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Building Positive Relationships in Title I Schools: Teacher and Student Perspectives in an Elementary Classroom

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BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS IN TITLE I SCHOOLS:
TEACHER AND STUDENT PERSPECTIVES IN AN
ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Alice Charlotte Pendlebury

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
School of Teacher Education
Educational Studies

December 2020

This Dissertation by: Alice Charlotte Pendlebury

Entitled: *Building Positive Relationships in Title 1 Schools: Teacher and Student Perspectives in the Elementary Classroom*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Education in College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in School of Teacher Education, Program of Educational Studies.

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ABSTRACT

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Title I schools have a high percentage of students who come from a background of poverty. Students growing up in poverty are more likely to have insecure attachments because of the chronic and acute stressors their caregivers experience. These insecure attachments mean that students are less likely to have positive relationships with their teachers and are less likely to trust them. Given the importance of positive relationships in student's academic, social, and emotional growth it is crucial that teachers are able to build relationships with these students regardless of their economic backgrounds. Qualitative case study was used to collect data from interviews with one teacher, interviews with seven students, observations, and artifact collection. The researcher was a teacher at the school where data collection took place in a different grade level than the teacher participant. The research showed that the teacher was good at building relationships through establishing trust with actions that showed benevolence, reliability, and competence. However, there was a lack of openness and honesty in the classroom, which led to students who had insecure attachments feeling less trust in their teacher. Because of these insecure attachments, combined with the lack of openness and honesty, students that were predisposed to have difficult relationships with their teachers perceived teacher actions to have negative intent. This shows that teachers need to receive more training and have more knowledge about the effect poverty has on students attachment styles and in turn what effect those

attachment styles have on a teacher's ability to build relationships with students. Teachers need to understand the multiple components that make up a positive, trusting relationship with their students so that they can self-reflect on their practice and incorporate practices that will have a positive impact on their relationships with students.

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I would also like to thank my teammate Chelsey Magallanes for always prioritizing our students above everything else and being a constant example of how we can change our students' lives by building trust and positive relationships with them.

And finally I would like to express my gratitude to all of my students, past and present, They inspired, and inspire, me every single day and deserve the very best. They are the reason I decided to pursue my doctorate and focus on this research. So above everything else, this is for them.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Children from low-income homes often have a difficult time in school and frequently do not perform academically at the same level as children from middle-class and upper-class homes (Howes & Ritchie, 1999; Hughes & Cavell, 1999; Myers & Pianta, 2008; Thijs & Fleischmann, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). It is understood positive relationships with teachers can help students to succeed (Murray & Greenberg, 2000) so this study aimed to understand better how a teacher in a Title I school that has a high proportion of students from low-income homes built those positive relationships. According to the Department of Education, Title I designation "provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards" ("Title I Part A Program," 2018).

This study explored student attitudes regarding their relationship with their teacher and if they considered it to be positive. This study used a qualitative case study approach to discover how a teacher in an upper grade at a Title I elementary school found success with her students by building positive relationships with her students and how her students perceived those relationships.

This chapter begins with an overview of the background to the study and the relevant research and research problem. An explanation of the theoretical framework is given, then the purpose statement and research questions. Following the research questions is an outline of

the research approach. Finally, the chapter concludes with the rationale and significance of the study.

Background and Context

Research has found children living in poverty perform at a lower level academically than their more affluent peers (Howes & Ritchie, 1999; Hughes & Cavell, 1999; Myers & Pianta, 2008; Thijs & Fleischmann, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Poverty affects children, both directly and indirectly. Parents living in poverty experience adverse effects on their emotional wellbeing, their stability, and their levels of stress (Ackerman et al., 2004a, 2004b; Conger et al., 1992; Dodge et al., 1994). In turn, the difficulties parents face get passed on to their children. Children experience less stable parenting with a higher risk for harsh discipline, which can leave them in an abusive or neglectful situation (Black & Krishnakumar, 1998; DuBois et al., 1992; Steinberg et al., 1981). There are significant impacts on children's cognitive and academic outcomes, which can adversely affect children's chances of successfully completing their education and then in adult life having the resources to get themselves out of poverty (Ackerman et al., 2004a; Duncan et al., 1998; Howse et al., 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2017; Wallenstein, 2012). Students from an impoverished background have challenges with their behavior in schools, their socialization with peers and teachers, and often attend schools that are not well equipped to give them the support they need (Baker, 1999; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Dodge et al., 1994; Engle & Black, 2008; Imber, 1973; Ladson-Billings, 2017; Murnane, 2007). In order for teachers to better serve this population of children, they need to know how to build positive relationships with them so the students can reach their academic goals. There is nothing teachers can do outside of the school to improve their student's lives - they cannot change what support children get at home, what type of parenting they receive, or if there is

enough food to get the child through the weekend. However, what teachers can control are the expectations they hold students to and the experiences and the opportunities students are given by the school. Creating positive, stable, and trusting relationships with students is a crucial part of that experience.

Positive relationships with teachers have been found to improve children's academic outcomes, and students learn better when their classroom is a warm, safe environment and their teacher is someone they can trust (Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 1998). Tschannen-Moran, and Hoy (1998) found, "Trust allows individuals to focus on the task at hand, and therefore, to work and learn more effectively. Productive relationships build effective schools" (p. 341).

Of particular note is the fact positive relationships with teachers can serve as a compensatory resource for children from high poverty homes (Goddard et al., 2001; Meehan et al., 2003). Having negative relationships with teachers can adversely affect children's performance in school and children who are already at risk of academic failure are both predisposed to having conflictual relationships with teachers and are most in need of positive relationships to mediate the detrimental effects of their environment (Hamre & Pianta 2001; Howse et al., 2003; Jerome et al., 2009). It can be difficult to establish positive relationships with students in these circumstances because students from low-income homes often have insecure attachments and a harder time trusting and building relationships with other people (O'Connor et al., 2012). Therefore, it became the teacher's responsibility to take the initiative and persevere when building positive relationships with their students, and they need more guidance in order to know how to do that.

Warmth, trust, and caring have all been identified as key components of positive relationships between students and teachers (Adams & Forsyth, 2013; Baker, 2006; Copeland-

Mitchell et al., 1997; Curby et al., 2009; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Goddard et al., 2001; Gregory & Ripski, 2008; Haberman, 2010; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hatton et al., 1996; Hyson & Taylor, 2011; Klem & Connell, 2004; Murray & Greenberg, 2000; Noddings, 2005; O'Connor, 2010; Russell et al., 2016; Thijs & Fleischmann, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Wentzel, 2002). Teachers need to have knowledge of what each of these components looks like in a positive relationship and how to replicate positive relationships in their own classrooms. All three aspects are intertwined to some degree, as Noddings (2005) explained, "Caring in education differs from brief caring encounters in that it requires strong relations of trust upon which to build. Such relations take time and require continuity" (p. 64). Also, Hamre and Pianta (2001) found:

> These findings indicate that children's abilities to form warm, trusting, and low-conflict relationships with teachers in the early elementary years are salient markers of children's adaptation to the social environment and, as such, may forecast academic success, at least through the lower grades. (p. 626)

As positive relationships are made up of a combination of all three of these components, it becomes crucial that we study what these relationships look like in practice and how warmth, trust, and caring show up in a classroom.

