classroom match her words. Her authentic discussion about the texts they were reading, the enthusiasm she demonstrated for new books and text resources, and the reading and responses she modeled all shouted a love for reading. "Isn't this amazing?! Look at all this information they gathered," Ms. Jonas exclaimed as she showed students the online resource about the Holocaust that would provide further background information about the novel they were reading, *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (Boyne, 2007) (Ms. Jonas, Field notes, November 30, 2018). In March, when reading a chapter in *The Giver* (Lowry, 2014), Ms. Jonas read aloud as students followed along with the twists and turns in the troubling topic of being "released" in the story's utopian community. Upon reading the last word in the chapter, Ms. Jonas raised her eyebrows in astonishment and students immediately started blurting out responses and feelings the author left them with: "No way!" and "What?!" (Ms. Jonas, Field notes, March 8, 2019). Her excitement and enthusiasm for reading seemed to prompt her students' enthusiasm for reading. As social learning theory (Bandura, 1971) claims, students learn from the models around them. Ms. Jonas' fluent, expressive reading, along with her personal reactions to the text, shown through both words and body language, spoke volumes

about her love for reading and her desire for students to love reading. This passion for

reading was intertwined in her navigation of social-emotional experiences for these readers.

Classroom Environment

As I entered Ms. Jonas' room the first day, I could certainly feel the love of reading

reflected in the atmosphere and in the classroom environment. Shelves with baskets of books

framed the classroom. Labels hung on each basket, categorizing the books in personal and

appealing ways (see Figure 4.1): as "Ms. Jonas' faves," "Characters who do hilarious

things," "Must reads," "There's a movie too," "Cool things people have done," "You go

girl," and "People who fought for what's right."

Figure 4.1. Classroom library with labels.

Cozy reading spaces speckled the classroom, with different seating areas and pillows.

There were high-top tables with stools, a rug with pillows, and benches that bordered the

classroom carpet. There were no lines of desks, or even desks at all (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2. Cozy reading areas and seating.

Because Ms. Jonas was the English Language Arts teacher, to whom all of the sixth grade students rotated for reading instruction, this environment greeted 74 students every day as they entered for their reading experience. The turquoise and purple walls created a warm space. Lamps, strings of white lights, and the smell of sweet baked goods coming from an air freshener provided additional ambiance (Field Notes, November 15, 2018). Splashed around the room were inspirational words encouraging students to never give up, be themselves, and to be the change (see Figure 4.3).
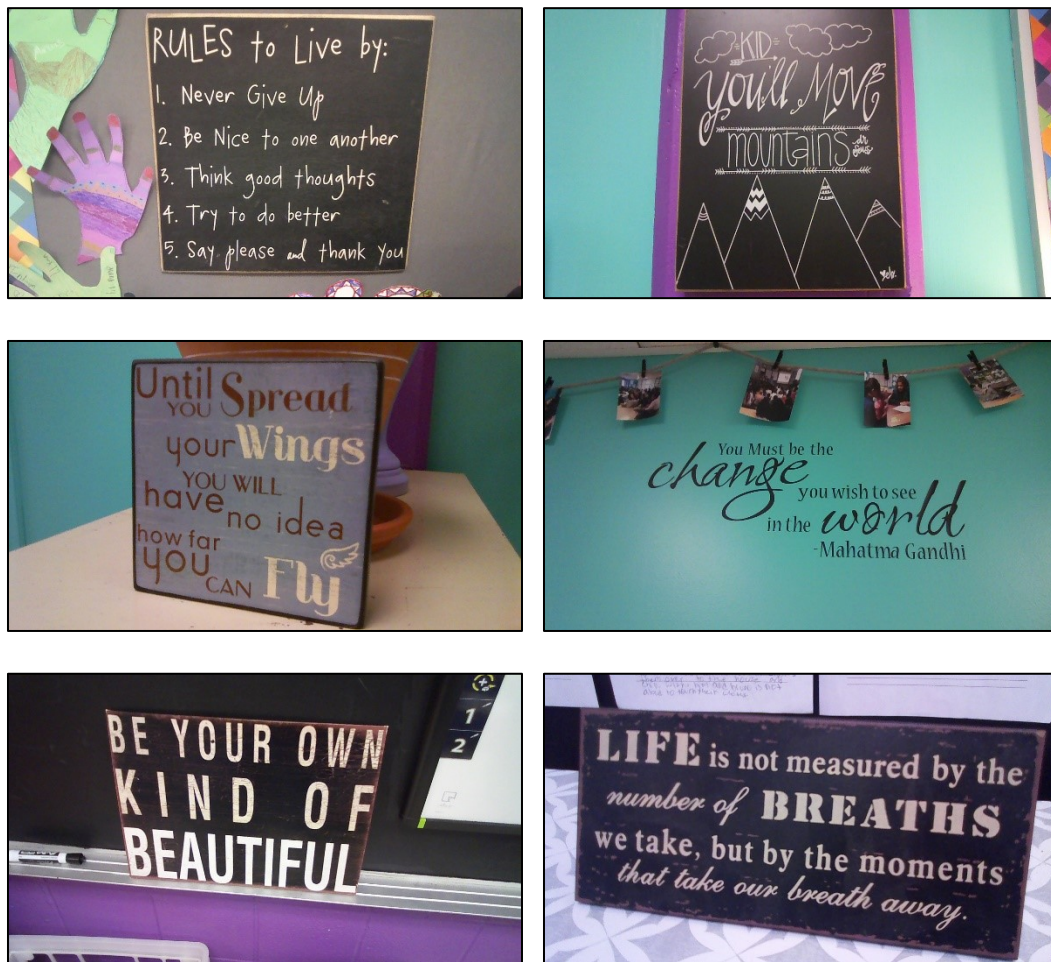

Figure 4.3. Inspirational words.

As I took in the carefully and thoughtfully crafted classroom environment, I knew that this story was already impacting my own story. It felt good to be there. I knew as a researcher, this environment alone impacted my ability to be neutral. Echoing what Clandinin (2013b) stated, "As a researcher, I cannot enter into a teacher's classroom as a neutral observer and try to give an account of her reality" (p. 72). I knew that I needed to be awake to my interpretations of Ms. Jonas and her story, being transparent about the warm environment tinting my inquiry lens. These initial feelings stemmed from the physical environment I interpreted as warm and one demonstrating a love for reading and valuing the primacy of students' learning. I was feeling what Clandinin (2013b) explained: "[In narrative inquiry], neither teacher nor researcher emerges unchanged" (p. 72). This also allowed me to further consider the element of situation in the three-dimensional space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000); acknowledging that location impacts stories and experiences.

Much literature indicates that the social-emotional environment or emotional context in the classroom holistically hinges on the interactions and occurrences within the classroom (Pianta et al., 2008). Specifically, Pianta et al. (2008) explained the emotional quality of the classroom included the warmth of teacher-student interactions and the teacher's response to students' social and emotional needs. I knew the stories awaiting my observations of Ms. Jonas' interactions with students held further insight into Ms. Jonas' story of navigating social-emotional experiences for her readers.

Knowledge of Students' Lives

During my first observation on a November day, I sat perched on a short stool next to the counter lining the wall furthest from the doorway. I watched as third period students

streamed through the doorway and headed to the front carpet. The first couple minutes of my time with Ms. Jonas revealed great insight:

> As one student, David, entered the classroom, Ms. Jonas said, "David, did you and Andrew 'Fortnite' too hard last night and he couldn't come to school today?" David smiled at Ms. Jonas and she returned the smile. (Field notes, November 15, 2018)

Literally, not more than two minutes into this classroom and the warmth in the physical environment was being echoed in the classroom interactions. Ms. Jonas demonstrated a knowledge of her students' lives to foster warmth. Knowing that David plays the video game *Fortnite*, she used that knowledge in her interaction with him. Future observations also revealed Ms. Jonas' knowledge of her students' lives outside of school, including when she prompted her students who played football to help define the word *defense:* "Come on you football players…what does it mean to play defense?" (Field notes, February 1, 2019) or when she greeted a girl coming into the classroom with questions: "Hey stranger. How was New York? How was your brother? Was he a baller? What college does he go to again?" (Field notes, March 1, 2019). Ms. Jonas' knowledge of her students played a significant role in the social-emotional experience in this reading classroom. This reflected a stance of culturally relevant pedagogy through Ms. Jonas' *social relations,* which Ladson-Billings (1995b) explained as a core tenet of this pedagogy, where teachers maintain a fluid relationship with students, connect with all students, and create a community of learners.

Through other communication and teacher reflections, Ms. Jonas shared the knowledge she possessed of her students' lives. She would mention a student being from Puerto Rico, being in the United States for two years now, or attending Greenwood since first

grade. A daily story that stood out to me, representing Ms. Jonas' knowledge of her

students' lives, occurred in December:

> The day's task prompted students to read an informational article to support their understanding of the class novel's topic, the Holocaust. Students prepared to read independently by getting their notebooks form the plastic crate so they could record thoughts as they read new information. As students grabbed their notebooks, Ms. Jonas opened a new notebook and placed tabs throughout to organize it for reading responses, data, and so on. She then handed the notebook to a White boy of medium stature standing in front of her. He thanked Ms. Jonas and found a spot to read. While students were reading, Ms. Jonas moved closer to me to share more about the student for whom she got a notebook. Ms. Jonas proceeded to say he was new but has been at Greenwood on and off. She explained that the student moves back and forth between a boy's home and the disabled grandma and has multiple challenges. Ms. Jonas explained that he missed over 5 days earlier in the year and they thought he was gone from Greenwood but he came back and could not do the work because he hadn't read the two pieces of literature they were comparing the day he returned. "I can't get mad at him because he didn't do the reading. And it's not his fault." (Ms. Jonas, Field notes, December 7, 2018)

Deeply knowing her students, inside and outside of school, quickly appeared as an

obvious common narrative theme in Ms. Jonas' story of navigating social-emotional

experiences for her readers. As I considered my own social-emotional experiences in reading

as a child and how that influenced my reactions and interpretations about Ms. Jonas' story, I

found myself wishing I had had a teacher who knew me and interacted with me in a way

similar to Ms. Jonas. Hachey (2012) claimed, "People of all ages have a need to secure the

love and respect of others—to feel socially connected" (p. 40). I could relate to literature

claiming it is human nature to desire acceptance and love (Hachey, 2012; Ormrod, 2012).

Literacy Learning as a Social Process

Going back to my first observation, Ms. Jonas' view of literacy learning as a social

process also surfaced:

> Displayed on the board was a quote: "Be good. Be kind to each other. And if there's somebody you love, tell them. The world always needs more love." Ms. Jonas asked

the students to share their thoughts about the quote and hands raised to the air. The students responded with connections to the wildfires currently going on in California and the Jewish people they were reading about in their novel about the Holocaust. (Field notes, November 15, 2018)

Ms. Jonas intentionally prompted the students' dialogue to learn from each other and to collaboratively make connections with what they were reading. The social interactions within this reading block not only played out in this observation but weaved throughout every observation and the story of Ms. Jonas' navigating the social-emotional experience for readers. Ms. Jonas' view of literacy learning as a social process seemed to strengthen classroom community and promote deeper meaning of readings. An observation in December illustrated this point:

Ms. Jonas had the students open their notebooks and record the two questions:

What is the purpose of the introduction?

Which sentence suggests that the Nazis knew that what they were doing was wrong?

The students were reading the novel *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* as a class but paused the reading of the novel to read an informational article about the Holocaust to provide further context for the novel. Ms. Jonas prompted students to read the article in partners while discussing these two questions. As students worked together, Ms. Jonas moved from partnership to partnership engaging them or joining in among the dialogue that carried out. "What did the author want us to know in the first three paragraphs?" Ms. Jonas asked. Moving to another group, Ms. Jonas fished further, "So why do you think the author thought it was important to include?" (Field notes, December 7, 2018)

Ms. Jonas' thinking behind this experience in her classroom was followed up in her reflection after this observation.

I have them read with a partner because I think bouncing ideas off each other as well as shared learning is powerful when it comes to a classroom. This does not mean however, one person doing all the work. This class works really well together and it seems like everyone is helpful and here for the same goals: TO LEARN. (Ms. Jonas, Teacher reflection, December 7, 2018)

Ms. Jonas viewed talking about reading as powerful in literacy learning, which impacted her story of navigating social-emotional experiences for her student readers. This idea resonates with what Gay (2010) said about culturally responsive teachers "enabling ethnically and culturally diverse students to be open and flexible in expressing their thoughts, feelings, and emotions, as well as being receptive to new ideas and information" (p. 51). As I mentioned, the classroom stories of talking about their readings continued in every observation. Day after day I observed reading and talking. Ms. Jonas viewed talking about reading as powerful, and she also knew that she needed to make talking about reading comfortable for her students if she desired them to engage in this way. After an observation in January, Ms. Jonas elaborated on her use of small group discussion to encourage every student to talk about their reading.

> After we discussed the first page, students got into groups of 4 to talk about page 2 and 3 annotations. I wanted to give students a smaller group setting to learn from each other. The same 3-5 kiddos share, raise their hands, etc. so I wanted to make sure that more kids would be participating and interacting with the text by providing a smaller stage to share their learning. (Ms. Jonas, Teacher reflection, January 25, 2019)

The International Literacy Association (2018) views talking about reading as crucial to fostering independent reading as well: "When students talk around text and confer with the teacher and each other…reading becomes accountable and authentic" (p. 6). The buzz of student discussion throughout the room was a regular occurrence in my observations. Talk about text coincided with Ms. Jonas' expectation for students to be respectful listeners to each other by tracking the speaker and showing they cared about what others say. As my time of collecting data came to an end and Ms. Jonas and I engaged in the follow-up interview, Ms. Jonas shared about her daily priority for her students to talk about reading.

[An overarching goal for each reading block is for them] to talk to each other because it's hard for some of them. I mean they're sixth graders and they're kind of too cool to raise their hands sometimes. But I know that they have awesome ideas and I hear it when they talk to each other and that's why I have like a big goal for me every day is to have them talk. Because I know that they have it in their heads but they just don't necessarily want to share it out. (Ms. Jonas, Follow-up interview, March 12, 2019)

Clearly, talking about reading, which played out in Ms. Jonas' classroom regularly, impacted the navigation of social-emotional experiences for her readers.

Critical Text Choice

Ms. Jonas' critical text choice helped foster this goal of talking about texts. Using literature for critical purposes (Paris & Alim, 2014) and confronting social issues through literature (Gay, 2010) aligns with one of multiple goals of culturally sustaining pedagogies. This also involves choosing literature that students can connect with (Nussbaum, 2000) or develop feelings and build character to support their cultures. I quickly became aware of Ms. Jonas' critical text choice as I entered this story in November; students were reading chapter seven in *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (Boyne, 2007). Part of the daily class structure included a class novel that they read in different ways each day; sometimes a chapter was read independently, sometimes in partners, and other times Ms. Jonas would read a chapter aloud. *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (Boyne, 2007) is a book about a nine year-old boy who comes to understand the realities of a boy he befriends on the other side of the concentration camp fence during the Holocaust. Within its pages are themes of trust, power, guilt, ethics, resiliency, growing up, and friendship.

Along with this novel Ms. Jonas introduced on-line resources and informational articles that depicted historical accounts of the Holocaust. After reading chapter seven in the novel, Ms. Jonas and the students intensely discussed the characters in the story by analyzing

dialogue. A few weeks later, after reading an information article titled *The Holocaust, Part Two: The "Final Solution,"* the students used text evidence to consider the author's purpose. As this lesson ended, Ms. Jonas displayed this quote for class discussion: "Blind obedience is when people, regardless of whether they believe what they are doing is morally, ethically, or legally right, they do what they are told by a leader or people in control" (Field notes, December 7, 2018). Discussion played about as Ms. Jonas asked the students why people may exhibit blind obedience and where blind obedience occurs in our world.

