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A Multiple Case Study On The Experiences And Perspectives Of Instructional Coaches Supporting Teachers With The Literacy Instruction Of Historically Marginalized Populations

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A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY ON THE EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES SUPPORTING TEACHERS WITH THE LITERACY INSTRUCTION OF HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative multiple case study explored the experiences and perspectives of instructional coaches that support teachers with the literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations through the lens of the following three theoretical frameworks: the partnership approach, critical literacy, and culturally relevant pedagogy. The three participants involved in the study all came from the same district but different schools and were recruited based on the criteria of being an instructional coach in a middle school that has more than 51% of students from historically marginalized populations, as identified by the state's department of education website. The data collected included a pre-interview protocol, an interview, observations, and a post interview. This study will help to inform the future preparation of instructional coaches and best practices with respect to supporting teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized students. Educators need practical strategies and frameworks that inform how they teach literacy to historically marginalized students to be successful through transformative, culturally sustaining approaches that empower students.

Keywords: historically marginalized populations, instructional coach, literacy, professional development

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my loving and supportive family, my parents, Bessie Williams Lomax and Basilio Williams; my sisters, Tara Williams and Kerensa Williams; and most importantly, my nieces and nephews, Trey Bryant, Jade Bryant, William Watson, and Niyah Callen. They have all provided loving support and inspiration during this process through pep-talks, hugs, and much-needed family time, never letting me give up. Also, to my extended family and friends, who have always offered caring and encouraging words over the years.

Additionally, I would like to dedicate this work to all of my students. They have taught me so much about perseverance, determination, grit, and love over many years in education. Each one of them has given me memories that continue to remind me why I do this work every day.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Instructional coaches support teachers in using evidence-based, best practices through ongoing, job-embedded, and personalized professional development by working side-by-side with teachers to empower them with research-based strategies through training, modeling, and monitoring implementation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Kane et al., 2018; Knight, 2007). The concept of instructional coaching was based on the seminal work of Joyce and Showers (1980, 1982), who studied the impact of peer coaching on educator development that revealed a disconnect between traditional, whole group professional development and the implementation of new strategies, with participants rarely applying what they learned in the classroom. By investigating the relationship between various training methods and classroom application, they found "modeling, practice under simulated conditions, and practice in the classroom, combined with feedback" drastically increased the implementation of new practices to over 80% compared to the traditional training model of less than 10% (Joyce & Showers, 1980, p. 384). Teachers who had a peer coach displayed a higher level of retention of new knowledge by successfully applying the skills and strategies learned (Baker & Showers, 1984; Joyce & Showers, 1980; Magin & Dunsmore, 2015).

With initial and continuous research supporting the positive impact of instructional coaching on teacher practices, there has been an increase in the utilization of instructional coaches with the expectation that the effect on teacher practices would have an impact on student achievement (Arguilar, 2013; Mangin, 2014; Steckel, 2009). The increase in hiring instructional coaches is also due in part to the climate of school reform culture and standardized testing in K-12 schools, so educators are focused on student achievement data and looking to instructional coaching to support teaching and learning to increase test scores (DeMonte, 2013; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Consequently, the federal education law reauthorizations, including No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) and most recently, The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), offered federal funding in which coaching is specifically listed as an allowable expense for districts and schools in order to improve student achievement (ESSA, 2015; Galey, 2016; NCLB, 2002). Therefore, the hiring of instructional coaches in schools "significantly increased in the era of standards-based reform with the staffing rate of coaches doubling over the past 15 years" in hopes to use coaching "as a capacity-building instrument for promoting individual and system-level instructional change" (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017, p. 323). So, districts utilize instructional coaching to increase professional capacity and student achievement (Massey, 2012).

Although various factors contribute to a student's academic achievement such as individual student characteristics and home environments, research has shown that among school-related factors, teachers have the largest effect size on student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hattie, 2009). Teacher effectiveness encompasses a complex

set of skills such as planning high quality instruction, organization, and assessment practices, drawing upon their training and knowledge to support student academic success. Teachers also have a major influence on other student factors that affect student learning such as knowledge acquisition of new content and a motivation to learn. Additionally, not only does an effective teacher impact student learning, there are certain research-based, instructional strategies which have shown increased effectiveness when implemented properly (Marzano et al., 2001). Therefore, teacher practices and the implementation of research-based strategies are highly important to student success. To cultivate effective teachers and provide best strategies, teachers need continuous support, training, and timely feedback to improve professional practices (Tucker & Stronge, 2005). Instructional coaches provide these key aspects in an ongoing, supportive environment to promote the success of both teachers and students.

Educators need practical strategies and frameworks that inform how they teach historically marginalized students to be successful through transformative, culturally sustaining approaches that empower students (Alim & Django, 2017; Howard, 2016). The past and current practices of education are proving not to support success in historically marginalized groups, further solidifying that educational reform is necessary for our multicultural society. Rather, the over-inundation of standardized testing has caused a more embedded deficit mindset about students that exist outside of the cultural norm, partly due to the use of assessment data to blame students for the results that are a symptom of the societal inequities that disproportionately impact educational outcomes among certain groups of people (Irvine, 2010; Milner, 2012; Reardon, 2011). Effected the most by systemic racist practices, historically marginalized students need the tools to change the very

systems that oppress them (Alim & Django, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014; Osbourne, 1996). One-way educators can support the literacy instruction of historically marginalized populations while simultaneously impacting change is through critical literacy, which is teaching students how to critically examine texts by analytically reading, questioning and analyzing (Bishop, 2014; Shor, 1999). Literacy instruction through a critical lens is one of the most powerful ways to help students challenge the biased and unjust norms they encounter and make a difference in society and their lives (Morrel, 2008). According to Morell (2008),

> No population requires critical literacy more than today's urban youth. These young people are also daily bombarded with racist, sexist, classist language and texts that threaten to circumscribe their worldview and to encourage them to participate willingly in preserving a status quo that may be problematic and oppressive toward others that do not look or act or think like the 'norm'; a status quo that may ultimately serve against the self and collective interests of youth in urban America.(Morell, 2008, p. 6)

To make meaningful change in the literacy instruction of historically marginalized populations, teachers need intensive training in best practices for these populations. The professional development that addresses these practical frameworks for teachers need to be ongoing and job-embedded to support teachers with the successful implementation of best practices and strategies (Gutiérrez, 2008). Because research has shown instructional coaching to be the most successful model for teacher professional development, coaches can build teacher capacity and increase student learning by providing the support they

need as they implement frameworks for literacy instruction that works best for historically marginalized students.

Statement of the Problem

While there is research that supports the use of instructional coaches to positively impact teacher practices through a more comprehensive approach to training, "There is little systematic examination of both what kinds of coaching work best in which contexts and the broader institutional factors that shape coaching policy and practice" (Galey, 2016, p. 55). Even though educators recognize instructional coaching as a common method of improving teacher and student outcomes through professional development, there are varying types of coaches including all-inclusive and content specific focused positions, leading to little empirical evidence of coaching effectiveness on teacher practice, leaving a need to further understand, refine, and define coaching in schools (Desimone & Pak, 2016; Taylor, 2008). The lack of systematic and consistent implementation and conceptualization of instructional coaching creates a continued need to research coaching initiatives. Therefore, the framing of coaching roles and responsibilities affect the outcomes of school reform, teacher practices, and student success (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). Just as there is a lack of systematic and consistent implementation of instructional coaching, there is even less emphasis on the formal training of these coaches, with the training and preparation being an integral part in their ability to support the wide, varying needs of all teachers for school success. Not only is there a need to clarify best practices of instructional coaching as a professional development model, but also a need

for a focus on how instructional coaches gain the knowledge and skills to effectively perform their duties both prior to and during their roles, which is imperative in the research on instructional coaching for school and district reform (Gallucci et al., 2010).

More specifically, there is limited research on the use of instructional coaches supporting teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized students. With many efforts over the past few decades and various school reform initiatives to raise student achievement, there has not been a significant increase in adolescent literacy achievement nationwide, with over eight million adolescents struggling to read (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; NAEP, 2019). Even though school reform and assessment culture have over inundated K-12 education, educators know that test scores do not provide the full picture of student achievement. However, the proliferation of high stakes assessments and the pressure from legislators to increase test scores have driven instructional practices of literacy to focus on test preparation rather than critical thinking skills necessary for success in both academics and life (Valli et al., 2012). Because there are so many complexities and nuances that exist within literacy acquisition and literacy instruction, the test preparation approach has not shown to be effective as seen in the data. Therefore, there is a need to implement a different type of literacy instruction that empowers students most negatively impacted by assessment (Harvey, 2013). With historically marginalized populations most negatively impacted by a focus on and use of assessment data, educators still face the pressures to increase academic achievement for all students within an inequitable society and system (Morrell, 2008). For these reasons, teachers need practical frameworks and research-based best practices to support the most vulnerable of student groups in literacy instruction. The professional development on these

practical frameworks for teachers need to be ongoing and job-embedded to support teachers with the implementation of best practices. Instructional coaching would provide a form of professional development for these teachers, but they need to be knowledgeable of the best strategies to support teachers with literacy instruction of historically marginalized youth.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the perspectives and experiences of instructional coaches that support teachers with literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. For this research, an instructional coach was defined as a professional educator who provides support to teachers in implementing research-based instructional practices into their teaching through ongoing, job-embedded, and personalized professional development (Knight, 2007). In addition, historically marginalized populations were defined as "groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions" over an extensive period (NCCDH, 2019, p. 1).

The perspectives and experiences of instructional coaches gave insight into how middle school instructional coaches support teachers with literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. The data collected will help to inform future preparation of instructional coaches and best practices with respect to supporting teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized students. The information gained

from these experiences and perspectives can give insight into instructional coaching practices and literacy strategies in middle schools.

Research Questions

To understand the perspectives and experiences of instructional coaches supporting teachers with the literacy needs of historically marginalized students in middle schools, the following central research question guides the study: How do instructional coaches support teachers with literacy instruction of historically marginalized students in middle schools?

1. How do instructional coaches use coaching practices to support teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized populations?
2. How do instructional coaches select literacy strategies to train teachers on supporting students from historically marginalized populations?
3. How does the instructional coach provide strategies to support teachers who instruct historically marginalized students?

Assumptions

Assumptions are the statements the researcher accepts as true about certain aspects of the study. In qualitative research, the focus is on providing an account of other people's experiences and perceptions with very little researcher input (Simon, 2011); therefore, the researcher made the following assumptions about the participants and this qualitative, multiple case study:

1. All participants willingly participated in the study.

2. All participants responded to the questions and prompts truthfully.
3. All participants understood the interview questions.
4. All participant responses accurately reflected their perceptions of their roles and responsibilities.
5. All participant responses indicated their perceptions of their daily practices.
6. The sample of participants was representative of instructional coaches in schools with marginalized populations.

Limitations

Limitations of a study are the factors that are out of the researcher's control; however, these factors must be considered to limit barriers in the study (Simon, 2011). The study was bound by the following limitations:

1. The results of the study are dependent upon the conditions during the time of the study.
2. Qualitative research occurs in the natural setting making it difficult to replicate.
3. The interview process was dependent upon the questions asked and subjective participant answers.
4. The observation process was dependent upon the participants carrying out their daily activities.
5. Because qualitative research is subjective by nature, researcher bias may affect the analysis and the findings.

Delimitations

The delimitations of a research study are the scope and boundaries set by the researcher to narrow the focus and answer the research questions (Simon, 2011). The study was bound by the following delimitations:

1. The study is limited to three instructional coaches in public middle schools; therefore, it may not be generalizable to other states or other types of schools, such as private or charter.
2. By only selecting schools with instructional coaches, the study will not include schools that utilize a different model of professional development successfully.
3. The study only focuses on grades six through eight.

Definition of Key Terms

This section identified and defined the key terms found in the research literature, providing an understanding of the key concepts in this study.

Historically marginalized populations- "groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions" over an extensive period of time (NCCDH, 2019, p.1).

Instructional coach- a professional educator that provides support to teachers in implementing research-based instructional practices into their teaching through ongoing, job-embedded, and personalized professional development (Knight, 2007).

Literacy- *"*a process by which one expands one's knowledge of reading and writing in order to develop one's thinking and learning for the purpose of understanding oneself and the world" (Encyclopedia, 2019, p.1).

Professional development- structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher practices, skills, and knowledge expertise (Learning Policy institute, 2019; OECD, 2009).

Organization of the Study

The researcher organized the study into five chapters. Chapter 1 included an introduction, statement of the problem, purpose statement, research questions, assumptions, limitations and delimitations, and the definition of terms. Next, Chapter 2 reviewed the literature related to the topic including instructional coaches, literacy instruction, and the instruction of marginalized populations. Chapter 2 concluded with the theoretical frameworks. Chapter 3 described the research design, philosophical assumptions, tradition of inquiry, sampling procedures, and data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter 4 presented and discussed the data analysis and findings of the study. Chapter 5 contained the discussion, implications, recommendations for future research, and a conclusion.

Summary

Research has found instructional coaches to be the most effective approach to training teachers. Instructional coaches support teachers through a more personalized method of professional development. They are responsible for improving the teaching and learning practices of teachers and need to stay abreast of research-based strategies to

train teachers. However, there is little information on the practices and preparation of instructional coaches, or a systematic approach to which models or types of coaches are most effective. With teachers being the single most important influence among school-related factors, they need to be prepared with best practices and strategies to support student success. With societal inequities that influence the literacy education of students from historically marginalized populations, they need to be prepared to identify and change the unfair practices that affect them. Critical literacy provides a way to empower historically marginalized students with the skills they need to be successful and become agents of change. When properly trained and prepared, instructional coaches can successfully provide professional development to teachers to support the literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives and experiences of instructional coaches that support teachers with literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations in middle schools.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, the researcher listed and discussed three major topics: (a) instructional coaching, (b) literacy instruction, and (c) the instruction of historically marginalized populations. The chapter ends with a review of the theoretical frameworks that inform this study. By looking at all three components, the researcher gained a more comprehensive view of the overall practices of instructional coaches supporting teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized populations.

Instructional Coaching

Instructional coaching is a professional development model employed by districts and schools to support teacher learning and implementation of new strategies through ongoing, continued instructional support (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Knight, 2007). Because there are so many variations among the definitions of an instructional coach, for this study, the definition of an instructional coach was a professional educator that provides support to teachers in implementing research-based instructional practices into their teaching through ongoing, job-embedded, and personalized professional development (Knight, 2007). The traditional professional development model for teachers was usually a lecture style training where teachers learned from presenters, and then left to implement the strategies without ongoing support (Joyce & Showers, 1982; Knight, 2007). With less

than 10% of teachers implementing what they learned from traditional training models, there was a need for a different type of professional development rather than continuing the "drop-in or drive-by professional learning that offers no opportunity for collaboration and collective problem solving" (Eisenburg & Medrich, 2013, p. 48). Additionally, a study on teacher training found that it could take over 50 hours of professional development for teachers to improve their skills and this does not include the support needed for teachers to apply their new learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Research over the years has shown continuous training and assistance with implementation have been the best methods to change teacher practices (Aguilar, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sailors & Shanklin, 2010).

In the early work on coaching to support teachers, Joyce and Showers (1980) began studying the effects of what they coined as peer coaching on the implementation of teacher practices in comparison to traditional trainings (Joyce & Showers, 1980). Their work started with researching the training design and implementation for K-12 educators, looking for a better way to support teachers with new learning. While some attributed the failure of implementation of new strategies in the classroom to teachers, they acknowledged that the type of training for teachers was not a productive approach (Joyce & Showers, 1980). There needed to be continuous support for teachers during the implementation phase in the classroom with students. They began to study the effects of peer coaching on teacher implementation and the transfer of new practices in classroom instruction. Their findings showed that peer coaching was highly effective in staff development by providing evidence-based, best practices through ongoing, job-embedded, and

personalized professional development, while increasing implementation of new strategies to over 80% (Joyce & Showers, 1980, 1982). In a follow-up study, Baker and Showers (1984) found that "teachers who had a coaching relationship—that is, who shared aspects of teaching, planned together, and pooled their experiences—practiced new skills and strategies more frequently and applied them more appropriately than did their counterparts who worked alone to expand their repertoires" (Baker & Showers, 1982, p. 25). Even in early studies on preservice teacher preparation, data showed that peer coaching improved the field experiences and practices of the preservice teachers by providing support and observation and feedback on the implementation of best practices to improve instruction (Hasbrouck, 1997; Hudson et al., 1994). Furthermore, peer coaching provided a non-threatening approach to observation and feedback cycles by offering an alternative to administrative evaluations. With the many duties of running a school, many administrators do not have time to provide research-based, content specific and ongoing observation and feedback, which improve instructional practices (Ridge & Lavigne, 2020). When utilized successfully, peer coaching offers a way to improve teaching and learning through best practices and make a difference for students and teachers (Barkley, 2005). Additionally, when the instructional coach has the necessary training and skills, they can successfully provide the type of professional development most effective in successfully supporting teachers with utilizing best practices (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009).

As instructional coaching became more popular, some national organizations saw a need to provide some criteria for instructional coaching "as researchers and district leaders are explicit regarding the need to carefully and clearly delineate a coach's responsibilities" (Hanover, 2014, p. 4). The International Literacy Association (ILA) (2006), in

collaboration with other national teacher organizations, published standards for middle and high school literacy coaches, which stated the components of effective professional development include the following: "grounded in inquiry and reflection; participant-driven and collaborative; involving a sharing of knowledge among teachers within communities of practice; sustained, ongoing, and intensive; and connected to and derived from teachers' ongoing work with their students" (ILA, 2006, p. 3). These components lay the groundwork for coaching expectations in all content areas. The organization developed the statement as "a blueprint not only for literacy coaches, but also for policy-makers, school and district administrators, and teacher educators, in the hopes that it will help support and develop coaching in ways that would benefit adolescent learners" (ILA, 2006). Additionally, ILA published the "Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals" (2018) as criteria for developing and assessing programs that prepare literacy professionals. These standards help to organize and standardize the development of coaches.

Duties and Responsibilities

Instructional coaches have a plethora of duties and responsibilities, which look widely different from school to school. Even when giving a definition for instructional coaching, many educators still wonder what coaches do daily. As their daily tasks change, there is a need for coaches to prioritize their work. Killion (2009) believed that when coaches have a focus they can have a greater impact on teachers and students. By narrowing the duties and responsibilities, instructional coaches are less likely to be over-

whelmed by taking on too many tasks further frustrating themselves and being less effective. Killion (2009) identified 10 roles that provide a range of support coaches employ with teachers. These roles are not the only responsibilities of coaches, but offer a focus on a specific set of skills that impact teacher practice. The 10 roles Killion (2009) identified are the following:

1. Data Coach: The coach assists teachers and school leaders with disaggregating student data in order to determine goals for improvement.
2. Resource Provider: When teachers need resources and additional information, they look to the coach to provide the materials and knowledge they need. This aspect can be time consuming for coaches due to the time it may take to research a topic.
3. Mentor: Coaches serve as mentors for all levels of teachers from the novice to the seasoned. They must be knowledgeable of teacher developmental stages and provide the support needed on all levels.
4. Curriculum Specialist: By assisting teachers with what they should teach and providing a deeper understanding of the curriculum, coaches help teachers become content experts. With instructional coaches, they have to support teachers across all content areas despite their training.
5. Instructional Specialist: Even though coaches must support curriculum, they must also be able to assist teachers with how to instruct through best practices and strategies.

6. Classroom Supporter: Coaches provide support to the teacher in the classroom through co-teaching, modeling, and observations with feedback to improve teaching and learning.
7. Learning Facilitator: The professional development and training of teachers is one of the most important roles of instructional coaches. They determine the needs of the school, students, and teachers, then, provide training for teachers for improving instructional practices.
8. School Leader: Instructional coaching is a leadership role. They select and implement various initiatives, lead teacher groups, and serve on committees both in and out of the school environment. However, it is important to note they are not administrators.
9. Catalyst for Change: Coaches identify issues and then make plans to improve and change by determining next steps. They are usually the catalyst for change in instructional practices.
10. Learner: In order to assist teachers, the instructional coach is constantly learning and researching new strategies and educational updates in order support teachers in their learning and development (Killion, 2009, pp. 9-13).

These 10 roles provide a focus for instructional coaches when determining which responsibilities are most important. Even narrowing the roles to 10 leaves coaches with a lot to do. They must find ways to balance and prioritize these responsibilities and still be effective. Some of the factors that influence coaching duties are "job descriptions, role expectations, goals of the coaching program, goals of the school's improvement plan, the context in which they work, the time of the school year, the experience of the coach, and

the experience of the teacher (Killion, 2009, p. 14). Therefore, an instructional coach's duties and responsibilities and the weight and order in which these roles are carried out vary greatly, which affects their effectiveness (Killion, 2009; Knight, 2007; Ridge & Lavigne, 2020). Coaching initiatives have utilized different models with variations of implementation, and there are very few formal coaching preparation programs at universities or colleges, nor is it required prior to employment. Most trainings are provided at state or district levels, which further differentiates the roles and outcomes of instructional coaches (Pierce & Buysee, 2014). Administrators in areas without state or district initiatives are then left to hire coaches without training on best practices or a clear understanding of responsibilities with little to no support. Countless factors impact the overall effectiveness of coaching on teacher practices and students including the individual knowledge and actions of each coach. With so many variables that impact coaching effectiveness, the research findings on coaching effectiveness varies greatly depending on which nuisances were present during the study (Knight, 2007; Pierce & Buysee, 2014; Sweeney, 2011).

Training

When instructional coaches are expected to be the experts in so many different areas, they need professional development to ensure they have a clear understanding of the research and best strategies to assist teachers. Instructional coaches must manage and retain a great deal of information on new frameworks, curriculum updates, and other initiatives, while training others on the information (Knight, 2009). With training and prepara-

tion being an integral part in their ability to support the wide, varying needs of all teachers for school success, the coach's professional development is imperative. There is a need to determine how instructional coaches gain the knowledge and skills they need to effectively perform their duties both prior to and during their roles, which is essential to the research on instructional coaching for school and district reform (Gallucci et al., 2010). If instructional coaches are not properly trained, instructional coaches "run the risk of being ineffective, wasting time and money, or even misinforming teachers" (Knight, 2009, p. 51). The training for instructional coaches requires not only a knowledge of the research on instruction and content area practices, but also a knowledge of coaching strategies such as communication, building relationships, and working with adult learners. Therefore, instructional coaches need multiples types of ongoing training, just as teachers. They need continuous training on new instructional and content area strategies and initiatives rolled out from a national, state, and local level to be effective in teacher professional development and support (Knight, 2009; Taylor, 2008). With the aim of making the biggest change in teachers' practices, administrators should ensure instructional coaches have access to a wide range of training. Additionally, instructional coaches need training on how to employ the best practices in coaching strategies. Because coaches interact with teachers daily, they need training in how to engage and train adult learners with strategies that support learning transfer and implementation and the competencies of successful coaching (Magin & Dunsmore, 2015). However, there is little systematic training of instructional coaches both prior to and during their employment. With instructional

coaching being so important to the success of teacher implementation and student outcomes, there should be more structured processes and programs that prepare and support instructional coaches in developing their knowledge and skills throughout their tenure.