Little research has incorporated student viewpoints into the study of student-teacher relationships. As a positive relationship necessarily includes two perspectives (Mayer et al., 1995), this is a significant gap in our understanding of the nature of relationships between teachers and students. Additionally, it has been recognized teacher's perspectives and student's perspectives do not always align adding more weight to the fact that our understanding so far is rather one-sided and incomplete (Hughes & Cavell, 1999; Murray et al., 2008). The addition of this perspective could add some valuable insights to the existing literature, and the absence of it

is noticed in much of the present research (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Russell et al., 2016; Stipek & Miles, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

We know little about how students perceive their relationships with their teachers and yet the importance of these relationships has been recognized for a long time. Trust, warmth, and caring are key components of positive relationships, and positive relationships have been shown many times to improve students' academic outcomes, which is even more crucial if we wish to empower students to interrupt a pattern of poverty later in their lives. There are of course some teachers who are able to build positive relationships with their students who come from low-income homes, and this study illustrates one of these teachers' practices alongside shedding some light onto what her students believed about their relationships as well.

Research Problem

Given the number of challenges students coming from poverty face in school and the fact that building positive relationships with them could help to ameliorate some of those struggles, it seemed clear that it was essential to make a further study of relationships between teachers and students to see how to do that. Also, the students' perspective in these relationships needs to be taken into consideration and is missing from the majority of the research.

Theoretical Framework

John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth began the work on attachment theory in the 1950s. At the basis of the work was the idea that children form certain attachment bonds with parents and that those bonds become part of children's internal working models, from which they will make assumptions about their future relationships with adults. An attachment figure serves as a secure base from which children can explore the world with the knowledge there is someone there to support them and create a safe place for them when they return or if they fail (Bretherton, 1992).

In order to be well adjusted, children need warm, secure, responsive relationships with their parents, particularly their mothers, and they will use those relationships to model what they expect of adults and other caregivers as they encounter them. The parent-child relationship then serves as a blueprint for all subsequent interactions in a child's life (Crittenden, 2017; Myers & Pianta, 2008).

Children from low-income families generally display less responsive behavior and have a harder time adjusting to relationships with people outside of their families than more well-off children might (Ahnert et al., 2006). According to O'Connor et al. (2012), they experience more insecure attachments at home due to inconsistency in their home lives or their parent's behaviors and parenting style. Insecurity at home leads to insecure attachments, and children then learn to assume that all relationships with adults will be unreliable and unstable (O'Connor et al., 2012).

Children enter school with working models of relationships with adults already internalized and, therefore, they base their expectations for those relationships, and their corresponding behavior, on prior experiences (Myers & Pianta, 2008). The parent-child relationship has a significant influence on the teacher-child relationship (Sabol & Pianta, 2012; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012). If children have grown up with sensitive and responsive maternal care, they are more likely to trust their teachers and see themselves as worthy of the same trust and care. However, unresponsive and insensitive care leaves children feeling that they themselves are unworthy and they will view other adults with whom they come into contact with distrust (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; O'Connor et al., 2012). This can make a teacher's attempts at building a relationship more difficult; however, it is important teachers persevere as, ". . . a sensitive teacher may reshape children's relational models, and subsequent behavior and relationships" (Sabol & Pianta, 2012, p. 214).

Ahnert et al. (2006) and Elicker et al. (1999) found secure attachments with a maternal caregiver and primary non-parental caregivers had positive effects on children's psychological adjustments, social competence, and cognitive functioning. Verschueren and Koomen (2012)) found secure attachments with teachers are very important as they act as a secure base from which children can explore the world around them; therefore, from an attachment perspective, the affective qualities of the student-teacher relationship are paramount. Secure teacher-child relationships are recognized as being high in closeness and low in dependency and conflict (Birch & Ladd, 1997; O'Connor, 2010; Roorda et al., 2011).

A secure attachment with a teacher has a beneficial effect on children's academic growth. Children with secure attachments trust adults to care for them. Because of this, they have a more positive outlook and affect and are more socially competent than peers with insecure attachments. These secure students are more likely to take risks and work and play on their own because they know they have a safe place to return to if things get difficult or if they get upset. They are not preoccupied with protecting themselves and keeping themselves emotionally safe, as they are confident in the care that their teacher has for them. This leads to greater learning opportunities and increased engagement in academic tasks (Howes & Ritchie, 1999; Hughes et al., 2008; Myers & Pianta, 2008; Thijs & Fleischmann, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

This study focused on how a teacher built positive relationships with students from high poverty homes. As these students are more likely to have grown up with insecure attachments and, therefore, internalized distrust or suspicion of adults, it is harder for teachers to connect and establish relationships with them. However, it is vitally important that teachers find a way as a secure attachment to a teacher can help to realign children's expectations of adult-child relationships as well as improving children's academic outcomes (Myers & Pianta, 2008).

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to describe what actions a teacher in a Title I school took to build positive relationships with her students and to find out how students perceived those relationships. With a better understanding of teacher's actions and student's perceptions of those actions, other teachers could be better prepared to create positive relationships with their students and, in turn, would see better academic outcomes for their students who lived in poverty.

The following research questions were addressed:

Q1   What are the ways in which a teacher builds positive relationships with upper elementary students in poverty at the beginning of the school year?

Q2   How does the teacher maintain positive relationships?

Q3   How do students perceive their relationships with their teacher?

Q4   From the students' perspective, in what ways does the teacher build positive relationships with her students?

Research Approach

I wished to illuminate teacher practices that lead to positive relationships established between students and teachers, and so qualitative research served me best. I conducted a case study as I believed the narrative aspect of such a study allowed me to paint a rich picture of what building positive relationships in an upper elementary classroom in a Title I school looks like. The narrative nature of such a study lent itself well to including student's perspectives in the narrative in order to enrich and deepen our overall understanding. As it would be impossible for all teachers to get an opportunity to observe, and learn from, teachers who are able to enjoy trusting relationships with students my research aimed to "convey to the reader what experience itself would convey" (Stake, 1995, p. 39).

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher was to be as unobtrusive as possible so as to try and minimize any changes in the typical classroom structure. My role was to observe and interpret what I saw. As Stake (1995) stated, stated, "Of all the roles, the role of the interpreter, and gatherer of interpretations is central. Most contemporary qualitative researchers nourish the belief that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered" (p. 99). I was primarily an observer in the classroom but also acted as an 'observer as participant' and as time went on became more involved in what was happening in the classroom as recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2017). I was, therefore, able to ask students questions in the classroom environment and focus on how they were feeling about what they were working on and if they understood the purpose of what they are working on. I could ask them about any behavior I saw which may have been related to their relationship with the teacher; such as them being an active participant in the classroom or sitting quietly, if the teacher called on them often, if they felt comfortable sharing their ideas in the classroom, or what happened when they got answers wrong. As I was an observer/participant, I was able to ask some of these questions in the moment and, therefore, get more data on the spot. If I had waited and recorded these sorts of questions to ask students at a later date, a lot of the information might have been lost as students might not recall specific instances in the classroom. I had to be careful to not interrupt learning when asking these questions and I had to make sure I was not asking potentially uncomfortable questions, such as why a student may have felt they were not getting called on, within earshot of the teacher. I tried to place myself on the opposite side of the classroom to the teacher, both to avoid distracting from her teaching, and to make students feels more comfortable talking with me. I did not help students academically with their work, as I did not want to enter into a 'teacher' role in the

classroom. As I observed, I wrote down information as it came up, and I made researcher notes of anything unusual that might have warranted further conversation in an interview with the teacher.