As the period wrapped up, the students talked of pressures people feel and fear that drives blind obedience; feelings of being trapped or having no choice. Slavery and peer pressure surfaced in student comments. Ms. Jonas' critical text choices and follow-up questions pushed her students to consider social issues from historical as well as current standpoints. Many of these social issues are ones the students may personally deal with in their lives currently or in the future.

Critical sociocultural theorists Moje and Lewis (2007) asserted the need "for demonstrating how children's opportunities to learn are both supported and constrained by the role of power in everyday interactions of students and teachers and by the systems and structures that shape the institution of schooling" (p. 16). Ms. Jonas undoubtedly applied critical sociocultural theory in her teaching by encouraging students to make meaning of the personal through political and societal understanding (Madison, 2011). According to Madison, "The experiences in your life, both past and present, and who you are as a unique individual will lead you to certain questions about the world and certain problems related to why things are the way they are" (2011, p. 21). Ms. Jonas anticipated problems her students

might face, and she chose literature that might allow them to question "why things are the way they are."

After the class finished the novel *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (Boyne, 2007), they began the journey of reading *The Giver* (Lowry, 2014). This novel, by Lois Lowry, tells a story of a twelve-year-old boy born into a utopian, futuristic world where there is no conflict, poverty, inequality, or injustice. This boy soon learns of the secrets in this world that prompt him to question morals, values, and beliefs. Ms. Jonas paired informational texts with this novel as well, including an article, "Utopia," by Thomas More (2019) and an article, "Total Control in North Korea" (2019). In March, Ms. Jonas even chose to analyze the song "Imagine" by John Lennon (1971). The song perhaps encouraged listeners to imagine a world filled with peace and harmony, with "nothing to kill or die for" and "no possessions." Discussion about values versus rights, living in community, remorse, sacrifice, and authority were prominent in this unit. Students contributed thoughts such as, "Remorse is a deep regret for something you've done" (Field notes, January 18, 2019); "Something that stood out to me was that in North Korea, they are told what the people are supposed to wear" (Field notes, February 1, 2019); and "Lennon wanted no war. No people judging other people" (Field notes, March 1, 2019). The critical text choice Ms. Jonas utilized created a platform for students to share their personal feelings, opinions, connections, and reactions to topics and literature that were real and deep. The positive social-emotional experience created for readers significantly stemmed from the texts Ms. Jonas chose to incorporate.

Facilitator of Student Learning

As time unfolded, I learned more about Ms. Jonas' story of navigating the social-emotional experience of reading for her students. I continued to observe the greater value

placed on the amount of student talk over teacher talk through comments like, "Okay, let me explain so I can quit talking and turn you loose" (Ms. Jonas, Field notes, November 30, 2018). This exhibited Ms. Jonas' desire to be a facilitator in her students' learning rather than be a provider of their learning. Narrative inquirers attend to what is present in their studies but also to what is absent (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In Ms. Jonas' story, the need for control of direct instruction and narrow paths in her students' learning experiences was absent.

> On a cold January day, students scattered around the room, some laying on the floor, some leaning against pillows, some sitting at high-top tables or the benches around the front carpet. They settled in to independently read chapter three of The Giver (Lowry). After moving around to different students to listen to them read and confer with them about the reading, Ms. Jonas pulled all of the students back to the carpet to discuss the chapter. Ms. Jonas facilitated the initiation of this discussion by saying, "I want to hear what stood out to you as you were reading." Conversation followed, which included almost all students. There was a calm, respectful conversation with students contributing naturally. Sometimes hands were raised, other times students just shared respectfully. No students talked over other students. Students helped each other answer or elaborate. One student said, "I can't remember how old she was but…" while another student put up five on his fingers. "Oh, was she five?" and the rest of the class agreed. When students shared predictions or thoughts about interpretations, Ms. Jonas responded with, "Yeah" or "Ohhh, maybe." A little later in this open discussion, Ms. Jonas chimed in, "If you have something to add on, just add it. I want you guys to start leading these discussions. Over this quarter and the rest of the year, I want you to lead your learning. I want you all to determine what goes on in here and your learning." As she said this, I interpreted her desires for these students to already be playing out in this story. (Ms. Jonas, Field notes, January 18, 2019)

> In fact, Ms. Jonas elaborated on a specific experience of navigating students'

leadership in their learning through a reflective journal entry in February:

> Students read an article on North Korea today. Ernesto (3rd period) mentioned that *The Giver* reminded him of North Korea. I took what he said to heart and looked into articles. When I found one, my mind was made up. I would put this information into our unit. This was a great opportunity for informational text to be put into our unit. (Ms. Jonas, Teacher reflection, February 1, 2019)

Ms. Jonas' displayed her role as facilitator, rather than dictator, of her students' learning by embracing the fact that she was learning as well. During the follow-up interview with Ms. Jonas, she told stories of her learning from students and her coworkers.

Learning from students:

> I've kind of gone out of my comfort zone of course with like reading to them and then like my personal life reading. Just picking up books that I would have never...like I would have never read *The Giver*. Thinking two years back let's say. Reading and teaching *The Giver* versus only picture books or you know like in my own time reading like I just finished *Malala*, which is like every education person should read that book. Just little things like I would have never picked this up but I have a true, not passion, but I'm very interested in it but I would have never. And then to teach on top of that, something that you're interested in is a cool, putting it all together stepping out of my comfort zone. So it's been a new experience for all of us. Just having conversations with eleven and twelve year olds is so fun and to hear their ideas. I always have things that they should be saying thought out, like, "Here's the answer to this question that I'm gonna ask." And they'll always come out of left field with something I haven't even thought about but is absolutely true. So I think that that's the fun part. Everyone's kind of learning together. It's amazing. I love it. (Ms. Jonas, Follow-up interview, March 12, 2019)

Learning from coworkers:

> It feels comfortable because I'll say something or I won't know something and it's just an environment that's safe and you won't feel stupid or you won't feel like, "I should have known that." Sarah is the coach here and she goes in and teaches lessons too. So we'll plan a lesson in our PLC and then she'll go teach it and record it and then we'll analyze it and talk through it and stuff. Just everybody not being afraid and everyone's just like, "I'm gonna come watch you but don't think that you're doing something wrong. I just want to learn from you too or I want to make a couple comments of maybe what I liked or what we could work on or moving forward." So it's never like a done deal. I think that that's fun to do with everyone. (Ms. Jonas, Follow-up interview, March 12, 2019)

The role of facilitator, rather than dictator, of student learning meant that students had the freedom to guide their own learning experiences. The facilitation or guiding of learning as described, connects with the type of facilitating Ladson-Billings (1995b) described in culturally relevant teachers. This included giving "students opportunities to act as teachers"

(p. 480) and using "spontaneity and energy" (p. 479) to shift a lesson based on students' curiosities. Influences of colleagues within Ms. Jonas' ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1976) clearly fostered this approach of teaching. Without this factor in her ecological system and the adopted role of facilitator, the social-emotional experience for these readers would be a much different story.

Student Interest, Choice, and Autonomy

The undercurrent of student interest, choice, and autonomy in the classroom added to the story's theme of Ms. Jonas being a facilitator in their reading experience. From day to day, students chose whether to read alone or with a partner, whether to respond to reading through writing independently or with a peer, and whether to sit on a stool, lie on the carpet, or lean against a pillow. As students read independently, Ms. Jonas circled around to different students asking, "What's your goal today?" Students would reply with answers such as, "To finish this chapter" or "To get to this page" (Field notes, February 19, 2019). Students were clearly in the driver's seat, possessing autonomy in their daily reading.

Ms. Jonas' reflective journal included her intentions to "spark their interest…and to have students guide their own learning and increase their knowledge on what THEY decided to learn more about, not me" (Ms. Jonas, Teacher reflection, November 30, 2018). Later, she stated, "I wanted them to come up with their own thoughts, questions, and wonderings while reading" (Ms. Jonas, Teacher reflection, January 18, 2019).

Although Ms. Jonas chose the class novels, students had complete control over what they read independently. Ms. Jonas shared her thoughts about the need to attend to students' interest in reading during my initial interview with her:

They don't want to open a book where it's like brown pages, and 1970...You know what I mean? And so, getting new books, which I know is not easy to do, but if you want to inspire that fire with them, then you need to get books...You know? And books that, they can see themselves in those characters I think is powerful. (Ms. Jonas, Initial interview, January 9, 2019)

Ms. Jonas' desire to utilize books that reflect the students in the characters replicates the approach Bishop (1990) called for of using literature with students as both windows and mirrors; literature as windows to learn about diverse others and literature as mirrors that reflect themselves. Ms. Jonas later shared the story of using grant money to order books from Barnes and Noble and going to the library across the street from her house: "We just kind of laid them all out and were like, 'What do you want to read?'" (Ms. Jonas, Follow-up interview, March 12, 2019). Student interest and choice played a central role on a daily basis, allowing students autonomy in their learning. Researchers Guthrie and Barber (2019) stated, "When we think of motivation, our mind first turns to interest" (p. 53). The theme of student interest, choice, and autonomy in Ms. Jonas' story links to reading motivation and in turn, the social-emotional experience of readers in her classroom.

High Expectations

Although the absence of control weaved throughout Ms. Jonas' story of navigating the social-emotional experience for her readers, high expectations were ever present. These high expectations revealed themselves through her challenging of students, holding them accountable, and believing in them. Prompting further effort and thinking in classroom experiences, maintaining rigor in curriculum and resources, and pushing students in the completion of homework all ran rampant in Ms. Jonas' story. The daily occurrences surfaced in my observations of Ms. Jonas' teaching, her reflective journal entries, and the interviews in which we engaged. There were snippets here and there, but the high expectations were

also a constant presence in this story, as displayed even on the class homework basket (see Figure 4.4).
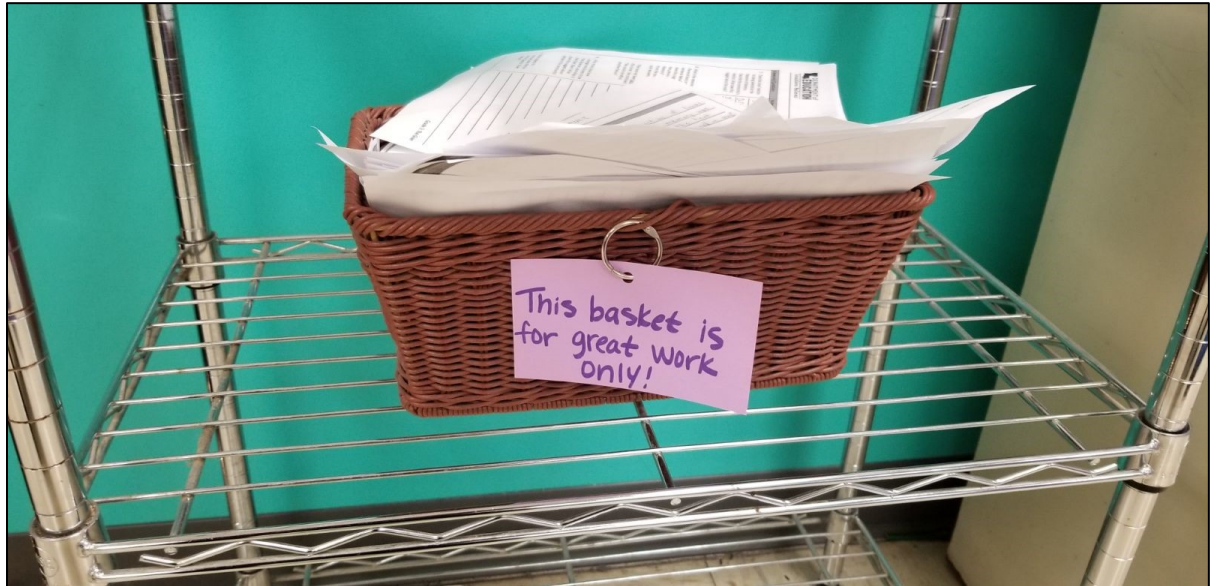
Figure 4.4. Homework basket displaying high expectations.

These high expectations, partnered with her knowledge of students' lives, prompted a warm demanding (Kleinfeld, 1975; Vasquez, 1989) approach. As Sandilos, Rimm-Kaufman, and Cohen (2017) pointed out, warm demanders "are nurturing or caring toward their students but do not lower academic standards or expectations and are effective disciplinarians" (p. 1322). To further reveal Ms. Jonas' story of high expectations through believing in and challenging students, I pulled from all data sources, observations, interviews, and teacher reflections to retell this story element through poetry. The compilation of Ms. Jonas' actions, quotes, and reflections poetically tell the story.

High Expectations

We can't keep doing the same things if you want different results
My job is to expose them to sixth grade text
It's going to be hard
They can do hard things
My expectation in reading is just that they work hard
They will step up to the challenge
No backing down on those expectations
They can do it. I feel like just maybe they haven't been given the opportunity
I want to see them struggle but then I call them back

"Get going buddy"
"Keep looking. I'll come back and check on you"
"Shhh…Let him do it"
"You need to finish that homework and bring it back Tuesday"
"Don't forget. Don't make me hunt you down. Because I will"
"You have to take this seriously. This is serious"
"You have three zeros in the grade book. Do you know what that is doing to your grade?"
"I want you to find it in the text first. You need to explain how you know that"
"I want you to do your very best. You aren't in trouble I just want you to do your best"

Not giving the excuse that they can't do it because they can
I know they have awesome ideas…I hear it when they talk to each other
I feel like they've grown so much because it is hard
It's real life…I'm trying to put it in perspective for them
To make everyone successful

Ms. Jonas not only held her students to high expectations but also held herself to high

expectations. What I experienced living alongside Ms. Jonas told the story of her

commitment to teaching and to these students. In the follow-up interview, Ms. Jonas spoke

directly about the expectations she holds herself to:

> Like this morning I don't feel good, obviously, you can tell. You can hear but I know
> that there's 74 people waiting for me and I know that we have stuff to do today and so
> I'm gonna hold myself at that high expectation as well. (Ms. Jonas, Follow-up
> interview, March 12, 2019)

Being attuned to tensions in Ms. Jonas' story, a circumstance beyond her control caused tension that further exposed Ms. Jonas' high expectations for herself and her commitment to her students. On February 11, 2019, I received this email from Ms. Jonas:

Hi there,
Our sixth grade science teacher filed for FMLA [Family Medical Leave Act] over the weekend. It has not been approved, but she is not coming to work.
The other sixth grade teacher and I are splitting her class until further notice. Just wanted to give you a heads up, that there will be many students here.

When I followed up with Ms. Jonas through email, she replied, "I did not sleep well last night. I am very upset and disappointed that she is choosing this path. I am so angry that she does not seem to care about the kids or to do her job and leave it to us" (Personal communication, February 11, 2019). It was obvious that the story Ms. Jonas wanted for her students would be impacted by this story playing out in the sixth grade. Her care for these students ran deep given the expectations she had for her students and herself. As it has been said, "Teachers cannot have high expectations for students without caring about their academic success, and vice versa" (Rojas & Liou, 2017, p. 31). Gay (2010) linked high expectations to culturally responsive teachers in saying, "Their performance expectations are complemented with uncompromising faith in their students and relentless efforts in helping them meet academic demands" (p. 75). Undoubtedly, Ms. Jonas exhibits culturally responsive pedagogy in this area.