Adolescent Literacy

The definition of literacy is often ever evolving with broad descriptions of the reading and writing processes with multiple characteristics and versions. Some define it as simply the act of decoding print while others view it as a complex means of communication through various mediums (Moye, 2002). According to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), literacy is more than just reading and writing with a range of social and academic tasks, but now includes digital and cross-disciplinary literacies (NCTE, 2018). One aspect that many scholars agree upon is that literacy is an ongoing non-hierarchical process throughout one's life (Moye, 2002; Moye & Sutherland, 2003; NCTE, 2018). More specifically, adolescent literacy ranges from grades 4-12 in which students switch from learning to read to reading to learn. With physiological and developmental changes, adolescents need support with understanding and investigating complex texts and its meanings. In a position statement "A Call to Action: What We Know About Adolescent Literacy Instruction," NCTE (2018) defined adolescent literacy as "a complex, purposeful, social, and cognitive process in which readers simultaneously use their knowledge of spoken and written language, their knowledge of the topic of the text, and their knowledge of their culture to construct meaning" (NCTE, 2018, p. 1). Adolescents need a wide range of complex skills to be successful consumers of information.

Adolescent literacy rates, based on assessment scores, have been stagnant over several decades; therefore, educators have increased focus on improving literacy instruction and achievement in all middle and high school grades (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; IRA, 2004; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy, a report by the Alliance for Excellence in Education (2006) that was written in response to the national concern for adolescent literacy statistics, stated there are over eight million struggling readers in grades 4-12 in schools across our nation (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 7). Even though, the first edition of this report was published in 2004, the data has remained relatively the same. The Nation's Report Card (2019) results showed that 36% of eighth grade students read at or above grade level, which meant that 64% were at basic or below basic reading levels. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores have not significantly improved at the eighth-grade level in over 20 years. In "The Condition of Education 2019" report, the National Center for Education statistics (NCES) stated that the NAEP scores for eighth grade reading have only increased seven points since 1992 (NCES, 2019). Based on these statistics, there is a need for effective strategies to improve literacy instruction that addresses the needs of all students (Beers, 2007; Fisher & Frey, 2017; Hanover, 2014). Teachers have enormous pressure on them to raise literacy rates across America, raise scores on state assessments, and provide students with the skills they need to be successful in society.

Furthermore, the NAEP assessment scores "show a clear and persistent discrepancy in educational achievement among student groups, with African American, Latino, and American Indian student outcomes at the lowest level of achievement" (Pitrie, 2014,

p. 210). This discrepancy is often referred to as the achievement gap, which is "when one group of students (such as, students grouped by race/ethnicity, gender) outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant (that is, larger than the margin of error)" (NAEP, 2019, p. 1). More specifically, the achievement gap included the following:

> discrepancy in educational outcomes between various student groups, namely African Americans, Native Americans, certain Asian Americans, and Latinos on the low end of the performance scale and primarily White and various Asian American students at the higher end of the performance scale. (Howard, 2010, p. 10)

Ladson-Billings (2006) referred to this gap as America's "educational debt" due to inequitable, systemic, and societal practices rather than assigning it to the individuals' ability through a deficit perspective. Moreover, educational scholars have expounded on the educational debt concept and developed the term "opportunity gap," which is caused by other systemic and inequitable practices occurring that disproportionately affect educational outcomes among certain groups of people (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Irvine, 2010; Milner, 2012).

According to Heller (2011), the literacy skills of adolescent learners have not improved in over thirty decades because the skills needed have become drastically more complex. There is a need to focus on the skills that help adolescents successfully interpret the multiple literacies they encounter daily. Historically, there is a federal emphasis on early grade levels literacy and basic reading skills; however, the data show the need for continuous literacy instruction to support students at higher grade levels. The decline of adolescent literacy success over the years leaves educators searching for answers to the

problem (Perie et al., 2005). In addition to the pressures generated from high stakes assessments and federal reform acts, secondary teachers particularly are overwhelmed with meeting the needs of students and improving literacy skills while ensuring schools show success on assessments. Many times, this stress causes teachers to concentrate on state assessment success, which means that students do not get the type of instruction or information they need to be successful in life (Stoops, 2004). Educators understand that test score are not the only way to measure student success, but assessments have been used to negatively label certain student groups and schools, while adversely impacting teachers' jobs and reputations, rather than investigating the problems entrenched in society (Flores, 2007).

Best Practices in Adolescent Literacy

Just as there are multiple definitions and perspectives of literacy, there are just as many viewpoints on the best mode of literacy instruction. Even over two decades ago, in the article "Integrating the Language Arts," Wagner (1985) wrote, "Integrating the language arts means providing natural learning situations in which reading, writing, speaking, and listening can be developed together for real purposes and real audiences" (p. 2). The International Literacy Association (ILA) defined literacy practices as "diverse forms of interacting with text that enable individuals to accomplish a range of purposes and attain personal benefits in ways that are shaped by cultural contexts and language structures" (ILA Literacy Glossary, 2020). Furthermore, teachers must educate hundreds of students of varying abilities daily using a multi-faceted curriculum. While "successful

teachers are able to skillfully integrate a range of instructional literacy approaches and resources to meet the diverse needs of their students, literacy teaching can only be described as truly effective when it positively impacts student learning" (Harvey, 2013, p. 1). Johnson and Eubanks (2015) asserted,

> A dual focus on cultural relevance and centering student voice is particularly important in a time when teachers must serve students whose literacy and language backgrounds may be at odds with literacy practices valued in schools and on standardized tests (p. 31).

When teaching literacy, teachers should invite various forms of literacy from all cultural backgrounds that students bring into the classroom, respecting their multiple literacies as a strength (Perry, 2006, 2007). With the term literacy having varying definitions and undergoing continual changes, to take advantage of multiple perspectives, and new ones that will develop, Leu et al. (2017) suggested we "take advantage of multiple perspectives, and new ones that will ultimately emerge, to capture the full range of the complexities defining literacy during a period in which literacy continually changes" (p. 4). While students encounter multiple literacies on a regular basis, educators should also consider the careful selection of texts, which reflect various cultures and identities of students (Perry et al., 2013). Additionally, while quality literacy instruction uses a variety of texts, educators should reflect on "providing stimulating thought; inspiring humankind to consider its pathway; fostering debate and more questions about past, current, and future society; moving a person beyond self, pushing the reader to think deeply" (Perry et al., 2013, p. 16). Therefore, providing a rich variety of texts and integrating research based practices of 21st century literacies, educators can transform literacy instruction to become

critical to not only teaching academic skills, but also building critical literacy skills. Many scholars are offering alternative methods and ideas to improve adolescent literacy through research. The book, *Adolescent Literacy: Turning Promise into Practice* is a collection of works from experts that offer answers to help teachers meet the needs of their students. In this book, Kylene Beers (2007) so poignantly wrote, "In this time of what some have labeled 'the adolescent literacy crisis' we need our most respected adolescent literacy educators to offer a bold vision of what literacy education for adolescents in the twenty first century should be" (p. 13). Beers' statement calls for a change in the literacy instruction to meet the needs of the twenty first century learner. To successfully connect with their students and help students connect with the subject matter, teachers need a variety of intellectual and emotional resources on which they can draw (Woolfolk et al., 2005). The National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE, 2018), gave dimensions of adolescent literacy with key actions to consider in adolescent literacy, which included the following:

1. Incorporation of Disciplinary Literacy Instruction: Students encounter literacy concepts across disciplines and content areas that have specific skills. Therefore, all secondary teachers should be teaching adolescents how to read in the disciplines.
2. Integration of Multiple and Social Literacies: Students are inundated with various streams of literacy messages both traditional and electronic and teachers need to be able to integrate these skills into the classroom.
3. Orchestration of Engagement and Motivation: Wide independent reading develops fluency, builds vocabulary and knowledge of text structures, and offers

readers the experiences they need to read and construct meaning with more challenging texts. Texts should be broadly viewed to include print, digital, and visual media.

4. Appreciation of Multicultural Perspectives and Cultures: Teachers should expose students to a wide variety of perspectives and cultures through a critical lens. (NCTE, 2018, pp. 1-2)

Additionally, the International Literacy Association (ILA, 2012) have develop the following to address the needs of adolescent literacy instruction:

1. Content area teachers who provide instruction in the multiple literacy strategies need to meet the demands of the specific discipline
2. A culture of literacy in their schools with a systematic and comprehensive programmatic approach to increasing literacy achievement for all
3. Access to and instruction with multimodal, multiple texts
4. Differentiated literacy instruction specific to their individual needs
5. Opportunities to participate in oral communication when they engage in literacy activities
6. Opportunities to use literacy in the pursuit of civic engagement
7. Assessments that highlight their strengths and challenges
8. Access to a wide variety of print and non-print materials. (ILA, 2012, p. 1)

NCTE and ILA expressed the need to ensure adolescent readers have a wide-range of literacy skills to be successful both in school and in other professional and social settings. Using a more holistic approach to literacy instruction for adolescents equips them to be critical readers of the world around them.

English teachers cannot carry the burden of fixing the adolescent literacy crisis alone. Consequently, all teachers must understand their roles in literacy instruction. The comprehension skills taught in the English language arts class are useful across contents; however, students need additional skills to help them study math, science, and history. Content area literacy is defined as the ability to meaningfully interact with content area words (Draper et al., 2005). Content area vocabulary requires students to understand the concept represented by the word or image. For students to understand content area vocabulary and the concepts represented by the word or image, they must interact meaningfully with content area texts that require cognitive strategies, such as asking questions, in which the learner develops a cognitive approach to learning and a critical understanding of the subject matter (Conley, 2008). Students need to learn content-area literacy, and content-area teachers must teach it. Texts in other content areas vary in structure, language conventions, vocabulary, and criteria for comprehension.

By providing students with an understanding of the structure of specific texts in the given content and multiple ways to comprehend, it will assist not only struggling readers but all students. However, content-area teachers also must understand and convey the relevant rules for reading and writing in their classes as well as how to teach those rules to students. This means all teachers need to be trained in teaching reading and writing strategies to teach skills such as identifying the purpose and building knowledge to help students gain understanding (Bain et al., 2008; Moje & Speyer, 2008).

An increased emphasis on content area literacy has become prominent over the years. The need for content area teachers to incorporate reading skills which are pertinent

to the subject area has become necessary to ensure literacy success (Draper, 2008). However, many content area teachers believe that only the ELA teacher should teach these crucial skills (Lester, 2000). In the book, *Why Content Area Literacy is Difficult to Infuse into the Secondary Schools: Complexities of the Curriculum Pedagogy and School Culture*, O'Brien et al. (1995) identified that most content area teachers do not see a correlation between literacy skills and content information. Thus, many content area teachers do not participate in the teaching of reading strategies in their classrooms (Lester, 2000). In this case, extensive professional development is needed to educate teachers on the necessity of content area literacy, as well as the role everyone plays in literacy instruction. Current standards mandate that all content area teachers play an integral part in ensuring students' literacy skills. Content area teachers must realize that literacy does not stop existing outside of the English classroom, and therefore, they too have a role in literacy instruction. The Common Core State Standards emphasized,

> Instruction in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language [should] be a shared responsibility within the school…. Standards include expectations for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language applicable to a range of subjects, including but not limited to ELA. Grades 6-12 standards are divided into two sections, one for ELA and the other for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. (corestandards.org)

This is a huge advancement in the literacy education of our children. Policymakers realize that most of the texts that our students encounter within their professional careers, from college to the workplace, are informational and/or functional texts, which are prominent throughout the other disciplines. This interdisciplinary approach will ensure

students have the skills necessary to succeed. It also means that ELA teachers will have more support from their colleagues, and therefore, not carry the entire responsibility of literacy alone. Additionally, culture is a major component of how people read and interpret their experiences and the world.

Historically Marginalized Populations and Education

Being cognizant of the inequities in society, particularly in the education field, the instruction of historically marginalized students must meet the academic and social needs of culturally diverse populations, while providing them with the tools to challenge the current constructs that affect them (Howard, 2003). When addressing the instruction of historically marginalized students, it is important to examine the historical context on racist and systemic discriminations that affect educational institutions. The root of societal inequities steeped in racism while sustaining racial superiority stemmed from racist ideologies still embedded in the education system to maintain power of the dominant culture (Banks, 2016; Zamudio et al., 2011).

The concept of race is complexly, intricately, and deeply embedded in American society with many imbalanced opportunities based on these racial concepts. The critical race theory began in the field of legal studies which critiqued our systemic laws, rules, and norms based on the role race plays in equity and equality for all. The theorists asserted the United States of America was created for white males by white males, therefore many of the systems we have in place support them and disenfranchise other groups by keeping them from attaining the same amenities for a better life (Zamudio et al., 2011). The critical race theory has been adopted by other fields including education as a

lens to research how these racial, systemic inequities affect their field of study. Education has experienced its share of problems with race relations. In "Critical Race Theory and Education: History, Theory, and Implications," Tate (1997) discussed the educational and legal components that contributed to the educational imbalances for people of color over the course of history. By revealing the historical timeline of the development of American education and educational policies of this country, educational researchers must address the unequal policies and practices that are still apparent today. Tate (1997) stated, "A relationship exists between educational research built on assumptions of the inferiority paradigm and the construction of education-related policy and law" (Tate, 1997, p. 200). These laws and policies, which viewed people of color as inferior, continue to shape the educational practices and instruction of historically marginalized populations creating an unequal foundation of education for certain American citizens, particularly students of color.

Historically, inner city, minority schools remained segregated and grossly underfunded in comparison to suburban white schools, which influences the quality of education. Many refer to these inner city schools with large amounts of minority and poor students as urban schools. The term urban education has come to mean much more than a school located in a metropolitan area; the term has become laden with race, class, and socioeconomic status with a myriad of both community and institutional problems. During the Civil Rights Movement, most White Americans were so against the integration of schools that it took an act of the Supreme Court to end segregation in schools. Even after *Brown v. the Board of Education*, schools remained segregated and not equal. Anderson

(1988) discussed the history of African American education and its unequal implementation citing how power and politics molded black educational institutions, which differed from other Americans, causing an unequal outcome. He found that African American education was more vocational in nature than that of their White counterparts. He assertined that African Americans did not need academic centered instruction or higher education opportunities, but rather a more working class education. This not only stemmed from the inferiority ideology, but also was a means to keep African Americans in certain jobs and away from other opportunities to build knowledge and wealth for decades (Anderson, 1988). Part of the achievement gap argument remains centered on the belief that American education is equal; therefore, it must be a cultural or racial inferiority causing the achievement gap (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Nieto and Bode (2008) stressed, "It is the school's perception of students' language, culture, and class as inadequate and negative, and thus the devalued status of these characteristics in the academic environment, that help explain school failure" (p. 272). Some schools have viewed poor students of color with a deficit mindset and set out to correct or assimilate them through education often blaming the students for their failures, as measured by current educational standards, further perpetuating dominant ideologies to rationalize racial superiority and maintain privilege and power (Anyon, 1980; Nieto, 2005; Zamudio et al., 2011). These issues are important in the investigation of the educational system and how these perspectives still permeate the policies and practices of modern day education and policies.

Milner (2012) asserted, "Standardization, in many ways, is antithetical to diversity because it suggests that all students live and operate in homogeneous environments

with equality and equity of opportunity afforded to them." By trying to regulate all aspects of education and using the same tools to instruct and measure student achievement, education becomes counterproductive in providing equity to all students. Academic assessments determine a wide range of outcomes including student achievement, funding of schools, building of prisons, and even housing values. Even though these assessments are normed using white, middle class males as the measurement of success, thereby not considering the many intelligences, cultural aspects, and other nuances of race, class, gender, culture, or language. There have been many studies that measured background knowledge and experiences at the same rate or more than intelligence, which lead to discrepancies in the data (Milner, 2012; Tate, 1997). Other aspects to examine are the laws and policies in place that impact school structure, practices, and culture. The decisions on student to teacher ratios, funding, curriculum, teacher preparation programs and hiring, content area standards, and grade-level achievement are all based on the same norms that rarely consider diverse populations and perspectives. According to Solorzan and Yosso (2016), it is necessary to "identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom" (p. 25). Therefore, educational practices should be responsive to students' needs with a wide-range of practices employed based on the differences students bring to the educational setting (Gay, 2010). Rather than blaming historically marginalized populations, some educational researchers assert that the problems stem from society and educational policies and practices that disenfranchise certain groups of people; furthermore,

these components need investigation then reformation. A change in how academic success is measured would create a change in educational practices and procedures; therefore, this would change academic achievement (Foster, 1999; Irvine, 2010).

Banks realized that schools played a role in fixing the nation's issues,

> We must also be tenacious in our faith that the school can play a limited but decisive role in bringing about equal educational opportunities for all students and can help them develop the cross-cultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function in a democratic society. (Banks, 2016, p. 111)

In additional studies, Ladson-Billings (2009) found that successful teachers of diverse students not only believe in their students' ability to succeed, but also in their ability to teach them. These teachers did not have a deficit mindset about their students, and they fostered positive relationships both in and out of the school. Based on her research, Ladson-Billings (1995) developed the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, focused on the successful education of African Americans, and it has positively influenced teaching practices and educational research for diverse populations of students. The development of this theoretical framework came from the need to combine culture and teaching rather than viewing them separately to prepare teachers that educate a growing diverse population in the United States.

Supporting Historically Marginalized Populations

In addition to culturally relevant pedagogy, a large number of students from marginalized populations deal with a plethora of issues stemming from a variety of societal inequities, which affect their lives both in and out of school, such as poverty, lack of

quality healthcare, and social/emotional needs (Rivas-Drake et al., 2019). Therefore, it is imperative to address all the needs of students while providing them with a quality education. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, *A theory of human motivation* (1943), humans have certain needs that should be met in order to be successful. There are five hierarchical levels, which affect human motivation. When applied to education, Maslow's theory provides the basis for utilizing a more holistic approach by addressing the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual qualities that affect teaching and learning (Maslow, 1954). The hierarchical list starting from the bottom are (a) physiological, (b) safety, (c) love-belonging, (d) esteem, and (e) self-actualization. While everyone does not experience all at the same rate or time, they each affect the learning process of humans. More importantly, poverty can affect all five of these levels. Consequently, if students are struggling with poverty, they are more likely to struggle with all five levels, and historically marginalized populations experience poverty at higher rates than their white counterparts.

In *Teaching with poverty in mind*, Jensen (2009) broke down poverty into the following six categories: (a) situational, (b) generational, (c) absolute, (d) relative, (e) urban, and (f) rural. Each of these categories have unique circumstances that impact people and change throughout someone's life. Unfortunately, due to systemic racism and inequities, minorities are usually in a cycle of generational poverty, particularly African Americans due to enslavement. Jensen (2009) also asserted there are four factors caused by poverty which effect the learning process which are emotional-social, acute chronic stressors, cognitive lags, and health and safety. Among these factors, emotional-social and acute chronic stressors are the most misunderstood and often lead to disciplinary actions such

as suspensions and expulsions because students are not equipped to cope with the myriad of problems they encounter (Jensen, 2009).

As educators recognize the need to support the whole child, more schools are beginning to implement social emotional learning (SEL) aspects in schools to improve teaching and learning. The recent movement to incorporate a more critical lens to SEL has developed into a more transformative approach to "mitigate the educational, social, and economic inequities that derive from the interrelated legacies of racialized cultural oppression in the United States to effectively address issues such as power, privilege, prejudice, discrimination, social justice, empowerment, and self-determination" (Jagers et al., 2019, p. 163). Transformative SEL would produce more equitable outcomes and learning environments by addressing the needs of students disproportionately affected by unjust practices which includes "examining biases and replacing inequitable practices with those that lend themselves to fertile, inclusive, multicultural learning environments that cultivate the interests and talents of children, youth, and adults from diverse backgrounds" (p. 163). Additionally, relationship building among teachers and students is an important component to developing a safe and nurturing environment conducive to learning, particularly for students experiencing outside stressors such as poverty and racism (Jensen, 2016; Liew et al., 2010).

According to Jensen (2016), "Effective teacher-student relationships contribute to student achievement and this contribution varies depending on students' socioeconomic status and grade level" (Jensen, 2016, p. 28). Research shows that positive teacher-student relationships have a 0.72-0.87 effect size on student achievement, which is a significant amount (Hattie, 2009; Marzano, 2003). According to the Commission on Children at

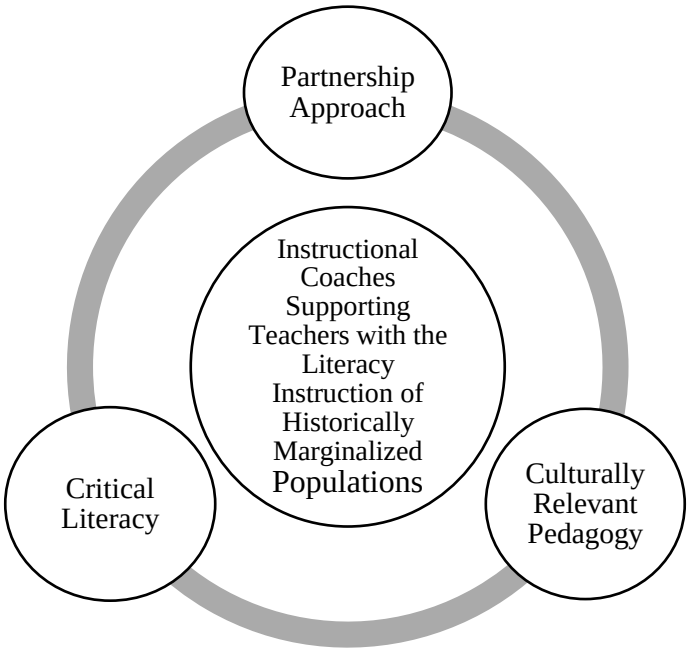
Risk (2003), researchers concluded that humans need to connect with one another, and "when students feel connected they stay in school, achieve more, and are more likely to graduate" (Jensen, 2016, p. 27). At-risk students from low-income families with teachers that provide quality instruction and provide emotional support through building relationships perform equal to their peers in higher income households (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Research shows that students that have positive, quality relationships with their teachers often perform better academically and are more motivated to engage in classroom activities, which increases learning.

Theoretical Frameworks

While examining three major areas that help to answer the central research question: How do instructional coaches support teachers with literacy instruction of historically marginalized students in middle schools? The following theoretical frameworks help to inform and focus this study: (a) partnership approach, (b) critical literacy, and (c) culturally relevant pedagogy. These theories overlap to support each aspect of the major areas of study and give a more holistic understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the instructional coaches.

Figure 1

Theoretical Frameworks



Note. The theoretical frameworks were combined to inform how instructional coaches support teachers with literacy instruction of historically marginalized youths.

Partnership Approach to Instructional Coaching

Instructional coaches must have a deep understanding of research-based instructional strategies to be able to support all teachers with their needs. These strategies range from content area instruction and assessment to classroom management. They also need strategies to communicate and build relationships with teachers in a way that respects the teacher as a professional and help them better their craft. As an instructional coach, they must not only provide knowledge but also be a partner in the learning process and planning while working with the teacher to model or co-teach in the classrooms (Aguilar, 2013). Coaches need to understand best educational strategies and be able to employ best coaching practices. Because coaches are supporting teachers, they must recognize the

best way adults learn to be effective in helping teachers learn new material (Knight, 2007). There are varying theoretical and practical frameworks on the best implementation and practices for instructional coaching. Research shows approaches that range from teacher centered to student centered focuses with just as many different implementation practices. While there are a plethora of frameworks and practices, school and district leaders often rely on the instructional to choose the strategies that best meet the needs of the school and the teachers (Kise, 2009). The concept of coaching adults is not germane to the educational field with a focus on the way in which adults learn versus students is very different. Prevalent in a variety of disciplines, similar coaching approaches improved the professional practice and effectiveness of individuals and organizations (Kurz et al., 2017).