I personally value the relationship building aspect of teaching highly and believe quite firmly that effective classroom management is not possible without strong relationships with students. I have had many conversations with peers about this and have acted as a mentor teacher for those struggling with classroom management in their own rooms. In my capacity as a mentor, I always go back to the relationship the teacher has with their students and encourage them to prioritize that in order to improve their classroom management and consequently their student's achievement. Although I made every effort to be as objective as possible, I do hold these biases, and they could have effected how I interpreted or looked at the data. I will be using member checking in order to preserve as much of the participant's voices as I can so as to limit this possibility.

<center>**Rationale and Significance**</center>

The rationale for this study sprang from a desire to help students living in poverty achieve their full academic potential by providing teachers specific ways to build relationships. Students coming from a low-income family benefit from the support of a teacher that they have a positive relationship with and the outcomes for their behavior, emotional growth, and socialization are significant and important.

A supportive and strong attachment to a teacher may help students living in poverty face some of the challenges or obstacles that exist because of their home lives and a close relationship with a teacher could serve as a protective factor against some of the negative outcomes of prolonged poverty (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Academic success is key to breaking the cycle of

poverty, and one of the best ways for children to change this life is to succeed in school, graduate, and get jobs that provide them the resources to change their circumstances. None of these things are possible without a positive relationship with a teacher (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Crosnoe et al., 2004; Hatton et al., 1996; Klem & Connell, 2004; Liew et al., 2010; Pianta et al., 2008).

Summary

This chapter covered the importance of the study and along with the background and the theoretical framework. It then addressed research questions, the research approach, and the role of the researcher. Finally the rationale and significance of the study were explained. Chapter II is an extensive look at the research that has been done on how children, and specifically their relationships, are affected by poverty, how important positive relationships are between teachers and students, and different types of positive relationships teachers and students can share. Chapter III outlines my methodology, data collection, and analysis. Chapter IV covers my findings from the study, what information and data I collected from the teacher and the students. I compare how the teacher perceived her actions and how those actions were received and perceived by the students. Finally Chapter V discusses the research questions and the implications of the findings. Chapter V also discusses the limitations of this study and then the opportunities for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Children who come from families living in poverty have a harder time in school than their more affluent counterparts (Howse et al., 2003; Wallenstein, 2012). Students who are at risk for negative academic outcomes need strong relationships with their teachers to make academic gains and fulfill their potential. If students come from a family dealing with poverty, they could have insecure attachments with their parents, and this can lead to them having distrustful internal working models of relationships with adults (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; O'Connor et al., 2012). These models can make it much harder for teachers to establish positive relationships with students, but it is crucial for students' success, as positive relationships can have mediating effects on the other challenges that could leave students vulnerable to academic failure.

Poverty

Defining Poverty

In order to study the effects of poverty on children, we need to have a working definition of what poverty is. There are a number of different types of poverty, and according to Engle and Black (2008), these can include the lack of material assets and health, limited capabilities, limited social belonging or absence of cultural identity. Poverty could also be considered in the form of a lack of respect and dignity or limited access to information or education. Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000)) add to this list by taking into account neighborhood characteristics such as

the number of professionals, the percentage of people who have attained higher education, the

number of unemployed individuals and the percentage of male joblessness as well as the more

traditional poverty markers of personal or combination of income. This study focuses on

economic poverty and uses income as a marker of poverty. When individuals or families, cannot

provide for their basic food, shelter, and clothing needs, they are said to be in poverty (Brooks-

Gunn & Duncan, 1997). However, Engle and Black (2008) stated the absolute poverty line is,

"the food expenditure necessary to meet dietary recommendations, supplemented by a small

allowance for nonfood goods" (p. 243). According to Milner (2013), whether students receive a

free or reduced lunch is commonly used as a marker of family poverty.

Finally, it is important to note that poverty is not the fault of the poor. Although there

have been some researchers who seemed to blame a "culture of poverty" (Lewis, 1968; Payne,

1996), others such as Harvey and Reed (1996) took the view that the existing systems in society

have damaged the poor. Milner (2013) recognized even teachers did not always see that their

privilege, the successes of their ancestors passed down through generations, and their existing

societal status has made much of their achievements possible. Many people still have the view

that working hard, staying out of trouble, and having ability and skill is what has allowed them to

achieve their place in the middle or upper classes, not understanding how big of a role luck and

privilege play. Ladson-Billings (2017) put it best when she stated, "Poverty is a social condition

created by the decisions of the powerful" (p. 82).

Detrimental Effects of Poverty
on Families

There are many consequences of living in poverty, and although this study focused

mostly on how poverty affected children, it was important to note that adverse effects on families

and parents led to some of the difficulties children faced. For example, low-income families were

more likely to be headed by a single parent or a parent who had a low level of education. The parent or parents might be unemployed or, if employed, they may have low earning potential. All of these things could account for the observable negative consequences of poverty on children (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997).

Life Changes

A family living in poverty may go through many changes in their day-to-day lives, often unexpectedly. Last minute changes in work schedules, work availability, child care, transportation availability, and even living arrangements can lead to a lot of upheaval for families (Dodge et al., 1994). These transitions happen more frequently in families living in poverty than in affluent families and can have negative impacts on the children in the family. Some of these changes can account for the differing experiences children have in school. Sometimes behavior issues or academic issues in school seem to come and go, and for teachers, this can be difficult to explain. However, if teachers and schools take into account family circumstances, frequently these changes correlate to periods of transition in children's family lives (Ackerman et al., 2004a, 2004b).

Stress

The change and uncertainty present in the lives of families living in poverty also add a great deal of stress to family lives. Stress can affect families when it happens at a community level, such as a net loss in jobs, or at an individual level, such as unemployment, lack of food and money, overcrowded housing and a general loss of hope (Pelton, 1978; Steinberg et al., 1981). Chronic, daily stressors and acute stress both have impacts on individual's wellbeing and have been shown to have a wide variety of negative impacts (DuBois et al., 1992). One of the effects of this level of stress on families was a decreased appreciation for prosocial behavior, higher

tolerance for deviance, and changes in parenting style that can lead to harsh punishments and an environment of abuse or neglect (Black & Krishnakumar, 1998; Steinberg et al., 1981).

Lack of Safety in the Neighborhood

The neighborhoods in which families in poverty live can be a source of stress as they affect family life quite significantly but often in a negative way. Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) found neighborhoods with high socioeconomic status (SES) had a positive effect on achievement and school outcomes, even among adolescents. However, Black and Krishnakumar (1998) claimed, even when families living in poverty tried to find safe options in their communities to keep their children involved in structured activities, such as at a recreation center, or getting involved in music and sports, those resources were not available in the communities in which they lived.

Detrimental Effects of Poverty on Parents

Emotional Wellbeing

The emotional effects of dealing with economic hardship are numerous and can negatively impact parents' ability to look after their children adequately and positively. Parent's emotional state has an impact on their daily interaction with children, their cognition, and their responses to undesirable behavior. These stress processes may exacerbate existing issues in families and then directly impact children when their parent's child-rearing abilities are impaired (Conger et al., 1992). This change in parenting styles, particularly the use of harsh disciplinary measures, has a strong influence on child and adolescent adjustment (Ackerman et al., 2004b).