Persistence

Two days later I entered the classroom for an observation, and 37 students were piled into Ms. Jonas' room. Despite the circumstances and the extra students, I observed the normal buzz of conversation, reading, and responding to reading through writing. After the reading block, Ms. Jonas and I conversed about the situation and again, Ms. Jonas shared her

feelings of frustration and being overwhelmed. She said that she did not know how another

teacher can just not care and that she has an issue when others do not do what they are

supposed to do. The quote that lingered with me was, "It's not the kids' fault. It's going to

work out but just frustrating" (Ms. Jonas, personal conversation, February 13, 2019). This

tension in the story became the main topic in my memo after this time with Ms. Jonas. I

wrote:

> It's obvious that Ms. Jonas has a heart for these students. Listening to her talk about
> how it's not the students' fault and how she can't believe someone can do this to the
> students demonstrates a clear commitment to her students and their learning. Despite
> the stresses she told me about today (not having a sixth grade teacher, finishing
> DARE, beginning Girls on the Run, conferences, etc.), her classroom functioned as
> normal. She engaged them in reading and writing, held them to high expectations,
> got them thinking deeply and authentically about texts, got students socially
> interacting in response to texts, and acknowledged students' thoughts and ideas.
> (Researcher memo, February 13, 2019)

This is the kind of commitment and persistence Gay (2010) and Ladson-Billings

(2017b) discussed in reference to culturally relevant or responsive teachers who have the

ability to persist emotionally and physically, never giving up on students. "They believe that

in order to get results teachers have to stick with it—often long past any time others would"

(Ladson-Billings, 2017b, p. 445). Difficult circumstances may arise, but teachers have to

weather the storms. Ms. Jonas certainly knew how to weather the storms. With ecological

development (Bronfenbrenner, 1976) at the theoretical roots of this study, stories Ms. Jonas

told noticeably linked multiple systems as influential in her commitment to her students and

ability to persist. Ms. Jonas' micro-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1976), or the system including

specific personal settings, included stories from her childhood about her mom's expectations

to "do your best, if not better than everyone" (Ms. Jonas, Initial interview, January 9, 2019)

and about moving to Kansas City with a boyfriend after student teaching and him breaking

up with her. Her response: "Okay, well, I'm just going to start fresh by myself then" (Ms. Jonas, Initial interview, January 9, 2019).

The influence of the exo-system, or the system including social structures such as educational institutions (Bronfenbrenner, 1976), also became front and center, through the school, coworkers, and Ms. Jonas' principal. The social institution in which Ms. Jonas worked playing a role in her story of commitment and persistence.

> Well I've always thought of like the camaraderie of our school. No one's really out on an island by themselves. Everyone's here for everyone. Everyone's here for the kids. I think that shows school wide. We're here for the kids so if I can't do something I need you to help me because I need to be here for the kids. (Ms. Jonas, Follow-up interview, March 12, 2019)

During our follow-up interview, Ms. Jonas told about her work with the other English Language Arts (ELA) teachers in third, fourth, and fifth grades, which proved to support her persistence and provide further context about the ecological systems prompting her development:

> We meet with a PLC as ELA, PLC three through sixth and I feel like every time we meet it's almost like a little pep rally. "This is what I'm doing and it works really well and like it's really new and I'm afraid to do it but I did it anyway and it worked." Just hearing it from across grade levels and like third grades departmentalized, fourth, fifth, and now in sixth so we're all departmentalized. So those strong reading years that they'll get before me is cool. The teachers who are teaching that are extremely passionate about it. It hopefully will be a little easier next year and a little easier next year and a little easier the next year. I think for sure our PLC that we meet with every Wednesday after school is very motivating and brave because we're all just learning together and that's the cool part.

> It feels comfortable because I'll say something or I won't know something and it's just an environment that's safe and you won't feel stupid or you won't feel like, "I should have known that." Sharon is the coach here and she goes in and teaches lessons too. So we'll plan a lesson in our PLC and then she'll go teach it and record it and then we'll analyze it and talk through it and stuff. Just everybody not being afraid and everyone's just like, "I'm gonna come watch you but don't think that you're doing something wrong. I just want to learn from you too or I want to make a couple comments of maybe what I liked or what we could work on or moving forward." So

it's never like a done deal. I think that that's fun to do with everyone. And to have trust from our principal, Mrs. Carrington, that we can kind of do what we want. (Ms. Jonas, Follow-up interview, March 12, 2019)

The impact of the principal, Mrs. Carrington, on Ms. Jonas' story also became obvious as I noticed notes from Mrs. Carrington pinned next to Ms. Jonas' desk (see Figure 4.5).
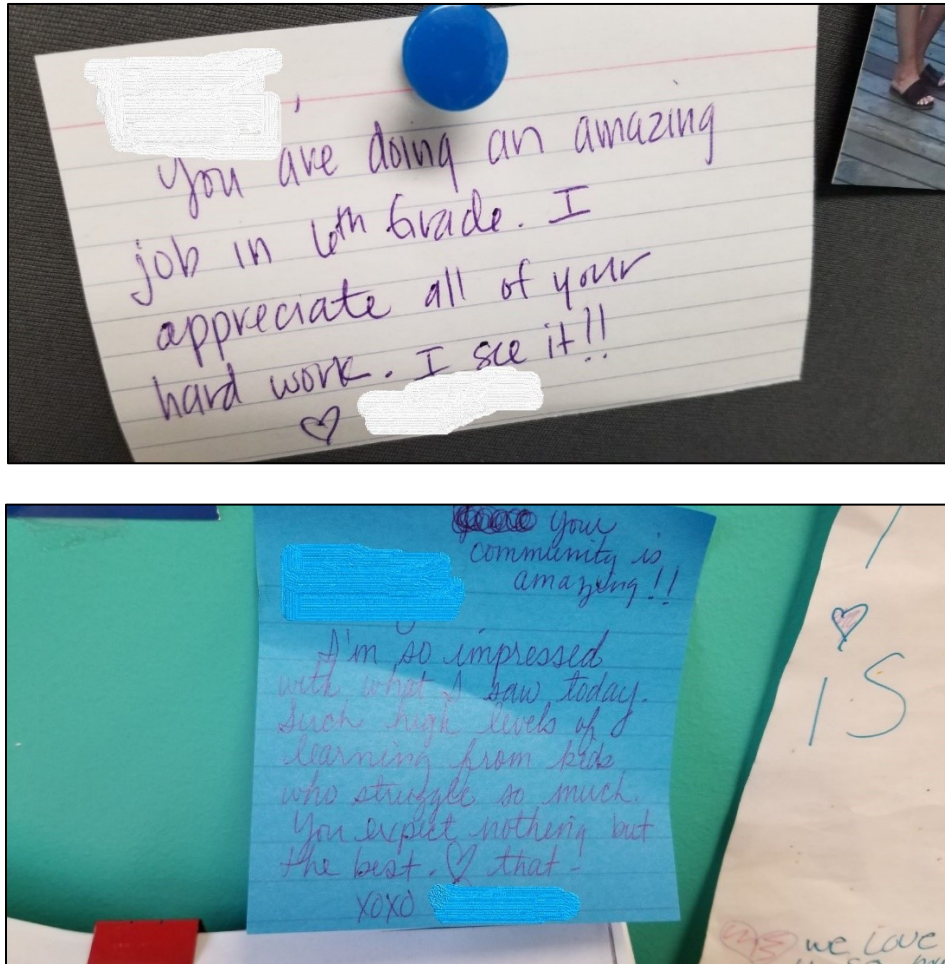

Figure 4.5. Notes from the principal.

Sharing the common narrative themes in stories or narrative style allows the readers of this study to fully understand the teachers' behaviors, actions, and beliefs in navigating

social-emotional experiences for readers. I have also summarized these themes in Table 4.1,

knowing a table provides just a glimpse of the overall story.

Table 4.1

Common Narrative Themes in Ms. Jonas' Story

Common Narrative Themes	Explanation or Examples
A love for reading	Ms. Jonas' love for reading in her personal life
Classroom environment	The physical classroom environment and the social-emotional environment impacted by teacher-student interactions
Knowledge of students' lives	The knowledge Ms. Jonas has of the students' lives outside of school; family situations, interests, traditions, etc.
Literacy learning as a social process	Social interactions that are intentionally designed to learn more about literacy and reading specifically
Critical text choice	Selecting texts for specific reasons; Intentional choices for reasons such as meaningful content, student connections, social issues, etc.
Facilitator of student learning	Teacher takes on the role of facilitator or guide, rather than dictating what and how the students learn
Student interest, choice, and autonomy	The incorporation of students' interest, choice, and autonomy in the classroom; letting students make decisions and acknowledging their voice
High expectations	Holding students to high expectations in terms of their effort and abilities; Ms. Jonas' holding herself to high expectations as well
Persistence	Being able to persevere through difficult circumstances; not giving up but pushing through

Throughout my time spent with Ms. Jonas, further understanding about the behaviors, actions, and beliefs of navigating social-emotional experiences for readers by high-performing teachers emerged. These findings and the evidenced stories, quotes, and teacher reflections overlap from theme to theme at times. Every teacher's story is different. In the following section, I present a snapshot introduction of Mrs. Dabney and then her story representing discovered themes.

Mrs. Dabney: A Snapshot

Mrs. Dabney's teaching career stretches over 32 years. Currently, she is a fourth grade teacher at Harrison Elementary School under the leadership of Dr. Grimes. Harrison Elementary School is a neighborhood school located in an area of the city marked by segregation and White flight. In the past few years, a group of majority White families in the neighborhood started their own school, just miles from Harrison Elementary. Mrs. Dabney identifies as White. Harrison Elementary enrolls more than 300 students, including 70.3% of students who identify as Black, 10.5% Latinx, and 9.3% White. Mrs. Dabney's students reflected the school's population. During my time with Mrs. Dabney, several themes surfaced. As stated in reference to Ms. Jonas' themes, these themes, the stories, and the evidence that supports the themes tend to overlap naturally at times.

- An absence of love for reading

- Focusing on the test

- Challenging students while positively reinforcing

- Cooperative interactions

- Understanding students' knowledge and lives

The overall story of Mrs. Dabney is presented in the following section, organized by these found themes. Daily stories, quotes from interviews, teacher reflections, and researcher memos all contribute to the telling of her story.

Mrs. Dabney's Story

> I was not a reader when I was a kid. I did not like it and I remember in fifth grade, Mrs. Miller 'cause she was my neighbor and she was friends with my parents. I remember whatever book you chose, let's say you go to the book nook. Whatever book you chose you had to start that book and finish it. I remember that kind of turned me off to reading as a kid. It was never like something that I would choose to do. My parents weren't big readers. (Mrs. Dabney, Initial interview, January 7, 2019)

An Absence of Love for Reading

Dewey (1986) explained, "Every experience lives on in further experiences" (p. 248). Mrs. Dabney's story of navigating social-emotional reading experiences for her students began in her experiences long ago. Mrs. Dabney's sharing of this story of her lack of a passion for reading helped me understand the continuity within the three-dimensional space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), or impact of past, present, and future, on her current story. While recognized as a high-performing reading teacher, based on her test scores and principal and district recommendations, an absence of love for reading became a common narrative theme. Take for instance, Mrs. Dabney's words from both the initial interview and the follow-up interview:

> If I could teach math all day, I would teach math all day. Reading is not my thing. Teaching reading is kind of a chore. It's not my passion. (Mrs. Dabney, Initial interview, January 7, 2019)

> Oh, I lie and tell [the students] I love to read. I enjoy it. Is it the first thing I'm going to choose to do if I have a moment of free time? Probably not. I have other interests. (Mrs. Dabney, Follow-up interview, March 13, 2019)

Although Mrs. Dabney jokingly stated she lies to the students, she honestly shared that she lacked a love for reading. Tuning in to my own personal reactions and interpretations, I recognized the initial tension I felt. This story of Mrs. Dabney conflicted with my assumed story of a high-performing reading teacher. I questioned: Wouldn't a high-performing reading teacher love reading? Wouldn't a love for reading run through the veins of the social-emotional experience created around reading in the classroom? I possessed an awareness of social learning theory (Bandura, 1971), claiming individuals learn from the models around them. It appeared Mrs. Dabney understood this too, given her desire for her students to think she loves reading. Existing research also verified that a teacher's leisure reading habits do not always influence the level of best literacy practice implementation (Burgess et al., 2011), despite other research correlating teachers who read leisurely with effectiveness in teaching reading (McKool & Gespass, 2009). I knew that Mrs. Dabney needed to tell and show me her story rather than trying to write her story through my assumptions or biases about the need to have a love for reading. Part of revealing her story includes describing a typical day in Mrs. Dabney's classroom.

A typical day in Mrs. Dabney's classroom. Mrs. Dabney's classroom consistently felt neat, orderly, and very well organized. Desks arranged in groups were evenly spaced throughout the classroom, student work was displayed in orderly rows on the wall, and bulletin boards held neatly hung content with headings or titles to name or explain the display. White walls framed two sides of the classroom with one gray-blue wall at the back and windows stretched along another side. As I wrote in my field notes after one of my first visits to her classroom at Harrison Elementary:

As I walked into Mrs. Dabney's room for my first observation I noticed the organized groupings of desks, arranged into four long rectangles running vertically from the front carpet and board. The classroom, rid of clutter, had a place for everything. Even the work on the wall hung in an organized fashion. (Field notes, November 14, 2018) (see Figure 4.6)

Figure 4.6. Classroom environment.

Later that same first day, Mrs. Dabney introduced students to an article called "First

Thanksgiving Meal." Below, I share segments from my field notes as I observed Mrs.

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Dabney engage students with this text. These notes illustrated patterns of interactions,

curricula, and instructional strategies that I consistently observed in Mrs. Dabney's

classroom environment:

> As the students filed into the classroom from lunch, they gathered on the front carpet facing the board. No obvious seating arrangement emerged but students seated themselves from the front of the carpet to the back, with some students needing to sit along the back and sides. Mrs. Dabney, positioned in a chair in front of the students with her back to the board, introduced the informational article about the time-appropriate topic, the Mayflower and the life of the pilgrims. Before reading aloud, Mrs. Dabney called on students to share what they previously learned about the experiences of the passengers and sailors on the Mayflower. Students consistently raised their hands giving answers that Mrs. Dabney acknowledged as correct: "Ohhh. Good one." (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, November 14, 2018)

> As Mrs. Dabney prepared to begin reading, she emphasized that good readers ask questions. She asked students why readers ask questions and again, the students responded with answers in which Mrs. Dabney agreed. At that point, Mrs. Dabney began reading the article aloud. The read aloud was peppered with questions for students to answer along the way, including questions about the trip, what they brought with them, and how they must have felt. After reading this particular section in the article, Mrs. Dabney directed the students to their seats to read the next section about the pilgrims independently. She explained to the students that they should be highlighting and underlining the text, as they had learned, when they come to important information in the text or upon words they do not know or fully understand. "I see Kierra highlighting…I see Ja'Von circling…," Mrs. Dabney announced as students engaged in the independent reading. She circled around the room monitoring students' engagement and whispering in the ears of a couple different students. As she bent down to whisper in a student's ear who sat towards the back of the room where I observed, I heard her say, "You have some of the same words circled as I had." The student raised his eyebrows and smirked quickly as Mrs. Dabney moved on. (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, November 14, 2018)

> After a few minutes, the class discussed that portion of the text. With Mrs. Dabney guiding the discussion by posing questions and then calling one student at a time, the class discussed what the pilgrims ate, along with what they did not eat. (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, November 14, 2018)

> Ah, they're saying what they didn't have on the table. Every family is going to look a little bit different. Right? One of the things I was sharing with Mrs. Knox is when I got married to my husband, our families' Thanksgiving looked very different from each other. (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, November 14, 2018)

The students returned to the front carpet and for the next section of the text Mrs. Dabney asked volunteers to read aloud. Multiple students raised their hands eagerly. As Jordan read aloud, he paused at a difficult word and Mrs. Dabney chimed in: I love that you are slowing down there because that's a difficult word. Boys and girls, if you come to a word that you are not familiar with, I don't want you to just get stuck on one word. You are going to circle it, skip over it, and keep on reading. (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, November 14, 2018)

The reading continued as Mrs. Dabney read more aloud, another students read aloud, and the class chorally read a paragraph aloud. To read the final portion of the text, Mrs. Dabney told them they would read with their teams, meaning their table groups. Before moving back to their teams from the carpet, Mrs. Dabney informed them that they needed to know what they were looking for as they read. She had the students read the questions that were included at the end of the article. When sending the students off to their teams, Mrs. Dabney questioned, "When working with your teams, is it okay to get up close and sit on your knees?" (Students nodded). "Yes, get together." As teams worked to complete the reading and begin answering the questions, Mrs. Dabney circulated around the room pushing and guiding students. "I do not want to see you get stuck when you have to do this by yourself," she stated to a team struggling with the word "indigenous." (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, November 14, 2018)

My time in the classroom came to an end as Mrs. Dabney called the students' attention to reflect on the reading: "Was this an easy piece to read?" Students shook their heads and some mumbled "no." "No. I want you to persevere," Mrs. Dabney explained. "This is not going to be easy but we've got to do this." Mrs. Dabney referred to the need to do hard work and persevere in preparation for the requirements of the state test coming in the spring. The students then transitioned into the district's adopted computer resource, called iReady, on individual laptops. (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, November 14, 2018)

Focusing on the Test

I chose to include the story of this first full observation in Mrs. Dabney's classroom because it contained elements of all common narrative themes in her overall story of navigating social-emotional experiences for her readers. The structure of the observed reading blocks typically followed a similar format. During the follow-up interview, Mrs. Dabney referred to this structure as, "I do, you do, we do" (Mrs. Dabney, Follow-up interview, March 13, 2019), meaning, she models, students try independently, and then the

students work collaboratively. Mrs. Dabney believed utilization of this structure prepares her students best for the learning necessary for the state assessment. In nearly every observation, conversation, interview, and teacher reflection, influence of "the test" surfaced.

