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Teachers Experience With Latino Academic Underperformance: A Qualitative Case Study

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Abstract

Teachers who instruct Latino students face many instructional challenges. Latino students must learn a new language as well as grasp grade level content. Along with learning a new language, they struggle with not having enough background knowledge, not being sufficiently exposed to cultural content, low self-confidence, and lack of parental involvement. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain an understanding of Latino students' academic struggles from the perspective of their teachers. This study was guided by the following research question: How do some elementary educators in the Southern United Stated describe their experiences teaching reading to underperforming Latino students? The sample was obtained through snowball strategy and it consisted of eight participants who were Title I elementary teachers from the Southern United States. The data collection instruments were interviews and journal entries. An inductive analysis was used to analyze collected data. The key findings of this study were that teachers understand that Latino students lack background knowledge and they have to provide appropriate scaffolding to help students make connections to ease comprehension. The teachers expressed the need for them to include more cultural tasks in the classroom to increase student engagement.

Keywords: Latino, ELL students, performance, reading, student engagement

Dedication

To my two grandmothers in heaven, Mandedette and Tmam who taught me how to be a strong, fearless woman.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank God for being with me on this journey, He poured into me consistently so I could do this work. I would like to recognize my faculty chair, Dr. Heather Miller for her consistent support and guidance throughout this process. I would like to acknowledge my best friend, Rudolph, for his guidance, support, love, understanding, and encouragements to stay focused and determined. I want to thank my son, my parents, and my aunt who have made this journey easier by their constant support. Finally, I want to acknowledge the Concordia faculty and staff.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction

Elementary teachers who instruct Latino students are faced with the challenge of teaching content and assisting their students learning a new language. With this learning dynamic, Latino students are underperforming in literacy. This case study addressed teachers' experiences about their students' academic experiences. Attempts from educators to explain their students' struggle with comprehension and classroom activities after receiving instruction needed to be investigated. Based on Latino students' low performance in literacy, teachers' expertise and perspectives were valuable tools in assisting in the uncovering of probable reasons for this underperformance.

I explained the background, context, history and conceptual framework for the problem. which I then related to the constructivism theory. I delved into the study's purpose and presented the research question that will be this study's guiding compass. The rationale, relevance, significance, and terms relevant to this case study were defined. Finally, I described possible assumptions, delimitations and limitations this study could have.

Background, Context, History and Conceptual Framework for the Problem

The existing problem was Latino students' inability to respond to their teacher's instruction and make learning gains. Factors contributing to this problem are the language barrier (Schofield, Beaumont, Widaman, Jochem, Robins, & Conger, 2012) between them and native-born students, parents' reluctance to get involved in their children's academic lives (Sibley & Dearing, 2014) students' lack of motivation or belief in themselves (Osborne & Jones, 2011), and students' disruptive misbehavior in the classroom (Moreno & Segura Herrera, 2014). Webb (2013) noted the creation of standardized tests in the 19th century was to make decisions about college admission. After World War II, educators began utilizing these assessments to

gather evidence, and make educational and objective decisions (Bruce, 2013). After the Brown v. Board of Education decision, standardized tests started being utilized to keep track on how each race was performing academically (namely on the SAT). When the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) became law in 2002, standardized evaluations became mandated opportunities for standards to be taught in class and assessed. These assessments were created to reduce the academic gap between White and minority students. However, educators, parents, and some administrators argued that the NCLB act and the standardized testing accompanying it were not beneficial to education and did not reduce learning gaps between races. During the 2005-2006 academic year, it became mandatory for students to perform well on the reading portion of the assessment in third grade to continue on to fourth grade. Reading is crucial in the other grades as well because the mathematics and science assessments require students to be able to read and understand the questions. The next academic year, science was added to the lists of assessments to be taken starting in fifth grade.

In 2015, a new consolidated act, ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) was voted into law offering more freedom to states and their educators to accommodate the needs of every child. The Department of Education (n.d.) also noted that ESSA allows for educators to be trained to include a variety of interventions to adequately equip top teachers and produce top schools. Webb (2013) specified that these state evaluations affected the culture of American education because they not only push teachers to "teach to the test," but significantly influenced the educational experience of African Americans and Latinos who underperform on these standardized tests compared to their Whites' counterparts.

States in the Southern United States have also seen a significant growth in Latino students in the last decade. According to data from the Pew Hispanic Research Center, as of

2009, there were 692,000 Hispanic students enrolled in K-12 public schools, making up 24% of the total student population of the research state, making it seventh state with the highest student Hispanic population (Pew Research Center, 2017). The Research Center projected the number of Hispanic school children will have increased by 166% by 2050 and surpass the number of White students (Fry & Gonzalez, 2008). Nearly half of Hispanic students (44%) are first-generation, while 20% second-generation and 5% third-generation speak English with some difficulty, making it challenging for them when they enter American school as English Language Learners (ELL) needing to master English to understand the content taught.

Every state has standards assessment which is the measure by which levels of academic performance for each race are tabulated and compared. Every year, the assessments were either restructured, renamed, or replaced with others tests. They test English Language Arts (ELA) which includes reading and writing, mathematics, and science. It is administered to all students from Grades 3 to 10. The achievement level ranges from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest); students have to score a two to obtain mastery or satisfactory performance (Florida Standards Assessment, n.d.). If students in third grade do not master the literacy portion of the assessment, they are given an opportunity to attend summer school and take another evaluation; if they do not pass it, they are retained.

Conceptual Framework: Constructivism

Constructivism is a learning theory where students utilize their background knowledge, personal and social experiences to construct meaning and understanding of what they are learning (Al Mahmud, 2013; Liepolt & Wilson, 2004; Shaffer, 2008). In order for this process to be successful, it must be a continuous activity, where learners draw from personal experiences, and are active in their learning by communicating and interacting with peers, educators and the

world around them. Bredo (2000) explained for students who construct meaning, knowledge is made from their environment, not found, told, or explained by an educator. Once their personal experiences are able to be integrated into the learning and students are able to create their own meaning from what they are learning, then students are on their way to grasping educational concepts and becoming successful (Shapiro, 2011). Dewey (1944) founded the constructivism philosophy and characterized it as both doing and knowing for the purpose of educating oneself. Vygotsky (1979) defined constructivism as social because individuals have to form meaning through interactions with others and the world. Every experience a student has involves the world around them, their parents, their siblings, friends, teachers, schools, immediate surrounding, or to sum it up, their society.

Rivet and Krajcik (2008) added when teachers use culturally familiar tasks in the classroom, they become facilitators and assist students in recognizing themselves in the texts they read; this method promotes pupil motivation, engagement, and interest throughout the learning process. Scheer, Noweski, and Meinel (2012) defined constructivism as an almost holistic experience for students where learning happens as a whole, through experiences, collaboratively and not fragmented as it has been in the school system. Thus, the question arises, how do learners continue to construct and build on their knowledge? The educator, who becomes a facilitator must stay away from assessments and provide opportunities for students to experience learning they can construct and exercise their critical thinking skills from (Liepolt & Wilson, 2004; Sheer et al., 2012). Having students participate in the problem-solving process, applying insights, and application of skills are all additional skills proving that pupils' knowledge is building.

Statement of the Problem

The problem that inspired this study was the fact that reasons for Latino students' continued underperformance in literacy were not sufficient to explain why the academic gaps kept widening. The literature had not concentrated enough on educators' perspectives on the issue plaguing Latino students. Assessment scores proved there was a discrepancy between races but teachers' who instructed them daily could reveal reasons they believed these students were consistently underperforming in reading despite daily instruction and interventions they were receiving.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to analyze possible reasons for Latino students' inability to make academic progress according to their instructors. According to the literature, Latino students were one of the minority subgroups struggling to learn in classroom settings and were unable to reach mastery on standardized assessments. Some of the factors contributing to this underperformance problem were the lack of parental involvement in their children academic lives (Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2011), and lack of encouragement from parents (DeCarlo et al., 2014), which was often caused by a language barrier (Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010). The collected data from this research study–journals and interview questions from participants (teachers)–revealed their perspectives on what impedes the learning process of their Hispanic students.

Research Question

This study was directed by this research question: question: How do some elementary educators in the Southern United Stated describe their experiences teaching reading to underperforming Latino students?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of Study

It was important to understand why such a large subgroup was struggling in a certain subject (language arts: reading and writing); and the research study revealed the opinions of those who are closest to those students, who work with them every day: their teachers. Once educators knew how to observe their students and discovered reasons why learning was not occurring as it should, the work of delving into their weaknesses and strategized to turn them into strengths for each child could begin.

Definitions of Terms

Standardized assessment. A standardized assessment is a state assessment administered at the end of each academic year to assess students' knowledge of academic standards taught during the school year. In the southern state, in the research school, this standardized test is the FSA. It contains an ELA, a math and a science section (fifth grade). Roehl (2015) explained how standardized assessments are used to measure student performance and compare them across districts and states.

Latino students. The American Community Survey identified Latino or Hispanic as being from Latino as those whose origin or ancestry is Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, from other Spanish-speaking countries of the Caribbean or Central or South America, or from Spain (US Department of Education, 2015). People who identify their origin as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Spanish is often their first language.

ELL. ELL is the acronym for English Language Learner: a student whose first language is not English. According to the US Department of Education (2015), ELL students are between 5 to 18 years old, attend school, live in a home where English is not the primary language spoken, and report speaking English. Based on their level of English comprehension upon

school entry, they are assigned an ELL level (I to V) and instructor to assist them with acquiring the English language, becoming familiar with the content taught and performing tasks in English at school. When students make progress, their ELL level improves, and they can also be assigned to different teachers throughout the year.

Underperformance. Academic underperformance is a less than well or below expectation performance from a student because of an inability or unwillingness to meet academic standards. An indicator of academic underachievement or underperformance is related to grades and performance on standardized tests that are below average.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Assumptions

Assumptions made in research case studies are factors that a researcher believes accepts as true without any concrete proof (Ellis & Levy, 2010). An assumption that should not have been made in this research study was to presume that the language barrier was the sole cause of Latino students' academic struggles and underperformance on the state assessment test. Another assumption not to make was that it was their parents' lack of involvement contributing to their issues. A common assumption that can be made is that once elementary Latino students are able to read words from a book and a story, they are not struggling; however, reading comprehension is a significant component in reaching academic success. Finally, when participants are involved in a study, it is easy to believe they will be honest and forthcoming with their detailed experiences.

Delimitations

Richey and Klein (2007) noted that delimitations are environmental factors affecting a study. One of the delimitations of the study was its focus on Latino students' academic

underperformance in literacy. Data for the academic year 2015-2016 demonstrated Latino students were the subgroup with the lowest scores in the tested grades (third, fourth, and fifth) in the literacy section of the Florida State Assessments (FSA, n.d.). However, other subgroups who also had less than commendable scores in the same evaluations were not studied. Teachers who taught kindergarten, first and second grade were not participants because these grade level do not participate in standardized testing. Also, teachers at Title I schools were asked about their experience which, if studied, might be different than those in more affluent neighborhoods. For example, it could be highly possible that Latino students in top achieving schools are not prone to underperformance because of parental involvement.

Limitations

Ellis and Levy (2010) defined study limitations as factors outside a researcher's control that can affect the study's results. This study was limited to teachers' opinions and perspectives of teachers in the research site. There were eight articipants sharing their opinions with the researcher in their interviews about how their Latino students construct learning in the classroom. A couple of interviews were the first and third mode of data collection. The second mode of data collected were teacher journals completed for a week on a couple of Latino students, recording verbal and nonverbal behaviors. It reflected their opinions, but not those of others such as parents, students, or administrators. Additional methods of data collection may have revealed more information. Another study limitation was the small number of participants, which reduced the amount of data collected. This study's data collection process was conducted in the span of three months, which limited the time participants had to observe their Latino students, once they became aware of one of the study's components (Latino students' academic behavior).

Summary

In Chapter 1, the research question was presented within the framework of constructivism. The study problem was the lack of teacher perceptions on the reasons why Latino students were constantly underperforming in literacy no matter how much instruction they receive. Latino students were one of the subgroups unable to make adequate learning gains even when they received instruction and additional assistance in English. These were defined as any students from Hispanic origins labeled as ELL students whose first language was not English, their first language may or may not be Spanish. The way students responded to their teachers was introduced and needed to be further investigated because learning happens in the classroom with teachers. This research study guided researchers and instructors to delve deeper into the world of that said Latino student to understand what occurred in his learning process Limitations, delimitations, and assumptions of the study were also explained.

In Chapter 2, a literature review discussing issues Latino students confront will be presented. The study's research methodology will be shared in Chapter 3 to explain how the study will be completed, then the results will be disclosed in Chapter 4, followed by a discussion relating the results to literature in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this study, the reasons for the academic underperformance of Latino students compared to other students were investigated. In the research demographic, located in the Southern United States, the subgroup with the lowest percentage in third through fifth grade on the yearly standardized assessments are Hispanic students. These assessments were deemed important because they determined the school grade, and all students were expected to perform on grade level; therefore, subgroups not meeting standards years in a row became problematic for the school. One of the issues was that the research state has a high Hispanic population and demonstrated that Latino students was the subgroup that had been systematically failing their standardized reading assessments for at least the last three years.

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this qualitative study was constructivism; a learning theory wherein students construct their own meaning, understanding, and knowledge through past experiences, and then reflect on these experiences (Al Mahmud, 2013; Liepolt & Wilson, 2004). Shaffer (2008) reported constructivism is predicated on the premise that learners create meaning for themselves based on their cultural and social experiences. As students become exposed to new concepts and lessons in the classroom, they need to be encouraged to connect them to their previous experiences and be able to verbalize their thoughts about what they are learning. Furthermore, Shaffer (2008) noted learning as a process of meaning making rather than a product of accumulated facts. Shaffer (2008) also emphasized learning as social construct, or activity, occurring repeatedly not only through interactions with experiences but also interactions with peers through discussions. Shapiro (2011) explained students became successful as they learned

that grasping concepts, scientific or otherwise, and continuing to build their interest involved asking their teachers questions and were able to explain and verbalize their understanding.

Constructivism suggests that classrooms become student centered (Olivares, 2002), where learners attempt to understand how the world and the things in it work by drawing from their own bank of experiences to add to what they already know. Rivet and Krajcik (2008) suggested teachers should use culturally familiar tasks in the classroom to allow students to recognize themselves in a text, and build on that prior knowledge, understand what they are learning, and create their own meaning of what is presented in class. When students are invited to include their own experience into the classroom environment, they may become highly motivated, engaged, interested throughout the task and have less trouble understanding new concepts (Rivet & Krajcik, 2008). The first exposure to an event helps the student make a meaningful connection and prompt the desire to learn more about the topic.

The constructivist approach also requires teachers to observe the way students construct their learning through activities and peer conversations, and then, necessary, help students learn (Al Mahmud, 2013). Al Mahmud (2013) identified a constructivist teacher as one who becomes a facilitator in the classroom and assists students as they grasp their knowledge. Liepolt and Wilson (2004) explained teachers should encourage students to use active techniques such as experiments and real-world problem solving to deepen their understanding. The teacher then ensures that students are referring back to their backgrounds and experiences and connecting it to the present content to make sense of the new material.

Review of the Literature

This study was designed to investigate the reasons why Latino students underperformed academically in reading. Reardon, Valentino, and Shores (2012) stated Latino students entered

school approximately three years behind in literacy skills. The majority of them did not have foundational skills and know the basics when entering kindergarten such as their letters and their numbers. Major reasons for this poor achievement were a lack of parental involvement (Walker et al., 2011), the difference between boys' and girls' learning styles (Sax, 2006), racial inequalities and stereotypes in the classroom (Noguera, 2012), issues faced by ELL in mainstream classrooms (Tong, Irby, Lara-Alacio, Yoon, & Mathes, 2010) and behavior (Cavanagh, Vigil, & Garcia, 2014). This study was intended to examine how these different reasons contribute to Latino students' academic underachievement.

Influence of Parental Involvement on Academic Achievement

Parental involvement at school promotes connections between two of the main environments of the child's life: home and school. Parental involvement translates itself through a host of other behaviors, such as modeling, or development of positive feelings toward school, which children need to succeed in class (Sibley & Dearing, 2014). Lee and Bowen (2006) stressed the importance of parents connecting with their children, characterized by a certain congruence, or agreement, between values, behaviors, and attitudes.

Parental involvement at home and at school has a positive impact on a child's academic life. While at home, certain expectations are set by parents or guardians about behaviors and attitudes required at schools. Parents can be visible to school personnel and be a part of the school community by participating in parent conferences, attending programs where students contribute, and volunteering (Lee & Bowen, 2006). At home, parents should be able to assist with homework. Lee and Bowen (2006) and Turney and Kao (2009) explained teachers' desire for parents to get more involved with school conferences, homework, and discussions of schoolwork and school experiences. Domina (2005) explained when parents and the school

collaborate, they become aware of their children's performance and shift into assisting their child in subjects in which he or she is struggling. Turney and Kao (2009) stated that compared to Latino native-born parents, Latino immigrant parents were less likely to get involved in their children's school. Parental monitoring and contribution in a child's academic life can lead to better overall academic achievement (Domina, 2005; Gordon & Cui, 2012; Lee & Bowen, 2006). This relationship between parents and students helps the child develop a positive attitude about attending school. Domina (2005) suggested parent involvement helps children socialize and shows the child the importance of education. Through involvement, the parent shows interest in what the child is doing in school; this interest motivates the child to do well in class and value his or her education to please their parent. This cycle can be a boost to academic performance.

Latino Families

Parental involvement is directly linked to academic achievement. Sibley and Dearing (2014) discussed the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement. A lack of parental involvement can be linked to the poor academic achievement of Latino students. Walker et al. (2011) identified the elements affecting lack of parental involvement in students' lives at schools as lack of academic background, poverty, discrimination, and residential instability. According to Good et al. (2010), Latino parents are unable to, or at least are perceived to be unable to, assist their children with homework because of the language barrier and a lack of educational preparation, thus leaving the students either barely doing their homework or not doing it at all. Hart and Risley (2003) noted educated parents use more complex vocabulary with their children than parents with less formal education. Schofield et al. (2012) raised the problem of both Latino parents and students not being proficient in English; parents, however, have a harder time learning the language because of their environment

whereas students can become fluent in school much quicker. When parents do not speak English, it makes it almost impossible for them to assist their children.

All students have the challenge of the rigidity of curriculum standards and need all the assistance they can receive. Parents with limited English skills and academic preparation may be unable or unwilling to continually encourage their students to perform academically (DeCarlo Santiago, Gudino, Baweja, & Nadeem, 2014; Good et al., 2010). Good et al. (2010) explained how parents' inability to involve themselves in their children's academic lives directly affects students' grades. There is no additional voice at home able to explain concepts that students find difficult.

Walker et al. (2011) also presented the case of parents waiting for their children to ask for homework assistance before offering it or waiting for teachers to request parent conferences before involving themselves at work because they felt their poor educational background did not make them smart enough to help their child. Additionally, Walker et al. (2011) noted teachers often had misconceptions about reasons why Latino parents did not get more involved with the schools. Poza, Brooks, and Valdes (2014) illustrated cases where parents wanted to understand the functioning of schools to help their children succeed but preferred to get involved only at home because they did not know how to get involved in an academic setting. School personnel, who categorized parental involvement as a partnership with the school, classified parents who were would not associate themselves with school activities or in parent conferences as uninvolved. Walker et al. (2011) also offered a plausible reason parents stayed away from schools: they believe it is the school's job to educate their children and prefer not to interfere.