Malcolm Knowles (1980) developed a theory of andragogy, or adult learning, which described five assumptions about the nature of adult learners in comparison to pedagogy, how children learn. These assumptions gave specific conditions that support the best way to teach and interact with adult learners as a "humanistic conception of self-directed and autonomous learners and teachers as facilitators" (Reischmann, 2004, p. 1). This approach emphasized the adult learner making choices about their learning, rather than the teacher or expert controlling the learning process (Knowles, 1980; Pratt & Associates, 1998; Reischmann, 2004). The andragogy theory has informed many facets of adult learning in varying fields, including education.

In a National Association of Secondary School Principals bulletin, Terehoff (2002) asserted the concept that andragogy can support the professional development of teachers by "creating an environment for adult learning and engaging the school staff in

mutual planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of professional development learning experiences, school leaders can improve the process of school-based teacher professional development" (p. 66). School administrators and instructors of teachers need to not only acknowledge the experiences and knowledge teachers possess, but also incorporate best practices in adult learning theory to increase positive professional growth and change (Cox, 2015; Terehoff, 2002). The assumptions and implications of this adult learning theory by Malcolm Knowles (1980) have shaped the way teachers of adults develop the learning experiences for their students. Instructional coaching models utilize a combination of coaching and andragogy concepts providing a comprehensive approach to training and supporting teachers in the implementation of new practices (Chan, 2010).

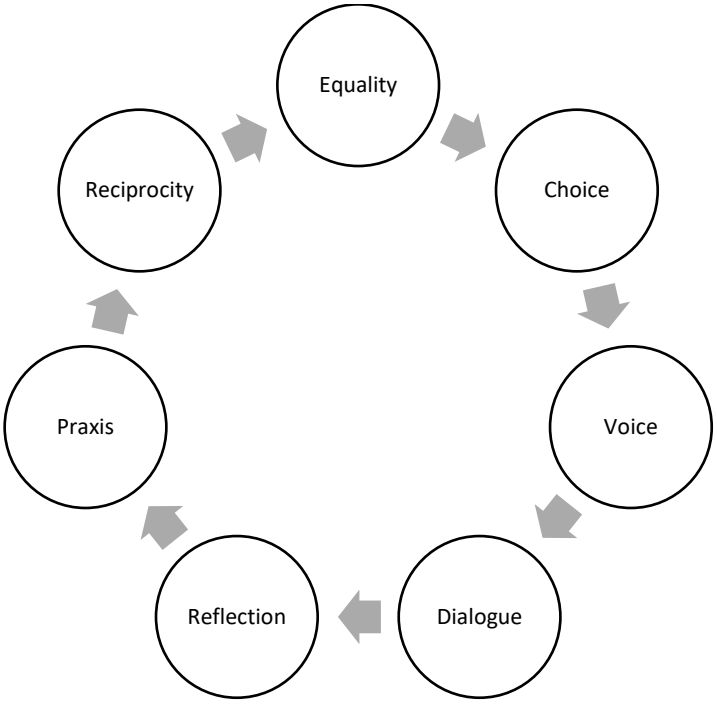
The partnership approach to instructional coaching is a theoretical framework for instructional coaching developed by Jim Knight (2007) to inform how coaches approach teachers. There are seven core principles that frame the partnership approach:

1. Equality: In the coaching-teacher relationship, they are both equals in their work.
2. Choice: Teachers and coaches make choices collaboratively with teachers having a say in what and how they learn.
3. Voice: Teachers have the freedom to voice their opinions and perspectives about content being learned.
4. Dialogue: There is an equal dialogue among the coach and the teachers in conversations about the work.
5. Reflection: Instructional coaches encourage teachers to become reflective teachers about their practices and decisions.

6. Praxis: Instructional coaches and teachers think about how ideas and strategies can be put into practice in the classroom.
7. Reciprocity: Both the coach and the teachers learn from one another through classroom practices and expertise (Knight, 2007, pp. 25-25).

Figure 2

Core Principles of the Partnership Approach to Instructional Coaching



Note. (Knight, 2007)

These seven core principles provide a conceptual framework for instructional coaches to describe how they work with teachers on a regular basis to keep the work focused on best practices.

Equality in the instructional coach and teacher relationship is one of the most important principles in the partnership approach. To build a good relationship, the instructional coach must approach the teacher as an equal, respecting their expertise and knowledge while giving them a say in the process. As an instructional coach, they cannot take a position of all-powerful and all knowing, but a partner in the learning process. While coaches may have a plethora of information, that does not mean the teachers' opinions or input is less important. When the instructional coach treats teachers as equals in the teaching and learning process, they build respect and comradery throughout the school and eliminate fear and opposition (Knight, 2009).

Teachers should have the ability to choose how and what they learn. In a partnership, everyone has input and works together toward the same goals. Traditional professional development often failed and some reasons were that teachers had very little say in the topics shared or the dissemination of the information. In Knight's (2009) research, he found that "offering choice actually increases both teachers' desires to teach with fidelity and the likelihood that teachers implement learning strategies and teaching routines" (p. 42). However, when districts or administrators mandate certain programs or strategies, the idea of choice is not as much of an option, but instructional coaches have an opportunity to offer teachers the choice in how they learn and how much support they need.

When coaches value what teachers have to say and allow them to voice their opinions, they are more likely to work with the coach on implementation. This opens the lines of communication and support the core principle of equality because teachers know their perspectives count. According to Knight (2009), "validation is a gift that can be given to

anyone, but it is a gift that many overwhelmed or pressured teachers receive with a tremendous amount of gratitude" (p. 46). The most important component in developing teacher voice is when the instructional coach simply listens. By listening to teachers cares and needs and empathizing with their concerns and daily encounters, instructional coaches are able to build a rapport. Additionally, instructional coaches should foster collaboration among other teachers and how they can all use their voice in the decision-making process while helping each other (Knight, 2009).

The core principle of dialogue is not simply a discussion but a meaningful conversation among equals on ideas and opinions as they question and explain their stances on concepts and ideas. Instructional coaches that foster equal dialogue through conversations about learning new strategies and implementation practices, giving teachers the opportunity to voice their thoughts through authentic discussions. By encouraging teachers to talk about their thoughts and fully listen to understand teachers' perspectives, instructional coaches can engage teachers in conversations on many levels (Knight, 2007).

Reflection is a process that supports the learning process. With this core principle, reflection takes place both before and after learning and implementation. Instructional coaches offer teachers the opportunity to consider a new learning strategy prior to trying it and reflecting on the learning and implementation of a strategy. This works along with the other principles of equality, choice, voice, and dialogue in developing professional relationship among coaches and teachers (Killion, 2009; Knight, 2009).

The core principle of praxis is how teachers implement strategies and ideas in the classroom. If instructional coaches are the best form of professional development for teachers, then they should be concerned with the actual practice of new strategies by

teachers. The point of teaching and sharing new ideas and practices is that teachers implement these in the classroom to improve the teaching and learning of all students. The primary work of an instructional coach is to support teachers in the implementation of new strategies and reflecting and refining the actual practice in the classroom. Then, after the practice of the new learning, teachers can reflect and dialogue about the experiences to further hone their crafts (Knight, 2007).

Effective and reflective instructional coaches know they learn from working with teachers as well. The principle of reciprocity emphasizes the reciprocal nature of coaching. As teachers learn life lessons and new ideas from their students, coaches also learn from teachers. When participating in dialogues and fostering voice among teachers, instructional coaches gain just as much knowledge as they provide, building mutual respect and professional relationships (Knight, 2007).

When considering the work of Joyce and Showers (1982) on peer coaching, the partnership approach contained many of the aspects that made peer coaching successful over the last several decades. The work of Knowles (1984) on andragogy versus pedagogy clearly emphasized the need for adult learners to have a voice and choice in their learning process. Andragogy Knowles (1984) later suggested four principles of andragogy to apply to the teaching adult learners. The principles are the following: (a) adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction, (b) experience provides the basis for the learning activities, (c) adults need to learn subjects that have immediate relevance to and impact on their job or personal life, and (d) learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented (Knowles, 1984). When reviewing the theoretical framework of the partnership approach to instructional coaching by Knight (2007),

the research on supporting adult learners especially in the education field is evident in the core principles.

Critical Literacy

Critical literacy is a theoretical framework grounded in Freirean pedagogy and Marxist philosophy (Anderson & Irvine, 1993; Freire, 1968). Stemming from the work of Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo in their book about literacy and critical pedagogy, *Reading the Word and the World* (1987), critical literacy began as a method to understand the meaning of texts is socially constructed, as well as the political and economic contexts in which they were written and created (Freire & Macedo, 1987). In some of Freire's works, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1974) and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), he discussed ways to empower oppressed people so that they could disrupt the status quo caused by power structures; however, the oppressed sometimes accept the cultural or societal norms that oppress them. Freire argued that most schools utilize a "banking concept" in which they deposit knowledge and this knowledge is laden with the dominant ideology, which perpetuates the oppression and dehumanization (Freire, 1968; Morrell, 2008). Critical literacy provides them a tool to challenge the oppressive circumstances and "as a practical approach to curriculum, it melds social, political, and cultural debate and discussion with the analysis of how texts and discourses work, where, with what consequences, and in whose interests" (Luke, 2012, p. 5). By being aware of the power of language and the messages embedded within texts, people can read with a critical lens and question certain conditions. This critical lens is a heightened consciousness

or awareness of societal inequities that help maintain the power status of a certain group of people, which is conveyed through language (Freire, 1968).

Since the start of critical literacy, several educational researchers and theorists have expounded on the definition and importance of utilizing critical literacy in education. Critical literacy encompassed more than teaching the functional skill of acquiring knowledge, but the means to change societal problems (Kretovic, 1985; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993).Lankshear and McLaren (1993) defined the term of critical literacy as an approach to empower learners by teaching them to read with a sociopolitical consciousness. Aronowitz & Giroux (1985) posited critical literacy would "present knowledge as a social construction linked to norms and values, demonstrate modes of critique that illuminate how, in some cases, knowledge serves very specific economic, political, and social interests,[and]function as a theoretical tool to help students and others develop a critical relationship to their own knowledge," (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985, p. 132). Anderson and Irvine (1993) defined critical literacy as "learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations" (Anderson & Irvine, 1993, p. 82). Shor (1999) defined critical literacy as "language use that questions the social construction of the self [to] examine our ongoing development, to reveal the subjective positions from which we make sense of the world or act in it" (p. 3). In addition, Morrell (2002) defined critical literacy as the "ability not only to read and write, but also to assess texts in order to understand the relationships between power and domination that underlie and inform those texts" (p. 73). While critical literacy definitions vary, the conceptual basis is being able to critically analyze

messages from varying perspectives from which the text was constructed with an awareness that language is power (McLaren, 1988; Morrell, 2002; Shor, 1999).

The use of critical literacy to educate our youth has become more prevalent with an ever-growing diverse population and a plethora of information outlets students can access (Morrell, 2002). Teachers of critical literacy empower their students to become close readers by developing the skills to identify both implicit and explicit messages of all texts and providing the ability to reshape unfair power structures (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Morrell, 2015). Mulcahy (2008) stated, "from a pedagogical perspective, critical literacy is a philosophy that recognizes the connections between power, knowledge, language, and ideology, and recognizes the inequalities and injustices surrounding us to move toward transformative action and social justice" (Mulcahy, 2008, p. 16). Critical literacy in education is not simply a strategy, but a mindset through which students view their world (Mulcahy, 2008). According to Lankshear and McLaren (1993), the most effective form of educational practice for critical literacy as a change agent is transformative praxis, which is "attempting to understand how agents working within established structures of power participate in the social construction of literacies, revealing their political implications" (p. 7). Critical literacy goes beyond theory when put into practice on a regular basis in classrooms with students; however some educators struggle with implementation from theory (Behrman, 2006). Therefore, Behrman (2006) organized classroom practice into six broad categories for student activities and tasks in the implementation of critical literacy. The six categories are the following: (1) reading supplementary texts, (2) reading multiple texts, (3) reading from a resistant perspective, (4) producing countertexts, (5) conducting student-choice research projects, and (6) taking social action

(p. 492). While the theory of critical literacy is a powerful concept of how teachers instruct students to be critical of the texts they encounter, there are not many practical steps to employ the concept. Some researchers warn against a set of practices for everyone to follow, but others are looking for more practical strategies to implement (Behrman, 2006; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). The National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE, 2019) also released key aspects of critical literacy derived from the literature to offer educators some guidance in implementation. They offer the following ten tenets as recommendations:

1. Critical literacy should be viewed as a lens, frame, or perspective for teaching throughout the day, across the curriculum, and perhaps beyond, rather than as a topic to be covered or unit to be studied.
2. Diverse students' cultural knowledge and the children's everyday worlds, their funds of knowledge, and multimodal and multilingual should be used to build curriculum across the content areas and across space and place.
3. Students learn best when what they are learning has importance in their lives.
4. Texts are socially constructed from particular perspectives; they are never neutral.
5. The ways we read text are never neutral. Each time we read, write, or create, we draw from our past experiences and understanding about how the world works.
6. From a critical literacy perspective, the world is seen as a socially constructed text that can be read.

7. Critical literacy involves making sense of the sociopolitical systems through which we live our lives and questioning these systems.
8. Critical literacy practices can be transformative.
9. Text design and production, which are essential to critical literacy work, can provide opportunities for transformation.
10. Finally, critical literacy is about imagining thoughtful ways of thinking about reconstructing and redesigning texts, images, and practices to convey different and more socially just and equitable messages and ways of being that have real-life effects and real-world impact (NCTE, 2019, p.1).

These key tenets offer some guidance for educators to design critical literacy plans for cross-curricular literacy plan. Within this cross-curricular plan, students should be able to develop a critical view when reading texts selected with student cultures and perspectives in mind. Educators should also select topics in which students have interest while focusing on social views and transformative actions (NCTE, 2019).

Critical literacy offers a way in which educators teach and inform students and empower them to become close readers by developing the skills to identify both implicit and explicit messages of all texts and providing the ability to reshape unfair power structures (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Morrell, 2015; NCTE, 2019). By understanding the historical and development of critical literacy in the field, educators can begin to infuse the key factors in a way that is meaningful and powerful to their students.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

In *Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy,* Ladson-Billings (1995) reviewed and discussed the research on culture and teaching to develop the theoretical framework known as culturally relevant pedagogy. The development of this theoretical framework came from the need to combine culture and teaching rather than viewing them separately to prepare teachers that educate a growing diverse population in the United States. She defined culturally relevant pedagogy as an "effective pedagogical practice [and] theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 469). One of the central principles of culturally relevant pedagogy was the refutation of a deficit mindset when thinking about diverse students (Howard, 2003). Culturally relevant pedagogy provided schools a way to respect the culture of all students and integrate these experiences into the school environment while providing a quality education (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). The three criteria in the culturally relevant pedagogical framework are (a) academic success, (b) cultural competence, and (c) critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Academic success. In her culturally relevant pedagogy theory, Ladson-Billings (1995) supported the need for every child to grow academically because the outcome of education is intellectual growth, and skilled teachers can increase the knowledge of his/her students. With standardized assessments being a large part of the educational cul-

ture and impacting schools and neighborhoods, the need to increase academic achievement among all students was an important reality for educators. Milner (2012) summarized Freire's work to be understood that

> although students should be empowered to counter oppressive practices that place them in situations of prisonlike subordination, they must also be able to operate within these systems in order to change them. Knowing what the culture of power actually is, how it works, and how power can be achieved are important aspects of consideration for student success. (p. 703)

Historically marginalized students need to understand the power structure to change it. However, Ladson-Billings warned against only using standardized test scores to measure academic growth. She asserted that she was referring to the "intellectual growth that students experience as a result of the experiences they have in the school, community, and classroom, especially with the help of a skilled teacher" not relying heavily on standardized assessment data. (Ladson-Billings, 2017, p. 142-143).

Cultural competence. Cultural competence in culturally relevant pedagogy is the ability to maintain cultural integrity while in the educational setting. Students would be able to bring some of their culture to the classroom rather than feel as though they must conform to another norm. Teachers incorporate the culture of their students in the classroom and through lessons that allow students to feel involved and valued (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings (2017) referred to cultural competence as the "skill and facility to help students recognize and appreciate their culture of origin while also learning to develop fluency in at least one other culture" (pp. 144-145). By respecting what

student bring into the classroom and incorporating their experiences and culture in the instruction, students become more successful (Howard, 2003).

In retrospect of her theory, Ladson-Billings (2017) identified cultural competence as the most misunderstood component in her theory because there tends to be intermittent and shallow inclusions of non-dominant cultural traditions in classrooms, rather than meaningful infusions throughout the year. Banks (2016) discussed the need for a more multicultural education that embedded a wide range of culture across the curriculum through "content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure" rather than a shallow incorporation of surface cultural components in isolation (p. 27). More recently, culturally sustaining pedagogy has emerged further expressing the importance of maintaining and elevating the home culture of all students rather than viewing it as something to fix to conform students, but rather

> to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling. In the face of current policies and practices that have the explicit goal of creating a monocultural and monolingual society, research and practice need equally explicit resistances that embrace cultural pluralism and cultural equality. (Paris, 2012, p. 93)

Culturally sustaining pedagogy builds upon decades of cultural and educational research to support the belief that non-dominant cultures are not inferior (Alim & Paris, 2017).

Critical consciousness. The critical consciousness component supports student's sociopolitical awareness and critique of societal inequities to challenge the current status

quo. Teachers plan activities and lessons that address issues that affect their students and enlighten them on the social, cultural, economic, and political matters (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2017). By incorporating critical consciousness into school lessons, teachers encourage students to not only have knowledge about their society, but to also question statuses and procedures. In reflection of her theory, Ladson-Billings (2017) stated that this is the "neglected dimension of CRP," because teachers often shy away from difficult conversations even though they are the most powerful component (p. 145). Drawing on the works of Freire, critical consciousness focused on the investigation of social and political constructs, identifying inequities, and taking action to seek justice. Teachers empower students in the classroom, teaching them how to acknowledge these injustices and the roles it plays in their lives (Young, 2010).

Since the inception of culturally relevant pedagogy, Ladson-Billings has reflected on both the implications and practices of her work. Many scholars and practitioners have added extensions and modification to culturally relevant pedagogy to address other marginalized populations (Ladson-Billings, 2014). While some misunderstandings remain about each component and critiques of her work, she continues to express the importance of supporting the learning of marginalized students. She notes that her theory is "undergoing important and exciting change as younger scholars help to remake and reshape culturally relevant pedagogy into what we now call culturally sustaining pedagogy" (Ladson-Billings, 2017, p. 154). The reshaping of culturally relevant pedagogy into culturally sustaining pedagogy allows for the culture of marginalized groups to become an integral part of their education rather than simply an intermittent additive while teaching assimilation (Alim & Django, 2017, p. 1). With a growing diverse population, educators must

construct lessons that are relevant and meaningful to the students' social and cultural realities while ensuring that "diverse funds of knowledge and culturally inherited ways of navigating the world need to be sustained as goods unto themselves […] and equally important" (Lee, 2017, p. 261).

Summary

This chapter was a review of the literature and theoretical frameworks that are pertinent to instructional coaching, adolescent literacy, and the instruction of historically marginalized students. While educators must operate within the confines of current education mandates and the assessment culture, they can improve educational outcomes by building relationships, providing quality instruction, and teaching students to critically examine our society. Instructional coaches are a significant factor in supporting teachers with these strategies through proven practices. By using effective coaching strategies for adult learners, supporting literacy instruction, and meeting the needs of marginalized populations, instructional coaches can impact student achievement for all learners.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is an explanation of the qualitative multiple case study approach and includes the research design, philosophical assumptions, sampling procedures, data collection processes, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations, establishing credibility, and the role of the researcher. The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore the experiences and perspectives of instructional coaches that support teachers with the literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. The experiences and perspectives of these coaches provided insight into how middle school instructional coaches support teachers with the literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. The following research questions guided the study and included one central question and three subquestions: How do instructional coaches support teachers with literacy instruction of historically marginalized students in middle schools?

1. How do instructional coaches use coaching practices to support teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized populations?
2. How do instructional coaches select literacy strategies to train teachers supporting students from historically marginalized populations?
3. How does the instructional coach provide strategies to support teachers who instruct historically marginalized students?

The three theoretical frameworks guiding this study were the partnership approach to instructional coaching (Knight, 2007, critical literacy (Morrell, 2008), and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). These three frameworks offered a foundation for the best practices of instructional coaches that support teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized populations.

Research Design

Qualitative research is an inquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon in a natural setting (Creswell, 2007; Eisner, 1991). In qualitative research, the researcher seeks to understand the phenomenon by collecting multiple forms of open-ended data, analyzing the information for description and themes, and interpreting the meaning of the information, while drawing on personal reflections and past research (Creswell, 2007). Maxwell (2005) stated, "the strengths of qualitative research derive primarily from its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people, and its emphasis on words rather than numbers" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 22). Finally, according to Merriman (1998) in qualitative research, the main goal is understanding and discovery, and the findings are comprehensive, holistic, and richly descriptive. The findings for this study needed to be very descriptive, which involved collecting data that would provide in-depth perspectives of the participants in ways a quantitative approach cannot offer. To understand the experiences and perspectives of instructional coaches supporting teachers with the literacy instruction of students from marginalized populations, qualitative research was the best method to study the "human experiences that are not approachable through quantitative approaches […] searching for meanings and essences of experience

rather than measurements and explanations" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 21). Therefore, qualitative research was the best methodological approach for this study.

Case study research has a long, well-known past across many fields of study (Creswell, 2007). As discussed by Creswell, (2007), Hamel et al. (1993), case study research is traced to anthropology and sociology and is widely utilized in the social sciences due to its popularity in psychology, medicine, law, and political science. Creswell (2005) defined *case study* as "the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system, over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and case based themes" (p. 73). Yin (1994) defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and relies on multiple sources of evidence" (p. 13). Merriam (1988) stated, "The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon" (p. 41). Gerring (2004) posited that a "case study is a research design best defined as an intensive study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar's aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomenon" (p. 341). According to Meriam, there are five steps to a research design, which include: literature review, theoretical framework, research problem, research questions, and purposive sampling. Therefore, a qualitative case study is a thorough, holistic, analysis of a bounded phenomenon. And, most importantly in a case study, the case itself it the single most essential factor (Merriam & Tisdel, 2016). These definitions and procedures offer a

flexible, holistic perspective of the case study method of inquiry to explore and analyze a bounded phenomenon.

There are three types of case study that are determined by the size of the case: the single instrumental case study, the collective or multiple case study, and the intrinsic case study (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). The researcher utilized the multiple case study in which "one issue or concern is selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue" (Creswell, 2007, p. 74). According to Yin (2003), the multiple case study utilizes the logic of replication in order to have a more in-depth look at the phenomenon within and across cases. The procedures for a multiple case study include determining the case, identifying the case/participants, collecting data through multiple sources, analyzing data both within and across cases, and reporting the findings through a complex, holistic picture (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "the inclusion of multiple cases is a common strategy for enhancing the external validity or generalizability of your findings" (p.40). The selection of multiple participants and the ability to utilize multiple forms of data collection techniques, such as interviews and observations, enhanced the strength of the qualitative research findings in this study (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1998).