Additionally, Mrs. Dabney utilized many reading passages or articles that reflected the type of reading her students would be faced with on the state assessment. The reading passages at times came from Reading Street and Story Town, old basal readers the district adopted in previous years along the swinging pendulum of curriculum and resource changes she experienced over her 32-year career. She stated, "Any assessment my kids take looks just like Reading Street or Story Town" (Mrs. Dabney, Initial interview, January 7, 2019). She explained how "old school brown English books" (Mrs. Dabney, Follow-up interview, March 13, 2019) used to provide students with necessary basic skills for testing but now this isn't happening. As Ladson-Billings (2014) recognized, "In this era of state-mandated high-stakes testing, it is nearly impossible for teachers to ignore mundane content and skills-focused curricula" (p. 83).   Something Mrs. Dabney stated during my initial interview framed her story of direct test-focus well: "If you're testing that way, why aren't you teaching that way?" (Mrs. Dabney, Initial interview, January 7, 2019). This quote directly reflected the point Berliner (2011) made about U.S. curriculum:

> It is the assessment system that defines what students should know at different levels, and deviation from that plan is considered dangerous because it might result in missing curriculum of material reflected in some items on a high stakes accountability test. (p. 295)

On a regular basis, Mrs. Dabney worked to get students prepared for the big test by explicitly warning them what the test contained, what they would be expected to do, and how they would be scored:

When you are taking the assessment, they are not going to provide the graphic organizer for you. You are going to have to identify what works for you. (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, December 5, 2018)

The test likes to trick you. Look at this one…'pupil or student'…they use words that mean the same thing that you may not know. (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, January 18, 2019)

Shouldn't we be writing in complete sentences fourth graders? On the test they expect all these things. Capitalization, punctuation, does it make sense. (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, January 18, 2019)

We are going to score most of our points on the test by the process of writing. (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, February 6, 2019)

You are going to have to do this in May on the state assessment. You are going to have to pull information out on your own and use that in your writing. (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, February 19, 2019)

When you take that big assessment in May, you are going to read some passages. You are going to write about those passages and pull ideas from those passages. (Mrs. Dabney, Field texts, March 6, 2019)

Again, a tense feeling grew inside me as I entered the classroom the first few times. I became aware of the negative connotation I attached to teaching to the test. Cognizant of my reactions and widening my eyes, I realized the three-dimensional space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) must be acknowledged in this story, like every other story. I needed to understand the interaction, continuity, and situation playing significant roles in this story. My job as narrative inquirer called me to understand the story and understand my story within that story, but not to evaluate the story. Reflecting on the tension I felt, I analyzed why I felt this tension. My experiences in urban schools as a teacher educator caused me to be on guard against test preparation. I witnessed cold classrooms where students were unknown and were expected to work through test-like workbooks. My tension was relieved

as I realized Mrs. Dabney's classroom painted a different picture, as the remaining themes demonstrate.

Living alongside Mrs. Dabney, the circumstances in which she taught and the pressure she felt seemed to drive this focus on the test. In fact, Mrs. Dabney talked about not wanting to focus on the test but in the last 10 years, it was the expectation (Mrs. Dabney, personal communication, April 1, 2019). The circumstances and pressure crystallized in her teacher reflections and responses to my questions about her daily priorities in reading:

> The students are really struggling with written responses. Writing is a major concern for multiple reasons, but the biggest worry is the MAP assessment in May. 40% of their ELA score is writing. Students must read a passage and then refer to the passage to write "Think About It" questions. This is very difficult, but....It is exactly like our assessment. They have to be exposed to difficult text. I have to push them. We are in crunch time, especially since we have been out of school due to snow days. (Mrs. Dabney, Teacher reflection, February 19, 2019)

Later in the follow-up interview, Mrs. Dabney shared how the inconsistency in the district and the district curriculum makes achievement on tests challenging and adds to the pressure:

> Our district, we've got so many superintendents that come in every three years and they're changing the way that the curriculum looks and what the classrooms should look like and they've slowly taken away the structure and the basic skills that the kids need to achieve what you want them to be able to do. I keep going back to writing, but I have a lot of pressure with this whole writing. (Mrs. Dabney, Follow-up interview, March 13, 2019)

Clearly, these institutional stories (Clandinin, 2013b; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) impacted Mrs. Dabney's story. These institutional stories play out within Mrs. Dabney's exo-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1976), containing social and institutional influences within the ecological system, such as the U.S. educational system. The context that developed provided

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a deeper understanding of Mrs. Dabney's story of navigating social-emotional experiences for readers.

Challenging Students while Positively Reinforcing

Going back to that first observation in her classroom, Mrs. Dabney's persistence in challenging her students rang from the mountaintops. As she closed the lesson and asked, "Was this an easy piece to read?" Mrs. Dabney knew the answer. "No. I want you to persevere," Mrs. Dabney explained. "This is not going to be easy but we've got to do this." I immediately recognized this theme in Mrs. Dabney's story of navigating the social-emotional experiences for her readers, and it surfaced continually in her daily stories. Even though many of her students were below grade level, Mrs. Dabney emphasized, "They have to be exposed to the fourth grade curriculum because they have to take that fourth grade assessment" (Mrs. Dabney, personal communication, December 18, 2018). The challenging and high expectations came in response to their behavior and efforts, in addition to their academic work. Mrs. Dabney expected them to focus, work hard, and succeed. An observation in February revealed a perfect example of Mrs. Dabney's daily stories of challenging her students.

> As the lesson began, Mrs. Dabney referred to the question the students would have to response to in writing, after reading the given informational text: Why is George Washington one of the most famous presidents in history? She continued to remind them that on the test they would have to write about the passage they are given. Mrs. Dabney gave an example of the reading passage and type of writing prompt a fourth grader received last year on the state assessment. "So we are going to practice. The more we practice, the better we get," Mrs. Dabney stated. She continued, "You guys write fabulous in isolation. But when you have to write sentences in a paragraph then you go BLAH! You act like you can't do it. I'm going to slowly pull away from giving you every single thing. Slowly I'm going to baby step away so you can do this. So by May you guys will be like, "'Oh, I got this.'" (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, February 12, 2019)

Mrs. Dabney explained, "Our job is to read and write the response to this question. We are going to gather our own information so we can write about the question." The class began the work of reading the article by doing a picture walk of the article, looking at the table of contents and photos throughout the piece. Mrs. Dabney read the text aloud at first and stopped occasionally to ask students to share information they learned, which could be used in their writing. After a while, Mrs. Dabney transitioned the students into reading and recording pieces of information independently. As they worked, Mrs. Dabney would interject to challenge the students' focus and effort:

"Go get a drink and go to the bathroom Jackson. We are getting ridiculous. Go throw some water on your face so you don't fall asleep."

"Sit up Arianna. Can't do your best work like that my friend."

"Josh, do you know what we're doing buddy? Earth to Josh. Come on. You are one of my best readers. Holy moly people. They are going to think you can't do this but you can. You are one of my smartest people."

Before the reading block ended, Mrs. Dabney gained the students' attention and asked some questions to gain students' ideas and thinking about the reading and the important content. After posing a question, one student raised his hand. "If Leon is the only one answering the question I am going to have a nervous breakdown. We went on winter break and we forgot everything!" Mrs. Dabney remarked. More students' hands shot up. Mrs. Dabney called on a student and after his answer she replied to the class, "Does that sound familiar? If not, wake up. Welcome to Harrison Elementary." A few more students contributed answers as the lesson ended and Mrs. Dabney verbally confirmed the responses. "I'm so glad you came to school today Leon," Mrs. Dabney said, giving him a high five. (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, February 12, 2019)

As this story reveals, the overall story of Mrs. Dabney's navigation of social-emotional experiences for her readers rested on high expectations and the challenging of students. The high expectations and challenge of Mrs. Dabney reflects what Sandilos, Rimm-Kaufman, and Cohen (2017) called demand, which aligned to academic achievement in their study of urban school districts. Specifically, they state, "The positive influence that teachers' demand has on the classroom should be considered in the context of instructional practices that are regarded as high quality" (p. 1333). Mrs. Dabney recognized the difference

between challenging her students, or demand, and frustrating them. Mrs. Dabney shared in the follow-up interview:

> I don't want them to feel defeated because they're not understanding it on the day that it's taught. It's not their fault that it was not taught to them previously. I try to build confidence that way and let them know that they will get it. It might not be now. (Mrs. Dabney, Follow-up interview, March 13, 2019)

Mrs. Dabney made it clear that she wanted to push her students without frustrating or discouraging them. She provided an energy in the classroom to usher students along in her high expectations, clearly demonstrating a belief in the students' abilities. She explicitly balanced the challenging of students with positive reinforcement. This provided a warmth to her demand, aligning to warm demanding pedagogy (Kleinfeld, 1975; Vasquez, 1989). As Margolis and McCabe (2006) explained, "Critical to struggling readers' future success is the realistic belief that they have the ability to succeed" (p. 448). Specifically attending to cognitive and effort attributions of students through positive reinforcement is one way to support students' belief in their ability to succeed (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). The metaphor of a seesaw comes to mind when considering the challenge and positive reinforcement. Throughout observations, Mrs. Dabney teeter-tottered between pushing students and encouraging students. In the initial observation I shared, notice how Mrs. Dabney interjected with "Oh, Good one," "I see Kierra highlighting…I see Ja'Von circling," and high fives. Further analysis of her positive reinforcement led to the following artistic representation (see Figure 4.7).

"I want you to persevere."	"You did a really nice job of working hard."
"Get your pencil going."	"Excellent Ja'Von."
"Sit up team one. Sit up tall."	"All of team 3 has a good starter sentence."
"All hands should be up."	"You can do it my friend."
"Okay, you've got to get something on your paper."	"You are way smart. Way smart."

Figure 4.7. Mrs. Dabney's balance of challenge and positive reinforcement.

Mrs. Dabney went on to say, "Everybody gets upset and sometimes I will bark at them, but I think overall, they think, 'She wants what is best and I have to have that expectation for them'" (Mrs. Dabney, Follow-up interview, March 13, 2019). Although this study did not incorporate the student perspective, if students indeed interpreted Mrs. Dabney in this way, Noddings' (2005) care theory comes into play. Noddings (2005, 2012) stated that in order for a relationship to truly be caring, students, or the cared-for individuals, need to recognize the relationship as caring. In fact, Nodding (2012) stressed that without the cared-for showing "that the caring has been received…there is no caring relation—no matter how hard the *carer* has tried to care" (p. 772). Mrs. Dabney believed students viewed her as wanting the best for them through her care. Hearing Mrs. Dabney say this confirmed what I recorded in my researcher memos even back in January:

Mrs. Dabney has very high expectations for their work in measuring up to the test. She recognized that the students were tired but she required them to push through it and still work hard, demonstrating their abilities in reading and comprehending. Despite the high expectations and pushing, the students seem to respect her. They haven't demonstrated resistance towards her. (Research memos, January 18, 2019)

Later in this interview Mrs. Dabney shared experiences from her early years of teaching and how she learned to teach in urban schools as a White, rural Iowa girl. In this interview and at other times in this journey, Mrs. Dabney talked about experienced, and often Black, principals and teachers guiding, coaching, and taking her "under their wing" (Mrs. Dabney, Initial interview, January 7, 2019):

I've always had great people around me that I learned from. Not just principals. Other staff. Older black teachers that were so structured, but you would think, "They're so mean to those kids," but those kids loved those teachers. They were the first ones that they'd hug and loved. (Mrs. Dabney, Follow-up interview, March 13, 2019)

This insight allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the three-dimensional space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of Mrs. Dabney's navigation of social-emotional reading experiences for her students. Past interactions and experiences in Mrs. Dabney's teaching career helped mold this current story through the dimension of continuity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This aligns with what Connelly and Clandinin (1988) said: "Teachers tell us that much of what they learn about teaching and what it means to teach is learned through being a teacher" (p. 203). Teachers learn through the process of teaching, from students, from other teachers, and through the school and curricular milieus (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988).