Communication gap Between Home and School

Strambler, Linke, and Ward (2013) warned messages parents communicate to their child about school is crucial because they either propel the child to great academic proficiency or causes academic failure. Sackes, Isitan, Avci, and Justice (2016) suggested parents' belief about literacy affected both homework and influenced students to build their reading practices at school. This educational socialization, as Strambler et al. (2013), identified it, determined students' interaction in schools with teachers, courses, peers, and themselves (e.g., thoughts, tasks, classwork, and homework). Children often imitate their parents; consequently, if parents value education, their child may be more than likely to value education as well. Walker et al. (2011) explained how parents will have to become more sensitive to their children's feelings about schools and offer suggestions, answer questions, and give advice about school, especially when students doubt themselves because it can lead to how students stay motivated and engaged in school.

Good et al. (2010) documented another factor affecting some Latino parents' engagement in their children's school life: the communication gap existing between parents and teachers. The authors reported the reluctance or even fear of some of the parents (especially those who were from low socioeconomic status), to communicate with the teachers because of their inability to speak English. Nevertheless, Good et al. (2010) reported some parents express the desire to be involved in their students' academic lives but said they thought teachers' stereotyping blocks communication and prevents involvement. The parents felt condescended to and discriminated against. Furthermore, they believed the district was not taking them into consideration and involving them into decisions concerning their children because of their immigrant status and inability to speak English; thus, there was no point to engage with the

district staff in the first place. Ishimaru (2014) also expressed how parents felt unwelcomed and powerless in their children's schools because of their inability to partake in the decision-making process of curricula or school decisions. If parents think they have no voice in what happens inside the classroom, they do not think it is worth it to attend meetings. This feeling of inadequacy leaves parents unwilling to express their concerns about the school system or the type of education their child is receiving (Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005).

Academic Identification

Strambler et al. (2013) defined academic identification as the way students view and involve themselves at school. It all begins with messages parents communicate to their children about school: it affects how students perform and identify with their academic abilities and self-worth. The distinction between self-concept and self-worth is that self-concept is how a student perceives he or she can perform, while self-worth is how he or she feels about his or herself, his or her academic performance, and his or her ability. Osborne (2011) opined when learners identify positively with schools, they tend to perform well in school. Black and Latino students misidentified themselves with schools and were not motivated or focused enough to perform well in class. This stems from their parents not having finished school, being disinterested in their children's academic lives, or not having enough time to be involved. This research study measured how academic identification impacts students' self-esteem and self-worth through their academic response. This was collected through teacher journals after they have just taught.

Racial and Economic Inequalities and the Achievement Gap

Racial inequalities, in the context of this study, are the unspoken differences between races that exist in the classroom. The NCLB act, enacted into law in 2001, was created to enable every student, regardless of race, to succeed academically. Yet the National Center for

Educational Statistics (2011) reported that, despite NCLB, education gaps exist between White and minority students, including Latinos (Noguera, 2012; Reese, Jensen, & Ramirez, 2014). Murnane and Papay (as cited in Rojas-Leboeuf and Slate, 2011) reported that for the most part, teachers support the principles of the NCLB Act: that every child should perform and make adequate yearly progress. Yet some teachers do not agree about the incentives set to reward teachers because they say it ultimately reduces the quality of education. The NCLB Act has to ensure that each subgroup made of races and groups of students such as the exceptional educational group makes academic gains. Understanding why these inequalities exist will drive this research study by analyzing the behavior of Latino males' students.

The socioeconomic status of students can become a source of racial and ethnic difference in the classroom (Ford, 2012). Reardon and Galindo (2009) noted that, generally, White/ Latino gaps were attributed to socioeconomic status, language proficiency and school quality. Latino students' socioeconomic status affects educational opportunities because they do not have access to the same abundance of opportunities, experiences, or role models (Carrington, Tymms, & Merell, 2008). Latino students are three times more likely than White children to grow up in poverty, and four times more likely to have parents who have not completed high school. They often begin kindergarten with educational gaps and are less likely to graduate high school (Reardon et al., 2009). Many automatically begin school at a disadvantage because they have parents not positioned to assist them academically. Moreover, Reardon et al., (2009) remarked that often parents who have not finished their education are not good motivators for their children. According to DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, and Lee (2006), one reason for this gap is the economically disadvantaged status of Latino students. Hartley and Sutton (2013) acknowledged that inequalities stem from lack of opportunities and social capital. The absence of experiences

students had outside of the classroom limited their background knowledge and affected their learning and level of participation in the classroom. This study will investigate what happens when Latino students do not have any background knowledge to draw from in the classroom because of their lack of experiences.

Poverty is one of the issues that cause inequality in the classrooms because children coming from non-English families or low socioeconomic status tend to have a lower level of English proficiency (Kieffer, 2008; Tong et al., 2010). They do not have many opportunities to speak English nor do they have access to some life experiences (Sanchez, Bledsoe, Sumabat, & Ye, 2004) which lowers their background knowledge limiting their classroom discussion. Guccione (2011) also noted that Latino males ELL students coming from economically disadvantaged families tend to have limited background knowledge, poor vocabulary, and low reading comprehension. Students from these families need extra assistance from their teacher because they are often performing below grade level.

Another factor stemming from poverty is student mobility: students move from district to district or even school to school more than once and this mobility affects their academic performance (Palardy, 2015). The new student has to adjust to new content and routines, and new classmates, he or she is often left friendless, without much confidence and urge to participate in class. Also, when students move from school to school, they have to either catch up or wait to be on the same pace curriculum wise as the others; this might cause them to lose interest, then it might be hard to get their attention again.

Negative Effects of Stereotyping

Mendoza-Denton (2014) addressed the relationships between teacher and students affected by stereotypes leading to loss of self-esteem. The author found that students who were

victims of ethnic judgment from their teacher believed they were inferior to others in the classroom and were reluctant to produce any meaningful work (Mendoza-Denton, 2014). To overcome this issue, Ford (2012) stressed that educators should use positive and motivational words because they decrease negative outcomes of racial differences. Teachers must be careful about how they communicate with struggling students.

If their academic level is poor, which it often is, Latino students, perceive themselves as inadequate and isolate themselves (Galindo & Fuller, 2010). According to Lo, Correa, and Anderson (2015), moreover if the student is an immigrant (i.e. Hispanic), the English language is not fully mastered, the pupils in question perceive themselves as outcasts, and this self-perception often blocks academic performance. The stereotyping of students is worsened by teachers' misunderstanding of the real problem. Misguided teachers give the wrong instruction or refer students to the wrong support services, such as exceptional student services (Ford, 2012). Cartledge and Kourea (2011) identified the need for culturally responsive teaching to be the norm in classrooms where culture must be understood for the right relationship between teacher and student to be formed and sustained. When culture is taken into consideration, personal experiences can be used in the classroom to engage students to prevent or reduce isolation because if students do not feel welcomed and included in their environment, they will detach themselves. This research study will explore whether students with self-esteem and confidence issues play a role in how they interact and construct their learning.

Acculturation, or learning and adapting to a new culture, is an additional source of inequity in the classroom. Berry and Sabatier (2011) asserted Latino students become stressed and anxious when having to adapt to a new culture to the point of not being able to concentrate in class. Gonzales et al. (2008) explained how acculturation stress leads to poor academic

performance and even poor mental health. Zychinsky and Polo (2012) recognized amongst Latino students, stress caused by internalizing symptoms and pressure to perform well affects grades negatively and leads to depression. At that point on, feelings of self-efficacy are low and students are reluctant to even try to perform.

Stereotypes against students are a potential problem for Latino students because it leads to more issues. Hartley and Sutton (2013) asserted that stereotypes, defined as the classification and the labeling of a group of individuals into something that they typically are not, can prove to be a hindrance to academic performance. The Latino student who feels stereotyped against begins to expect people to see him or her fail. This characterization might be a good starting point for this research study because it may explain why subjects' behavior while learning in the classroom, or their inability or refusal to learn. Inequalities (Shabazian, 2014) and stereotypes also persist because in certain schools because the principals assign certain students based on specific criteria such as aptitude and intelligence (Burns & Mason, 2002). If groups of same students in one classroom, some based on their race, some on their abilities, some on their English proficiency level, classrooms become unbalanced. This kind of classroom setup can be problematic because while in one classroom, students might be able to challenge each other, in another, students might be struggling to understand the content, need more assistance from the teacher, and barely producing any meaningful work. Palardy (2005) argued these imbalanced classrooms contribute to the achievement gaps. Explanations for these achievement gaps will be important to this study because they could explain why the majority in one subgroup is underperforming.

Students spend the majority of their day in the classroom with their teachers, thus the importance of reviewing the quality of these teachers. Palardy (2005) claimed teachers'

effectiveness should be evaluated beyond certifications and degrees; the most important factor is the substance of the instruction delivered in the classroom.

Curriculum Gaps

According to the National Assessment of Educational Report, gaps in curriculum have existed between White and Latino students for at least the last 20 years (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011). Reardon et al. (2009) discovered that reading and math educational gaps between White and minority students began in kindergarten but seem to be more significant in math. Researchers demonstrated that even if Latino readers are considered fluent, it did not mean that their reading comprehension was on grade level (Currie, Haskins, McDonald, & Leidy, 2012; Ferguson, 2003; Reardon et al., 2012; Saeki, Singh, & Barbara, 2012). Latino students may be stronger performers in math than in reading because math is taught with more rigidity and fidelity. Reading needs more methodical instruction, such as background knowledge, foundational assessments, and interventions. Also, Latino parents who only speak Spanish might find it easier to assist their children in math because it is a universal concept, whereas reading requires more comprehension. Quinn and Cooc (2015) and McGee and Pearman II (2014) argued that not just math and literacy gaps exist between Whites and minority students, mainly Black and Latino students, but science gaps are also problematic in elementary classrooms.

Quinn and Cooc (2015) revealed that some science teachers did not have time to expose Latino students to hands-on experiments, scientific inquiry, or problem solving to interest students in science because of lack of resources in their schools, and because they are a Title I schools with students struggling in math and reading, resources are often used to improve reading and mathematics scores; the priority is not to purchase science manipulatives. Clayton

(2011) referred to the racial inequalities existing in schools preventing Latino students from receiving the best from their schools. In high poverty area, most schools are highly populated by economically challenged students and resources are limited (Orfield & Lee, 2004). These schools struggle with providing a challenging curriculum and trained teachers (Clayton, 2011). Going to school in high poverty areas create inequality in the classroom manifested in stereotypes, teacher assignment, and curriculum weaknesses.

Impact of Teacher Interactions and Expectations

Through daily interactions with their students, teachers have an effect on what they include in the curriculum. Teachers drive learning and development more so than the craft of teaching itself (Hamre et al., 2013). Being culturally responsive and aware of students' needs and lifestyles can help teachers form lasting bonds with students that translate into great academic performance.

Teachers, especially newer ones to the teaching profession, should be trained on how to be culturally and racially sensitive. McKown and Weinstein (2008) demonstrated that some teachers had lower expectations for African American and Latino students than the rest of their students, even if they were all performing at the same academic level. Professional development should focus on helping teachers become more inclusive of all students regardless of their race or culture and provide emotional support that their students need (Hamre et al., 2013; Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004). When new teachers lack the necessary skills to interact with students on their cultural level, the focus tends to be on behavior issues and not on instructional ones (Weinstein et al., 2004).

Teachers may interpret some responses as rude or disrespectful when simply it is in that student's culture to answer in such a way (Weinstein et al., 2004). Haworth, McGee, and

McIntyre (2015) noted when the whole school adopts a culturally responsive atmosphere as a way to interact with students, it is much more likely for all teachers to adopt that approach and use in their classroom. Consequently, the authors explained learning communities should be formed at all schools, and workshops on being a culturally sensitive teacher should be offered to the whole school, then efforts and results monitored closely. Fuller and Garcia Coll (2010) expressed how Latino students have strong social competencies, and the ability to communicate well with others because of their cultures. Reese et al. (2014) argued these interpersonal skills must be used in order for academic performance to thrive. If students are treated well and are comfortable in their environment, they will feel more at ease to ask for assistance.

Stereotypes also existed against teachers (Lippi Green, 2011); the author recounted a petition signed in several states preventing teachers with language accents to teach first or second grade classroom. This total eradication of culture from education establishments can make students feel that their difference is unwelcomed, even abnormal. Ogbu (2008) hypothesized students can sense when they are not well liked or discriminated against by their teachers. Mendoza-Denton (2014) reported underprivileged students have a lot of self-hatred and helplessness feelings, which shows the dire need for positive relationships and encouragement from teachers. This study will reveal teacher behaviors towards students and pupils' academic response to their instructors.

Relationships with teachers are essential in guiding students' academic performance. Sabol and Pianta (2012) suggested that when children and teachers form close bonds, academic performance in schools improves, as do motivation and relationships amongst peers. Moreover, positive interactions between teachers and students help reduce negative behavior from students while promoting healthy connections for children (Fitzpatrick, Cote-Lussier, Pagani, & Blair,

2013; Spilt, Hughes, Wu, & Kwok, 2012). Mendoza-Denton (2014) noted students may perform if they feel liked and not discriminated against. Fitzpatrick et al. (2013) opined that students search for relationships that resemble the first relationships they ever had with adults: their parents, guardians, and preschool teachers. If positive, students look for the same pattern of these relationships with their teachers who should aspire to mirror them. Furthermore, positive relationships with teachers are believed to curtail negative childhood experiences and help students develop a positive approach toward school and transform their outlook on education and academic performance into positive ones.

Throughout the day, teachers have numerous opportunities to engage, motivate, and help students organize themselves. Analytical discussions, use of new vocabulary words, expressing one's opinions, and giving short motivational speeches are all ways educators can impact students' lives (Jensen, Rueda, Reese, & Garcia, 2013). In order for that to happen, a teacher has to be able to draw on an already existing rapport with a student to reach them and initiate student participation. Students also learn by getting involved, pitching in, and participating in the planning stages of activities. This way they see a model of their teacher's brainstorm ideas and problem solve (Rogoff, 2012). How teachers communicate, collaborate, motivate, inquire, and perceive their student enables students to express their thoughts, opinions, and perspectives and freely ask for guidance. Osborne et al. (2011) concluded high self-esteem is linked to positive relationships, taking part in classroom activities, and having the student receiving regular feedback from its environment, mainly from parents and teachers.

Instructional support is as important to receive as emotional support in the classroom. Carrington et al. (2008) indicated the importance of teachers having the appropriate an up-to-date pedagogical knowledge and skill set to be able to properly engage and sustain a learning

environment for all students. If content is difficult for students, engagement is tough to maintain. A teacher can only keep a student's attention if she or he is interested in the topic, and this is done through personal relationship between teacher and student. One way to do this is to match students with same gender teachers. Although Martin and Marsh (2005) discovered there was no significant difference in how instruction was received from the student's perspective depending on gender. In addition, Carrington et al. (2008) concluded women teachers were better at bringing the best in their students because of their nurturing qualities.

Instructional support is also given well when the instructor is aware of the students' culture and their background and ties the new learning explicitly to students' prior knowledge. Kelley, Siwatu, Tost, and Martinez (2015) argued that teaching must be instructional and culturally responsive. The authors defined this method as incorporating children's culture and real-world experiences in the curriculum content to promote understanding, engagement and participation. Including students' real lives into lessons also promotes motivation and higher order thinking skills (Early et al., 2006). Pupils are then able to complete follow-up activities because they can relate to what was taught.

Gender Differences

Gender differences between boys and girls make learning a different experience for each of them. Because of their biological and societal predispositions, each gender comprehends new concepts differently (Bonomo, 2010; Sax, 2006). In addition to racial inequalities and stereotypes that might hinder academic performances in the classroom, gender may be associated with discrepancies in reading. According to researchers (Halpern et al., 2007; Logan & Johnston, 2009; Twist, Schagen, & Hodgson, 2007), girls consistently outperform boys in literacy. Their biological predisposition appears to affect their learning style, and some boys

have a preconception about reading that stops them from even trying to put in some effort into their work (Heikkila, 2012; Sax, 2006).

Brain variances. First, variances in the brain explain how boys and girls process information differently. Kaufmann and Elbel (2001) reported how differences in the brain of the male and female child also correlated to their intelligence quotient (IQ). The authors explained the anatomy of the brain as such: one part of the male brain, the inferior parietal lobe, is larger and more interested in spatial and mathematical reasoning: skills that boys are stronger in than girls. The area of the brain affecting language, spatial memory, and motor coordination functions differently for both genders. Girls' language capacity develops much quicker than does boys' capacity, while boys are stronger at coordination (Gabriel & Schmitz, 2007; Heikkila, 2012; Sax, 2006); Heikkila (2012) also noted a difference in maturity level, book choice, and leisure reading.

While the areas involved in language and fine motor skills mature about six years earlier in girls than in boys, the areas involved in targeting and spatial memory mature some four years earlier in males than in females (Hamlon, Thatcher, & Cline, 1999). Connor et al. (2011) called it "the active extraction and construction of meaning from all kinds of text" (p. 189) which means that female students can interpret texts they are reading and are able to comprehend what they read because they can recall details. Girls have episodic memories, or long- term memory recording the time and place of events; they also allow females to remember faces and special dates, books, and clothing. On the other hand, males have a semantic, visual spatial memory and can recall major historical facts rather than events or details from a text they have just read. This study will set teacher interviews and inquire about Latino students' interaction with both classroom environment and curriculum.

Central nervous system differences. Boys and girls also have nervous system differences, affecting their learning abilities. Sax (2006) explained that some males are labeled slow learners, or even they are referred by teachers to special education; but in reality, their slow or different learning styles stems from their biological dispositions. Males have a different nervous system than females, which requires them to need louder directions, more break time between tasks, and plenty of movement. Bonomo (2010) also reported strong sensory differences between genders, affecting their learning in the classroom. Males, for instance, are drawn to moving objects and picture-based objects, whereas girls can understand content without pictures. Boys also respond to quick encouragement and are challenged with competition.

Understanding the differences between boys' and girls' learning styles will enable and empower teachers to properly reach their students (Bonomo, 2010). If instructors want boys to participate in lessons, they need to be aware of how boys' respond differently to instruction, content and their surroundings. This characterization goes further than a simple awareness that boys and girls need to be stimulated differently within the classroom environment (Bonomo, 2010; Sax, 2006). This specification will be important to this study because it could be a starting point to finding out if teachers are aware of these gender differences and teaching accordingly.

Interest in reading. Another important factor that differentiates the two genders is their interest level in reading. The drive to read influences reading behaviors and comprehension (Schwabe, McElvany, & Trendtel, 2014). Motivation affects learning and influences test performance, while the opposite results in low motivation and poor test scores (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007; Solheim, 2011). Scholes (2010) added that boys have less motivation to read because they see it as nerdy, uncool, or boring. Solheim (2011) characterized motivation as the reader's belief in his or her own ability to read. Conradi, Jang, and McKenna (2014) defined reading

motivation as the drive or desire to read stemming from the individual's reasons for and attitude towards reading. Both intrinsic (the desire to read for pleasure) and extrinsic (external purposes, i.e., for rewards) motivation must be grasped by the child who is reading. Also, parents' perceptions could be affecting children's reading motivation. Ozturk, Hill, and Yates (2016) found that parents' expectations that girls have higher literacy abilities and anticipate higher success rates than boys could also be one of the reasons girls are motivated to perform academically than boys.

Other researchers have reported similar attitudes from parents having a more positive attitude concerning girls (Baroody & Diamond, 2013; Sackes et al., 2016). Logan and Johnston (2009) stated girls have more positive attitudes toward reading compared to boys, enjoying reading and activities related to it. On the other hand, Morgan and Fuchs (2007), divulged poor readers usually are the ones who are unmotivated to read. If boys do not receive motivation from their parents or continue seeing girls being recipient of that motivation and praise as the preferred readers in the family, they will continue to be reluctant to believe that they, too, can become good readers. Brophy (2013) explained if parents are not paying attention, they might miss the opportunity of seeing their child's potential and encourage a talent; for instance, a parent might miss a boy's talent for reading or writing because he or she was not expected a male student to be good at that in literacy. Furthermore, Carter and Wojkiewicz (2000) found parents were more involved in their daughters' schools than their sons'. Connor et al. (2011) articulated that motivation is necessary for students to complete activities well, and reading achievement is a requirement for school success.