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore the experiences and perspectives of instructional coaches that supported teachers with the literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. The experiences and perspectives of these coaches provided insight into how middle school instructional coaches supported teachers with the literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. The multiple case study approach was best suited for this study based on the

need to provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perspectives of multiple individuals that had experienced this phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994).

Philosophical Assumptions

There are four major philosophical assumptions recognized in qualitative research. The researcher demonstrates beliefs and practices toward ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical, and methodological assumptions when conducting their research (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1988). These assumptions influence how a researcher designs and conducts the study and analyze the data. As a result, the researcher must explicitly acknowledge certain philosophical assumptions they bring to the research process, which can have an impact on the study (Yin, 2011).

Ontology

Ontology is the nature of reality. There are multiple perspectives of reality and the researcher and the participants construct meaning in a variety of ways (Creswell, 2007). The researcher employs a critical theory ontology due to the belief that reality is influenced by outside forces such as social, political, economic, cultural, and gender values. These factors affect how individuals perceive themselves and others (Creswell, 2007; Donmoyer, 2006).

Epistemology

Epistemology is the knowledge being collected and how it is collected to discover the truth. In qualitative research, the researcher tries to get close to the research. In the critical paradigm, the findings are based on the local values of the participants and also is impacted by the same external factors that affect the ontology (Creswell, 2007; Donmoyer, 2006).

Axiology

The axiology assumption is the role that values play in the study. In qualitative research, the researcher states the values he/she brings to the study, reporting their values and biases and the value-laden nature of the data collection (Creswell, 2007; Donmoyer, 2006). Additionally, the critical theory paradigm asserts that outside sources influence the values and biases.

Rhetoric

The rhetorical assumption, "the language of the research," is important in qualitative research, due to the use of informal voice that relays the experiences of the participants, so "the writing needs to be personal and literary in form" (Creswell, 2007, pp. 17-18). This is particularly important in a multiple case study, which describes perspectives of participants that have experienced the phenomenon.

Methodology

The methodological assumption is the research design chosen by the researcher, which includes participant selection, data collection and analysis, and reporting the findings. In qualitative research, procedures are inductive in nature and emergent, interpretative, and reflecting throughout the process (Creswell, 2007; Donmoyer, 2006).

Sampling Procedures

In this study, the researcher used criterion sampling. According to Creswell (2007), when using criterion sampling the researcher selects the participants that meet the criterion and are useful for quality assurance. Criterion sampling is a type of purposeful sampling that involves reviewing and studying "all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance" (Patton, 2002, p. 238). Criterion sampling was particularly important for this multiple case study to understand the experiences and perspectives of instructional coaches supporting teachers with the literacy instruction of student from historically marginalized populations all participants must experience this phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). Creswell (2007) suggested utilizing no more than five case studies in a single study to provide enough data to identify themes and cross-case analysis. Therefore, for this multiple case study, the researcher selected three instructional coaches to provide sufficient data to support both validity and reliability of the research.

Participants

The researcher selected the participants based on criterion sampling to meet the purpose of the study, which was to explore the experiences and perspectives of instructional coaches that support teachers with literacy instruction in middle schools with students from historically marginalized populations. Criterion sampling ensured that all participants have experienced the studied phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Lichtman, 2013; Maxwell, 2005). The definition of an instructional coach was a professional educator that provides support to teachers in implementing research-based instructional practices into their teaching through ongoing, job-embedded, and personalized professional development (Joyce & Showers, 1982; Knight, 2007). The definition of historically marginalized populations is "groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions" over an extensive period (NCCDH, 2019, p. 1).

The participants involved in the study all came from different schools in the same district and were recruited and selected based on the criteria of being an instructional coach in a middle school that had more than 51% of students from historically marginalized populations, as identified by the state's department of education website. If they did not meet the established criteria, they were ineligible to participate in the study. The researcher delivered a recruitment letter and information sheet (Appendix B) to each of the coaches, once the district and the school administrators approved the study. The district process for research included submitting study details and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Then, a research team consisting of various district employees reviewed

the documents and approved the research. Finally, the school administrators and instructional coaches agreed to participate in the study.

All participants completed a pre-interview protocol about their backgrounds, training, and perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of an instructional coach. Below is a detailed description of the participants and their responses.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Name	Race	Sex	# Years Coaching	Current School Type	# Years Teaching	Subject Taught	Degree
Steven	Caucasian	Male	1	6-8	11	6-8 Social Studies	Doctorate in Educational Leadership
Mary	Caucasian	Female	2	6-8	30	6-8 English	Masters in Education
Suzy	African American	Female	3	K-8	9	6-8 Mathematics	Masters in Educational Leadership

Research Sites

The researcher conducted the study in an inner-city school system in a major metropolitan, southeastern region of the United States. At the time of this study, the district was the sixth largest school system in this southeastern state and the enrollment was approximately 23,041 students and 2,737 employees with 43 schools (Niche, 2020). The student population was approximately comprised of 91% African American, 7% Hispanic, 1% Caucasian, and 1% other. All schools in the system were Title I with more than

70% eligible for free or reduced lunch. This study consisted of three schools that served studentsin grades six through eight. All three schools had an instructional coach that served all content area teachers in the school.

Site one. The first school site, Star Middle School, was a middle school with grades six through eight that had been open for over 60 years as both an elementary and middle school. At the time of this study, the school's demographics included 339 students, with 88% African American, 7% race not identified, and 4% White. In addition, the following subpopulations were identified: 11% Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, 3% English learners, 12% students with disabilities, and 69% economically disadvantaged. There were 17 teachers, 1 instructional coach, 1 principal, and 1 assistant principal on staff. The staff was comprised of 71% African Americans, 19% Caucasians, and 10% individuals with race not identified, with 74% females and 21% males, and a subpopulation of 5% Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. The credentials of the staff were as follows: 26% bachelor's degree, 26% master's degree, 26% not specified, 11% educational specialist degree, and 11% provisional certificates. On the state accountability assessment, the students scored 46% on academic achievement and 99% on academic growth. The state gave the school an overall grade of a C on the report card. The school was on the state support list for having one or more subgroups of students that scored at or below the performance of all students in the lowest performing schools (State Department, 2020).

Site two. The second school site, Oak Tree, was a K-8 school with grades kindergarten through eight. For this study, the researcher focused on grades six through eight. The school has been open for more than 70 years and was a high school. At the time of

this study, the school had 690 students attending, with 96% African American, 2% White, and 1% two or more races. The school also had the following subpopulations: 1% Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, 4% students with disabilities, and 37% economically disadvantaged. The staff consisted of 67% African American, 21% White, 10% race not identified, 2% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 5% Hispanic/Latino ethnicities. The credentials among the staff included 39% with a master's degree, 32% with a bachelor's degree, 17% not specified, 10% with an educational specialist degree, and 2% with provisional certificates. They had 15 teachers (6-8), 1 instructional coach, 1 principal, and 1 assistant principal on staff. The school scored an A on the state report card, 88% of students scored academic proficiency, and 100% showed growth on the state accountability assessment (State Department, 2020).

Site three. The third school, Maple Middle, was a middle school with grades six through eight. The school name stayed the same for over 50 years, but the grades changed over the years from elementary to a K-8 school, followed by a middle school. The school had 454 students, with 96% African American, 1% White, 1% two or more races, 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 1% race not specified. At the time of this study, the subpopulations were 4% Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, 2% English learners, 13% students with disabilities, and 82% economically disadvantaged. There were 24 teachers consisting of 21 teachers, 1 instructional coach, 1 principal, and 1 assistant principal. Over 84% of teachers had more than three years of experience. The credentials among the staff included 29% with a master's degree, 42% with a bachelor's degree, 17%

not specified, 10% with an educational specialist degree, and 2% with provisional certificates. The school received an overall D on the state report card with 26% of students identified as meeting academic proficiency and 88% academic growth (State Department, 2020).

Data Collection

In a multiple case study, it is important to obtain as much information in various forms that provide in-depth descriptions from participants that have experienced the phenomenon to enhance the strength of the research and build an in-depth description (Creswell, 1998, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Yin, 2002). The researcher collected multiple qualitative data sources from three instructional coaches that supported teachers with the literacy instruction in middle schools for students from historically marginalized populations. The data sources included a pre-interview protocol, an interview, observations, and a post interview based on field notes. The pre-interview protocol (Appendix C), sent and returned via email, consisted of three open-ended questions with sub questions to help the participants elaborate on their responses. The purpose of the pre-interview protocol served to obtain contextual information on each participant's background, training, and perception of the role and responsibility of an instructional coach. Qualitative researchers use interviews to uncover the meaning structures that participants use to organize the experiences and make sense of their worlds (Hatch, 2002). The interview (Appendix D) with each of the participants contained seven questions that included clarifying questions about the pre-interview protocol and probing questions to gain a deeper understanding of participants' responses to the open-ended questions. The pandemic occurred during the study;

therefore, the observations occurred virtually with teachers and instructional coaches due to school closings and safety reasons. During the observations, instructional coaches virtually met with teachers to provide support for online instruction. The researcher observed and took notes of the meetings and acted as a nonparticipant. Lastly, the post interview (Appendix E) occurred to gain additional insight and information from all the previous data collected and contained seven additional questions about culture and supporting literacy of historically marginalized populations.

Table 2

Data Collection Procedures

Procedure	**Length of Time Required of Participants**	**Total # of Times the Procedure is Performed**
Pre-Interview Protocol	1 hour	1
Interview	1 hour (more or less-based on participant)	1
Observation(s)	6 hours	1 (same day or across multiple days)
Post Interview	1 hour (more or less-based on participant)	1

Data Analysis

In case study data analysis, the researcher analyzes the data for significant statements and themes that provide insight and understanding of the cases and settings. The process included grouping the statements into common themes and then, interpreting the data into descriptions of the cases and settings through the experiences and perspectives of the participants (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002). Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing "the data for analysis, then reducing the data into

themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion" (Creswell, 2007, p. 148; Patton, 2002).

The researcher collected the data from the participants, utilized a transcription application, read the documents, and looked for information that addressed the research questions; then, the researcher reduced the data by coding them for common themes in accordance with Hatch's (2002) inductive analysis. Inductive analysis, as in inductive reasoning, relied on themes emerging from the data through repeated examination and comparison (Hatch, 2002).

Ethical Considerations

In qualitative research, protecting the research participants should be of paramount concern. The researcher had a responsibility to prevent harming the participants and protecting the research process, and had an "obligation to respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of the informant(s)" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 201). The researcher took precautionary measures to address the ethical issues that commonly arise in qualitative research. The study was designed to eliminate risk to participants as much as possible by disclosing the purpose of the study, seeking voluntary participants, and assuring their confidentiality and anonymity. Written permission to conduct the study was obtained from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), the school systems for which the participants were employed, and individual participants. The foreseen risk is the loss of confidentiality so pseudonyms were used for all participants and locations in the reporting of the research. All conversations took place on a secure, online conferenc-

ing website or the phone. All information remained confidential. The research was discussed only by parties directly involved in the study. Electronic recordings and documents were secured by passwords only known by the researcher. All physical data was stored in a locked, secure cabinet at the researcher's residence. Electronic data was stored on a personal computer protected by passwords. Document and audio files containing identifiable information were encrypted. The researcher was the only person with direct access to all confidential information pertaining to the participants.

Establishing Credibility

To control the biases and produce a well-grounded and supported study, the researcher utilized multiple verification procedures. The researcher used four separate verification procedures to ensure that the study was credible, trustworthy, and transferable in the qualitative findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The verification procedures were triangulation, member checking, peer review, and rich, thick description (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from at least three different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective. Member checking is the process of taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they could judge the accuracy and credibility of the account. Member checking is considered "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). Peer review is the process of having a colleague review the research process and findings of the researcher (Erlandson et al., 1993; Merriam, 2009). Rich, thick

description is the process of describing in detail, the problem, participants, and all components involved in the study which helps with transferability (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Role of the Researcher

The role that a researcher plays in qualitative research is critical in the data collection and analysis procedures and focuses on becoming "one" with the topic and handling every aspect of the investigation, while serving as the primary instrument in handling all observations, interviews, and data collection (Creswell, 2007). Maxwell (2005) stated that in qualitative research, "the researcher is viewed as the instrument" (p. 83). According to Hatch (2002), qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, which is how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. The interpersonal skills of the researcher are paramount to the success of a qualitative study (Morse & Richards, 2002).

Summary

This chapter provided a review of the methodology and research design utilized in studying the experiences and perspectives of how middle school instructional coaches support teachers with the literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. The researcher conducted a multiple case study with three participants at three different sites that experienced the same phenomenon. By utilizing the multiple case study approach, the researcher could provide a cross-case analysis and examine similarities and differences among the participants. The data collection and analysis process

aligned with best practices in the qualitative research design. The researcher collected a pre-interview protocol, conducted an interview and post interview based on field notes, and completed an observation of the daily activities of the instructional coaches. The data analysis consisted of reading the documents and looking for information that addressed the research questions; then, reducing the data by coding them for common themes in accordance with the qualitative research design and case study methodology. This chapter also included philosophical assumptions, sampling procedures, descriptions of the research sites and participants, data collection procedures, and analysis processes.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Chapter 4 presents the findings of this qualitative, multiple case study on the experiences and perspectives of instructional coaches that support teachers with the literacy instruction with students from historically marginalized populations. These findings are a culmination of interviews, and observations of three instructional coaches. The qualitative data collection and analysis procedures provide a rich, thick description of the experiences and perspectives of the three instructional coaches. Reporting qualitative findings through case study methods highlights the development of themes that show the essence of the experiences of the participants through their words (Creswell, 2007). A total of three schools with three participants purposefully selected based on the determined criteria comprised this study. This chapter describes the participants selected from three middle schools, the results of the participants in response to interview questions, a description of the observations conducted, and the results of meanings formulated from significant statements and phrases and themes that emerged from the analysis of data collected.

Statement of the Problem

While there is research that supports the use of instructional coaches to positively impact teacher practices through a more comprehensive approach to training, “There is little systematic examination of both what kinds of coaching work best in which contexts

and the broader institutional factors that shape coaching policy and practice" (Galey, 2016, p. 55). Even though educators recognize instructional coaching as a common method of improving teacher and student outcomes through professional development, there are varying types of coaches including all-inclusive and content-specific focused positions, leading to little empirical evidence of coaching effectiveness on teacher practice, leaving a need to further understand, refine, and define coaching in schools (Desimone & Pak, 2016; Taylor, 2008). The lack of systematic and consistent implementation and conceptualization of instructional coaching creates a continued need to research coaching initiatives. Therefore, the framing of coaching roles and responsibilities affect the outcomes of school reform, teacher practices, and student success (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015).

Just as there is a lack of systematic and consistent implementation of instructional coaching, there is even less emphasis on the formal training of these coaches, with the training and preparation being an integral part in their ability to support the wide, varying needs of all teachers for school success. Not only is there a need to clarify best practices of instructional coaching as a professional development model, but also a need for a focus on how instructional coaches gain the knowledge and skills to effectively perform their duties both prior to and during their roles, which is imperative in the research on instructional coaching for school and district reform (Gallucci et al., 2010).

More specifically, there is limited research on the use of instructional coaches supporting teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized students. With many efforts over the past few decades and various school reform initiatives to raise student achievement, there has not been a significant increase in adolescent literacy

achievement nationwide, with over eight million adolescents struggling to read (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; NAEP, 2019). Even though school reform and assessment culture have over inundated K-12 education, educators know that test scores do not provide the full picture of student achievement. However, the proliferation of high stakes assessments and the pressure from legislators to increase test scores have driven instructional practices of literacy to focus on test preparation rather than critical thinking skills necessary for success in both academics and life (Valli et al., 2012). Because there are so many complexities and nuances that exist within literacy acquisition and literacy instruction, the test preparation approach has not been effective, as evidenced in the data. Therefore, there is a need to implement a different type of literacy instruction (Harvey, 2013).

With historically marginalized populations most negatively impacted by a focus on assessment, educators still face the pressures to increase academic achievement for all students within an inequitable society and system (Morrell, 2008). For these reasons, teachers need practical frameworks and research-based best practices to support the most vulnerable student groups in literacy instruction. The professional development on these practical frameworks for teachers need to be ongoing and job-embedded to support teachers in the implementation of best practices. Instructional coaching would be the best professional development model for these teachers, but they need to be knowledgeable of the best strategies to support teachers with literacy instruction of historically marginalized youth.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the perspectives and experiences of instructional coaches that supported teachers with literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. For the purpose of this research, an instructional coach is defined as a professional educator who provides support to teachers in implementing research-based instructional practices into their teaching through ongoing, job-embedded, and personalized professional development (Knight, 2007). And, historically marginalized populations are defined as "groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions" over an extensive period of time (NCCDH, 2019, p. 1).

The perspectives and experiences of these coaches provides insight into how middle school instructional coaches support teachers with literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. The data collected helps to inform future preparation of instructional coaches and best practices with respect to supporting teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized students. The information gained from these experiences and perspectives gives insight into instructional coaching practices and literacy strategies in middle schools.

Participants

The researcher selected the participants based on criterion sampling in order to meet the purpose of the study, which was to explore the experiences and perspectives of instructional coaches that support teachers with literacy instruction in middle schools

with students from historically marginalized populations. The participants involved in the study all came from the same district but different schools and recruited based on the criteria of being an instructional coach in a middle school that has more than 51% of students from historically marginalized populations, identified by the state's department of education website. If they did not meet the established criteria, they are ineligible to participate in the study.

Steven. Steven is an instructional coach at a 6-8 school with a Bachelor of Science in Education, a Master of Arts in History, and a Doctorate of Educational Leadership. Prior to being an instructional coach, he has taught seventh and eighth grade social studies for 10 years in an urban middle school within the same district. He became a teacher because he saw "education as the way to maximize my impact in this world [and had] a profound faith that education was the key to solving the world's greatest problems, and becoming a teacher puts you on those front lines."

After he completed his doctorate in educational leadership, he sought a change in position and was hired as the instructional coach at a middle school. This study took place during his first year as an instructional coach. Steven is Caucasian and works in an urban Title I school with students that were 96% African American and 4% Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. He has not received any formal or systematic training prior to becoming an instructional coach. Since he was hired, he attends district led workshops on the main duties of an instructional coach and content area professional development. He defines an instructional coach as "someone who meets teachers where they are at and supports them as they continue to grow, develop, improve, and build capacity." He believes the roles

and responsibilities include “modeling lessons, co-teaching, planning, data analysis, taking teachers through coaching cycles, building the relationships with the teachers, leading teams and initiatives, providing feedback on all phases of instruction, and advocating for your teachers.” Steven plans to continue working as an instructional coach and hopefully in the curriculum department.

Mary. Mary is a 30-year veteran in education and a second-year instructional coach with a bachelor of science in English and sociology education and a master of education. She has taught English Language Arts in both seventh and eighth grades for 28 years. She stated that she chose education as a profession because “I wanted to teach since I was a child. I wanted to make an impact on young people.” Prior to becoming an instructional coach at her school, she worked for a nonprofit summer camp for middle school students as a coach to the camp teachers and attended regional instructional coach conference; however, she does not view these experiences as formal training.

Mary is a Caucasian woman at a school with 88% African American students and 11% Hispanic/Latin ethnicity. She is an English classroom teacher at the same school for three years, prior to becoming the instructional coach. She credits her success as an instructional coach and her positive experiences in the position to the support of her current principal and assistant principal who were former school-based coaches. She defines the roles and responsibilities of an instructional coach as “teacher support, observations, feedback conferences, documentation, assistance, co-teaching, modeling lessons, locating resources, leading professional learning sessions, and trouble-shooting.” Mary looks forward to retiring soon and taking care of her mother.

Suzy. Suzy chose education as a profession "because of [her] passion for mathematics, and eagerness to share [it] with others". She has a Bachelor of Science in mathematics education, a Master of Science in mathematics education, and a Master of Art in instructional leadership. She has been an educator for 12 years and taught middle school mathematics. She also has been an instructional coach at the same school for three years. The school consists of 96% African American students and 1% Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. Suzy did not receive any training on instructional coaching prior to taking the position; however, she attended training provided by her school district on coaching and curriculum. When asked about the need for training on instructional coaching before hired, she stated, "Yes, I needed training because I had no prior experience as a coach or what the job entails." Her view on the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches is "conducting observations and feedback, assisting with teacher's curricular needs and the daily lesson planning protocol, modeling, and observations." She receives consistent feedback and support from her administrators. The school's assistant principal was the instructional coach prior to Suzy, so she provides significant assistance. Suzy plans to become a school administrator in the future.

Research Questions

To understand the perspectives and experiences of instructional coaches supporting teachers with the literacy needs of historically marginalized students in middle schools, the following central research question guided the study: How do instructional coaches support teachers with literacy instruction of historically marginalized students in middle schools?

1. How do instructional coaches use coaching practices to support teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized populations?
2. How do instructional coaches select literacy strategies to train teachers on supporting students from historically marginalized populations?
3. How does the instructional coach provide strategies to support teachers who instruct historically marginalized students?

Themes

Qualitative data analysis through case study methods supports the development of themes that show the experiences and perspectives of each case through the words of the participants (Creswell, 2007). The themes developed after carefully analyzing all collected data through interviews and observations. The researcher transcribed the data using a transcription application. The researcher read each transcription several times to get the essence of the all data collected. After getting a sense of the whole report, meaningful units developed from significant statements, then categorized the meaningful units into themes. The four major themes that emerged were the following: lack of coaching support/training, managing numerous coaching duties/responsibilities, supporting literacy instruction, and supporting teachers with historically marginalized populations.

Table 3

Themes and Subthemes A

Themes	Definition	Subthemes
Lack of Coaching Support and Training	The lack of support and training coaches received before or during employment from various entities.	• Prior Training • School District training • Administrative Support
Managing Numerous Coaching Duties and Responsibilities	The management of numerous daily duties and responsibilities instructional coaches are accountable for carrying out.	• Observations & Feedback • Modeling Lessons • Providing Teacher Support
Supporting Literacy Instruction	How coaches support literacy instruction across content areas.	• Selection of Strategies • Fostering Content Area Literacy
Supporting Teachers with Historically Marginalized Populations	How coaches support teachers working with historically marginalized populations.	• Teacher and student support • Coaches' Perceptions of School Culture and Climate

Lack of Coaching Support and Training

Instructional coaching is a professional development model employed by districts and schools to support teacher learning and implementation of new strategies through ongoing, continued instructional support (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Knight, 2007). Instructional coaches support teachers in a variety of ways including but not limited to co-planning, modeling strategies, promoting teacher reflection, analyzing data, and providing meaningful feedback for professional growth. With training and preparation being an integral part in their ability to support the wide, varying needs of all teachers for school

success, the coaches' professional development is imperative. If instructional coaches are not properly trained, instructional coaches "run the risk of being ineffective, wasting time and money, or even misinforming teachers" (Knight, 2009, p. 51). They need continuous training on new instructional and content area strategies and initiatives provided from the national, state, and local level to be effective in teacher professional development and support. The training for instructional coaches requires not only a knowledge of the research on instruction and content area practices, but also a knowledge of coaching strategies such as communication, building relationships, and working with adult learners. Therefore, instructional coaches need multiples types of ongoing training, just as teachers need ongoing training (Knight, 2009; Taylor, 2008).