Mrs. Dabney's tireless work of challenging her students greatly contributed to the social-emotional experience for these readers. She exhibited a care for her students through these high expectations, in doing something she viewed as positive for the students' well-

being (Gay, 2010). As Gay (2010) stated, "Teachers who really care for students…expect high performance from them" (p. 48). During my follow-up interview with Mrs. Dabney, she shared her ultimate desire for her students as readers, which prompted the challenging of her students:

> I'm hoping that wherever they came in August, they've shown considerable growth. We see it on iReady. Our district uses iReady. That's one indication that the kids will do well on the state assessment. It's all about assessments, of course. The data from the iReady, the district already has seen and then hopefully that will transfer to the MAP. (Mrs. Dabney, Follow-up interview, March 13, 2019)

Cooperative Interactions

On that first day, the formation of the desks and the teams working together to read and answer questions about the pilgrims' lives proved to be another common narrative theme in Mrs. Dabney's story. The theme of cooperative interactions aligns with recommendations of reading researchers Guthrie and Barber (2019): "Collaborative reasoning is not merely a social break from learning or an open discussion, but a scaffolded process of cumulative contributions based on reading a topic" (p. 57). They go on to recommend that collaboration occur in every lesson. In time, it became obvious that working cooperatively occurred on a regular basis in this classroom. Once Mrs. Dabney dismissed students to work in their teams during that first observation, the students knew exactly what to do. They leaned in to hear each other and took turns reading and sharing ideas. This had been practiced many times before. In teacher reflections, Mrs. Dabney shared her intentionality in navigating cooperative work:

> I like to have my students in cooperative groups with different ability levels. I will intentionally call on a stronger student in the team to answer questions. This strong student will guide the team, as I rotate around to groups. We have a 5-1 scale for understanding in each team. 5 = you understand and can explain it to others. 4 = you

understand the skill. 3=I need help. 2=I don't understand. 1=no effort. (Mrs. Dabney, Teacher reflection, December 5, 2018)

Again in February she added:

Each team has students at various ability levels. Some are stronger in math than reading, etc.…Students need to work in cooperative teams and use their strengths to aid other team members. Leaders in each team are a "5." They can explain skills to others. There are about 2 leaders in each team. (Mrs. Dabney, Teacher reflection, February 19, 2019)

Mrs. Dabney made her approach to cooperative work explicit to her students as well. In December she reminded them, "In your teams you're going to help each other," and to one particular group when a teammate stumbled on a word, "Help him out" (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, December 5, 2018). "The students need to rely less on me and more on each other. Eventually, solely on themselves," Mrs. Dabney shared in January (Mrs. Dabney, Teacher reflection, January 18, 2019). The students were cognizant of Mrs. Dabney's goal for them to learn from each other. They often knew their role in the group as well. This practice of cooperative learning draws from the African worldview of cooperation and collective responsibility, where "everyone contributes to the well-being of the group" (King & Swartz, 2016, p. 2). On different occasions, Mrs. Dabney referred to their roles when teams collaboratively worked:

Isaiah, right here. Come on. You're my leader. (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, January 18, 2019)

 Zion, you need to take charge because this team is sluggish. (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, January 24, 2019)

Lana, you're going to have to take the leadership role because Destiny isn't here today. (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, February 19, 2019)

Okay, Lana and Maria. My friend Jared probably doesn't know what's going on. So I need you to help others while I'm working with other teams. (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, February 19, 2019)

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The element of working cooperatively and learning from others echoed in Mrs. Dabney's story with other Harrison teachers as well, demonstrating cooperative learning as part of her ecological system of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). The story Mrs. Dabney told revealed the element of community and collaboration among the Harrison staff as a factor within her micro-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1976), the most personal system impacting her:

> That's what's really great about this staff is we help each other a lot and they want us to collaborate as much as possible. They don't want us to feel, that's the superintendent's thing is they don't want you to feel isolated. They want you to collaborate and even though there's just two wings, this wing is four, five, six. We all get together four, five, six. We'll just trade kids, like I shared with you previously, these are our children. They're not just Mrs. Dabney's students. So I might have kids sitting with us in a couple weeks for fractions, because Mrs. Knox's kids need to revisit fractions, and my curriculum is fractions third quarter. (Mrs. Dabney, Initial interview, January 7, 2019)

Mrs. Dabney also told about her collaboration with teachers and staff at other times throughout her career. Specifically, during the initial interview, Mrs. Dabney told about being moved from her very first school that was predominately White, to another school due to the district's balancing of White and Black teachers: "I got bumped to an all-Black school. I loved that staff…they kind of took me under their wing. It was a predominately Black staff; Black male principal who took me and just guided me" (Mrs. Dabney, Initial interview, January 7, 2019). This same interview led to conversations about "sponging off" things that her own children's teachers did and learning from other teachers from surrounding school districts when she attained her master's degree.

Clearly, Mrs. Dabney's story of collaborating and working cooperatively with other teachers played a parallel role in the story of navigating social-emotional experiences for her

readers. Collaborating with others to learn and grow was pertinent. Not only did she desire

collaboration for her students, she engaged in collaboration herself.

Understanding Students' Knowledge and Lives

Mrs. Dabney intimately knew about her students' lives. She knew which of her

students struggled with vocabulary and writing, explaining this to me without having to look

at their work or previous assessments. Beyond their knowledge and academic needs, Mrs.

Dabney knew her students' families, their living arrangements, who had attended Harrison

since kindergarten, and who would rather be in school than out of school. Mrs. Dabney

knew that Leon was homeless and that he hated spring break and snow days. She also knew

how bright Leon was, which brought her to tears in a conversation about his potential.

Undoubtedly, Mrs. Dabney's understanding of her students influenced their social-emotional

experiences in her classroom.

As a result of her familiarity with students, Mrs. Dabney experienced tension between

her teaching decisions and the expectations placed on her and the students. Clandinin,

Murphy, Huber, and Murray Orr (2010) also found that "Achievement-test practices that

flow from accountability policies shape powerful stories of school...[which often] create

tensions for teachers…as they live out their lives with children in the in-classroom place" (p.

82). Mrs. Dabney could relate to this tension. Take, for instance, the perspective Mrs.

Dabney provided during the initial interview:

> We have to find things of interest for them to read, so let's say for example, the
> achievement series tests that my kids just had to take. One of the questions was on
> ancient clocks, and the other was on the Revolutionary War. Okay. There is no
> interest in ancient clocks or the Revolutionary War, when you're nine years old. And
> then they had to write an essay 'cause on the state assessment they have to write
> essays, but they could have chosen from all of the different topics. Why did you
> choose ancient clocks and the Revolutionary War as the assessment for achievement

series for second quarter? For non-fiction? For a nine year old? We gotta find high interest so that they have more of a passion for reading. (Mrs. Dabney, Initial interview, January 7, 2019)

I gained a whole new perspective after hearing this. The institution of education, nested within Mrs. Dabney's exo-system of ecological development (Bronfenbrenner, 1976), exhibited a powerful influence. Mrs. Dabney possessed a deep understanding of her students' knowledge and lives, and she utilized that understanding despite tensions of testing.

I observed for over a month before this and had not yet gained insight into Mrs. Dabney's opinions about the reading experiences needed for students or the tensions she experienced. This insight allowed me to make meaning of even my first observation that I described above. As Mrs. Dabney engaged the students in the informational reading about the pilgrims, which resembled the type of texts students would face on the state assessment, she worked to make the text interesting by relating it the students' knowledge and lives. She built on the previous knowledge she knew they acquired and related the content of what the pilgrims traveled with and the food they ate to what her students travel with and the foods that they eat on Thanksgiving. Later in December, when reading about polar bears and their ability to live in temperatures 50 degrees below zero, Mrs. Dabney pulled the students' lives into the text: "It's about 40 degrees here. There's no way we would go outside for recess at 50 below" (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, December 5, 2018). Mrs. Dabney possessed a deep understanding of her students' knowledge and lives, and this became another common narrative theme in her story of navigating social-emotional experiences for her readers.

Social learning theory (Bandura, 2001) clearly played a role in Mrs. Dabney's story given her demonstrated understanding that students' lives and interests support socially-constructed learning. This theory also recognizes that the social learning experiences cannot

always be controlled by the learner. Mrs. Dabney validated her students' lives and interests but the curriculum she presented did not draw on their funds of knowledge (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994) or heritage or community practices (Paris & Alim, 2014) as mediated in culturally sustaining pedagogy.

When I observed her in February, Mrs. Dabney focused on students' writing in response to what they read. She highlighted the unique preferences and characteristics writers possess by reading aloud from a book *How Writers Work* (Fletcher, 2000). Mrs. Dabney then pulled the knowledge she had of her students into the lesson: "Is everyone's process for writing going to be all the same? No. Some people may say, 'Writing is my strength. I'm good at this.' Others may say 'I really have to work at writing'" (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, February 6, 2019). Continuing with this book a couple weeks later, Mrs. Dabney pointed out to students, "Zoriah likes to write or read on her mom's bed. Truman said he likes to write at his desk. And Faith likes to write and read laying on her stomach" (Mrs. Dabney, Field notes, February 19, 2019).

Mrs. Dabney's knowledge of her students also included their lives and circumstances outside of school. She seemed to agree with Kirkland's (2019) statement, "Poverty, family distress, and external conditions have an impact on schools and student achievement" (p. 11). On multiple occasions she referenced the students' families and home contexts. This knowledge guided the decisions Mrs. Dabney made and the navigation of social-emotional experiences in her classroom. One example comes from a conversation I had with Mrs. Dabney in December:

> Our kids…we have a lot of great families but we have a lot of kids who live in chaos. They are at dad's and then they're at grandma's and then they're at aunt's and then they're at their mom's boyfriend's house. When they come here. We have structure

and they know that we do this from 8:00 to 9:00. And we do this from 9:00 to 9:30. Like, Tray yesterday, he's like, "How long are we out for break?" And I said, "You don't come back til January the 9th and he was like, "Mrs. Dabney, that's too long." This is their family. This is their home. This is where they feel safe. This is where we take care of them. (Mrs. Dabney, personal communication, December 18, 2018)

As Mrs. Dabney's story played out, I understood how the themes of *focusing on the test* and *possessing a deep knowledge of her students* bumped up against each other. There were times that Mrs. Dabney's knowledge of her students misaligned with the curriculum and preparations for the test. In addition to her reaction to the lackluster reading passages students were being faced with such as ancient clocks and the Revolutionary War, Mrs. Dabney also revealed the tension between these two themes in the follow-up interview:

> Of course, looking at the curriculum. Covering that as best I can, but also I don't want it to be a frustration for them to the point that the lesson falls apart because it's above their ability level or it's not of interest to them. I've tried to do things that the district, of course wants, but then sometimes I think they're so disconnected from a classroom of 10 year olds that they're like, they don't get it. Then I have to tweak things that's still covering what is needed. (Mrs. Dabney, Follow-up interview, March 13, 2019)

The autonomy Mrs. Dabney possessed in tweaking things for her students seemed to come from her confidence in knowing what her students needed. She stated, "We are old school, skill drill, old school teaching. Go down the teachers in this hall. We are just old school, basic, we've taught for a long time. We know what they need" (Mrs. Dabney, personal communication, December 18, 2018). This autonomy to do what she thinks her kids need streams from her principal, Dr. Grimes, as well, telling more about the three-dimensional space of Mrs. Dabney's story:

> Our district, and a lot of urban school districts, we change things every three years. Something new. Do you know how many times we've piloted a reading program? Do you know how many textbooks I have back there that we have piloted? Dr. Grimes…Oh, we're piloting another reading program. We're piloting another reading program. These little people…oh, we're going to try this. Now we're going to try this. Now we're going to try this. Dr. Grimes is like, "Nope. We're not doing that."

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Her favorite phrase is "best practices." She's like, "You know your kids. You know what your kids need. You give your kids what they need." Dr. G…we adore her. We will die when she leaves us. (Mrs. Dabney, personal communication, December 18, 2018)

As Allensworth, Ponisciak, and Mazzeo (2009) explained, "Teachers stay in schools with inclusive leadership, where they feel they have influence over their work environment and they trust their principal as an instructional leader" (p. 2). Mrs. Dabney clearly values that in Dr. Grimes. Despite the challenges Mrs. Dabney discussed, she feels autonomy to make the tweaks her students need based on her understanding of the students' knowledge and lives. While Mrs. Dabney accepted the freedom to use what she knows about her students to make decisions, her text decisions conformed to the dominance of testing. She surely felt the White gaze of the U.S. education system upon her (Paris & Alim, 2014). Paris and Alim (2014) posed the question, "What would liberating ourselves from this gaze and the educational expectations it forwards mean for our abilities to envision new forms of teaching and learning?" (p. 86).

As with Ms. Jonas' story, I summarize Mrs. Dabney's common narrative themes in Table 4.2. Summarizing the themes and overall story in this way does not feel appropriate due to the inadequate picture it paints. I recognize, though, that for some readers, summary tables help synthesize the daily stories that created Ms. Jonas' and Mrs. Dabney's overall story of behaviors, actions, and beliefs in navigating the social-emotional experiences of their readers.

Using the findings, it is necessary to understand the implications of this study. In the final chapter, I attend to those implications. Additionally, I discuss the educational

significance of the findings and implications before offering recommendations for future

studies.

Table 4.2

Common Narrative Themes in Mrs. Dabney's Story

Common Narrative Themes	Explanation or Examples
Absence of love for reading	Lack of enthusiasm, love, or personal interest in reading by Mrs. Dabney
Focusing on the test	Test-focused instruction, student work, and dialogue within the classroom; Centered on the high-stakes state assessment
Challenging students while positively reinforcing	Pushing students' behavior, efforts, and academic levels beyond the current status without frustrating; seesaw of challenge and positive reinforcement
Cooperative interactions	Utilizing group work within the classroom context; Encouraging students to learn from each other
Understanding students' knowledge and lives	Mrs. Dabney's knowledge of what her students need based on their academic performance, behavior, and lives outside of school

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS: WHY THIS MATTERS

In this study I strived to understand the stories of high-performing urban elementary teachers' navigation of social-emotional experiences for readers through their behaviors, actions, and beliefs. Specifically, I desired to find the answer to the research question:

- What are the behaviors, actions, and beliefs of high-performing urban elementary teachers in navigating social-emotional experiences for readers?

I lived alongside two high-performing teachers, Ms. Jonas and Mrs. Dabney, for more than four months, gathering data from weekly observations, two interviews, and teacher reflections. In this chapter I review the findings from each teacher's story and discuss the implications of the findings collectively. I present the significance of this study in the field of education before making recommendations for future research.

Review of Findings

After thoroughly analyzing field notes from classroom observations, interview transcripts, teachers' personal reflections, and my own personal reactions and memos, common narrative themes emerged that tell each teacher's story. Each teacher's themes are presented separately since they are different stories with different findings. I first share Ms. Jonas' storied themes and then Mrs. Dabney's. Details about these themes and the teachers' stories were provided in Chapter 4, along with tables consolidating findings, so here, the findings are briefly summarized.

Ms. Jonas' Story: Common Narrative Themes

A love for reading permeated Ms. Jonas' classroom. Her explicit claims to love reading were paralleled in her enthusiasm for the class texts and her expressive read alouds.

Ms. Jonas' own love for reading drove her to help students "get excited about something" and to give them time to "actually enjoy reading" (Ms. Jonas, Follow-up interview, March 12, 2019). Her love for reading began as a young child and still resonates today. This theme played a major role in Ms. Jonas' navigation of social-emotional reading experiences for her students.

The classroom environment, which Ms. Jonas intentionally created to promote reading, also contributed to her story of navigating social-emotional experiences for the readers in her classroom. The room brimmed with bookshelves housing baskets of books with enticing labels. Books were organized based on Ms. Jonas' faves, class pics, books made into movies, and books with courageous characters. The classroom also contained different comfortable areas for reading. In one corner of the classroom a rug was positioned, along with a wingback folding chair and oversized pillows. Another area of the room had a knee-height table with pillows circled around it for sitting. Two high-top tables were positioned at the back of the room behind the class rug and bright orange storage benches. The decisions Ms. Jonas made about setting up this classroom environment directly impacted the social-emotional experiences of her students.

Additionally, Ms. Jonas demonstrated a deep understanding of her students' lives outside of school that impacted the social-emotional experiences for the students in this reading classroom. She knew their hobbies, interests, and families, in addition to how long they had attended Greenwood Elementary or what preceded their enrollment at Greenwood. Ms. Jonas leveraged this knowledge in her interactions with students by simply asking them about events in their lives or making connections to students' lives and experiences.

The social-emotional experiences of readers also emerged through Ms. Jonas'
navigation of social interactions about texts. Ms. Jonas clearly viewed literacy learning as a
social process. In every class observation students discussed their thoughts and shared their
opinions either in partners or as a whole class. She prioritized social processes for students
to "bounce ideas off each other" (Ms. Jonas, Teacher reflection, December 7, 2018) and
"learn from each other" (Ms. Jonas, Teacher reflection, January 25, 2019). Ultimately, Ms.
Jonas demonstrated a belief that readers need to engage socially in response to readings.

Another theme that surfaced in this story involved Ms. Jonas' critical text choice.
The two novels students engaged in as a class during my data collection period included *The
Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (Boyne, 2007) and *The Giver* (Lowry, 2014). Both of these
novels involved deep topics: the Holocaust and living in a utopian community, respectively.
Throughout the reading of these novels, students discussed topics such as ethics, power, and
injustice. Ms. Jonas also pulled partnering texts including informational articles and song
lyrics to provide further insight about the novels' contents. One article directly resulted from
a student's insight the day before and another day students begged to listen to a song multiple
times when the song lyrics were analyzed. Obviously the social-emotional experiences were
positively impacted by Ms. Jonas' critical text choice.