Biliteracy. On another note, Lapayese, Hutching, and Grimalt (2014) defined biliteracy as the ability for a student to express themselves clearly in two languages: their home language

and English. This ability plays an important role in gender learning, especially in immigrant students' academic lives. Lapayese et al. (2014) reported girls from immigrant families are more likely than boys to maintain bilingual proficiency and outperform boys. This could be because girls are typically more conversational than boys in general. Additionally, life in many Latino homes is structured where girls are encouraged to pursue academic activities while boys are expected to do manual work. Santos, Galligan, Palkhe, and Fabes (2013) observed that being hard working and following classroom rules or studying hard are not typical male behaviors observed in the classroom. Culture and masculine stereotyped behaviors, such as aggression and physical toughness, are in direct contrast to how students are expected to respond in their classroom environment (Santos et al., 2013). Students are expected to think and formulate arguments, answer questions, and express their opinions in oral and written form. This research study will focus on observations of boys' behaviors in their classroom environment to determine their focus level while producing work.

Reading Comprehension. Males and females' reading comprehension is different because of the way they each process it (Clinton et al., 2014). Boys are more likely to struggle with reading because they find recalling details about texts they have just read challenging, therefore answering questions is difficult for them. Girls outperform boys in reading assignments because they are able to recall more facts and events. Males struggle with reading comprehension and reading assessments because they forget what they have just read and have to constantly review the text searching for details, which is time consuming and according to their traits, they might find bothersome.

Although boys and girls have different learning styles, memorize differently, and perform differently in the classroom, Limbrick, Wheldall, and Madelaine (2012) concluded boys do not

require different type of instructions than girls. In fact, even if on different levels, all children need instruction in the same five categories in reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Reardon et al. (2012) communicated that reading abilities and decoding skills are required to write. Being able to decode is the ability to know the know the sound of the letters of the word and match them in an orthographic pattern to sound out the word in question (Sparks, Patton, Ganschow, Humbach, & Javorsky, 2008). Once decoding abilities are mastered, reading abilities such as knowledge-based literacy competencies, or background knowledge, vocabulary, and comprehension skills, can be developed in parallel to decoding skills. They are not dependent on each other. Solak and Atlay (2014) reported both genders need and should use the same strategies in reading to understand their texts. And, even if at a different pace, all children can learn and master these skills with effective instruction, apart from children with special circumstances who need additional assistance and more resources to meet a goal set apart for them.

Challenges Faced by ELL in Reading

When a student's first language is not English and he or she must go to school in America and acquire the language, the student is identified as an ELL. Latino ELL male students face many struggles because mastering a new language and all the comprehension skills needed for reading is a difficult task (Tong et al., 2010). First, the student develops his thinking in his native language, then has to attempt to explain it orally in the new unfamiliar language; in this case, English. The problems vary when it comes to literacy instruction for them; ELL students differ from each other, depending on when they entered the country and the length of time they have been in the United States (Reardon et al., 2009). Also, Latino male students speak, understand, and communicate in Spanish on their own level and acquire English

competencies at their own pace (García & Kleifgen, 2010; Gort, 2012; Gutiérrez-Clellen, Calderón, & Weismer, 2004). Latino students who struggle speaking English are often separated from their classmates. Galindo and Fuller (2010) also described some Latino ELL males in their classroom as uninterested, socially incompetent, and disengaged. These characterizations will be important to this research study because it will be a starting point in finding out why students are disengaging themselves from classroom activities. When bilingual students enter school, they should be given formative assessments in both their home language and English for their individual level to be known, then they can receive individualized instruction immediately upon entry in order for them to catch up to non-ELL students (Bunch, 2011).

Mainstream classrooms. A major problem faced by Latino males' students placed in mainstream classroom with English speakers, is the difference between their English proficiency level (Davison, 2006; Leung, 2007). According to Harper and de Jong (2009), teachers are not adequately prepared to teach ELL students (Latino males, or all speakers of second language for that matter) using the proper strategies. The inclusion of Latino boys ELL into mainstream classroom tends to be a one-size-fits-all method, but it does not accommodate students trying to grasp the English language. Furthermore, that immersion method has replaced many bilingual education programs designed to help ELL students master the English language.

In the classroom, according to Crosson and Lessaux (2010), reading fluency and reading comprehension is weaker for Latino males than for those whose primary language is English. Quirk and Beem (2012) vocalized that skilled reading requires both the identification of words and higher order thinking skills (reading comprehension skills) which Latino ELL male students struggle with. Crosson and Lesaux (2010) conveyed how fluency probes given to track students' fluency progress is not an effective assessment tool because an accurate word caller is not

necessarily good at comprehension. Good readers are expected to makes inferences as they read, but it is a difficult process for a Latino ELL student trying to translate their Spanish thoughts into English (Ralph & Crouse, 1997).

To assist with this skill, teachers are encouraged to choose materials that will trigger interest in their pupils. When students are interested in what they read, they are motivated to speak and share their thoughts and opinions about what they just learned, and they may want to explore the topic further. Hudson and Smith (2001) summarized the issues faced by these Latino ELL students as lack of instruction or quantity and quality of instruction, lack of homework, motivation, lack of parent involvement, and English proficiency throughout the course of their previous grades. These explanations mean that through the course of ELL's academic school years, they may lack the proper accompaniment to make it to grade level proficiency.

Teacher training. Ford (2012) expressed the beliefs some teachers have about Latino male ELL students and how their English ineptness could be a roadblock for them. First, the study found some teachers have little patience for students trying to master the new language; then they believe that ELL students should be able to be proficient in English without any accent (Ford, 2012). However, Lippi Green (2011) conveyed that to become fluent in a language, students have to learn to adapt their speech and writing to their context and audience. Teachers have to allow children to be themselves and create an ideal environment to allow Latino males to make mistakes and learn from them; this is how true learning happens. According to Lippi Green (2011), if there is such a thing as appropriateness or speaking proper English, then the Latino ELL student might never feel comfortable enough to express himself. This is one reason why instructors should attend trainings on how to effectively assist Latino ELL students acquiring English.

Haworth et al. (2015) offered suggestions for whole school professional developments to improve teacher efficacy when teaching students. Latino ELL students face intercultural challenges (Gibbs, 2003) and socioeconomic issues (McIntyre, 2011) that teachers must be aware of and know how to handle. Then, educators must become daily motivators equipping their students to move past their insecurities to perform well in the classroom. Haworth et al. (2015) shared if the school's whole staff of feels effective when teaching every student, then individual teachers will feel as competent because they can reach out to colleagues, for instance. If teachers feel adequate and comfortable teaching their students, the delivery of curriculum will be smoother and students will have an easier time connecting to the lessons.

Children whose background are from non-English speaking families, with low socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to enter school with lower levels of English proficiency (Kieffer 2008; Tong et al., 2010). Kieffer (2008) stressed needs of Latino ELL students are not met in the classrooms. He articulated that academic success has to be built with strong educational programs. Latino ELL students, who have short attention spans or believe they cannot learn English (Lippi-Green, 2011), need focused plans targeted to their area of weaknesses. Teachers have to be systematic and explicit in their instruction. Vaughn et al. (2006) recommended that teachers focus on modeling reading strategies, and when and where to apply these strategies.

Teachers need to become facilitators, consistently monitoring and giving feedback to students. In addition, instruction for struggling or Latino ELL students just beginning their journey into English should be around phonics and vocabulary. It also should include all kinds of interactive teaching and activities to engage students and promote participation. However, in all of those plans Siwatu (2011) suggested the teacher be culturally responsive to further

influence students' academic engagement and self-efficacy. Effective teachers of African American and Latino students are proficient in using background cultural knowledge and prior experiences to make learning more relevant (Gay, 2000). When students feel included, they are more likely to engage in the lesson.

Lack of English vocabulary. Latino male ELL students also struggle with reading comprehension because of their lack of vocabulary (Leider, Proctor, Silverman & Harring, 2013). What assists students with understanding texts while reading is word reading skills abilities coupled with verbal language ability and grasping the meaning of the word (Leider et al., 2013). Students have to build their vocabulary to be capable of drawing from it when reading texts throughout their school years. Leider et al. (2013) also disclosed the most important thing bilingual students should be aware of the semantic aspect of words they read. Their Spanish vocabulary is also useful because referring back to it is somehow useful to them when they simply have to translate it back to English.

Two-way immersion as a solution. Marian, Shook, and Schroeder (2013) presented an effective approach for Latino ELL students to have a better academic performance in school. A two-way immersion program where students are instructed in both English and their home language. This program has proved to propel Latino ELL students' academic scores because they are learning the curriculum in both languages and can understand clearer. To assess the effectiveness of this program, the authors explained that for their study they put both minority ELL students and majority language learners through the two-way immersion program and noticed that both groups made academic gains; thus, learning in both languages is beneficial because it provides more opportunities for comprehension. Then, independently, once English fluency is captured, the concepts learned will be easier to explain from the student's perspective.

Behavior Issues

As long as elementary students have been in schools, teachers have dealt with constant disruptions which then accumulates to severe behavior infractions. Referrals are made by teachers when they feel they have exhausted all other interventions in the classrooms, for example, changing seats, take away recess, send to other teachers, refer to counselors, talk to parent, until it becomes essential to write a referral behavior to administrators. Owens (2016) noted boys' and girls' social dispositions prepare their behavior for school differently; while girls are expected to have a more respectful quiet behavior, from a young age, boys have had their buoyant and somewhat disruptive and loud behavior nursed or called out more often and are responsive to that call. Kaufman et al. (2010) also argued males are known for their mostly violent and physical aggressions which result in office referrals, while girls get involved in relational issues that can be resolved in the classroom setting.

Researchers (Ford, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011) explained referrals tend to be disproportionate for minorities, mainly African-American and Latino from their White counterparts and often lead to suspension. Reports noted minority students tend to be mostly refereed for loitering or disrespect, which are behaviors other races exhibited but were seldom referred for (Skiba et al., 2011). Discipline issues have been associated with low socioeconomic status, gender and race stereotyping (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). Also, it should be noted that minority students', namely Latino and African-Americans are stereotyped by educational professionals as students who do not value education because of their culture, which then leads to their low academic underperformance and disruptive behavior (Moreno & Segura Herrera, 2014). This can lead to the assumption that the behavior in question is to not cause disruption rather than any other issue demanding another level of attention. Rueda (2015) noted teacher's

perceptions of students of colors is translated into facial expression, gestures, tone and pitch, body language and disengagement about aggression and this determines the trajectory of students' academic and disciplinary trajectories.

McNaughton, Cowell, and Fogg (2015) addressed Latino students' depressive state in school settings because of family issues, academic stress or inability to properly perform in class. It can be internalized, and symptoms are seen as fatigue, inability, or unwillingness to work in class, and forgetting homework. On the other hand, when externalized, depressive behavior leads to lack of interest in schools, disruptive behavior and aggression. The behavior issues students get written up for and sent to the office for are symptoms of other issues that school personnel need to be trained to identify and treat before punishing students for something they did but have no control over or understand. Peguero, Bundy and Sung Hong (2017) explained that individual or group victimization or bullying affects school bonding and causes students to pull back from school and class.

Results of behavior. The effect of the students being in the office explaining the reasons for their behavior instead of being in classroom often leads to low reading and math performance (Vincent, Tobin, Hawken, & Frank, 2012) because students are not in the classroom. However, some researchers (Skiba et al., 2011), have not confirmed that educational gaps are specifically caused by the behavior issues that must be handled in other places than the classroom. Nevertheless, it could be safe to assume that if students are not present in the classroom, they are unable to receive instruction and in turn show learning growth. Latino students' levels of frustration combined with their teachers' misunderstanding of both their culture and current situation in the classroom lead to behavior that is deemed disruptive and unacceptable in a classroom setting.

Solutions. The main resolution to the discipline problem plaguing schools is that educational establishments must become part of the solution. The United Children's Fund (2007) summarized the role of education as not only preparing children academically, but promoting values of understanding, peace, tolerance, unity, equality, friendship: all values necessary to build nurturing relationships (2007). Children need to be taught social-emotional skills as well to know how to react. Another suggestion is for schools to have school wide positive support behavior and an RTI process to track and monitor student behavior (Kaufman et al., 2010) to ensure that students spend more time in classrooms. The need to include restorative justice in the classroom is to keep students in the classroom to respond to conflict and behavior issues in a better way (Cavanagh et al., 2014) and to have them be present and engaged for their own learning. Pennell (2004) noted restorative justice focuses on peace, restoring and building trust between all stakeholders (student, teacher, parent, administrator). Morrison et al. (2014) suggested that students get involved in school bonding activities, to learn that they are able to count on each other and receive help from each other.

Teachers are to promote an atmosphere of peace and unity in their classroom and between their students. They can attempt to do so by trying to understand students multiculturally to decrease misunderstandings leading to conflicts, misbehavior and unnecessary referrals (Ford, 2012). Furthermore, Morena et al. (2014) argued that students unfamiliar with the American school system might exhibit behavior that could be interpreted as disruptive and in need of severe punitive consequences, when in fact the behaviors expected from teachers need to be explained, taught and will change through practice and time. Macfarlane (2007) identified the need for students to be treated inclusively if they are expected to act within the norms of the school.

Moreno and Segura Herrera (2014) suggested having students undergo a functional behavioral referral (FBA) assessment to determine the reasons behind their misbehavior objectively. The results of the assessments allow educators to make better choices concerning students with behavior issues such as qualifying them for better services such as counseling or special education. Another solution is making sure students' mental health and positive family relationships are in shape. Martinez, DeGarmo, and Eddy (2006) shared support from teachers, parents, and peers leads to higher academic achievement and positive behavior.

When students are not receiving instruction because they are in the office with a discipline referral rather than in the classroom, their education or lack thereof becomes problematic. Researchers have related that most of the time, Latino students' disciplinary behaviors are related to their inability to perform up to the set standards in the classroom. Their behavior needs to be diagnosed then supported with necessary, adequate service in order to adopt a more positive behavior aimed to benefit not harm them.

Review of Methodological Issues

Scholars used literature from other authors to solidify and support their claims. Most research discussed in this literature review was quantitative. Aliaga and Gunderson (2000) noted quantitative research explains a phenomenon through the collection of numerical data and its analysis. Mujis (2004) described the quantitative approach as more objective compared to the qualitative approach, which demands for the researcher to become immersed in the study. Mujis (2004) noted questions raised by research studies are answered precisely with quantitative studies. These past research data compared girls' and boys' reading, math, and science assessments results. The presented literature review (Clayton, 2001; Lapayese et al., 2014; Owens, 2013; Rojas-Lebouef & Slate, 2011) offered evidence that girls are outperforming boys

in literacy assessments across grade levels and by race (Logan & Johnston, 2009; Owens, 2013; Palardy, 2015; Quinn & Cooc, 2015; Reardon & Galindo, 2009; Reardon et al., 2012; Zoda, Slate, & Combs, 2011).

Researchers (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Sibley & Dearing, 2014) found a correlation between parental involvement and successful academic achievement. The literature review has also suggested that Latino students who are ELL struggle with learning the English; and acquire it at varying paces (Lapayese et al., 2014; Rojas-Lebouef & Slate, 2011; Sanchez et al., 2004). The quantitative method is useful because, as Mujis (2004) concluded, numerical data exposes an objective reality by exploring relationships between variables. Numbers sometimes fail to delve deeply into possible reasons for the existence of problems. For instance, the data on girls scoring academically stronger than boys in literacy did lack significant interpretations or explanations from students, teachers, or parents for that discrepancy. For example, the researchers in the preceding studies did not interview school personnel to explain the reasons for Latino students' underperformance compared to any other subgroup. To challenge that weakness, a mixed methods study combining quantitative and a qualitative method would have been a better fit for some of these studies. Creswell (2013) noted that qualitative studies include assumptions and use of interpretive frameworks that guide the study.

Quantitative studies or use of statistical numbers to examine the existence of an issue, support researchers in exposing an existing problem; they can also show different causes that changes the intensity of the problem. However, once the existence of an issue is established, reasons for the problem must be uncovered in order to be solved. Thus, for the studies to be strong and complete, they should have included a qualitative aspect. That qualitative study

would examine in detail all the issues that caused that problem to begin, to continue to exist, to grow.

Synthesis of Research Findings

This literature review presented plausible reasons for Latino students' literacy underperformance in standardized assessments in elementary grades. The lack of parental involvement in children's academic lives affects their grades negatively (Sibley et al., 2014). Some Latino parents' lack of education (Good et al., 2010) prevents them from getting involved with homework because they are not really familiar with the English language (Schofield et al., 2012). The language gap also discourages parents from including themselves at school because they perceive the personnel to be unwelcoming. As a result, they miss opportunities to get involved in their child's education or understand what an academic life looks like (Walker et al., 2011). Finally, whether parents participate or not in schools, messages they communicate to their children about it is crucial. Positive messages can motivate students to like school and perform well (Osborne et al., 2011; Strambler et al., 2013), but if parents do not stress the importance of education, students will not value it either.

Another factor affecting Latino students are inequalities in the classroom. The NCLB Act was voted into law in 2001 to ensure that every child, regardless of their race or background would have a chance at academic success. Teachers are responsible of ensuring all children receive the necessary instruction to meet all standards in assessments (Leboeuf et al., 2011). Nevertheless, minorities are still underperforming in reading (Noguera, 2012; Reese et al., 2014) compared to other races. Hispanics' low socioeconomic status affects their lack of experiences and background knowledge results in their lack of access to experiences to draw from to understand presented content in the classroom (Carrington et al., 2008; Reardon et al., 2009).

This lack of background knowledge also discourages students from participating in class (Hartley & Sutton, 2013). Latino students who struggle with English isolate themselves, sometimes perceiving themselves as outcasts (Lo et al., 2015). When they enter school, having to acquire the English language, they are identified as ELL and they function with low English proficiency (Tong et al., 2010), struggle with poor reading comprehension skills, vocabulary, and limited background knowledge (Guccione, 2011).

Students become stressed when adopting a new culture. This stress, or acculturation, can lead to poor academic performance (Gonzales et al., 2008; Zychinsky et al., 2012). Teachers' misconceptions about students' differences are harmful to their relationships with their students. If students are victims of ethnic or racial judgment from their teachers, they begin to feel inferior (Mendoza-Denton, 2014). Latino who struggle with stereotyping from teachers need the opposite from their instructor, equal treatment so they feel encouraged to learn (Noguera, 2012). Strong relationships with teachers help students become motivated, engaged, and comfortable to participate in class (Osborne et al., 2011; Rogoff, 2012). Another response to inequalities is culturally responsive teaching (Cartledge & Kourea, 2011), where students' culture is included in the curriculum to promote learner engagement. Teachers should participate in workshops to learn how to be more inclusive and respond appropriately to all their students regardless of ethnicity (Hamre et al., 2013; Weinstein et al., 2004). Knowing how to answer students in the classroom in culturally responsive ways maximizes instructive time (Haworth et al., 2013).

The learning patterns of each gender must be recognized for teachers to deliver appropriate instruction to each gender. Boys' and girls' senses react differently (Bonomo, 2010; Sax, 2006); for instance, boys are more interested in spatial and mathematical reasoning, whereas girls' brains are more prepared for verbal and written language abilities (Gabriel & Schmitz,

2007). Boys tend to respond to moving objects, have shorter attention spans than girls, and need quick encouragement (Bonomo, 2010). Therefore, classrooms teachers must be willing to make accommodations to grab and keep boys' attention throughout an entire lesson. Another difference between boys and girls is the motivation to read, which tends to be relatively lower for boys. Poor motivation affects reading behaviors and, in turn academic performance (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007; Solheim, 2011). Boys and girls tend to understand texts differently because of the way they memorize. Males tend not to recall events right away like girls, and as a result do not perform well on assessments. Latino boys and girls do not to receive the same message from their parents'; some parents believe that their sons are more suited for manual work. Yet despite all these differences, both genders need to be taught the same skills in literacy, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency vocabulary, and reading comprehension (Limbrick et al., 2012).