Parenting Style

The effect that poverty could have on parenting is varied. Dodge et al. (1994) found there was an impact on the amount of warmth that mothers showed children in particular. They found

the use of harsh discipline increased and exposure to violence, either in the home or the

community, was related to income poverty. All of these things could negatively impact

children's development and adjustment. Evans and Rosenbaum (2008) noted a relationship

between economic hardship and the time investments parents made in their children. These

investments include parents chatting with their children as well as providing them with enriching

experiences such as trips to the museum or zoo. They found a lack of resources for enrichment in

the home, such as appropriate writing utensils or books for children to read and be read to. Pelton

(1978) made the point, "poor people have very little margin for irresponsibility or

mismanagement of either time or money" (p. 615). The lack of communication and resources for

children in families of poverty amplifies the hazards of neglect. Pelton (1978) noted the

problems and stressors of poverty are causative agents in some parent's abusive and neglectful

treatment of their children.

Detrimental Effects of Poverty on Children

Risk of Child Abuse/Neglect

Children who live in poverty are at a much higher risk of experiencing abuse or neglect

than their more affluent peers and one of the reasons for this is that stress is seen as a potential

cause of abusive or neglectful behavior (Steinberg et al., 1981) and, as research has shown

(Black & Krishnakumar, 1998; DuBois et al., 1992; Pelton, 1978; Steinberg et al., 1981), living

in poverty can cause chronic, or acute, stress in parent's lives. Cross-sectional studies have

supported the claim that economic stress leads to mistreatment of children by their parents at the

individual and aggregate level and there is substantial evidence at a national level of an

overabundance of children from families in poverty that have been involved in child abuse and

neglect incidents (Pelton, 1978; Steinberg et al., 1981).

Other causes of this additional risk for abuse and neglect could be that children in poverty often have mothers who are less warm towards them and who experience more life stress but less support from the community and, therefore, greater isolation (Dodge et al., 1994). Families are more likely to hold values that aggression is either an appropriate, or at least effective, way of solving problems. Children in poverty can be victims of harsh discipline techniques, again because aggression and harsh punishment can be effective at regulating their behavior. They are more likely to observe, and perhaps even experience, violence in their neighborhoods. These children often have more transient lives and, therefore, it is difficult for them to build and maintain a stable peer group or supportive relationships with teachers or other adults (Dodge et al., 1994). All of these things leave children much more susceptible to abuse or neglect.

Finally, Pelton (1978) warned against the myth that child abuse and neglect was "classless" and he stated this myth was damaging as it allowed people to view abusive and neglectful behaviors as a type of "disease" rather than, as he claimed, a sociological and poverty-related problem.

Academic/Cognitive Risk

The biggest and most often commented upon risk in the research was that children in poverty face problems when it comes to their academic and cognitive abilities and achievement. In fact, Duncan et al. (1998) found, when compared to the effect on behavior, mental health and physical health, cognitive and academic abilities were substantially affected by family income.

Children from affluent backgrounds have a considerable head start when entering school when compared to children coming from a background of poverty concerning scholastic skills and school readiness (Howse et al., 2003; Wallenstein, 2012). It has generally been agreed that being ready for school and being on grade level in kindergarten and first grade were important

predictors of later school success. This is likely since the longer children have gaps in their academic abilities, the bigger those gaps grow. It becomes harder and harder to catch students up as they progress through elementary school, leaving them further at risk of academic failure. Duncan et al. (1994) found socioeconomic status had an effect on 5-year-olds IQ and that specifically, income had more effect than other SES measures. Ackerman et al. (2004a) found deficits in verbal and reading ability in particular constrained academic growth in later years. They found, once a gap in achievement had started, then it was difficult to close, even if family circumstances changed.

Children's ability to adjust and take advantage of the school environment is challenged by low income Ackerman et al. (2004a). Children from families in poverty find it harder to adjust to the school setting and, therefore, develop differently than children in more advantaged positions. Ackerman et al. (2004b) found extended exposure to adverse living situations undermined the development of cognitive and social skills that children need for success in school. Poverty influences children in this way by limiting protective factors that could mediate this effect, such as having a cognitively stimulating environment and opportunities for enrichment at home (Engle & Black, 2008). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) found children from low-income families are often not equipped to access the dominant middle-class culture in their schools, or the dominant white culture if they are from Latinx or African American families, and as such they need to be able to depend on relationships with teachers in order to access the opportunities that the 'mainstream' could provide. As Latinx and African American families have been disproportionately represented in communities with low SES (Black & Krishnakumar, 1998; Breger, 2017; Haberman, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014, 2017;

Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Milner, 2013; Murnane, 2007; Patterson et al., 1990; Wallenstein, 2012), this was a considerable barrier to their academic achievement.

Volatility in family circumstances had stronger effects on children in the lower grades than in the upper grades (Ackerman et al., 2004a). This could be attributed to the fact that if children are in upper grades when their families' economic circumstances change they already have strong academic achievements behind them and so the gaps start later and, therefore, grow slower. It could also be that, as children proceed in school, they become more resilient and have more stable peer relationships and teacher relationships to support them as their lives at home go through transitions. Furthermore, it was found, while economic changes affected ability and achievement for children in early and middle childhood, it did not have a substantial effect on performance for adolescence (Duncan et al., 1998).

However, just because low income does not have such a significant effect on middle childhood and adolescence does not mean that there is not some effect. Indeed, children who experience poverty typically carry the academic impacts of that with them throughout their education as is evident in the research. Ackerman et al. (2007) have shown that about 40% of children from economically disadvantaged homes in fifth grade were in reading assistance programs. Whereas Murnane (2007) found, "Although about three-quarters of white youth earn high school diplomas on schedule, the corresponding figure for black and Hispanic youth--who are especially likely to be living in poverty--is roughly half" (p. 162). The amount of time that students face poverty has a lasting impact on their success in school and children in poverty generally face poor school outcomes and low levels of competencies in various domains of academics (Baker, 1999; Milner, 2013; Patterson et al., 1990).

Along with the effects on their cognitive abilities, poverty also affects children's engagement with school and their motivation to succeed. Hatton et al. (1996) noted that children in low-income schools tended to withdraw from lessons. They were less willing to take risks and engage in learning. Students occupied themselves in work avoidance behaviors and seemed particularly avoidant in reading and writing activities. McLoyd (1989) noted that as children's academic aspirations diminish, so does their motivation to succeed in school, which then has a direct impact on their achievement and later outcomes.

These effects are concerning because academic attainment has such a huge impact on children's later lives and their ability to change their circumstances. Educational achievement is a great predictor of success in later life (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997) and students from poverty who struggle in school face increased risk of academic failure (Spilt et al., 2012). Engle and Black (2008) noted that children from poor homes had limited chances of succeeding academically and yet needed that academic achievement to escape from poverty later in life. Ladson-Billings (2014) summed it up when she said:

> The academic death of students is made evident in the disengagement, academic failure, dropout, suspension, and expulsion that have become an all too familiar part of schooling in urban schools. Academic death leaves more young people unemployed, underemployed, and unemployable in our cities and neighborhoods, and vulnerable to the criminal justice system. Furthermore, this vicious cycle often continues with the children they will parent. (p. 77)

Negative Behavior and Emotional Impact

Patterson et al. (1990) found the unique stressors and combination of different sources and durations of stress in children's lives had a direct impact on their emotional wellbeing. Children were likely to suffer from a generally lower mood and lower attention span, which, as well as making school more difficult, could combine to impact children's mental health negatively. Multiple researchers have found children from low-income families generally have

more behavior problems than their peers, and as SES goes down, behavior problems increase linearly (Brooks-Gunn, & Duncan, 1997). Therefore, income is seen as a predictor of problem behaviors in school and children in chronically impoverished families have more behavior problems than other children, which is perhaps related to the lack of cognitive stimulation at home (Dodge et al., 1994; Engle & Black, 2008; Patterson et al., 1990). Behaviors in children can be categorized as either externalizing behavior or internalizing behavior.