The role of facilitator, rather than dictator, of students' learning contributed to the
social-emotional experiences Ms. Jonas navigated as well. Students often guided the lesson
through their discussion, curiosities, and connections. In some instances, Ms. Jonas followed
the students' lead, such as the time she pulled in an article about North Korea when a student
pointed out similarities between that country and the utopian community they read about in
The Giver (Lowry, 2014). Ms. Jonas explicitly stated to the students, "I want you to lead

your learning. I want you all to determine what goes on in here" (Ms. Jonas, Field notes, January 18, 2019). The role Ms. Jonas maintained directly connected with the theme of student interest, choice, and autonomy in this classroom. On a daily basis, students owned whether they read alone or with a partner. They decided where to sit and what book to read. They even regularly set their own personal goals in their independent reading. The themes of Ms. Jonas being a facilitator in the students' learning and the presence of student interest, choice, and autonomy in the classroom influenced the social-emotional reading experiences of these students.

One theme in Ms. Jonas' story involved her high expectations for students. High expectations were held for students' effort and abilities. She knew the work was hard, but she also knew they could do hard things. In the follow-up interview with Ms. Jonas, we talked about teaching reading in an urban district and she stated the necessity of "Not giving the excuse that they can't do it because they can" (Ms. Jonas, Follow-up interview, March 12, 2019). This belief appeared in her pushing students to tell more or dig deeper in the reading. Likewise, it appeared in her conversations with students who did not complete their homework. These high expectations sent a message about the care Ms. Jonas felt for her students in this reading context.

Finally, the overall persistence Ms. Jonas demonstrated in her teaching role and in the students' reading and education encompassed her full story. Consistently holding high expectations for her students and herself formed part of this story, but persisting through challenges also contributed to this theme. During my time with Ms. Jonas, another grade level teacher decided to stop coming to school and later filed a Family Medical Leave Act form. Given Ms. Jonas' response, this decision did not come from a tragedy or issue that

required the teacher to leave. This decision meant the two remaining teachers had to split her students and take them into their own classrooms, requiring them to teach 37 to 38 students at one time. Ms. Jonas became upset and disappointed in the teacher's decision but knew the students counted on her. With extra students crammed into her classroom, Ms. Jonas persisted. She forged forward, committed to make the best of the situation.

In summary, Ms. Jonas' story of behaviors, actions, and beliefs navigating social-emotional experiences for her readers included the themes:

- A love for reading

- Classroom environment promoting reading

- Knowledge of students' lives

- Literacy learning as a social process

- Critical text choice

- Facilitator of student learning

- Student interest, choice, and autonomy

- High expectations

- Persistence

Mrs. Dabney's Story: Common Narrative Themes

As I spent months with Mrs. Dabney, multiple themes transpired in her story as well. One theme that Mrs. Dabney explicitly shared about herself was her absence of love for reading as a child. Even as an adult, she enjoyed reading but she did not love reading enough to choose it above other activities. She specifically shared, "Reading is not my thing. Teaching reading is kind of a chore" (Mrs. Dabney, Initial interview, January 7, 2019). She also lacked self-confidence in teaching reading in comparison to math. However, knowing

students needed to be interested in reading, she told them she loved to read. Despite a personal lack of love for reading, day-in and day-out Mrs. Dabney taught with energy. She demonstrated a motivation to teach reading and do the work necessary for the students. Had Mrs. Dabney never told me of her lack of love for reading or teaching reading, I would never have known it from observing her teach.

The energy and motivation Mrs. Dabney possessed in her teaching surfaced through a sense of urgency in preparing for the state assessment. Focusing on this test, the expectations of the test, and how to succeed on the test regularly played out in her classroom. Mrs. Dabney admitted that she determined how and what to teach, based on the test. She felt pressure to support the students in attaining acceptable test scores while also recognizing the students did not typically come to her as fourth graders with the necessary knowledge for her to build upon; driving her even more strongly to prepare them with specific skills required on the test. The focus on testing certainly impacted the social-emotional experiences of her students.

Along with the theme of focusing on the test, challenging her students stood out in Mrs. Dabney's story as well. She held high expectations of her students. She knew what they would be faced with on the test, and she challenged them with test-like content even though she recognized the difficulty for her students. Mrs. Dabney maintained high expectations for her students' efforts and utilization of skills they previously learned. In saying that, however, Mrs. Dabney never wanted to push them to frustration levels or to defeat them. To avoid frustration, she regularly inserted positive reinforcement to encourage students' effort and encourage them in continued work. Responses to students such as, "Excellent" and "You can do it" occurred daily. She also recognized that students' lack of

knowledge about specific content resulted from previous teachers not teaching them the content. "It's not their fault," she explained (Mrs. Dabney, Follow-up interview, March 13, 2019). Again, the theme of challenging her students while balancing positive reinforcement adds another layer in the story of Mrs. Dabney's behaviors, actions, and beliefs in navigating the social-emotional experiences of these readers.

Mrs. Dabney's story also contained the theme of utilizing cooperating interactions in their reading experiences. The belief of students needing to learn from each other prompted Mrs. Dabney to engage students in partner work and cooperative groups. She supported students in slowly helping each other out more and relying on her less. Mrs. Dabney knew her leaders and grouped students together with diverse ability levels so they could "use their independent strengths to aid other team members" (Mrs. Dabney, Teacher reflection, February 19, 2019). This social engagement in reading occurred regularly and clearly fostered a social-emotional experience for the students.

The final theme which crystallized in Mrs. Dabney's story involved her understanding of students' knowledge and lives. She knew her students' interests and realized that reading materials incorporated on tests often lacked content interesting to her students. Mrs. Dabney also knew her students' strengths and struggles; what they mastered and what they lacked. She knew their lives inside and outside of school, including their living situations and personal desires. She used this understanding of her students to "give her kids what they need" (Mrs. Dabney, personal communication, December 18, 2018) while maintaining alignment to the education system's value on testing. Undoubtedly, Mrs. Dabney's understanding of her students influenced their social-emotional experiences in her classroom.

Pulling all these themes together, Mrs. Dabney's story included the themes of:

- An absence of love for reading

- Focusing on the test

- Challenging students while positively reinforcing

- Cooperative interactions

- Understanding students' knowledge and lives

Given these findings, it is critical to consider the implications they hold. Rather than simply documenting the findings and putting this study behind me, I must make meaning of these findings to conceptualize the learning I am left with and the learning my readers can embrace. In the following section I explain why the stories of Ms. Jonas and Mrs. Dabney matter; how these stories contribute to knowledge about the social-emotional experiences navigated by high-performing urban teachers. Each teacher lived a different story, and those stories diversely produced answers to the research question: What are the behaviors, actions, and beliefs of high-performing urban elementary teachers in navigating social-emotional experiences for readers?

Implications of the Findings

As Clandinin (2006) explained, "We must be able to answer the 'so what' and 'who cares' questions that all researchers need to answer in their work" (p. 52). In this study, analysis of the consolidated findings reveal some very powerful implications. Looking at the results holistically suggests several implications about navigating social-emotional experiences for readers in urban schools. These include the ideas that:

- Navigation of social-emotional experiences can vary

- Unique ecological systems and driving forces influence teachers' navigation of social-emotional experiences

- Colleagues can positively impact navigating social-emotional experiences

- There is a need for warm demanding teaching

Navigation of Social-emotional Experiences Can Vary

As the findings reveal, the navigation of social-emotional experiences for readers can be different for each high-performing urban elementary teacher. The themes that each teacher displayed in their overall stories contained some different threads and storylines. This supports Smagorinsky's (2018) claim, "'Best practices, then, are not universal, but those that are suitable to local contexts, cultures, and worldviews" (p. 19). Nash and Panther (in press) concur in stating, "These practices do not account for teachers' philosophical stances and theories of learning or for the iterative nature of teaching" (n.p.). Although both of these teachers produced higher test scores than other similar classrooms, their navigation of social-emotional experiences was very different.

The approaches to navigating social-emotional experiences varied in Ms. Jonas' and Mrs. Dabney's stories, which appeared in the seen and unseen, the present and the absence. For instance, Ms. Jonas used intentionally-chosen novels and related texts to engage students with deep social issues, which contributed to their social-emotional experiences as readers. Mrs. Dabney utilized picture-book read alouds at times to make instructional points. The International Literacy Association (2018) explained, "Read-alouds promote a love of literature, foster social interactions, and ignite a passion for lifelong reading habits" (p. 2). On a more regular basis, she photocopied grade-level articles and passages for teaching skills and preparing for the state test, which contributed to alternative social-emotional experiences

of her readers. Experiences that aligned to test-like scenarios. Ms. Jonas facilitated whole group open discussion of texts, while Mrs. Dabney engaged students in question-answer type experiences. Additionally, Ms. Jonas used time in her classroom for students' independent reading of books they chose, and Mrs. Dabney spent time working as a whole group, in partners, or individually, all reading the same article or passage. There may be outside opinions or views about some practices being better than others, but the implication here is that navigating social-emotional reading experiences can vary among high-performing urban elementary teachers. In fact, in Chapter 2, I specifically attended to current literature about high-leverage practices, evidence-based best practices, and asset-based practices, all claiming to be effective for the teaching of reading. Following that literature though, I shared critics' statements about how high-leverage practices and best practices neglect factors of culture, language, and community (Kinloch, 2018; Nash & Panther, in press; Smagorinsky, 2018). Culturally sustaining pedagogy also received significant attention in Chapter 2, with specific approaches, behaviors, and beliefs activating this pedagogy for diverse populations. Literature shows that high-performing teachers and those that navigate positive social-emotional experiences for readers often use practices that connect to and extend student culture. The themes discovered in this study did not all align with these practices and pedagogies. For example, culturally relevant teachers build competence in at least one culture, critical consciousness, and academic achievement, yet Mrs. Dabney mainly focused on academic achievement. Similarly, culturally sustaining pedagogies focus on a critical centering on student, family, and community knowledge and practices, as was evident in the ways that Ms. Jonas critically selected texts that center students' experiences. Ms. Jonas does not explicitly address the aspect of CSP such as sustaining heritage practices though.

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The variations of Ms. Jonas' and Mrs. Dabney's navigation of social-emotional reading

experiences, in comparison to established effective literacy practices (TeachingWorks, 2017;

Malloy, Marinak, & Gambrell, 2019) and practices that build on student culture (Gay, 2010;

Ladson-Billings, 2009; Paris & Alim, 2017), can be seen in Table 5.1. Although exact

alignment is not always present, the elements included in the same row are related practices.

Table 5.1

Variations in Navigating Social-emotional Experiences

Ms. Jonas' Navigation	Mrs. Dabney's Navigation	Effective Literacy Teaching Practices	Practices that Build on Culture
Literacy learning as a social process	Cooperative interactions	Hear all voices; Student-led discussion; Small group work	Understands literacy learning as social process; Intentional discourse
Knowledge of students' lives	Understanding students' knowledge and lives	Respectful relationships; Learn about students' personal experiences	Care "for" students; Knowledge of students' lives
Facilitator of student learning		Invite students as active contributors; Elicit student thinking	Teacher as facilitator
Student interest, choice, and autonomy; Facilitator of student learning		Provide students access, relevance, and choice	Support students in feeling efficacious
Critical text choice		Utilize wide variety of text	Critical text selection
Facilitator of student learning		Authentic, inquiry-based opportunities	Students should see relevance in learning
High expectations; Persistence	Challenging while positively reinforcing		High expectations; Persistence
	Challenging while positively reinforcing	Provide oral and written feedback	
			Sustain heritage and community practices
	Focusing on the test		
Classroom environment			

Each teacher possessed different themes in navigating social-emotional reading experiences in their classrooms, some of which did not align with the literature. Ultimately,

this reflects Schlein and Schwarz's (2015) point, "The curriculum is what happens in classrooms among teachers and students. It is shaped by teachers with students in connection with their experiences, interests, and interactions" (p. 12). This involves not only the cognitive element of curriculum but also the social-emotional element.

Unique Ecological Systems and Driving Forces

The navigation of social-emotional experiences for readers had different driving forces in each teacher's story. Ms. Jonas and Mrs. Dabney each had different past stories, diverse influential school and institutional stories, varying impacts of ecological systems, and unique personal priorities. These unique factors greatly influenced the teachers' behaviors, actions, and beliefs in navigating social-emotional experiences for readers.

As the themes in each teacher's story demonstrate, Ms. Jonas possessed a love for reading while Mrs. Dabney did not. Each teacher shared stories of their childhood reading experiences but the told stories varied greatly. Ms. Jonas told of reading to her dolls and younger sisters as a child. She also enthusiastically talked about her favorite book her mom read to her every night and her obsession with Laura Ingalls books, possessing the entire set which is still in her mom's basement. A love for reading followed Ms. Jonas into her adulthood. Ms. Jonas reads regularly before bed, and this often involves "books about basically learning more about something" (Ms. Jonas, Initial interview, January 9, 2019).

In contrast, Mrs. Dabney explained she was not a reader as a child. Her parents were not big readers, and she was turned off to reading by a fifth grade teacher. As an adult, Mrs. Dabney admits, "Reading is not my thing" (Mrs. Dabney, Initial interview, January 7, 2019). She grew to enjoy reading more as an adult, but reading is not her first choice of things to do when she has free time. As a teacher of reading, she wants her students to believe she loves

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reading because this is what she desires for her students. Mrs. Dabney also lacks confidence in teaching reading even though her students produce higher than normal test scores. Variation between personal reading practices and feelings of Ms. Jonas and Mrs. Dabney is reflected in literature. Literature exists that correlate teachers' personal reading practices with effective reading instruction (McKool & Gespass, 2009) while other literature finds no correlation (Burgess et al., 2011). This demonstrates the unique factors present in each teacher's story that seem to play a role in the behaviors, actions, and beliefs in navigating social-emotional reading experiences for their students.

Additionally, Ms. Jonas, a six-year teacher, taught at Greenwood Elementary all six years and learned from the teachers, the principal, and personal experiences from this one school context. Ms. Jonas told about the transition of teaching first grade for five years and then moving to sixth grade. Her personal experiences taught her that first grade is physically exhausting, crawling around on the floor from group to group, while teaching sixth grade is intellectually exhausting. This transition of grade levels also exposed Ms. Jonas to influences of the first grade team and later, influences of the sixth grade team. She was also influenced by the English Language Arts (ELA) professional learning community (PLC) at Greenwood, which included the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade ELA teachers. The Greenwood demographics influenced her knowledge about teaching English language learners as well. Ms. Jonas' story also involves one solitary principal, Mrs. Carrington. This study reveals Mrs. Carrington's support and encouragement of Ms. Jonas, exemplified by her decision to move Ms. Jonas from first to sixth grade.

In contrast, Mrs. Dabney, a 32-year teacher, taught in this urban school district her entire career but worked for multiple principals, at multiple schools, and among multiple

teachers. Mrs. Dabney's 32 years of teaching affords her more experiences and influential layers within her story. Her story was flooded with changes of superintendents, changes in district curriculum and teaching approaches, changes of schools, changes of principals, and changes in student populations. Mrs. Dabney shared, "Our district, we've got so many superintendents that come in every three years and they're changing the way that the curriculum looks and what the classrooms should look like" (Mrs. Dabney, Follow-up interview, March 13, 2019). She experienced pendulum swings in reading approaches from old-school brown English books to balanced literacy. School changes for Mrs. Dabney occurred due to being bumped in an attempt to balance White and Black teachers, due to the closing of schools, and due to her own choosing. She told of the different principals she worked for, some Black, some White, some male, some female, some taking her under their wings, but all "excellent principals" (Mrs. Dabney, Follow-up interview, March 13, 2019). At her current school, Mrs. Dabney discussed changes in student population after schools closed and boundaries shifted. She knew, and shared that others could tell, which students were original Harrison kids and which were the new kids. Clearly, Ms. Jonas' and Mrs. Dabney's ecological systems and past stories contained diverse content and influences, providing varied driving forces in the navigation of social-emotional reading experiences.

