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# Reading Achievement and Family Literacy Behaviors of Black Boys

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Reading Achievement and Family Literacy Behaviors of Black Boys

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**Table of Contents**

Abstract ..... xiv

Acknowledgements ..... xv

Chapter 1 ..... 1

Reading Achievement and Family Literacy Behaviors ..... 1

    Literacy Behaviors Impacting Reading Achievement..... 4

    National Initiatives and Political Influences that Support Reading Achievement ..... 6

    Purpose of the Study ..... 7

    Research Questions ..... 8

    Research Hypothesis ..... 8

    Variables..... 8

    Definition of Terms ..... 9

Significance of the Study ..... 13

    Limitations ..... 15

    Summary ..... 16

Chapter 2 ..... 17

    Theoretical Framework ..... 17

    Impact of Family ..... 19

    Parent Involvement ..... 21

    Influence of Parent Education: Beliefs and Practices ..... 25

    Parent Involvement for Reading-Black Boys..... 26

    Black Parents’ Responsibilities for Their Children..... 28

    Black Boys and Reading ..... 29

    Culturally Responsive Teaching ..... 36

    Reading Comprehension ..... 38

    Ethnic-Racial Socialization Practices..... 41

    Summary ..... 44

Chapter 3 ..... 47

Research Design and Methodology ..... 47

    Justification for Research Design..... 47

Research Questions ..... 50

Research Hypothesis ..... 51

Methods of Study ..... 51

    Study Site ..... 51

    Research Variables ..... 51

    Sampling..... 52

    Research Instruments ..... 52

    Parent Questionnaire ..... 53

    The Missouri Assessment Performance ..... 54

    The Standardized Test of Assessment of Reading ..... 56

    Data Collection Methods..... 58

    Institutional Review Board..... 59

    Data Analysis ..... 60

    Qualitative Data Analysis..... 62

Summary ..... 63

Chapter 4..... 65

    Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 1: Home Literacy Practices ..... 66

    Findings for Home Literacy Practices..... 70

    Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 1: Reading Activities at Home ..... 70

    Findings for Reading Activities at Home..... 77

    Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 1: Parent/Child Experiences..... 78

    Findings for Parent/Child Experiences ..... 87

    Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 2: Correlation between Home Literacy Practices and Reading Performance of Elementary Black Boys..... 89

        Findings..... 91

    Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 2: Correlation between Home Literacy Practices and Reading Performance of Elementary Black Boys..... 92

        Findings..... 95

    Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 2: Correlation between Home Literacy Practices and Reading Performance of Elementary Black Boys..... 96

        Findings..... 97

Qualitative Data Analysis..... 98

Summary ..... 106

Chapter 5..... 107

    Discussion ..... 108

    Home literacy practices of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade parents ..... 110

    Home literacy practices of 4<sup>th</sup> grade parents ..... 110

    Home literacy practices of 5<sup>th</sup> grade parents ..... 111

    Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 2: Correlation between Home Literacy Practices and Reading Performance of Elementary Black Boys in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade ..... 112

        Findings..... 113

    Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 2: Correlation between Home Literacy Practices and Reading Performance of Elementary Black Boys in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade..... 114

        Findings..... 114

    Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 2: Correlation between Home Literacy Practices and Reading Performance of Elementary Black Boys in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade..... 115

        Findings..... 115

        Interpretation..... 115

    The results of qualitative data analysis and findings..... 117

    Results of Analysis of Variance for Research Question 3: Determining Changes in Reading Performance of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys between 2011, 2012 and 2013 ..... 119

        Findings..... 119

        Interpretation..... 119

    Reflections on the Home Literacy Practices ..... 119

    Reflections on the Reading Activities at Home ..... 121

    Reflections of the Parent/Child Experiences..... 121

    Recommendations ..... 123

References..... 124

Appendix A..... 149

Appendix B ..... 154

Appendix C ..... 154

**List of Tables**

Table 1.1. The percentage of Black boys reading below grade level ..... 2

Table 1.2. SLPS Annual Dropout Rates ..... 14

Table 2.1. Three Historical Framings ..... 31

Table 4.1. Descriptive Summary Statistics of Home Literacy Practices for Grade 3..... 66

Table 4.2. Descriptive Summary Statistics of Home Literacy Practices for Grade 4..... 68

Table 4.3. Descriptive Summary Statistics of Home Literacy Practices for Grade 5..... 69

Table 4.4: Descriptive Summary Statistics of Reading Activities at Home for Grade 3..... 71

Table 4.5: Descriptive Summary Statistics of Reading Activities at Home for Grade 4..... 73

Table 4.6: Descriptive Summary Statistics of Reading Activities at Home for Grade 5..... 76

Table 4.7: Descriptive Summary Statistics of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 3 ..... 78

Table 4.8: Descriptive Summary Statistics of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 4 ..... 82

Table 4.9. Descriptive Summary Statistics of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 5 ..... 85

Table 4.10: Correlation Analyses between Home Literacy Practices and 3rd Grade..... 91

Table 4.11.: Correlation Analyses between Home Literacy Practices and 4th Grade ..... 94

Table 4.12: Correlation Analyses between Home Literacy Practices and 5th Grade ..... 96

Table 4.13. Content of Home Literacy Questionnaire ..... 97

Table 4.14: Book titles supplied by parents..... 98

Table 4.15: Third Grade Parents Reading Experience..... 99

Table 4.16. Fourth Grade Parents Reading Experience ..... 101

Table 4.17. Frequencies of Adult Readings..... 102

Table 4.18: Fourth Grade Parents Reading Experience..... 102

Table 4.19. Fifth Grade Child Reading Experience..... 103

Table 4.20: Fifth Grade Adult Reading Experience ..... 103

Table 4.21: Results of Analysis of Variance for Determining Changes in Reading Performance  
..... 105

Table 4.22: Results of the Holm-Bonferroni Multiple Comparison Test ..... 106

**List of Figures**

Figure 1.1 Trends in fourth-grade NAEP reading scores ..... 1

Figure 2.1 Research Data Analyses Matrix ..... 61

Figure 2.2 Nesting Ground Framework ..... 37

Figure 2.3 Racial Socialization Typology ..... 43

**List of Charts**

Bar Chart 4.1: Frequency Distribution of Reading Activities at Home for Grade 3-Question 5 . 72

Bar Chart 4.2: Frequency Distribution of Reading Activities at Home for Grade 4-Question 5 . 75

Bar Chart 4.3: Frequency Distribution of Reading Activities at Home for Grade 5-Question 5 . 77

Bar Chart 4.4: Frequency Distribution of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 3-Question 5 ..... 80

Bar Chart 4.5: Frequency Distribution of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 3-Question 6 ..... 81

Bar Chart 4.6: Frequency Distribution of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 4-Question 5 ..... 83

Bar Chart 4.7: Frequency Distribution of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 4-Question 6 .....84

Bar Chart 4.8: Frequency Distribution of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 5-Question 5 ..... 86

Bar Chart 4.9: Frequency Distribution of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 5-Question 6 ..... 87

Chart 4.10. Reading performance of the third, fourth and fifth grade Black boys from the M.A.P. and S.T.A.R. assessments ..... 93

Bar Chart 4.11: Frequency of Third Grade Adult Books..... 100



### **Abstract**

The Black family's role in the literacy development of their children is important. Successful Black students in urban settings are influenced by their home environment, parent-child interactions, and home-to school connections. This is especially true for Black males. When parents are intimately involved in their child's schooling by staying knowledgeable, encouraging and demonstrating the importance of reading, a child's success in school is inevitable (Edwards, 2004). This study focuses on the significance of home literacy attitudes, behaviors, and practices that impact the reading scores of Black boys in third, fourth and fifth grades at three elementary schools in the St. Louis Public School District. The research design is an Explanatory Sequential Quasi-Mixed Methods- Multi-Strand (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006) which is used to explore the relationship between family home literacy behaviors, practices and attitudes and the reading achievement of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade Black boys. Their reading scores from the Missouri Assessment Program (M.A.P.) and Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (S.T.A.R.) were analyzed and correlated to responses given by their parents on a parent questionnaire. M.A.P. and S.T.A.R. reading assessment results reveal that few boys included in the current study read at proficient levels; the majority of these boys read at the basic or below basic levels. The findings from this research indicate there is a relationship between parents who create a home literacy environment and the reading scores for third, fourth and fifth grade Black boys. The reading scores analyzed in this study indicate few significant correlations to the home literacy environment; however, the majority of the Black boys' reading scores are below proficient levels. There is a relationship between the home literacy environment and the reading scores; however, the practices are not consistent enough to yield a significant correlation.

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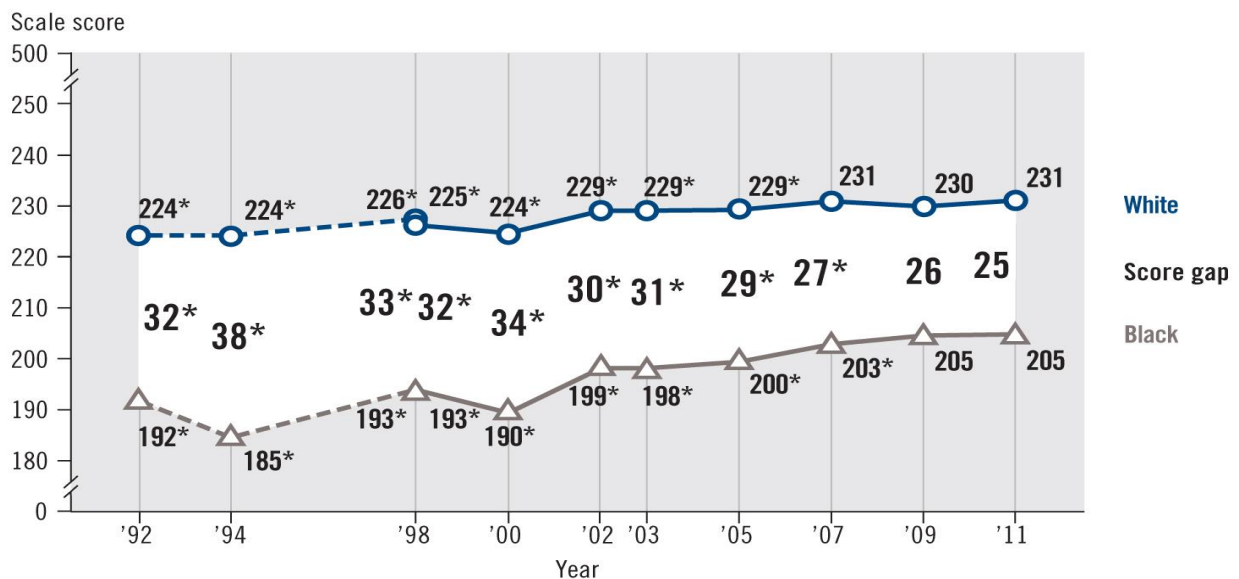
**Chapter 1**

**Reading Achievement and Family Literacy Behaviors**

Literacy development is key to the overall success of a student. More specifically, the development of reading skills is integral to determining which students will attain an acceptable level of success versus those who will not (Lonigan, Burgess & Anthony, 2000; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2000). On average, Black students obtain poorer academic outcomes in educational endeavors than their White counterparts. In the current study, the terms *Black* and *African American* are used to represent the same racial and ethnic population. The National Assessment of Educational Progress Report (NAEP, 2011) results for fourth-graders reveal that there were no significant changes in average reading scores for White and Black students from 1992 until 2011 (see Figure 1.1).

*Figure 1.1*

*Trends in fourth-grade NAEP reading average scores and score gaps for White and Black students*



Note. Significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) from 2011. NOTE: Black includes African American. Race categories exclude Hispanic origin. Score gaps are calculated based on differences between unrounded average scores (NAEP, 2011).

Researchers indicate that factors that influence the academic performance of Black students are socioeconomic status, negative stereotypes, and oppositional identity (Boykin & Hill, 2001; Ogbu, 1997; Steele, 1997). While reflecting on the NAEP (2011) trends, greater attention should be given to the schooling experiences of Black boys. The recent NAEP data suggests minimal improvement in the scores of Black boys; the trends show the need to provide additional instructional support in the classroom and home.

The general low achievement of Black boys has been documented in both the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2009, 2011) reports for fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades and the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2006). Underperforming academic achievement among Black males is a consistent finding in educational research at all levels (Ogbu, 1997; Prager, 2011). Table 1.1 reflects the most recent performance data of Black boys on the reading section of the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) state achievement test in the three urban schools used in the study.

*Table 1.1. The percentage of Black boys reading below grade level on the MAP state achievement test at the three urban schools used in the current study*

Category of Students	Grade	Total Number of students reading below grade level (2010-12)	2010 MAP Performance *	2011 MAP Performance *	2012 MAP Performance *
Black boys	3 <sup>rd</sup>	93	62.1%	62.2%	64.9%
Black boys	4 <sup>th</sup>	104	71.9%	58.0%	77.9%
Black boys	5 <sup>th</sup>	109	83.4%	73.6%	60.7%

Note. Percentage of Black boys reading below grade level at Cote Brilliante, Farragut and Lexington schools in the St. Louis Public School District (DESE, 2010-12).

The percentage of Black boys reading below grade level did not significantly change from 2010 to 2012 for the third graders. The M.A.P. scores indicate 70% of third grade Black boys are not meeting grade level expectations in reading. The majority of the Black boys in the current study read at the Basic or Below Basic levels on the M.A.P. and the Emergent Level on the S.T.A.R. However, the percentage of Black boys reading below grade level for the fifth grade decreased between 2010 and 2012. The percentage of black boys reading below grade level for the fourth grade had mixed performance; their reading scores decreased from 2010 to 2011 and increased from 2011 to 2012 (See Table 1.1). The decrease in the Black boys reading below grade level for fifth graders from 2010 to 2012 could be due to a number of factors including parental intervention which influenced the reading habits of the children (Edwards, 2004).

Children who come from rich home-literacy environments achieve greater scores in oral language skills, phonological awareness, knowledge of the written system, a broader vocabulary, and reading comprehension in the primary grades (Van Steensel, 2006). Ethnic minorities, more specifically Black boys and low-income families, tend to obtain lower scores on literacy assessments. According to Van Steensel (2006), lower income families have fewer books in their homes; the parents read less to their children, and these families place less emphasis on literacy-related activities. Student achievement for these children is negatively impacted as a result of having fewer books and parents reading less to the children.

Declining student achievement among Black boys and those of other ethnicities has reached alarming levels (Smith & Wilhelm, 2006). According to NAEP (2009), the reading achievement trends for Black boys fluctuated between 11-13% over the five-year span of 2006-2011. Such decline suggests there is little support given to Black children at school or at home (Fantuzzo, LeBoeuf, Rouse & Chen, 2012). According to the Missouri Department of

Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE, 2010), there must be continuous support and remediation given, where needed, in both the schools and homes for the children from lower socio-economics. As the research suggests, these subgroups (males and minority students) continue through the primary grades and beyond trailing behind their counterparts and never really reaching their academic potential. Yet, insufficient research has been conducted on the reading culture within the black families' homes and the students' reading habits and warrants further research into this national epidemic among Black boys in urban districts in the fourth and fifth grades (Fremon & Hamilton, 1997; Prager, 2011). These particular grades are significant in that as students are matriculating from the primary to intermediate grades, the likelihood of sustainable reading achievement, primarily comprehension skills, are lacking before Black boys enter middle school (Aratani, Wright & Cooper, 2011). By the third, fourth and fifth grades, it is expected that students have matriculated from "learning to read to reading to learn" (Chall & Jacobs, 2003). There are two factors driving the current study: a) the reading achievement performance gaps of Black boys as compared to other minority boys and girls, and b) the critical role that parents might play in helping to advance the literacy performance of Black boys.

As the NAEP (2011) reports, there is a slight increase in the reading habits of the black students as a group; however, a gap in the literacy achievement remains between black and white students. This is especially true for students entering 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. (Chall & Jacobs, 2003).

### **Literacy Behaviors Impacting Reading Achievement**

Educators have increasingly identified parental involvement as the primary vehicle by which to elevate academic achievement for all children in the urban setting (Jeynes, 2005). There are four critical factors that support reading achievement: School, home, community, and the individual child (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz & Casserly, 2010; Loera, Rueda & Nakamoto,

2011). The school must provide an adequate reading curriculum and offer high quality teaching and learning tasks. The responsibility of the home is to maintain family behaviors and cultural practices that support the child's literacy development (Lewis et al., 2010). The community must support the school's efforts with both resources and opportunities for success (Edwards, 2004). Finally, the child's role is to ensure he or she takes ownership in learning literacy development, increasing motivation, and genuinely appreciating reading (Loera, et al., 2011). Less attention has been given to the family functioning factors that influence the Black males' academic achievement (Murray & Mandara, 2003). It is important to note that parents have the capacity to modify their parenting behaviors in such a way that these behaviors are conducive to their child's learning development (Kumpfer & Alvarado, 2003).

It has long been recognized that the character of children's home circumstances influences their intellectual development and school learning (Loera et al., 2011). Edwards (2010) argues that there are two key areas that parents can apply to support school learning specific to reading. First, the Parent-Child book reading is considered an important literacy event in which parents ask questions or encourage their child to talk about the book they are reading together. The Parent-Child talk is also when the parent and child talk about the illustrations, content and word recognition. Secondly, parents can become actively involved with their children's learning once formal schooling starts by supervising homework, encouraging out of school literacy activities, and providing access to reading materials through sources such as the public library (Edwards, 2010).

Purcell-Gates (1996) examined the relationships between home literacy practices and written language knowledge that children brought to school. This study had two main findings: First, having an understanding of print was related to the frequency of in-home literacy events.

Second, in homes where literate adults read and wrote at complex levels, children knew more about forms of written language. Reynolds (1992) conducted a ten year study on the Black families and the impact that mothers and fathers have on their boys. Reynolds' (1992) research reveals that Black parents do their utmost to provide the best opportunities despite issues of economic disadvantage and social exclusion. Regardless if black boys are raised in a single parent home or partnered households, the vast majority are raised in a loving, caring and stable home environment.

According to Edwards, Havriluk and Roblyer (2006), a balance must be sought between parent support and the support their children must receive at school. Edwards' et al. (2006) research suggests that parent involvement at all grade levels results in their children doing better academic work, coming to school prepared and on-level, having higher aspirations, and displaying other positive behaviors. Although research supports the importance of parental involvement in a child's educational experience, it is also important to identify national mandates and reform efforts that support the educational experience of Black boys in order to improve their academic achievement (Joe & Davis, 2009).

### **National Initiatives and Political Influences that Support Reading Achievement**

Over the past 20 years, there have been numerous education initiatives, including *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB, 2001) and more recently, President Obama's 2010 *Race to the Top Initiative* (USDE, 2009), and *Striving Readers'* reform (USDE, 2010) efforts; all three implemented specific levels of accountability for districts, teachers, and administrators that would advance literacy and academic achievement for all children. Before these initiatives, immense gaps remained in academic achievement and the school districts' standardized test scores continued to widen between heterogeneous groups of American children (NCES, 2006).



Even with national educational initiatives to address the academic levels of American children, large academic and financial disparities exist between school districts serving high poverty families and those with greater financial means and resources (Ferguson & Ladd, 1996). School districts having excessively high (more than 80%) poverty rates have a tendency to suffer from inadequate funding, improper allocation of available funding dollars, an inequitable distribution of internal and external funds, poor principal and teacher training, high teacher turnover, minimal parental involvement, and a lack of financial support from local tax bases (Pipho, 2001).

The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010) released a national report that shows how poverty and different school contexts exacerbate the number of students having trouble in reading. This report reveals that 83% of Black boys failed to meet their grade-level reading target. According to the Casey Foundation, the reading problem has seemingly gotten worse over the last three years, while during this same period, districts were under pressure to boost scores on state achievement tests, which in turn suggests that states have lowered their achievement standards. To underscore this point, the NCES (2006) showed that only 16 states met their reading level targets, and the NAEP (2009) report indicates that 68% of all fourth grade public school students scored below proficient levels.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between the family's home literacy behaviors, practices and attitudes and the reading achievement of Black boys. According to Tatum (2005), educators believe the reasons urban schools across the country are not meeting their academic goals are, in part, because children are enrolled when they are not sufficiently prepared for school. The children arrive at school, some for the very first time, not

knowing the basics of the alphabet, the primary color wheel, or basic computation facts. A large majority of Black children come to school three to five years behind their counterparts (Tatum, 2005).

The researcher assumes from the onset of the study that there is a positive relationship between the home literacy practices of urban parents and the literacy achievement of their boys at the elementary level. The research questions and hypothesis below have been developed to test this assumption.

### **Research Questions**

**RQ1:** What are the descriptions of home literacy attitudes, behaviors, and practices of urban Black parents whose sons are in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades?

**RQ2.** What is the correlation between the home literacy practices of urban Black parents and the reading performance of their 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades sons?

**RQ3.** How have the reading scores of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys changed between 2011 and 2013?

### **Research Hypothesis**

**H1:** If Black boys, in an urban School District, have families who support their educational experiences through home literacy attitudes, behaviors and practices, then these boys will have higher reading scores on Missouri Assessment Program (M.A.P.) state achievement test and the Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (S.T.A.R.).

### **Variables**

The dependent variables for this study are the MAP communication arts scores and the S.T.A.R. assessment results, which provide a measure of reading ability. The independent

variable is the home literacy practices as measured by a modified parent questionnaire (Curry, 2012).

### **Definition of Terms**

**Attitude:** It refers to a sum of positive or negative emotions, feelings, and beliefs toward any object, such as people, things and ideas, through evaluations of our own mental states.

Attitude is self-perception and a result of observations of our own behaviors (Bohner & Dickel, 2011).

**At-Risk:** It is the failure or a potential failure to complete schooling due to external factors that inhibit academic progress (Dwyer & Wynn, 2001).

**Black:** In the United States, the racial classification also refers to people with all possible kinds of skin pigmentation from the darkest through to the very lightest skin colors, including albinos, if they are believed by others to have African ancestry and exhibit cultural traits associated with being "African American." Therefore, the term 'black people' is not an indicator of skin color but of racial classification (Davis, 2001). The terms, *Black* and *African American* are used interchangeably in the current study.

**Culturally responsive teaching:** Culturally responsive teaching is defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively (Gay, 2000). It is also inclusive of content, product, process, and the agents of culture (Tatum, 2005).

**Emergent Reading Level:** Students beginning to understand that printed text has meaning. They are learning that reading involves printed words and sentences, and that print flows from left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page. They are also beginning to identify colors, shapes, numbers, and letters (Renaissance Learning, Inc., 2013).

**Explanatory Sequential Quasi-Mixed-Methods-Multi-Strand:** Quantitative followed by qualitative; connecting the data between two phases. One type of data (Quantitative) that provides the basis for the collection of another type of data (qualitative). Inferences are analyzed based on both strands of the study. The second strand of the study (qualitative) either confirms or disconfirms the inferences of the first strand (Quantitative) or provide further explanation for unexpected findings of the first strand (Quantitative). (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006).

**Family Literacy:** Three characteristics describe family literacy; they are (1) the study of literacy in the family, (2) a set of interventions related to literacy development of young children, and (3) a set of programs designed to enhance the literacy skills of more than one family member (Britto & Brooks-Gunn, 2001; Handel, 1999; Wasik et al., 2000).

**Home Literacy Behavior:** All functional uses of literacy within the home context including activities such as excursions to outside sites (example: library or church) as well as activities that directly include print (example: reading and writing). Participant structure of the event such as who is involved as well as materials found within the home context related to literacy (example: books and environmental print) (Purcell-Gates, 1996).

**Literacy:** The ability to read for knowledge and write coherently and think critically about the written word (National Academy of Education, 1985).

**Literacy practice:** A social practice that is learned as part of the wider social practices and processes in which we are engaged in as we become members of our families and communities. We learn to engage in literacy as we learn to behave and belong in our families and communities (Edwards, 2004).

**Missouri Assessment Program (M.A.P.):** They are state achievement tests, which consist of Grade-Level Expectations tests for students in grades 3-8, and Course-Level Expectations tests for grades 9-12 students. The tests are administered to all public school students in the state of Missouri and assess the students' knowledge and skills of the Missouri Show-Me Standards, 1996.

**Proficient Reader:** Student is proficient at recognizing many words, both in and out of context. Student spends less time identifying and sounding out words, and more time understanding what was read. Students can blend sounds and word parts to read words and sentences quickly, smoothly and independently than students in the other stages of development (Renaissance Learning, 2013).

**Oppositional cultural identity:** This is where Blacks because of their internalization of discrimination developed their own culture. Ogbu (1997) states that Black Americans have developed and exhibit this oppositional culture in music (rap, hip-hop, jazz), through clothes (baggy, loose fitting) and even speech (Ebonics). Tatum (1997) states during late adolescence and early adulthood, young African-Americans recognize the personal impact of racism and develop an identity which opposes anything White. This oppositional social identity is designed to protect young Blacks from the psychological assaults of racism and to keep the dominant group (Whites) away.

**Quasi-mixed Methods Design:** Both qualitative and quantitative data are collected in the research study; however, there is not true integration of the findings or inferences for the overall study. (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006).

**Race:** An ideological construct, one that is loaded with meanings and beliefs about superiority and inferiority (Noguera, 2002).

**Racial socialization:** To foster a sense of cultural and racial identity within those of minority groups (Murray & Mandara, 2003).

**Reading:** Complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning (National Academy of Education, 1985).

**Reading achievement:** Expectations of student literacy performance in relation to a range of text types and text difficulty and in response to a variety of assessment questions intended to elicit different cognitive processes and reading behaviors (NAEP, 2009). For this study, reading achievement will be determined by the reading scores obtained on the M.A.P. communication arts test.

**Reading Comprehension:** Understanding the meaning of the text through words, numbers, and images, in print or digital form (International Reading Association, 2010).

**Reliability:** An instrument that yields reliable information that can be validly interpreted, and it maintains the multi-dimensionality of home literacy through statistical analysis (Curry, 2012).

**Socioeconomic:** Pertains to the combination or interaction of social and economic factors (Carnevale & Desrouchers, 2003).

**Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (S.T.A.R.).** S.T.A.R. Reading is used to assess students' reading skills. S.T.A.R. classifications are given in scaled scores from 300-900 and directly relate to literacy classifications. The assessment provides an approximate measure of each student's reading level and reports these as Emergent (300-674), Transitional (675-774) and Probable Reader (675-900) (Renaissance Learning Inc., 2013).

**Urban schools:** Those schools meeting these four criteria: a) location in areas other than rural or suburban communities; b) high rate of poverty as measured by free or reduced lunch

population--typically 80% and higher; c) high proportion of students of color, and d) the applicable district is characterized as “high needs” or “at-risk” (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

**Validity:** Validity is an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of interpretations and actions based on test scores or other modes of assessment (Messick, 1990).

### **Significance of the Study**

Reports from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for the St. Louis Public School (SLPS) District indicate that 86% of fourth grade and 80% of fifth grade Black boys were reading below proficiency (DESE, 2010). According to DESE, the percentages of Black boys reading below proficiency in the three urban schools being studied ranged between 62% and 65% for the third grade between 2011 and 2013; ranged between 72% and 78% for fourth grade between 2010-2012; and ranged between 61% and 83% for fifth grade between 2010-2012. (See Table 1.1). These data indicate that too many Black boys in the St. Louis City schools are not advancing in their literacy growth, and this issue warrants exploration.

According to the DESE report, fifty percent of high school annual dropouts for St. Louis Public Schools were Black male students (See Table 1.2). Children who are not reading proficiently by fourth grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school, and according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 34 percent of America’s fourth graders read at grade level (NAEP, 2011). America’s Promise Alliance, a youth organization, argued that high school graduates fuel the economy, while dropouts cost taxpayer dollars (Dell ‘Antonia, 2012).

*Table 1.2. SLPS Annual Dropout Rates and Percentages for Black male students*

Race	Gender	Year	Annual Enrollment & Percent of Black students	District Dropout Number (Grades 9-12)	Black Males Dropout Number (Grades 9-12)	Black Males Dropout Rate (%)
Black	Male	2010	10,623	1437	723	50.3
Black	Male	2011	9,997	1498	751	50.1
Black	Male	2012	9,946	1280	642	50.2

Note. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011.

The Casey Foundation (2010) reports that educators have recognized the importance of mastering reading by the end of third and fourth grades if students are to succeed academically. In March 2010, the Obama administration released its blueprint for revising the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, calling for priority on reading achievement and an increase in federal dollars designated for early reading instruction (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010).

Some significant reforms have already been made in response to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 around four areas: a) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness; b) Providing information to families to help them evaluate and improve their children's schools; c) Implementing college- and career-ready standards; and d) Improving student learning and achievement in America's lowest-performing schools by providing intensive support and effective interventions (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010).

Urban school districts play a critical role in educating America's children. Although there are almost 17,000 public school districts in the United States, 53% of the districts serve economically disadvantaged students (Epstein, 2000; Public Education Network, 2000). It is in



the big cities that the challenges facing the education system (low achievement, political conflict, inexperienced teachers, high student mobility, and budget deficits) are seemingly pervasive as noted by the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS, 2006). Thus, every national debate about testing, accountability measures, teacher quality, leadership development, fiscal solvency, parental involvement, and achievement gaps among children from different racial and economic backgrounds is, in large part, a debate about urban public schools (CGCS, 2006).

This study was conducted in an urban school district where 3,028 fourth and fifth grade Black boys attend school (DESE, 2010). According to DESE (2011), there are 1,634 out of a total of 1,895 fourth grade Black boys who are reading below proficiency level. In the fifth grade, there are 1,494 out of a total of 1,862 Black boys who are reading below proficiency level. This study explored the relationship between Black parents'/guardians' home literacy practices and the reading scores of their sons on Missouri Assessment Program state achievement test (M.A.P.) and the Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (S.T.A.R.).

Edwards (2004) suggests that family environmental factors such as undereducated parents, living in poverty, and single-parent homes contribute to minority children's poor performance in schools. Family behaviors are the most influential resources a parent can have (Edwards, 2004).

### **Limitations of the Study**

1. The study is limited to 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys attending three schools were randomly selected from St. Louis Public Schools.
2. The study was limited to an urban school district with a majority of Black students.
3. The study may be generalized to other American urban school districts because of similarity in demography and other socioeconomic factors.

4. The study was limited to identifying the actual meaning(s) of home literacy.

### **Summary**

It seems logical to explore the relationships between the parents'/guardians' literacy practices and beliefs and the reading achievement of their children. Prior studies such as Curry (2012) analyzed the home literacy behaviors that impact the reading achievement of children. Van Steensel (2006) suggests children who come from literacy-rich environments achieve greater scores in language skills, and have a broader vocabulary in the primary grades. Therefore, it is important to understand the home literacy behaviors of Black boys living in urban communities and how such home environments impact their reading scores. Data from the NAEP (2011) and DESE (2010) suggest that Black boys in urban school districts are performing at lower levels in reading ability than their counterparts. Reynolds (1992) found that the involvement of Black parents at home and school had a positive effect on elementary school aged boys. The researcher collected data on specific home literacy behaviors and practices of urban parents to determine whether these behaviors and practices are related to the reading achievement of Black boys in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades.

This study explored the relationships between home literacy behaviors and practices of urban parents and the reading achievement of Black boys in elementary grades. The first chapter presented the background for the study. Chapter two provides a discussion of the theoretical framework of the study by exploring relevant literature. Chapter three consists of the research study design, methods of study, and statistical analysis and interpretation. Chapter four provides research results and findings. Chapter five presents the conclusions and discussion and discusses implications of the findings and recommendations for further investigation.

## Chapter 2

### Theoretical Framework

Chapter two provides a theoretical framework for the current research study that is rooted in a quasi-mixed method research design. This theoretical framework, although not commonly used among researchers, is best suited for this particular study. The theoretical framework, as distinct from theory is often times referred to a particular paradigm (Mertens, 2005; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) and influences the way knowledge is studied and interpreted. It is the choice of this paradigm to establish the intent, motivation and expectations for the research. The researcher identified this research design as an explanatory sequential quasi-mixed method in which this study occurred chronologically, QUAN(quantitative)→qual(qualitative) (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2005). The conclusions from the first strand of the study (thus the capitalization QUANTITATIVE) are based on initial data collection and interpretation. The second strand (qualitative) is intended to confirm or disconfirm the inferences from the first strand (QUANTITATIVE) to further explain the results of the research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

The current research studied the relationships between Black parents'/guardians' beliefs, practices, and attitudes, and their sons reading achievement. The reading habits of black males and the influences of the schooling system, parental behavior, and the family culture are an integral part of this study. Researchers, Epstein (2010), Loera (2011), Edwards (2004), Joe and Davis (2009), Tatum (2005), Purcell-Gates (1996) and Van Steensel (2006), have conducted studies that address home literacy behaviors and the impact on Black boys' reading achievement over time. At the core of understanding the role of families in their children's academic achievement is Epstein's Typography of Family Roles (1986; 2010). The current study also builds upon Gay's (2000) and Mead's (2009) research that families play a significant role in the

education of their children especially the child's literacy growth. Socioeconomic status, parents' education and income indirectly relate to children's academic achievement through parents' beliefs and behaviors (Jimerson, Egeland, & Teo, 1999). Tatum and Muhammad's (2012) research of Black boys' reading habits supports the current study in that this researcher studied the home literacy behaviors and the correlation of these behaviors to the reading achievement of Black boys. Culturally responsive teaching methods (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Tatum, 2005) have been found to be effective in meeting the needs of Black students. Several researchers have supported the expansion of reading comprehension in order to improve the overall reading achievement and are also reviewed for the current study (Bransford & Johnson 1972; Derry, 1996; Durkin, 1993; McEwan, 2001; Narvaez, 1998; Pressley, 1998; Rosa, 1994; Van de Broek, 1994; Van de Broek & Kremer, 2000). Further discussion based upon the arguments presented by various authors such as Hughes, Smith, Stevenson, Rodriguez, Johnson and Spicer (2006) regarding the ethnic-racial socialization practices are integrated into the study along with an explanation of the racial socialization typology as illustrated in Figure 2.3 presented by Murray and Mandara, (2003).

Murray and Mandara (2003) investigated the family functioning of African Americans to determine whether family types differed across demographic variables, attitudinal characteristics, and self-esteem. An overarching purpose was to introduce an empirical typology of family functioning for African Americans that included a wider range of social classes and levels of income.

The influence on the Black males' educational experience is dependent upon the family's characteristics and the role of the parent as the mediating factor in the child's achievement (Fan, 2001). According to Epstein (2010), low-income parents have minimal involvement in the

education of Black boys at home and school and even those involved provide inadequate help. It is well established that parents matter greatly for their children's development and success both in and out of school. Yet, there are no manuals for raising happy, caring, confident, and successful children. Parents do their best with the information that they have or receive to help their child succeed in school (Epstein, 2010).

According to Lonigan (1994), literacy acquisition is the result of the interactions between a child's environmental experiences and their cognitive abilities. However, despite the relationship between home literacy and emergent literacy, the evidence used to support this connection has been subject to criticism by researchers in the area (Lonigan, 1994; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994). Specifically, researchers have suggested that the weak correlations found between home literacy and emergent literacy may be a product of weak construct validity (Lonigan, 1994; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994). This weak construct validity has been attributed to methodological problems (i.e., study design and execution), as well as inconsistencies in how home literacy has been defined and measured (Scarborough, Dobrich, & Hager, 1991).

According to Lonigan (1994), this lack of agreement has the potential to create weak measures of association. Concerns about the definition of literacy and the measures designed from these definitions suggest it may be necessary to take a closer look at how home literacy behaviors and practices impact the reading scores of Black boys.

### **Impact of Family**

Gay (2000) suggests children from lower socioeconomic status families have a greater likelihood of performing poorly on standardized assessments as compared to their suburban counterparts. Children from lower socioeconomic status families arrive at school less prepared than students from middle class families. Children from these less advantaged backgrounds are

not expected to have already acquired formal reading instruction. These children need more instruction regarding literacy skills (phonemic awareness, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge) that are necessary for learning to read, especially, learning to read at their age-appropriate level (Mead, 2009).

For some students, the lack of reading readiness leads to feelings of inferiority in early literacy skills, leading one to deduce that children who come to school behind their peers, fall farther behind, never truly reaching their age-appropriate skill level within each successive year of reading instruction (Tatum, 2000). Jeynes (2005) describes this dilemma and helps educators understand the severity of the problems within urban districts, thus concluding from the research that parental involvement activities such as reading to one's children and communicating with them, and subtle involvement activities like parental style and expectations are needed to improve children's literacy. Given the substantial influence of parental involvement, educators should consistently encourage parents to become more involved in their children's schooling. While many teachers and administrators agree that children from different family backgrounds can acquire basic school skills, the general consensus among them is that in order to master the skill of reading, children must receive some minimal assistance from their families (Edwards, 2010).

The power of the family and the impact of parents' involvement in their child's education are important factors in student achievement (Joe & Davis, 2009). Educators must continue to remind themselves that they serve the children of diverse families. These parents'/guardians' continuous involvement or school presence may not, in reality, be what educators expect. According to Epstein (2010), it is imperative, however, that school leaders encourage a strong home-school connection in order to meet the academic needs of students.

One of the most consistent findings in educational research is the underachievement of Black boys at all levels (e.g., elementary, secondary, and postsecondary) of education (Fan, 2001). Low teacher expectations, placement in lower ability classes, underperforming schools, and undereducated teachers contribute to downward trends for Black boys (Steinberg, Dornbusch & Brown, 1992). According to Joe and Davis (2009), the family environment such as undereducated parents, living in poverty, and single-parent homes are issues that can influence the level of parental participation in their son's educational growth.

### **Parent Involvement**

According to Epstein (1997 & 2010), the following six types of parent involvement help to shape and strengthen the parent-school partnership:

**Type 1 is parenting:** School staff with child-rearing skills assists parents with setting home conditions that supports children at various grade levels.

**Type 2 is communicating:** The school communicates with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.

**Type 3 is volunteering:** The school improves its recruitment techniques, work availability, training, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the schools or in other locations to support student and school programs.

**Type 4 is learning at home:** The school finds ways to involve families with their children by providing learning activities for use at home, including homework, and other curriculum-linked activities and decisions.

**Type 5 is decision-making:** The school includes families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees and other parent organizations.

**Type 6 is collaborating with the community:** Coordinate resources and services for families.

The framework of six types of involvement helps educators develop more comprehensive programs of school-family-community partnerships. Each type of involvement includes many different practices of partnership. Each type has particular challenges that must be met in order to involve all families, and each type requires redefinitions of some basic principles of involvement. Finally, each type leads to different results for students, families, and teachers (Epstein, 2010). Type 1 (Parenting) is the focus for this study in that it addresses the home activities that parents can do with their child to strengthen the home- school connection.

According to Edwards (2010), the family as a social institution has experienced many transformations that have profoundly influenced not only the ways in which we understand what constitutes “family” but also the function of the family unit as well. Tutwiler (1998) believes that school and home connections are likely to be enhanced when teachers and other school personnel are respectful of a family’s living circumstances as well as the unique ways a family may support the education of their child.

Davis-Kean (2005) indicates school staff cannot conclude that parents, who are not constantly visible in their child’s school, do not care. Educators must not draw on their own misconceptions that parents in the urban setting do not want to be involved in their child’s education. Many parents send their child to school to be educated by the educators, while some



struggle to make ends meet. Generally, parents genuinely want what is best for their children (Marcon, 1999).

When educators delve into the parents' reasons as to why they are not visible at school, the reasons range from single parents needing to work, to the school hours not being compatible with the working parents' schedules. Some parents may have had prior negative interactions with the school, a teacher, and/or administrator, or they are still reacting to adverse experiences they had as a student (Davis-Kean, 2005). Educators must remember that parental involvement can be diverse (Epstein 1997 & 2010) and that parents can be involved and motivated to participate in their children's education and especially reading growth.

The extent of parent involvement in school-based activities and homework has shown positive influences on achievement (Marcon, 1999; Reynolds, 1992). During Reynolds' (1992) study of nearly 1,000 Black children, parental involvement was shown to have had direct effects on early reading achievement and socio-emotional maturity. Reynolds' (1992) study found that the effects of active parental involvement were sustained beyond the primary grades, into the intermediate, and for some, the secondary grades. Furthermore, Marcon's (1999) study, which looked at the relationship between parental involvement and early childhood development in urban families, found that the level of parental involvement had either a positive or negative impact on the child's verbal skills, daily homework completion and submission, and increased social development. The more the parent was involved, the more positive was the academic achievement whereas less parental involvement led to a decrease in a child's verbal skills, submission and completion of homework on time and the child's social development.

When teachers, particularly in urban schools, believe parents are actively involved, the child is likely to perform better (Murray & Mandara, 2003). In addition, the reverse could be

inferred. If the child does well in school, regardless of the child's home environment, community, and perceptions of others, the parents are likely involved (Murray & Jackson, 1999). However, Izzo, Weissberg, KasproW and Fendrich (1999) found that when the parents of Black boys were not perceived by their immediate teacher as actively involved, those same boys were isolated into a group of students at risk for low performance.

What is important to note is the perception of the teacher. When parents are not active in school activities, they are considered uninterested, leading teachers to categorize these students as at risk of failure (Fendrich, M.; Izzo, C.V.; KasproW, W.J. & Weissberg, R.P., 1999). All too often, this represents the opinions of many teachers in the urban settings, which may lead to the self-fulfilling prophecy that no matter the child's current family situation, if the parents are not visible and/or active in the school, then the child has no support system (Fendrich, M.; Izzo, C.V.; KasproW, W.J. & Weissberg, R.P., 1999). Unfortunately, this erroneous perception may cause the teacher to put forth minimal effort to make certain that the child does not fail (Izzo, et al. 1999). Izzo et al. (1999) studied 1,250 urban Black students in kindergarten through fifth grade to determine the teacher's perception of parent involvement and its effect on student achievement. In this study, teachers were asked to rate their students on concerns and competencies in the social and academic arenas and their own perceptions of the quality and quantity of parental involvement. The results revealed that teachers' perceptions of parental involvement quality remained stable over a five-year period. A noted factor is that different teachers were interviewed each year. The study also revealed that teachers' perception of boys and the involvement of their parents were far less favorable when compared to girls. Further, Black boys perform better in school, specifically in reading comprehension, when their parents

were outwardly involved (Izzo, et al., 1999). Consequently, when the teachers perceived the parents were involved, they were more inclined to work with the students.

When addressing actual parental behaviors, such as contacting the school when needed, volunteering, and participating in direct educational supervision, the research has shown that these behaviors had no effect on the reading scores of Black children (Fan, 2001). This means that other factors also play a part in the development and learning skills among Black children especially their reading scores.

Davis-Kean (2005) suggests there is a positive connection between boys and parent involvement and their progress in school. Ensuring parents are involved is merely one component of success. What must be understood is that for some boys, the low level of parental involvement in their education may offer additional explanations for the boys' poor performance. Educators must know how to connect to the students and the parents in order for these students to attain their full academic potential (Davis-Kean, 2005).

### **Influence of Parent Education: Beliefs and Practices**

Parents' education may have direct, positive influence on their child's achievement (Jimerson, et al, 1999; Kohn, 1993; Luster, et al, 1989). For example, Alexander, Entwisle and Bedinger (1994) found that parents of moderate to high income levels and good educational backgrounds held beliefs and practices that mirrored their expectations as to how their children will be educated as compared to those of low-income families which resulted in fewer interests in learning. Alexander, et al (1994) suggested that the parents' abilities to form accurate beliefs and practices regarding their children's performance are essential in structuring the home and educational environment so their child can excel in all schooling endeavors.

Halle (1997) conducted a study of low-income minority families and found that mothers with higher education had higher expectations for their children's academic achievement, and these expectations were directly related to subsequent achievement in reading. Brookes-Gunn, Duncan and Klebanov (1994) concluded that both mother's education and family income were important predictors of the physical environment and learning experiences in the home. Likewise, Smith, Brooks-Gunn and Klebanov (1997), found that the home environment mediated the association of family income and parents' education with their children's academic achievement. The mediation effect was stronger for maternal education than for family income. Thus, Smith, Brooks-Gunn, and Klebanov (1997) posited that education might be linked to specific behaviors in the home (e.g., reading, playing). Corwyn and Bradley (2002) found that maternal education had the most consistent direct influence on cognitive and behavioral outcomes with some indirect influence through a cognitively stimulating home environment. The current study suggests that student engagement and student achievement will excel when parents are partners in teaching their child to read.

### **Parent Involvement for Reading-Black Boys**

Society in general and educational researchers in particular, has long been interested in the positive effect that parental involvement may have on academic achievement (Christenson, Rounds & Gorney, 1992; Epstein, 2010; Keith, 1991; National Center for Education Statistics, 1997). Fan and Chen (2001) maintain that there is extensive research literature attesting to the importance parental involvement in children's achievement. Much less has been written, however, on the influence of parental involvement in schooling on children's academic motivation. There are many ways that parents can be involved in their children's schooling. The most common way is to engage with their children on homework and projects. Parents also are

involved when they visit children's schools, meet with their teachers, partake of school activities and events, volunteer at the school, obtain resources for school events, help their children with course selection, keep abreast of children's academic progress, and impart their educational values to children.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) propose a theoretical framework for parental involvement. Their theoretical conceptualization for parent involvement focuses on three main issues: a) why parents become involved in their child's education; b) how parents choose specific types of involvement, and c) why parental involvement has positive influence on achievement outcomes. The framework provides more than types of parent involvement; it attempts to explain why parents choose to be involved. Fan and Chen (2001) conclude, although this model is promising, it remains unclear how the major elements can be operationally defined and measured empirically.

Joe and Davis (2009) suggest there are perceptions in parents' academic beliefs according to their socioeconomic status and family structure. Working and middle-class families have higher expectations for academic achievement than those less affluent. Joe and Davis (2009) claim that Black parents have more involvement in their child's reading while at home, as compared to their White, Asian, and Hispanic counterparts who are seemingly more active within the school setting. Their research concludes that parents of Black boys are involved during the early learning years and have a tendency to become less involved as their children proceed through the educational system (Joe and Davis, 2009). However, Epstein (1997) argues that parent involvement particularly among Black families, does not adequately represent the full extent of involvement of the Black families within their child's educational experience.

Newkirk (2002) reports on minority boys and their reading skills in *Misreading Masculinity: Boys, literacy and popular culture*. Newkirk (2002) discusses the reading achievement of boys as displayed in end-of-year assessment results and concludes that boys who seem uninterested in literacy in the classroom may be enthusiastic readers and writers in different contexts. Yet, the literacy practices that appeal to some boys are not always valued in the context of institutionalized school literacy and may be overlooked, to the frustration of both student and teacher. Although the NAEP (2009) data shows that in a random sampling of fourth through eighth grade students, girls outperform boys annually, it does not explain why boys have a tendency to feel isolated or inferior in their literacy experiences.

Newkirk (2002) maintains that schools are attempting to address the literacy needs of boys. However, the manner in which these specific needs have been addressed has often been ineffective. This may be due, in part, to the insufficient amount of time spent working with boys in reading and other content areas (Newkirk, 2002).

### **Black Parents' Responsibilities for Their Children**

The current study explored the relationship between the family's home literacy behaviors practices and attitudes and the reading achievement of Black boys. Edwards (2010) suggests that poor African-American families should understand their responsibilities in supporting their child's reading and overall achievement while in the home. Parents who cannot help their children with their homework can at least encourage them to do their best in school and support their efforts (Epstein, 1986). Epstein (1986) suggests that parents who are ethnic minorities, have low socio-income strata and have low levels of education nevertheless, can read aloud to their child or listen to them read, sign their child's homework, inquire about a child's day at

school, visit the classroom, watch and discuss TV shows, and borrow books from the teacher to provide additional help .

Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) conducted a qualitative study in which they observed Black families providing literacy experiences for their children as a means of daily survival. These literacy activities are deemed necessary for survival as opposed to personal or educational growth. These activities included discussions about applications of food stamps and taught them the significance of student financial aid (Edwards, 2010). Although these children understood what their parents wanted them to learn, they struggled with school-based literacy activities. In further observations of these Black families, other home literacy practices involved Bible readings, newspaper readings and communication with the local social service agencies. To conclude, these studies indicate that Black family's home literacy practices are specific to "social domains"- entertainment and daily living routines (Edwards, 2010).

### **Black Boys and Reading**

According to Tatum and Muhammad (2012), the volume of experiences Black boys have interacting with texts significantly correlates with their overall reading success and that motivation is highly correlated with reading comprehension. Additionally, reading comprehension is heightened by discipline and world knowledge, and effective teachers of reading comprehension employ classroom discussions to make meaning of the texts they encounter (Tatum & Muhammad, 2012).

The reading habits could be related to teacher expectations and perceptions of African American male youth and teachers' qualifications (Croninger, Nishio, Rathburn & Rice, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2001). In their review of research, Duke, Pearson, Strachan, and Billman, (2011) stated, "Teachers can overcome disadvantages in reading comprehension that students

bring to school” (pg.5). They cite Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill (1991) who found that students whose home environments were poor with respect to promoting reading comprehension development nonetheless made adequate progress in reading comprehension if they had strong teachers of reading comprehension for two consecutive years. When students receive adequate instruction in reading, they make progress. If they receive at least two years of poor instruction, students do not make progress in reading. The research, however, concludes that one quarter of the variance of student achievement is associated with characteristics of teachers and schools (Croninger et al., 2003; Marzano, 2000; Miller, 2003). According to Croninger, et al. (2003), student characteristics (e.g., home environment, background knowledge, and motivation) account for approximately 75% of the variance in student achievement.

Identifying texts that African American male youth will find meaningful and significant is a challenge that many teachers face. For African American males, these texts contribute to a healthy psyche, focus on a collective struggle, provide a road map for being, doing, and acting, and provide modern awareness of the real world (Tatum, 2000, 2005, 2012). Although there is a promise of moving towards Common Core Standards of education, there is skepticism because of the bureaucratic nature of many urban schools. Table 2.1 captures how current literacy practices can be conceptualized based on an historical understanding of the formation of the literacy development of African American males. The framework outlines three key components, (literary presence, literary pursuits, and literary character), to improving reading ability while in school, particularly for black boys in the urban setting. Simply exposing black boys to texts is not enough. The text must provide a presence where the black boy can make a personal connection, reflecting literary pursuits where actions and behaviors are determined (such as making wise decisions and building positive personality traits.)



*Table 2.1. Three Historical Framings to Approach Literacy with African American Male Youth*

Definition	Enacting in urban	Elementary example
<p>Literary presence: Staking a claim and making oneself visible within the intellectual community through acts of literacy.</p>	<p>Create in-school contexts for African American male youth to share their voices and visions through acts of reading, writing, and speaking.</p> <p>Nurture the multiple identities of African American male youth.</p> <p>Select texts that speak to their multiple identities instead of selecting texts based on their reading identities alone.</p> <p>Scaffold ways for them to share their thoughts and respond to texts</p>	<p>Select read-aloud with rare words and lead discussions about the rare words.</p> <p>Create a young storytelling time when kids are allowed to create and share their own stories.</p> <p>Establish young poetry reading or young debate clubs in the primary grades.</p> <p>Have students read primary source documents (e.g., letters) written by African American children from historic literary works.</p> <p>Have students write their own stories.</p>
<p>Literary pursuits: Specific literacy actions and experiences that are both individual and collaborative and are enacted around texts.</p>	<p>Engage African American males with texts that cause them to be, do, and think differently as a result of what they read.</p> <p>Create an environment that affords them the opportunity to shape their own ideas.</p> <p>Structure opportunities for critiquing and evaluating</p>	<p>Have video talk time after students watch a video about people, places, and things.</p> <p>Have students read and discuss text about key issues that are important to their local, national, and international community.</p> <p>Lead them in a discussion of current events about children occurring throughout the world.</p>

	<p>their own writings.</p> <p>Allow them to read for information and for mere pleasure.</p>	<p>Have them discuss how they believe their own lives are connected to other children in the world. Make sure they write every day.</p>
<p>Literary character: The personal and academic characteristics of a person that develop as a result of engagement in reading, writing, and speaking.</p>	<p>When literary pursuits are enacted, African American male youth will become thinkers and resilient beings.</p> <p>They will have confidence in reading, writing, and speaking and sharing their ideas.</p> <p>This will transfer to other spaces in and out of the classroom.</p>	<p>As a result of engaging in literary pursuits, students feel confident in sharing ideas in class discussions with the security of knowing that their ideas will be respected</p>

Note. (Tatum, 2005). Used with permission of the author.