ELL students struggle in the classroom because they acquire English at different paces than other students, depending on their age when they entered the country, their parents' level of education and assistance they receive from parents, teachers, and school programs (Gort, 2012; Reardon et al., 2009). However, Latino male ELL students are often placed in mainstream classrooms with teachers who are not trained to teach students learning English as a second language (Harper & de Jong, 2009), and this one-size-fits-all approach does not help the Latino students succeed in the classroom. Students need to identify the words and understand the meaning of the text to answer comprehension question; these are difficult skills for them to master (Crosson & Lesaux, 2010; Leider et al., 2013). Teachers should be choosing materials to engage students because if students are engaged and the topic is interesting to them, they will be inclined to work. Professional development for educators is one of the best ways for schools to help all ELL students become academically successful (Haworth et al., 2015). Instructional

plans need to be targeted toward Latino ELL students' weaknesses and encompass males' learning styles to ensure that they are learning (Lippi-Green, 2011). Another good strategy for them is a two-way immersion program in which they are learning in both languages at the same time (Marian et al., 2013).

Critique of Previous Research

Latino students have a difficult time as soon as they enter the classroom. They must master a new language and a new culture while trying to understand new concepts being taught in a completely new environment. More often than not, their parents are unable to help because they are also not fluent in English. Educators misunderstand these students. There is a strong necessity for educators to become sensitive to their differences and struggles, therefore, need to use culturally sensitive teaching (Siwatu, 2011), immersing students' background knowledge and past experiences into the curriculum.

However, despite the assistance students might or might not receive from the adults in their lives, or despite their English proficiency, Latino students are stressed by their differences from other students. Researchers have found that Latino ELL students who are treated differently by their teachers isolate themselves and think that their difference is unwelcomed or unwanted (Galindo & Fuller, 2010; Lippi Green, 2011); might even start misbehaving (Moreno & Segura Herrera, 2014). Furthermore, when Latino males' students think of themselves as incompetent, they often exclude themselves from participating in class activities (Galindo & Fuller, 2010), limiting their learning opportunities. Low self-confidence and low self-esteem (Lo et al., 2015) are issues that block learning. Teachers need to be aware of these issues and come up with strategies to reach struggling students.

The literature studied did not mention any specific strategies educators could use with Latino students who are not responsive to instruction in a mainstream classroom. Instructors should be accommodating to such students through small differentiated groups, limit activities to fifteen minutes and have students move a lot. Teachers need to establish good relationships with students based on trust, invite students to share personal experiences that can be used in the classroom, use words of encouragement at all times, and, finally, pay attention to the different learning styles between boys and girls to reach students as well.

Summary

According to the literature, there are multiple issues contributing to Latino males' academic underperformance in their standardized testing and their low academic performance in the classroom: they struggle with learning the English language, need time to adjust themselves to the new culture of the classroom, and must create meaning of what they are learning by using their own experiences. Teachers must be trained to become facilitators, use culturally responsive teaching, include students' own life experiences into the curriculum to engage them. Researchers have shown that students' academic skills suffer because they struggle with lack of parental involvement, teachers' misconceptions about them, and struggle with new concepts in class. Researchers have found that these issues can all be overcome with positive messages from both parents and teachers, involvement in the classroom with personal experiences, and accepting students' own learning rhythm. This research study delved into further research to learn what contributed to Latino students' underperformance on standardized assessments (i.e. how they constructed their meaning, how they responded to their instructor's teaching and how they learned). The next chapter describes the methodology used in this research study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

A qualitative case study was used to examine the experiences of teachers who have taught and continue to instruct Latino students on a daily basis. Case studies are used to examine a specific phenomenon where the situation is not clearly defined and needs to be investigated (Hatch, 2002; Yin, 2003). Teachers were able to share their classroom experiences such as their interactions with students, account for how their students construct their learning, and offered opinions about the issues regarding the academic lives of Latino students. Teachers experiences were as valuable as their students' experiences because they were the behind-the-scene lens of everything going on inside the classroom.

Through interviews and teacher journal completions, I examined teachers' experiences regarding how Latino male students utilize their environment and personal experiences to build their knowledge. Teachers were the right professionals to be able to explain how students use everything in their surroundings. Teachers observed whether students made connections with experiences or kept them separate, and understood if the students learned individually or collectively because these teachers shared the environment with students.

Chapter 3 presented the purpose of the study, articulated reasons for the design of the study, introduced the population, and discussed the sampling and instrumentation methods. The data collection tools utilized in the research study and their analyses are explained. Through participants' statements, a clear view of how the learning process of Latino students occurs in the classroom is laid out. Identification of attributes, limitations of design and validation procedures were also discussed in this chapter. Chapter 3 concluded with a discussion of the expected findings and ethical issues, followed by a chapter summary.

Research Question

Stake (1995) affirmed research questions are a powerful structure for organizing a case study. It becomes the guiding tool for the researcher to begin the research. The purpose of a case study is to uncover how to better understand a relevant phenomenon in which the situation is not clearly defined (Hatch 2002; Yin, 2003). A research question helps frame an issue which does not have any solution yet. The researchers have an awareness of what observations and findings have already been made and but know how to focus on investigating to find plausible answers for the unfounded.

This research study attempted to answer this question: How do some elementary educators in the Southern United Stated describe their experiences teaching reading to underperforming Latino students?

Purpose and Design of the Study

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research was to understand teachers' experiences teachers concerning the underperformance of Latino students in literacy. Latino students in the Southern United States were continually underperforming in literacy (Reese et al., 2014). Reasons for this trend stem from lack or poor English-speaking abilities, absence of parental involvement (Sibley et al., 2014; Walker et al., 2011), difference in learning styles from females (Sax, 1999), racial stereotyping and inequalities (Noguera, 2012) in the classrooms and the labeling of Latino students as ELL (Tong et al., 2010) and the learning issues accompanying that classification.

Research Design

A case study can be used to examine a program, event, activity, process, in which one or more individuals are involved (Stake, 1995). In order to answer the research question, an

intrinsic case study will be used, because it only focuses on one case, helping me delve deeper into a unique phenomenon; rather than an instrumental one which is to study a case to understand something else (Stake, 1995). Furthermore, qualitative research addresses the study of a social or a human problem: data collection is done in a natural setting, in the environment of the participants. It is both inductive and deductive and allows for the establishment of themes; it should include voices of participants, and my reflections leading to the description and interpretation of the problem (Creswell, 2013). Hatch (2002) explained that the researcher has the opportunity and the obligation to appreciate, respect and report the perspective of participants as they are offered. Understanding their experiences allows the researcher to become part of the picture, or the life of the participant and fully comprehend the problem. Participants for this study were chosen on the basis of their experience and knowledge of the research topic, and their familiarity with all the elements of the phenomenon being investigated (Sargeant, 2012).

Interviewing, artifact collection, and direct observations are some of the data researchers collect for a qualitative study (Hatch, 2002; Stake, 1995, 2010; Yin, 2014). Qualitative case studies help us learn about people, groups, and organizations (Yin, 2014). Researchers record objectively what they view on the field, what they are told from participants and these recordings becomes subject to examination, then these interpretations lead to assertions, understandings and modifications of previously made generalizations (Harding, 2013; Hatch, 2002; Stake, 1995). Claims made by researchers are drawn from the context and situations being observed (Stake, 2010). Yin (2014) proposed that case studies researchers are to investigate and observe attitudes of the subjects around them. The author suggested documents, artifacts, and interviews as data necessary for collection, examination and tools researchers should use to draw interpretations and conclusions and write analyses. Stake (1995) noted qualitative researchers use narratives

from their subjects to assist with getting an experimental understanding of the case, as well. It is expected that in the field comments are analyzed and synthesized.

Research Population and Sampling Method

Research Population

The research population comprised of classroom and resource teachers who have classroom teaching experience. They were also required to be teaching Latino students in elementary schools in the Southern United States because this case study was solely focused on understanding Latino students' academic underperformance. This group of teachers had different levels of experience and included both genders. They also taught a variety of subjects.

Sampling Method

The sampling method used was a snowball sampling strategy. I recruited one participant through a recruitment letter (see Appendix A) who was familiar and knowledgeable about the content of the study, and she recommended similar participants from her network (Robins Sadler, Lee, Seung-Hwan Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). IRB approval was required before teachers were invited to participate in the research study. Since this research was on Latino students' learning; children are considered a vulnerable subject population and research on them has to be reviewed by the IRB board (Concordia University, n.d.).

Eight teachers were chosen as a sample for this research project, using the snowball method. These participants were teachers who worked in the Southern United States, in elementary Title I schools, and had taught Latino students. Passive recruitment was used through snowball strategy; therefore, site permission was not necessary nor granted. These instructors could be of any gender, any ethnicity, and any age group. They were only required to have instructed Latino students as classroom or resource teachers. These participants were able

to observe Latino students interact in and with their learning environment, peers, and teacher throughout the day and were able to share their perceptions into how learning is constructed because of that monitoring.

Instrumentation

Instrumentation are the data collection tools used to gather information from my participants. There were three forms of instrumentation for this study. There was an initial or first interview, optional journal entries from some participants, and a secondary interview, or follow-up interview. All eight participants were interviewed both times, however because journal entries were optional, only four participated.

First interview. For this research study, I first interviewed all eight participants who had taught teaching Latino students for at least three years. Hatch (2002) defined qualitative interviews as ways for researchers to understand how participants (teachers in this case) made sense of their world, organized and constructed meaning out of it. The initial interview questions that were asked to each participant can be found in Appendix A. I took notes of participants answers and recorded each interview for easy transcription and summarization.

Journal Entries. The second data collection tool I used for this research study were teacher journals, which Hatch (2002) defined as written records of experiences and reflections. Journal completions were not mandatory for all participants, they had the option to complete a weekly journal recording observations and reflecting on their interactions with students during small group instruction. Then at the end of the week, participants were able to draw conclusions on students' verbal and nonverbal working behaviors, and offered perspective on their experiences. The template for a page of the teacher journal can be found in Appendix B.

Follow-Up Interview. The third data collection strategy was a follow-up interview. This were conducted after the first interview data were analyzed. Follow-up interview questions were amended based on answers I received in the initial first interview: the follow-up interview contained follow through questions from the first interview (Hatch, 2002), and journals entries. All eight teachers were also given the chance to discuss what they noticed during the research study during the second interview.

Data Collection

Three methods of data collection were used for this qualitative case study as described above. They offered detailed opinions and perspectives of teachers about their Latino students were as followed: 1) Initial Interviews, 2) Journal Entries and 3) Follow-up Interviews. Participants were recruited via snowball sampling: one participant was sent a recruitment email (see Appendix D) through personal contact and shared the research study information with other participants who had also taught Latino students. Recruited participants were also welcomed to invite others to participate in the study as well, after Concordia IRB approval.

Interviews

I collected data for my research study first by performing qualitative interviews with each participant. Hatch (2002) offered the notion that interviews explore participants experiences through conversational methods. The initial interview had 10 questions (see Appendix A), each directly related to the purpose of the study and to address the research questions. These interviews were conducted either face-to-face in a public place or by phone, whatever way was more convenient for the participant. Beforehand, when a participant agreed to partake in the research study, he or she had a chance to specify which way they preferred to be interviewed. Five minutes before the scheduled time of each interview, we both were prepared to ensure that

everything was working and the interviewee was comfortable before it began. The interviews were one-on-one, between each participant and me. They lasted 40 minutes to an hour and were audio recorded.

The follow-up interview (third data collection tool), was a supplement of the initial interview. Hatch (2002) opined that such interviews are used to probe into areas mentioned during previous interview interactions. A second interview were also allowed for the member-checking process to take place (Koelsch, 2013), which was where participants were provided with opportunities to verify the accuracy of first interview findings. Hatch (2002) expressed that perspectives are deepened when interviews are used in conjunctions with journals. They were conducted in the same manner as the first one, for the same amount of time (30 to 45 minutes). The follow-up interview contained five questions (see appendix C). Questions for the second interview were altered after analysis of the first interview results.

Journal Entries

Prior to the beginning of the first interview, the journaling process was shared with participants and they were informed that it was optional. The task was for them to complete a journal for one or two Latino students (participant choice on the number of students) during small group or one-on-one instruction and record students verbal and nonverbal behavior along with their reflections. The teachers who chose to complete journal entries had to be comfortable delivering small differentiating group instruction in literacy and viewed the journal as a learning opportunity, not an extra form to fill out quickly to get rid of. Journal entries were focused on the teacher's thoughts and observations. Their reflections offered overall perceptions about the strengths, weaknesses, progress and their own thoughts about their students. At the end of the week, they were asked to complete a summarized reflection for the whole week, and possibly

offer recommendations about how their Latino student can improve in school settings (see Appendix B). Hatch (2002) stated writing things down encourages people to process and reflect on their experiences in different ways.

Identification of Attributes

Attributes in qualitative research are descriptors of criteria intended to measure the topic similar to, but not the same, as variables used to operationalize measurement in quantitative research. It is important to describe these attributes to understand the full complexity of Latino students' academic experiences. These students face unique challenges that their teacher must prepare for in order to address underperformance issues.

Latino students. When children enter America from Spanish-speaking countries, they enter school as ELL. Depending on their age when they enter the country and the length of time they have spent in the United States (Reardon & Galindo, 2009), they are tested, assigned an ELL level, and acquire English at their own pace. Furthermore, according to Sax (2006) and Bonomo (2010) boys and girls learn differently. Boys do not recall events from texts they read as easily as girls, they have shorter attention spans (Hamlon et al., 1999) which make their reading comprehension difficult. They also are not receiving as much motivation from their parents, who for various reasons do not prioritize reading and school (Scholes, 2010).

Teacher preparedness. Teachers should have an awareness of Latino students' culture because cultural knowledge can assist them in reaching students more effectively and engage them in lessons. This can be accomplished through school-wide workshops: teachers should be taught the importance and learn how to interact with their students in culturally responsive ways (Hamre et al., 2013; Haworth et al., 2015). Also, for teachers to reach Latino boys in the classroom, they must engage them by including what they know about students' lives and

personal experiences in the curriculum (Kelley et al., 2015). Understanding factors affecting low academic performance for Latino students such as lack of parental academic assistance, poor academic background (Reardon et al., 2009), and inability to speak English clearly (Galindo & Fuller, 2010; Lo et al., 2015) can enable teachers to make the curriculum relevant to the students, as well; thus, raise academic scores.

Academic performance. Academic performance is defined by the ability by which a student performs academically. In many studies, White students often outperformed Black and Latino students (Noguera, 2012; Reese et al., 2014). Although, all subgroups made some progress, Latino families' socioeconomic status was a major factor allowing Whites to outperform them academically, especially given the fact they begin kindergarten with educational gaps (Reardon et al., 2009). Mendoza-Denton (2014) also attributed teachers' stereotypes expecting minorities not to have the highest performance as having negative effects on Latino students' motivation. Additionally, researchers (Halpern et al., 2007; Logan & Johnston, 2009; Twist et al., 2007) have shown girls consistently outperform boys in literacy.

Reading comprehension. ELL students coming from economically disadvantaged families, may also have had limited schooling which restricts background knowledge. This limitation leads to a struggle with poor vocabulary and reading comprehension (Guccione, 2011). Reading comprehension goes beyond putting sounds together, decoding, and understanding new vocabulary words which are some weaknesses ELL students have. Even demonstrating good fluency, or reading words correctly at a good pace, does not indicate good reading comprehension (Currie et al., 2012; Ferguson, 2003; Reardon et al., 2012; Saeki et al., 2012). It is important for instructors to keep students engaged in the classroom in order to increase their participation and comprehension. Reese et al. (2014) reiterated teachers' responsibility to utilize

students' cultures and integrate them into the curriculum to engage learners and increase their classroom participation, resulting in an increase academic performance.

Language barrier. Language barriers concern mostly Latino students' parents and this impedes them from assisting their children with homework or get involved in school affairs. These are the pupils who suffer academically the most. Additionally, Good et al. (2010) noted the severity of the lack of communication between Latino parents and teachers because of parents' inability to not only speak English but unwillingness to ask for assistance. To have positive feelings and succeed in school, parents should get more involved in their children's academic lives (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Sibley et al., 2014).

Parental involvement at home and school has a positive impact on a child's academic life, (Domina, 2005; Gordon et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2006). While at home, expectations set by parents or guardians about behaviors and attitudes should mirror the ones set at schools. Parents can be visible to school personnel, by including themselves in the school community, by participating in parent conferences, attend programs where students participate, and volunteer in classrooms (Lee et al., 2006). At home, parents should be able to assist with homework. Lee et al., (2006) and Turney et al., (2009) explained teachers' desire for parents to get more involved with school conferences, homework, and discussions of students' academics in general but the language barrier prevents them from doing so. The communication gap is unhealthy and unhelpful for all parties involved.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis is the method of conveying directives, structure, and significance to the mass of collected data (Harding, 2013). When analyzing data, there are recommended steps to follow to fully be able to draw clear and concise conclusions that can adequately answer the

research question (Hatch, 2002). The method of analysis that was utilized in this study was inductive and typological: the data was coded or deconstructed to then be classified into themes.

Interviews

The beginning step of the analysis process was for each recorded interview to be transcribed: it had to become a narrative story easy to enable careful and methodical reading. Then, the information was coded alongside the margins by common threads, or themes surfacing on the transcripts as they were read carefully (see Appendix F). Coding allows for easy reflective these opinions should be summarized with accuracy and validity. For this very reason, it was important to ensure that during the interview, answers, opinions, and perspectives offered by participants were relevant to the research study's objectives for them to be utilized (Harding, 2013).

According to Harding (2013), thoroughly read transcripts guarantee accuracy and completeness of information, identifying the research objective as the next step. For instance, this study's objective was to determine reasons for Latino students' poor performance in literacy according to their teachers. Once relevant materials had been classified into themes, repetitive or unnecessary details were removed. Finally, once these steps had been completed, reflection was drawn and written into brief notes. Once this process was completed for all interviews, the process of summarizing began (Harding, 2013). This process of reducing the transcripts into brief notes or bitable chunks assisted me in identifying essential points and I used results to draw conclusions (Harding, 2013).

The data analysis procedure for the second interviews is very similar to that of the first one. Following the transcription of the recorded materials, the minutes have to be coded and categorized into themes. The second interview also offered corrections and additions to the

previous data collected with the member checking process (Koelsh, 2013). In that process, I shared findings collected during all first interviews with participants. Findings from all participants were summarized into a narrative that was read to participants during the second interview and they assisted me in locating inconsistencies to secure the credibility and validity of the data.

Then an inductive data analysis was used. This type of analysis began with the examination of the specific parts of the data; it specifically looked for patterns within the data through careful discovery and development of the data to then form frames of analysis. Frames of analysis, or domains are guided by the research purpose, question and the kinds of data collected. The data could either be classified into specific words or entire descriptions, whichever frames was easier to make connections to find relationships within the data (Hatch, 2002). These domains were categories I utilized to create semantic relationships to extract the most information out of the data.

Journal Entries

Journal data was collected through the teacher journal entry forms (see Appendix B). To begin analyzing the data gathered from these documents, Hatch (2002) noted the best procedure to enable the researcher to do so was to conduct a typological analysis or grouping data content into similar ideas. A typological analysis is the initial grouping of categories for analysis and classification of categories that are easily recognizable and identifiable. In this type of analysis, the categories or patterns that emerge were evident. They came in forms that could easily be transformed into relationships such as similarities, differences, or cause and effect to name a few. After the dissemination of the journal data into typologies, patterns, relationships and themes emerged in order for generalizations to be made (Hatch, 2002). Finally, I looked through the

journal entries for patterns supporting the various main ideas or themes identified in the interviews. Methods, relationships or themes were often found in answers that participants noted or answered similarly. They were integrated with each other or could also be statements complementing each other.