Finally, different personal priorities for students as readers also created unique driving forces for these two teachers' navigation of social-emotional experiences for the students in their classrooms. During the follow-up interviews, when specifically asked, What overarching goals do you have for your students' experience during the reading block?, the two teachers' answers differed greatly.

Ms. Jonas: I just think that it's cool when we have that 30 minutes or 20 minutes of time that they actually enjoy reading. No one for the most part...I mean there's a couple that don't like reading and reading is hard and it stinks for them, but hopefully I'll expose them to enough information slash text slash informational text that they get excited about something. That they can go outside the box and be like, "This is something I would have never picked up but maybe I don't know that about myself as a reader yet." Just to get them excited. Grow the love for learning I guess. Love to read. I tell them all the time I read before I go to sleep and it's not because it's boring. It's just something I enjoy doing and then it relaxes you. (Ms. Jonas, Follow-up interview, March 12, 2019)

Mrs. Dabney: I try to hit a skill. Right now, it's main idea and supporting details, which also connects to the reading, which connects to the writing. It just kind of all flows. Then we just recently worked on synonyms and antonyms, which connects to the writing. Everything has some connections and builds on what I'd previously taught. What I love, of course, has been throwing out things that I've taught long ago, hopefully over spring break they won't forget everything, but they'll throw in things that they're building on. (Mrs. Dabney, Follow-up interview, March 13, 2019)

These responses alone demonstrate the unique driving forces in the reading experiences they desire and navigate for their students. This supports the implication, even further, that ecological systems and driving forces of high-performing urban elementary teachers' navigation of social-emotional experiences for readers are unique. The unique systems and forces of Ms. Jonas and Mrs. Dabney are shown in Table 5.2. This table is not comprehensive though because an individual's ecological system or driving forces are not fully known by another individual and sometimes are not always recognized by the individual.

Table 5.2

Unique Ecological Systems and Driving Forces of Ms. Jonas and Mrs. Dabney

Ecological System and Driving Forces of Ms. Jonas	Ecological System and Driving Forces of Mrs. Dabney
Fond childhood reading memories	Unappealing childhood reading memories
Love for reading	Lack of love for reading
Loves teaching reading	Lacks confidence in teaching reading
Six years of teaching experience	32 years of teaching experience
Previous experience teaching first grade	Experience working in multiple schools
Experience under one (White) supportive principal	Experience under multiple "excellent" Black and White principals
Student population with refugees and ELLs	Student population with majority Black students
Collaborative colleagues	
	Collaborative colleagues
Desires students to love reading	
	Pressured by high-stakes testing
Grade-level teacher who left mid-year	
	Personal goals for students to learn reading skills

As Maring and Koblinsky (2013) stated, "Teachers' experiences will be influenced by individual, family, school/community, and societal level systems" (p. 380), all of which are personalized to their unique system contents. This implication means that ecological systems and driving forces may vary within urban schools and for urban teachers but high-performing teachers producing higher than normal test scores can still thrive. These ecological systems and driving forces become part of what is navigated when navigating social-emotional experiences for their readers.

Positive Impact of Colleagues

Despite the differences in navigating social-emotional experiences and the driving forces of the navigation, both teachers in this study explicitly shared the positive impact of their principals and fellow teachers. Ms. Jonas compared meeting with her PLC to "a little pep rally" (Ms. Jonas, Follow-up interview, March 12, 2019). Additionally, she shared, "No one's really out on an island by themselves. Everyone's here for everyone. Everyone's here for the kids" (Ms. Jonas, Follow-up interview, March 12, 2019). Clearly Ms. Jonas sees herself as part of a positive teaching community. The collective teacher support and the vulnerability among colleagues assists Ms. Jonas in developing confidence, feeling a sense of security, and improving her teaching practice.

Mrs. Dabney also shared about colleagues' influence over her 32 years of teaching. She discussed the positive impact of past teachers and principals, as well as her current co-workers and principal. Reflecting on a previous school and those coworkers, she reminisced, "Amazing staff. Older Black teachers that taught me more than I learned in college. That's where really, I learned how to teach…from that staff" (Mrs. Dabney, Initial interview, January 7, 2019). When considering her current teaching context, she shared, "That's what's really great about this staff is we help each other a lot" (Mrs. Dabney, Initial interview, January 7, 2019). The teachers she worked among in previous contexts, as well as current colleagues, obviously played a significant role in Mrs. Dabney's story. There is no question her current principal, Dr. Grimes, positively impacts Mrs. Dabney as well, given her comment, "Dr. G…we adore her. We will die when she leaves us" (Mrs. Dabney, personal communication, December 18, 2018). On multiple occasions, Mrs. Dabney spoke of the full support Dr. Grimes provided for her teachers and the autonomy Dr. Grimes encouraged in

her teachers to "do what's best for your children" (Mrs. Dabney, Follow-up interview, March 13, 2019).

Research by Hollins (2012) told of the importance of positive teacher communities and collaboration for urban teachers. She told of collaboration among teachers that occurs naturally and as well as collaboration facilitated by mentors or administration. Natural collaboration can include "teachers working together on units of study, investigating a shared problem, developing a joint activity for students across classes, or team teaching an aspect of the curriculum" (Hollins, 2012, p. 90). Planned collaboration can "[focus on] everyday classroom practices, encourage teacher dialogue and problem solving, address students' characteristics and learning propensities, document teaching practices and progress toward improvement" (p. 91). Both of these types of collaboration surfaced in Ms. Jonas' and Mrs. Dabney's stories. Hollins (2012) explained that transformative teacher communities, which are needed in urban schools, involve teachers actively and consciously engaging in professional communities where they "recognize and value the knowledge distributed among the members of their team, and [use] their individual experience and expertise to develop a very powerful shared knowledge base" (p. 45). Ms. Jonas and Mrs. Dabney both shared stories that imply that positive collaboration among colleagues takes a role in the ecological systems influencing their navigation of social-emotional experience for readers.

The Need for Warm Demanding Teaching

The concept of being warm demanders (Kleinfeld, 1975; Vasquez, 1989) emerged as a final implication in the consolidated stories of Ms. Jonas and Mrs. Dabney. This concept "refers to the teaching style in which teachers are nurturing or caring toward their students but do not lower academic standards or expectations and are effective disciplinarians"

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(Sandilos et al., 2017, p. 1322). Bondy and Ross (2008) described warmth as consistent positive regard, sending messages of care for the students, an authentic interest in students' lives, and respect. They explained warmth comes from building relationships deliberately, learning about students' cultures, and communicating an expectation of success. Demand, on the other hand, refers to the rigorous academic challenging of students and determination in students' exertion of effort (Sandilos et al., 2017). In fact, ""What makes warm demanders different [than other teachers using motivational strategies and holding high expectation] is that they *insist* on students meeting those expectations" (Bondy & Ross, 2008, p. 56). The demander aspect of warm demanders comes through providing learning supports, supporting positive behavior, and being clear and consistent with expectations (Bondy & Ross, 2008). In the cases of Ms. Jonas and Mrs. Dabney, navigation of social-emotional experiences for readers by high-performing teachers comes through a warm demander pedagogy.

The warmth aspect of the warm demander pedagogy materialized in both teachers' knowledge of their students. Ms. Jonas and Mrs. Dabney both knew their students' academic strengths and areas needing improvement, as well as their personal lives. However, it took me longer in my journey with Mrs. Dabney to see the warmth aspect of her warm demander stance. In retrospect, I realized I struggled to initially interpret this accurately because the demander side of a warm demander can seem harsh to an uninformed observer (Bondy & Ross, 2008). There were certainly times when I felt like Mrs. Dabney's push tiptoed along the line of being a little too firm. As Bondy and Ross (2008) stated,

> In acting as a warm demander, "how you say it" matters, but who you are and what students believe about your intentions matter more…When students know that you believe in them, they will interpret even harsh-sounding comments as statements of care from someone with their best interests at heart. (p. 55)

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Until I spent significant time in Mrs. Dabney's classroom, I did not possess an accurate view of the warm relationship Mrs. Dabney had established with her students. I needed to reinterpret some of those first stories after gaining deeper insight over time. After further processing and investigation, modes of warm demanding pedagogy became clearer to me. Table 5.3 explains those modes of warm demanding pedagogy according to Kleinfeld (1975) who first coined this pedagogy.

Table 5.3

Modes of Warm Demanding Pedagogy

Modes of Warmth	Modes of Demand
Warmth is the first focus	Comes after warmth is established
Create an emotionally warm climate	Expect high quality work
Dissipate students' fears	Individualize instruction
Personalized relationships	Facilitated through personal concern
Express concern for students	Persistence in calling on students
Minimized hierarchy between teacher and student	Provide a structure for learning
	Make clear, explicit demands
Teacher smiles frequently, uses close proximity, and uses touch	Avoids direct criticism
Supportive of all student attempts	

Both Ms. Jonas and Mrs. Dabney knew the students' interests such as technology and Fortnite. They also knew about the students' lives outside of school. They made connections with parents and families that assisted in understanding their students. For instance, while engaged in conversation with Mrs. Dabney, she needed to step out of the room to talk with a parent wanting to discuss some concerns. Ms. Jonas told of parents who

sought out books on the current topic for the class to use during their unit. Additionally, these teachers knew when students faced issues of abuse, homelessness, or hunger. They strived to know their students because they possessed a care for the students' well-being and success.

In terms of demand, the high expectations of Ms. Jonas and Mrs. Dabney academically and behaviorally challenged the students. Not a day went by in either of their classrooms that I did not observe high expectations. They held students accountable for their behavior, effort, and performance. On occasion, Ms. Jonas utilized the phrase, "What were the expectations?" in order to hold the students accountable. Mrs. Dabney waited for more students to raise their hands which communicated the demand, or insistence element, of warm demanders. Other common actions taken by the teachers to maintain high expectations and demand within their classrooms included Ms. Jonas moving students' spots on the carpet so they could "do their best" and Mrs. Dabney asking students to go get a drink or throw water on their face to help them stay focused.

Overall, the essence of warm demander pedagogy played a role in the stories of these two high-performing urban elementary teachers and their navigation of social-emotional experiences for readers. This implication from the stories of Ms. Jonas and Mrs. Dabney align with Sandilos, Rimm-Kaufman, and Cohen's (2017) study of more than 600 urban teachers and their students. Their study found demand significantly correlated to students' positive academic growth in reading. This implication of my study, which investigated two high-performing urban teachers as defined by their test scores, reflects what these previous researchers concluded.

In the next section I take the findings and implications a step further. While findings and implications are important to document, it is critical to understand the significance they hold in the field of education.

Educational Significance

Now I turn to the question, *What do the implications of this study mean for the field of education?* Although just a small section in this report, the educational significance blankets the field of education expansively. In fact, this study is significant for any teaching experience between a teacher and a student.

Good Teaching is Good Teaching: Key Principles

In 1987, Chickering and Gamson presented seven principles for good teaching at the undergraduate level. These principles of teaching include:

1. Encourages contact between students and faculty.
2. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students.
3. Uses active learning techniques.
4. Gives prompt feedback.
5. Emphasizes time on task.
6. Communicates high expectations.
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning. (p. 2)

Today, these principles are widely used to improve undergraduate education and develop faculty. I propose that these principles define good teaching at any level. Good teaching is good teaching, regardless of grade or age level. In fact, if these principles are dissected and analyzed, almost all of them involve the social-emotional experience in learning. Likewise, Ladson-Billings (1995a) studied excellent elementary teachers of African American students and found they simply carried out "good teaching" (p. 159). She identified the good teaching as culturally relevant pedagogy, arguing "its centrality in the academic success of African

American and other children who have not been well served by our nation's public schools" (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 159). The three propositions within this good teaching included: (a) "teachers demanding, reinforcing, and producing academic excellence in their students" (p. 160), (b) "utilizing students' culture as a vehicle for learning" (p. 161), and (c) "students developing a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities" (p. 162). These propositions also heavily incorporate the students' social-emotional experience in the classroom.

Based on the results of this study and the topic of social-emotional reading experiences, I outline four key principles to navigate a positive social-emotional reading experience for students. These key principles include: (1) Deep teacher understanding of students' lives, cultures, and heritages, (2) Incorporation of students' diversity, interest, and voice in text selection and reading practices, (3) Social interactions in response to reading, and (4) Warm demanding teaching with high expectations and demonstrated care for students (Kleinfeld, 1975; Sandilos et al., 2017; Vasquez, 1989). Further clarity and elaboration for each key principle is provided in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4

Key Principles in Teaching for Positive Social-emotional Reading Experiences

Key Principles	Explanation and Examples
Deep teacher understanding of students' lives, cultures, and heritages	Teachers invest in getting to know students; Develop relationships with students and their families; Teachers utilize a variety of resources to educate themselves about students' diversity
Incorporation of students' diversity, interest, and voice in text selection and reading practices	Teachers determine texts based on student identities and interest; Students choose independent texts; Student choice is utilized in determining reading independently, in partners, small groups, whole class, etc.
Social interactions in response to reading	Teachers and students actively engage in dialogue about what is read; partners, small groups, and whole class activities around reading are utilized
Warm demanding teaching with high expectations and demonstrated care for students	Teachers know students' current reading abilities and push to extend those; Students are held accountable for engaging and growing in reading; Positive reinforcement is provided; Rigor is expected for all students; Teachers explicitly state goals or desires for students based on the teachers' care for student success

To extend these four principles, educational leaders in the United States need to determine non-negotiables for reading classrooms. Two key players in the field of education, the student and the teacher, drive the necessary non-negotiables for these classrooms. The four key principles inform the non-negotiables our country needs for students as readers and for teachers as teachers of reading.

Non-negotiables for U.S. Students

Given the four key principles and the findings and implications within this study, education leaders in the United States need to ask questions such as: (1) What kind of social-emotional experience in reading do we want students in our country to have? and (2) What priorities should our country hold for student readers? In the preceding section, implications of the findings demonstrated that students engaged in different social-emotional experiences in reading, including experiences that focus on students' interests, experiences that focus on test preparation, experiences that involve collaboration, experiences that challenge students, and experiences that occur within environments laden with inspirational words. Those experiences resulted from different priorities for student readers. The current U.S. educational system values and prioritizes accountability and standardized learning. As provided in the literature review in Chapter 2, the accountability and testing craze in the United States has produced negative experiences for many urban students (Afflerbach, Cho, Crassas, & Kim, 2009; Allington, 2013; Gallagher, 2009; Kohn, 2010, 2011; Zhao, 2018). Assessments to monitor students' reading development and literacy learning do not necessitate a negative social-emotional reading experience. Likewise, holding schools and teachers accountable for students' reading development does not necessitate a negative social-emotional reading experience. However, if educators in our country consider a positive social-emotional reading experience as a non-negotiable, the process of assessment and the degree to which assessments should impact instruction must be determined. Current high-stakes assessment approaches seemingly hinder positive social-emotional reading

experiences. Zhao (2018) talked about his own first-hand experiences growing up in China, a test-driven country:

> I knew how high-stakes testing corrupts education, turning it into test preparation. I knew how a test-driven education causes damage to the physical and psychological well-being of students, parents, and teachers. I knew that a test-driven education does not result in citizens who can defend a democracy, nor does it produce the creative and innovative individuals needed in the modern economy. I knew that it does not reduce inequity, either, and actually, as it has been practice in China, such an education perpetuates inequality. (p. 2)

He also explained that factors such as standards, testing, and direct instruction have side effects that are not being considered and confirmed that short-term achievement outcomes do not always transfer to long-term benefits (Zhao, 2018). To reiterate the literature in Chapter 2, high-stakes testing and the pressure of accountability on urban schools can create concerns in social-emotional reading experiences caused by instruction that lacks authenticity (Allington, 2013; Kohn, 2011; Zhao, 2018), ignores students' interests and cultures (Au & Gourd, 2013; Unrau et al., 2015), and kills reading motivation and enjoyment (Gallagher, 2009; Kohn, 2010; Margolis & McCabe, 2006). In fact, Mrs. Dabney's story reflected some of these concerns related to high-stakes testing and pressures of accountability. It seems as if the United States is willing to risk all of this in order to increase high-stakes test scores.