Prior training. Most instructional coaches are hired, do not receive formal training, and are left to do their best. This lack of training can lead to various issues. Most trainings are provided at state or district levels, which further differentiates the roles and outcomes of instructional coaches (Pierce & Buysee, 2014). Administrators in areas without state or district initiatives are then left to hire coaches without training on best practices or a clear understanding of responsibilities and with little to no support.

None of the participants in this study received formal training prior to being hired as a coach. They were hired based on their success as classroom teachers. Steven stated, "I did not receive any formal or systematic training prior to becoming a coach." Suzy similarly said, "I did not receive training as an instructional coach prior to starting the job." While Mary worked to help teachers in a summer program, she did not receive formal training prior to working as a school level coach. However, she expressed,

> I did not receive training as an instructional coach prior to starting the job. However, I have worked for summer camp for the last 7 summers where I served as a coach. I received extensive training from the summer camp program and even attended a regional instructional coach conference but I needed training because I had no prior experience as a coach or what the job entails.

So even though she worked in the summer camp supporting teachers, it was different from her current position as an instructional coach in a middle school.

While instructional coaches have a huge task of supporting teachers in order to positively affect student achievement, they do not receive formal training or are not given extensive systematic support prior to starting the job. Many are left to their own understanding of best practices from when they were classroom teachers. With large amounts of funding and promises of better data, instructional coaches are placed in precarious positions to make the necessary changes without the proper training (Galey, 2016).

School district training. Even though instructional coaches may not receive formal training from post-secondary institutions or educational organizations, many of them receive some training from their school districts. With each district determining how to train coaches and the content of the training for coaches, it causes some confusion when coaches receive varying information, rather than having a nationwide standard of preparation. The participants all received some training from the district level after they were hired.

Steven said,

> Since I was hired, I have received a couple workshops that hit on some of the main duties of an instructional coach by the district. The training primarily dealt with following a guideline or protocol of sorts. It might've been two, but I'm almost certain that I've only been to one.

When he spoke about the style of the district training that he attended, he expressed, "It was like workshop style, but it was different components of, um, maybe not even necessarily coaching, but maybe in um, a curriculum area a curriculum coach might deal with." When asked his perspective on the district training, he conveyed,

> I would love to see something more systematic in terms of ongoing professional development for curriculum coaches. I would consider it would be super valuable to our district, which would be ongoing professional development, where we met like once a month to network and see how people are understanding their role and learning from each other, and also to get whatever necessary professional development, um, that is needed.

Steven expressed his need for a "more systematic" approach to his training as an instructional coach. He also wanted to be able to work with other instructional coaches in the district and share best practices and build a network of colleagues.

He was not alone in his sentiment regarding a lack of training. Suzy also did not receive training prior to starting her position as an instructional coach and received very little training from the district level. Suzy stated that she attended "two coaching workshops that lasted 6 hours each." She continued, "The school district provided the training. We discussed the coaching cycle." Suzy too believed that the training was a bit structured around duties and responsibilities and not more experience based. She also specified,

> It could have been more hands-on as in having the coach trainer to visit my school and give me feedback on how I give feedback to teachers. Yes, I needed training because I had no prior experience as a coach or what the job entails.

Suzy intimated that she needed more hands-on experience so that she could offer that to teachers as well. In addition to the coaching training, she needed some additional support on helping teachers of all content areas. She identified,

> It was a difficult transition for me because um, me and my background with middle school mathematics and with being a curriculum coach, you're kind of responsible for all subject areas, science folks, then ELL, including math. I mean, it really doesn't matter what subject area you teach, but you know what good instruction looks like, it was pretty much me learning the curriculum for different subject areas.

Even though she expressed that she "knows what good instruction looks like" across content areas, she still felt that she needed some support around various content areas and how to support all teachers. Additionally, she spoke about her school being a K-8 school and how she is responsible for all grade levels by saying,

> Right now I'm the curriculum coach for K-8 school, but it's almost like, I'm more leaning towards the middle school because I guess that's where I was before I became a coach. Elementary is my biggest challenge because, you know, I never had training at that level and never taught it.

Her responsibilities span across multiple grade levels and content areas, but she feels as though her training has not prepared her for the position. Suzy expressed,

> There's still some gaps, the training really focused on, our responsibility, you know, what do we think our responsibilities are as a coach. Maybe the district coordinator could come over one day, visit classrooms with me, make sure I'm doing everything right, that could have been more useful for me.

She wants to be sure she is doing a good job and wishes that she had more hands-on, one-on-one support to ensure she is providing teachers and students with what they need as well, which goes beyond just a list of duties and responsibilities.

Even though Mary received some training in a summer camp program as a teacher coach, she feels that the district did not provide much support once she started the position. She stated, "At the district level I don't receive much feedback or support. Despite the fact that I received training through a nonprofit, I think it would be beneficial if instructional coaches were trained at the district level." Currently, her role as the instructional coach is determined by the administration of her school." Her position in the summer camp did not completely transfer to her position as a school instructional coach and thus, she needed more district level support.

Therefore, the coaches felt as though they are not getting enough support from the district level after obtaining the position. The school district is not meeting their ongoing professional development and growth needs, and they had very little training prior to taking the position.

Administrative support. Instructional coaches walk a thin line between support and administrative duties. They must support teachers in a variety of ways and must meet

the expectations of the administration. Therefore, it is imperative to have a strong instructional leader that supports and guides the instructional coach toward their expectations of teaching and learning. Instructional coaches need the support of the administrative team and work closely with them to carry out their mission and vision to make the school successful. Instructional coaches must understand the mission and vision of the administration and need regular times to meet with the principal to plan and meet the organizational goals (Knight, 2007).

Suzy felt that she received a lot of administrative support in her position. Her principal and assistant principal support her plans to assist teachers while she carries out their vision for teaching and learning at her school. The assistant principal was an instructional coach at the same school prior to her being hired and helped her transition and take over the position. She explained,

> I have received feedback and support from my administrators. They support me by attending the PLCs [professional learning communities] that I conduct with teachers. My principal is really good about sending me over to other schools to kind of, um, observe other coaches and other assistant principals to see how they do things. So he was very supportive in that area.

It helped Suzy to be successful in her position by getting more support from her administrative team that she felt she had not received from the district level.

Steven also received support from his principal, but felt it was not in the format of a formal meeting by stating,

> Any time my principal is, um, engaging in discussion or, uh, trying to teach me things on the fly. And I say informal, cause there's no formal times that we sit

> down and talk about it, but it might be something that she wants to make sure that I'm highlighting in coaching sessions.

So, his principal does not have a lot of time to spend training Steven in sit-down meetings. He still feels that his principal provides support "in terms of how she wants it done or what it could look like, but also like advice and expertise, you know, from her perspective and her expertise. She's trying to share that expertise with me along the way." The principal shared advice in more informal ways that helped him to carry-out her mission and vision for instruction in the school; however, Steven wanted more time to plan and discuss with his principal.

Mary expressed that she has great administrative support because her principal and assistant principal were both previous instructional coaches, and they provide advice and support for her on a regular basis. She stated,

> Both my principal and assistant principal were once coaches. This helped me tremendously. They have both guided me on what the expectations are to be successful in my job. I have had a positive experience at my current school. I receive a lot of support at the school level from my administration.

Having this level of support on a school level from administration has guided her through her position as an instructional coach and helped to fill in the training gaps she has experienced.

When instructional coaches have a strong partnership with the administrative team, it not only assists the coach in carrying out their duties and responsibilities, but it also shows teachers that the coach and administrators are working together to improve

teaching and learning. The collaboration and shared vision make it easier for coaches to approach teachers and assist with training and implantation (Killion, 2009; Knight, 2007).

The three participants in this study shared the sentiment of a lack of coaching support and training both prior to and during their employment. While some received more support from their administrators than others, there was no consistencies in the amount of time or type of support they received. The district provided some short and broad training and support, but all participants wanted more explicit and ongoing help from the district level.

Instructional coaches need continuous training on new instructional and content area strategies and initiatives rolled out from a national, state, and local level to be effective in teacher professional development and support (Knight, 2009; Taylor, 2008). With the aim of making the greatest change in teachers' practices, instructional coaches must have access to a wide range of training. Additionally, because coaches interact with teachers daily, they need training on how to engage and train adult learners with strategies that support learning transfer and implementation and the competencies of successful coaching (Magin & Dunsmore, 2015). However, there is little systematic training of instructional coaches both prior to and during their employment. With the importance of instructional coaching to the success of teacher implementation and student outcomes, there should be more structured processes and programs that prepare and support instructional coaches in developing their knowledge and skills throughout their tenure.

Managing Numerous Coaching Duties and Responsibilities

Instructional coaches support teachers in a variety of ways including but not limited to training, co-planning, modeling strategies, promoting teacher reflection, analyzing data, and providing meaningful feedback for professional growth (Hanover Research, 2014). Instructional coaches have a plethora of duties and responsibilities, which look widely different from school to school. Even when providing a definition for instructional coaching, many educators still wonder what coaches do daily. As their daily tasks change, there is a need for coaches to prioritize their work (Killion (2009).

Observations and feedback. While instructional coaches are not given very clear duties and responsibilities, the teachers, administration, and data provide insight into the needs of the school. One of the most common and necessary duties of an instructional coach is conducting observations to gain perspective on the needs of the teachers, but also providing meaningful feedback to teachers to improve instruction. Each of the participants expressed that they conduct observations and give feedback to teachers based on those observations.

Suzy stated that her main responsibilities are observation and feedback by stating, "The day-to-day responsibilities of an instructional coach would include observations and feedback conferences." She spent a lot of her time visiting classrooms and providing tips to teachers to improve their instruction. The administration expected a certain number of observations weekly as a means of support to all teachers.

Mary also expressed that one of her main duties was

> conducting observations and feedback on a regular basis, and when I have feedback conferences with teachers, I always start with a positive, follow with something we can work on together, and end with another positive. I don't have all the answers, but I try to be as supportive as possible.

She provided her teachers with positive feedback and took on the role of a partner rather than an expert with her teachers.

Steven also conducted regular observations and feedback cycles with his teachers. He stated,

> I would say there's some things that are universal, so like I have to do observation feedback cycles, the protocol is the same for every teacher, for every observation that I do. And I do, you know, are anywhere from three to six a week and I've seen everybody in the building multiple times.

He has a system to ensure that he sees the teachers in the building on a regular basis. Additionally, he stated,

> I record those providing feedback on all phases of instruction and meet teachers where they are at and support them as they continue to grow, develop, improve, and build capacity. The role of an individualized support system is a major part of my responsibilities.

Steven did not just provide feedback, but implemented individualized support plans for all teachers in the school. Steven also provided support and feedback to his teachers during meetings. In a meeting with one of the teachers at his school since the pandemic started, he said,

> The first thing I wanted to say was how incredibly impressed I have been with your remote learning plan and specifically your dedication to communication to all of the students. Your presence online, uh, virtually is going to have a strong impact.

This provided some very positive feedback during a tough time for the teacher, building a relationship with him. He continued,

> And already just based on the number of assignments turned in it, I feel like you're getting significantly greater results than some of the other teachers that I've talked to. I appreciate all the effort you're putting into communicating the parents and your versatility.

Students were participating in remote learning at the end of the school year, and he was praising a teacher for his virtual practices and student participation. This went a long way with the teacher during the meeting. By providing timely feedback to the teacher, Steven could motivate and support the work of the teacher.

The observations and feedback cycle is an important role for instructional coaches. They must visit classes and observe teachers to gain an understanding of what is happening in the classroom and gauge teacher practices and needs. The feedback process provides teachers with both positive feedback and steps for professional growth. For instructional coaches to determine next steps, they have to know what teachers are doing and how to support the growth of everyone. The observation and feedback cycle fosters high-quality implementation of best practices while building a relationship with all teachers.

Modeling lessons. Instructional coaches provide observations and feedback, but then also model lessons for teachers that need additional support or struggle with components of implementation. By modeling best practices, instructional coaches can ensure that teachers are carrying out the strategies in the correct way. All the participants mentioned modeling, but expressed that they rarely get to model lessons for teachers due to other duties and responsibilities.

Suzy said that her duties also include the following:

> assisting with planning and other curricular needs such as modeling. So when I model, um, it's normally for a teacher who's having kind of issues with pedagogy and classroom management. And so it's just pretty much me modeling classroom management and instruction. Most teachers who are struggling with instruction are also struggling with classroom management.

Suzy made a connection between teachers having problems with the implementation of best practices due to a lack of strong classroom management. Oftentimes, she is modeling classroom management more than instructional strategies.

Mary stated her responsibilities include the following:

> co-teaching and modeling lessons for teachers and side by side assisting, I try to help them find resources, um, model teaching. I really wanted to do the more model teaching, especially with a couple of our teachers this last year. And you know, it just didn't happen the way I wanted it to.

Modeling involves both the instructional coach teaching a strategy while the teachers watches. Co-teaching is when both the teacher and instructional coach work side-by-side

rather than just the coach modeling the lesson. She had other responsibilities that did not give her enough time to model and co-teach with teachers, which she regrets.

Steven said he tried to make time to "model lessons, co-teach, take teachers through coaching cycles, and build relationships with the teachers" as much as possible. He had the same problem as the other two participants, not having enough time to model and co-teach as much as he wanted to for all teachers. He felt this was the one responsibility he often had to neglect, to complete other tasks and duties.

Modeling lessons for teachers of all levels is an important role for an instructional coach. To provide the full coaching cycle and improve teacher implementation, instructional coaches need time to model best practices for teachers on a regular basis. All the participants expressed a desire to provide more modeling to teachers, but they were just too busy with other duties and responsibilities.

Providing teacher support. When needed, instructional coaches are a resource for best practices, providing support materials to teachers. They are not only a source of knowledge, but they also spend a lot of time researching best practices and strategies to provide teachers with resources and training to improve instruction for all students. When teachers need resources and additional information, they look to the coach to provide the materials and knowledge they need. This aspect can be time consuming for coaches due to the time it may take to collect the information.

Steven believed that providing support to teachers is one of his most important responsibilities stating, "The role of a coach is to be an individualized support system while

leading teams and initiatives on all phases of instruction and advocating for your teachers." He strongly felt that teachers need a coach that could give them the tools they need to be successful. He expressed,

> I see myself as depending on what that teacher needs. I'm there to support that. I think it goes back to like the idea in my mind of, um, individualized support, um, and where I also want to respect every teacher as a professional.

Steven views coaching as a partnership with teachers rather than a supervisory role. He works to provide what the teacher needs, but works with them to determine those needs. He explained, "I would say in the, in the gentlest way possible, um, I'm very noncontroversial, um, or non-confrontational, um, absolutely the most gentle way possible. Like, have you thought about this?" He also recognized that not all teachers need the same level of support by stating,

> I just need to do a lot less coaching for some of them. Um, so it could be, it could be a veteran teacher that has just done the same thing over and over again. Um, and you know, since the literature has changed in the last 20 years, um, let me share with you something new that has come out since you were in school.

He notices that even veteran teachers need some coaching in new practices and strategies and spends time sharing support materials with them as well.

Mary strongly felt "the coach's role with teachers is first and foremost to support the teachers." She uses her time to be a supportive resource for all aspects of the teachers' responsibilities. She stated, "I spend time answering questions and assisting with planning lessons, discipline, strategies, and praising teachers as often as possible." She also

took on a shared responsibility role with teachers, working as a partner in the decision-making process. She articulated,

> I don’t have all the answers, but I try to be as supportive as possible. You tried this, or this didn't work, let's try something else, you know practices as in like strategies or the other I've tried and they worked, or I've been in another classroom and I worked, uh, I also encourage teachers to observe other teachers' classrooms that work.

By taking on a partnership with teachers, she can offer new suggestions and ideas in a non-confrontational way. As part of a meeting with one of her teachers, she provided support on virtual learning during the pandemic. She asked the teacher,

> What challenges with the virtual learning have you faced that you've really struggled with? I know that really participation in class is one. What ideas do you have because you know, next year we're looking at blended learning and we don't know what we're facing, starting off as, so you know, what ideas do you have maybe to encourage more involvement?

She is giving the teacher the opportunity to offer suggestions and be the expert in this exchange. She continued, “I'll be learning right there, along with you, um, you know, about techniques and strategies, you know, to get the students involved. You know, to get more kids participating.” She felt the need to provide support around virtual learning because teachers were struggling with participation at her school since the pandemic required distance learning; however, she shared her own uncertainty with the teacher and wanted to become a thought partner and learner with the teacher.

Suzy also works with teachers to share materials and strategies. She has teacher training sessions and meetings to share best practices, but she also looks for implementation of the information shared. She monitors implementation of the strategies through documentation. In a grade level meeting, she asks teachers to "collect some, just a few work samples that you have just as evidence of implementation of the units and also include the student reflections as well." By collecting this information including student input, it helps her to asses if the strategies are successful and what changes or adjustments she may need to make as an instructional coach. She also asks teachers for input on strategies and implementation, allowing them to share their thoughts and expertise.

Instructional coaches are often viewed as the experts that provide materials and resources to teachers. They must have a deep understanding of research-based instructional strategies to be able to support all teachers with their needs. These strategies range from content area instruction and assessment to classroom management. They also need strategies to communicate and build relationships with teachers in a way that respects the teacher as a professional and help them better their craft (Aguilar, 2013). As an instructional coach, they must not only provide knowledge, but also be a partner in the learning and planning process while working with the teacher (Knight, 2007). All the participants respected the voices of their teachers and operated with some of the core principles of the partnership approach to coaching as described by Knight (2007).

Literacy Instruction

Instructional coaches must support literacy instruction for all content area teachers to provide a holistic approach to literacy in the school. The International Literacy Association (ILA) defined literacy practices as "diverse forms of interacting with text that enable individuals to accomplish a range of purposes and attain personal benefits in ways that are shaped by cultural contexts and language structures" (ILA Literacy Glossary, 2020). While "successful teachers are able to skillfully integrate a range of instructional approaches and resources to meet the diverse needs of their students, literacy teaching can only be described as truly effective when it positively impacts student learning" (Harvey, 2013, p. 1). For this study, literacy was defined as a process by which one expands one's knowledge of reading and writing to develop one's thinking and learning for understanding oneself and the world (Encyclopedia, 2019). Therefore, providing a rich variety of texts and integrating research based practices of 21st century literacies, educators can transform literacy instruction to become not only teaching academic skills, but also building critical literacy skills.

Selection of strategies. Instructional coaches are a significant factor in supporting teachers with selecting new strategies for implementation to improve student outcomes through proven practices. Additionally, there is a need for effective strategies to improve literacy instruction that addresses the needs of all students (Hanover, 2014; Beers, 2007; Fisher & Frey, 2017). Because instructional coaches are responsible for improving the

teaching and learning practices of teachers, they must be abreast of research-based strategies to train teachers. All the instructional coach participants discussed how they share and support new literacy strategies with teachers in their schools.

Steven worked to ensure the use of literacy as a strategy to empower the students as his school. Steven emphasized,

> I'm pretty confident that all of them see literacy as a tool to empower students in their school and in the community. Right. Like in general they see literacy as a tool to empower people in general. And I can think of lots of instances where they are specifically encouraging students to, um, think critically through literacy.

He believed that teachers know the importance of literacy and how it empowers their students by making them think critically about what they are reading and the world around them. He explained how teachers encourage critical thinking by describing,

> They do a lot of points of view, different perspectives, what they choose for students to read and also highlights an emphasis on them reading multiple perspectives. Um, and, and a lot of times when I visit the classrooms during those types of lessons, I do see that.

He saw these strategies as a means to empower students through literacy. However, he acknowledged, “I don't think most of our students leave thinking that literacy has empowered them. So, I would like to acknowledge that there's probably a disconnect somewhere along the way.” He admitted there is a possible disconnect between how teachers see literacy and how students see literacy. He explained this disconnect by stating,

> I also don’t know how confident they are that literacy can empower students, and I don't know if I see them intentionally and explicitly tell it like, this can empower

you. Um, but some of them I would say that took this idea of literacy, empowering students in the school and the community were more ELA teachers.

Steven knew the importance of literacy as an empowering tool for students, but questioned whether students and teachers view it as a means to empower students to make changes in their communities. The thought of critical literacy to impact student lives and communities is not always apparent. When he does see these strategies, it is usually in some of the English courses. By recognizing this disconnect, he can then help teachers to bridge the gap in the perceptions among students about the power of literacy. When he took a closer look at the instruction in the classes and the strategies used, he explained,

> So like looking over the lesson plans and specifically looking for the literacy instruction, the literacy components that are included in the lessons, it looks different. It looks different in every class, right. It looks different in ELA class where it's always X, I mean, almost always explicit, but even in science and social studies, oftentimes, I don't know if it's just because of the time period that we live in. Um, but they're pretty good at like highlighting the literacy components that they are doing.

He admitted that the literacy instruction looked differently in different subjects with the English course being more explicit in their teaching strategies. He expounded on his observations,

> And so when I was observing in the classroom, like if I went into a social studies classroom, a lot of our new eighth grade social studies teachers, you know, I was always looking for ways and strategies that they could use to incorporate literacy

> and then maybe do an activity that would support, you know, what they've read, um, encourage them to have the kids annotate, and to keep kids writing.

By regularly observing teachers, Steven can get insight into what strategies teachers are using and the implementation to address the needs of everyone. Then, he followed up on providing ideas and strategies to the teachers that needed it most.

It is important for instructional coaches to not only gain input from all teachers in selecting literacy strategies for implementation, but also providing them with the support and resources to be successful. Mary worked hard to support teachers with new strategies once the pandemic started and schools went virtual. She expressed, “Once we went into virtual, you know, things like common lit news, ELA, Scholastic, things of that nature, you know, to help them tie in literacy into their content, just to make sure we're hitting on that.” Mary provided different websites and strategies to her teachers as they struggled through trying to instruct students virtually. Again, she expressed this was important because teachers needed extra support during this time. She used her time to be a supportive resource teachers in literacy instruction. She stated, “I spend time answering questions and assisting with planning lessons, discipline, strategies, and praising teachers as often as possible.” She also took on a shared responsibility role with teachers, working as a partner in the decision-making process. She articulated,

> I don’t have all the answers, but I try to be as supportive as possible. You tried this, or this didn't work, let's try something else, you know practices as in like strategies or the other I've tried and they worked, or I've been in another classroom and I worked, uh, I also encourage teachers to observe other teachers' classrooms that work.

Her support of literacy strategies was more of a shared responsibility with her teachers while they struggled to instruct students virtually.

Suzy worked with teachers to determine the best way to support student literacy needs and selected the best strategies for those needs. She gave the following example,

> the very last meeting that we had before we left was, um, teachers were telling me that with those long passages, um, students are not reading the whole passage, you know, and by the time they read the whole passage, they get to the question, they really don't know how to answer the question. So some of the things we came up with was having to annotate or read the questions first and then go back and kind of read the passage to kind of annotate as they go.

These conversations helped all teachers determine the most important needs of the students and adjusted instruction by employing strategies that supported the concerns. Another common strategy they utilized was the RACE strategy (restate, answer, cite, and explain) for writing short passages or answering questions. Then, she also had common activities on certain days throughout the week. She explained,

> We also talked about the RACE strategy. I want to say every Wednesday we would do like essay writing or an assignment where we had some type of reading assignment school wide. So, for example, maybe the week before in a faculty meeting or whatever, I told the school, Hey, it's Wednesday, we're gonna focus on, um, reading comprehension. And later next week we're focused on if they're writing using the race strategy.