The Center on Education Policy (2010) reports that boys read fewer "whole books" and score lower on reading tests than girls-up to 16% lower in some states, and 10% lower on a national average. Noguera (2002) maintains that it is not that boys cannot read (though clearly many cannot read well); reading does not appeal to them. According to Newkirk (2002), American culture now entices boys to become more engaged in electronics, games, movies, advertising, sports and television. Further, the American culture implies that reading is for girls and boys are less interested unless the reading material piques their interests (Smith & Wilhelm, 2006).

Schwartz and Avila (2006) conclude boys tend to read a wider number of genres over a broader range of topics than girls. Boys are usually most interested in books and periodicals

about hobbies, sports, and activities they might engage in, and in informational resources. They like escapism (via science fiction, adventure, and fantasy) and humor more than fiction and poetry; and they like to collect series of books (Smith & Wilhelm, 2006). Reading choices made for boys in school frequently do not reflect their preferences. It appears that since girls are clearer and more vocal about what books they want, elementary school teachers who are predominantly women, and mothers rather than fathers, select reading materials for mainly for female children (Smith & Wilhelm, 2006). According to Schwartz (2002), most of the books available to boys in the classroom and at home are those preferred by girls. Further, boys want to see characters like themselves sometimes, so materials provided to them should feature people of different ethnicities, races, and backgrounds who live in a variety of types of homes and communities (Schwartz, 2002).

Tatum (2005) concludes that the concept of gender awareness and an emphasis on masculinity have led to making the following suggestions on how to increase boys' involvement with reading:

- Use male oriented texts with ethnic male characters, as opposed to non-ethnic female oriented text.
- Use texts that engage boys emotionally with the primary characters.
- Expose boys to nonfiction texts (expository) that focus on learning "how to do" something new. Boys, more so than girls, tend to enjoy working with their hands.

Although gender is central to the ongoing discussion about boys and reading, some have argued that boys' failure in reading is more connected to their economic status (Elwood, Epstein, Hey & Maw, 1998). Epstein (2000) suggests that it might be more useful to draw, instead, on feminist and pro-feminist insights in order to understand what is going on in terms of gender

relations amongst boys. Important questions, they suggest, are: what kind of masculinities are being produced in schools, in what ways, and how do they impact upon the education of boys? In other words, there is an urgent need to place boys' educational experiences within the wider gender relations within the institution and beyond (Epstein, 2000).

Smith and Wilhelm (2002) conducted research involving 50 boys and concluded that boys had a strong belief in the importance of reading and doing well in school. Tatum (2005) states that boys are resistant to the day-to-day reading practice if it does not make a connection to their interests, their historical backgrounds, and what they believed to be their needs as they approached adolescence.

Tatum (2005) concludes that the conventional understanding is that school prepares young people for the future. So often these young people, and especially boys, are told, "Stay in school and get your education." However, urban youth are likely to hear this message from individuals who have not taken advantage of their own education. The importance of the study of classroom behavior among students is to determine the relation between what happens in the classroom and the behaviors in the home once the child leave the classroom at the end of each day. The aforementioned arguments by Tatum (2005), Smith and Wilhelm (2002), Epstein (1998), Schwartz (2002) suggest that home behaviors echo what the child hears while at school; however, it is equally important to study the home behaviors to seek any connection.

According to Smith and Wilhelm (2002), Black males reject literacy because of its future orientation, its separation from immediate uses and functions, and its emphasis on knowledge that is not valued in their daily lives outside of school. Further, Tatum (2005) concludes that growing up in an environment where many adult males have been defaulted by school, whether intentionally or unintentionally, Black males perceive the value of school to one's future

experience as a false promise filled with an empty outlook on life, and by people who simply do not care. Consequently, if literacy fails repeatedly to meet their needs, these boys resist the idea that being in school has value (Tatum, 2005).

Kunjufu (1995) states literacy instruction must have value in young people's current time and space if it is to attract and sustain their attention. It must address their issues and concerns in such a way that will lead them to want to take a closer look at their present situation and have a desire to change. Many poor Black males are too preoccupied with thoughts of their own mortality and the mundane energy needed to survive than to concentrate on, or believe in literacy as a bridge to their successful future (Kunjufu, 1995). One might notice that young, Black boys have a preoccupation with survival based upon their choice of music, their conversations with peers, and many of their personal reflections (Kunjufu, 1995). Although addressing these needs within the Black cultures may not be ample enough to curb the social ills that plague them, a child's teacher holds a greater potential to address their educational needs (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Educational goals have historically fallen short of addressing the academic, cultural, emotional, and social needs of Black males (Ladson-Billings, 1994). There needs to be a concerted effort to make a connection with black males and their families. Tatum (2005) maintains that Black males require a balance between taking their minds away from the day-to-day community issues that consume them and redirect their thoughts toward more inspiration and hope for their future. Poverty has a way of souring the childhood of Black boys. Reading has a way of sweetening that same childhood (Tatum, 2005).

Ladson-Billings (1994) suggests that teachers who have successes in teaching Black boys resist teaching just the mandated curriculum. Successful teachers within the urban setting not

only implement high quality instruction, they create a mediated learning environment which ensures a safe and mutual respectful student-teacher relationship in the classroom. Furthermore, they seek training and implement a culturally responsive approach to the teaching of reading.

### **Culturally Responsive Teaching**

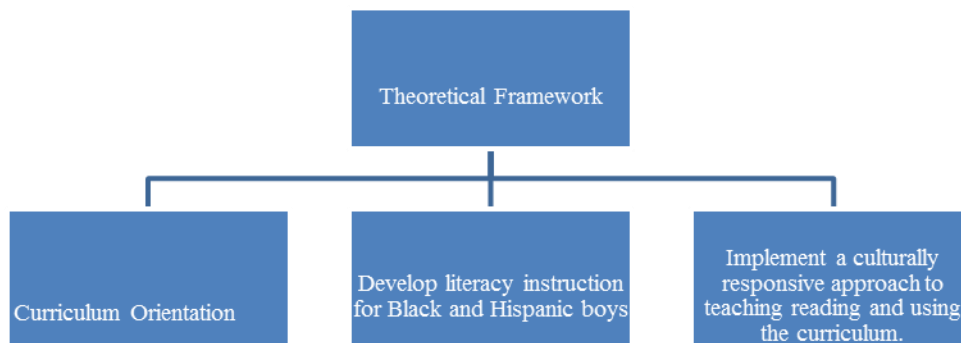
According to Gay (2000), a culturally responsive teaching approach is when a teacher not only recognizes but also appreciates a student's culture, and uses that culture as teachable moments to engage and connect with the student for a more desirable outcome. Ladson-Billings (1994), a leading scholar in using the culturally responsive approach, sees this approach as recognizing the importance of culture by supporting students who have not always been properly served in our country's public school system and demands that teachers create an atmosphere conducive for effective learning. It is important to note, one must not assume that all minorities have the same or similar cultures and that they learn in the same manner. According to Gay (2000), reading instruction that considers the needs of Black boys and acknowledges their struggles is considered culturally responsive teaching. Gay (2000) outlines the five-point description of culturally responsive teaching:

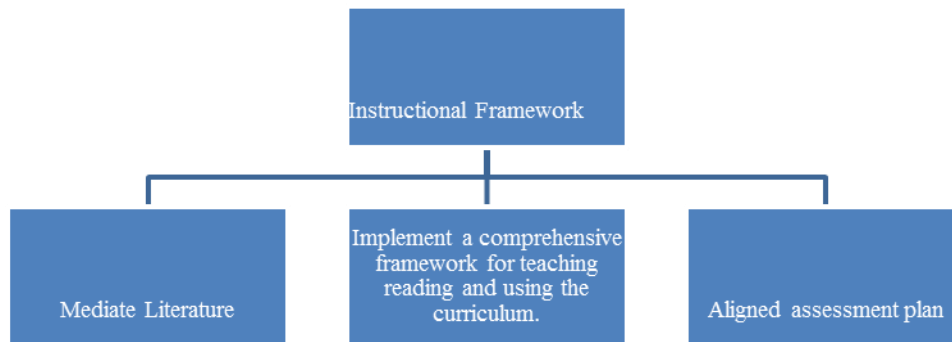
- Implements curriculum that contains diverse content worthy of systemic instruction by all teachers within urban systems
- Shapes a construct between home and school connections
- Implements diverse instructional strategies
- Teaches and instills an appreciation of their cultural heritage
- Incorporates multicultural resources and materials within all subjects. For the Black child, it is important for them to be exposed to material that depicts their heritage in a

positive light. If more materials of this nature were provided to Black boys particularly, their interest to read may increase (Gay, 2000, pg. 128)

In order to prevent or minimize poor academic performances of the Black males, a culturally responsive approach to the curriculum should be implemented. Tatum (2005) advocates the importance of text selection and engaging students in literature. It is important to denote the connection between text selection in the classroom and its connection to home literacy behaviors. Having books in the home as an extension of the classroom is significant to the consistency of encouraging reading behaviors among black boys while in the home. If the texts that are being utilized in the classroom are also shared in the home, the reading enthusiasm and improvement of the reading ability has the probability to increase over time. Teaching students comprehension skills and strategies is an important part of a comprehensive framework; those lessons must be anchored in meaningful texts. Tatum (2005) has conceptualized what he calls a Nesting Ground Framework (See Figure 2.2). This is a model that seeks to help teachers design literacy instruction that will create nesting grounds in which adolescents can grow and flourish.

*Figure 2.2 Nesting Ground Framework*





Note. (Tatum, 2005). Used with permission of the author.

The Nesting Ground Framework demonstrates a framework through which Black boys can acquire literacy skills. This is an initial step in making one's classroom a nesting ground for Black boys to conceptualize the role of literacy instruction.

### **Reading Comprehension**

Reading has been identified in many ways since it became the center of educational research during the 1980s (Pressley, 1998). Reading comprehension was thought of differently not as a discrete skill but as the interaction of text and the knowledge possessed by the reader to produce meaning (National Academy of Education, 1985). Reading comprehension does not come into being without the connection between the involvement and engagement of the reader. Van de Broek and Kremer (2000) describe what happens during reading comprehension thusly: readers construct a mental picture of the text; a representation in memory of the textual information and its interpretation (Van de Broek & Kremer, 2000).

Durkin (1993) maintains that the first step to gaining meaning from printed text is the ability to fluently decode words, the skillful use of comprehension (i.e., cognitive) strategies while reading the text is important. Durkin (1993) simply refers to this comprehension skill as "reading to learn." Cognitive strategies are mental models to gain meaning and understanding of the text. According to McEwan (2001), reading behaviors and thought processes engage the



reader in order to influence the decoding process. Behaviors include note taking, constructing a graphic organizer, previewing the text, looking back to check on an answer for accuracy, writing a summary, retelling a story or simply reading aloud. Thoughts include processes that activate prior knowledge, monitoring comprehension (intermittent comprehension checks) or inferring meaning of the text.

Pressley (1998) suggests it is easier to talk about the importance of comprehension or the need for testing comprehension than it is to actually teach it. Pressley (1998) found in a year-long study there is a lack of comprehension instruction within classrooms despite decades of research on how to teach comprehension skills and the benefits derived from it. Rosa (1994) conducted a study that generated information about individual differences in the cognitive styles of Black male students at the elementary level and explored the implications for these differences for reading comprehension processes, especially as it relates to comprehension of expository text. These differences were analyzed utilizing the cognitive style framework that measures the way a person thinks, perceives and remembers information which maintains dimensions of perceptual functioning which are reflected in an individual's cognitive activities (Rosa, 1994). Rosa (1994) study reveals there is a significant difference between the high-field independence of children compared to the low-field dependence of children specific to vocabulary development and that teachers must take these differences into consideration when teaching in the classroom. High-field independent African-American males received higher raw scores on the test of comprehension as compared to low-field dependent counterparts. Recognizing such differences can help to better equip parents to supporting their child with reading development.

Narvaez (1998) studied causes of individual differences in the comprehension of texts along two lines, reader skill and reader knowledge. Reader's skill concerns basic reading and

language abilities, including essential decoding skills such as word recognition, vocabulary, and memory as well as higher-level skills such as reading strategies and forming references. Readers with more of these skills are better at comprehending texts.

A second type of individual difference that researchers study is differences in the specific knowledge brought by the reader to the text (Derry, 1996). Constructivist theory generally assumes that an individual possesses or interprets experience based on previous experience or knowledge. Derry (1996) suggests there are three types of knowledge structures that can be activated in an individual: memory objects, cognitive fields, and mental models. If the reader lacks the knowledge requisite for interpreting the information in the text, the reader will misunderstand or misinterpret the text. Van de Broek (1994) contends that as a reader reads and remembers text, he or she attempts to create a coherent mental representation by integrating text information and by elaborating on the text with prior knowledge. Prior knowledge often comes in the form of general knowledge structures.

According to Bransford and Johnson (1972), cultural knowledge seems to affect comprehension much like background knowledge. Similarly, when texts are inconsistent with the expectations or high-level knowledge structures of the reader, the reader will understand poorly, recall wrongly, and even distort memory to fit with the readers' mental schema. It is deduced that cultural influences on reading comprehension often transpire without awareness. Reading is also influenced by the reading context and their readers' conscious goals. It is important to recognize the reading ability of black boys and the impact the home behaviors may have to their success. Knowing the reading ability is one aspect; but to study the home behaviors and whether or not there is home-school connection may determine the overall success.

### **Ethnic-Racial Socialization Practices**

Hughes, Smith, Stevenson, Rodriguez, Johnson and Spicer (2006) suggest ethnic-racial socialization has important consequences for academic outcomes. Youth have reported stronger and more positive ethnic identities when parents incorporate cultural practices into their parenting repertoire.

Hughes, et al. (2006) introduced the notion that communications to children about ethnicity and race are highly salient components of parenting in ethnic minority families. In the early 1980s, portraits of Black families described parents' concern that their children would encounter racial barriers and negative stereotypes and their corresponding emphasis on promoting high self-esteem, instilling racial pride, and preparing children for bias (Peters & Massey, 1983; Richardson, 1981; Spencer, 1983; Tatum, 2000). Smith, et al. (2003) reported that children's perceived racial barriers were inversely associated with their academic achievement.

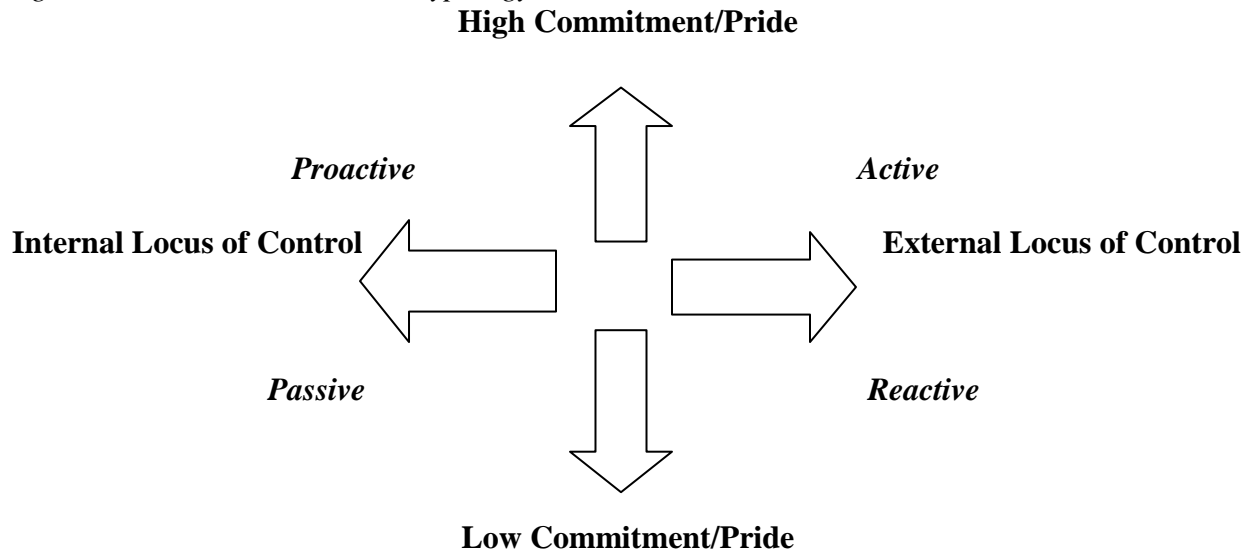
There are many inconsistencies and misconceptions regarding the impact of families of Black boys on their academic achievement in school (Joe & Davis, 2009). Examples include: Black boys who are raised in impoverished areas do not succeed. Black boys raised in single parent homes have minimal if any parent involvement in the school, therefore poor academic achievement is inevitable. Families living in low socio-economic areas do not read to their child, or help with homework, let alone inquire if they have an assignment. When parents in the Black community raise their boys in an authoritative manner, teach them to respect and love their culture, and instill a sense of personal power in spite of the constant societal barriers, the idea of attaining academic achievement is possible (Joe & Davis, 2009).

Educators must work to implement culturally competent and comprehensive interventions for minorities including Black boys in order for students to meet high academic standards and feel successful (Caughy, Nettles, O'Campo, & Lohrfink, 2002). Black boys need to be exposed to culturally relevant or inspirational reading material with images that resemble them. When Black boys are struggling academically, in many instances, small group and direct instructional practices are best suited to meet their academic challenges (Holman, 1997). Another means of intervening is to ensure the learning environment is safe. Black boys must feel safe, physically and emotionally with their teacher and, in turn, the teacher must believe these children can achieve (Kozol, 2006).

According to Murray and Mandara (2001), one of the primary tasks of Black families is to foster a sense of cultural and racial identity in their children, particularly in boys. This is critical as these groups are bombarded with negative and stereotypical images within the media and educational system. Collectively, this is called racial socialization, and is commonly used in minority groups, particularly when these children reach adolescence (Murray & Mandara, 2003). The importance of the typology is to describe the relationship between adolescent development and the impact the environment has on the social development of the child and the family.

Figure 2.3 outlines a racial socialization typology that shows four types of parents within a two-dimensional figure.

*Figure 2.3 Racial Socialization Typology*



Note. This framework offers a description of the prototypical parent of each major category (Murray & Mandara, 2003). Used with permission of the author.

This typology distinguishes the four groups of parents that predominate: (a) focus on racial awareness and instill a sense of ethnic pride, and/or (b) focus on personal power known as, locus of control (Murray & Mandara, 2003). While conducting research on parental interactions within the families and the manner in which parents, namely single-parents, instill common beliefs in their children, several educators use the typology shown in Figure 2.3 to provide a vivid picture regarding the effects of racial socialization (Murray & Mandara, 2003). Figure 2.3 illustrates the importance of the parent’s teaching in the home to their child’s academic success. Parents take ownership in their child’s academic success by ensuring their child recognizes their value as a Black child in this society. When pride is established in the home, strengthening the home-school connection through home literacy practices, the reading of the Black child is likely to grow and be sustained over time (Murray & Mandara, 2003).

### Summary

The review of the literature has produced a recurring theme emphasizing the importance of Black parents/guardians being involved in their sons' lives and how such involvement impacts their reading (Fan, 2001). Within the literature, however, there is a paucity of research explaining the connection between home literacy behaviors and the reading scores of Black boys in third, fourth and fifth grades. However, research findings are also inconclusive on the cultural values and ethnic-racial socialization in the home and the impact that these have on improving reading scores of Black boys in the elementary grades (Murray & Mandara, 2003). Although the research remains inconclusive, home literacy behaviors may impact reading scores in a positive way while embedding cultural values to support black boys understanding of the importance of reading appropriately (Tatum, 2005).

The researcher, a senior administrator in Missouri's largest public school district, has consistently observed the underperformance of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys in the St. Louis Public Schools whose reading proficiency as shown on the Missouri Assessment Program (M.A.P.) Communication Arts reading section (DESE, 2010) and the Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (S.T.A.R.) (2006). As a result, she embarked on this research study to determine whether there is any relationship between urban Black parents' literacy practices and the reading performance of their sons.

Over the years, Black boys have been inconsistent in their reading achievement according to the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). The reading achievement trends for Black boys fluctuated 11-13% between 2006 and 2011 (NAEP, 2009). Educators have increasingly identified parental involvement as the primary vehicle by which to elevate academic achievement for all children in the urban setting (Jeynes, 2005).

The responsibility of the home is to maintain family behaviors and cultural practices that support the child's literacy development (Lewis, et al., 2010). The student achievement reports by Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for the St. Louis Public Schools indicate that 86% of fourth grade and 80% of fifth grade Black boys were reading below proficiency (DESE, 2010). The issues concerning the reading performance of Black boys warrant additional exploration. Britto (2001) examined the relationship between family literacy and emerging literacy skills of low income African American preschool and school aged children. Findings from Britto's (2001) study reveal that maternal interactional styles, book reading, and teaching with book reading and puzzle-solving activities signified the quality of the interaction impact on these African American children's emergent literacy skills.

After careful review of existing literature, it is safe to assume that this dissertation study may be one of the first to focus on the specific relationship between urban Black parents' home literacy practices and the reading outcomes of their sons at the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade levels. The outcomes of this research study may be generalized to other urban American public schools because St. Louis, where the study will be conducted, is similar in demography and other socio-economic factors to other urban American cities.

It is against the backdrop of the research literature review and Missouri's student performance reports that an objective scientific research study, both quantitative and qualitative in scope, that determined the impact of urban Black parents' home literacy attitudes, behaviors, and practices on the reading achievement of their sons in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades.

The current research focused on whether there is a relationship or connection between the parents' home literacy attitudes, practices and behaviors and the reading scores of Black boys in

third, fourth, and fifth grades. The following chapter describes the design, hypotheses, questions, variables, population and procedures for the proposed study.



## Chapter 3

### Research Design and Methodology

Chapter three presents the research design and methods of study. It provides the justification for establishing the design and explains the procedures used in conducting the current study.

#### Research Study Design

The research design used in this study was an *Explanatory Sequential Quasi-Mixed-Methods-Multi-Strand* (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006); the qualitative and quantitative components being mixed at the Experiential (methodological/analytical) stage (Angell & Townsend, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 1998, 2003, 2005, 2006, & 2009). The *Explanatory Sequential Quasi-Mixed-Methods-Multi-Strand* was selected to identify the relationship between the family's home literacy behaviors, practices and attitudes and the reading achievement of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys employing the criteria used in Mixed Methods research typology and the design questions they answer (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006).

#### Justification for Research Design

Quasi-Mixed-Methods research has been established as a third methodological movement over the past twenty years, complementing the existing traditions of quantitative and qualitative movements (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, 2009). This development has been accompanied by a search for an appropriate paradigm to provide a legitimation for the use of mixed methods comparable to the paradigms that have been widely accepted as justifying the use of quantitative and qualitative methods separately. (Hall, 2012 pg. 1).

This research study used the *pragmatism* paradigm approach described by Teddlie & Tashakkori (1998, 2003, 2005, 2006, & 2009) because pragmatism is the philosophical paradigm underlying the use of mixed methodology in behavioral and social sciences research (Alise, 2008, Burke et al., 2007; Somekh & Lewin, 2005; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). The pragmatism paradigm was used to guide the researcher in philosophical assumptions about the research and in the selection of tools, instruments, participants, and methods used in the study (Alise, 2008, Ponterotto, 2005). The pragmatic paradigm/theoretical framework approach allowed the researcher to use both qualitative and quantitative methods of study and to match methods to the specific questions and purpose of the research (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The theoretical framework, as distinct from a theory, is sometimes referred to as paradigm (Mertens, 2005; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). It influences the way knowledge is studied and interpreted. It is the choice of paradigm that sets down the intent, motivation and expectations for the research. Without choosing a paradigm as the first step, there is no basis for subsequent choices regarding methodology, literature review, and design of a research study. (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006).

From an extensive review of the research literature and their own research, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2006) established the criteria used to determine and classify mixed methods research. Teddlie and Tashakkori's (2006, pg. 14) *Criteria Used in Mixed Methods Research Typologies and the Design Questions* were used to justify the research design for the current study. Following the criteria given by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2006) that different authors have used to create their mixed-methods typologies (Creswell et al, 2003; Greene et al., 1989; Green & Caracelli, 1997; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Morgan, 1991; Morse, 1991) as well as the report of Angell and Townsend (2011), this research study used the Explanatory Sequential Quasi-Mixed-Methods-Multi-Strand design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). The *Explanatory*

*Sequential Quasi-Mixed Methods Multi-Strand* design was chosen for the following reasons: a) It is *explanatory* since the researcher used “qualitative findings to help interpret or contextualize quantitative results” (Angell & Townsend, 2011 pg. 21); b) The study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods as per the “Number of Methodological Approaches Used” criterion as indicated in the Criteria Used in Mixed Methods Research Typologies (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006); c) The study design is multi-strand according to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2006) as it involves two phases of data collection and analyses. The quantitative reading achievement data was collected in 2011, 2012, and 2013 while the close-ended and an open-ended modified survey questionnaire (Curry, 2012) data was collected in 2014. The analyses of the qualitative and quantitative data were done at different times; d) The design is sequential because the collection of qualitative and quantitative data occurred in the chronological order of three years (2011, 2012, and 2013) as per the Type of Implementation Process criterion in the Criteria Used in Mixed Methods Research Typologies (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006) as supported by the findings of other researchers (Creswell et al., 2003; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; & Morse, 1991, 2003); e) The study is of Quasi-mixed design because the design is mixed only at the experiential (methodological/analytical) stage of the study. There is no true integration of the findings or inferences for the overall study according to the Stage of Integration of Approaches criterion established in the Criteria used in Mixed Methods Research Typologies (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). The experiential or methodological/analytical stage involves concrete observations and operations, which include methodological operations, data generation, analysis, and interpretation (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2005, 2006); f) The Quasi-Mixed Methods design was selected because it ensured the quantitative component of the study had priority over the qualitative part from the onset of the research study in terms of planning,

operations, data collection, and data analysis and interpretation. This is per the Priority of Methodological Approach criterion in the Criteria Used in Mixed Methods Research Typologies (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006) and g) The function of the quasi-mixed methods study is complementarily as per the Functions of the Research Study criterion in the Criteria Used in Mixed Methods Research Typologies (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006) since a complementarily purpose is indicated when qualitative and quantitative methods are used to measure overlapping, but distinct facets of the phenomenon under investigation. Results from one method type are used to enhance, illustrate, or clarify results from the other (Green et al., 1989; Mark & Shotland, 1987; Rossman & Wilson, 1985).