Limitations of the Research Design

Limitations

Limitations were factors that influenced the research beyond my control. One limitation of my study is the limited number of participants. I had eight participants complete the study. This is a limitation because if a teacher decided not to participate, then number of participants decreased to an even lower number and the risk of not enough information to answer the research question. Another limitation was having a participant backing out of his or her commitment to them filling in the teacher journal for the week because of time constraints or because of being overwhelmed. Four teachers were journaling their experiences teaching Latino students because of level of comfort with small group instruction, and it was not a requirement to participate in the study, therefore losing one teacher could have skewed the results.

Delimitations

According to Simon (2011), delimitations explicates the criteria of participants in the study, geographic section, or professions of the organizations involved in the research study. One of the first delimitations of this research study was its sole focus on Latino students' academic underperformance in the target southern region of the United States. A second delimitation was the fact that both interviews could have been done through phone and might not be as comfortable for participants to share their experiences. In phone conversations, people

might have a tendency to rush through the conversation, and not be as detailed as they could be in phone conversations.

Validation

Both Creswell (2013) and Harding (2013) identified validation strategies as useful approaches for ensuring that all accounts and conclusions given or drawn from data in the research study as accurate. As the researcher, I had to make sure that accounts gathered from my participants are as truthful and valid as possible. Moreover, I had to ensure standards for assessing the quality of my research were available and put in place.

Credibility

Shenton (2004) compared the credibility of a research as "reality," meaning the study and its findings have to be as close to reality, or what is happening in real life as possible. A researcher has to of establish trustworthiness, credibility and dependability in the data presented in the study to ensure its exactness (Creswell, 2013). The author explained that one way to do this is for to for me to have an extended presence in the field and be able to use a triangulation or a mixture of data sources and methods. I needed to guarantee that participants were thorough in their descriptions, probing them for example and referrals to illustrate their interpretations and perspectives (Creswell, 2013).

Dependability

Shenton (2004) defined a dependable research study as one, that if done over in the same manner with the same participants, produced similar results. Stake (1995) noted the necessity of minimizing misrepresentations and misunderstandings and showing a certain amount of effort in data scrutiny by closely examining and validating rather than having repetitions. Member checking was another way to ensure dependability in a study: rough drafts of transcripts and data

analysis summaries were shared with participants for accuracy review and comments on the analysis of the study (Koelsch, 2013; Stake, 1995).

Expected Findings

The question the research study attempted to answer was: How do some elementary educators in the Southern United Stated describe their experiences teaching reading to underperforming Latino students? In this study, I expected the participants to discuss issues Latino students encounter in the classroom, such as them being second language learners, their lack of phonological awareness and phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension. Furthermore, participants would have probably discussed problems such as the students' reluctance or inability to complete their homework and connect that to the failure to make academic gains. Lastly, I believed the lack of parental involvement in their child's academic lives combined with their inability to speak or understand the English language would also come up. The results confirmed the literature by enumerating the same issues addressed by scholars. It also shed some light onto new problems that the literature had not covered.

Ethical Issues

Conflict of Interest Assessment

In this research study, there were no conflicts of interest because I did not hold any position of power. I did not work in a higher position than any of the participants nor did I oversee their work. On the contrary, I am a teacher who works in district close to the ones participants' district. There is no conflicting interest between the districts. I had no interest to gain from this study, my motivation for collecting data was only fueled by scholarly goals.

Researcher's Position

Stake (1995) defined a collector as one who is present in the field, collecting data through which a research question can be answered. In this research study I had the role of a collector. I collected data from participants through interviews answers and classroom journal observations. I analyzed these data, finding common themes, and classifying this information to enable the data to accurately answer the research question. As the collector, I also ensured the privacy of my participants, and established clear guidelines to guarantee that the entire research process was conducted ethically.

Ethical Issues in the Study

When conducting a research study, the US Federal Regulations Board is clear that when dealing with human subjects and research, it is imperative the process be completed as ethically as possible (Concordia University, n.d.). Creswell (2013) enumerated some ethical issues as consent procedures and confidentiality of participants. The Belmont Report (1979) contained ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects when conducting research studies: individuals needed to be treated autonomously, capable, respectably as they shared their opinions. The information relayed to them had to be understandable (Office for Human Research Protections, 1979).

Furthermore, when conducting classroom research, adults should be the ones consenting to participate in the study, and procedures should not include any sensitive information or questions intended to be disturbing to a reasonable person. Participants should not be coerced or pressured into anything that is unusual or uncomfortable for them (Concordia University, n.d.). For instance, informed consent (see Appendix E) had to be signed by participants when conducting a research; before process begins: in the consent form, participants had to be

informed of the study's purpose and understand they had the right to participate or withdraw from the research study. I did not collect any data prior to receiving CU-IRB approval. Passive recruitment was used; therefore, site permission was not necessary or granted.

Chapter 3 Summary

This case study helped answer how educators experience teaching Latino students who are experiencing learning difficulties in literacy. To complete this research study, participants were snowball sampled based on their familiarity and knowledge on the subject matter. Then, data was collected through two sets of interviews and teacher journal entries detailing their experiences working with Latino students who struggle with reading content. Participants were able to offer their opinions, perspectives, and insights into how their students constructed their learning. Afterwards, these data collected were analyzed and validated. Ethically, I held the position of collector, and upheld all ethical guidelines set by the U.S. Federal Regulations Board and the CU–IRB approval to ensure all participants and human were protected during the research process. Passive recruitment was used, therefore district and site approval were not necessary.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

This research study was aimed at analyzing teachers' perspectives about the struggles their Latino students encounter in the classroom. This case study was guided by the following research question: How do some elementary educators in the Southern United Stated describe their experiences teaching reading to underperforming Latino students? As the researcher, I interviewed and collected teacher journal entries conducted while they were teaching as data. In my opinion, it is as important to closely observe our students during the learning process as is the assessments data used to classify students as performing or not. The interviews and journal entries were conducted to get teachers' perspectives and opinions about their Latino students' learning process in the classroom.

The results of the data show that according to teachers, student self-motivation and self-esteem play a major role on how they approach their studies. Teachers also prefer working in small group and unanimously discuss that one-on-one instruction would benefit struggling Latino students the best. The students typically have to go to the three tiers of education, and most of them do demonstrate slow progress. However, those who do not progress have to be referred. Finally, teachers offer school wide strategies they think would benefit Latino students and their families.

In Chapter 4, I describe the participant sample used for the study, justify and explain and details the research methodologies and their analyses. I summarize the findings and present the data collected and their results. Chapter 4 concludes with a discussion of the highlights of the findings, which most of the participants offered as explanation, and suggestions to improve the learning conditions and circumstances of their students.

Description of the Sample

This qualitative research study was designed to get teachers' perspectives on the reading academic performance of Latino students. Therefore, the population had to include teachers who had previously the demographic in question. Eight teachers participated in the study; there was the same amount of veteran and new teachers and they were all current elementary teachers of Latino students teaching in language arts and reading, math and science or all subjects.

A short introduction of each participant is necessary to understand their opinions, thoughts and perspectives about teaching their Latino students. They are dedicated and passionate about their Latino students, well-versed in understanding their students' struggle and strategizing to help these students overcome the academic hurdles and become successful. Participant names have been changed to protect their identity.

Amanda

Amanda is a first-year classroom teacher, who has had experience teaching students as a teacher's assistant, a substitute, and co-teaching with a veteran teacher her previous year. She teaches reading, language arts, social studies, mathematics and science. She is a young African-American, soft-spoken, enthusiastic teacher who believes all her students, regardless of their academic levels or cultural background can succeed.

Felicia

Felicia is a first-year teacher with a student teaching position for half a year before this current year. She is enthusiastic and empathetic. She co-teaches with a reading teacher; she is responsible for the delivery of the math and science curriculum. She often puts herself in her Latino students' shoes' and pretends she does not speak English properly or has not been introduced to the concept to improve her instruction.

Manuel

Manuel is the only male participant. He has been a strict mathematics, science and writing teacher for seven years. As a Black male from Jamaica, he can relate to being a male in a different environment and having to adapt himself to succeed. This advantage allows him to understand the struggles of his Latino students and adequately prepare them to succeed.

Mary

Mary is a 14-year teacher who has instructed several grade levels and all subjects but is now co-teaching and responsible for the mathematics and science components of the curriculum. Her years of expertise have enabled her to take on different roles as a teacher (teacher, mother, counselor) and make her a constant encourager and motivator for her students.

Katherine

Katherine is a veteran teacher of 25 years who has her doctorate in Educational Leadership. Enthralled with student learning, she remained a classroom teacher offering her years of experience as a foundation for learning growth. She currently teaches small groups of non-performing students in reading. She believes that reading is a catalyst for Latino students' performance growth.

Myriam

Myriam is a 12-year teacher who has only worked in the same Title I school for her whole career. The majority of her students are receiving free and reduced lunch and are immigrants. Her tenure at the same school has given her unique perspective on the learning behaviors of all her students as she understands their culture, economic background and parental dynamics.

Gaelle

Gaelle is a 15-year teacher who provides supplemental academic instruction to retainees and low-performing students. Her position and experience have given her ample opportunities to observe the behaviors of Latino students who struggle in literacy. Her small group and one-on-one teaching experiences give her a strong perspective between a student's ability and willingness to learn.

Rebecca

The last participant was Rebecca, a third-year teacher who actively engages her students in hand-on activities because she wholeheartedly believes they are one of the only ways to have the target demographic be engaged and take the most out of their learning. Every participant was pleased to participate in the study, noting that their opinions on their students has never mattered much in research.

Research Methodology and Data Analysis

This intrinsic case study was used to analyze teachers' perspectives on their Latino students' learning behaviors. For several reasons such as language barriers, lack of parental involvement and self-esteem issues, Latino students are prone to struggle academically in reading. The intrinsic case study, focused on only one case to delve deeper into the phenomenon, was aimed at understanding factors impeding learning growth in Latino students. Potential solutions were to also be recommended by participants.

Data collected were interviews, an initial and final one; and optional journal entries participants had to complete while observing their students during small group or one-on-one instruction. The interviews were recorded, then transcribed. An inductive analysis was used to analyze the interviews. According to Hatch (2002), once transcribed, frames of analysis, or

codes guided by the research purpose, question and the kinds of data collected have to be found. Such codes can be Teacher Perception (TP), Teacher Assumptions (TA), Teacher Suggestions and Strategies (TS + ST) to name a few. Once transcribed, I read through the interview narratives once. The second time, I coded the acronyms, which are specific letters or words, along the margins of the transcripts. I also noted the themes along the margins, for easy referral when writing down the analysis. I then underlined the experts that referred to the themes and codes that I would use as excerpts to justify my analysis.

Summary of the Findings

Teachers participated in two interviews and three of them completed journal entries on their students. Most of the participants introduced their Latino students as motivated to learn but lacking English proficiency, prior knowledge and vocabulary. Most of these students need more frontloading, scaffolding, and support from their teachers than the rest of the student population. Participants identified several barriers impeding or slowing their Latino students' progress. Motivation dwindled as students became aware of their lack of progress, and was replaced with a tendency to be unengaged, distracted and having behavior issues. The lack of parental support was also noted as a major barrier for students' academic progress because Hispanic parents are not assisting with homework, speaking the language at home, reading with and to their children or understanding curriculum concepts. Most of the reading teachers illuminated the fact that students in mid-elementary (second through fifth) have minimal issues with decoding and reading the words on a page, but struggle with reading comprehension because of a lack of curiosity, background knowledge, think-aloud strategies and English fluency and comprehension. Teachers offered an array of instructional strategies they use to support Latino students in the classroom.

Presentation of Data and Results

The data I collected were analyzed by following the inductive analysis steps. The results of my analysis are presented next. The analysis information answers the research question and is organized by themes supported by selected codes. These codes were used during my data analysis (Table 1). The research question is answered through a category of themes reflecting the answers of the participants. The themes presented in the data and results include parental involvement, culture in the classroom, issues faced by ELL in mainstream classrooms, reading comprehension and behavior.

Table 1

Themes and Codes

Theme	Code Abbreviation
Parental involvement	**TOE**= Teacher Opinion of General Education; **TA**= Teacher Assumptions; **TS**= Teacher Suggestions; **PI**= Parental Involvement
Culture in the classroom	**TOE**= Teacher Opinion of General Education, **TPS**= Teacher Perception of Student, **TS & ST** = Teacher Suggestions and Strategies
Issues faced by ELL in mainstream classrooms	**TOE**= Teacher Opinion of General Education, **TPS**=Teacher Perception of Student; **TA**= Teacher Assumptions; **TS & ST** = Teacher Suggestions; **LS**= Latino Student; **BK**= Background Knowledge
Reading Comprehension	**TOE**= Teacher Opinion of General Education; **TPS**= Teacher Perception of Student; **TA**= Teacher Assumptions; **TS & ST** = Teacher Suggestions and Strategies; **I=** Interventions; **LS**= Latino Student; **BK**= Background Knowledge
Behavior	**TPS**= Teacher Perception of Student; **TA**= Teacher Assumptions; **TS & ST** = Teacher Suggestions

Note. TOE= Teacher Opinion of General Education, TPS = Teacher Perception of Student; TA = Teacher Assumptions; TS & ST = Teacher Suggestions and Strategies; LS = Latino Student; PI = Parental Involvement; I= Interventions: BK= Background Knowledge

One primary research question guided this study: How do some elementary educators in the Southern United Stated describe their experiences teaching reading to underperforming Latino students? Five themes emerged to support this study's research question: (1) parental involvement; (2) culture in the classroom, (3) issues facing ELL in mainstreams classrooms, (4) reading comprehension and (5) behavior. These are the findings for the two interviews conducted with each participant: the initial and follow-up interview done at the end of the study.

Interview Data Results

Parental Involvement

The teachers expressed the importance of parental involvement in their child's academic lives. Involvement and interest are visible in the classroom because when assisted, students are more confident and proficient in their classroom work. These codes will explain this theme: code TOE (Teacher Opinion of General Education), code TA (Teacher Assumptions), code TS & ST: (Teacher Suggestions and Strategies), and code PI (Parental Involvement).

Code TOE: Teacher Opinion of General Education. During the interviews, teachers revealed the difference between education then and now, explaining that there are more demands on students which means they need more support. It is clear that it is teachers' opinions that parental involvement needs to begin from early childhood for a strong educational career. In his interview, Manuel claimed that some parents do not understand the importance of school, or of childhood development and solely rely on the school to educate their children and therefore fail to read to their children or expose them to varied experiences. Gaelle explained that education guidelines such as suggestions for appropriate reading levels can be explained at parent conferences; however, not all parents attend conferences:

> There are guidelines, the parents are informed at parent conferences that this is the reading level we would like them to be to go to the next grade level. But in (the county where research is conducted), because third grade is considered a mandatory retention grade, very few children are retained in other grades.

Rebecca shared that "if kids saw that their parents saw (education) as a priority, then it would relate to the kids' real life and real situation."

Code TA: Teacher Assumptions. Teachers shared their opinions that Latino students who struggle in school are not prepared because of the lack of assistance at home. Amanda revealed "my Latino students who are doing well are doing well because they have that expectation at home." Gaelle noted, "When the homework is getting done, which involves reading a book, they come to school prepared; I think that is a hindrance when that does not happen […]; when a family works together, they usually succeed." Families might not know or understand what is expected of them when it comes to helping their children succeed and shy away from asking for assistance. Felicia portrayed Latino families as lacking support themselves, but being "too prideful to ask for help, insisting they cannot afford any thing additional, so maybe letting them feel more within our community saying 'it is okay, we are just helping.'"

Code TS & ST: Teacher Suggestions and Strategies. Teachers suggested parents ask for assistance from the school and the teachers to be able to assist their children. Felicia portrayed Latino families as lacking support themselves, but being "too prideful to ask for help, insisting they cannot afford any thing additional, so maybe letting them feel more within our community saying 'it is okay, we are just helping.'" Many Latino families do not speak English, therefore Latino students only speak English at school so Mary proposed "hav(ing) classes to

teach parents English in the evenings, and I feel like if the parents can grasp the English language they could help their children read. They could even learn to read with them in English." Rebecca spoke of the time constraints that plague the classroom environment causing frustrations with teachers:

> And they want the mini lesson to last this long, and the groups to last this long, and they have much of it (lesson) scripted out; sometimes the freedom to do an activity that might go a little longer, but it might not be something that you can formally assess for each child because they all do it as a team, but it is the process, that in the process the kids are asking each other questions and asking you questions. […] Those things take longer than twenty minutes and just the flexibility of having a conversation or a debate got a project like the student read the books, and they are coming up with their own test. Well that can take a long time. That could go on for two weeks with the students doing that one project. So, I would say that some teachers do not want to go there because they are afraid that if somebody comes in they are not going to know exactly how it aligns to the standards when it is part of the process.

Code PI: Parental Involvement. Teachers stressed the benefits of parental involvement in the children's' lives. They shared that regardless of parents' own abilities, a voice in the child's life goes a long way. In her interview, Gaelle shared:

> Dad does not speak English. But having a conference with the dad, I was really surprised at what the dad was able to say about his student. He knew that his student had low comprehension. And I asked through the translator: 'how does he even know if he does not even read English?' He could tell, just based off of asking his son a question, he could tell that his son was hesitating.

When parents have an off-hands approach to their child at home, it creates serious learning gaps. Katherine expressed that a major barrier to Latino students' learning progress is the fact "they are not reading enough books at home. They are in school, they go home, they play. It is a lack of reading at home."

Culture in the Classroom

Latino students know and feel that they are different from the moment they step in the classroom. They speak, understand and think in Spanish, while their classroom environment is conducted in English. They have to maneuver learning a new language, culture while their culture is dominant at home. The codes TOE (Teacher Opinion of General Education), TPS (Teacher Perception of Student), TS & ST (Teacher Suggestions and Strategies) and BK (Background Knowledge) were used to address this theme.

Code TOE: Teacher Opinion of General Education. Teachers understand that their Latino students have to familiarize themselves with not only the curriculum and standards being taught in individual grade levels, but also with the English language. Acquiring English while trying to perform academic tasks is a daunting task and students need as much support as they need. In her interview, Myriam compared education then and now, observing that education now is too fast paced and does not give children enough time to think:

> Schools in general are going to have to go back to the way things used to be, where children are able to have the time to read and to think about it. Everything is so fast paced, we do not teach them to calm down anymore. They need time to reflect on things they read, and we want answers and we want them fast. We are treating these kids like computers. Give them time to read, to reflect upon it. Give them time to draw pictures and illustrate. We are into this common core and asking these questions, and everything

seems to want to be so high in learning base, that's not how everybody learns. And what you tend to do is frustrate them.

Rebecca also talked about the importance of giving students time to process and think about the content they are learning: "Sometimes things take longer than twenty minutes and just the flexibility of having a conversation or a debate or a project like the students read the books, and they are coming up with their own test. Well that can take, to do it right, that can take a long time. That could go for two weeks with the students doing that one project."

Code TPS: Teacher Perception of Student. Teachers expressed that when Latino students are familiar with the English language, meaning speak it at home with their parents and are fluent readers in English, they have an easier time mastering the standards. However, students who struggle with English have a more difficult and slower time to understand concepts. They are often below grade level and some teachers expressed that Latino students are aware of their difference struggle with self-esteem and confidence. Amanda explained that when she "thinks about students who are very low, and I cannot really push them to succeed, I think it is like a self-esteem thing, barrier. They tend to shy away from, I do not know, learning, and they do not have a lot of self-confidence. […] It has a lot to do with self-esteem and confidence. And also, when they are low, they get left behind in classroom instruction." Myriam spoke of another side of her students: anger.