Externalizing behavior is usually more disruptive in a classroom setting and, therefore, more likely to be noticed. Externalizing behavior includes aggression, fighting, acting out, time off task, classroom disruptions, and shouting out. Duncan et al. (1994) reported that externalizing problem behavior was more highly reported in low-income neighborhoods than in others. Similarly, Dodge et al. (1994) found when teachers rated externalizing behaviors, children from low socioeconomic status were three times as likely as other children to be in the clinical risk range. Finally, Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) found strong evidence that children showed more externalizing behaviors than internalizing behaviors if they were from low-income families.

Internalizing behavior is less noticeable, although it is cause for concern, and includes anxiety, withdrawal from peers and teachers, and depression (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Ackerman et al. (2007) found struggling in school, and particularly in reading, lead to feelings of failure among children. These feelings of failure sometimes turned into anger and sadness as children became more frustrated with their lack of progress. Children experienced anxiety and fear of upcoming educational challenges and the possibility of experiencing more failure. They found some children felt shame, particularly when they compared their academic growth or achievements to their peers. Interestingly, they found these feelings often increase with time

spent in school and fifth graders who experienced reading problems had more of an emotional response to their academic struggles than younger children. As fifth graders become more concerned with how they appear to their peers, and because by fifth-grade gaps in learning have become significant and sometimes seem insurmountable, it makes sense that these children felt the sting of their academic struggles more acutely than their younger counterparts.

Part of the cause of these increased instances of externalizing and internalizing behavior among children from low-income families is a trend towards having less self-regulatory capacity than other children from more affluent homes. Evans and Rosenbaum (2008) found children coming from poverty had deficiencies in the early development of self-regulatory skills. This then negatively impacted their time at school because they would struggle to control their emotions and behaviors. Howse et al. (2003) found this lack of self-regulation leads to an increase in distractibility for children in kindergarten and this inability to maintain their attention to school tasks also negatively impacted their school achievement.

Impact on Socialization

School is a social institution and daily interactions with peers, teachers, and other adults in the school play a huge role in student's success or otherwise in an academic setting. Unfortunately, students who came from a background of poverty experienced a more negative social context in schools which could mean that, as a result, "students seem not to have the social connectedness with adults at school that could function as a protective factor in the face of academic or life stressors" (Baker, 1999, p. 59). Part of this lack of social adjustment could come from the lack of a secure social experience at home. Erikson posited that if children's needs have been met consistently during their first year of life, then they react to subsequent people in a trusting manner. However, if their early life has been tumultuous and needs have not always

been met, then the child is more likely to see the world as undependable and is less likely to form trusting attachments with others (as cited in Imber, 1973) Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) restated this by claiming that, if children grew up in a consistent environment with consistent parenting, they were more likely to be trusting. On the contrary, if they had had a childhood marked by inconsistencies and lack of follow-through, they might generally be more suspicious of other people.

The negative impact on children's socialization seems to be more apparent when discussing children's relationships with teachers rather than their peers. Although McLoyd (1989) found children in poverty often felt embarrassed about their lack of material goods or the circumstances of their home lives and so withdrew from peers in an effort to protect themselves from judgment, no other research noted detrimental impacts of poverty on children's relationships with their friends. In contrast, student's relationships with teachers were more heavily impacted, perhaps because of the key aspect of trust when building relationships with other adults. Children who have experienced inconsistent and unreliable adults in their home lives are unlikely to view adults in the school setting as being dependable and reliable, this then impedes building relationships. Goddard et al. (2001) noted that poverty had a substantial adverse impact on relationships and the capacity of teachers to build trust with their students. Teachers interviewed by Russell et al. (2016) also cited out of school environments and living situations as influencing their relationships with children. Jerome et al. (2009) noted that the security or insecurity of attachments in children's early lives continues to impact their ability to forge relationships with their teachers into preadolescence.

School Deficiencies

"A second consistent finding is that disadvantaged American children, those who most need the nation's best teachers because their parents lack the resources to compensate for poor schooling, are least likely to get them" (Murnane, 2007, p. 172). The schools that low-income children most often end up going to are usually the least well-equipped to help them achieve academic success. Housing patterns leave poor children concentrated in certain schools and certain school districts (Murnane, 2007), and those schools have a myriad of issues that are outlined in the research. According to Ennis and McCauley (2002), low-income schools face problems such as difficulty hiring qualified teachers, low teacher control over curriculum, inadequate classroom discipline, more frequent student possession of weapons, and a higher incidence of student pregnancy. Ladson-Billings (2017) adds the prevalence of new and inexperienced teachers to that list and Goddard et al. (2009) commented on the strained trust relations in such schools. Additionally, Milner (2013) found that these schools have more teacher absences, a lack of commitment and persistence among teachers, and a disproportionate number of teachers teaching outside of their field of expertise. It is hardly surprising then that Murnane (2007) has found that even if students graduate, they are left without the skills they need to earn a decent living. Milner (2013):

> In many urban and high poverty schools, students are being taught and are learning how to follow rules but are rarely learning how to develop their own academic, social, and political awareness and positions on issues. In this way, schools are preparing students for the kind of jobs they will assume: to follow directions. Urban and high-poverty spaces are preparing their students to take orders. (p. 33)

School Dependence

Unfortunately, alongside the fact that low-income schools are sometimes not able to have much success with their students comes the issue of school dependency. School dependent youth

rely on their schools to supplement a lot of what they lack at home. Milner (2013) pointed out that children living in poverty count on schools to give them breakfast and lunch, academic support, emotional support through counselors and psychologists, and access to educational resources outside of the school such as field trips or exposure to museums or art galleries. It is important to note that children from low-income families rely on their teachers for social, emotional, behavioral, and academic support in a way that their more affluent peers do not need to (Howse et al., 2003). Because of this, it is crucial that students be able to build relationships with their teachers and other adults in the school so that they feel welcome and can construct positive attitudes about school (Milner, 2013).

Harmful Reactions to Children in Poverty

Teacher Attitudes

The people who are supposed to be on the front lines in helping children in poverty are their teachers, however, sometimes teachers hold harmful views about those children and then react in ways that make their teaching much less effective. Van Maele and Van Houtte (2011) found some teachers had meager expectations of children from low-income families. They believed these students could not live up to the normative academic expectations they held for other children and consequently lowered their expectations and their standards. Teachers perceived the students to be less teachable, and so the level of trust between teachers and students was irreparably harmed, and when students and teachers do not have a trusting relationship the art of educating can shift into one focused on rules and regulation and, most importantly, compliance.

(Haberman, 2010). stated:

> It cannot be emphasized enough that, in the real world, urban teachers are never defined as incompetent because their 'deprived', 'disadvantaged', 'abused', 'low-income' students are not learning. Instead, urban teachers are castigated because they cannot elicit compliance (p. 84).

Teachers with negative attitudes towards children in low-income schools have teaching practices that are best categorized as authoritarian and directive (Haberman, 2010). Milner (2013) found students in low-income schools were taught to follow rules and comply with authority as a way to prepare them for the jobs that teachers assumed they were going to have, positions where they merely needed to obey orders. These children were not given a chance to question authority or engage in critical thinking; they were not empowered to think about inequity or to develop skills to overcome it. They were not encouraged to think about racist and inequitable policies either in or outside the schools and ways they might confront those. Instead, they were reduced to following directions and complying with what they had been specifically directed to do (Haberman, 2010).