A modified questionnaire (Curry, 2012) with thirty questions was provided to the parents to capture their home literacy attitudes, behaviors and practices. Only two of the thirty questions were open-ended (unstructured) and captured the descriptive/qualitative responses of the parents as they identified favorite book titles as children and as adults. The remaining twenty-eight questions of the modified questionnaire (Curry, 2012) were closed-ended/forced choice responses that provided the quantitative data of the of the research study.

### **Research Questions**

Three research questions and one hypothesis were used to address the home literacy attitudes, behaviors and practices of the urban Black parents of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades boys.

**RQ1:** What are the descriptions of home literacy attitudes, behaviors, and practices of urban Black parents whose sons are in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades?

**RQ2.** What is the correlation between the home literacy practices of urban Black parents and the reading performance of their 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades sons?

**RQ3.** How have the reading scores of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys changed between 2011, 2012 and 2013?

### **Research Hypothesis**

**H1:** If Black boys, in an urban school district, have families who support their educational experiences through home literacy attitudes, behaviors and practices, then these boys will have higher reading scores on Missouri Assessment Program (M.A.P.) state achievement test and the Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (S.T.A.R.).

### **Methods of Study**

#### **Study Site**

The research study was conducted at three St. Louis School District elementary schools in the City of St. Louis. St. Louis is an independent city on the eastern border of Missouri, United States. With a population of 348,069, it was the 58<sup>th</sup> largest city according to the 2010 U.S. Census (US Census Bureau, 2010). The Black population of St. Louis City was 49.2% in 2010. St. Louis School Public Schools District is the largest public school system in Missouri. The enrollment in 2013 was 25,046, with Black students comprising 81% of the enrollment and 83% of the students qualifying for the Free and Reduced Lunch program (DESE, 2013).

#### **Research Variables**

One independent variable and two dependent variables were selected to conduct the study and test the single hypothesis and address the three research questions: The variables were a) Urban Black parents' home literacy attitudes, behaviors, and practices as independent variable as measured by Curry's (2012) modified questionnaire. The modified Curry's questionnaire

provided both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data of the questionnaire was generated by only two of the thirty questions that were open-ended (unstructured). Twenty eight closed-ended/forced choice responses of the modified questionnaire provided the quantitative data for the research study; b) Reading scores from the Missouri Assessment Program (M.A.P.) state achievement test (DESE, 2012 & 2013) served as dependent quantitative variable and c) The Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (S.T.A.R.) scores (Renaissance Learning, Inc., 2013) served as the second dependent quantitative variable.

### **Sampling**

The probability sampling method of simple random sampling was used in this research study. The simple random sampling technique ensured every item in the population of fifty-four elementary schools, twelve grades, one hundred-twenty seven students, and one hundred twenty-seven parents had an equal chance of being selected (Frerichs, 2008). Random sampling minimizes the error of measurement and thus is amenable to the scientific method. A random number generator was used to randomize the selection of samples of three schools, three grades, forty-six students, and forty-six parents (Research Randomizer, 2013). The randomized sample sizes were determined by using an online calculator (Maccor, 2013).

### **Research Instruments**

The researcher used three data collection instruments to test and describe answers to the three research questions and one hypothesis. The first instrument, a modified questionnaire (Curry, 2012) was used as a dual-purpose instrument to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The modified questionnaire is primarily a quantitative instrument with the qualitative role being of secondary importance. The modified questionnaire consisted of two open-

ended/unstructured questions, where Black parents provided their own responses for the favorite book titles they read as children and as adults thus providing qualitative data. The modified questionnaire had twenty-eight close-ended/forced choice response questions that generated the quantitative data of the modified questionnaire instrument. The second instrument, Missouri Assessment Program (M.A.P.), provided 2012 and 2013 annual student reading quantitative data from the State of Missouri (DESE, 2012 & 2013) and the third instrument was Standardized Test Assessment of Reading (S.T.A.R.) 2013 quantitative scores (Renaissance Learning, Inc., 2013) from the Saint Louis City School District.

**Parent Questionnaire.** A questionnaire modified from Curry (2012) was used to survey urban parents' literacy attitudes, behaviors, and practices. The modified questionnaire is ideal for the purpose of the study; it generated quantitative and qualitative data to address the three research questions and the single hypothesis; is feasible in terms of time and resources where it is used; has been adequately piloted (Curry 2012); and is ethical (Brewerton and Millward, 2001). The researcher modified this instrument to use only the questions that were specific to home literacy practices for elementary aged children. There were existing questions within the questionnaire that addressed preschool aged to secondary level students. The questions used were specific to parent activities as well as their reading interests and how these impact their children's reading achievement.

According to Curry (2012), the parent questionnaire has been acknowledged as both a reliable and valid measure of both academic and non-academic phenomenon in adults. The questionnaire was found to have good test and re-test reliability of Cronbach's alpha of 0.74 and internal consistency of Cronbach's alpha of 0.96. Thus, the questionnaire was found to be a reliable way of obtaining important information from parents. The results from the Curry (2012)

study suggest the best measure for assessing home literacy behaviors and predicting a child's reading skills are directly related to the child's experiences and the results from the parent questionnaires. Although Curry's questionnaire consists of one hundred thirteen questions, the researcher selected thirty questions for the modified questionnaire, specific to elementary aged children and parents' reading interests.

The urban St. Louis parents responded to thirty close-ended questions of the modified Curry's (2012) Parents' Questionnaire (See Appendix A). Curry's Parent Questionnaire consists of two parts with one hundred and thirteen closed-ended questions while the modified Curry's Parent Questionnaire is categorized into literacy programs at home with ten closed-ended questions, reading activities at home with ten closed-ended questions, and parent/child experiences with eight close-ended questions and two open-ended questions.

**The Missouri Assessment Performance.** The M.A.P. quantitative instrument for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades students reading scores was used as a dependent variable to address the three research questions and test the single hypothesis of the study. The M.A.P. is a series of annual state assessment tests for Communication Arts, Mathematics and Science at grades 3-12. These assessments are designed to measure if students in Missouri are meeting the Show-Me knowledge (content) and Performance Goals (Process) Standards (DESE, 1996). The M.A.P. assessments are required under Senate Bill 380, often referred to as the "Outstanding Schools Act," the state school-reform law enacted in the legislature in 1993. This bill required the State Board of Education to adopt no more than 75 academic performance standards, which established the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary for students to "successfully advance through the public elementary and secondary education system of this state" (DESE, 2011). According to Senate Bill 319 (DESE, 2001), if a student in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade is reading one to



two years below level, an individualized reading plan is required and the child must attend the summer session for remediation. The communication arts M.A.P. tests consist of Multiple Choice/Selected Response (MC) questions, Constructed Response (CR)/short-answer questions, and Performance Event (PE)/long-answers and problem-solving questions based on the original and revised Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Domains or Educational Objectives (Bloom et al., 1956, Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001). For the Missouri Assessment Program (M.A.P.), students generate short response answers in constructed response while they use problem-solving and critical thinking skills to generate long answers in performance events. The M.A.P. emphasizes Bloom's educational objectives of Knowledge and Comprehension (lower-order thinking skills) and Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation (higher-order thinking skills). Bloom's cognitive skills are required in the 2,439 Missouri Public Schools' curriculum, instruction, and assessment and must be taught as Depth of Knowledge (DOK) to enhance student learning and performance outcomes (Vandeven, 2006). Schools use DOK charts and Grade Level Expectations (GLE) for communication arts (Vandeven, 2006) to incorporate Bloom's cognitive skills in unit and lesson plans. A DOK chart (Webb, 1997, 2002; Webb et al., 2006; Krathwohl, 2002) has four performance level skills aligned with Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Skills: Level 1-Recall/Reproduction, Level 2-Skill/Concept, Level 3-Strategic Thinking' and Level 4-Extended Thinking (LeBaron, 2011). The M.A.P. state achievement test is standardized and deemed reliable and valid (CTB McGraw-Hill, 1999).

The M.A.P. reading scores were correlated with the modified Parent Questionnaire (Curry, 2012) to determine what if any correlation existed between home literacy practices of urban Black parents and the reading performances of their 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade sons who are currently enrolled in the schools covered by this study.

**The Standardized Test of Assessment of Reading.** The S.T.A.R. (Renaissance Learning, Inc., 2013) is a normed-referenced standardized reading test, which has been mandated by the St. Louis City School District to be given to all students in grades 1-8. The S.T.A.R. Assessments are computer-adaptive tests designed to give an accurate, reliable, and valid data to provide teachers with enough information to make data-informed decisions regarding instruction and intervention (Renaissance Learning, Inc. 2013). The S.T.A.R. data reports include skills-based test items, learning progressions for instructional planning and quantitative reports. The S.T.A.R. assessments are designed for students in the early stages of literacy development, specifically in pre-kindergarten through third grade. The S.T.A.R. reading assessment presents 34 test items, the first 10 items assess reading comprehension from a previous reading passage, the remaining 24 test items are skill based derived from the five reading domains specific to the grade level of the student taking the test (Renaissance Learning, Inc. 2013) .

The S.T.A.R. reading test items include word recognition, author's purpose, analyzing and evaluating text, constructing meaning and analyzing literary texts. It is important to denote the S.T.A.R. reading assessment is a timed test which raises concerns for students in the primary grades as students are attempting to get acclimated to working at a specific pace and not at their own pace. At the conclusion of the assessment, a diagnostic report is generated that summarizes the student's results and helps teachers understand each student's current performance (Renaissance Learning, Inc. 2013).

The S.T.A.R. diagnostic reports classify students as: Emergent, Transitional, and Probable readers. An Early Emergent Reader (300-487) is classified as a student who is beginning to understand that printed text has meaning. The student is learning that reading

involves printed words and sentences and that print flows from left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page. The student is beginning to identify colors, shapes, numbers and letters (Renaissance Learning, Inc. 2013). A Late Emergent Reader (488-674) is a student classified as being able to identify most of the letters of the alphabet and can match most of the letters to their sounds. The student is beginning to read picture books and familiar words around the home (Renaissance Learning, Inc. 2013). A Transitional Reader (675-774) is classified as a student who has mastered alphabet skills and letter-sound relationships. The student can identify many beginning and ending consonant sounds and long and short vowel sounds and is probably able to blend sounds and word parts to read simple words (Renaissance Learning, Inc. 2013). A Probable Reader (775-900) is a student who is becoming proficient at recognizing many words, both in and out of context. The student spends less time identifying and sounding out words and more time understanding what was read. Probable readers can blend sounds and word parts to read words and sentences more quickly, smoothly and independently than students in the other stages of development (Renaissance Learning, Inc. 2013).

The results provide differentiated instructional recommendations that are: a) Instructional reading level (IRL) which represents the highest grade level that a student can effectively be taught, b) Estimated oral reading fluency (ORF), an estimate of a student's automaticity of word recognition which lead to efficient comprehension and c) Zone of proximal development (ZPD) that represents the level of difficulty by a range of book levels and individualized-based results. The STAR results from spring 2014 were used in this research study. (Renaissance Learning, Inc., 2013).

Research conducted during the development of S.T.A.R. Reading confirms that the test is reliable, valid, and correlates highly with high-stakes standardized reading tests (Renaissance Learning, Inc., 2013). The test was normed in spring 1999 using a nationally representative sample of 30,000 students from 269 schools in 47 states across the U.S. The reliability of S.T.A.R. Reading was established with three reliability studies: Test-retest (n=2,095), alternate forms (n=4,551), and generic reliability (n=29,169). The grade-level reliability estimates from all three studies are extremely high, ranging from 0.79 to 0.92 with most estimates greater than 0.85 (Renaissance Learning, Inc., 2013). Studies (Pike, 2008) have successfully used the S.T.A.R. to determine reading performances for the grade populations (3-5), which are the grade levels investigated in this study. The S.T.A.R. reading scores were correlated with the Parent Questionnaire to determine what if any correlation existed between home literacy practices of urban Black parents and the reading achievement of their 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades sons who were enrolled in the schools covered by this study.

### **Data Collection Methods**

A questionnaire modified from Curry (2012) was used to survey urban parents' literacy attitudes, behaviors, and practices in spring 2014. The modified Curry's (2012) Parent Questionnaire is categorized into literacy programs at home with ten closed-ended questions, reading activities at home with ten closed-ended questions, and parent/child experiences with eight close-ended questions and two open-ended questions.

The Missouri Comprehensive Data Systems (DESE, 2010) was used to access the 2011-2013 M.A.P. reading scores for the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades boys for the three urban elementary schools covered by the research study. The S.T.A.R. test data, a normed-referenced standardized

reading test, which has been mandated by the St. Louis City School District to be given to all students in grades 1-8, was provided by the School District's Research, Evaluation, and Testing Division. The St. Louis City School District's Tyler Student Information System (Tyler Technologies, 2014) was used to identify Black boys who were enrolled in 2011, 2012, and 2013 and had taken M.A.P. test in communication arts. The Student Information System generated a list of students' names and numbers. The researcher reviewed the student data to ensure the racial and grade level criteria were met, and that the 2012 and 2013 of M.A.P. communication arts data as well as the 2013 S.T.A.R. data existed for these students. All student names were coded for anonymity.

### **Institutional Review Board**

The University of Missouri's Institutional Review Board's (IRB) application for Expedited Review was approved for the research study. Following the IRB guidelines, written permission was obtained from the school district to conduct the study with district schools. In addition, written consent and an informational letter were provided to the parents before their participation in the study. The letter emphasized the purpose of the study and the intent to improve the quality of education for the students in the district. The school district's school family specialists assisted in securing parental permission and participation in the study. Parents had the right to accept or refuse to participate in the study and the right to refuse to answer any questions on the modified questionnaire (Curry, 2012). Throughout the study, questionnaires, consent letters, student information, and reading scores have been secured according to IRB guidelines.

**Research Study Timeline**

<p>July-August, 2013 September, 2013</p>	<p>Dissertation proposal approved IRB Expedited application approved Participant consent obtained</p>
<p>August-November, 2013  December 2013-May 2014</p>	<p>Review and collection of reading scores data Distribution and collection of Parent Questionnaires Data collected/Data analyzed</p>
<p>May 2014-November 2014</p>	<p>Writing final study results/dissertation  Submit dissertation for committee review/make corrections/secure committee members' signatures  Defend dissertation before committee/make corrections/finish formal paperwork  Submit completed/approved dissertation to UMSL Graduate school</p>

**Data Analysis**

The research study used a modified parent questionnaire (Curry, 2012) that consisted of a) twenty eight closed-ended questions that generated quantitative data. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and correlational statistical techniques (Borg et al. 2007) (Figure 2.1) and b) two open-ended questions that generated qualitative data. The qualitative data was analyzed using analytic induction to infer themes and patterns from the examination of the data (Borg et al. 2007) (Figure 2.1). The data consisted of a) Modified parent Questionnaire (Curry, 2012) that measured Black parents' home literacy attitudes, behaviors, and practices as independent variable; b) two years (2011, 2012 and 2013) of M.A.P. reading scores for the 3<sup>rd</sup>,

4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys as dependent variable and c) one year (2014) of S.T.A.R. scores for the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys as the second dependent variable.

The quantitative research data was analyzed using SPSS V.21 computing software (IBM SPSS, 2012) (Figure 2.1). The Shapiro-Wilk (1965) technique was used to test for the normal distribution of the data following the guidelines by Park (2008). The data analyses involved a) descriptive statistical analysis (Borg et al. 2007) which provided detailed description of literacy practices at home, reading activities at home, and parent/child experiences of urban Black parents whose sons are in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades using the data collected with the modified Curry’s questionnaire (Curry, 2012); b) correlational statistical analysis that involved determining if there is correlation between the home literacy practices of urban Black parents and the reading performance of their 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade sons; c) One-Way Analysis of Variance (Borg et al. 2007) which involved determining whether the independent variable (year) in the form of ordinal categories differs on the dependent variables (students’ M.A.P. and S.T.A.R. reading scores (Borg et al. 2007) and d) Analytic induction technique (Borg et al. 2007) was used to infer themes and patterns from the examination of the qualitative data generated by the two open-ended questions in modified Curry (2012) questionnaire. The matrix analyses below shows how each research question was investigated for the outcomes. Each research question was analyzed separately to arrive at the conclusion for this study.

*Figure 2.1 Research Data Analyses Matrix*

Research Question	Data Type/ Data Analysis Technique	Analysis Tool	Outcome of Data Analysis
Research Question 1: What are the descriptions of home literacy attitudes, behaviors, and practices of urban Black parents whose sons are in the 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , and 5 <sup>th</sup> grades?	-Quantitative data -Descriptive and Frequency statistical analyses of Modified Curry (2012) questionnaire quantitative and independent data variables (28	SPSS Descriptive Procedure & SPSS Frequency Procedure.	Means, standard deviation, frequency tables, and frequency charts.

	questions).		
Research Question 1: What are the descriptions of home literacy attitudes, behaviors, and practices of urban Black parents whose sons are in the 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , and 5 <sup>th</sup> grades?	-Qualitative data  -Analytic induction analysis of the qualitative data generated by the two open-ended questions of the Curry (2012) modified questionnaire.	Frequency tables, Bar charts, Modes, and Pie charts.	Themes and Patterns.
Research Question 2: What is the correlation between the home literacy practices of urban Black parents and the reading performance of their 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , and 5 <sup>th</sup> grades sons?	-Quantitative data  Bivariate Correlational statistical analysis between the home literacy practices of urban Black parents as measured by the Parent Questionnaire (Curry, 2012) (independent variable) and students' MAP and STAR reading achievement scores (dependent variables).	SPSS Correlation Procedure	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r); Probability values (p-values); Sign of correlation; and Direction of correlation.
Research Question 3: How have the reading scores of 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , and 5 <sup>th</sup> grades Black boys changed between 2011 and 2013?	-Quantitative data  -One-Way Analysis of Variance (1-Way ANOVA) of Black boys' to determine whether M.A.P. & S.T.A.R. reading scores (dependent variables) has changed between 2011 and 2013 (independent variable).  Conduct Levene's Test of Normality & equality of variances.  Conduct Bonferroni Multiple Test Procedure where significant differences are found.	SPSS One-Way ANOVA Procedure.  SPSS Bonferroni Multiple Comparison Technique.	Levene's statistical test of normality & equality of error variances..  ANOVA Degrees of Freedom F-values  ANOVA significance <sup>1</sup> (probability levels).  Bonferroni multiple comparison tests significance <sup>1</sup> (probability values, p-values).

Note: All significant tests were conducted at  $\alpha=0.05$  i.e. at 95% probability level of certainty.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

An inductive analysis of the open-ended/unstructured questions, numbers seven and ten of the modified Curry (2012) questionnaire (See Appendix A) related to Parent/Child reading



experiences was completed for the qualitative component of the research study (Figure 2.1). The open-ended questions were:

- What is the title of your favorite book when you were a child?
- What is currently the title of your favorite book or magazine?

The book and magazine choices for the parent readings were categorized as fiction, non-fiction, fantasy, sport, and other. The patterns and themes of urban Black parents reading habits, when they were children and as adults were determined from the data using the qualitative analytic induction analysis.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 described the rationale for the study and its design using: a) The scientific method; b) The three questions and one hypothesis to be investigated; c) The data collection methods; d) Curry's (2012) modified questionnaire instrument that is independent variable but primarily quantitative with two qualitative questions; e) Two years of M.A.P. reading scores for the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys as an instrument as well as a dependent variable, and f) One year of S.T.A.R. reading scores for the for the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys as an instrument as well as a dependent variable.

The validity and reliability of the parent modified Curry questionnaire (2012), the M.A.P. and the S.T.A.R. instruments as well as how the data they generated were analyzed to answer the research questions and test the hypothesis have been sufficiently described. The timeline for the research study was presented.

All responses to the parent questionnaire have been separated by school and grade level. Parent consent letters are maintained on file with the researcher and safeguarded with S.T.A.R. and M.A.P. results are kept in an electronic file with the researcher; the names of the boys were removed and coded to ensure confidentiality. According to the IRB guidelines, all information pertaining to this research is secured under lock and key and when results of the research are published or discussed at conferences, no identifying information will be shared. The research results and findings will be discussed in Chapter Four and will provide the results of analysis for each research question as well as the hypothesis.

## Chapter 4

### Results and Analysis

Chapter four presents the data analyses, results, and findings for the research questions and the hypothesis. The purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between the family's home literacy behaviors, practices and attitudes and the reading achievement of Black boys. The researcher collected the M.A.P. and S.T.A.R. data results and coded the results in a spreadsheet to protect the identity of the students. Next, the results from the parent questionnaire were coded and compared to each third, fourth and fifth grade Black boy's assessment results from M.A.P. and S.T.A.R. The results were analyzed for correlation of the home literacy practices to the assessments results. The data were organized by grade level and the responses to the research questions were arranged sequentially. Each research question is captured with the results of the analysis and interpretation provided.

The first research question of the study involved the description of literacy practices at home, reading activities at home, and parent/child experiences of urban Black parents whose sons are in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades using data collected with modified Curry's questionnaire (Curry, 2012).

**Research Question 1:** What are the descriptions of home literacy attitudes, behaviors, and practices of urban Black parents whose sons are in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades? The descriptions from the parent questionnaire are categorized into three sections, a) Home Literacy Practices; b) Reading Activities at home; c) Parent/Child Experiences. The descriptions define the attitudes, behaviors and practices that occur that support the Black boys after the school day ends. The results from the questionnaire are intended to provide correlations between home literacy practices and the impact of the reading scores. The analysis showed the various

practices that engage the parents with their boys at home. The results show there is correlation between some home literacy practices and the reading performance of the boys according to the M.A.P. and S.T.A.R and therefore, some improvement in reading scores from below basic to basic indicate such. The results from this research are supported by the findings in the Casey Foundation (2010), the Center on Education Policy (2010) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2009 & 2011) that the Black boys continue to struggle in reading and a majority of the Black boys are not proficient in reading achievement.

**Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 1: Home Literacy Practices**

The results indicate the parents of the third grade boys are actively engaged in literacy practices, such as ensuring their boys have a library card, ensure books are in the home and reading with their boys. Parents participate in literacy programs at the school as well as the local branch library. It is important to note, teachers provide book lists to the boys, it is safe to deduce the books are found in the school library as well as the local library and by having a library card, and there is accessibility to the reading materials.

*TABLE 4.1. Descriptive Summary Statistics of Home Literacy Practices for Grade 3 as Measured by Curry’s Modified Questionnaire (N=41)*

Literacy Practices at Home	Mean	SD
Q 1 Available Books	0.98	0.16
Q 2 Reading to Child	0.83	0.21
Q 3 Newspapers Read	0.44	0.11
Q 4 Library Card	0.37	0.06
Q 5 Attend Literacy programs	0.22	0.02
Q 6 Parent Workshops	0.49	0.04

Q 7 Lending libraries	0.59	0.01
Q 8 Book Lists	0.63	0.06
Q 9 Computer in the home	0.54	0.23
Q 10 Technology programs	0.83	0.15

---

Note: Q= Question, N= Number of Subjects. Adapted from “Development and Validation of a Home Literacy Questionnaire to Assess Emergent Reading Skills of Pre-School Children” by J. Curry, 2012, University of Alberta.

In Table 4.1 there is a low standard deviation among several indicators. Parents of third graders have lending libraries (SD= 0.01) where students can check out books for their personal use at home. Also, parents are actively attending literacy programs (SD= 0.02) with their child at the St. Louis Public library. This indicates parents are participating in programs that support reading with their child, outside of the school day as well as encouraging their child to check out reading materials from the school’s library for their use. Lending libraries allow parents to read to their child thus the low standard deviation of question two. Third graders have a library card (SD= 0.06) which allows the families to check out books together, teachers provide appropriately leveled book lists (SD= 0.06) that families can take to the library when searching for reading material to check out from local libraries. As it relates to Epstein’s model (2010) parent involvement, parents attend parent literacy workshops (SD= 0.04) at their child’s school to receive resources and suggested activities to use at home to help with reading. The results from Literacy Practices at home suggest there is a significantly high parent involvement rate.

Table 4.2 shows results for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade parents show there is significant home literacy practices in the areas of available books in the home (SD= 0.00), parents spend time reading to and with their child at the end of the school day (SD= 0.04), parents are reading various

publications such as newspapers with their child, parents indicated they are utilizing the free newspaper publications on a regular basis as an added reading resource for them and their child (SD= 0.01). The St. Louis Public library offers free literacy programs at the local branches throughout the city and the results indicate parents are taking advantage of these programs with their child (SD= 0.07). As with the third graders, parents report that their fourth graders check out reading materials from their school’s lending library (SD= 0.09). It is important to note the value of lending libraries at schools for families who might not have the monetary resources to provide books on a regular basis; children are encouraged to participate in the lending libraries. Along with the reading materials in the home, there is high level of computer usage in the home (SD= 0.02) which can also allow for reading materials, instructional games and websites that support literacy practices while at home. The results for these fourth graders’ parents indicate involvement is important to the families.