By providing strategies school-wide, teachers and students can focus on the process and implementation together and discuss successes and needs for improvement. Suzy also can

monitor the implementation and support teachers in a more systematic way without overwhelming teachers with too many things at the same time.

Fostering content area literacy. ELA teachers cannot carry the burden of fixing the adolescent literacy crisis alone. Consequently, all teachers must understand their roles in literacy instruction. The comprehension skills taught in the English language arts classes are useful across contents, however, students need additional skills to help them study math, science, and history. Content area literacy is defined as the ability to meaningfully interact with content area words (Draper et al., 2005). This means all teachers need to be trained in teaching reading and writing strategies to teach skills such as identifying the purpose and building knowledge to help students gain understanding (Bain et al., 2008; Moje & Speyer, 2008).

Steven worked to involve all content teachers in the literacy process, not just the ELA teachers. He explicated,

> I talked to the teams about literacy across the curriculum. So especially, you know, science, social studies and, you know, the ELA teachers and helping them find resources and especially with, yeah, I was sending out resources constantly to help them tie in literacy into their content, you know, just to make sure we're hitting on that.

It is important to involve all content area teachers in the literacy instruction process and the selection of common strategies to implement in all courses. Steven goes further by observing teachers to determine any need for support and changes in the implementation of the literacy strategies. He identified that all content area teachers utilized some type of

literacy strategy in their courses, but it is not always explicitly explained or stated to students and attributed this to the recent changes in teacher preparation on the importance of content area literacy. He continued, “Um, and so a lot of times they'll just be like, read and write, read this and write that, okay. I covered literacy.” Then, he would follow-up with the question, “Well, how is it that reading this ancient primary source is different than what they're reading, uh, down the hall in, in ELA?” He admitted, “I would say the bulk of my time in terms of literacy instruction is helping specifically science and social studies teachers rethinking how they teach the literacy skill.” He attempted, like others, to implement common literacy strategies across content areas. With him working at a project-based school, he has more opportunities for teachers to collaborate on projects. However, he needed to support content area teachers outside of ELA more often. He worked hard to incorporate literacy instruction across all content areas.

Mary also meets with grade level teams and supported literacy across content areas. She looked for input from all teachers for the selection of literacy strategies and sent out resources to support teachers in implementation. “Well, you know, I talked to the teams about literacy across the curriculum. So especially, you know, science, social studies and, you know, the ELA teachers and helping them find strategies and yeah, I was sending out resources constantly.” She too noted that science and social studies teachers needed some additional support. She looked to her English teachers to support in the selection of literacy strategies and resources.

Suzy meets with the English Language Arts (ELA) and social studies teachers to get ideas for common literacy instruction and strategies to share with the other teachers. She said,

> I would meet with the, um, ELA and humanities teachers together and we would kind of talk about first some of the problems we see with instruction and literacy. And then together we'll come up with strategies that we think we will work on and then I will come up with a way to kind of implement and monitor those, uh, strategies or whatever we talked about in our PLC.

She wants to ensure that all teachers used similar strategies and determine the best way to monitor and support the implementation for all teachers. Her English and humanities teachers supported her with literacy strategies too. Suzy was a former mathematics teacher and voiced her concern on supporting other content areas. So, she depends on these teachers for help.

All teachers must educate hundreds of students of varying abilities daily using a multi-faceted curriculum. While "successful teachers are able to skillfully integrate a range of instructional literacy approaches and resources to meet the diverse needs of their students, literacy teaching can only be described as truly effective when it positively impacts student learning" (Harvey, 2013, p. 1). Students encounter literacy concepts across disciplines and content areas that have specific skills. Therefore, all secondary teachers should be teaching adolescents how to read in the disciplines (NCTE, 2018).

Supporting Marginalized Populations

Being cognizant of the inequities in society, including in the educational field, the instruction of marginalized students must meet the academic and social needs of culturally diverse populations while providing them with the tools to challenge the status quo

(Howard, 2003). Banks asserted that school plays a role in fixing the nation's issues and additionally stated,

> We must also be tenacious in our faith that the school can play a limited but decisive role in bringing about equal educational opportunities for all students and can help them develop the cross cultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function in a democratic society. (Banks, 2016, p.111)

In additional studies, Ladson-Billings (2009) found that successful teachers of diverse students not only believe in their students' ability to succeed, but also in their ability to teach them. Instructional coaches support all teachers including those that instruct historically marginalized populations. Therefore, they must be aware of the needs of these students and how to support the teachers in the implementation of best practices for this population.

Coaches' perceptions of school culture and climate. The school culture and climate are very important to the operation and overall success of the school. The coaches' perceptions of the school culture and climate impacts the way in which they operate with teachers, staff, parents and students. All three coaches discussed the school culture through various lenses. The main subthemes that emerged were parental involvement and parent perceptions of the school, which affects each school's overall environment differently.

Suzy discussed the parental involvement at her school as being positive due to the level of participation parents take in the school activities. She asserts, "Our parents are very involved. Um, I mean students are well behaved, not saying it, um, they don't get

suspended or anything else, but we, we have, compared to other schools in the district." Her school has a good reputation in the district for parental involvement. She thinks this is what creates the good school climate. She emphasizes,

> We pretty much have a good climate, you know, um, many of the kids are able to learn. Um, like I said, the parents community are hands on. Um, and that kind of plays a big part. And when you have that parent participation there, um, I think that's the big component of our school culture is the parent involvement pretty much the culture is very good at our school.

She also participates in the parent conferences with teachers on student achievement. She shared,

> A lot of the parent conferences that I deal with are curricular needs. Uh, so with that, you know, I kinda give strategies to the teacher and the parents on what ways we can get this child on the right track, um, but I know they need some type of remediation and I will work with them as a coach.

This also attributes to the positive school culture and climate when parents are staying involved in the learning process of their children. As an instructional coach, she takes part in the conferences to support the teachers and students as well.

Mary also spoke highly of her parental involvement at her school as it relates to school culture and climate. She concluded,

> Well, I do think that the parents, for the most part have a positive outlook. The school has a really good reputation. The principal demands a lot from the teachers and, um, you know, so the school culture, for the most part, it's, you know, I would think our school culture is positive.

She credited the school principal for fostering the positive reputation and school culture and climate among the staff and the community.

Recently reorganized, Steven's school combined students from a few other schools and neighborhoods, which caused friction among the students, parents, and communities. Also, they have several new teachers and a new school principal, so they are trying to build a positive school culture and climate from the ground up. He perceived that

> when you have, like, when you have most well 90% plus parents, um, living below the poverty line, um, in your community, now you're talking about a totally different set of issues. And, it makes it tough on parents to get into schools. Um, whether it's because of the time of day or lack of childcare or transportation. I'm not saying that any of them are easy fixes, but yeah. So if I hear the negativity, I try to remain positive and offer alternative narratives about what could be happening.

Steven believed that poverty affected many aspects of the school and home relationship and impacted how parent interacted with the school. When the school was issuing electronic devices prior to releasing students due to the pandemic to support virtual learning, some parents were worried about being held accountable for the devices. Steven said he got requests from parents to not issue the electronic devices. "A lot of them love the iPads. Um, but I hear complaints every day like, I can't believe you gave my kid an iPad because they're going to break it or they're gonna have to pay for it." He was responsible for issuing the devices, but many parents did not want to take it and be held respon-

sible. However, the student would not be able to complete their work or participate in virtual learning. The parents are more worried with other life issues and financial concerns that manifest into complaints that some educators do not understand, such as school materials versus other essential financial strains.

The instructional coaches had perceptions about the school culture and climate and, they connected it with the parental involvement at their respective schools. When working with historically marginalized populations, educators must be cognizant that a large number of students from marginalized populations deal with a plethora of issues stemming from a variety of societal inequities, which affect their lives both in and out of school, such as poverty, lack of quality healthcare, and social/emotional needs (Rivas-Drake et al., 2019). Therefore, it is imperative to address all the needs of students while providing them with a quality education.

Teacher and Student Support

Suzy had some training in college prior to teaching in urban schools. She believes this prepared her for working with historically marginalized populations. She recalled,

> I was in the urban teacher education program which was kind of around working in, um, urban communities and urban schools. So that was one early experience that I had working in urban schools. Your whole curriculum kind of centers around urban education, even your internship, even my internship within an urban setting.

She credits this program and the experiences she had to her success in urban schools. She further stated, “So it kind of helps you. The program pretty much helps you with those

strategies and kind of gave me hands on experience with working in those schools and those school's settings." Not only did the coursework assist her in understanding special circumstances, but the program also gave her a network of teachers that she could collaborate with to support her students. She continued,

> I remember having those, uh, meetings like outside of my regular courses where we kind of had a chance to discuss some of our experiences working in these urban schools. Um, that was one thing that was helpful kind of being able to collaborate and talk to other teachers, I mean, uh, that are working in urban schools are also interning and doing their internships in urban school. You kind of hear some of the things that were happening with them and some of the strategies they were using also they would bring in teachers that taught in urban school with a kind of have this, having conversations with us.

By having the network of teachers and experts from the field, she felt she gained a set of skills that helps her in the current position as an instructional coach, supporting teachers of students from marginalized populations. In her current school, she has a different set of obstacles with student engagement. She explained,

> Now, one of our biggest issues here is having students that, that won't put forth the effort. You know, they may be smarter students. Now we have the PBIS [positive behavior interventions and support] program where we award points for good behavior or something. We did that. And then every, I would say every nine weeks those kids would have earned an amount of points. Um, they get a chance to attend a party, a dance, whatever we may have planned for them.

By promoting positive behavior, they support students in their academic achievement. She found ways to motivate students to do the work because they are more than capable to perform the assignments.

On the other hand, Steven found it overwhelming to meet all the needs of teachers supporting historically marginalized students. He explained,

> Support that is needed compared to the support that we get for our students in terms of like where they are academically, where they are in like in social, emotional learning, um, where they are in those areas. Um, if that gap is so overwhelming that it is, um, it's a lot for the teachers. In fact, it's too much, like you'd have to be Superman, um, to, to make it happen. And we have some people who are close to that, but to expect everyone to be super teacher is just unrealistic.

Steve discussed the struggle to support all the needs of the students and teachers in his school and how teachers need many skills to be successful. He also believed the curriculum should be more reflective of the student body which could promote pride and interest. He expressed,

> We can do things that, um, reflect, uh, our culture and our heritage. Um, and even though I'm not black, I feel that like there should be an Afrocentric curriculum taught to students where students can see themselves. Um, like I want our students to see that African Americans and Africans have done great things and have written great poetry and written great essays and short stories and, um, documentaries. And they're doing the research here, you know like there's that kind of cultural spin that we can put on the education.

Steven was a former social studies teacher and respected the historical aspect of incorporating cultures that reflect the student body. He felt that this would go a long way in supporting and motivating the students at his school.

Mary discussed the struggles teachers faced in her school while supporting their students. She has also taught at the school she currently serves as an instructional coach, so she is also speaking from her perspective in the classroom. When describing her students, she stated,

> They read on third grade reading level and they do math at a second grade level. Right. And so, like, all of these things are compounded. And then you also have to share the classroom with 28 other kids who are also struggling. Um, and so helping teachers find the most efficient and best way to reach as many as they can knowing that the cards are stacked against them and their students is a hard, it's a hard job.

She felt that providing support to her teachers when they face multiple issues is difficult for her. However, she motivated the teachers by telling them to do their best, saying,

> And so I think I come from the perspective that doing the best you can is the best you can, but you can't do any more. And so, um, and so let's, let's focus on what we can accomplish and go from there.

She encouraged teachers to do the best they can for their students to motivate them to meet their needs. She also talked about positive behavior support, stating,

> There's rewards in place and things of that nature. Uh, we have that game room, they get to go and participate, you know, for a class period, they get to play in the game room and, um, yeah, things like that.

In addition to recognizing positive behavior, they also work on increasing student achievement through intervention strategies. She explained,

> We have intervention twice a week and making sure that they target those students based on, you know, on data that is not just a makeup work period, because it was fairly easy for that to become a makeup work period. And you're not really looking at where this child is weak, you know, so I try to work usually in our grade level team meetings, you know, encouraging them to make sure that they're utilizing the intervention class to really help children who need help in certain areas.

Mary wanted to make sure teachers were utilizing intervention times to support students that needed extra instruction. She continued to express her concern by stating,

> I feel like a lot of our super low kids get overlooked sometimes because our focus is so much on those that we think we can push over to that next level, you know, um, on the test, you know, and I don't think sometimes we focus too much on the task.

She believed that student achievement was a very important part of supporting her students. Mary recognized that as a white female, she may carry biases and not understand all aspects of working with historically marginalized populations. She explained,

> You have to recognize, you know, as a white female and an urban district and appreciate the culture that you're working with and like today, especially with things that go on in the world, you have to acknowledge white privilege. You have to acknowledge that, you know, we have marginalized groups of children and there's reasons that they're marginalized.

She admitted that she had implicit biases and came from a different culture, and there are unfair issues that affect the students. She expounded,

> The poverty that we have and the reason that it's certain groups of kids tend to be in poverty. You have to understand institutionalized racism, that the opportunities, as much as the country talks about opportunities, they're not necessarily there for certain groups of people. And so you cannot come in, you know, especially from a white culture and not understand that the problems and marginalized cultures are real, you know, you can't come in with that attitude, you're in the wrong place, if you do.

By acknowledging that there are institutionalize and systemic inequities, Mary recognized the problems and does not blame the students or the community for the issues they must face daily. She worked with her staff to support the needs of her students.

A large number of students from marginalized populations deal with a plethora of issues stemming from various societal inequities that affect their lives both in and out of school, such as poverty, lack of quality healthcare, and social/emotional needs (Rivas-Drake et al., 2019). Therefore, it is imperative to address all the needs of students while providing them with a quality education. When applied to education, Maslow's theory provides the basis for utilizing a more holistic approach by addressing the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual qualities that affect teaching and learning (Maslow, 1954). Additionally, relationship building among teachers and students is an important component to developing a safe and nurturing environment conducive to learning, particularly for students experiencing outside stressors such as poverty and racism (Jensen, 2016; Liew et al., 2010).

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of this qualitative, case study study on the experiences and perspectives of instructional coaches that support teachers with the literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. These findings are a compilation of the responses to interviews and observations of three instructional coaches supporting teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized populations. After the data collection and analysis, four major themes and 10 subthemes emerged from the study. The lack of coaching support and training consisted of prior training, school district training, and administrative support. All three instructional coaches discussed the support they received from all three levels. None of them received any formal training prior to accepting the position, with minimal district training, and some administrative support. The managing of numerous coaching duties and responsibilities seemed daunting to the participants. The three most discussed duties in this study were observations and feedback, modeling lessons, and providing support materials to teachers. These duties and responsibilities took up most of their time as an instructional coach, and all participants wished they had more time to model lessons for all teachers. However, all three instructional coaches could support teachers with materials and resources based on their needs. The theme of literacy instruction included the two subthemes the selection of strategies and fostering content area literacy. The instructional coaches all identified and shared literacy strategies and supported those strategies across all content areas. When supporting historically marginalized populations, the instructional coaches provided teacher and student support to ensure success despite societal inequities. The coaches' perceptions of the school culture and climate can influence the way in which they operate

with teachers, staff, parents and students. All three coaches discussed the school culture through various lenses. The school culture and climate are an integral part of the educational process of students. Parental involvement in education is a very important component in all aspects of the educational process. The perceptions parent have of the school impacts how much they are involved in school activities.

Overall, all three of the instructional coaches had similar experiences and worked hard to support teachers with literacy instruction for marginalized populations. To understand the phenomenon of the experiences and perspectives of instructional coaches supporting teachers on meeting the literacy needs of historically marginalized students in middle schools, the findings helped to understand the central research question: How do instructional coaches support teachers with literacy instruction of historically marginalized students in middle schools?

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher provided a review and discussion of the major findings from the data analysis of this qualitative research study on the experiences and perspectives of instructional coaches that support teachers with the literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. Additionally, the researcher discussed an examination of the research questions and sub-questions, which guided the study, the literature relevant to the findings, the theoretical frameworks, the limitations of the study, the recommendations for future research, and the conclusions in detail.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore and examine the experiences and perspectives of instructional coaches that support teachers with the literacy instruction in middle schools with students from historically marginalized populations. Using qualitative research design, the researcher sought to understand the phenomenon by collecting multiple forms of open-ended data from the participants, analyzing the data collected for description and themes, and interpreting the meaning of the information, while drawing on personal reflections and past research (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, qualitative research was an inquiry approach useful for exploring and under-

standing a central phenomenon in a natural setting (Creswell, 2007; Eisner, 1991). Maxwell (2005) stated, "the strengths of qualitative research derive primarily from its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people, and its emphasis on words rather than numbers" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 22). Finally, in qualitative research, the main goal is understanding and discovery, and the findings are comprehensive, holistic, and richly descriptive (Merriman, 1998). The findings needed to be explicitly descriptive, which involved collecting data that would immerse the readers in ways, such as thick, rich descriptions, that a quantitative approach could not provide.

The researcher utilized the multiple case study approach in which "one issue or concern is selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue" (Creswell, 2007, p. 74). According to Yin (2003), the multiple case study utilizes the logic of replication in order to have a more in-depth look at the phenomenon within and across cases. The procedures for a multiple case study include determining the case, identifying the case/participants, collecting data through multiple sources, analyzing data both within and across cases, and report the findings through a complex, holistic picture (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). The selection of multiple participants and the ability to utilize multiple forms of data collection techniques, such as interviews and observation, enhanced the strength of qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1998).

Criterion sampling allowed the researcher to select participants who experienced the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2007, Lichtman, 2013; Maxwell, 2005). The three participants involved in the study all came from the same district but different schools and recruited based on the criteria of being an instructional coach in a middle

school with more than 51% of students from historically marginalized populations, identified by the state's department of education website.

Once the district and the school administrators approved the study, the researcher delivered a recruitment letter and information sheet (Appendix B) to each of the coaches. All participants answered a pre-interview protocol about their background, training, and perceptions of the role and responsibility of an instructional coach. Additionally, participants completed an interview, observations, and a post interview. The researcher used a transcription application for all the data collected from the participants. Once transcribed, the researcher read and reviewed all data for accuracy. All procedures utilized helped answer the research questions for this study.

The researcher read each transcription several times to understand the essence of all the data collected from the participants. After gaining a sense of the whole statement, meaningful units developed from significant statements. The researcher closely examined the collected data from the participants and coded the information through labeling and organizing participant responses to identify and categorize reoccurring themes and subthemes. The four major themes that emerged were the following: coaching support and training, coaching duties and responsibilities, school culture and climate, literacy instruction, and supporting marginalized populations. After coding and labeling the information, the researcher described the findings by organizing the responses of each participant by themes and subthemes to determine the perspective of each participant as it related to their experience of the phenomena. The discussion of the study included a review of the research questions the lead the study in comparison to the findings from the data analysis.

In the review of the literature pertinent to this study, the researcher discussed three major topics: (a) instructional coaching; (b) adolescent literacy; and (c) the instruction of historically marginalized populations, and the theoretical frameworks.

Instructional coaches support teachers in a variety of ways including but not limited to co-planning, modeling strategies, promoting teacher reflection, analyzing data, and providing meaningful feedback for professional growth (Knight, 2006). While there are different models for instructional coaching, the skilled coach chooses the best approach that meets the needs of individual teachers and students (Hanover, 2014). Also, while there is research that supports the use of instructional coaches to positively impact teacher practices through a more comprehensive approach to professional development, "there is little systematic examination of both what kinds of coaching work best in which contexts and the broader institutional factors that shape coaching policy and practice" (Galey, 2016, p. 55). The theoretical framework for instructional coaching that supported best practices of supporting adult learners was the partnership approach developed by Knight (2007). In his partnership approach, instructional coaches should provide the following components: equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity (Knight, 2007). These key factors help to build relationships through respect and provide the necessary support for successful instruction.

The literature review revealed much inconsistency in the definitions and perspectives of literacy and literacy instruction. One aspect that many scholars agreed upon was that literacy is an ongoing process throughout one's life (Moye, 2002; Moye & Sutherland, 2003). The International Literacy Association (ILA) defined literacy practices as "diverse forms of interacting with text that enable individuals to accomplish a range of

purposes and attain personal benefits in ways that are shaped by cultural contexts and language structures" (ILA Literacy Glossary, 2020). This definition encompassed the idea that literacy is not only ongoing, but also a means to empower individuals while respecting their cultural and linguistic heritage.

The theoretical framework that best aligned with the study was critical literacy. Lankshear and McLaren (1993) discussed the term of critical literacy as an approach to empower learners by teaching them to read with a sociopolitical consciousness. Varying definitions of critical literacy emerge, but they all have the same purpose, which is to be aware of the construction of messages within society. Critical literacy encompassed more than teaching the functional skill of acquiring knowledge, but the means to change societal inequities and problems (Kretovic, 1985; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993). Anderson and Irvine (1993) defined critical literacy as "learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations" (Anderson & Irvine, 1993, p. 82). In addition, Morrell (2002) defined critical literacy as the "ability not only to read and write, but also to assess texts in order to understand the relationships between power and domination that underlie and inform those texts" (p. 73). While critical literacy definitions vary, the conceptual basis was the ability to critically analyze messages from varying perspectives in which the text was constructed with an awareness that language is power (McLaren, 1988; Morrell, 2002; Shor, 1999). Teachers of critical literacy empower their students to become change agents of society. When working with historically marginalized populations, it is important to empower students with critical literacy to enable them to interrupt the status quo, which negatively affects their lives.

The third major topic discussed in the literature review was the instruction of historically marginalized populations. The instruction of marginalized students must meet the academic and social needs of culturally diverse populations while providing them with the tools to challenge societal inequities (Howard, 2003). The roots of societal inequities were steeped in racism while sustaining racial superiority stems from racist ideologies embedded in the education system to maintain power of the dominant culture (Banks, 2016; Zamudio et al., 2011). Banks realized schools played a role in fixing the nation's issues, saying,

> We must also be tenacious in our faith that the school can play a limited but decisive role in bringing about equal educational opportunities for all students and can help them develop the cross-cultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function in a democratic society. (Banks, 2016, p. 111)

When historically marginalized students were not successful, as measured by current educational standards, they were blamed for their failures, further perpetuating dominant ideologies to rationalize racial superiority and maintain privilege and power (Anyon, 1980; Nieto, 2005; Zamudio et al., 2011). As Ladson-Billings (2006) asserted that the "educational debt" of America is not the fault of the students it affects, but the societal and economic ills that have plagued a group of people that we owe a quality and equal education (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Winn and Johnson (2011) stated these inequities "led to education deficit of African American and Latina/Latino youths who have been historically denied access to education and/or equal educational funding and are excluded from the civic process" (Winn & Johnson, 2011). In additional studies, Ladson-Billings (2009)

found that successful teachers of diverse students not only believe in their students' ability to succeed, but also in their ability to teach them. These teachers did not have a deficit mindset about their students, and they fostered positive relationships both in and out of the school (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Her research led to the development of the theoretical framework, culturally relevant pedagogy. To prepare teachers that educate a growing diverse population in the United States, the development of the theoretical framework, culturally relevant pedagogy, came from the need to combine culture and teaching when instructing students (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings (1995) defined culturally relevant pedagogy as an "effective pedagogical practice [and] theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 469).