Alongside this approach to teaching is a non-work approach observed by Hatton et al. (1996). They found that teachers would have classes spend large portions of the day engaged in non-work and non-academic activities such as watching videos. Crucially, the researchers point out; these activities did not require any actual teaching effort. Hatton et al. (1996) noticed that in trying to encourage compliance from their students, some teachers went the opposite route of authoritarian and formed friendship like relationships with their students. However, to not jeopardize their 'buddy-like' relationships with their students, teachers would make accommodations that, "reveal an implicit expectation that underachievement is natural, even inevitable" (p. 47).

Blaming Families

Comments in which teachers either directly or indirectly blame families for the circumstances students live in and come to school from are pretty common throughout low-income schools. Sometimes these comments are unthinking or could be categorized as microaggressions, but still perpetuate the idea that having little to no income and being poor are the fault of the family rather than just the situation the family happens to be in. Hatton et al. (1996) observed this and commented on it the most in their research. They heard teachers categorize families as 'bad' and unsupportive of the school. Lack of money for school equipment was recognized as a symptom of poverty but still was commented upon as showing a lack of commitment to schooling and that the lack of commitment to education then kept families living in poverty. Judgments about how parents spent money on things other than school supplies were common, and generally, there was an overall attitude that students were coming into school with an unacceptable number of 'deficiencies' because of their home lives. Hatton et al. (1996) point out that these 'deficiencies' are usually no more than the family not being middle class but are used as an excuse for all academic underachievement.

Blaming Children

Unfortunately, there is also a culture in some schools of blaming children, not for the fact that they come from poverty as that would be absurd, but for the effects that their background has on their school lives. Milner (2013) and Hatton et al. (1996) stated academic failings were seen as the result of bad decision making or lack of work ethic rather than a product of the environment children are coming from. Teachers fail to recognize that privilege, socioeconomics, and opportunity help students succeed, and a lack of those things holds them back. Beliefs that children cannot succeed result in lowered expectations because of students'

academic failures. Hatton et al. (1996) noticed that teachers blamed students for their poor

behavior and disruptive tendencies when it was clear to the researchers, from an outsider's

perspective, that these students were reacting against a school day that was poorly planned,

overly rigid, and boring.

If we consider all the ways in which poverty negatively affects children, from increased

risk of child abuse and neglect to poor academic and behavioral outcomes, poor socialization,

and significant deficiencies at the schools they attend it is not surprising that they are not

achieving as well as other children might.

Ladson-Billings (2017) claimed:

> When we consider the many ways the entire society is arrayed against poor urban
> students--segregated housing, substandard schools . . . health threats, lack of
> access to healthy food, and inadequate healthcare--we cannot reduce their
> academic problems to individual failings. (p. 86)

The Attitudes of Families and
Children Living in Poverty

As we have seen, there has been a lot of negative attitudes surrounding children and

families that lived in poverty in regards to education. However, the research painted quite a

different picture of the attitudes these children and families held toward their education. Both

Ladson-Billings (2017) and Milner (2013) found low-income parents and families strongly

valued education as a way for their children to better their lives and their circumstances. These

families expressed strong beliefs in the importance of education and worked hard to instill those

beliefs in their children.

Howse et al. (2003) found economically disadvantaged children tended to be highly

motivated to come to school and work hard while at school. While it could be expected that due

to lack of community support and the fact that they experience more failure than their peers, they

would have a negative attitude towards school that was generally not the case. In fact, children from low-income families were sometimes more highly motivated to take part in challenging activities than more advantaged children and entered school with high levels of confidence in their abilities.

Effective Ways to Reach Children in Poverty

Teaching

Teaching students from low-income families involves acknowledging where the students come from, incorporating student experiences into the curriculum, and engaging students in meaningful instruction in the classroom. Hatton et al. (1996) noted that some teachers were able to recognize the reality of home experiences that did not involve the resources available to a middle-class family and built their teaching practices around them without resentment or rancor.

Haberman (2010) stated effective low-income schools rely on building trusting relationships with their students and used meaningful activities and engaging learning experiences to maintain control and a productive environment. When students feel that there are high expectations in a classroom that demand and enforce academic excellence, they are likely to rise to those standards (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Challenging students to demonstrate their academic abilities and encouraging them to draw on their skills and abilities as leaders in order to tackle real-world problems is an effective way to introduce meaning into their academic lives. In this way, peers will also observe children being educational leaders and want to emulate their practices rather than getting into trouble with them (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Following a scripted curriculum, therefore, is not the best way to effectively teach students in poverty because it offers little opportunity to respond to the lived experiences of students (Milner, 2013) and is, therefore, devoid of meaning for them.

Teachers who are passionate and excited about what they are teaching imbue excitement and passion in their students. Ladson-Billings (2017) reported that students' favorite teachers, and their parents' favorite teachers, were the ones who increased children's enthusiasm for school while holding them to high academic standards. These teachers also incorporated the children's culture and background into the curriculum, and they encouraged students to consider real issues in their lives and their communities from a variety of perspectives, recognizing that students want to use the knowledge they acquire. Ladson-Billings (2017) and Milner (2013) also pointed out that good teachers know that they are preparing students to become citizens of a diverse democracy and they take the time the challenge students to question the status quo, think about why they are in poverty and question the inequitable circumstances that may have led there. Ladson-Billings (2017) ends by overthrowing the assumption that no one can teach these children because they come from a culture of poverty, in fact, her research proves just the opposite.

Relationship Building

There are significant challenges in building relationships with students who are living in poverty. Murray and Malmgrem (2005) wrote that creating these types of positive, supportive relationships in schools that were deficient in many ways was a daunting task. However, as Wallenstein (2012) noted teachers have no control over the background students are coming from, they cannot control whether students go home to an empty house, or never get read to, but teachers can control what happens as soon as students enter school. The literature suggests that not only are positive teacher-student relationships good for all children, but they can actually serve as a compensatory resource for children whose lives have been affected by aggression and negative parent-child relationships (Meehan et al., 2003). Hatton et al. (1996) believed, if social

transformation, an aim of teaching noted by both Ladson-Billings (2017) and Milner (2013), was to be achieved then teachers needed to build productive relationships with their students.

Teachers building good relationships with their students need to maintain a slight distance to still be able to do their jobs and teach children. Teachers' relationships with students should be characterized by warmth and good humor, however, the relationship must lead to better engagement in academics and the teacher should be able to use their relationship with the student to help the student achieve their academic goals. Having a good, productive, positive relationship with students should not be synonymous with being their friend (Hatton et al., 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Baker (2006) noted that a good student-teacher relationship could lead to better academic outcomes for the child. Jerome et al. (2009) explained these relationships may be especially important to children who had not had strong attachments previously because they had not had a prior opportunity to build adaptive relational skills. Luckily, they found previous insecure attachments did not predispose children to necessarily have poor relationships with their teachers; however, it may be more difficult or take more time. Because of this, they make the case that it is especially important to place children who are at risk of academic failure into classrooms with teachers who will take the time to build those relationships. Roorda et al. (2011) found strong student-teacher relationships had a positive impact on students' academic success and that those relationships increased in importance as students got older.