*TABLE 4.2. Descriptive Summary Statistics of Home Literacy Practices for Grade 4 as Measured by Curry’s Modified Questionnaire (N=37)*

---

Literacy Practices at Home	Mean	SD
Q 1 Available Books	1.00	0.00
Q 2 Reading to child	0.89	0.04
Q 3 Newspapers Read	0.35	0.01
Q 4 Library Card	0.70	0.12
Q 5 Attend literacy programs	0.30	0.07
Q 6 Parent Workshops	0.65	0.15
Q 7 Lending libraries	0.51	0.09
Q 8 Book lists	0.68	0.16
Q 9 Computers in the home	0.59	0.02

Q 10 Technology programs	0.73	0.22
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Note. Q= Question, N= Number of Subjects. Adapted from “Development and Validation of a Home Literacy Questionnaire to Assess Emergent Reading Skills of Pre-School Children” by J. Curry, 2012, University of Alberta.

Table 4.3 results indicate the 5<sup>th</sup> graders parents provide the free newspaper publications as added reading resources for their child (SD= 0.08). Parents attend the literacy programs at the local library branches with their child in an effort to gain additional resources and activities to support their child’s reading (SD= 0.04). In addition to attend the local branch libraries, parents are engaged in the school’s parent workshops which gives them specific activities that parents can do with their child (SD= 0.01). The parent workshops at the school are equally important in that these workshops are given by the classroom teachers who can offer specific home activities, specific to their child’s individual needs. The lending libraries are a valued resource for the fifth graders (SD= 0.05) in which the books provided to the students are specific to the child’s reading level and allows for independent practice while at home. There is value in having computers in the home (SD= 0.03). Children can access reading activities and instructional games while at home to support their reading practices with the families.

*TABLE 4.3. Descriptive Summary Statistics of Home Literacy Practices for Grade 5 as Measured by Curry’s Modified Questionnaire (N=42)*

---

Literacy Practices at Home	Mean	SD
Q 1 Availability of Books	0.93	0.17
Q 2 Reading to Children	0.83	0.12
Q 3 Newspapers Read	0.43	0.08
Q 4 Library card	0.52	0.12

Q 5 Attend literacy programs	0.17	0.04
Q 6 Parent workshops	0.40	0.01
Q 7 Lending libraries	0.43	0.05
Q 8 Book lists	0.57	0.16
Q 9 Computers in the home	0.50	0.03
Q 10 Technology programs	0.81	0.15

---

Note: Q= Question, N= Number of Subjects. Adapted from “Development and Validation of a Home Literacy Questionnaire to Assess Emergent Reading Skills of Pre-School Children” by J. Curry, 2012, University of Alberta.

### **Findings for Home Literacy Practices**

The results of the analysis of the Home Literacy Practices for the urban Black parents’ who sons are in the third, fourth, and fifth grades (Tables 4.1-4.3) seem to suggest that the Black parents strongly agree that: Books and/or other reading materials are available at home (97%); they or other members of their household read with their children after school hours (85%); and their children access reading programs/games on computer or other electronic devices (79%).

The data analyses seem to indicate that Black parents whose sons are in the fourth grade fairly agree that: Their children have St. Louis Public Library card (70%); parent workshops that focus on literacy are offered at their children’s schools; and their children’s teachers share lists of books appropriate for the students’ reading levels.

### **Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 1: Reading Activities at Home**

In Table 4.4, there is a clear support from the third grade parents that having magazine subscriptions (SD= 0.04) is important reading material in the home. The results from the questionnaire does not suggest the other indicators are not as important, however, there is a



lower standard deviation which suggests magazine subscriptions is integral to reading activities in the home.

*TABLE 4.4: Descriptive Summary Statistics of Reading Activities at Home for Grade 3 as Measured by Curry’s Modified Questionnaire (N=41)*

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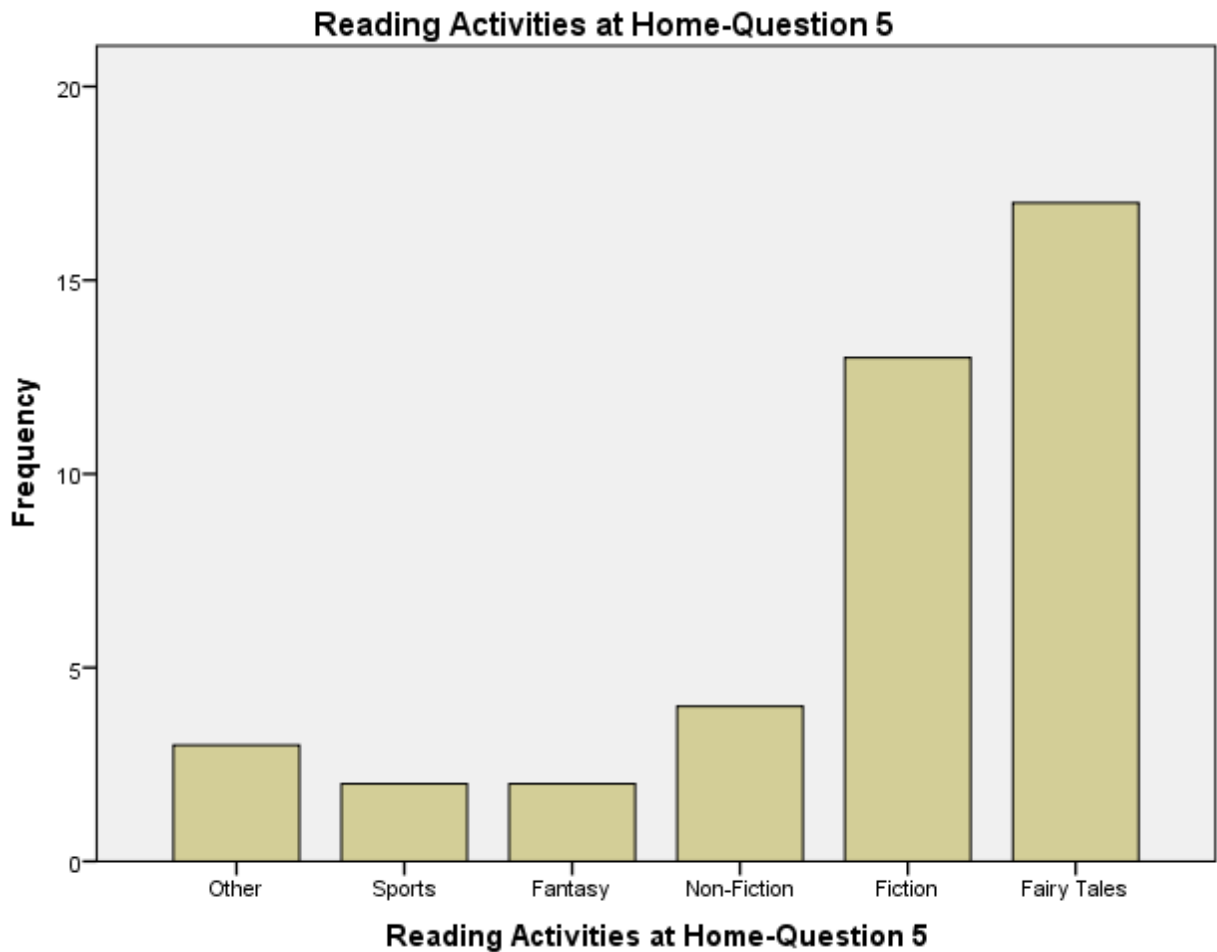
Reading Activities at Home	Mean	SD
Q 1 Weekly Reading to Child	2.20	0.33
Q 2 Child Reading to Family	2.46	0.19
Q 3 Bring home books	1.22	0.14
Q 4 Visits to the library	0.88	0.15
Q 6 Monitor technology use	2.66	0.49
Q 7 Literacy workshops	0.93	0.21
Q 8 Book fairs	1.29	0.35
Q 9 Help with book reports	1.95	0.57
Q 10 Magazine subscriptions	0.41	0.04

---

Note. Q= Question, N= Number of Subjects. Adapted from “Development and Validation of a Home Literacy Questionnaire to Assess Emergent Reading Skills of Pre-School Children” by J. Curry, 2012, University of Alberta.

Of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade parents surveyed the frequency of the books that their children prefer are Fairy Tales as compared to fiction, non-fiction, sports and fantasy.

*Bar Chart 4.1: Frequency Distribution of Reading Activities at Home for Grade 3-Question 5 as Measured by Curry’s Modified Questionnaire (N=41)*



The results in Table 4.5 indicate fourth parents place a strong emphasis on the having magazine subscriptions in the home (SD= 0.01). Equally as important are visits to the St. Public libraries to check out reading materials (SD= 0.05) as well as working with their child on assigned book reports (SD= 0.07) which are important as fourth graders learn the importance of reading to learn information as they soon will transition into the middle grades where reporting on information read is essential to reading achievement. Parents report that their fourth graders participate in the school’s book fairs that occur two per academic year (SD= 0.04) to begin

building their home libraries. In addition to building home libraries, parents encourage their child to check out books from the lending libraries at the school (SD= 0.08), this strengthens the reading practices and having various reading materials to read to and with their child. Parents also indicated on the questionnaire the importance of attending literacy workshops hosted at their child’s school (SD= 0.06).

*TABLE 4.5: Descriptive Summary Statistics of Reading Activities at Home for Grade 4 as Measured by Curry’s Modified Questionnaire (N=37)*

---

Reading Activities at Home	Mean	SD
Q 1 Weekly Reading to Child	2.49	0.51
Q 2 Child Reading to Family	2.70	0.29
Q 3 Bring home books	1.22	0.08
Q 4 Visit to the library	1.05	0.05
Q 6 Monitor technology use	2.30	0.31
Q 7 Literacy workshops	1.05	0.06
Q 8 Book fairs	1.05	0.04
Q 9 Help with book reports	1.43	0.07
Q 10 Magazine subscriptions	0.35	0.01

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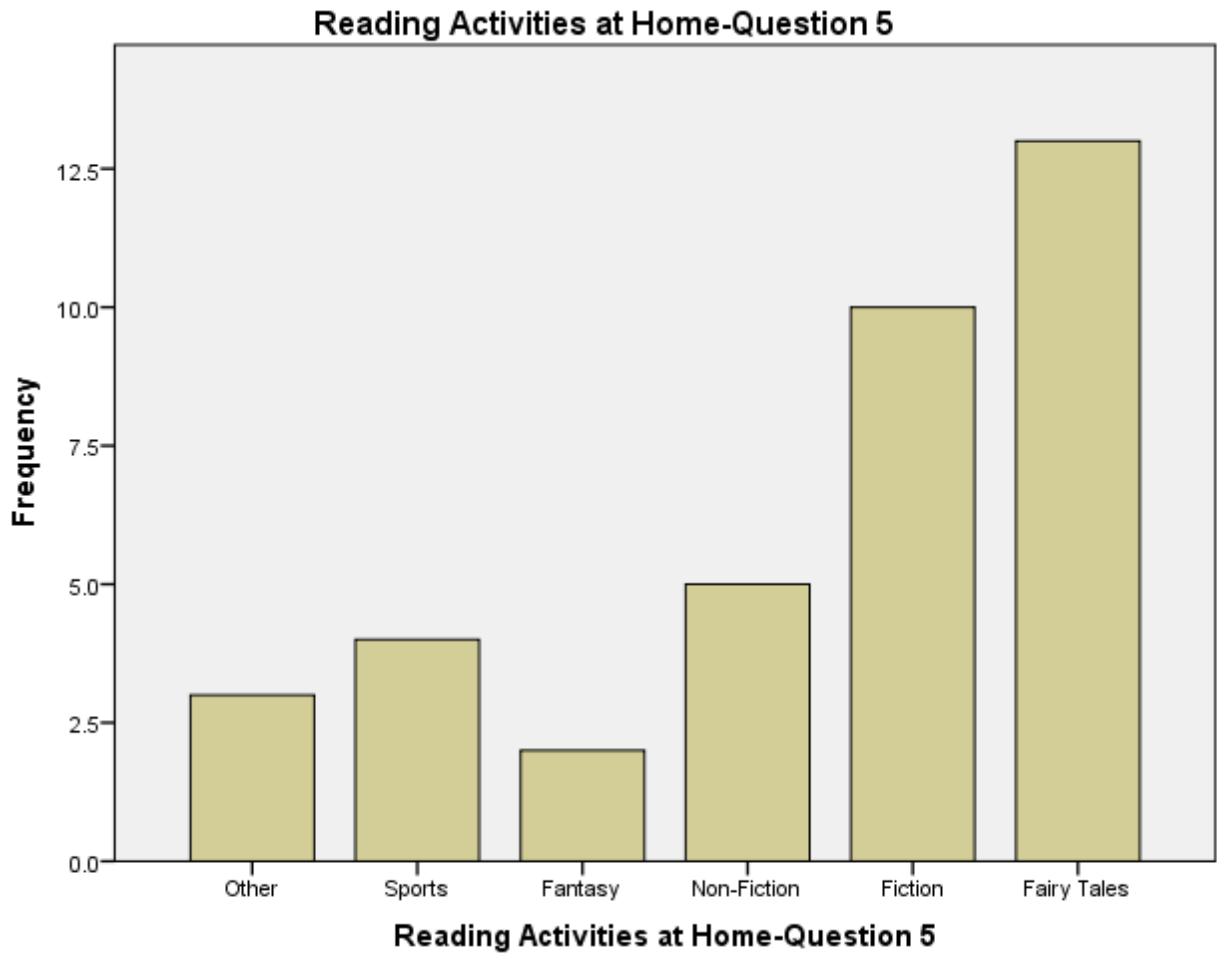
Note. Q= Question, N= Number of Subjects. Adapted from “Development and Validation of a Home Literacy Questionnaire to Assess Emergent Reading Skills of Pre-School Children” by J. Curry, 2012, University of Alberta.

The results indicate fourth parents place a strong emphasis on the having magazine subscriptions in the home (SD= 0.01). Equally as important are visits to the St. Public libraries to check out reading materials (SD= 0.05) as well as working with their child on assigned book

reports ( $SD= 0.07$ ) which are important as fourth graders learn the importance of reading to learn information as they soon will transition into the middle grades where reporting on information read is essential to reading achievement. Fourth graders participate in the school's book fairs that occur two per academic year ( $SD= 0.04$ ) to begin building their home libraries. In addition to building home libraries, parents encourage their child to check out books from the lending libraries at the school ( $SD= 0.08$ ), this strengthens the reading practices and having various reading materials to read to and with their child. Parents indicated on the questionnaire the importance of attending literacy workshops hosted at their child's school ( $SD= 0.06$ ) which is another resource to gather reading activities to support their child's reading while at home.

The fourth graders parents' responses which captured the frequency of the titles most selected indicated their preference for reading genres were fairy tales. The responses were most often selected by the parents as their reading enjoyment.

*Bar Chart 4.2: Frequency Distribution of Reading Activities at Home for Grade 4-Question 5 as Measured by Curry’s Modified Questionnaire (N=37)*



The results in Table 4.6 indicated that fifth grade parents place high priority on having magazine subscriptions in the home (SD= 0.01) as an added reading resource for the families. Parents demonstrate by the results to question 9 there is high parent involvement to helping their child with book reports (SD= 0.03) as students are in these intermediate grades, parents recognize the importance of the work in fifth grade as their child transition to the middle grades in the coming years. Fifth grade parents have indicated the importance of visiting the local

branch libraries to check out books (SD= 0.07) as well as attending literacy workshops at the school with their child (SD= 0.09) to supplement reading activities taking place in the home. Fifth graders participate in book fairs (SD= 0.06) at the school that occurs two times during the academic year.

*TABLE 4.6: Descriptive Summary Statistics of Reading Activities at Home for Grade 5 as Measured by Curry’s Modified Questionnaire (N=42)*

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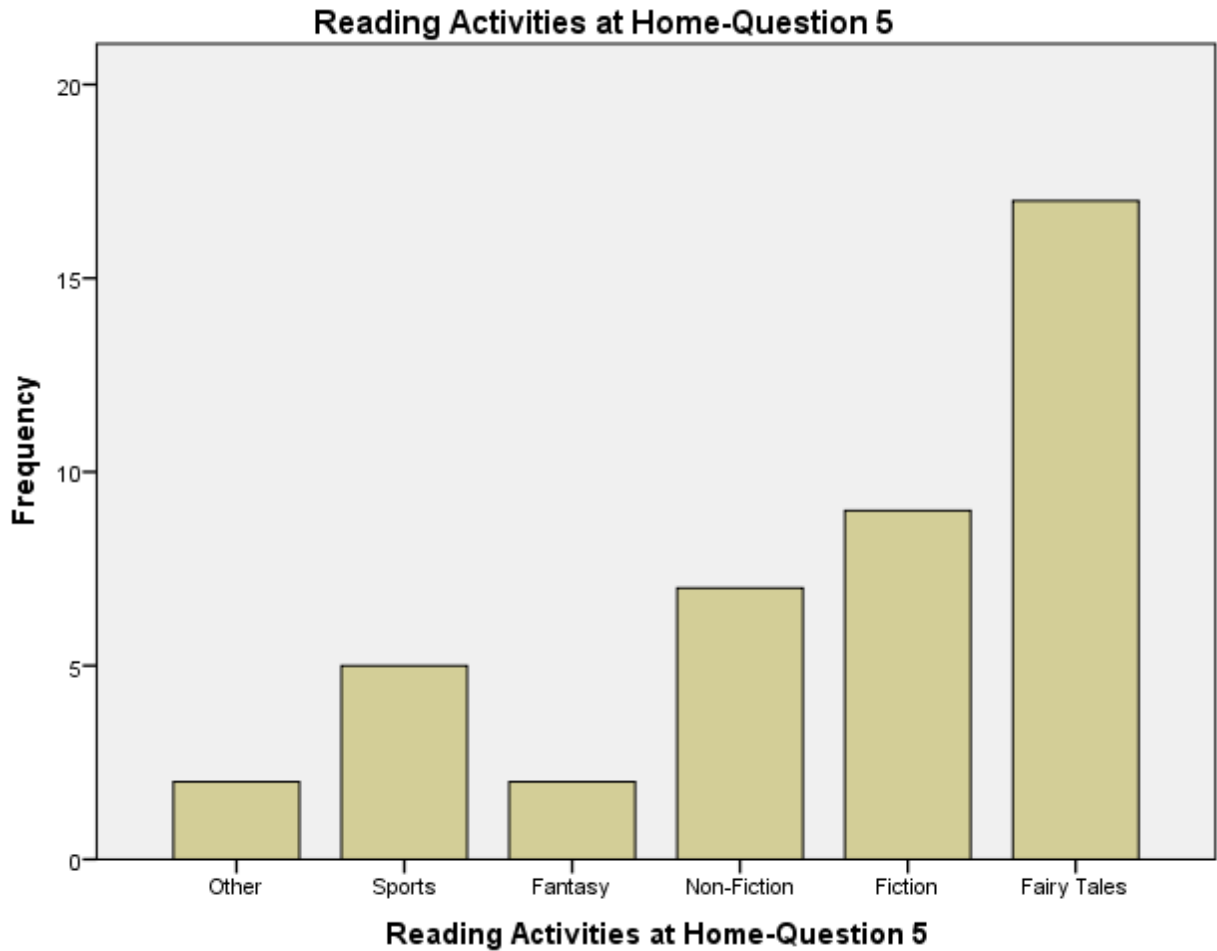
Reading Activities at Home	Mean	SD
Q 1 Weekly reading to child	2.19	0.43
Q 2 Child reading to family	1.93	0.37
Q 3 Bring home books	1.29	0.10
Q 4 Visit to the library	0.80	0.07
Q 6 Monitor technology use	2.43	0.25
Q 7 Literacy workshops	0.74	0.09
Q 8 Book fairs	1.14	0.06
Q 9 Help with book reports	0.98	0.03
Q 10 Magazine subscriptions	0.38	0.01

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Note. Q= Question, N= Number of Subjects. Adapted from “Development and Validation of a Home Literacy Questionnaire to Assess Emergent Reading Skills of Pre-School Children” by J. Curry, 2012, University of Alberta.

Much like the third and fourth grade parent responses, the fifth grade parents’ genre of preference are fairy tales. Spacing is off between text and graphics.

*Bar Chart 4.3: Frequency Distribution of Reading Activities at Home for Grade 5-Question 5 as Measured by Curry’s Modified Questionnaire (N=42)*



**Findings for Reading Activities at Home**

The results of the analysis of “Reading Activities at Home” (Tables 4.4-4.6) seems to show that Black parents whose sons are in the third, fourth, and fifth grades agreed that a) They or other family members of their households read with their children after school twice a week on the average (mean = 2.30) and b) their children ask to read to them or other members of their households twice a week on the average (mean = 2.40); they monitor their children while reading programs/games on a computer or other electronic devices more than twice a week (mean =

2.50); and they seldom assist their children with book reports (mean = 1.5). The data analysis for “Reading Activities at Home” (Charts 4.1-4.3) indicate that the most frequently chosen types of books or reading materials that the third, fourth, and fifth graders of the Black parents were fairy tales (39%), fiction (27%), non-fiction (15%), and sports (11%).

**Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 1: Parent/Child Experiences**

These results in Table 4.7 indicated that books were available to the parents when they were children, thus the need to ensure their children had books in the home as well as allowing their children to check out books from the local branch library and the school’s lending libraries. Parents of third graders recall their own parents reading the local newspaper for the most current local information occurring in the area and a possible indication that such information was used for social information such as shopping needs and most recent local and national occurrences. Parents had library cards as well; the prior third grade results show their children have library cards as well. However, it is important to denote, when these parents were children, they seldom read to other family members. The prior data show their children, in fact, read to them or together as is considered important as a reading activity in the home.

*TABLE 4.7: Descriptive Summary Statistics of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 3 as Measured by Curry’s Modified Questionnaire (N=41)*

Parent/Child Experiences	Mean	SD
Q 1 Availability of Books for Parents	0.90	0.23
Q 2 Thoughts of parents reading	0.78	0.15
Q 3 How often were you read to	2.68	0.79
Q 4 Required to read to family	2.44	0.29



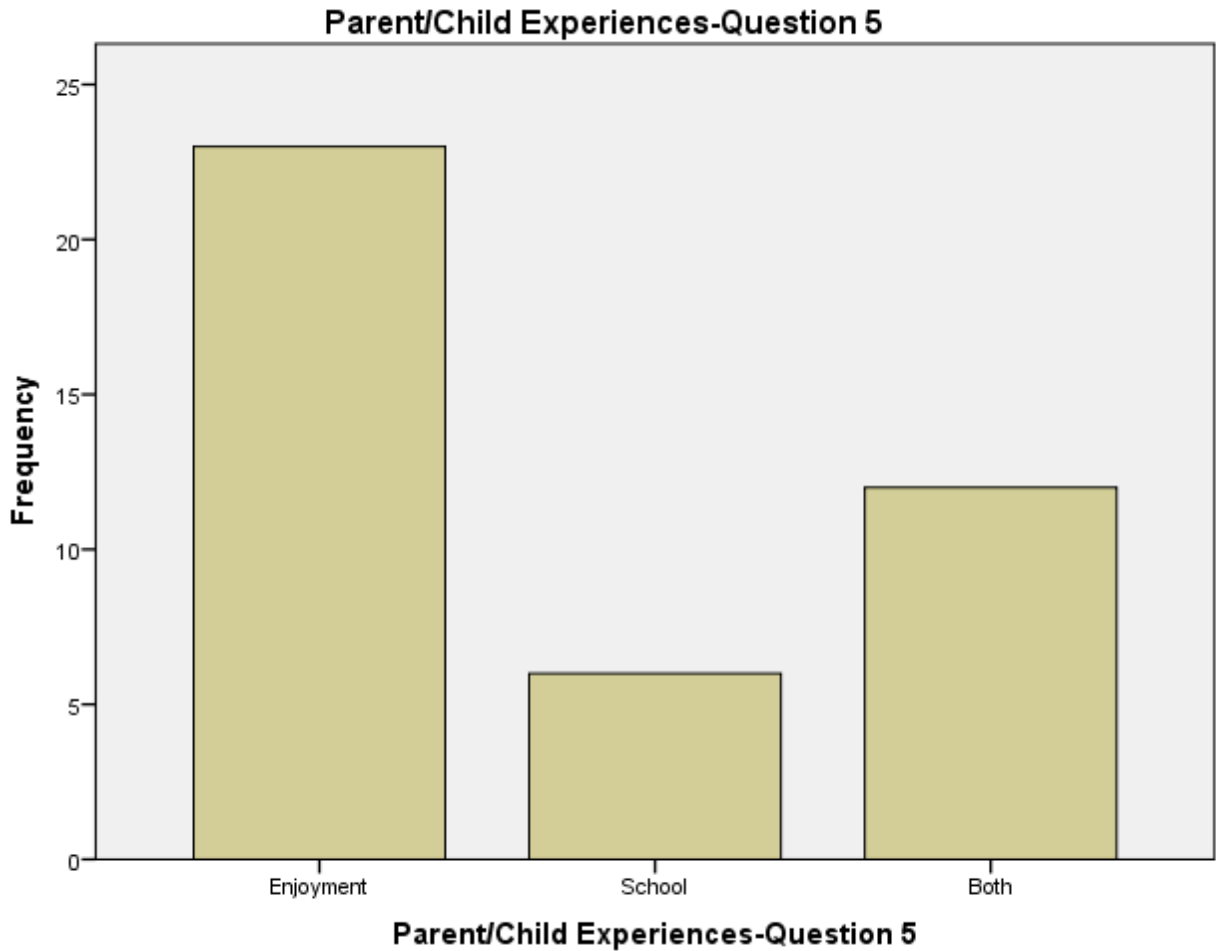
Q 8 Have a library card as a child	0.76	0.19
Q 9 Electronic reading material	1.85	0.27

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Note. Q= Question, N= Number of Subjects. Adapted from “Development and Validation of a Home Literacy Questionnaire to Assess Emergent Reading Skills of Pre-School Children” by J. Curry, 2012, University of Alberta.