> They are angry and I do not know have this student who, he lacks the motivation to do anything. You give him the work. You even partner him up with a peer that is stronger and can help him while I can move on and help someone else when I have given him his instruction. I tell him what to do. Then he becomes angered because I then move on to someone else, or I ask him to get back on ask. Stop the talking, stop the walking. He

gets up to get the broom instead of doing something. I mean, I have an anger issues with him right now because he becomes disinterested in writing. If I ask him to write, or I ask him to read, once that task is asked of him it then becomes a problem if I am not standing over him.

Code TS & ST: Teacher Suggestions and Strategies. Teachers offered a variety of strategies aimed at reducing the culture shock and difference of their students. In her interview, Amanda actually suggested encouraging students by showing them "that knowing a second language is actually an advantage." In her classroom, she uses Spanish as a building block for learning rather than completely ignoring it. "Spanish is fast, you know? And just making them aware of that, teaching them to vary the speed of how they read." Felicia shared how the use of cognates is beneficial to her students because it allows the Latino students to use their Spanish background to understand:

So, for instance, we just went to a professional development recently, and one of the things I did not even think about is bringing cognates into your lessons a little bit more. Bringing in sentence frames into your lessons. So, I have started, especially with my ELL students, saying, 'Hey.' I write the sentence frame for them, and I have them fill out the last piece I'm missing, if they're very low. Depending on where they are. And I am seeing more of an improvement with them. 'Okay, they understand what I asked because they could answer the question. Now, let me see if I can - after a few weeks of doing this - get them to do the whole sentence. Give them a shortened version.' So, bringing cognates into it, I've started doing that more. I didn't realize how much that could be such a big thing. My kids are like, 'Oh yeah, that means this in Spanish or this in Creole.' And

> I was like, 'Holy moly, that sounds just like the English word! Who would have thought?'

Amanda also explained how she assist with reading comprehension.

> So, I am always 'what is this, what is that, what is this, what is that, how do you say it in Spanish' because I have a lot of Spanish speakers in my class, some which are not ELL. I am always saying, just to check, how do you say this in Spanish, how do you say that in Spanish. So, the classroom is a very multilingual classroom, the students speak Spanish to each other. And then also, I speak creole and I also have Brazilian students, there are sometimes, that we just stop and talk about the concepts and we use the vocabulary word in all languages in the classroom. I am always bringing in real life examples, especially when it comes to math and story problems. they are not successful in the story problems because there is a lot of concepts that you know, culturally, they are not exposed to.

Issues Faced by ELL Students in the Mainstream Classroom

ELL students are put in a unique situation when they are placed in mainstream classroom with native English speakers. The standards and concepts are being taught in English, and regardless of their English proficiency, Latino students are expected to perform on grade level in this new language. Their struggles will be depicted through these following codes: Code TOE (Teacher Opinion of General Education), Code TPS (Teacher Perception of Student), Code TA (Teacher Assumptions), Code TS & ST (Teacher Suggestions and Strategies), Code LS (Latino Students), and Code BK (Background Knowledge).

Code TOE: Teacher Opinion of General Education. When introduced to new concepts, students need some background knowledge or previous experiences they can reference too; for the most part because they come from different countries, speak Spanish and often, come

from impoverished families, they have minimal background knowledge. Rebecca explained: "it affects their comprehension because if they don't understand the phrases or the vocabulary inside the text, or a word that describe a feeling in the text, then that affects them in multiple ways." She also demonstrated explains how the lack of vocabulary affects their assessment scores:

> Let us say the character was feeling excited, but there's one of these vocabulary words that means the same thing as excited as one of the answers, but they have never heard that word before. Then even the kids who do understand the story very well, who are Hispanic, who have a Hispanic background, they still can't understand the vocabulary so they know it, but they can't show that knowledge on an assessment.

Code TPS: Teacher Perception of Students. What teachers perceive about their students is important for the teacher to be able to accommodate the curriculum to their students' needs. When talking about Latino students, Gaelle offered: "I found the Hispanic students very mentally willing to learn but I do find them lagging behind academically with their reading. That is a generalization, but for the most part, not performing as well as I believe they can." Rebecca shared:

> I think most Latino students do not enjoy reading generally as much as female students do. They enjoy things that are more visual, more practical and more relevant to their lives so I think that for schools, they could implement some kind of reading that is more tailored to the interest of the students and their passions, because a lot of times they are very passionate about certain things and topics that they like.

Code TA: Teacher Assumptions. Assumptions are made every day, before the school year starts, as the school year progresses, as students are learning and not learning. Their behavior is under assumption everyday by their teachers which use those to accommodate and

tailor their instruction. Manuel shared that if Latino students are readers, then the lack of vocabulary and background knowledge might be the reason why Latino students struggle:

> I have found that vocabulary development is very important. Now obviously that's assuming that the student doesn't have a reading disability or something. So, let's say this is just an ELL Latino male who is able to decode words, has fluency, and basically has the foundational skills for reading. Right? So, let's say they have those skills, then in my opinion just vocabulary development and also extensive background knowledge often helps these particular students succeed. Like a lot of them again, if you're explaining or introducing a particular concept or content, they may not catch on as well as others because they've never been exposed to it. So that's why we're building that background knowledge thoroughly is very important and helps tremendously.

Felicia shared her thoughts about what could be impacting her Latino students' ability to create sentences: "I think the trouble with the Hispanic, Latino ones is they do not know how to articulate what the question might be. So, if I ask them, 'What shape is this?' and I want them to say 'triangle,' they may not be able to say, 'That is a triangle.' Where I could say, 'That is a' and they just say, 'triangle.' And that's what I really want them to know."

Code TS & ST: Teacher Suggestions and Strategies. Amanda offered some great suggestions as to how to assist ELL students with reading:

> I tell the ELL students, or the Latino students. Spanish is a very fast-paced language. It is like rapid fire. It goes like a million miles per hour. English is different. You need to slow down. You need to enunciate. You need to take your time. You cannot speak the same way you speak in Spanish in English. And that is not a bad thing. It is just a different language. So just that constant awareness. […] Even in our curriculum, at the

> very beginning of the school year, they had a story, and it was by a Spanish author. And every couple of sentences or phrases, there would be like a Spanish sentence or phrase. And all the Latino kids felt so empowered because they knew what it said, they could read it, and they'd laugh at me if I tried to read it, because I have a terrible Spanish accent. And just to try to help them see like, "Guys, it's not a bad thing." And so, they really, really like that story. I think one of the biggest mistakes that I've seen - this is my opinion - that I have seen educators do is just like kick Spanish out of the classroom, when you can actually use their mother language to help them with English. But I've found that reading with those students one-on-one, teaching them translation of Spanish to English, empowering them more, practicing with them, pairing them with students that are higher and are native English speakers. And then also, pairing them with Latino students who are higher and who are not native speakers, obviously. Because then ... sometimes even in class, I'll ask them, "How do you say this in Spanish?" And they'll help me, and I'm like, "Okay. very interesting." And so, try to form connections between the Spanish word and the English word.

Most of the participants mentioned building background knowledge and vocabulary as one of the key strategies to assist ELL Latino students. Amanda shared how she assists her ELL Latino students in the classroom:

> I rely a lot on visuals. I rely on cognates. I am constantly teaching that. We are constantly doing things like breaking down syllables or basically, I do not know if you are familiar with the ELL learning matrix that has a lot of these different strategies. I do a lot of teacher think-aloud and a lot of Socratic discussions and a lot of turn and chat. I bring in realia, like actual objects from home so sometimes they can have a visual. I do a

> lot of pointing and questioning. […] I do a lot of whole class instructions, they break off into pairs a lot and then try to match the ELLs with students that are higher and students that are willing to help them and I go through the classroom, I check their understanding.

Code LS: Latino Student. Latino students who are in mainstream classrooms have to adjust themselves to fully function in an environment and language they might not be comfortable in. They have to be closely supported in order to develop in that environment. Amanda spoke of the importance of teachers not shying away from the use of Spanish in the classroom but using it as bridge to improve reading in English.

> A couple of months ago, we had some Scholastic books that were delivered. And there was a book that I found that I really liked. It was this Spanish story that had the English translation. And maybe more materials like that, maybe more curriculum that kind of shows them the word-to-word translation and correspondence. Maybe more dictionaries, Spanish-to-English dictionaries. I know ... like for example, we play a lot of vocabulary videos. And the videos come with subtitles. And I find my ELL students and Latino students, they read the subtitles a lot. Even in our math curriculum, if I play a math video, there is ... you could turn on the subtitles, and you'll see them just following the words. So just more language exposure, more opportunities to practice and to read. And I know I have said it a whole bunch of times, but just to understand that speaking a different language is not a disadvantage.

Code BK: Background Knowledge. In a child's academic life, parental involvement not only involves assisting with homework and reading but exposing children to the world outside for them to expand their experience repertoire. According to teachers, Latino parents are

stretched thin with work schedules or simply do not know the importance of sharing the outside world with their children. As a result, Myriam explained:

> I noticed that even if they get on a bus, a school bus, many of them have not seen a highway. Many of them have not seen tunnels and bridges and canals and beyond to the concrete walls that they live in. And their buildings and their community, there's no background schema for them to relate to anything. So, when you ask them of their experience, they have none to give you. So therefore, if we provide the opportunity for them to leave the community, they probably will never have that chance to see a dolphin come out of the water, and to look at a monkey live, and to see what it actually smells like, which isn't quite pleasant to begin with. However, they should be able to have the opportunity. Providing we live in Florida, there's no excuse to why these kids cannot be exposed to certain things.

Katherine went one step further and compared Latino students without any background knowledge to those who have experiences they can draw from. "The lack of background knowledge and life experiences affect Latino students tremendously because when you compare them with the English students who go to the park, their parents talk to them, they travel, they go to Disney. Their experiences are so much well than the average Latino student." Amanda emphasized that the lack of background knowledge

> affects their reading comprehension so much. The part where you said just giving them more exposure and making sure theta they are constantly independently reading is a big, big part of it. There is so much that they do not know. So even when you said they might be able to read, they do not know what they are reading, that is a very, very big factor. […] When it comes to my instruction, I assume they know nothing so that I can,

you know, always teaching to everything, absolutely every concept, every vocabulary word.

Felicia noted:

> not having background knowledge is huge. This is really my first year with a lot more Latino than I had before. And coming into some of these kids, I ask them a simple question of, "Who knows 101 Dalmatians?", so that I can relate it to a story we were having. Half of my kids didn't know that show, or that movie, or that book. And you're like, "That's been around forever!" So, having that lack of knowledge to help piece something else together, it almost impedes their learning because then they don't have something to click it to. Some remedies I think should happen is if they're coming in at a younger age, we're letting them be more kids. We're not shoving down that they need to know how to add by the time they go to first grade, and they need to know this by the time they go to second.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the most important component of education. Being able to read and decode is an important step but understanding what one reads insures that students internalize the content they are learning. For Latino students, understanding what they are reading is difficult because they often think in Spanish, their first language and in mainstream class, they are expected to grasp concepts in English rapidly. The following codes will illustrate this theme: Code TOE (Teacher Opinion of General Education), Code TPS (Teacher Perception of Student, Code TA (Teacher Assumptions), Code TS Teacher Suggestions, Code I: (Interventions), Code LS (Latino Student), and Code BK (Background Knowledge).

Code TOE: Teacher Opinion of General Education. Reading is one of the most important subjects because the ability to read insures success in all other subjects and in life. All students need to be able to read and understand what they are reading. It is possible for Latino students to struggle with comprehension because they began thinking in Spanish and have to adjust thinking in English. Amanda shared how she assists her students with reading: "So I do a lot of teacher read-aloud at the end of the day. I am always reading them stories and u am never assuming they know what we are talking about. She also proposed setting goals for students:

> students tend to perform better when they have a goal they are trying to accomplish. Like in my school, again going back to IStation, as a class, we come up with a classroom goal. And each month, when they get tested, if we meet that goal- whatever the teacher sets that goal to be- we get to move our… it is a little rocket and it is in the hallway. And it is displayed for the whole school to see. And all the kids get excited to see if our class as a whole is advancing.

Code TPS: Teacher Perception of Student. Students need their teacher's guidance at all times but according to participants, Latino students need more than support but thrive on constant feedback. Rebecca recounted episode where her Latino students were in need of that instant feedback:

> I find that, a lot of times, especially for a Hispanic student and with the comprehension, read it. They answer the question the way they think it is supposed to be answered, but they do not get that immediate- did I get it wrong? – feedback. Even in a group, when they do the work with me, it is very centered on… we work with a passage. I work from the I-ready book. Take a passage. We read it the first two days, we look at the vocabulary. We look at what do we do before reading, during reading, and after reading?

> Then, sometimes even just the first day, depending on the how long the story is, because the stories are pretty short in there but there are questions in the book after that, that are pinpointed to certain standards. The kids read the questions. They underline what they are looking for in the question. They go back, straight into the text, with me looking at them, right there in the group. Okay, what are you going to do? We read the question. What is the question asking you? What do we need to do? Go into the text and find it. They go right into the text. They underline their evidence. They do their process elimination. Then, right then, we share answers. We debate our answer, and we see how you did. I think that instant feedback, and that is only like fifteen minutes. […] If comprehension is the issue, they need to know how they are doing. Because a lot of times, they think they are doing awesome and they are not because they can read it really fast and tell you what it is about, but even if we do just one question, one question is much better than four questions, but we have gone through the entire process, start to finish, or how do I find this answer. It is not about just finding the right answer, but what is the process, explain how you got the answer, then I can figure out what is going on in your mind, so that I can help you get better. If there is none of that dialogue, then that does not happen. Throughout the week, when you see these behaviors, it is so nice to be abler, on Friday to meet with kids one-on-one, to give them that little pep talk, tell them how great they are doing, to tell them how much they have improved.

Code TA: Teacher Assumptions. As a reading intervention or additional resource to teaching, teachers have been instructed to have their students' complete minutes on computer programs such as IReady, IStation and ReadingPlus, based on the students' individual reading

levels. Teachers have their students complete the designed amount of minutes set and assume that it is helping students progress. Manuel explains:

> One is called the IReady program. Another one is ReadingPlus reading programs where the kids take an initial assessment and they kind of… depending on how they do, the program is tailored to start where the child's needs. For instance, it could be a fourth grader but they are reading at a second-grade level, so the program starts at second grade and builds up on those skills.

Amanda also shared the ambiguous ways computer programs are used to qualify students as needing more interventions: "they get tested at the beginning of the school year, I believe. I am not exactly sure. This is my first year. But we know that they are ELL students, and also, based off, like my school does IStation. Just based off of different scores and how they compare to the rest of the classroom."

Code TS & ST: Teacher Suggestions and Strategies. When teaching the curriculum, teachers have to ensure all of their students are receiving and understanding the instruction. With Latino students, and their challenges with using a second language as the primary one, teachers have to use specific strategies to engage their Latino students and ensure learning does take place. Participants mentioned not having enough time for hands-on-activities but it being the most engaging strategy to spark and keep interest. Mary noted that "students love hands-on activities. They feel more involved in their education." Rebecca detailed several hands-on activities she uses in the classroom and the impact it has on her students:

> For my lower group, every day I do a play. The play is really nice because number one, it helps with fluency. They all have a copy of the script, and everybody has a part, whether it is a bigger part of a small part. They pretty much can read the entire script

> even if… They can read all the parts, not just their own, because they are so used to practicing it every ten minutes or fifteen minutes during the day. They learn how to read with expression. Also, you know how a lot of times when kids are reading a story, they have a very hard time following the dialogue? Knowing when the character is switching and who is talking? That helps them. seeing it played out amongst each other helps them better character dialogue, which I found a lot of Hispanic students, because of the lack of language at home, do have a harder time. They are reading very fast, and they do not know which character is talking and when. That helps with that. Then, so even sight words, because the kids are looking at the script, and it's like the on grade-level text, even a little… Martina, the beautiful Cockroach. It might even be a fourth-grade level text so they had a lot of vocabulary presented within the book, so we go over the vocabulary. What could this word mean? They are so familiar with it, because they are practicing it all the time, that they can learn how to use those context cues. Also, for the kids who like drama and acting and also being funny, that gives them an outlet to do that in a classroom in a positive way […} and also getting in front of people and doing something also helps them with their self-confidence, which is another thing that I see in Hispanic males.

Katherine summarized the benefits of hands-on-activities on students.

> I have hands-on activities where I give them a high-scope word and they look at the word, they spell the word, say it and they can draw something to illustrated the word or they can write about the word. They can use a sentence using the word. It is excellent. They are motivated, they are excited and their recall process is very effective when it

comes to that word because they see the word, they draw a picture about the word and they use a sentence using the word. It is very effective.

Teachers also mentioned the importance of using cognates to assist Latino students with learning new words. Amanda mentioned:

> I think a lot of my Latino students have this pre-conceived notion 'I speak Spanish, so I cannot understand it (English), or 'I cannot learn' or 'it is too hard.' But at least with the older students, I have tried my hardest this year to teach them a lot about cognates, you know and just show them actually, like I said earlier, if you know Spanish, you actually have an advantage because there is a lot of words that they may not sound like English words, but you would be surprised, they are very related to English words. So just bringing that awareness to them.

Rebecca spoke of informing students of their academic performance to empower them and keep them motivated to do their work:

> For writing I got a good system, where they were writing Monday through Thursday, and then half of the writing time on Thursday, I would start writing conferences. I have the checklist, and they come to me with pieces. They go through the checklist with me, and we see what they are doing and what they are not doing, and they make goals, but to get through all the kids, it takes time. Sometimes, I even have to go into the Friday and the Monday. Same with doing Fountas and Pinnell (reading level assessments) tests take time, so that is a one-on-onetime that you can also always explain concepts into there. Having the Monday through Thursday instruction, and then having the Friday just for conferences, I find is very impactful, because they know exactly what they need to work on and exactly the steps that they can… when they can do to improve. Also, I use a

> tracker in my class, where they track their portfolios and how they are improving, with colors, with red, with yellow, and with green, for how they are doing overall, if there needs development for approaching, proficient, or exemplary (the grading system). That is more of the assessment is broken down by standards, but it is also how they did on a whole for assessment.

Code I: Interventions. It is important to identify when Latino students are struggling because it allows the teacher to put interventions in place to assist the students and them the appropriate assistance. Every participant explained that there are 3 tiers of intervention/ instruction called the RTI process. Manuel defined it well: "also, what is considered RTI, response to intervention, if it is identified that this child needs reading, is having reading difficulties then one specific program that is phonic based." In general education, all students begin on Tier one which is general on grade level instruction supplemented by small group instruction and student-level guided reading to assist students. If progress is not visible, students are entered into Tier 2 where they receive additional assistance on top of their regular small group and guided reading intervention. Tier 3 is Gaelle explained: "at the tier 3 level, we meet with the school-based team, called SBT, and we determine if there needs to be a next step. That next step is child study Team, CST. If we need to take, to refer that student to the psychologist to see if there is a learning disability or some sort of different learning style." Manuel detailed the RTI process:

> So, if a child is identified to be in the lowest twenty-fifth percentile in reading for example, they are not always referred to the school-based team but let us say they are. If they are referred and they are formally placed on supplemental intervention, and intensive interventions, eight weeks of both though. Let us say that they are put on

> supplemental intervention where they receive eight weeks of an evidence-based reading intervention like Foundations, and then after those eight weeks the teams meet and decides 'Okay Bobby has not much progress. Okay, let's go ahead and add more time'. So instead of thirty minutes of receiving this intervention, he will now receive intervention for forty-five minutes for an additional eight weeks. Or, we could change the intervention and try a different intervention for that additional eight weeks. Which those additional eight weeks would be considered intensive interventions. So, after they have completed supplemental intervention, and intensive interventions, that is sixteen weeks total, and the child is still not closing the gap, then at that point is usually when the child is referred to a school psychologist for a psychoeducational evaluation to parse out whether or not there may be other things that are going on that may be contributing to the reason why Bobby is not making the progress at the rate which we expected.