The research clearly shows that positive relationships between teachers and students are crucial for students' success and that for students from low-income families, these relationships could be the turning point in their academic lives, "He maintained that many teachers fail in high-poverty environments because they do not have the ability to connect with students and

build relationships with them where students are willing to participate in learning" (Milner, 2013, p. 33).

Positive Relationships

The Importance of Relationships

Importance for Students

Having a positive, productive, and trusting relationship with a teacher can improve children's experiences at school and, therefore, their academic achievement. Particularly for children coming from low-income families who may not have these types of relationships with other adults in their lives, schools and teachers can become a place of support and safety. Goddard et al. (2009) found, even though the importance of relationships is well established in the literature, efforts to improve children's academic outcomes generally fail to focus on relationship building. Russell et al. (2016) found student benefits from positive teacher relationships included better emotional well-being, increased belief in their abilities, improved academic engagement and effort and actual increases in student's social and academic skills. Students in elementary school typically spend up to a year with the same teacher, so the potential for building a lasting and productive relationship is high. A positive relationship with a teacher is associated with immediate and ongoing beneficial outcomes for children (Baker, 2006). Baker (1999) also noted that in addition to the benefits outlined above by Russell et al. (2016) students also learned more specific attitudes and beliefs about school from their relationships with teachers and so they improved their overall outlook on education. Murray and Greenberg (2000) pointed out that an improved perspective on the school environment has a direct link to students' social, emotional, and academic adjustment.

Importance for Students Who Struggle

Students who struggle with self-regulation often show externalizing behaviors, which can get them into trouble in the classroom. Liew et al. (2010) found a supportive teacher could serve as compensation and provide children with outside regulation until they learned to self-regulate, therefore, acting as a source of support outside the home. Sabol and Pianta (2012) noted the mediating effect of a positive student-teacher relationship. They found teacher-child relationships can compensate for earlier negative experiences, and those strong student-teacher relationships can lead to improved academic, social, and emotional outcomes for children at behavioral and demographic risk.

Importance for Teachers

The importance of positive relationships with students on teacher's well-being and happiness is less studied and reported. However, having less conflictual relationships with students and having to expend less energy trying to control or elicit compliance from a class would free teachers up to spend their time teaching. Haberman (2010) described the feeling of a classroom where the teachers are demanding control and the students are resisting "as seething with resentment" (p. 83), which must undeniably be an unpleasant state to work in. He noted that given the amount of emotional and physical energy teachers must expend to maintain that level of control all day every day they are likely to burn out faster. Hamre and Pianta (2001) added that teachers who have positive relationships with their students are more motivated to spend extra time helping them and giving them academic support. A more pleasant school environment is characterized by positive relationships between teachers and their students because teachers see the resultant growth in their students. Teachers who do not see growth and continually fail in their attempts to improve children's academic outcomes are generally unhappy and as Margonis

(2004) pointed out, "A great many of educators' efforts succeed or fail because the relational preconditions for learning are either present or absent" (p. 44).

Effects of Positive Relationships

Academic Effects

The strongest case can be made for focusing on improving student-teacher relationships when the amount of research about the positive academic outcomes is considered. Although students come to school from different backgrounds and with different levels of preparedness studies overwhelmingly have found a positive relationship with a teacher will have corresponding effects on student's achievement (Baker et al., 2008). Students reported enjoying school more and having more positive attitudes about their education. They also achieved more academically and were more engaged in their school lives. When students felt that the general climate of the classroom was positive and supportive, they achieved more in math and reading, particularly in third and fifth grade and students who had positive relationships with their teachers had fewer problems in school and viewed their teachers as being caring and supportive (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Crosnoe et al., 2004; Hatton et al., 1996; Klem & Connell, 2004; Liew et al., 2010; Pianta et al., 2008).

Students who are at risk for academic failure for any reason seem to fare particularly well when they have a positive relationship with a teacher. Milner (2013) pointed out that a positive relationship with a teacher can show school dependent children that they can rely on some adults in their lives for support and caring even if their past experiences have taught them otherwise. These relationships can help them to build a favorable view of the school and, therefore, encourage them to attend more frequently and be more engaged when they are present. Anderson et al. (2004) found improved attendance among students considered at risk when they had

established at least one meaningful relationship with an adult in the school; in this study, it was a

monitor in a paraprofessional position. Closeness and quality of relationships between students

and monitors led to better attendance, higher engagement, and improved academic success,

which transferred back to their regular classrooms with their general education teachers. Positive

and supportive relationships were found to have a moderating effect on the struggles students

faced when they entered school with behavioral, emotional, attention, social, or academic

problems (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Students who struggled with self-regulation had better

outcomes when placed with teachers who were supportive and dedicated to building a positive

relationship with them (Liew et al., 2010).

Early childhood is an important time for children to have positive relationships with their

teachers, as this is the time when they are trying to adjust to a new school environment. It is also

the best time to try and close gaps in children's academic skills as, the longer the gaps remain,

the wider they become and the harder they are to fill. Hughes and Kwok (2007) found early

elementary students gained more in achievement when they felt they had a warm and supportive

relationship with their teacher. Similarly, Hamre and Pianta (2001) reported that establishing

positive student-teacher relationships in the early years was a strong predictor of students' ability

to adapt to the school environment and, therefore, indicated continued academic success.

Older children benefit from a strong relationship with their teachers. Baker (2006) noted

that relationships were a strong predictor of academic success and that the outcomes for younger

children and older children were comparable. Wu et al. (2010) found the effects of a positive

student-teacher relationship could impact students' academic trajectories over the next three

years. Although it may seem that older children care less about what their teachers think of them

and more about what their peers think of them, in accordance with Erikson's model of

psychosocial development, their relationships with their teachers remain essential to their social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes.

Improved Engagement and Motivation

Alongside, and perhaps causally related to, improved academic outcomes are an improvement in students' engagement and motivation. Hamre and Pianta (2005) explained theories of motivation could account for students feeling more motivated to learn when they have a positive, responsive, and secure relationship with their teachers. Birch and Ladd (1997) related this to attachment theory and pointed out that students who have these positive relationships with their teachers then have a 'strong base' from which they can explore, take risks, and engage in academic endeavors without anxiety. Students who feel they have a strong interpersonal relationship with their teachers are more likely to pursue academic goals. They are more inclined to engage in educational activities even when there is a risk of failure. Teachers can also use their relationship with students to encourage engagement and promote motivation in the classroom (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Hatton et al., 1996; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Klem & Connell, 2004).

Positive Behaviors

Better behavior in school leads to more time engaged in actual learning and a more positive classroom environment for both the teacher and the students. Strong relationships between teachers and students can lead to better behavior from students and, therefore, better outcomes. It seems especially important to have these relationships to deal with behavior problems when students are in the younger grades. Hamre and Pianta (2001) claimed that students who had significant behavior problems were more likely to avoid difficult behaviors in the future if they had a supportive and positive relationship with their teacher. Specifically, these

relationships had to be marked with low levels of negativity. Students beginning school with

problem behaviors, who were placed with highly positive teachers who could build relationships

with them regardless of their behaviors, had significantly less continuing behavior problems in

the future when compared to their peers. Students with similar behavior problems who had more

conflictual and negative relationships with their teachers did not see the same gains.

Skalická, Belsky, et al. (2015) had similar results when they looked at the relationships

between preschool children and their teachers and found high levels of positivity and support

translated into less behavioral problems when the students reached school age. Hughes and

Cavell, (1999) looked specifically at aggressive behaviors in young children but again found a

warm and supportive relationship with a teacher in year one led to a decrease in aggressive

behaviors the following year.