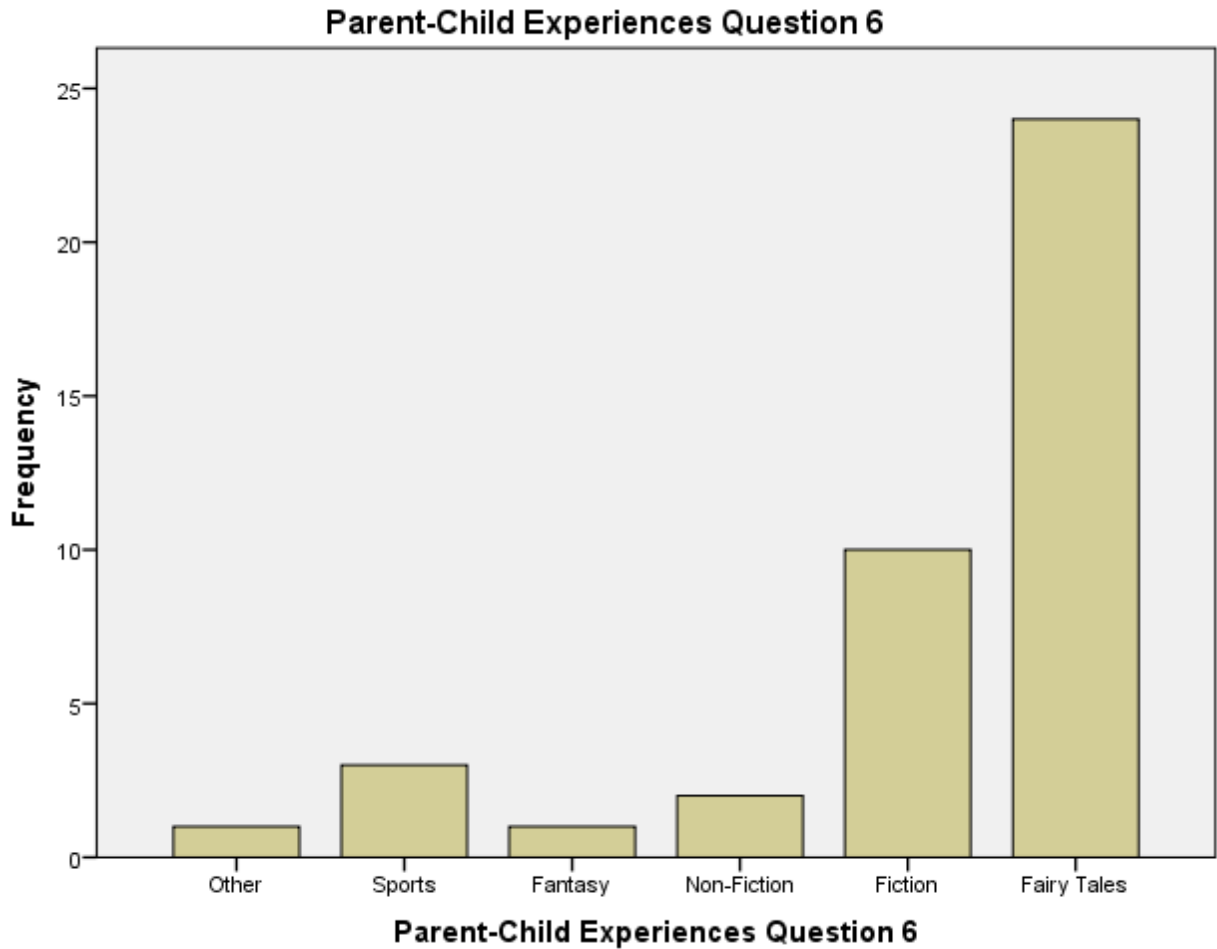
The results from question 5 indicate, when the parents were children, they preferred to read for enjoyment rather than what was expected of them while in school. Further in the research, the data showed the frequency of the titles of books the parents enjoyed reading.

*Bar Chart 4.4: Frequency Distribution of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 3-Question 5 as Measured by Curry's Modified Questionnaire (N=41)*



Much like their own children, the parents enjoyed reading fairy tales as compared to the other genres identified.

*Bar Chart 4.5: Frequency Distribution of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 3-Question 6 as Measured by Curry’s Modified Questionnaire (N=41)*



The results in Table 4.8 showed similar results as the parents of the third graders in that they had library cards as children and books were readily available in their homes. Although the fourth grade parents recall family members reading the local newspapers when they were children, reading with a family member did not occur nearly as often as it currently happens in the home.

*TABLE 4.8: Descriptive Summary Statistics of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 4 as Measured by Curry’s Modified Questionnaire (N=37)*

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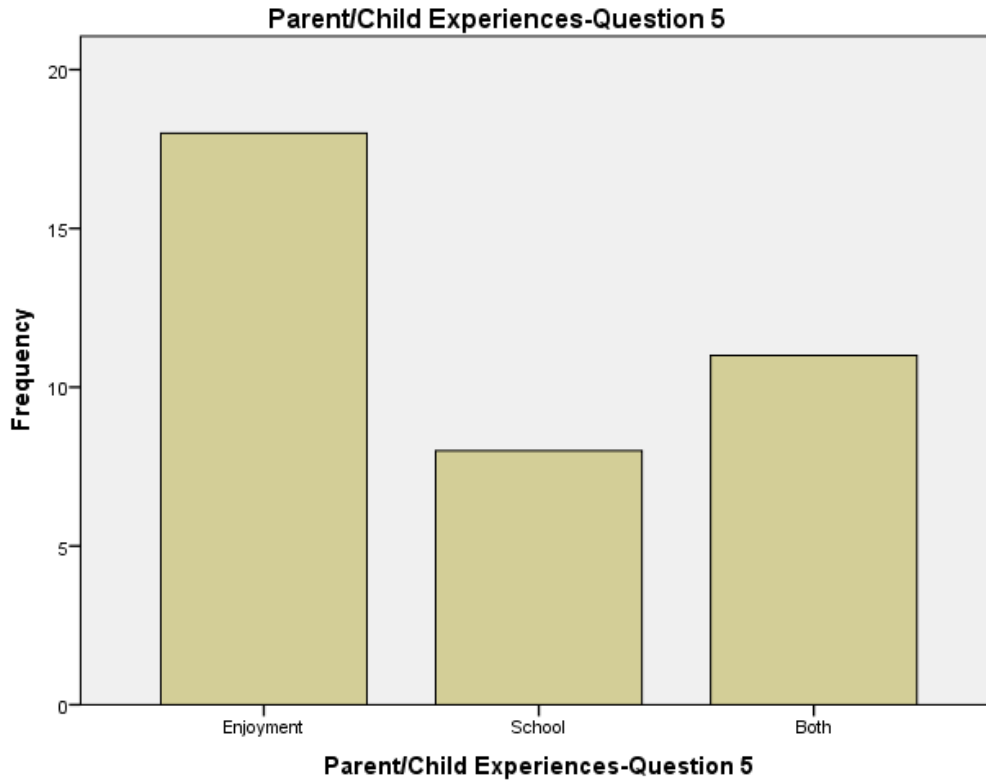
Parent/Child Experiences	Mean	SD
Q 1 Available books for parents	0.92	0.27
Q 2 Thoughts of parents reading	0.89	0.19
Q 3 How often were you read to	2.51	0.54
Q 4 Required to read to family	2.22	0.36
Q 8 Have a library card as a child	0.86	0.10
Q 9 Electronic reading material	2.32	0.47

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Note. Q= Question, N= Number of Subjects. Adapted from “Development and Validation of a Home Literacy Questionnaire to Assess Emergent Reading Skills of Pre-School Children” by J. Curry, 2012, University of Alberta.

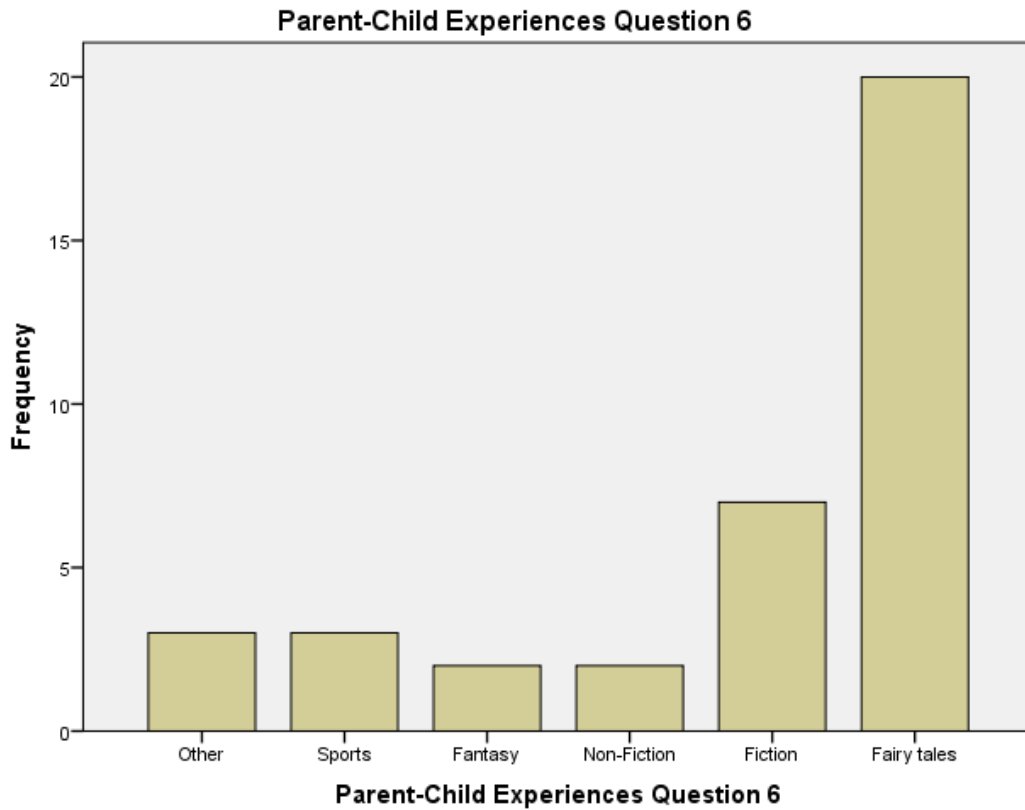
Bar chart 4.6 showed the parents read for pure enjoyment. Parents enjoyed fairy tale genres and in turn, the researcher discovered from the results of the questionnaire, their children enjoy reading fairy tales as much as their parents did as children.

*Bar Chart 4.6: Frequency Distribution of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 4-Question 5 as Measured by Curry’s Modified Questionnaire*



Fairy tales are the most preferred genres read as a child for the fourth grade parents. These results mirror the choices their children make when selecting reading material. The selection of “other” was not indicated, minimal interest was indicated for non-fiction and fantasy genres.

*Bar Chart 4.7: Frequency Distribution of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 4-Question 6 as Measured by Curry’s Modified Questionnaire (N=37)*



In Table 4.9, the results for the parents of third and fourth graders, similar results indicate the parents recall their parents reading newspapers as well as having a library card. Although the data reveal books were available to them as children, the results from parent responses indicate there were a higher number of responses that indicated when they were children; they were not required to read the books to a family member.

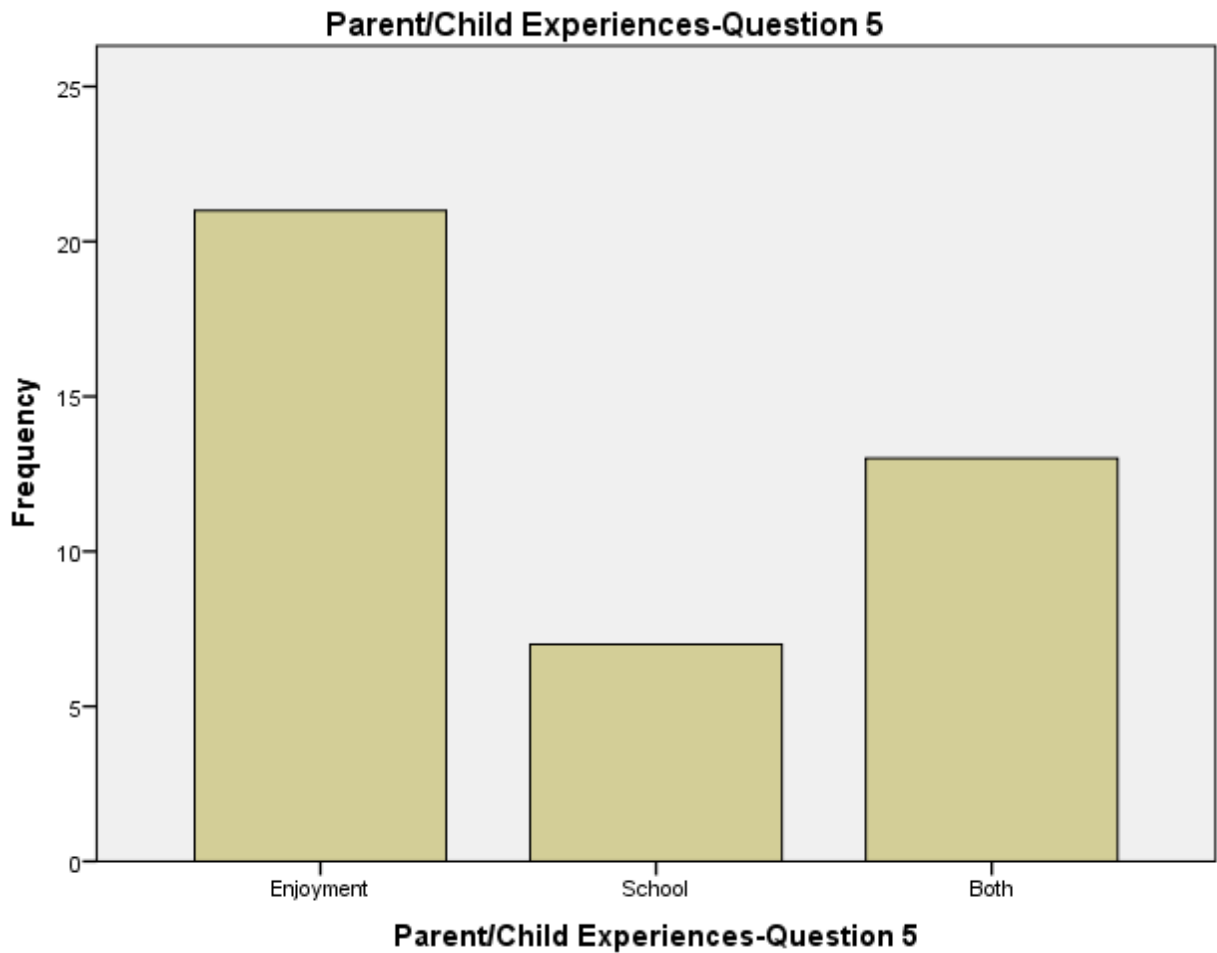
*TABLE 4.9. Descriptive Summary Statistics of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 5 as Measured by Curry's Modified Questionnaire (N=42)*

Parent/Child Experiences	Mean	SD
Q 1 Available books for parents	0.95	0.22
Q 2 Thoughts of parents reading	0.71	0.13
Q 3 How often were you read to	2.43	0.79
Q 4 Required to read to family	2.50	0.73
Q 8 Have a library card as a child	0.93	0.18
Q 9 Electronic reading material	1.88	0.53

Note. Q= Question, N= Number of Subjects. Adapted from "Development and Validation of a Home Literacy Questionnaire to Assess Emergent Reading Skills of Pre-School Children" by J. Curry, 2012, University of Alberta.

Nearly 50% of the parent responses indicated, that when these parents were children, the fifth grade parents preferred reading for enjoyment, rather than reading for school purposes. The results from the third and fourth grade parents indicated similar results in that as children, they too preferred reading for pure enjoyment.

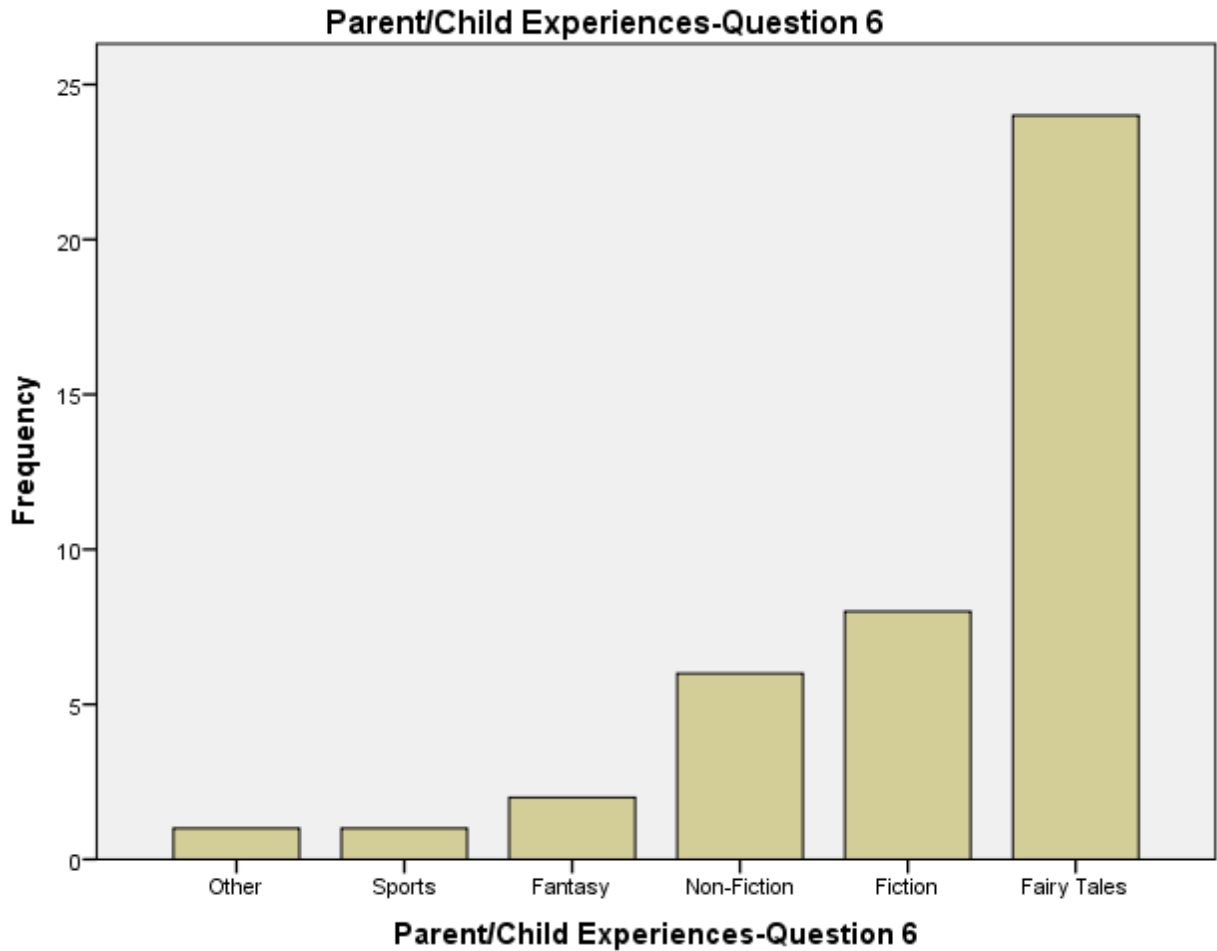
*Bar Chart 4.8: Frequency Distribution of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 5-Question 5 as Measured by Curry’s Modified Questionnaire (N=42)*



The results from the fifth grade parent responses mirror prior results of third and fourth grade parents and students in that fairy tales was the preferred genre as a child. The results further indicate sports and fantasy received minimal selection as a preferred genre of choice.



*Bar Chart 4.9: Frequency Distribution of Parent/Child Experiences for Grade 5-Question 6 as Measured by Curry’s Modified Questionnaire (N=42)*



**Findings for Parent/Child Experiences**

The results of the analysis of Parent/Child Experiences (Tables 4.7-4.9) indicate that Black parents whose sons are in the third, fourth, and fifth grades agreed strongly agreed that: Books and other reading materials were available when they were children (mean = 0.90); they remember as children their own parents or other household members reading local newspaper mean = 0.80; and they had a public library card when they were children (mean = 0.85). The Black parents also responded that: Their own parents or members of the household read to or

with them sometimes when they were children (mean = 3.0); they were seldom required to read to members of the household when they were children; and they use a computer or electronic devices to access reading materials for their children or their household (mean = 2.0).

The results of the data analysis for Parent/Child Experiences (Charts 4.4-4.9) show that the Black parents of the third, fourth, and fifth grade boys frequently read for enjoyment when they were children (52%), followed by both reading for enjoyment and school (28%), and then by reading for school (20%). The data also indicate that when the Black parents were children, they frequently enjoyed reading fairy tales (57%) and fiction (21%).

Research question one asked what are the descriptions of the home literacy attitudes, behaviors and practices of Black parents whose sons are in the third, fourth and fifth grades. The results from the questionnaire are similar from grade to grade. The descriptions indicate there are books in the home, a strong emphasis on having library cards, participating in the local library literacy workshops as well as the school parent workshops. Computers are in the home and used by the students for reading material and instructional games. At all three grade levels, the parents' results had similar results recalling they read to family members and had library cards as well. Responses to research question two indicated the correlation between the home literacy practices and how such practices impact their sons reading achievement in the classroom.

The second research question of the study involved the investigation of whether any correlation exists between the home literacy practices of urban Black parents and the reading performance of their 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades sons. The data for the home literacy practices of the urban Black parents were acquired using the modified questionnaire (Curry, 2012). The reading performance data came from: a) Missouri Assessment Program (M.A.P.) Comprehensive Data

System (DESE, 2010) and b) S.T.A.R. Reading Assessment (Renaissance Learning, Inc., 2013) used by Saint Louis Public Schools (2014).

**Research Question 2:** What is the correlation between the home literacy practices of urban Black parents and the reading performance of their 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades sons?

SPSS v.21 is the statistical analysis used to test the correlation between the home literacy attitudes, behaviors and patterns and how this impacts the reading achievement of black boys in third, fourth and fifth grades. The M.A.P. and S.T.A.R. results were matched with the students by school; each student received a special code rather than using actual names of students to protect their identity. The coded names were matched to the questionnaire and test results and imported into SPSS, which generated the correlation for each.

### **Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 2: Correlation between Home Literacy Practices and Reading Performance of Elementary Black Boys.**

The results of this analysis showed the correlation between the home literacy attitudes, behaviors and practices that impact the reading achievement of Black boys in third, fourth and fifth grades. By using the SPSS v.21 statistical analysis, the data results showed there was a strong correlation between home literacy practices and had an impact on reading achievement scores for their sons. However, few of the boys at any of the grade levels in the current study were proficient readers according to M.A.P. data. Fluctuations occurred in the percentages of Black boys reading at the proficient levels from 2011 through 2013 according to the M.A.P data. For example, the cohort of Black boys at school one showed reading scores starting in 2011, as third graders, their scores were 27%, as fourth graders in 2012, their reading scores dropped to 20% proficiency and as fifth graders in 2013, their proficiency scores increased by 16%; however, the bottom two quartiles continues to be a high percentage of struggling readers. At

school two, the third grade cohort were reading at 18% proficiency, the fourth grade cohort indicated a slight increase of 5% (23%) and the fifth grade cohort declined to 17%. School three cohort of third graders indicated 22% were proficient readers, the fourth graders had a 4% increase at the proficient level and the fifth graders increased to 37% proficient level. While the results indicate slight increase over time, there continues to be a more than 50% of the cohort of Black boys who are not reading at proficient levels. Reading performance as measured by the S.T.A.R. reveal that all of the boys in the third, fourth, and fifth grade levels were Early to Late Emergent readers.

In Table 4.10, the six literacy practices at home for the parents of the third grade Black boys were found to be strongly and positively correlated with the reading performance of their children at 95% significant probability level ( $p < 0.05$ ). These six literacy practices are books in the home, reading with their child after school hours, parent literacy workshops offered at the school, teachers share book lists, computers in the home and children have access to reading programs/games on an electronic device.

Four literacy practices of Black parents at home were not significantly correlated with the reading performance of their third grade sons ( $p > 0.05$ ). These four practices are parents take free newspaper publications home to read, have a library card, parents attend literacy programs sponsored by the St. Louis Public library, and the schools have a lending library for the families to use with their child.

*TABLE 4.10: Correlation Analyses between Home Literacy Practices and 3rd Grade Student Performance on Missouri Assessment Program and STAR Reading assessment (N=41)*

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<b>Literacy Practices at Home</b>	<b>(correlation coefficient, p-value)</b>
Are books and/or other reading materials available in your home?	(0.748, p<0.05 <sup>*</sup> )
Do you or other members of your household, read with your child after school hours?	(0.651, p< 0.05 <sup>*</sup> )
Do you take copies of free newspaper publications home and read them with your child?	(-0.273, p>0.05)
Does your child have a St. Louis Public Library card	(0.119, p>0.05)
Do you and your child attend literacy programs sponsored by the St. Louis Public Library card?	(-0.058, p>0.05)
Are parent workshops that focus on literacy offered at your child's school?	(0.711, p<0.05 <sup>*</sup> )
Does your child's school have a lending library for families?	(-0.060, p>0.05)
Does your child's teacher share lists of books appropriate for your child's reading level?	(0.638, p<0.05 <sup>*</sup> )
Do you have a computer in your home?	(0.677, p<0.05 <sup>*</sup> )
Does your child access reading programs/games on a computer or electronic device?	(0.781, p<0.05 <sup>*</sup> )

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Note. <sup>\*</sup>Correlation is significant at p = 0.05 level. Adapted from “Development and Validation of a Home Literacy Questionnaire to Assess Emergent Reading Skills of Pre-School Children” by J. Curry, 2012, University of Alberta.