Gaelle stressed the same point: "Many students do not need special education, they do not have a disability, they just need constant tier two or tier three intervention, just to support their reading."

Code LS: Latino Student. Latino students have a unique challenge when it comes to reading comprehension because of their dual language, Spanish and English. They speak and think in Spanish, yet are expected to also read, think and reason grade level content in conning, college. Rebecca noted that Latino students need to be taught how to question: "It is really in the questioning, teaching them how to question before, how to question during, how to ask questions after, because it is all in the comprehension. For a lot of students that, a lot of parents I have talked to, they can read very well. They can decode very well but, they cannot comprehend."

Code BK: Background Knowledge. As mentioned before, background knowledge is the critical component in increasing reading comprehension for Latino students. Background

knowledge is minimal with Latino students; therefore, teachers explained the use of specific strategies to increase background knowledge. Katherine noted the importance of building

> Background knowledge before you even start (the lesson). You basically have to build a knowledge, that background knowledge so that can relate to how they are reading otherwise you do not make sense to them. You can do it with stories, you can do it with a movie. You can do it with students, let us say talking about their knowledge. If you are doing, something for example with the zoo, they have not been to the zoo, they are ignorant of the zoo, they have not been to a zoo, okay. So, you can have a student who really has been to the zoo talk about it. You can show a movie. So basically, have other students relate their knowledge about the subject to them for you or for you to talk about it with pictures, with movies, with telling them about it.

Amanda shared:

> I rely a lot on visuals. I am always sharing PowerPoints, I am always showing them pictures, always. So, the part where you said having dialogue about background knowledge, that is just very, very, very huge because I have found that ELL have very, very limited vocabulary.

Manuel illustrated what the lack of background knowledge looks and feels like for a student:

> If you do not really know or have a point of reference from which you are learning something new, it is a lot more difficult to understand it. For example, we are in writing, kids have to write a prompt about their day at zoo and… oh I am sorry. They have to write something about a camel. if you had a camel and you are in the desert, how would you blah, blah, blah, blah? Well, for this particular group I would teach it. Most of them have never been to the zoo before and most of them did not know what a camel was. So,

> it is hard to write about something you do not know or you do not have information on, you understand? […] If I know I have a writing assignment on a particular topic let us say a camel, yes, I would read a book. I would do a teacher read-aloud on camels and on the desert. Watch a short film on things. We could have print-outs that are put in the class that talk about certain things that help build up that background knowledge.

Behavior

Behavior has been a factor in classrooms because they are filled with children who are active and love to play. However, with rules and the necessity to learn, children are expected to put their playful side aside and focus, learn and walk. For some, this expectation comes easy; for others, it is more difficult. The following codes: code TPS (teacher perception of student), code TA (Teacher assumptions) and code TS+ ST (teacher suggestions and strategies) will explain the behavior theme.

Code TPS: Teacher Perception of Student. How a teacher perceives the behavior and misbehavior of their students sets the tone for the classroom routine. Students misbehave for various reasons and it is important for teachers to understand those behavior dynamics to remedy the problems. Amanda noted that "most of the time in the classroom, they get lost or start to misbehave. The instruction no matter the pace is too fast for students."

When asked if she thought whether students playing during instructional time was because they were not able to learn or not wanting to learn, Myriam answered:

> I think it could be a little bit of both, however you still need to draw that child back, and have them understand that there is a time and a place for everything. And that they will have consequences for their behaviors and there will be time allowed for them to be able to play and socialize. This is why I am a firm believer of giving them recess time and

being firm in instruction in your class management, because if they think they can takeover, they will. So, you need to be firm, and if you promise them recess, you should give them recess. And if they have done something wrong to have their recess away as a repercussion, they should not go to recess. And you should not punish the whole group for one individual, they need to understand that.

Code TA: Teacher Assumptions. What a teacher believes about a student behavior will predict how they respond to that behavior. Teachers understand that the behavior of their students stem from certain causes and therefore, plan to change that behavior accordingly. Katherine noted: "when they disconnect, they do not really understand what you are talking about and it just, they misbehave. They actually misbehave. It is a sign, really, that they are not really getting what you are talking about so they are misbehaving to bring attention to them." Manuel noted the relationship between the increase of success and motivation: "I would say the more they have success the more they wanted to do more, but I think that is with anyone."

Felicia described certain behaviors she noticed from her students during classroom instruction and she shared her assumptions:

> Watching what they are doing. Saying 'hey, you are getting up fifteen times because you know you do not know and just do not know what to do? Are you getting up fifteen times because you get ants in your pants?' What is going on? So, I am definitely… My eyes are a little open since seeing that. So, I definitely had to stop more. 'Awesome. You good? You want me to explain anything? Want me to go back?' If they said no, a lot of the time I would still do it anyways, I would be 'okay, let us recap. The whole class.' And when I mean the whole class needs recap, the whole class probably needs recap. I kind of let that kid feel, 'oh do not rip me.' Billy Joel over here, he was struggling too. Was not just

you. Kind of let them have that sense of security like 'oh gosh, it was not just me. Phew!' but also the pulling those kids aside later in the day or the next day, say, 'here, were you struggling with this assignment? Do you want help? We got this teacher in here now. You got me now. You want help and I am seeing them more like 'hey, hey I need you. Okay.' So, that is definitely, so they are opening up.

Code TS + ST: Teacher Suggestions and Strategies. Teachers have to know how to handle Latino students' behavior issues to enable them to be successful. Manuel mentioned the importance of sympathizing with students.

I was already cognizant of the unique challenges of Latino students being myself from Jamaica, and I guess you consider me African-American. I am already cognizant of challenges but I guess it did make me focus in more making sure they were receiving the appropriate attention and accommodation if necessary and not kind of getting overwhelmed with the daily or the unique pressures of having to get certain things done.

Mary shared how putting one of her unfocused students into a position where he could help another student transformed the behavior.

We got a non-speaking student from Honduras. This particular student I was studying was awesome at translating from Spanish to English and he was extremely focused at that point, but in my journal writing about the lessons that I teach him, he is completely unfocused, but the thing is we are in a small group. It is the boy from Honduras who is bilingual. He was so happy, I think to be able to help someone who does not speak English and understand the concepts that I was teaching in small group, that he kind of surprised me. He was extremely helpful and I tried to give him a lot of compliments. […] Being helpful kind of settled him down and boosted his confidence.

Journal Entries Results

Journal entries collections were also collected from four teachers who chose to participate in that optional portion of the study. During the first interview, participants were given the choice to complete weekly journals on their students. In them, participants recorded their observations done on Latino students' during small group instruction. Participants noted the verbal and non-verbal cues of their students. They also provided summaries of strengths and weaknesses observed as well as suggestions for improvement.

Reading Comprehension

Code LS: Latino Students: Felicia spoke of Latino students seeking constant approval to keep their learning move on during all of her small group instruction.

> So, one of the things I noticed, especially when you asked me to do the journals, I was watching all of my Latino males and I was watching the females too, I was interested to see their nonverbal cues. When I was reading this I was, 'The nonverbal cues. They don't give those. What is she talking about?' And then I was, 'Okay, let's watch them read, and let's see what they do.' And you see some of them fishing with their paper, or it is just the simple their scratching their face as they are reading. I was, 'Okay. This kid might be a little frustrated about reading this right now.' I just thought, 'Oh, maybe they're just playing. They want something to touch. Or maybe they just...' Who knows? They had an itch on their... I didn't think, 'Maybe, this kid could be struggling.' I've noticed more... My Latino males... I have some that are surprisingly high, and some that are where we expect them to be. And the ones that are surprisingly high, they almost look for that approval. They want you to say, 'Yeah, you got it. Yeah, you're good. Yep, that's how you say that word', where the other ones, they want that too.

Rebecca conducted her journal entries for three consecutive days on a Latino student while teaching specific reading standards during small group instruction. These standards were to find the lesson and moral of the story, explaining character traits and cause and effect. She noted:

> The student recalled the most important parts of the story, explained character feelings but was unable to describe the lesson. He demonstrated difficulty answering beyond text questions and confused the order of cause and effect. The student answered quickly without giving himself time to process the question and has trouble understanding the objective of the day. He repeatedly asked me to repeat the questions and requested for assistance when writing his answer and spelling words. He screamed out 'oh, I think I know the answer' and 'I can answer that one.' Towards the end of the activity he was talking to other students in the group about the characters in the story or about the daily schedule while periodically returning to his work and asking me to clarify the lesson.

Behavior

Code TPS: Teacher Perception of Students. For her journal entry, Mary observed a Latino student in small group setting during an opinion writing lesson for three days. She noted that that during a review of the lesson, the student expressed not remembering. The teacher stated that he acted like he did not remember. The student continues to "yell out: 'I do not get it', while tilting his chair and looking around the room. He yelled out to other students across the room 'Stop!' and was very distracted. Every day the student is distracted and unorganized. He is consistently unengaged even during small group instructions. He is reluctant to complete the writing assignments and screams out many times that he needs help. The teacher noted:

He was more focused during one-on-one assistance. He is distracted, unfocused, yells out in class and needs attention. Other students' behaviors are a constant interest for him. He is constantly asking to drink water and to use the bathroom and yells out to other kids.

In her journal entry, Gaelle observed two students of different ability levels during small group instruction and noted two different behaviors. Both are retainees however, the first one she observed was able to follow along and answer most comprehension questions. She writes:

> Student is active, motivated and engaged. He is eager to answer questions and has to be encouraged to slow down and think about the answers. Once he does, his answers are good. He seeks approval after each answer given, his confidence gets a boost and he is on to the next task. However, he tends to lose focus when he is not understanding reading.

On the other hand, the second Latino student struggled with reading and has a difficult time staying still, engaged and motivated. He was constantly dropping his pencils to pick it up or asking to use the restroom. As noted:

> This is a boy who has serious reading deficiencies, and unfortunately does not focus enough to learn the lessons I am teaching. He refused to even try. He kicked his feet on the floor, passed over words he does not know, looked around while getting up, leaning on the desk and asked to go to the bathroom multiple times.

In her journal entry, Rebecca explained her student's learning behavior during her reading small group instruction:

> Student looked back into the story when asked a question, wrote answers down very quickly and was eager to finish. He became fixated on the activity. He consistently raised his hand to answer questions, while his eye contact and attention wandered. I had

> to tap the table near his book for him to refocus his attention five times. I also had to prompt him to slow down but his eyes kept wandering which he responded to. He was unable to focus for more than three or four minutes at a time; even on medication, student was only focused while he was talking or directly interacting with me. Even during conversations with me, he missed information and had trouble focusing. He zoned out while the other students were sharing their thoughts. His lack of stamina was consistently a problem that broke down the learning process for him. He seemed to go in and out like a channel losing connection.

Myriam conducted her journal entries observing a Latino student during a math lesson and a reading lesson, one each day. She noted in the math lesson:

> The student can do the work and completed six out of 10 problems and was able to follow directions given. The student is more engaged in math lessons than in reading lessons because he has an easier understanding of math.

The second day during her small group instruction,

> The student did listen as the story book was read to him and was able to deliver verbal responses but was unbelievably opposed to reading a word from the book and was asked to remain on task and focus on his work three or four times as he put his hands on his shoulder. The student was engaged as the story was read to him and while choral reading with his peers however his independent work was minimal. He chose not to respond to the question or write his own creative myth as requested by me.

Code TS+ST: Teacher Suggestions and Strategies. In her journal entry, Mary observed her student be completely disengaged, distracted, yelling out and constantly distracting others and made the following suggestions:

> Student would benefit from being placed on a behavior plan, and because he is more responsive to one-on-one instruction, should be placed with an academic tutor. A timer should be set for fifteen minutes to see if students can write for fifteen minutes quietly and perhaps the time limit can be increased weekly. Mom needs to question pediatrician about medication to focus better.

Reflecting back on her observations and her journal entries, Gaelle mentioned the difference in parental involvement between the two boys:

> One of the boys who is performing well, he does his reading homework at home every night. You can tell, his fluency improves, he knows the words I taught him the day before. When I ask him, he said that his dad reads to him, but 'sometimes he reads it wrong, so I correct him. It is not because parents do not speak English, that is not an excuse to not help your kid, you can have him sit and read to you. Allowing him to read with a peer who is stronger in reading could help him become a better reader. The other boy does not do his homework, which is in my class reading at home. You can tell by the fact that he cannot read or remember the story (the same story every day) or answer the same questions I asked him before. Sometimes he forgets his book in his bookbag, he does not even come prepared for class. I think he sees my class as recess because it is away from his classroom. Teaching him to take his time and showing him how to go back to the text to find evidence could be a confidence boost.

Rebecca journaled on a Latino student who was eager to participate and answer question but struggled with staying focused when Rebecca's attention focused on other students. She suggested:

> Offering more visual representation and graphic organizers with steps to demonstrate the learning process. Also, explaining the standard and objective and giving the student something to do independently at his seat and have him come back to the group when he is done with activity and explain what he did. Giving him more of a leadership role in the group by having him explain the skill using some kind of visual we come up with together.

For the Latino student who was unwilling to read by himself and write his answers after receiving his small group instruction, Myriam suggested to "have him draw first then write sentences with assistance for him to be able to deliver some work." Myriam also recommended using the student strengths in math to have him work with a partner and giving him more challenging work. "This could boost his confidence, which could, hopefully, translate into reading."

Interview and Journal Entries Findings

After looking at both journals and interviews and doing an extensive inductive analysis, I then combined the two data collection strategies and found that when Latino students began their work, they wanted to succeed and were eager to learn from their teacher. They were enthusiastic about answering questions and performing their work. When Latino students become aware of their struggles or inability to complete a task, they disconnect and disengage, and start acting out or trying to run away from the task at hand.

Findings for both data collection strategies also complemented each other because observations from journal entries illustrated participants' interview explanations. For instance, when teachers spoke of Latino students being disengaged and losing interest if they struggled

with comprehension, the journal entries noted the type of student behaviors (student talking to others, asking to use the restroom repeatedly) that described the student being distracted. Findings for both data collection strategies demonstrated that the lack of parental involvement in a Latino student's academic life both at home and at school were indicators of students' motivation and willingness to learn. When a student was completing work with parents, the student was more eager to work harder and to keep trying when they could not complete a task. However, students who did not receive much parental support at home did not complete their homework or were read to, were unprepared for class and struggled with basic instruction and tasks. They were distracted during instruction even when the teacher was close to them. Teachers stressed the necessity for them to be aware of this distraction, in order to slow down the pace of the lesson and give students closer attention to get them unstuck.

I looked across these data and found that the lack of vocabulary and background knowledge was problematic for Latino students. Not understanding certain words or commands and being unable to relate to the content being taught frustrated students. As a strategy, teachers noted the importance of being mindful and constantly addressing the lack of vocabulary, background knowledge and including students' culture consistently through every lesson to keep academic engagement and motivation. In addition, findings about struggling students needing specific small group instruction, guidance assistance was consistent between interviews and journals.

Finally, when put in a leadership or assistant position, both interview and journal data showed that Latino students with strong academic and behavior deficiencies became motivated and were able to assist others and complete all of their work, even if it had to be modified to fit their level. Both data collection demonstrated that Latino students were constantly seeking their

teacher's approval in every task in order to continue. They were not confident and looked to their teacher for confirmation that they were succeeding even if the student had made significant progress.

Chapter 4 Summary

Chapter 4 introduced each of the study's participants and detailed the context in which each of these teachers come in contact with Latino students, and thus were selected to share their perspectives on the academic lives of their Latino students. The selection of case study and type of analysis used to dissect the data were explained as well. The findings were summarized, and also detailed with data excerpts to explain illustrate the participants' opinions, arguments and ideas. In Chapter 4, I presented the study data and results for the reader to visualize the data collection and analysis process.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this final chapter is to summarize and discuss the results drawn from the data I obtained from my participants. Key findings will be reviewed in relation to the literature presented in Chapter 2 and the constructivism theory, the conceptual framework that grounded the study. Limitations will be explored. Implications the results will have on practice, policy, and theory will also be explored and recommendations for further research will be offered.

Summary of the Results

The research study was guided by the following question: "How do some elementary educators in the Southern United Stated describe their experiences teaching reading to underperforming Latino students?" The question was created to investigate Latino students' academic performance through the lens of their teachers. The interview and journal entries provided detailed explanations and offered various strategies to assist the Latino student population. The teachers were adamant about Latino students' desire to learn although they lacked basic foundational skills, had poor vocabulary and had limited background knowledge. Teachers reported that when students have limited skills, they struggle to make connections and understand what they are reading, which in turn translates into poor assessment scores. To remedy these issues, teachers have to constantly front load content, use videos and photographs to introduce new concepts, train students in using questioning skills and create hands-on-activities to engage students. Based on their experiences, teachers shared when Latino students realize they are struggling, or not making any academic progress, they disengage, become unfocused and start misbehaving. It is of the utmost importance for teachers to have a heightened awareness of their Latino students to address weaknesses as they arise to prevent them from falling behind.

Discussion of the Results

To the research question, "How do some elementary educators in the Southern United Stated describe their experiences teaching reading to underperforming Latino students?" teachers were more than willing to share their thoughts and opinions about their students. To defend the parental involvement theme, teachers noted the importance of parental involvement as a catalyst to their children success. When parents are concerned and active in their child's life, that child is much more interested in applying him or herself in school and put effort in when something is hard. On the other hand, when parents are unable to involve themselves in their students' academic lives, children were reluctant to put in much effort in the classroom.

Teachers also linked the lack of motivation and level of distraction to poor reading comprehension. Latino students, especially those who come from low socio-economic backgrounds, do not have a large bank of life experiences they can draw from. This lack of background knowledge and minimal vocabulary results in Latino students having low comprehension. Latino students must learn everything at the same time: acquire background knowledge through the use of realia and videos and understand new content about what they are learning. This requires a level of diligence and focus from both students and teachers. Students must be willing to understand that their being and speaking another language is not a disadvantage and not let the fact that they must learn everything in a new language discourage them. Teachers also explained the utilization of computer reading programs such as Iready, Istation and Reading Plus tailored to students' instructional level can be motivators because the content is not too difficult for Latino students. These results support the theme of culture in the classroom and reading comprehension.

To encourage and support their students, teachers need to incorporate their students' Latino culture in the classroom. For instance, some teachers shared they ask students translate words from Spanish to English and vice versa. This inclusion can often be perceived as a confidence boost because the teacher is letting students know that they are important and can teach something. Another strategy to boost reading comprehension, behavior, background knowledge is the use of hands-on activities in the classroom. These activities are engaging because students are creating their own knowledge. Latino students are more responsive when they think they are playing a game or can use their different learning styles. These findings support the constructivism theory and illustrate the theme of issues faced by ELL students in classrooms and academic settings.

To support the theme of behavior, findings from interviews and journal entries revealed that Latino students tend to disengage, talk with their peers, repeatedly ask to step away from their instruction (to use the restroom or drink water) and misbehave when they are unable to complete their work, need more attention from their teacher who is attending to other student or simply frustrated with their struggle with the content. As mentioned before, to address this problem, teachers suggested teaching more small groups or one-on-one whenever possible. Teachers also mentioned giving students more processing time to construct their knowledge rather than expecting them to spit out answer quickly.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

In addressing reading comprehension skills, participants shared the fact that Latino students often struggle with the understanding what they read rather than reading the words themselves. Researchers attested to the fact that ELL (in the case of this research study) Latino males not only need to identify words but understand the meaning of the text to answer

comprehension question and commented on the difficulty of mastering these skills (Crosson & Lesaux 2010; Leider et al., 2013). Grasparil and Hernandez (2015) enumerated the skills needed for proficiency in reading comprehension involves development of both word-level and text level comprehension skills: word-level skills encompass automatic decoding, vocabulary word sufficiency to know the meaning of the decoded words. Text-level skills involve recognizing sequence of events, identifying main idea and details, making inferences and generalizations, and drawing conclusions.