Many researchers and experts, however, believe reading instruction and priorities must value social-emotional aspects of reading. Afflerbach, Cho, Crassas, and Kim (2009) expressed this notion:

> When we think of our teaching successes, do we think of students who earned high test scores? Or do we think of students who went from reluctant readers to enthusiastic readers? Do we think of students who evolved from easily discouraged readers to readers whose motivation helped them persevere through reading challenges? Do we remember students who avoided reading at all costs transforming themselves into students who learned to love reading? Certainly, we can count such

students and our positive influence on them among our most worthy teaching accomplishments. (p. 323)

They also said, "If we are serious about accountability, we need assessments that demonstrate that high-quality teaching and effective reading programs influence student readers' growth," (p. 323) which can include motivation, perseverance, and self-esteem.

These researchers are not alone in this stance. Gallagher (2009) reflected this same view:

> Let's see whether we have this straight: we immerse students in a curriculum that drives the love of reading out of them, prevents them from developing into deeper thinkers, ensures the achievement gap will remain, reduces their college readiness, and guarantees that the results will be that our schools will fail. We have lost our way. It is time to stop the madness. (p. 23)

As a system, those in the field of education in the United States must determine whether this is the type of social-emotional experience desired for student readers and what non-negotiables to uphold. According to Morrell (2017), "We have an ethical and moral imperative to ensure that every student receives a humanizing, impactful literacy education. We also have a moral imperative that every student's literacy education increases his or her capacity for intercultural understanding" (Morrell, 2017, p. 456). Hence, U.S. educational leaders must determine what "success" means in student reading. Morrell (2017) believed, "What counts as high-status knowledge has to be historicized and continually problematized in our ever-changing world" (Morrell, 2017, p. 461).

Based on the four key principles outlines in the previous section and the results of this study, I believe non-negotiables for every student in every reading classroom must include:

- Daily opportunities to choose texts to read

- Daily discussions about texts with teacher and/or peers

- Daily opportunities to read alone or with peers

- Daily opportunities to personally relate to or see themselves in text options

Non-negotiables for U.S. Teachers

This study also fosters educational significance in what non-negotiables educational leaders possess for U.S. teachers. Teachers in the United States come from all walks of life and live vastly different stories. Much of this cannot be controlled or avoided. For instance, the U.S. educational system cannot control a teacher's childhood reading experiences, a teacher's current opinion of reading, or a teacher's interests. This study demonstrated that teachers possess different priorities and driving forces, and they navigate different social-emotional experiences for readers. These are factors that may be in the realm of influence by the field of education, specifically teacher educators, principals, and individuals providing teachers' professional development or evaluating teacher performance. A united effort could emerge to prepare and support teachers accordingly if the U.S. educational system adopted non-negotiables for its teachers. Some questions necessary to pose and determine solid stances on include:

- What should all reading teachers value or prioritize in their reading instruction?

- What priorities must be communicated to teachers about their students' reading experiences?

- What approaches or experiences should be expected in teachers' reading instruction?

- What should the driving forces be in teachers' reading instruction?

Current practices in the U.S. educational system communicate a desire for teachers to value test scores. Consequently, this communicates that teacher priorities and approaches for

reading instruction must result in increased high-stakes test scores. In order for teachers to be viewed as successful or high-performing, test scores often become the determinant. As Boucher (2016) stated, "The discussion of teacher effectiveness has become muddied by the politics of standards and holding teachers 'accountable' for their students' success on standardized tests" (p. 92). He went on to explain his belief that successful, high-performing teachers may report high test scores in comparison to others, they also produce students who are successful in many other ways not measured by test scores (Boucher, 2016).

Determining the non-negotiables the field of education holds for our country's teachers in turn influences many far-reaching aspects in the field. First of all, the type of preparation we provide for teacher candidates can be shaped in very specific ways. The courses that are offered, the practices that are taught, and the priorities that are shaped can all be aligned to these non-negotiables for U.S. teachers. Even the selection of cooperating teachers for these teacher candidates falls into line with these non-negotiables (Boucher, 2016). Additionally, teachers already in the field can unite in common priorities and system-driven influences. For instance, professional development can tune in to these non-negotiables for teachers and work to support teachers in an aligned manner. Teacher evaluation processes and tools should also align.

The non-negotiables I advise for every teacher in every reading classroom to provide a positive social-emotional experience in reading for every student include:

- Possesses a classroom library that includes texts which reflect the students' cultures and heritages, as well as diverse cultures and heritages
- Utilizes student interest inventories and information collected about student identities to make decisions about reading materials and practices

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- Personally interacts with all students about reading content and reading practices through oral or written communication

- Regularly sets authentic reading goals (not test score goals) with students and encourages students' efforts and abilities through praise

In essence, the hands and feet of the U.S. educational system are the students and teachers. This study, the findings, and its implications hold vital significance for the field of education. Adopting non-negotiables for U.S. students and teachers as described here will impact the social-emotional experiences of student readers. These non-negotiables require attention from varying educational leadership levels, including national education boards and committees that develop teaching and learning standards, teacher preparation programs that prepare teachers for certification, and district and school leaders who develop curriculum resources, teacher evaluation systems, and professional development content. As explained, the educational significance of this study runs from the top down within the U.S. educational system.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on current literature and this study's approach and findings, I propose recommendations for future research to extend the understanding of this topic in the field. These recommendations stem from wonderings that emerged as I carried out this study.

First of all, this study focused on teachers' navigation of social-emotional experiences for elementary readers through teacher observations, teacher interviews, and teacher reflections. However, the students' perspectives remained untapped. The navigation of social-emotional reading experiences was interpreted by the one-sided views of teacher participants and a biased inquirer. Further research that obtains the students' perspectives

about their reading experiences would provide further insight about whether there is consensus between students, teachers, and researcher on those experiences. This recommendation for research aligns with the necessary humanization in research that "values experiences, perspectives, and cultural knowledge that young people bring into schools and carry with them within and across multiple communities" (Kinloch, 2018, p. 14).

Although not intentional in my study, the two participant teachers happened to be White teachers, teaching mostly students of color. Both of these White teachers qualified for this study based on attaining reading test scores higher than those in other classrooms with similar demographics. Research exists about racial matches and mismatches between teachers and their students, along with whether correlations exist between racial matches and academic achievement (Boucher, 2016; Egalite & Kisida, 2018; Gershenson et al., 2015; Sandilos et al., 2017). However, research comparing the navigation of social-emotional reading experiences by high-performing White teachers to the navigation by high-performing teachers of color is lacking. Ultimately, this research holds potential in providing insight of how race and culture may influence the social-emotional reading experiences a teacher navigates.

Finally, and possibly most pertinent to the well-being and success of U.S. students, I recommend a longitudinal study of students' social-emotional reading experiences and long-term outcomes. Extensive research exists about the impact of social-emotional experiences on students' short-term reading development, practices, and feelings about reading (Dorman, 2012; Gallagher, 2009; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Kirkland, 2014; Noddings, 2005, 2012; Split et al., 2012). It is also necessary to understand how social-emotional experiences in reading as elementary students impact students' future reading preferences, views, and

behaviors in later years. Longitudinal research could assess the students' preferences, views, and behaviors of reading held and carried out in middle school, high school, college (if applicable), and adulthood. Findings of this magnitude could inform the type of priorities and experiences the field of education urgently needs to perpetuate based on the long-term outcomes desired for U.S. citizens. As Zhao (2018) warns, it is necessary to identify the long-term side effects of what schools and teachers are doing in our schools right now.

Conclusion

As the researcher in this study, I approached my work with my own perspectives, biases, and stories. I entered the research with my own childhood stories that lacked social-emotional experiences to prompt me as a reader.   I align with other researchers who believe the social-emotional experiences of reading are as important as the cognitive instruction of reading. Although U.S. urban schools are faced with pressures on the cognitive results of reading, based on high-stakes testing, it is critical to acknowledge the social-emotional experiences these readers face every day. Effective reading instruction must be viewed holistically, including both the cognitive and social-emotional prongs of reading. Ultimately, teachers drive decisions within their classrooms and become an element of the curriculum (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). A student's education, specifically reading education, hangs on the type of interactions experienced with the teacher. As Goldenberg (2014) noted,

> At its core, education is a process that occurs, by and large, through the interactions between teacher and student, and we must recognize that for children of all races and ethnicities to be successful, these interactions must be beneficial and productive for the students. (p. 112)

Without these understandings, leaders may be ignoring the possible side effects that high-stakes testing have on urban students.

Likewise, a re-visioning of what it means to be a successful reader is necessary. Settling for the current colonized, dominant definition of success in reading in the U.S. educational system, which relies on high-stakes test scores and practices that reflect a White, monolingual, middle-class norm, the diverse students in our country may suffer. Giroux (1987) claimed, "Curriculum must be seen in the most fundamental sense as a battleground over whose forms of knowledge, history, visions, language, culture, and authority will prevail as a legitimate object of learning and analysis" (p. 178). I am willing to take a stand on this battleground to fight for reading instruction for urban students that acknowledges their racial, cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic diversity and prioritizes the social-emotional experience.

OVERVIEW OF STUDY PRESENTED TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

A Narrative Inquiry of High-Performing Urban Elementary Teachers' Navigation of Social-Emotional Experiences for Readers

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Background

This study aims to understand the stories of two high-performing reading teachers in an urban elementary context. *High-performing* is determined by high-stakes standardized test scores of students in reading. With many urban elementary students struggling to proficiently read according to standardized assessment, observing urban teachers who are prompting higher levels of reading in their students is critical. Given the literature that recognizes the social and emotional components of reading, this study will specifically focus on those areas.

You will be one of two subjects in the study in the Kansas City, Missouri Public School District. The two specific sites will be Gladstone Elementary School and Hartman Elementary School.

Purpose

As stated above, the purpose of this study is to understand what occurs in classrooms of high-performing urban reading teachers in terms of the social-emotional experience facilitated for readers. The question guiding the study is: *What are the behaviors, actions, and beliefs of high-performing urban elementary teachers in navigating social-emotional experiences for readers?*

Through this understanding, there may be insight into what needs to be occurring in other urban classrooms during the reading block to increase students' reading proficiency.

<u>Procedures</u>

Observations: One time each week the researcher will observe you in your classroom during the reading block timeframe. Observations will begin at the start of the study (anticipated to start in November) and will continue through March. Since the researcher aims to gain an authentic understanding of the everyday reading experience facilitated by the teacher, nothing should be adjusted or changed in the daily routines in preparation for an observation. Audio-recording will occur during some of the observations to capture specific quotes or language for deeper analysis. Only the researcher will have access to these audio-recordings.

Reflective Journal or Debriefing: Following each observation, you will have the choice of completing a reflective journal entry or an oral debriefing with the researcher about the observed reading block. The journal or oral debriefing will be open-ended and teacher-driven but aims to capture your reflection and internal processing about behaviors, actions, and beliefs during each observed reading block. No more than 10-15 minutes is anticipated to complete this journal entry each week. You will have the choice of either typing these journal entries or keeping a hand-written journal. If the oral debriefing is chosen, you will share your reflection with the researcher following each observation session. This oral debriefing will take 10-15 minutes.

Interviews: In addition to on-going conversations throughout the study that may occur naturally outside the reading block timeframe, two more formal interviews will be conducted. During the first half of the five-month study, you will be interviewed at a time and place that is convenient for you. A second interview will be completed at the end of the study as well (March). Each interview is anticipated to take 45-60 minutes and will be audio-recorded for analysis. Only the researcher will have access to these audio-recordings.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be involved in this study from November 2018 to May 2019. After data collection ends in March, you will be asked to validate and contribute to the conclusions and findings in the study report.

<u>Confidentiality</u>

Information gathered throughout this study will be kept confidential. The study investigators will have access to the data sources. The information will be stored in a locked office at the School of Education at UMKC and on password protected UMKC computers of the study investigators. Audiotapes will be destroyed after transcribed. Any information written in the dissertation, papers, presentations, or publications will be kept anonymous unless separate written consent give explicit permission to share your identity. If you withdraw before the study ends, the data collected will be kept and possibly used to inform study findings.

INITIAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

1. Tell me about your journey as a teacher.
   a. How did you become a teacher?
   b. Where has the path taken you on your journey as a teacher?
   c. Why did you choose to teach at the elementary level?
   d. Why have you decided to teach here?

2. Tell me about your learning about how to teach reading.
   a. What education have you received about teaching reading?
   b. What other experiences, if any, have influenced your knowledge of teaching reading?
   c. What are your current views or perspectives about teaching reading?

3. Tell me about your own reading experiences as a child.
   a. What are your memories about learning how to read?
   b. What were your feelings about reading as a child?
   c. What reading practices did you engage in as a child?

APPENDIX C

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

Using an emergent design, modification is anticipated for this interview protocol based on what leads up to this interview and what the researcher desires to understand as the study concludes.

1. What are your views about best practices for teaching reading?

2. What are your views or beliefs about your students as readers?

3. What are your expectations for your students in reading? Are those expectations different than your desires? Explain.

4. What are your priorities when teaching reading to your students?

5. What overarching goals do you have for your reading block?

6. What overarching goals do you have for students' experience during the reading block?

7. Are all of these desires, priorities, and goals influenced beyond yourself? Explain.

8. How do your behaviors and actions impact the teaching of reading?

9. How do your beliefs impact the teaching of reading?

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    sustain students' cultural competence in an age of high-stakes testing. *Urban*

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VITA

Hilary McNeil was born and raised in a mid-sized town in Illinois with a predominantly White population. She attended public schools for her K-12 schooling and obliviously learned from almost all White teachers, sitting among almost all White students, just like herself. As a successful student in terms of grades and conduct, Hilary transitioned after high school graduation to Iowa State University as an elementary education major. Teaching ran deep throughout her family tree, with her mother, father, aunt, uncle, maternal grandmother, maternal grandfather, and paternal grandmother all entering careers in the field of teaching. It was no surprise she developed an interest in teaching beginning in high school and graduating with a B.S. in Elementary Education in 2002.

After college, Hilary taught various elementary grade levels over a nine-year period in the states of Illinois, Florida, New Jersey, and Kansas. During these nine years, all of the schools consisted of diverse student populations including Black, White, Latinx, Chinese, Indian, and others. Additionally, all nine years, with the exception of one, included Title I schools with high percentages of low-socioeconomic students. These teaching experiences provided Hilary with a deeper cultural competence she had lacked earlier in life and prompted her desire to continue her education in pursuit of becoming a more effective teacher for all students. During her first two years of teaching, she attained a Master's degree in elementary language arts, and six years later she attained another Master's degree in English for speakers of other languages.

With nine years of elementary teaching experience, Hilary transitioned into a position at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC), teaching and supervising students in the elementary education program and Institute for Urban Education. Working for a program

focused on urban education and social justice, she soon realized her love for preparing

teachers for urban schools. The desire to continue a career in teacher education prompted her

journey into the interdisciplinary doctoral program (IPhD) at the same university in which

she worked.

Upon completion of the IPhD program, Hilary plans to maintain her position at

UMKC. She will continue to teach and supervise teacher candidates, in addition to

coordinating partnerships with urban school districts, schools, and cooperating teachers.