One of the central principles of culturally relevant pedagogy is "a rejection of deficit-based thinking about culturally diverse students" (Howard, 2003, p.89). Culturally relevant pedagogy provides schools a way to recognize the culture of students and incorporate their experiences in the classroom (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). In addition to culturally relevant pedagogy, students from marginalized populations deal with a plethora of issues stemming from a variety of societal inequities, which affects their lives both in and out of school (Rivas-Drake et al., 2019). Therefore, it is imperative to address all the needs of students. As in Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, five levels affected human motivation. When applied to education, Maslow's theory provided the basis for utilizing a more holistic approach to education by addressing the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual qualities that affect teaching and learning (Maslow, 1954). By acknowledging

the needs of historically marginalized students, which include the incorporation of Maslow's theory, instructional coaches and teachers can not only meet students' needs but also empower them to be agents of change through education. These three major topics and theoretical frameworks were the foundation of this multiple case study on the experiences and perspectives of instructional coaches supporting the literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the perspectives and experiences of instructional coaches that support teachers with literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. For the purpose of this research, instructional coaches was defined as a professional educator who provides support to teachers in implementing research-based instructional practices into their teaching through ongoing, job-embedded, and personalized professional development (Knight, 2007). And, historically marginalized populations was defined as "groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions" over an extensive period of time (NCCDH, 2019, p. 1).

The perspectives and experiences of these coaches gave insight into how middle school instructional coaches support teachers with literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. The data collected will help to inform future preparation of instructional coaches and best practices with respect to supporting teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized students. The information gained from

these experiences and perspectives can give insight into instructional coaching practices and literacy strategies in middle schools.

Research Questions

To understand the perspectives and experiences of instructional coaches supporting teachers with the literacy needs of historically marginalized students in middle schools, the following central research question guides the study: How do instructional coaches support teachers with literacy instruction of historically marginalized students in middle schools?

1. How do instructional coaches use coaching practices to support teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized populations?
2. How do instructional coaches select literacy strategies to train teachers on supporting students from historically marginalized populations?
3. How does the instructional coach provide strategies to support teachers who instruct historically marginalized students?

After data collection and analysis, the researcher then began to determine how the themes and subthemes that emerged support, refute, and/or inform the research conducted through the research questions and the existing literature. The five major themes that emerged from this multiple case study were the following: coaching support/training, coaching duties/responsibilities, school culture and climate, literacy instruction support, and supporting marginalized populations. These five major themes also had 10 subthemes that emerged.

Table 6

Themes and Subthemes B

Themes	Definition	Subthemes
Lack of Coaching Support and Training	The lack of support and training coaches received before or during employment from various entities.	• Prior Training • School District training • Administrative Support
Managing Numerous Coaching Duties and Responsibilities	The management of numerous daily duties and responsibilities instructional coaches are accountable for carrying out.	• Observations & Feedback • Modeling Lessons • Providing Teacher Support
Supporting Literacy Instruction	How coaches support literacy instruction across content areas.	• Selection of Strategies • Fostering Content Area Literacy
Supporting Teachers with Historically Marginalized Populations	How coaches support teachers working with historically marginalized populations.	• Teacher and student support • Coaches' Perceptions of School Culture and Climate

These themes and subthemes helped to answer the main research question: How do instructional coaches support teachers with literacy instruction of historically marginalized students in middle schools? All the themes and subthemes that emerged among the participants' responses gave insight into their experiences and perspectives as instructional coaches supporting teachers with the literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. All the participants experienced similar experiences as it

related to their jobs as instructional coaches. When analyzing how the themes and sub-themes helped answer the research questions, the researcher chunked the themes and sub-themes with research questions and sub-questions.

Table 5

Research Questions and Theme Correlations

Central Question: **How do instructional coaches support teachers with literacy instruction of historically marginalized students in middle schools?**		
Research Sub-Questions		
Sub-Question 1: How do instructional coaches use coaching practices to support teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized populations?	Sub-Question 2: How do instructional coaches select literacy strategies to train teachers on supporting students from historically marginalized populations?	Sub-Question 3: How does the instructional coach provide strategies to support teachers who instruct historically marginalized students?
Lack of Coaching Support and Training • Prior Training • School District Training • Administrative Support Managing Numerous Coaching Duties and Responsibilities • Observations & Feedback • Modeling Lessons • Providing Teacher Support	Literacy Instruction • Selection of Strategies • Fostering Content Area Literacy	Supporting Marginalized Populations • Coaches' Perceptions of School Culture and Climate • Teacher and Student Support

Sub-Questions

In addition to the central research question: "What are the lived experiences of instructional coaches supporting literacy instruction in schools with marginalized populations?" the following sub-questions helped better understand the central phenomenon:

1. How do instructional coaches use coaching practices to support teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized populations?
2. How do instructional coaches select literacy strategies to train teachers on supporting students from historically marginalized populations?
3. How does the instructional coach provide strategies to support teachers who instruct historically marginalized students?

Even though the instructional coaches had some variations in their answers about their experiences and perspectives supporting teachers with the literacy instruction in schools with historically marginalized populations. With so many different components embedded in the research question, other sub-questions ensured rich, thick description would emerge from the data collection and analysis. A myriad of subthemes emerged within the major themes which gave insight into their lives. These sub-questions broke down the main components of the research question.

Sub-Question 1

The first sub-question, "How do instructional coaches use coaching practices to support teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized populations?" focused on how instructional coaches support literacy in their schools with all content

area teachers and with all students. Therefore, looking at the day-to day activities coaches employ to support teachers with the literacy instruction in middle schools with students from historically marginalized populations is important for future training and research.

Lack of coaching support and training. One of the major themes from this qualitative study that gave insight into sub-question one was a lack of coaching support and training, which broke into three subthemes: prior training, school district training, and administrative support. For this study, the definition of the lack of coaching support and training was defined as the lack of support and training coaches received before or during employment from various entities. While instructional coaches have a huge task of supporting teachers and positively affecting student achievement, they did not receive formal training or given extensive systematic support prior to starting the job. This lack of training can lead to various issues in the implementation and outcomes of the impact of instructional coaching. None of the participants received formal training prior to becoming an instructional coach. Hired based on their success as classroom teachers, the instructional coaches expressed they needed some sort of formal training prior to taking the position. Steven stated, "I did not receive any formal or systematic training prior to becoming a coach." Suzy similarly said "I did not receive training as an instructional coach prior to starting the job." While Mary worked helping teachers in a summer program, she did not receive formal training either prior to working as a school level coach.

Another subtheme of coach training and support was district support. Even though instructional coaches may not have received formal training from post-secondary institu-

tions, many of them received some training from the school district in which they are employed. The participants all received some training from the district level after they were hired. Steven said,

> Since I was hired, I have received a couple workshops that hit on some of the main duties of an instructional coach by the district. The training primarily dealt with following a guideline or protocol of sorts. So, it was like workshop style, but it was different components, maybe not even necessarily coaching, but maybe in a curriculum area I would love to see something more systematic in terms of ongoing professional development for curriculum coaches.

Even though he received district training, it was not continuous or systematic. Suzy had the same sentiment, stating,

> [She received] two coaching workshops that lasted 6 hours each. The school district provided the training. We discussed the coaching cycle. It could have been more hands-on as in having the coach trainer to visit my school and give me feedback on how I give feedback to teachers.

She wanted more feedback and support in her day-to-day responsibilities with teachers. Mary also said she feels that the district did not provide much support once she started the position. She stated, "At the district level I don't receive much feedback or support. I think it would be beneficial if instructional coaches were trained at the district level. Currently, the role of coach is determined by the administration of the school." Mary needed more feedback support on a district level as well to ensure she was doing her job successfully. Therefore, the instructional coaches in this study felt as though they were not getting enough ongoing support from the district level after obtaining the position. Being an

instructional leader involves numerous responsibilities in handling a school's instructional program. The school district did not meet their needs in ongoing professional development and growth support by the school district to be successful support for their staff. If the expectation of an instructional coach was to provide professional development and support teachers in research based best practices, monitor instruction and increase student achievement, and assess teacher effectiveness; then, they need extensive training.

Although they do not have much district-wide support, all three coaches received building level support from their administrative team, which is the third subtheme of coaching training and support. It is important that they have the support of the administrative team and work closely with them to carry out their mission and vision to make the school successful. Suzy felt that she receives a lot of administrative support in her position. Her principal and assistant principal support her plans to support teachers while she carries out their vision for teaching and learning at her school. The assistant principal was an instructional coach at the same school prior to her being hired; therefore, she helped her transition and take over the position. She stated,

> I have received feedback and support from my administrators. They support me by attending the PLCs that I conduct with teachers. My principal is really good about sending me over to other schools to kind of, um, observe other coaches and other assistant couples to see how they do things.

Steven received support from his principal, but it is not in the format of a formal meeting. He stated,

> Any time my principal is, um, engaging in discussion or, trying to teach me things on the fly. Uh, a lot of it is in terms of how she wants it done or what it could look like, but also like advice and expert, you know, from her perspective and her expertise. She's trying to share that expertise with me along the way.

Mary expressed that she has great administrative support since both her principal and assistant principal were previous instructional coaches, they provide advice and support for her on a regular basis. She stated, "This helped me tremendously. They have both guided me on what the expectations are to be successful in my job. I have had a positive experience at my current school." The participants received administrative support at their respective schools while carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

Overall, instructional coaches need their own ongoing, relevant professional development to remain productive and effective in supporting teachers on a regular basis. With the assumption that the instructional coaches are experts and a resource for all teachers, they need to stay abreast of best practices, frameworks, and initiatives; and therefore, need time for their training and learning. However, the instructional coaches not only need training on best practices and strategies, but also need professional development on coaching skills. Most importantly, none of the participants completed coaching training prior to employment. The participants need training to develop their skills as instructional coaches with ongoing support throughout the school year. With training and preparation being an integral part in their ability to support the wide, varying needs of all teachers for school success, the coach's professional development is imperative (Knight, 2009). They need continuous training on new instructional and content area strategies and

initiatives rolled out from a national, state, and local level to be effective in teacher professional development and support. The training for instructional coaches requires not only a knowledge of the research on instruction and content area practices, but also a knowledge of coaching strategies such as communication, building relationships, and working with adult learners. Therefore, instructional coaches need multiples types of ongoing training, just as teachers (Knight, 2009; Taylor, 2008).

Managing numerous coaching duties and responsibilities. Another major theme that emerged from the research was managing numerous coaching duties and responsibilities. Despite not receiving much training, instructional coaches have an enormous number of tasks, that change based on district and school needs. A subtheme from coaching duties and responsibilities was observation and feedback, which was one of the most common duties of an instructional coach while conducting observations and providing meaningful feedback to teachers. Each of the participants expressed that they conduct observations and give feedback to teachers based on a regular basis. Suzy stated that her main responsibilities are observation and feedback, and "the day-to-day responsibilities of an instructional coach would include observations and feedback conferences." She spent a lot of her time visiting classrooms and providing tips to teachers to improve their instruction. The administration expected a certain number of observations weekly as a means of support to all teachers. Mary also expressed that one of her main duties is conducting observations and feedback on a regular basis, and "when I have feedback conferences with teachers, I always start with a positive, follow with something we can work on together, and end with another positive." Steven stated,

> I would say there's some things that are universal, so like I have to do observation feedback cycles, the protocol is the same for every teacher, for every observation that I do. And I do, you know, are anywhere from three to six a week and I've seen everybody in the building multiple times.

The observations and feedback cycle is an important role for instructional coaches. They must visit classes and observe teachers to get an understanding of what is happening in the classroom and gauge teacher practices and needs. The feedback process provides teachers with both positive feedback and steps for professional growth.

Another subtheme was modeling for teachers. By modeling best practices, instructional coaches can ensure that teachers are implementing the strategies in the correct way. All the coaches mentioned modeling, but expressed that they rarely get to model lessons for teachers due to other responsibilities. Suzy tries to work with teachers, but does not have time for all of them, so she said,

> Usually when I model, um, it's normally for a teacher who's having kind of issues with pedagogy and classroom management. Therefore, it is just pretty much me modeling classroom management and instruction. Most teachers who are struggling with instruction are also struggling with classroom management.

Mary had other responsibilities that did not give her enough time to model and co-teach with teachers, stating, “I really wanted to do the more model teaching, especially with a couple of our teachers this last year. And you know, it just didn't happen the way I wanted it to.” And regarding Steven’s other responsibilities, he said he tried to make time to “model lessons, co-teach, take teachers through coaching cycles, and build relation-

ships with the teachers as much as possible." However, his other duties kept him from being able to co-teach and model. Because the expectations of coaches changed based on administrative expectations and the needs of teachers, duties and responsibilities are different for each coach. Even though these themes emerged among all participants, the amount of time each could dedicate to certain components varied.

The third subtheme was providing support materials to teachers. While instructional coaches must provide observations, feedback, and modeling, they also must be a major resource for teachers, providing best practices and support materials when needed. While teachers are also inundated with a plethora of responsibilities, they look to instructional coaches for instructional support. Even though Steven was not sure of all his roles and responsibilities, he felt that teacher support was the most important. Steven said, "The role of a coach is to be an individualized support system while leading teams and initiatives on all phases of instruction and advocating for your teachers." Mary felt that "the coach's role with teachers is first and foremost to support the teachers. I spend time answering questions and assisting with planning lessons, discipline, strategies, and praising teachers as often as possible." Majority of the duties the instructional coaches tried to carryout was providing materials to support instruction. Considered the expert and a source of knowledge, instructional coaches provide a plethora of support. Teachers expect them to provide information and materials on many aspects of teaching and learning.

Instructional coaches have many duties and responsibilities, which look widely different from school to school. As their daily tasks change, there is a need for coaches to prioritize their work. Killion (2009) believed that when coaches have a focus they can

have a greater impact on teachers and students. By narrowing the duties and responsibilities, instructional coaches are less likely to be overwhelmed by taking on too many tasks further frustrating themselves and being less effective.

Based on the findings that correlate with sub-question one, the instructional coaches in this study were struggling with not only carrying out their duties and responsibilities, but also dealing with what they felt to be a lack of training and support. When reviewing the literature, instructional coaches need ongoing professional development and time to support teachers. When the instructional coach has the necessary training and skills, they can successfully provide the type of professional development most effective in successfully supporting teachers with utilizing best practices (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). As their daily tasks change, there is a need for coaches to prioritize their work. Killion (2009) believed that when coaches have a focus they can have a greater impact on teachers and students. By narrowing the duties and responsibilities, instructional coaches are less likely to be overwhelmed by taking on too many tasks further frustrating themselves and being less effective. As an instructional coach, they must not only provide knowledge but also be a partner in the learning process and planning while working with the teacher to model or co-teach in the classrooms (Aguilar, 2013). Coaches need to understand best educational strategies and be able to employ best coaching practices. Therefore, the participants need to be supported through their training, and then prioritize their daily duties to support teachers. According to Knight's (2007) partnership approach, the instructional coaches provided many of the tenets particularly choice, voice, and dia-

logue. All of the participants gave teachers options, elicited their thoughts and suggestions, and discussed next steps even in school-wide activities, which are all important in the partnership approach.

Sub-Question 2

Sub-Question 2, "How do instructional coaches select literacy strategies to train teachers on supporting students from historically marginalized populations?" focused on how the coaches select literacy instructional strategies. Since the instructional coaches worked with teachers of students from historically marginalized populations, a focus on the types of strategies chosen was important to the researcher. More specifically, did any of the participants choose literacy strategies that aligned with critical literacy, and not only supported academic achievement, but also empowered students to think critically about the world? Critical literacy encompasses more than teaching the functional skill of acquiring knowledge, but the means to change societal problems (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993; Kretovic, 1985).

Literacy instruction. The major theme literacy instruction with the subtheme of the selection of strategies was relevant in answering this sub question. Since instructional coaches are responsible for improving the teaching and learning practices of teachers, they must be abreast of research-based strategies to train teachers. All the instructional coach participants discussed how they share and support new literacy strategies with teachers in their schools.

When specifically asked about how teachers and students in his school view literacy as a means of empowerment, Steven emphasized,

> I'm pretty confident that all of them see literacy as a tool to empower students in their school and in community. Right. Like in general they see literacy as a tool to empower people in general. And I can think of lots of instances where they are specifically encouraging students to, um, think critically through literacy.

He believed that teachers knew the importance of literacy and how it empowered their students by making them think critically about what they are reading and the world around them. He explained how teachers encourage critical thinking by describing, "They do a lot of points of view, different perspectives, what they choose for students to read also highlights an emphasis on them reading multiple perspectives." He sees these strategies as a means to empower students through literacy. However, he acknowledged, "I don't think most of our students leave thinking that literacy has empowered them. So, I would like to acknowledge that there's probably a disconnect somewhere along the way." He admits there is a possible disconnect between how teachers see literacy and how students see literacy. Steven knows the importance of literacy in the school, but questions whether students and teachers view it as means to empower students to make changes in their communities. When he takes a closer look at the literacy instruction in the classes and the strategies implemented, he explained, "So like looking over the lesson plans and specifically looking for the literacy instruction, the literacy components that are included in the lessons, it looks different in every class." Therefore, there was not a school wide literacy focus, however, he stated that all teachers utilized literacy strategies, but those strategies looked different in each classroom.

Suzy admitted that she worked with her literacy and humanities teachers when looking for literacy strategies, since her background is in middle school mathematics. She said,

> So with my background being in mathematics, I would meet with the, um, ELA and humanities teachers together and we would kind of talk about first some of the problems we see with instruction and literacy. And then together we come up with strategies that we think will work, and then I will come up with a way to kind of implement and monitor those.

However, her team works to have real world activities and projects. She stated they have kids to think critically about literacy and explained, "For example, every year we do projects that where they have to come up with a real world problem, research their problem and find solutions for that problem." Then, she also had common activities on certain days throughout the week. She stated,

> I want to say every Wednesday we would do like essay writing or an assignment where we had some type of reading assignment school wide. So, for example, maybe the week before in a faculty meeting or whatever, I told the school, Hey, it's Wednesday, we're gonna focus on, um, reading comprehension. And later next week we're focused on if they writing using the race strategy.

By providing strategies used school-wide, teachers and students can focus on the process and implementation together and discuss success and needs for improvement. Suzy can also monitor the implementation and support teachers in a more systematic way without overwhelming teachers with too many things at the same time.

Mary used her time to be a supportive resource for all aspects of the teachers' responsibilities. She stated, "I spend time answering questions and assisting with planning lessons and strategies." She also takes on a shared responsibility role with teachers, working as a partner in the decision-making process. She articulated,

> I don't have all the answers, but I try to be as supportive as possible. You tried this, or this didn't work, let's try something else, you know practices as in like strategies or the other I've tried and they worked, or I've been in another classroom and I worked, uh, I also encourage teachers to observe other teachers' classrooms that work.

During an observation of a coaching meeting Mary spoke with a teacher that was working on reading Langston Hughes and Martin Luther King, having students make connections between Hughes' poems and Dr. King's speeches. She stated that she thought it would be "relevant to the kids and help to keep them engaged." She had students reading and creating videos since school was remote due to the pandemic.

Within the major theme, the subtheme of content area literacy emerged. All the coach participants tried to work with core content area teachers to support literacy across subjects including supporting all the other core instruction. With them coming from various classroom assignments before being employed as a teacher, some participants were more comfortable than others. Steven purposefully views lesson plans for literacy instruction. Even though it may be more evident in courses like the English language arts course, he finds it evident in other areas as well. He stated,

> So like looking over the lesson plans, looking for any red flags like that, um, specifically looking for the literacy instruction, the literacy components that are included in the lessons like, it looks different. It looks different in every class, right. It looks different in ELA class where it is almost always explicit if it's not explicit, then I'm, that's like my first question.

When looking at other content areas, he explained,

> Even in science and social studies, oftentimes, um, and they're pretty good at like highlighting the, the literacy components that they are doing I talked to the teams about literacy across the curriculum. So especially, you know, science, social studies and, you know, the ELA teachers. And so when I was observing in the classroom, I was always looking for ways, you know, and strategies that could be used to incorporate literacy.

Steven viewed literacy important in all content area courses.

All three participants' support of literacy instruction looked different, but they all assisted teachers with identifying strategies and helping with implementation. Even though the instructional coaches worked with all content area teachers on literacy and provided a plethora of strategies and resources, there was very little evidence on the use of the theoretical framework, critical literacy, to empower students. The use of critical literacy was not apparent in this study. Most of the strategies were general literacy skill-based. Even though Steve identified the importance of students using literacy to empower themselves and their communities, it was not a focus of the selection of strategies, nor was it a priority. Additionally, he admitted there was a disconnect between teacher and

student understanding of critical literacy. Teachers of critical literacy empower their students to become close readers by developing the skills to identify both implicit and explicit messages of all texts and providing the ability to reshape unfair power structures (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Morrell, 2015). All the participants saw literacy as an important component of the education process across content areas, but did not recognize it as a tool to empower historically marginalized students to become agents of change, nor did they purposefully select strategies to support a critical consciousness. Suzy shared her school's projects on community issues, but there was not any comprehensive implementation of critical literacy or its components. The use of critical literacy to educate our youth is imperative with an ever-growing diverse population and plethora of information outlets students can access (Morrell, 2002).

Overall, the instructional coaches supported literacy across content areas and school-wide. They all saw the importance of literacy as cross-curricular and the need to embed common practices. Even though one participant (Steven) stated that his teachers saw literacy as an empowering tool, the students were not clear on this aspect. None of the participants explicitly trained teachers on the components of critical literacy as a means to empower their students with the skills to transform society. When reviewing Behrman's (2006) six categories of critical literacy and the National Council for Teachers of English (2019) key tenets, there is no evidence that the instructional coaches supported teachers in the utilization of critical literacy with there students when instructing literacy.

Sub-Question 3

The last sub-question, "How does the instructional coach provide strategies to support teachers who instruct historically marginalized students?" examined the practices of the instructional coaches as they support teachers. The root of societal inequities steeped in racism while sustaining racial superiority stems from racist ideologies that are embedded in the education system to maintain power of the dominant culture (Banks, 2016; Zamudio et al. 2011). Being cognizant of the inequities in society, including in the educational field, the instruction of historically marginalized students must meet the academic and social needs of culturally diverse populations while providing them with the tools to challenge the status quo (Howard, 2003). For this study, the researcher investigated the findings for components of Ladson-Billings' (1995) theoretical framework, culturally relevant pedagogy which included the following three criteria: (a) academic success, (b) cultural competence, and (c) critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). When conducting the study, the researcher looked for components of these three criteria to see if instructional coaches provided any support to teachers in these areas.

Supporting marginalized populations. The major theme, supporting marginalized populations, helped answer this sub question. Instructional coaches support all teachers including those that instruct marginalized populations. Therefore, they must be aware of the needs of students and how to support the teachers in the implementation of best practices for this population. Within the major theme was two subthemes, coaches' perceptions of school culture and climate and teacher and student support.

Suzy had some training in college prior to teaching in urban schools. She believed this prepared her for working with marginalized populations and assisting teachers as well. She recalled,

> I was in the urban teacher education program which was kind of around working in, um, urban communities, urban schools. Your whole curriculum kind of centers around urban education, even your internship, even my internship was within an urban setting. You kind of hear some of the things that were happening with them and some of the strategies they were using also they would bring in teachers that taught in urban school with a kind of have this, having conversations with us.