To achieve these goals, teachers noted that using engaging materials and activities make learning easier and much more fun for students. Palmgren, Pihalto, Soini, and Pietarinen (2017) demonstrated how school engagement is associated with positive goal setting and high achievement rates and suggested teachers create positive relationships with students for that positive outlook on school to be formed. Lippi-Green (2011) demonstrated instructional plans should be written to target ELL Latino students' academic weaknesses and encompass males learning styles to ensure that they are learning (Lippi-Green, 2011). Although teachers did not mention boys learning styles, they did speak of including a variety of fun activities to keep students motivated and engaged.

This research study was based on the theory of constructivism which is defined by one's ability to construct their own meaning by connecting background knowledge and experiences to content being taught (Liepolt & Wilson, 2004). In regard to the constructivism theory, teachers shared how personal connections are difficult to make because of the lack of background knowledge and vocabulary. The lack of vocabulary is problematic for Latino male students (Leider et al., 2013) because reading comprehension becomes difficult. As a remedy, teachers explained having to overcompensate for this lack by including a multitude of photographs,

videos and realia in their classroom instruction. In their interviews, teachers noted that the use of technology (videos and pictures) could help engage students. Izadpanah and Alavi (2016) conferred that technology integration motivates ELL students and develops their English proficiency.

Ralph and Crouse (1997) demonstrated when good readers have to make inferences as they read, they therefore need experiences to refer back. This process is difficult for Latino students having to translate their Spanish thoughts into English (Ralph & Crouse, 1997) while acquiring other necessary skills. Students who come from different cultures have an additional burden of acquiring adaptive skills to be able to perform in the mainstream classroom and process their learning (Raines, Gordon, Harell-Williams, Diliberto, & Parke, 2017). Teachers need to choose materials that will trigger interest in their students. Typically, teachers who were successful teaching Latino students by having them increase their performance were using culturally responsive teaching methods that connected the curriculum to students' lives. When students are interested in what they read, they become more motivated to learn and participate in their own learning (Kelley et.al., 2015).

The constructivist approach also requires teachers to observe the way students construct their learning through activities and peer conversations, and then, necessary, help students learn (Al Mahmud, 2013). Al Mahmud (2013) identified a constructivist teacher as one who becomes a facilitator in the classroom and assists students as they grasp their knowledge. Liepolt and Wilson (2004) explained teachers should encourage students to use active techniques such as experiments and real-world problem solving to deepen their understanding. The teacher then ensures that students are referring back to their backgrounds and experiences and connecting it to the present content to make sense of the new material.

Relationships are also a very important factor in acquiring and processing knowledge. Learners are more successful when they learn together (Jolliffe, 2015). Latino students should be encouraged to participate in cooperative learning groups with their peers to learn from each other's experiences. Buchs, Filippou, Pulfrey, and Volpe (2017) demonstrated that cooperative learning opportunities shifts the focus off a teacher-centered classroom to a student-centered one where students learn how to take ownership and be responsible for their own learning. Teachers expressed the desire to have students work in groups more on hands-on learning activities. Another factor of encouraging students to learn with their peers is that they tend to be peer-influenced: if students are engaging in their learning then most likely, others reluctant to do so at first will follow that example. This process is named peer academic reputation and explained by North and Ryan (2018).

In their interviews and teacher journal entries, teachers spoke of Latino students lacking self-esteem and becoming distracted when they struggled with the content being taught. Galindo and Fuller (2010) and Lo et al. (2015) described the loss of confidence once Latino students viewed themselves as incompetent, and unable to complete their work and even confirmed that these issues block learning. That low performance can also lead to disengagement and misbehavior in the classroom (Moreno & Segura Herrera, 2014). Teachers need to be aware of these issues and come up with strategies to reach struggling students. Teachers expressed how including students' culture in classroom help student gain academic confidence and take risks in school. This is a method Rivet and Krajcik (2008) advocated for: teachers utilizing culturally familiar tasks in the classroom and becoming facilitators as they assist students in recognizing themselves in the texts they read. This technique also promotes student motivation, engagement and interest throughout the learning process (Rivet & Krajcik, 2008). Castro-Olivo, Preciado,

Le, Marciante, and Garcia (2018) stressed the effectiveness of culturally-rich interventions and that of the combination of culturally centered curriculum combined with social-emotional learning. Teachers did not allude much to social emotional learning of their students, but Latino students would be prime candidates to learn how to cooperate with others, how to respect themselves and others, how to set goals and achieve them for example.

Limitations

Limitations are considered factors affecting my study beyond my control or as Simon (2013) described are potential weaknesses in a study. This study was limited to participants opinions and perceptions obtained through interview answers and journal entries. For example, if I had been able to conduct classroom observations, my perspective as a researcher could have been included in the study to strengthen it. Another weakness of the study was the limited number of participants (eight), the fact that half of them were mathematics/science teachers and possibly did not offer as wide a bank of strategies to target reading comprehension as literacy teachers would.

Study Design

The data I collected in this research study was limited to predetermined interview questions and journal entries requiring specific criteria to be observed by participants. Only the perspectives, experiences and opinions of those participating and the students they have taught were presented. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews and phone interviews. Participants were given the journal entry templates during the initial interview and returned them at the second interview meeting.

Participants

The study participants consisted of only eight elementary teachers instructing in Title I schools. Passive recruitment was used therefore site permission was not necessary. The opinions and perspectives shared were based on Latino students taught in such school settings which are primarily located in low socio-economic areas. If interviewed, teachers in affluent neighborhoods could have shared their viewpoints and I could have determined whether Latino students differ academically depending on where they are schooled. Also, the participants only had elementary teaching experience, therefore the study was limited to understanding the learning process of Latino students in elementary school.

Research Method

The research study was limited to a qualitative case study. A case study is aimed at examining a specific process or program in which the participants were involved in (Stake, 1995). In my case study, I wanted to examine reasons contributing to Latino students' underperformance in literacy in elementary schools. Yin (2014) confirmed qualitative case studies help us learn about people, groups and organizations. This case was focused on examining a targeted group: Latino students learning patterns and behaviors in particular elementary schools from the perspective of their teachers. The results are not able to be generalized to all elementary Latino students.

Data Collection

The data collection was limited to only interviews and journal entries. The teachers participating in this research were the only ones who contributed to the data presented in this study. Another limitation was the amount spent interviewing teachers. Each interview was scheduled for forty-five minutes to an hour but lasted only thirty-minutes. While some

participants shared vivid details and offered examples about their experiences, others even when prompted only answered the asked questions without much description. The opinions and perspectives about Latino students learning behaviors are limited to the experiences of participants' who were interviewed. Another limitation was time constraints. The data collection process lasted two months, and I conducted my typological analysis (Hatch, 2002; Harding, 2013) in a one-month period.

Implication of the Results for Practice, Policy, Theory

This section will present the implications of the results in regard to practice, policy and theory. I will explain the implications of this study in relation to practice and policy in connection to the literature. Then, I will relate the results to the conceptual framework: constructivism.

Practice

One gap found in the practice is the tendency to attribute Latino students' underperformance in literacy to only one factor. Findings demonstrate that many factors affect these Latino students: limited background knowledge and poor vocabulary and this is a roadblock to the construction of their learning because connections are difficult to make. Grasparil and Hernandez (2015) noted the importance for teachers to understand that poor reading comprehension for Latino students is due to several factors such as word level skills but also text level skills to be able to perform rigorous tasks. Latino students need to be taught with the same systematic reading instruction approach as native speakers are to be successful. Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2014) stressed the importance of having Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) strategies in place for instruction to be delivered to Latino ELL students successfully. These strategies should be school-wide and must include lesson

preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice and application, lesson delivery, and review and assessment. Any additional instruction should be provided but as complement to the one received on grade level (Grasparil & Hernandez, 2015). For example, all students need to understand the structure of the text they are reading to be able to make connections. Liu and Wang (2015) added successful readers need to be able to extract and construct text meaning by bringing in their own experience and understanding.

Literature did not offer any specific strategies that can help teachers assist Latino students who are struggling in reading and teachers noted having to find strategies on their own to assist their students although teachers understand the need to be prepared and delivering meaningful lessons (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2014). Teachers expressed their concerns about Latino students needing much more exposure to concepts being taught. They proposed using photographs, movies, videos and vivid descriptions to offer students some background to ease the construction of learning by making connections. The teachers are using their experiences and those of their colleagues to make decisions to make their Latino students' learning experience easier and more pleasurable. Izadpanah and Alavi (2016) illustrated how the use of computers and technology in the classroom helps students acquire English. However, there was no mention of what programs or tools that could benefit Latino students which would have been useful to teachers.

Policy

Policy makers have created some guidelines as to how teachers are to instruct ELL students and matrices with strategies to enrich students' academic experiences. However, in these guidelines, there are no distinctions between nationalities, languages or student. In their interviews, the teachers were adamant about each of their students being different and having different learning styles. Liu and Wang (2015) noted guidelines set in place to assist Latino

students are often not adequate; what is necessary is the small group instruction and cooperative learning opportunities that have not yet been embedded into policy.

Kieffer (2008) expressed how Latino students' needs are not met in the classroom because teachers do not have access to educational programs tailored to those specific needs. Children whose background are from non-English speaking families, with low socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to enter school with lower levels of English proficiency (Kieffer 2008; Tong et al., 2010) and thus need more instruction from their teachers. Howard (2017) illustrated how teachers need to cover all five components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and reading comprehension) in an engaging and cooperative learning setting in order to successfully develop strong Latino readers. Teachers need to attend continuous trainings to keep their classroom as engaging and motivating as possible (Howard, 2017). Policy makers should also think about having teachers attend training to learn how to effectively collaborate with support staff assisting ELL students (Babinski, Amendum, Knoteck, Sanchez, & Malone, 2018). Latino students require additional services from resource staff: to be effective homeroom and resource teachers need to understand each of their instructional roles and be a complement to each other.

Theory

In relation to the conceptual framework of this study, constructivism theory, the teachers make meaning from their experiences. The conclusions they draw to modify their instruction stems from their daily experiences teaching their Latino students. When teachers are instructing, they have to reflect on the most and least effective strategies that reach each of their Latino students and then adjust and adapt accordingly. Teaching is a profession where constructing meaning from personal and shared experiences is continuous: it allows for growth. As teachers

grow and become more knowledgeable about the skills and abilities of their students, they become better at providing opportunities for their students to learn (Babinski et al., 2018) and create their own meaning.

Constructivism suggests that classrooms become student centered (Olivares, 2002), where learners attempt to understand how the world and the things in it work by drawing from their own bank of experiences to add to what they already know. Teachers have to ensure their Latino students have a strong knowledge and experience bank to refer back to. Making connections with self, text and the world is essential to grasping new concepts. Latino students often arrive at school with limited experiences which makes making connections and creating meaning daunting. Teachers have to provide a plateau of experiences as they teach to help students create meaning from what they are learning. Howard (2017) demonstrated that along with scaffolding and exposing Latino students to new concepts, classrooms should include discussions, high quality and high expectations from students, all of which promote Latino students' motivation and interest which translates into increases in performance.

Teachers did not mention receiving any professional development offering assistance in instructing Latino students. They instead talked about having to learn as they teach experimenting to know what works and does not. McKown and Weinstein (2008) noted professional development about teaching Latino students are scarce when they should be offered in abundance. When teachers lack the necessary skills to interact with students on their cultural level, the focus tends to be on behavior issues and not on instructional ones (Weinstein et al., 2004). Teachers probably believe they are unable to request specific professional development, but they should become more vocal about their needs in order for them to create deeper meaning. Makarova and Birman (2016) stressed the importance of teachers knowing how to assist students

familiarize themselves with a new culture. Teachers need to be well-versed in understanding how to include Latino students' culture into all aspects of school. Babinski et al. (2018) recommended effective continuous professional development be provided to support instructional practices as they change with time.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research could be expanded in several areas. Understanding Latino students learning process as a whole would be a good beginning point. An area of improvement could be for research to be conducted in both Title I elementary schools (located in lower socio-economic cities) and schools located in affluent neighborhoods would be able to further pinpoint if economic status plays a factor in academic underperformance. Comparisons between the two school systems would help determine whether Latino students from more comfortable neighborhoods struggle with minimal background knowledge, limited foundation knowledge, and level of engagement. A replication of the study may also be benefited by adding more data collection strategies such us classroom observations where the researcher can observe behaviors and add opinion to those of their teachers. Interviewing teachers in lower elementary would also aid at understanding how Latino students begin their schoolyears and what teachers do early on to complement for the skills.

It would also be beneficial to conduct research on the impact specific professional development would have on teachers' delivery of instruction on Latino students. Workshops on developing background knowledge, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and reading comprehension should be numerous to enable teachers to enlarge their bank of strategies. Issues affecting Latino students should not only be known to teachers, but also to district personnel, who can provide solutions to problems faced by teachers in the classroom.

Additional recommendations to enrich this research study would be to interview a more diverse group of participants including parents and students. Each of these demographics could offer more insight on the learning process of Latino students. If interviewed, students would have been able to reveal how they feel and understand the instruction they receive, what they struggle with, and what prevents them from achieving mastery in the classroom. Parents would be able to explain their children's behaviors at home concerning school, homework and reading.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results of this research study and discussed the findings in relation to the literature. The teacher participants explained their Latino students struggle with making connections and understanding content because they do not have sufficient experiences to relate to. Teachers noted having to create more engaging lessons to have their students become more comfortable in their academic settings. This dissertation addressed a gap in the teaching practice, embedding the framework of constructivism to understand teachers' perspectives. This qualitative case study was aimed at pinpointing and understanding factors contributing to Latino students' academic underperformance or as can be defined now struggles in the classroom in detail.

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Appendix A: Initial Interview

Interview questions:

1. How long you have worked as a teacher, and give a brief description of your duties at the school where you work?
2. How are your experiences teaching non-performing Latino students different than teaching any other male students?
3. What criteria does the Reading Intervention Team to classify Latino students as non-performing in reading and determine their specific needs?
4. What intervention activities, strategies, and lessons are used to address these reading deficiencies?
5. What alternative steps are taken when these students do not respond to the reading intervention?
6. How and when is the next Action Plan implemented to address the insufficient response of these students to intervention?
7. Based on prior experiences, what are the most effective intervention strategies to meet the needs of struggling non-performing/English Language Learners (ELL) Latino students?
8. What do you see as challenges and barriers that impede the learning progress of Hispanic males in reading?
9. What school-wide strategies you think could be implemented to assist Latino students who continually underperform on state-wide assessments?
10. What strategies you know have worked but have not yet been implemented with these students?

Appendix B: Journal Entry

Teachers' Experience With Latino Academic Underperformance:

A Qualitative Case Study

Journal Entry

Teacher will fill a journal page for each student during and after differentiation instruction (each day, for a week).

Teacher:_____Book/Skill:_____ Student:_____

Day_____ Date and time of Activity _____

Objective of Activity or Standard _____

Observation Items	Comments/ Verbal Cues	Nonverbal Clues
1. **SUBJECT MATTER CONTENT** (Does student show understanding of subject matter; demonstrates breadth and depth of mastery?)		
2. **ORGANIZATION** (Does student demonstrate understanding of objectives? Can student complete task with little or no help after having seen the activity modeled? Can student summarize main point of activity?)		
3. **RAPPORT** (Does student remain interested and engaged during the whole activity? Is student responding to activity with enthusiasm)		
4. **ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS** (Does student respond to interventions? How many interventions does the student need? What are specific clues demonstrating students need assistance ?)		

Strengths observed: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Weaknesses observed: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Suggestions for improvement:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix C: Second Interview

1. Tell me about your hands-on activities in the classroom.
2. If you could implement one-on-one instruction in your daily routine, describe how your classroom instruction routine would change and how it would impact Latino males?
3. How do the lack of background knowledge and life experiences in literacy affect their reading comprehension and how do you remedy that?
4. Describe a learning behavior exhibited by a Latino student that you observed since the research started you did not notice before this study?
5. How did the observed behavior impact your delivery of instruction? Did it change your thought process about your students? Explain.

Appendix D: Recruitment Letter

Dear Participant,

I am sending you this email to invite you to participate in my research study. I would also appreciate if you could inform and invite some of your peers and colleagues to partake in the study as well. Even if you decide to participate now, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you keep reading this, then it means something has sparked your interest and you are thinking about agreeing to participate which I am grateful for.

Purpose of Study

I designed this research study to understand teachers experiences in the classroom teaching Latino students who are underperforming in reading. The data for the last school years have shown Latino students continually being challenged across grade levels compared to their peers in literacy. The case study research is to get your perspective on how this population functions in the classroom.

Data Collection

I will need to collect data from you. The first and third step is an interview, with at least 10 questions, which should take about 45 minutes. The second step is optional, it is a weekly journal entry (just for a week) where you record verbal and nonverbal observations of one or two of your Latino students during differentiated instruction, then your thoughts about their behaviors. The two will be done face to face in library, somewhere that is quiet and convenient for you. At the end of all three steps, or the two interviews, you will be offered a $20 VISA gift card.

Please email me or call me at [phone redacted], if you are interested in participating in this study, or would like more information, please reply and include your phone number and the hours that are most convenient for you to be reached for us to talk and set our first appointment.

Thank you,
Aissatou Clesca-Cajuste
Doctoral Student in Education
Concordia University
[email redacted]
[phone redacted]

Appendix E: Consent Letter

Research Study Title: Factors Affecting Latino Students' Academic Underperformance
Principle Investigator: Aissatou Clesca-Cajuste
Research Institution: Concordia University Portland
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Heather Miller

Purpose and what you will be doing:

The purpose of this research study is to report instructors' perspectives on their Latino students' continual underperformance in literacy. I expect approximately 10 volunteers. At the end of the study, participants will receive a $20 VISA gift card. I will begin enrollment on April 1st, 2018 and end enrollment on April 30th, 2018. To be in the study, you will partake in two interviews of 45 minutes each with me and choose to complete a weekly journal on one or two of your Latino students during differentiated instruction time

Risks:

There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, I will protect your information. Any personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption or locked inside the researcher's home. Audio files will be deleted after being transcribed. When I look at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. I will only use a secret code to analyze the data. I will not identify you in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private at all times and then all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after we conclude this study.

Benefits:

Information you provide will help understand why Latino students are encountering so many difficulties when learning in the classroom. You could benefit this by being the catalyst in discovering strategies to assist these struggling students.

Confidentiality:

This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation is greatly appreciated, but I acknowledge that the questions we are asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a bad emotion from answering the questions, I will stop asking you questions.

Contact Information:

You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principle investigator, Aissatou Clesca-Cajuste at email, [email redacted]. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of

our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email obranch@cu-portland.edu or call 503-493-6390).

Your Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

_____	_____
Participant Name	Date
_____	_____
Participant Signature	Date
Aissatou Clesca-Cajuste _____	_____
Investigator Name	Date
_____	_____
Investigator Signature	Date

Appendix F: Coding

TOE - Teacher Opinion of General Education

TPE- Teacher Perception of Student

TA- Teacher Assumptions

TS & ST- Teacher Suggestions and Strategies

LS– Latino Student

PI- Parental Involvement

I-Interventions

BK- Background Knowledge

Appendix G: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously- researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does "fraudulent" mean?

"Fraudulent" work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one's own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate's final work without full and complete documentation.

What is "unauthorized" assistance?

"Unauthorized assistance" refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another's work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

Appendix G: Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced. All permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*.

Aissatou Clesca-Cajuste
(Digital Signature)

Aissatou Clesca-Cajuste
(Name)

10/9/18
(Date)