**Findings:**

The correlational analysis of the data seems to suggest that the reading performance of the third grade Black boys significantly increased (p<0.05) when: a) books and/or reading materials were available at home; b) when parents or other household members read with their children after school hours; c) when parent workshops that focus on literacy were offered at school; d) their children's teachers shared lists of books appropriate for the child's reading level;

e) the parents of the third grade Black boys had computer at home; f) and when children accessed reading programs/games on a computer or electronic device. The significantly strong correlations do not imply causal effect of the home literacy practices by the third grade Black parents on the reading performance of their sons. The indicators (literacy practices) that did not reflect a strong correlation are a) taking copies of free newspaper publications home to read with their children; b) having a library card; c) attend literacy programs sponsored by the St. Louis Public library, and d) school has lending libraries for families.

### **Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 2: Correlation between Home Literacy Practices and Reading Performance of Elementary Black Boys.**

The results in Chart 4.10 indicated the boys' performances vary between grade levels, however, the results from the M.A.P. show a higher performance level as compared to the S.T.A.R. assessment. However, few boys were proficient at any grade level according to the M.A.P. The majority of the third grade boys read at the Below Basic or Basic levels for all years reviewed. The majority of the fourth grade boys read at the Below Basic or Basic levels for all years reviewed. The majority of the fifth grade boys read at the Below Basic or Basic levels for all years reviewed.

In the schools selected for the current study, the S.T.A.R data reveal that all of the boys in the third, fourth, and fifth grade levels in read at the Emergent Levels (300-674). It is important to denote the S.T.A.R. assessment was administered for one year and factors such as computer challenges and children giving strong consideration to each question as opposed to the M.A.P. assessment. There is a strong message reiterated throughout the course of the year on the importance of the M.A.P. test as compared to the S.T.A.R. assessment. The S.T.A.R. results

indicated the Black boys are at the beginning stage of reading similar to children in primary grades of Kindergarten and First grades. Being an Emergent reader suggest these boys are beginning to understand that printed text has meaning. They are learning the proper way to read material, from left to right and top to bottom. Being an Emergent reader indicates a student is at the early stages of identifying colors, shapes numbers and letters. They are building their academic vocabulary, strengthening their listening skills and understanding concepts of print (Renaissance Learning, Inc., 2013).

*Chart 4.10. Reading performance of the third, fourth and fifth grade Black boys from the M.A.P. and S.T.A.R. assessments*

Assessment	Grade	Scale Score	Reading Performance
S.T.A.R.	3 <sup>rd</sup>	82-437	Emergent
S.T.A.R.	4 <sup>th</sup>	186-579	Emergent
S.T.A.R.	5 <sup>th</sup>	192-638	Emergent

Note. (St. Louis Public Schools, 2013)

M.A.P. scores

School	Grade	Year	Below Basic	Basic	Proficiency	Advanced
1	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2011	10%	41%	27%	20%
	4 <sup>th</sup>	2011	17%	55%	24%	0
	5 <sup>th</sup>	2011	31%	25%	15%	28%
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2012	26%	42%	23%	8%
	4 <sup>th</sup>	2012	30%	43%	20%	6%
	5 <sup>th</sup>	2012	11%	46%	30%	11%
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2013	23%	23%	33%	19%
	4 <sup>th</sup>	2013	26%	34%	30%	8%
	5 <sup>th</sup>	2013	0	54%	36%	0
2	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2011	30%	42%	18%	9%

	4 <sup>th</sup>	2011	20%	58%	16%	0
	5 <sup>th</sup>	2011	14%	51%	25%	7%
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2012	0	65%	21%	8%
	4 <sup>th</sup>	2012	10%	63%	23%	0
	5 <sup>th</sup>	2012	16%	52%	32%	0
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2013	21%	46%	28%	0
	4 <sup>th</sup>	2013	21%	60%	15%	0
	5 <sup>th</sup>	2013	30%	52%	17%	0
3	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2011	0	46%	22%	26%
	4 <sup>th</sup>	2011	7%	39%	36%	17%
	5 <sup>th</sup>	2011	19%	29%	38%	12%
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2012	8%	43%	25%	23%
	4 <sup>th</sup>	2012	7%	51%	26%	15%
	5 <sup>th</sup>	2012	0	57%	31%	10%
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2013	11%	60%	23%	0
	4 <sup>th</sup>	2013	8%	43%	43%	5%
	5 <sup>th</sup>	2013	5%	40%	37%	17%

Note. (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2013).

The correlation analyses in Table 4.11 reflect those specific home literacy attitudes, behaviors and patterns that impact the fourth grade boys reading scores. The researcher shows the indicators that have a weak correlation and one reflecting a strong correlation to the reading scores.

*TABLE 4.11.: Correlation Analyses between Home Literacy Practices and 4th Grade Student Performance on Missouri Assessment Program and STAR Reading assessment (N=41)*

**Literacy Practices at Home**

**(correlation coefficient, p-value)**

Are books and/or other reading materials available in your home?

(0.519, p<0.05\*)



Do you or other members of your household, read with your child after school hours?	(0.098, p> 0.05)
Do you take copies of free newspaper publications home and read them with your child?	0.152, p>0.05)
Does your child have a St. Louis Public Library card	(0.099, p>0.05)
Do you and your child attend literacy programs sponsored by the St. Louis Public Library card?	0.143, p>0.05)
Are parent workshops that focus on literacy offered at your child's school?	(-0.008, p>0.05)
Does your child's school have a lending library for families?	(-0.053, p>0.05)
Does your child's teacher share lists of books appropriate for your child's reading level?	(-0.061, p>0.05)
Do you have a computer in your home?	(0.055, p>0.05)
Does your child access reading programs/games on a computer or electronic device?	(-0.056, p>0.05)

Note. \*Correlation is significant at  $p = 0.05$  level. Q= Question, N= Number of Subjects. Adapted from "Development and Validation of a Home Literacy Questionnaire to Assess Emergent Reading Skills of Pre-School Children" by J. Curry, 2012, University of Alberta.

**Findings:**

The data reveal that boys having books in the home as an added exposure to the importance of reading has shown to have an impact on the reading performances of the boys. One literacy practice, having reading materials in the home for the parents of the fourth grade Black boys was strongly and positively correlated with the reading performance of their children at 95% significant probability level ( $p < 0.05$ ); and nine literacy practices of Black parents at home were not significantly correlated with the reading performance of their fourth grade sons ( $p > 0.05$ ). The practices that did not show significance are a) reading with your child after school hours; b) take copies of free newspaper publications home to read with your child; c) have a library card; d) attend literacy programs sponsored by the St. Louis Public library; e) parent workshops offered at your child's school; f) access to lending libraries; g) your child's teacher shares book lists; h)

computers in the home and i) access to reading programs on a computer or electronic device.

The data suggests that the reading performance of the Black boys increased when books and/or other materials were available at home ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 2: Correlation between Home Literacy Practices and Reading Performance of Elementary Black Boys.**

The results in Table 4.12 showed there is a 40% strong correlation between the home literacy practices and the impact on the reading scores of the fifth grade boys. When boys have the added resource of books in the home and parents spend time reading with and to them, the importance of reading is indicated by their reading performance.

*TABLE 4.12: Correlation Analyses between Home Literacy Practices and 5th Grade Student Performance on Missouri Assessment Program and S.T.A.R. Reading assessment (N=42)*

<b>Literacy Practices at Home</b>	<b>(correlation coefficient, p-value)</b>
Are books and/or other reading materials available in your home?	(0.807, $p < 0.05^*$ )
Do you or other members of your household read with your child after school hours?	(0.598, $p < 0.05^*$ )
Do you take copies of free newspaper publications home and read them with your child?	0.152, $p > 0.05$ )
Does your child have a St. Louis Public Library card	(0.099, $p > 0.05$ )
Do you and your child attend literacy programs sponsored by the St. Louis Public Library card?	0.143, $p > 0.05$ )
Are parent workshops that focus on literacy offered at your child’s school?	(-0.008, $p > 0.05$ )
Does your child’s school have a lending library for families?	(-0.053, $p > 0.05$ )
Does your child’s teacher share lists of books appropriate for your child’s reading level?	(-0.061, $p > 0.05$ )
Do you have a computer in your home?	(0.533, $p < 0.05^*$ )
Does your child access reading programs/games on a computer or electronic device?	(0.601, $p < 0.05^*$ )

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Note. \*Correlation is significant at  $p = 0.05$  level. Q= Question, N= Number of Subjects. Adapted from “Development and Validation of a Home Literacy Questionnaire to Assess Emergent Reading Skills of Pre-School Children” by J. Curry, 2012, University of Alberta.

**Findings:**

The results of the correlational analysis of the Black parents’ home literacy practices and the reading performance of their fifth grade sons indicates that four home literacy practices were strongly and positively correlated with the reading performance of the Black boys at 95% significant probability level ( $p < 0.05$ ); while six home literacy practices of the Black parents were not significantly correlated with the reading performance of their sons ( $p > 0.05$ ). The reading performance of the fifth grade Black boys increased when: a) books and/or other reading materials were available at home; b) when Black parents or members of household read with the fifth graders after school hours; c) computer was available at home; d) the fifth grade Black boys accessed reading programs/games on computers at home.

*Table 4.13. Content of Home Literacy Questionnaire (Curry, 2012)*

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Construct	Questionnaire Number
<hr/>	
Literacy Practices at Home	
Reading materials:	
Tools that promote reading	1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10
Opportunities to observe adults reading	2, 6
Trips to the library	4, 7
Reading Activities at Home	
Independent Practice:	
Reading	3, 5, 10
Reading-related games	6
Joint Reading Practice:	
Reading with family member, adult	1, 2, 4, 7

Instructional support received by adult 8, 9

**Parent/Child Experiences**

Attitudes, Beliefs and Patterns:

Parent Practices 2, 3, 8, 9  
 Attitudes/Beliefs 1, 4, 5, 6

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Note. Adapted from “Development and Validation of a Home Literacy Questionnaire to Assess Emergent Reading Skills of Pre-School Children” by J. Curry, 2012, University of Alberta.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

The results from the parent questionnaire were analyzed by the frequency of the responses and condensed into formats that provide detail to the research. The inductive analysis addressed descriptive questions seven and ten relating to Parent/Child Experiences:

- What is the title of your favorite book when you were a child?
- What is currently the title of your favorite book or magazine?

**Qualitative data analysis and findings**

A sample of (N=41) 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade parents-child experiences were analyzed. On the question, what types of books or reading materials did you enjoy as a child; twenty-seven (65.9%) respondents have indicated their favorite book experiences. All twenty-seven (65.9%) respondents favored fiction, while fourteen respondents (34.1%) have not indicated any book experiences (See Table 4.14 below).

*Table 4.14: Book titles supplied by parents*

Fiction	Fiction	Fiction	Fiction
<i>VALLEY HIGH</i>	<i>CORDUROY BOOK</i>	<i>ALEXANDER THE TERRIBLE</i> (n=2)	<i>JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH</i> (n=2)
<i>MONTY FLOATS</i> (n=2)	<i>THE COUNT OF MONTE</i>	<i>GREEN EGGS AND HAM</i>	<i>LITTLE BEAR</i>

	<i>CRISTO</i> (n=2)	(n=2)	
<i>GOOSEBUMPS</i> (n=3)	<i>THE THREE MONKEYS JUMPING ON THE BED</i>	<i>OF MICE AND MEN</i>	<i>Can't say name</i>
<i>THE MAGIC SCHOOL BUS</i>	<i>CAT IN THE HAT</i>	<i>DIARY OF A WIMPY KID</i>	<i>BABYSITTERS CLUB</i>
<i>THE WHEELS OF THE BUS</i>	<i>GOODNIGHT MOON</i>	<i>THE COLDEST WINTER EVER</i>	<i>BERNSTEIN BEARS</i>

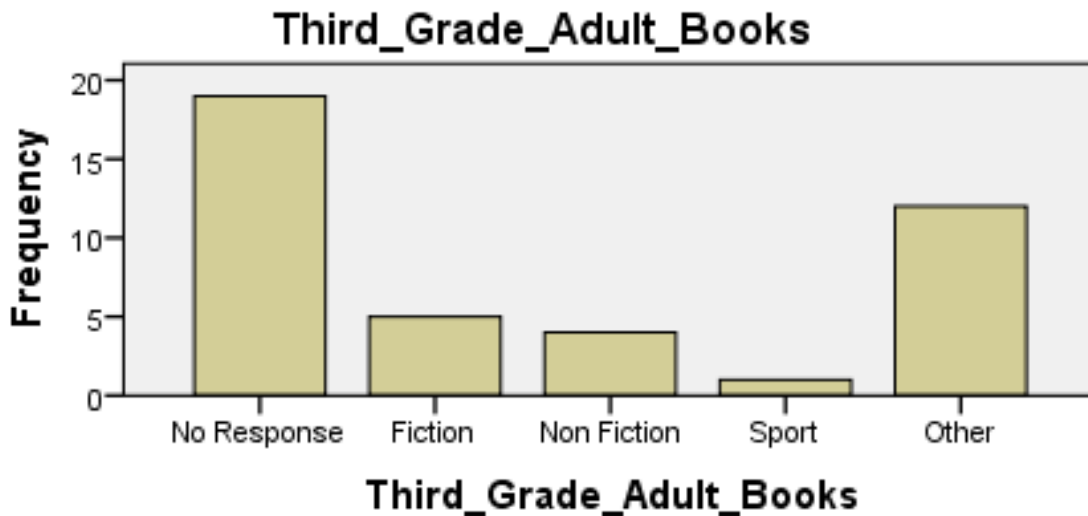
Table 4.15 indicates 3<sup>rd</sup> grade adult reading experiences that reflects high interest in magazine and other types of reading material for enjoyment for reading enjoyment. Titles such as *Teen Vogue*, *Dogs*, *True to Society* and *Time* magazine were identified multiple times.

*Table 4.15: Third Grade Parents Reading Experience*

Fiction	Non-Fiction	Sports	Other
<i>Z BOOKS</i>	<i>BIBLE</i> (N=2)	<i>SPORTS ILLUSTRATED</i>	<i>DOGS</i> (N=2)
<i>THE COLDEST WINTER EVER</i> (N=2)	<i>YOU PREACH</i>		<i>TIME</i> (N=2)
<i>THE BIG BAD WOLF</i>	<i>SISTER SONJA</i>		<i>TRUE TO SOCIETY</i> (N=2)
<i>SISTER TO SISTER</i>			<i>TEEN VOGUE</i> (N=2)
			<i>VOGUE</i>
			<i>IN THE MEANTIME</i>
			<i>EBONY</i>
			<i>BOSTON CHRONICLES</i>

The data showed that the most favorite book titles were magazines or periodicals for parents of third graders. From the sample of (N=41) participants, nineteen (46.3%) have not responded, five (12.2%) read fiction, four (9.8%) read non-fiction, one (2.4%) read sports, and twelve (29.3%) indicated other readings. Although not all parents responded to the question, it is important to show the frequency of magazine or periodical titles. The researcher could also deduce from the number of non-responses that the third grade parents did not have specific titles, could not readily recall titles or simply did not see the relevance of sharing their favorite reads. (See Bar Chart 4.11).

*Bar Chart 4.11: Frequency of Third Grade Adult Books*



The results from the questionnaire suggest the parents did not respond due to not reading any books at the time of completing the questionnaire or in some instance, the titles of the adult readings were not appropriate for sharing in this questionnaire. In Tables 4.16, 4.17 and 4.18, the total of sixty-one (100%) respondents who participated in the fourth grade adult survey, forty (65.6%) respondents have indicated their favorite readings. Five (8.2%) participants

reveal that they like to read fiction, three (4.9%) like to read non-fiction, one (1.6%) fantasy, one (1.6%) sports, and eleven (18.0%) like other readings as adults. A total of (N=61) respondents participated in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade child reading experience survey. Twenty-seven (44.3%) respondents indicated their favorite book titles. Sixteen (26.2%) liked to read fiction, seven (11.5%) indicated non-fiction, and two (3.3%) liked fantasy. None of the respondents have indicated fairy tales, sports and other readings.

*Table 4.16. Fourth Grade Parents Reading Experience*

Fiction	Non-Fiction	Fantasy
<i>THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO</i> (n=2)	<i>THE THREE LITTLE PIGS</i> (n=3)	<i>NARNIA, THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE</i> (n=2)
<i>BABYSITTERS CLUB</i>	<i>WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS</i>	
<i>CHARLOTTE'S WEB</i>	<i>DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING</i>	
<i>CAT IN THE HAT</i> (n=5)	<i>WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE</i> (n=2)	
<i>BONE</i>		
<i>WILL TO WIN</i>		
<i>GOOSEBUMPS</i>		
<i>BOX CART CHILDREN:HANK THE COW DOG</i> (n=2)		
<i>LITTLE BLACK SAMBO</i> (n=2)		
<i>SWEET VALLEY HIGH</i> (n=2)		

Table 4.17. Frequencies of Adult Readings

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Response	40	65.6	65.6	65.6
Fiction	5	8.2	8.2	73.8
Non-Fiction	3	4.9	4.9	78.7
Valid Fantasy	1	1.6	1.6	80.3
Sport	1	1.6	1.6	82.0
Other	11	18.0	18.0	100.0
Total	61	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.18: Fourth Grade Parents Reading Experience

Fiction	Non-Fiction	Fantasy	Sport	Other
<i>HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS</i>	<i>BLACK THEORY AND DIFFERENT SERMONS</i>	<i>DR. SEUSS</i>	<i>SPORT MAGAZINE</i>	<i>GAME FORCE</i>
<i>GONE WITH THE WIND</i>	<i>BIBLE</i>			<i>SEVENS</i>
<i>ZANE</i>	<i>FIFTY SHADES OF GREY</i>			<i>GQ</i>
<i>HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS</i>				<i>TIME (n=3)</i>
<i>HIGHLIGHTS</i>				<i>VOGUE</i>
				<i>EBONY</i>
				<i>TIME(n=3)</i>

From the total of sixty-nine (100%) respondents who have participated in the fifth grade survey, twenty-seven (39.1%) read fiction, four (5.8%) read non-fiction, and one (1.5%) reads fairy tale. Thirty-seven (53.6%) have not indicated any reading titles. The most favorite book



experiences were Babysitters Club Books, Cat in the Hat, and Goosebumps. See fifth grade adult reading experiences below in Tables 4.19 and 4.20.

*Table 4.19. Fifth Grade Child Reading Experience*

Fiction	Non Fiction	Fairy Tale
BABYSITTERS CLUB (n=7)	WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS	THE LITTLE RED HEN
THE HUNGRY CATERPILLAR	BIBLE	
GREEN EGGS AND HAM (n=3)	JACK AND THE BEAN STALK	
ALICE IN WONDERLAND(n=3)	THE THREE LITTLE PIGS	
PUSH(n=2)		
JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH (n=2)		
CAT IN THE HAT(n=4)		
SWEET VALLEY HIGH (n=2)		
GOOSEBUMPS(n=4)		
JUDY BLUME BOOKS		

*Table 4.20: Fifth Grade Adult Reading Experience*

Fiction	Non Fiction	Other
THE COLDEST WINTER EVER (n=3)	YOU PREACH	LIFE
GO PLATINUM	THE BIBLE	GQ
GIRL STOLEN	REBORN BY NEA ANNA	SEVENTEEN: THE LIFE OF

	<i>SIMONE</i>	<i>WINN DIXIE</i>
<i>SISTER TO SISTER</i>		<i>EBONY (n=3)</i>
Vary		
<i>HATCHET</i>		
<i>PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH</i>		
<i>SEE SPOT RUN, DICK AND JANE</i>		

The most favorite adult reading for 5<sup>th</sup> Grade reading responses was “The coldest winter ever.” Out of sixty-nine participants, only thirty-two (46.4%) respondents have indicated their favorite readings. Twenty-seven (39.1%) preferred fiction, four (5.8%) read non-fiction, one (1.4%) reads fairy tale, while no one has indicated sports, or any other readings.

The parents prefer to read fiction, periodicals/magazines, and the Bible. The results showed that there is a significant difference between child reading experiences and adult reading. The majority of parents still prefer to read fiction as adults.

The third research question of the study investigated whether there were significant changes in the reading scores of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys in the three years of reading performance data collection; and where the significant differences occurred, if any existed.

**Research Question Three:** How have the reading scores of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys changed between 2011 and 2013?

The researcher explored this question by comparing 2011 M.A.P. test results to the 2012, compared 2011 to 2012 and 2012 to 2013 M.A.P. results, calculating the mean difference and determining significance of three years of the mean scores.

The results of the Analysis of Variance in Table 4.20 of the 2011, 2012, and 2013 reading scores for the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys, suggest a difference in the annual reading scores of Black boys at 95% probability level ( $p < 0.05$ ). The Holm-Bonferroni method of multiple comparisons (Holm, 1979) was used to find where the differences between the three years occurred. The results in Table 4.21 showed there was minimal increase during the 2011 and 2012; however the reading scores show an increase in the reading scores in 2013.

*Table 4.21: Results of Analysis of Variance for Determining Changes in Reading Performance of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys between 2011 and 2013 (N=121).*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2372168.039	2	1186084.019	33.047	0.000*
Within Groups	12920852.860	360	35891.258		
Total	15293020.898	362			

Note. The difference between years is significant at the 0.05 level ( $p < 0.05$ ).

The Holm-Bonferroni method of multiple comparisons (Holm, 1979) indicated in Table 4.22 is the annual mean reading score of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys was higher for 2014 than either 2012 and 2013 ( $p < 0.05$ ); and that there was no difference in the mean reading scores of the Black boys between 2012 and 2013 ( $p > 0.05$ ). The annual mean reading scores of 2013 was higher for 2013 than 2012 for the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys ( $p < 0.05$ ).

*Table 4.22: Results of the Holm-Bonferroni Multiple Comparison Test for the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black Boys Annual Reading Scores for 2011-2013 (N=121)*

Year	Mean Difference	Significance
2010 vs. 2011	58.65	0.053
2011 vs. 2012	134.46	0.00*
2012 vs. 2013	193.12	0.00*

Note. \* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

### Summary

The research hypothesis suggests if Black boys have families who support their educational experiences through home literacy attitudes, behaviors and practices, then these boys will have higher reading scores on the Missouri Assessment Program and the Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading. From the research, the data indicates the parents’ responses to the questionnaire and the correlation to the boys reading scores shows there is a relationship between home literacy practices and reading achievement. Parents are actively involved in their son’s educational experiences and the support continues while at home which demonstrates the home to school connection positively impact the reading scores of the boys in these St. Louis Public schools. Chapter 5 will discuss the findings from the current study in the context of the research literature on home literacy behaviors and reading performance and academic achievement of Black boys.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Recommendations

Reading to children is the most important share time between a parent and their child. Reading to a child is the first step to developing emergent literacy skills (Lonigan, 2000). Additional reading skills such as phonological awareness, letter recognition, vocabulary development and oral language are all connected to a child learning to read. However, understanding the importance of such developments, it seems challenging to show an alignment between home literacy behaviors and literacy development (Lonigan, 2000). Scarborough and Dobrich, 1994 suggest probable reasons for a weak alignment between the two. Reasons include but are not limited to include flawed studies or researchers who use instruments that have poor reliability and validity. According to the current study, the students who were identified participants acquired the necessary reading skills through various literacy activities at home as well as the school. Few of the boys in either third, fourth, or fifth grades included in the current study were proficient readers. Data from 2011-2013 on the M.A.P. reveal that some increases were made in the students who were classified as Proficient. The majority of the boys in the current study were identified as Basic or Below Basic readers according to guidelines provided by the M.A.P. All of the boys included in the current study were identified as Emergent Readers according to guidelines provided by the S.T.A.R. Parents were engaged in literacy activities with their sons that only continued to strengthened their reading skills and understanding this, the results in the reading performance results indicated improved reading scores over time.

### Discussion

This study explored the home literacy behaviors, attitudes, and practices of urban Black parents to determine what if any relationship these variables had to their 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade sons' reading performances. The results from this study will be further explained in this chapter.

Epstein (2010) emphasizes schools that successfully engage parents are inclusive, they reach out to parents who may not feel included in the life of the school and to families whose children may be experiencing challenges with the curriculum. They work at building positive relationships and a welcoming school climate and at providing parents with practical strategies to build a stronger educational culture in their homes. Such authentic family-school partnerships are focused on improving attitudes to school and enhancing students' future success. Engaging parents in the life of the school yields many positive benefits and rewards for families and schools alike; leveraging home-school partnerships so that parents are encouraged and supported to be involved in their children's learning at home. This study shows the importance of parents being engaged in their sons' education. As parents are involved in supporting their sons to become better and stronger readers, there is a relationship between parental support and reading scores.

What is important to further emphasize is how important it is critical that parents have a strong connection to their child's school as well as the teacher. The data from the M.A.P. results (2012) indicate when parents play an integral role in their child's schooling; the impact of reading success is evident in the summative reading scores. The results from this study show the M.A.P. reading scores of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade boys attending the three urban schools are reading at the basic and below basic levels and the S.T.A.R. data results show these boys are reading at the Emergent level. Coupled with the correlation results from the parent questionnaire

indicating parents read to their children, ensure books are in the home and parents are engaged in school and local library literacy workshops. Although these home literacy activities support reading efforts of the boys, the data shows continuous support to improve reading skills is necessary for the development of reading.

According to Epstein (2000), the research on parent involvement as suggesting that students have more positive school attitudes, higher aspirations, and other positive behaviors when their parents who are aware, knowledgeable, encouraging and involved. The data from the current research reveal where the parents have been deeply involved in their son's schooling, there is a strong correlation to the home literacy behaviors and the reading scores. When parents are knowledgeable of the suggested reading activities at home the home literacy activities yield positive correlations to the reading results of their sons. The findings from this study support the idea there is a direct correlation between home literacy behaviors and a child's reading skill. Purcell-Gates (1996) stresses the importance of genres that young people encounter to enhance children's literacy development. As Purcell-Gates (1996) emphasizes the significance of the genres that children read while at home and school, the current study found that parents reveal that when classroom teachers provide specific book lists to families, this strengthens the reading development while at home. Specific book lists can be individualized based on the needs of the students; more importantly, these book lists can be classified by specific genres. The results from the parent questionnaire indicate children as well as their parents prefer fairy tales to read together or in their younger years. Teachers must provide book lists that capture fictional and non-fictional genres for continued practice as the M.A.P. and S.T.A.R. tests assess reading comprehension using fictional and non-fictional reading passages.