She expressed that this early training experience is why she has not only stayed in urban education, but also knows some of the special considerations that come with working with historically marginalized populations. Suzy also discussed positive behavior activities to promote student engagement. Since her current school did not have all the same issues as other urban schools with it having a specialty program, she did not express a lot of the same concerns as the other participants. However, she shared,

> Now, one of our biggest issues here is having students that, that won't put forth the effort. You know, they may be smarter students. Now we have the PBIS program where we award points for good behavior or something. Um, and then every, I would say every nine weeks those kids would have earned an amount of points and they get a chance to attend a party, a dance, uh, whatever we may have planned for them.

She expressed that the positive behavior and intervention implementation has helped to motivate students that were otherwise not engaged in their studies.

On the other hand, Steven, sometimes found it overwhelming to meet all the needs of teachers supporting historically marginalized students. He said,

> Support that is needed compared to the support that we get for our students in terms of like where they are academically, where they are in like in social, emotional learning, um, where they are in those areas. Um, if that gap is so overwhelming that it is, um, it's a lot for the teachers.

He admitted that teachers at his school have a lot of responsibility and could feel overwhelming at times to meet the needs of their students. He also offered a suggestion on his perspective on the curriculum which he believed should be more reflective of the student body which could promote pride and interest. He shared,

> We can do things that, um, reflect, uh, our culture and our heritage. Um, and even though I'm not black, I feel that like there should be an Afrocentric curriculum taught to students where students can see themselves. Um, like I want our students to see that African Americans and Africans have done great things and have written great poetry and written great essays and short stories and, um, documentaries.

Steven was a former social studies teacher and respected the historical aspect of incorporating cultures that reflect the student body.

Mary also struggled to find ways to support teachers of students from marginalized populations. Mary discussed the issues teachers face in her school while supporting their students. She has also taught at the school where she served as an instructional coach, so she is also speaking from her perspective in the classroom. She explained,

> They read on third grade reading level and they do math at a second grade level. Right. And so, like, all of these things are compounded. Then you also have to share the classroom with 28 other kids who are also struggling. Um, and so helping teachers find the most efficient and best way to reach as many as they can knowing that the cards are stacked against them and their students is a hard, it's a hard job.

She felt that providing support to her teachers when they face multiple issues was difficult for her. However, she motivated the teachers by telling them to do their best.

> And so I think I come from the perspective that doing the best you can is the best you can, but you can't do any more. And so, um, and so let's, let's focus on what we can accomplish and go from there.

She encouraged teachers to do the best they can for their students to motivate them to meet their needs. She also talked about positive behavior support, stating, “There's rewards in place and things of that nature. Uh, we have that game room, they get to go and participate, you know, for a class period, they get to play in the game room and, um, yeah, things like that.” In addition to recognizing positive behavior, they also worked on increasing student achievement through intervention strategies. She explained,

> We have intervention twice a week and making sure that they target those students based on, you know, on data that is not just a makeup work period, because it was fairly easy for that to become a makeup work period. And you're not really looking at where this child is weak, you know, so I try to work usually in our grade level team meetings, you know, encouraging them to make sure that they're

> utilizing the intervention class to really help children who need help in certain areas.

She knew that intervention was important to get students where they needed to be academically. Also, Mary recognized as a white female, that she may carry biases and not understand all aspects of working with historically marginalized populations. She explained,

> You have to recognize, you know, as a white female and in an urban district, you have to recognize, you know, and appreciate the culture that you're working with, you know, and like today, especially, you know, with things that go on in the world, you have to acknowledge white privilege. You have to acknowledge that, you know, we have marginalized groups of children, you know, for there's reasons that that they're marginalized.

She understood that certain societal inequities have created issues for certain groups of people, and by being cognizant of this, she acknowledged it is not the fault of the students, and teachers should do the best they can to support the students.

Another major theme that emerged which supported the instruction of marginalized populations was the coaches' perceptions of the school culture and climate. The school culture and climate supports positive student behavior, a conducive learning environment, and parent involvement and perceptions. All three coaches discussed the school culture through different lenses. Each school is different and has its own set of issues with culture and climate. Mary stated,

> Well, I do think that the parents, for the most part have a positive outlook. The school has a really good reputation. The principal demands a lot from the teachers

> and, um, you know, so the school culture, for the most part, I would think our school culture is positive.

Administration plays a large role in setting the stage for school culture and climate. Additionally, the principal at Mary's school is very involved and demands a lot from her faculty, staff, and the students.

Recently reorganized, Steven's school combined students from other schools and neighborhoods, which caused some friction among the students, parents, and communities. In addition, they have several new teachers and a new principal. So, they are trying to build a positive school culture and climate from the ground up. Therefore, they have challenges to overcome. Steven believed that poverty affected many aspects of the school and home relationship, which influenced how they interact. He perceived that

> when you like, when you have most well 90% plus parents, um, living below the poverty line, um, in your community, now you're talking about a totally different set of issues. And, it makes it tough on parents to get into schools. Um, whether it's because of the time of day or lack of childcare or transportation. I'm not saying that any of them are easy fixes, but yeah. So if I hear the negativity, I try to remain positive and offer alternative narratives about what could be happening.

He promotes building relationships with students and parents to bridge the gaps between the school and the community.

Suzy was proud of the high parental involvement at her school. She stated,

> We pretty much have a good climate, you know, um, many of the kids are able to learn. The parents and the community are hands on. Um, and that kind of plays a big part. And when you have that parent participation there, um, I think that's the

> big component of our school culture is the parent involvement pretty much the culture is very good at our school.

Suzy discussed the parental involvement at her school as being positive due to the level of participation parents take in the school activities. She asserted, "Our parents are very involved. Um, I mean students are well behaved, not saying it, um, they don't get suspended or anything else, but we, we have, uh, compared to other schools in the district." Her school has a good reputation in the district for parental involvement. She thinks this is what creates the good climate.

Even though all the schools are different and have varying cultures and climates, they all have adapted to the needs of their students, parents, and communities to support the mission and vision of their schools in a positive way. However, when reviewing the theoretical framework and culturally relevant pedagogy and comparing it to the findings of this study, there were very few instances that aligned to the three components: student achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. All the instructional coaches were supportive of student achievement, but there was very little evidence for cultural competence and critical consciousness. They supported student achievement as it related to grades, intervention, and test preparation; however, Ladson-Billings warned against only focusing on standardized assessments for this area. Ladson-Billings (2017) referred to cultural competence as the "skill and facility to help students recognize and appreciate their culture of origin while also learning to develop fluency in at least one other culture" (p. 144). There was no evidence during this study that the instructional coaches supported teachers in the appreciation of the students' cultures. Although Steven believed that there should be a more "Afrocentric curriculum" since that was the majority

of the district's population, there was not an explicit intention to do so within his school. The critical consciousness component supports students' sociopolitical awareness and critique of societal inequities in order to challenge the current status quo. Teachers plan activities and lessons that address issues that affect their students and enlighten them on the social, cultural, economic, and political matters (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2017). This is closely aligned with critical literacy as well. The instructional coaches did not encourage this when working with teachers. Overall, there was not much evidence that instructional coaches utilized culturally relevant pedagogy while supporting teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized populations.

Theoretical Frameworks

Examining the three major areas that help to answer the central research questions, the question was as follows: How do instructional coaches support teachers with literacy instruction of historically marginalized students in middle schools? The following theoretical frameworks help to inform and focus this study: partnership approach, critical literacy, and culturally relevant pedagogy. These theories overlap to support each aspect of the major areas of study and give a more holistic understanding of the experiences and perspective of the instructional coaches.

When reviewing the three theoretical frameworks serving as the foundation for this study, the instructional coaches who participated needed support in all of the components. The findings showed the most correlation with the partnership approach partly used when working with the teachers, despite the findings of a lack of support and training. However, there was not much evidence of utilizing culturally relevant pedagogy tenets or critical literacy components. In order for instructional coaches to support teachers

with the literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations, they need to utilize research-based practices that support a variety of implementation strategies. The partnership approach to instructional coaching is a theoretical framework for instructional coaching that informs how coaches approach teachers (Knight, 2007). Critical literacy "is a philosophy that recognizes the connections between power, knowledge, language, and ideology, and recognizes the inequalities and injustices surrounding us in order to move toward transformative action and social justice" (Mulcahy, 2008, p. 16). Additionally, the theoretical framework, culturally relevant pedagogy three components: student achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. When combining the factors of these three theoretical frameworks, instructional coaches are more likely to be successful when supporting teachers with the literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. However, the findings from this study do not show a strong usage of these three theoretical frameworks and a limited evidence of supporting teachers in the literacy instruction of historically marginalized populations based on research-based practices.

Limitations

While the researcher used multiple data sources in this research, there were still limitations to the qualitative study that may have yielded more results. By utilizing the criterion sampling method to determine the participants, the researcher only used individuals who met the criteria for this study, and all participants worked in the same school district in the same Southeastern region. The time restraints put on this study prompted the researcher to use smaller and easier data collection strategies and the results were dependent upon the conditions during the time of the study. During the study, a worldwide

pandemic occurred and all students and employees worked in a virtual environment for the remainder of the academic year; therefore, the observations occurred virtually with instructional coaches and teachers. These conditions also put extra stress on both the coaches and teachers to meet the needs of students, they otherwise would not encounter. Finally, the qualitative research method of inquiry is subjective by nature, and the findings may have limited generalizability.

Implications for Future Research

Instructional coaches are at the forefront of positively impacting teacher practices through a comprehensive approach to training; therefore, it is imperative that they are prepared to take on the task of supporting teacher learning and implementation of new strategies through ongoing, job-embedded instructional support. This line of research and inquiry could prove to be pertinent as we move forward in instructional coaching preparation and best practices in supporting the literacy instruction of historically marginalized children. The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore the experiences and perspectives of instructional coaches that support teachers with the literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. The perspectives and experiences of these coaches gave insight into how middle school instructional coaches support teachers with literacy instruction of students from historically marginalized populations. This provided an in-depth examination of the struggles, innovations, and successes of these instructional coaches, which could ultimately have a positive impact on the literacy instruction of historically marginalized populations of students.

Recommendation 1: Create Research-Based Professional Development Systems for Instructional Coaches

The establishment of relevant coaching preparation programs and professional development opportunities is needed in order to create a more systematic way of preparing coaches as they provide much needed support to teachers in a growing diverse society. With initial and continuous research supporting the positive impact of instructional coaching on teacher practices, there has been an increase in the utilization of instructional coaches with the expectation that the effect on teacher practices would have an impact on student achievement (Arguilar, 2013; Mangin, 2014; Steckel, 2009). While there is research that supports the use of instructional coaches to positively impact teacher practices through a more comprehensive approach to training, "there is little systematic examination of both what kinds of coaching work best in which con-texts and the broader institutional factors that shape coaching policy and practice" (Galey, 2016, p. 55). The lack of systematic and consistent implementation and conceptualization of instructional coaching creates a continued need to research coaching initiatives. Just as there is a lack of systematic and consistent implementation of instructional coaching, there is even less emphasis on the formal training of these coaches, with the training and preparation being an integral part in their ability to support the wide, varying needs of all teachers for school success. This and similar studies could have an impact on the educational preparation of instructional coaches by taking into account the findings and using them to frame a preparation program that meets their professional needs to ensure success.

Recommendation 2: Develop Best Practices for the Literacy Instruction of Students from Historically Marginalized Populations

More importantly, there is a need for additional studies on how students from historically marginalized populations received quality literacy instruction that prepares them to be critically conscious change agents in society. According to Miller (2009), there are certain skills a teacher must have to prepare students to be successful in the 21st century and among these is "the capacity to teach adolescent literacy skills regardless of the content area" (p. 4). One way educators can support the literacy instruction of marginalized populations while simultaneously influencing change is through critical literacy, teaching students to critically examine texts by analytically reading, questioning and analyzing (Shor, 1999; Bishop, 2014). According to Morell (2008), "No population requires critical literacy more than today's urban youth" (p. 6). By preparing instructional coaches to support teachers with the literacy instruction of historically marginalized populations, there would be a greater impact in how all teachers support the literacy needs of all students.

One major implication for the advancement of this study, researchers should choose a sample with a variety of secondary instructional coaches from varying backgrounds, years of experience, and levels of professional development. This would yield more reliable results when searching for themes among the data collected. Additionally, new studies can contribute more information by utilizing various sampling techniques. This study specifically used purposeful sampling, which yielded good descriptive detail of experiences. However, stratified sampling may garner more reliable results. For example, a researcher may comprise a group of 30 or more individuals, with various backgrounds and experience levels, who meet the criteria from multiple states and schools,

then randomly select a group of participants to perform a study. These participants from different states and schools can yield more in-depth discussion and data on the phenomenon as experienced for those serving as secondary instructional coaches supporting teachers with literacy instruction with students from historically marginalized populations. In addition, research utilizing other education based theoretical frameworks that support the success and achievement of students from historically marginalized populations would add more to this body of research.

Conclusion

Because instructional coaches are responsible for improving the teaching and learning practices of teachers, they must be abreast of research-based strategies to train teachers who instruct all students. However, there is little systematic training on or implementation of the practices and preparation of instructional coaches that support teachers and more specifically those that support teachers with historically marginalized populations. This study explored the lived experiences of instructional coaches that support teachers providing literacy instruction in middle schools with students from marginalized populations through the lens of the theoretical frameworks of andragogy, critical literacy, and culturally relevant pedagogy.

All three participants worked in urban schools with over 51% of students from a historically marginalized population within an urban school district. However, there was very little evidence that instructional coaches provided research-based practices that supported the distinctive needs of their students. Being cognizant of the inequities in society, including in the educational field, the instruction of historically marginalized students

must meet the academic and social needs of culturally diverse populations while providing them with the tools to challenge the inequities. Instructional coaches are a significant factor in supporting teachers with these strategies through proven strategies and practices. By using effective coaching strategies for adult learners, supporting literacy instruction, and meeting the needs of marginalized populations, instructional coaches can affect student achievement for all learners. Additional research is needed that is focused on instructional coaches as well as how they support teachers in providing literacy instruction for students from marginalized populations, which gives insight into literacy instruction that supports the education and respects the culture of all students equally particularly students from historically marginalized populations.

The literature and theoretical frameworks that are pertinent to instructional coaching, literacy instruction, and the instruction of historically marginalized students were studied and reviewed. While educators must operate within the confines of current education mandates and the assessment culture, they can improve educational outcomes by building relationships, providing quality instruction, and teaching students to critically examine our society. Instructional coaches are a significant factor in supporting teachers with these strategies through research-based practices. By using effective coaching strategies for adult learners, supporting literacy instruction, and meeting the needs of marginalized populations, instructional coaches can affect student achievement for all learners. The results and analysis of this study provide insight into the instructional coaches lived experiences of supporting teachers in literacy instruction with students of historically marginalized populations. The results reveal a need not only for a more comprehensive

instructional coaching preparation program, but also the need for training on instructing students from historically marginalized populations.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Institutional Review Board Approval

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM
Office of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use

470 Administra on Building
701 20th Street South
Birmingham, AL 35294-0104
205.934.3789 | Fax 205.934.1301 | irb@uab.edu

TO: Williams, Kris e B

FROM: University of Alabama at Birmingham Institutional Review Board
Federal wide Assurance # FWA00005960
IORG Registration # IRB00000196 (IRB 01)
IORG Registration # IRB00000726 (IRB 02)

DATE: 21-Aug-2019

RE: IRB-300003658
A Multiple Case Study on the Experiences and Perceptions of Instructional Coaches Supporting the Literacy Instruction of Students from Historically Marginalized Popula-tions

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The IRB reviewed and approved the Initial Application submitted on 15-Aug-2019 for the above referenced project. The review was conducted in accordance with UAB's Assurance of Compli-ance approved by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Type of Review: Exempt
Exempt Categories: 1
Determination: Exempt
Approval Date: 21-Aug-2019
Approval Period: No Continuing Review

Documents Included in Re view:

- infosheet.clean.190813
- interview.clean.190813
- datacollection(jour-
- nal).190814
- interview(followup).190813
- hsp.clean.190814
- data collection (observation).190813

APPENDIX B

INFORMATION SHEET

Information Sheet

August 13, 2019

Dear Instructional Coach,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a qualitative research study I am conducting titled," A phenomenological study on the lived experiences of instructional coaches supporting literacy instruction in middle schools with historically marginalized populations". The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of middle school instructional coaches that support literacy instruction, particularly with historically marginalized populations.

You have been purposefully selected for this study based on your role as an instructional coach in a school with a population of more than 30% marginalized students. The time frame for this study will be September 2019 to October 2019. If you agree to participate in this study, you will complete a pre-interview protocol, an interview, an observation of your daily activities, and a post interview. The interview will be previously scheduled at your convenience, which will last no longer than one hour. This interview will be face-to-face and audio recorded. A copy of the interview questions will be provided to you in advance for your review. The transcription of the interview will also be provided to you for review. The pre-interview protocol will be delivered to you by email The observation and post interview will be scheduled in advance at your convenience. The total amount of time for this study is approximately 4-5 hours.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and there is no compensation for your time given to this study. You may withdraw at any point during this process. Should you choose to participate, your identity will remain confidential and you will have the opportunity to choose a pseudonym to ensure your privacy. The research will be discussed only by parties directly involved in the study. All interview recordings and written transcripts of our communication will be kept locked and all electronic correspondence will remain on a password-protected computer.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached by phone 205-381-1380 or by email at kbw@uab.edu. I hope you are willing to participate in this study, and I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the UAB Office of the IRB (OIRB) at (205) 934-3789 or toll free at 1-855-860-3789. Regular hours for the OIRB are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CT, Monday through Friday.

Sincerely,

Kristie Williams

APPENDIX C

PRE-INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Pre-Interview Protocol

Hello and thank you for your time and participation in the qualitative research study entitled "A multiple case study on the experiences and perspectives of instructional coaches supporting teachers with the literacy instruction in middle schools from historically marginalized populations. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of three middle school instructional coaches that support literacy instruction in middle schools with students from historically marginalized populations.. Historically marginalized populations will be defined as "those excluded from mainstream social, economic, cultural, or political life" over time. (Given, 2008). "This is predominantly a social phenomenon by which a minority or sub-group is excluded, and their needs or desires ignored" (Business Dictionary, 2019).
Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may refuse to answer any questions. Remember that this pre-interview protocol is confidential and a pseudonym will used. You can type your answers on this protocol and return by email.

Please answer the following questions below. The sub-questions are only to assist you in answering the main question. A follow-up interview will be scheduled at your convenience for further discussion. Please use as much space as needed.

1. **Please begin by briefly describing your education career to date.**
   Sub-question 1a: What degrees do you have?
   Sub-question 1b: Why did you choose education as your profession?
   Sub-question 1c: How long have you been in education?
   Sub-question 1d: What subject did you teach prior to becoming a coach?
   Sub-question 1e: How long were you a classroom teacher?
   Sub-question 1f: How long have you been a coach?

2. **Did you receive coaching training/preparation before or after you were hired as a coach?**
   If yes,
   Sub-question 2a: How long was the training?
   Sub-question 2b: Who provided the training?
   Sub-question 2c: Did the training include any strategies for working with teachers
   Sub-question 2d: How would you adjust your coaching training?
   If no,
   Sub-question 2e: Do you think you needed training for being an instructional coach? Why or why not?
   Sub-question 2f: What do you think the training should include?
   Sub-question 2g: What type of support are you receiving or have received as a coach?

3. **What is your definition of an instructional coach?**
   Sub-question 3a: What are the day-to-day responsibilities of an instructional coach?
   Sub-question 3b: What is the coach's role with teachers?
   Sub-question 3d: What coaching strategies do you use?
   Sub-question 3e: What support do you receive as a coach?

Thank you for your time and participation.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Time of interview: _____
Date: _____
Place: _____
Researcher: _____
Participant: _____
Position of Participant: _____
Introduction:

Hello and thank you for your time and participation in the qualitative research study entitled "A multiple case study on the experiences and perspectives of instructional coaches supporting teachers with the literacy instruction in middle schools with students from historically marginalized populations. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of three middle school instructional coaches that support literacy instruction in middle schools with students from historically marginalized populations.. Historically marginalized populations will be defined as "those excluded from mainstream social, economic, cultural, or political life" over time (Given, 2008). "This is predominantly a social phenomenon by which a minority or subgroup is excluded, and their needs or desires ignored" (Business Dictionary, 2019).

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you may refuse to answer any questions. Remember that this interview is confidential and will be recorded, so refrain from using names. The recordings will be transcribed for use in this research project only. All answers will be kept confidential, and at the conclusion of this interview, I will ask you for a pseudonym you would like me to use in order to protect your confidentiality when referencing the study.

Questions:

1. Can I ask you a few clarifying questions about your pre-interview protocol responses?
   Probing questions based on previous responses.

2. Describe your coaching approach
   Probe 4a: What strategies and methods do you use to help teachers become better instructors?
   Probe 4b: How do you select these strategies and methods?

3. How do you support literacy instruction as an instructional coach?
   Probe 5a: How do you support teachers with literacy instruction?
   Probe 5b: What best practices do you share with teachers?
   Probe 5c: How do you select the practices to share?
   Probe 5d: How do you share these best practices with teachers?
   Probe 5e: How do you support teachers in the implementation of these practices?

4. How is literacy instruction used to empower students in their school and community?
   Probe 6a: Is this something you or your teachers discuss?
   Probe 6b: Do you or teachers encourage students to think critically about their world through literacy? Counter-narratives?

5. Tell me about the culture of your school
   Probe 6a: How do teachers, students, and parents/community members view your school and/or culture?

Probe 6b: How is the culture built or nurtured?

6. How do you work with the parents and students in the school?
   Probe 6a: What are some of the strategies and experiences you provide for students in the school?
   Probe 6b: What are some examples of success/challenges working with your students and teachers?
   Probe 6c: How do you help teachers understand the culture and work with students who are marginalized and need additional support

7. How did you learn to work with marginalized children?
   Training or experiences?
   Probe 7a: What did you learn from the training and experiences?
   Probe 7b: What techniques do you provide to teachers that support marginalized populations?
   Probe 7c: Why did you choose these techniques? (data, websites, research-based)
   Probe 7d: How do you know if the techniques are effective?
   Probe 7e: How do you support teachers in the implementation of these strategies?

Thank you for your time. Please be assured that all information collected during this study will remain confidential. At this time, please state a pseudonym I can reference when I refer to you in this study.

APPENDIX E

POST INTERVIEW QUESTIONS BASED ON FIELD NOTES

Post Interview Questions Based on Field Notes

1. How do you support teachers in sustaining the culture of marginalized children in your school?
2. How do you help teachers respect students' languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being as centered meaningfully and consistently in classroom learning instead of being considered as "add-ons."?
3. How do you support teachers in empowering marginalized students to make a difference within their communities?
4. Do you encourage teachers to value and sustain the cultural and linguistic practices of the community while providing access to the dominant culture?
5. How do you help teachers connect present learning to the histories of racial, ethnic, and linguistic communities both locally and nationally?

6. After reviewing the image, on what level of the iceberg are most of your teachers? Why?
7. How do you see yourself supporting teachers getting a deeper understanding of students' cultures?