The first research question of the study involved description of literacy practices at home, reading activities at home, and parent/child experiences of urban Black parents whose sons are in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades using data collected with modified Curry's (2012) questionnaire.

**Research Question 1:** What are the descriptions of home literacy attitudes, behaviors, and practices of urban Black parents whose sons are in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades?

The description of the home literacy attitudes, behaviors and practices of the Black patterns surveyed indicated there are several reading activities that occur in the home with their sons.

#### **Home literacy practices of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade parents**

The Black parents place a strong emphasis on their sons a) having a library card; b) the parents understand the importance of attending literacy programs whether the school is offering a program or the local library offering parent workshops; c) schools offer lending libraries to the boys to support home libraries and d) when teachers provide book lists to read at home, the parents ensure their sons have these lists and read the books with them. The home literacy activities are important to supporting their sons' reading development; the M.A.P. scores indicate that 70% of the Black boys are not meeting grade level expectations in reading. Additionally, 100% of the Black boys, who had S.T.A.R. scores, failed to meet the Probable reader level indicating grade level reading ability.

#### **Home literacy practices of 4<sup>th</sup> grade parents**

The Black parents understand the importance of having books in the home and as such, read the books with and to their child. In addition to having books in the home, the parents take advantage of free newspaper publications within their neighborhood and read the newspaper as a



means to stay connected to the activities in their neighborhood as well as national news. When literacy programs are offered at the school, the parents understand by attending these parent workshops, it helps them to stay knowledgeable and connected to various activities to use at home. Lending libraries are encouraged by the parents when the school provides various genres to take home to read with their sons. As their sons are of the digital age, there is strong emphasis of having computers in the home which is another reading tool for them with their sons.

### **Home literacy practices of 5<sup>th</sup> grade parents**

As these are older children in elementary schools, the parents continue to stress the importance of their attendance at the parent literacy workshops, both at the school as well as the local library branch. The parents attend in order to gain more resources in order to support their sons reading ability. As with the prior grades, parents encourage their sons to check out books from the school's lending library as an added resource to include in their home collection of books.

Activities such as reading to and with their sons after school hours, parents take their sons to the local branch libraries, provide reading materials such as free newspaper publications, have computers in the home and more importantly, participate in parent workshops at the school as well as attend parent literacy programs at the St. Louis Public libraries. Parents want the best for their children; therefore, parents ensure additional resources helps to strengthen the partnerships between the teacher and the parent. Home literacy practices, reading activities and parent/child experiences are interconnected for the overall success of children.

The interpretation of the results for research question one suggest parents practiced reading during their childhood years and in turn, held similar expectations for their child. If the parents were read to as a child or observed a family member reading, it is likely such behaviors

are replicated in their households. Reading to children is the single most key factor to preventing future reading problems during the early years of learning and yet, many parents do not fully understand the impact this simple act of reading has on their child's reading success. When children can see their parents reading whether for personal or professional reasons, the message the parents send is they value gaining information about the content they are reading. Reading is the fundamental method to learning.

The second research question of the study involved the investigation of whether any correlation exists between the home literacy practices of urban Black parents and the reading performance of their 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades sons. The data for the home literacy practices of the urban Black parents were acquired using modified Curry's (2012) questionnaire. The reading performance data came from: a) Missouri Assessment Program (M.A.P.) Comprehensive Data System (DESE, 2010) and b) S.T.A.R. Reading Assessment (Renaissance Learning, Inc., 2013) used by Saint Louis Public Schools in 2013. **Research Question 2:** What is the correlation between the home literacy practices of urban Black parents and the reading performance of their 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades sons? The reading performance of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade boys on the S.T.A.R. show there are low performance levels of reading. All of the boys are reading at the Emergent level which suggests they are reading at the early stages of reading which is an accurate assessment of the reading performance of the boys. The M.A.P. results show 70% of the boys in the current study are reading at Below Basic and Basic levels. The results of the study show that there is a relationship between the parents creating instructional home literacy environments and their sons' reading scores.

**Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 2: Correlation between Home Literacy Practices and Reading Performance of Elementary Black Boys in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade**

Correlation Analyses between Home Literacy Practices and 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Student Performance on Missouri Assessment Program and STAR Reading assessment (N=41)

**Findings:**

Three literacy practices at home for the parents of the third grade Black boys were found to be correlated with the reading performance of their children at 95% significant probability level ( $p < 0.05$ ); The literacy practices that demonstrated a relationship to supporting reading achievement were a) Parents attending literacy programs at the schools and local library branches; b) Parents attending workshops at the school; c) Encouraging students to check out books from the school's lending library. Seven literacy practices of Black parents at home were not significantly correlated with the reading performance of their third grade sons ( $p > 0.05$ ). The correlational analysis of the data seems to suggest that the reading performance of the third grade Black boys significantly increased ( $p < 0.05$ ) when: a) Books and/or reading materials were available at home; b) When parents or other household members read with their children after school hours; c) When parent workshops that focus on literacy were offered at school; d) Their children's teachers shared lists of books appropriate for the child's reading level; e) The parents of the third grade Black boys had computer at home; and f) When children accessed reading programs/games on a computer or electronic device.

Home literacy practices are determined to have tremendous effect on the third graders reading scores. Understanding when children reach third grade, they are reading to learn information rather than in other instances, learning to read. One of the most effective approaches to helping young children develop literacy skills is having a home environment that supports literacy (Epstein, 2000). Epstein's research shows that instructional environments have a powerful impact on children's growth in reading. Other researchers such as Edwards (2004) and

Fan (2001) have concluded it is clear that home environments for reading and writing should be given equal consideration as to the importance of a child's reading success. A literate home means more than just having books and writing materials on hand. To be effective, parents need to plan for how these materials will be used.

The correlations do not imply causal effect of the home literacy practices by the third grade Black parents on the reading performance of their sons. In fact, approximately 65% of the third graders, 78% of the fourth graders, and 61% of the fifth graders in the current study read below grade level according to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's M.A.P. data. The numbers of Black boys who are not reading proficient in both the current study and those in the Missouri mirror the findings of the NAEP (2009, 2011, 2012) data.

### **Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 2: Correlation between Home Literacy Practices and Reading Performance of Elementary Black Boys in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade**

Correlation Analyses between Home Literacy Practices and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Student Performance on Missouri Assessment Program and STAR Reading assessment (N=41)

One literacy practice at home for the parents of the fourth grade Black boys was correlated with the reading performance of their children at 95% significant probability level ( $p < 0.05$ ). Nine literacy practices of Black parents at home were not significantly correlated with the reading performance of their fourth grade sons ( $p > 0.05$ ).

### **Findings:**

The data suggests that the reading performance of the Black boys increased when books and/or other materials were available at home ( $p < 0.05$ ). Reading material such as fictional, non-fiction texts are important for reading development during the intermediate years. When boys in

are exposed to various genres and reading material, it is likely their interest in reading will expand. Not only having the reading materials in the home; however, reading the material with and to other family members helps to strengthen the home to school connection. Strong instructional environments (Epstein, 2000) only strengthen the reading ability of boys particularly those in low socio-economic settings and bridges the gap between what happens in the classroom and in the home.

### **Results of the Data Analysis for Research Question 2: Correlation between Home Literacy Practices and Reading Performance of Elementary Black Boys in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade**

Correlation Analyses between Home Literacy Practices and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Student Performance on Missouri Assessment Program and STAR Reading assessment (N=42)

#### **Findings:**

The results of the correlational analysis of the Black parents' home literacy practices and the reading performance of their fifth grade sons indicate that four home literacy practices were correlated with the reading performance of the Black boys at 95% significant probability level ( $p < 0.05$ ). Six home literacy practices of the Black parents were not significantly correlated with the reading performance of their sons ( $p > 0.05$ ).

#### **Interpretation:**

Parents who create an instructional learning environment in the home by reading to their child, having high expectations their child will devote time to reading books rather than engaging in less than mind-strengthening activities will see the evidence of their expectations through increased reading scores and success over time. The home literacy practices that showed a correlation were a) Parents attending literacy workshops where they learn various activities to do

while at home; b) Parents attend literacy programs at the local libraries to receive additional reading resources; c) Boys are encouraged to check out books from the school's lending libraries on a regular basis. The books the boys check out will be suggested by the classroom teacher based on the boys reading level and d) Parents believe it is important to have computers in the home to keep their boys engaged in reading. There remains six practices that did not have a correlation to the sons' reading achievement, a) Ensuring books are in the home for continuous reading; b) Parents are not regularly reading to their sons while at home; c) Newspapers and free publication are not consistently made available; d) Parents indicated their sons do not have a library card to check out books from the local library; e) Book lists from the school are not regularly provided to encourage parents to seek these titles for home reading material and f) Technology programs are limited for use in the home. Black parents are demonstrating their level of involvement not just by showing up to the school when problems arise, but their involvement demonstrates an extension of the classroom. For instance, Epstein's (2010) model of parent involvement, identifies six types of involvement, type 4- learning at home, where the school finds ways to involve families with their children by providing learning activities for use at home. The reading performance of the fifth grade Black boys increased when: Books and/or other reading materials were available at home; when Black parents or members of household read with the fifth graders after school hours; computer was available at home; and the fifth grade Black boys accessed reading programs/games on computers at home.

The qualitative data of the Parent/Child Experiences section of the modified Curry questionnaire (Curry, 2012) was processed by inductive analysis (Thomas, 2006). The inductive analysis addressed descriptive questions seven (7) and ten (10) relating to Parent/Child Experiences:

- What is the title of your favorite book when you were a child?
- What is currently the title of your favorite book or magazine?

### **The results of qualitative data analysis and findings**

A sample of (N=41) third grade parents childhood experiences were analyzed. On the question, what types of books or reading materials did you enjoy as a child; twenty-seven (65.9%) respondents have indicated their favorite book experiences. All twenty-seven (65.9%) respondents favored fiction, while fourteen (34.1%) have not indicated any book experiences. These responses give added richness to the analysis of the parent/child. The responses provided by the parents showed how these titles are similar to what their sons might currently be reading. Seeing the parent respond with the various titles also acts an indicator of the generation of parents completing the questionnaire. Current titles of parents' favorite book or magazine did not receive responses from everyone; the research can deduce the absence of responses due to not parents not devoting much of their personal time to reading as when they were children. Although parents who chose not to provide a response does not indicate there is less concern with reading, it is clear they are spending time reading with their child rather than devoting time to personal reading. The research can deduce those parents who did not provide a response could be they may not have had the time to fully complete the questionnaire or as children, reading was not considered as important and in turn, the same pattern continues into adulthood. It can further be deduced that parents serve as either positive or negative reading role models for their children.

The interpretation of the second research question of the study involved the investigation of whether any correlation exists between the home literacy practices of urban Black parents and

the reading performance of their 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades sons. The data for the home literacy practices of the urban Black parents was acquired using modified Curry's questionnaire (Curry, 2012). The reading performance data came from: a) Missouri Assessment Program (M.A.P.) Comprehensive Data System (DESE, 2010) and b) S.T.A.R. Reading Assessment (Renaissance Learning, Inc., 2013) used by Saint Louis Public Schools (2013). These data indicate that the majority of the Black boys in the current study are still struggling in their reading, lack proficiency, and need the support from home and school to improve. Both M.A.P. and S.T.A.R. data in the current study support the findings from NAEP (2009, 2011, 2012) that indicate that Black boys are not achieving proficiency or reaching advanced levels in reading in sufficient numbers. While some improvement was noted in reading performance with the M.A.P. scores for some students, not enough Black boys in the current study demonstrated reading proficiency.

The third research question of the study investigated whether there were changes in the reading scores of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys in the three years of reading performance data collection; and where the significant differences occurred, if any existed. **Research Question Three:** How have the reading scores of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys changed between 2010-2011 and 2012-2013?

According to the S.T.A.R. benchmark assessment data for 2014, Black boys in the study are not making improvements in reading performance. Nevertheless, M.A.P. data for 2010-2011 and 2012-2013 reveal that slight progress is being made, but it is not consistent. Schools are improving the practices of individual reading skills and strategies and offering more parent involvement activities to increase parent awareness of the school's performance and providing additional resources to parents to work with their sons while in the home.



### **Results of Analysis of Variance for Research Question 3: Determining Changes in Reading Performance of 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades Black boys between 2011, 2012 and 2013**

#### **Findings:**

The results of the Analysis of Variance of the 2011, 2012, and 2013 reading scores for the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys, suggest a significance difference in the annual reading scores of Black boys at 95% probability level ( $p < 0.05$ ). The reading scores indicate there was a slight increase in the reading scores in 2012-2013 compared to the prior analyzed years. The Holm-Bonferroni method of multiple comparisons (Holm, 1979) was used to find where the differences between the three years occurred. The Holm-Bonferroni method of multiple comparisons (Holm, 1979) indicated that the annual mean reading score of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys were significantly higher for 2013 than either 2011 and 2012 ( $p < 0.05$ ); and that there was no significance difference in the mean reading scores of the Black boys between 2012 and 2013 ( $p > 0.05$ ). The annual mean reading scores of 2013 was significantly higher than 2011 and 2012 for the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades Black boys ( $p < 0.05$ ).

#### **Interpretation:**

There results determine there were incremental gains from 2011 to 2013. Researchers such as Epstein (2010) suggests the importance of home literacy practices for reading with their children over time, has a strong correlation to their child's reading performance.

#### **Reflections on the Home Literacy Practices**

After conducting the analysis, it was evident the some parents in the urban setting devote time and energy to ensuring their boys in the third, fourth and fifth grades are exposed to the available resources to support their reading skills in school. Too few Black boys in the current

study advanced to the proficient reading levels during the 2011-2013 years. Parents provide books in the home and spend time reading with their sons. Parents in the urban setting are considered disengaged and leave it to the schools to ensure their children learn to read. The evidence is clear, parents want to be knowledgeable and constantly seeking ways to support their child after the school bell ends (Epstein, 2000).

This study shows that some parents are engaged in supporting their sons' efforts to improve their reading achievement. Although the reading scores from the S.T.A.R. and M.A.P. assessments do not reflect consistent improvement. Possible factors that were not explored in the current study, but may have some association with the reading proficiency of the Black boys, the quality of the instruction, the school attendance patterns for the boys, and the District's programs, strategies, and activities designed to address the literacy problems of its students. It is important to note the teacher mobility within the district each year. Teacher mobility in the St. Louis Public Schools turns over 250-300 teachers annually. The instructional practices at the elementary schools can vary from teacher to teacher, particularly when novice teachers are assigned in these tested grades. When this practice occurs and more often each year, the instructional practices tend not to be as strong when students are taught by novice teachers when compared to teachers who tend to have tenure in these critical grades and longevity within the school. Equally as important to teacher longevity is the consistent patterns in the home. All too often, a student's home environment tends to be inconsistent and as such, reflects in their academic performance. Finally, the success of the District's initiatives, activities, programs, and strategies to address the literacy failure of its students must be considered. Districts that continually fail to help students achieve the proficiency levels needed for literacy must be held accountable.

### **Reflections on the Reading Activities at Home**

As the study reflects on the reading activities at the home, parents who are actively involved in their son's educational experiences, ensure continuous reading activities occur at the home. Giving credit to the parent's attempts to be involved in their son's education, there are external factors that impede continuous reading improvement over time. Novice teachers assigned to these grades, which are considered critical grades to analyzing whether a school is meeting academic standards as, set by the state of Missouri. Parents can do what is necessary to support the reading practices of their sons; however, there has to be a continuation of strong instructional practices that occur in the classroom. When this occurs, the reading scores may show consistent growth over time. Much like the parents, the schools must have consistent patterns of recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers who will provide high-quality reading instruction to all students. Van Steensel (2006) indicates home literacy activities include joint activities such as watching literacy-based programs, partnering in computer-based instructional games, visit the library together. The results in the Reading Activities in the Home section of the parent questionnaire shows that parents visit the library and check out reading material weekly with their sons in an effort to maintain the home school connection. Children mirror similar interests as their parents, that is why it is critically important that parents allow their children to see them reading and writing on a regular basis. These behaviors are the practices that children must see as important to being successful in school.

### **Reflections of the Parent/Child Experiences**

Children mirror the patterns and behaviors of their patterns. If children see their parents reading and writing routinely, they will adopt similar patterns and behaviors. For instance, parents had books in their home and while they seldom read to other members of their families,

they maintained an expectation for their own child to read to and with them as adults. Parents had access to a library card and enjoyed reading fairy tale genre as a child; similar results from their sons indicated the same likes in reading. The attitudes, behaviors and practices are important to the success of children; however, parents must ensure continued positive practices in the home. It is the hope as an educator in the urban setting that such positive modeling and practices will resonate with more families over time.

This study shows there is a relationship between home literacy practices and the reading achievement of Black boys in the St. Louis Public schools. It is recommended the school district provides books for the children to take home to build their personal library. Imagination Station is a home library program that sends books to the families' home to build their personal reading library. Having this kind of home school literacy initiative will continue to support the reading of children at home.

### **Recommendations**

It will be important for future researchers to conduct a longitudinal analysis of reading skills of students during the early years of schooling. Better said, researchers might arrive at a far more conclusive result if they studied the students' reading performance during the primary years of Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> grade and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade before reaching the testing grades. Based on the findings of the study, further research on the importance of early literacy instruction and how preventative measures have an effect on the reading achievement when determined during the primary years of Black boys.

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**Appendix A**

Parent Questionnaire

Parent Survey

Instructions: This questionnaire is NOT A TEST. We are interested in parents’ views about their children’s education so that more effective programs can be created in the St. Louis Public Schools.

**Please provide one response for each question.**

Instructions: Please read the items below and rate yourself according to how well the statement describes you, not in terms of how well you think you should be or what others do.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Parent/Guardian Questionnaire: “How are you helping your child learn to read?”**

**LITERACY PRACTICES AT HOME**

1. Are books and/or other reading materials available in your home?

Yes                       No

2. Do you, or other members of your household, read with your child after school hours?

Yes                       No

3. Do you take copies of free newspaper publications home and read them with your child?

Yes                       No

4. Does your child have a St. Louis Public Library card?

Yes       No

5. Do you and your child attend literacy programs sponsored by the St. Louis Public Library?

Yes       No

6. Are parent workshops that focus on literacy offered at your child's school?

Yes       No

7. Does your child's school have a lending library for families?

Yes       No

8. Does your child's teacher share lists of books appropriate for your child's reading level?

Yes       No

9. Do you have a computer in your home?

Yes       No

10. Does your child access reading programs/games on a computer or other electronic device?

Yes       No

### **READING ACTIVITIES AT HOME**

1. How often do you or other members of your household read with your child after school hours?

Daily     More than twice a week     Twice a week     Once a week  
 Never

2. How often does your child ask to read to you or other members of your household?

Daily     Often     Occasionally     Seldom     Never



3. How often does your child check out and bring home books from the school's library?

Often     Sometimes

4. How often do you visit the St. Louis Public Library to check out books with your child?

Daily     More than twice a week     Twice a week     Once a week

Never

5. What types of books or reading materials does your child usually choose?

Fairy Tales     Fiction     Non-Fiction     Fantasy     Sports     Other

6. How often do you monitor your child while they use reading programs/games on a computer or other electronic device?

Daily     More than twice a week     Twice a week     Once a week

Never

7. How often do you attend workshops that focus on literacy at your child's school?

Weekly     Twice a month     Once a month     Never     I'm not sure

8. How often does your child's school host book fairs?

Twice each school year     Once each school year     Never     I'm not sure

9. How often do you assist your child with book reports?

Weekly     Twice a month     Once a month     Seldom     Never

10. Do you currently subscribe to any magazines for your household?

Yes     No

**PARENT/CHILD EXPERIENCES**

1. Were books and other reading materials available in your home when you were a child?

Yes       No

2. As a child, do you remember your parents or household members reading local newspaper publications?

Yes       No

3. How often did your parents or other household members read to or with you at home when you were a child?

Often     Sometimes     Seldom     Never     I do not remember

4. As a child, how often were you required to read to members of your household?

Often     Sometimes     Seldom     Never     I do not remember

5. As a child, I read for (see choices below).

enjoyment     school     both

6. What types of books or reading materials did you enjoy as a child?

Fairy Tales     Fiction     Non-Fiction     Fantasy     Sports     Other

7. What is the title of your favorite book when you were a child?

8. Did you have a public library card when you were a child?

Yes       No

9. How often do you use a computer or other electronic devices to access reading materials for your child and/or your household?

Daily     More than twice a week     Twice a week     Once a week  
 Never

10. What is currently the title of your favorite book or magazine?

\_\_\_\_\_ N/A

Source: Modified from the Development and Validation of a Home Literacy Questionnaire to Assess Emergent Reading Skills of Pre-School Children (Curry, 2012)

This concludes the parent survey. Thank you for your cooperation. Your responses will remain anonymous.

**Appendix B****Letter of Permission to Participate**

Mr. & Mrs. John Doe

1234 St. Louis Street

St. Louis, MO 63101

Dear Parent:

A researcher for the University of Missouri-St. Louis will be conducting a study about Black parents/guardians' beliefs and practices and its impact on reading scores of Black boys in third, fourth and fifth grades. The purpose of this study is to examine the reading scores of Black boys in grades three, four and five to determine the impact their family lives have on their reading scores.

This research also involves your completing a questionnaire regarding your beliefs and practices with your child. Your participation is strictly voluntary and confidential. Nobody will be penalized for choosing not to participate. The questionnaire will ask about your involvement in your child's reading while at home. In order to fully understand the question, it is important to get your perspective.

Your name will not be included in the results of this study and all results will be kept confidential. The estimated time to complete the questionnaire is about 10-15 minutes.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher. Thank you for your cooperation with this research which will benefit many St. Louis Public Schools children.

Sincerely,

Paula D. Knight

## Appendix C

### Permission Requests



KELVIN R. ADAMS, Ph.D.  
Superintendent  
CLEOPATRA FIGGURES, Ed.D.  
Deputy Superintendent for Accountability  
and Academic Services

August 23, 2013

Ms. Paula D. Knight  
Associate Superintendent  
Early Childhood Education  
801 N. 11<sup>th</sup> Street  
St. Louis, Missouri 63101

Dear Ms. Knight:

Your request to undertake the research project "Reading Achievement and Family Literacy Behaviors of Black Boys" has been reviewed and approved.

It is understood that you will only be working with data files and there will be no instructional loss of time for student or teacher. It is also understood that no students will be interviewed or otherwise involved with this work. I assume you have already made arrangements to get the necessary public data files for your work or that you will utilize the SLPS' Pulse system for the data necessary to complete your study.

I should remind you that a full electronic copy of the completed findings of this project (including bibliography) must be submitted at the end of the study. It will also be necessary to request, in writing, a second year of approval should the research not be completed during this 2013-2014 school year.

If I can provide any further information regarding this recommendation, please contact me at [cleopatra.figgures@slps](mailto:cleopatra.figgures@slps) or via telephone at 314.345.2488.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cleopatra Figgures".

**Cleopatra Figgures, Ed.D.**  
Deputy Superintendent for Accountability  
and Academic Services

**From:** Jennifer Curry [mailto:jennifer.curry17@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 17, 2013 9:29 AM  
**To:** Knight, Paula D.  
**Subject:** Re:

Hello Paula

I have no problem with you using my instrument for your research. I would love to hear all about the results of your work and how the instrument performs.

Cheers,

Jennifer

**From:** "Knight, Paula D." <[Paula.Knight@slps.org](mailto:Paula.Knight@slps.org)>  
**To:** "[jennifer.curry17@yahoo.com](mailto:jennifer.curry17@yahoo.com)" <[jennifer.curry17@yahoo.com](mailto:jennifer.curry17@yahoo.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 16, 2013 7:11:19 PM  
**Subject:**

Dr. Curry,

I am a current doc student at the University of Missouri and seeking your permission to use/modify your instrument that I found to be the most useful with my research study. Your questionnaire has by far, one of the best reliability and validity constructs I've seen.

I contacted Dr. Parrila for any help in locating your contact number or email.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you.

**Paula D. Knight**

Associate Superintendent, St. Louis Public Schools

**From:** PDK 7181 [mailto:pdknight7@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 05, 2014 7:26 PM  
**To:** Jelani Mandara; carolyn.murray@ucr.edu  
**Subject:** Permission Request

Good evening Drs. Murray and Mandara,

I am a doctorate student at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and seeking your permission to include the following in my dissertation:

**Racial Socialization Typology**

Your work will support my research on the Reading Achievement and Family Literacy Behaviors of Black boys in 3rd, 4th and 5th grades.

Thank you for your consideration.

Paula D. Knight

Hi Paula,

As we discussed on the phone, you certainly have our permission to use the racial socialization typology we developed in your dissertation.

Best regards,

Jelani Mandara

Associate Professor

Human Development and Social Policy

Northwestern University

2120 Campus Drive

Evanston, Il 60208

Dear Paula,

You have my permission as long as the appropriate citations are provided? It is probably a good idea to check with the journals if you are citing from one of their publications. Better safe than...

Best of luck with your research.

AWT

On Tue, Sep 9, 2014 at 5:48 PM, PDK 7181 <[pdknight7@hotmail.com](mailto:pdknight7@hotmail.com)> wrote:

Dr. Tatum,

This is a follow-up to a permission request to include the figures below in my research. I left a voice message as well this evening.

Thank you.

---

From: [pdknight7@hotmail.com](mailto:pdknight7@hotmail.com)

To: [atatum1@uic.edu](mailto:atatum1@uic.edu)

Subject: Permission Request

Date: Tue, 5 Aug 2014 19:17:16 -0500

Good evening Dr. Tatum,

I am a doctorate student at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and seeking your permission to include the following in my dissertation:



**Nesting Ground Framework**

**Historical Framing to Approach Literacy with African-American Male Youth**

Your work will support my research on the Reading Achievement and Family Literacy Behaviors of Black boys in 3rd, 4th and 5th grades.

Thank you for your consideration.

Paula D. Knight

314-504-6783