Baker (2006) and Baker et al. (2008) found children who struggled with self-regulation

and behavior were significantly advantaged when they had positive relationships with their

teachers compared with peers who lacked such relationships. Teachers, in this case, acted in a

compensatory fashion providing such children with the emotional support and security necessary

for learning and school adaptation.

Effects on Student's Socialization

Students who experience positive relationships with their teachers are more likely to

build social skills that can aid them as they move through their education. These social skills can

help students make connections with their peers and access the social landscape of the school

more easily (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Copeland-Mitchell et al. (1997) found even if students had

insecure attachments with their mothers or other adults in the home the relationships students

formed with teachers could serve as a buffer to that. Once students had a secure attachment to a

teacher, they were able to apply those prosocial skills and that security into increased socialization and interaction with other adults in their school and with their peers. Birch and Ladd (1997) found students who had strong relationships with their teachers reported feeling less lonely at school and were more likely to have positive school attitudes and Copeland-Mitchell et al. (1997) added that children were more likely to exhibit prosocial behaviors with their peers if they had a secure and positive relationship with their teacher.

Positive relationships with teachers can lead to positive relationships with peers because, like Hughes et al. (2001) noticed, teachers are at the focal point of the classroom and students will make assumptions about their peers based on the interactions they have with their teacher. The student-teacher interaction becomes part of the shared information that students have on their peers. As such, it has the potential to bias their assumptions about a peer, and they will act accordingly when forming friendships. If a teacher reacts positively to a child and points out her strengths, then other children are likely to notice that and appreciate the child's presence in the classroom. However, if a child draws an adverse reaction from the teacher, or if the teacher is seen to be annoyed by a child's disruptions or behavior, then her peers will look more negatively upon their classmate (Hughes et al., 2001). Finally, Meehan et al. (2003) point out that salient positive interactions with a teacher can increase children's sense of belonging in the classroom, thereby motivating them to engage more in the classroom community.

Effects on Older Children

Older children are positively impacted by strong relationships with their teachers in similar ways to younger children. A positive classroom climate can prevent relationships from declining as students enter fifth grade. As students get older, the quality of their relationships to their teachers matters more in terms of academic success, and as they prepare to enter middle

school, they especially value closeness in their relationships with their teachers (Baker, 2006). It makes sense that at a significant time of upheaval; in fifth-grade students are beginning to go through puberty and are preparing to transition into middle school, students look to teachers for emotional support. During these physical, social, and emotional changes students renegotiate and change their relationships and having trusting relationships with teachers can remove some of the anxiety this creates (O'Connor, 2010; Roorda et al., 2011; Russell et al., 2016).

Effects of Negative Relationships

Effects on Older Children

Positive relationships have similar effects on older and younger children, but negative relationships seem to have a more pronounced effect on older children and preadolescents. Unfortunately, as Baker (2006) pointed out, the impact of positive teacher relationships with children in middle childhood is relatively understudied even though it is a significant time of transition for children. Generally, relationships between teachers and students decline as they progress further up the school. Jerome et al. (2009) found that the closeness of student-teacher relationships fell exponentially as students entered the upper grades, and O'Connor (2010) noted that the quality of teacher-student ties declined throughout elementary school. Baker (2006) points out that as students get older, the increasing importance of their relationships with their peers may cause a change in their relationships with their teachers.

However, even though typically student-teacher relationships decline in closeness and quality as students get older, they did not diminish in importance Klem and Connell (2004) found, "Elementary students reporting low levels of support were twice as likely as the average student to be disaffected; middle school students were 68% more likely to be disengaged when they report low levels of teacher support" (p. 270). Hamre and Pianta (2001) also found

decreased support and an increase in negativity in relationships led to more behavior problems over the years. The transition into middle school at the same time as entering adolescence is a period of high stress, and upheaval for most children, and they need teacher support during this time perhaps more than ever.

Effects of Conflict in Relationships

Conflictual relationships with teachers lead students to disengage from the school process and, therefore, negatively impacted their academic success. Birch and Ladd (1997) found children who had negative interactions with their teachers withdrew themselves from participating in academic endeavors because they could no longer rely on the relationship as a source of support if they failed. Conflict with teachers also causes children emotional distress, which again results in them withdrawing and concentrating on protecting themselves instead of focusing on learning (Spilt et al., 2012).

Crosnoe et al. (2004) found across the board, students who had positive relationships with their teachers did better academically than those who had a negative relationship. Having a relationship marked with conflict predicted a wide range of detrimental behaviors and poor academic outcomes for younger students, and if children with preexisting behavioral issues were placed in unsupportive classroom environments, their likelihood of having conflictual relationships with their next teacher grew (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

"Children with academic risk tend to develop poorer relationships with their teachers compared to more academically competent children, whereas positive relationships with teachers appear to be particularly important for children who struggle with academic demands in school" (Sabol & Pianta, 2012, p. 220). Clearly, the children who need the most academic support through positive relationships with their teachers are the children least likely to get it. Conflictual

relationships can develop due to children's academic struggles, which limits their ability to create positive relationships with their teachers, although then it should be the responsibility of the teacher to form that bond regardless.

Negative relationships with teachers can be caused by behavior problems, particularly externalizing problems and aggressive behaviors. Skalická, Stenseng, et al. (2015) found that externalizing behaviors contributed to conflictual relationships more than internalizing behaviors from children, perhaps because internalizing behaviors, while they are markers of similar issues, are easier to miss. Unfortunately, a negative relationship with teachers because of behavior seems to be part of a cycle. Baker (1999) noticed that students who were unhappy in school got approximately twice as many behavior referrals than students who reported being happy in school. Because of the behavior referrals, children were unhappier, which lead to more behavior referrals. Stipek and Miles (2008 noticed the same issue when they looked at children's aggression. They found the more aggressive children were, the more negative interactions they had with teachers, which lead to them exhibiting more aggression. Aggression is a form of externalizing behavior, and that too can lead to a maladaptive cycle wherein teachers respond negatively to externalizing behavior which exacerbates the child's behavior which in turn leads to either sustained or increased negativity from the teacher (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). These cycles are unproductive and have to be recognized and broken before children's behavioral, emotional, social, and academic outcomes are irreparably damaged.

How Teachers Can Build Positive Relationships

Quality of relationships with students is in some part due to the individual characteristics of the teacher and the student in question (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Not all students are going to have solid relationships with all teachers and vice versa. However, some teacher characteristics

can be changed or adapted to make sure that all relationships with students are, at the very least positive, and in the best case, transformative.

Similarities to Students

Having similarities to students is not something a teacher can easily control, particularly if we focus on ethnic or cultural similarities. Teachers in elementary schools are overwhelmingly middle-class white females, and not one of those characteristics can be changed. Hughes and Kwok (2007) noted that this racial and income disparity may be impeding some relationship building in American schools. Saft and Pianta (2001) found that, regardless of reality, teachers who had students from a similar ethnic background generally considered their relationships to be more positive, and Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) reported that people tend to trust people who they perceive to be similar to themselves, as they feel more able to predict their behaviors based on cultural norms.

However, if being different from students means that teachers cannot build relationships, then no white teacher should teach Latinx or African American students and vice versa. No female teacher should teach males and, if there were an abundance of male teachers in elementary school, they would not be able to teach females. Any teacher from a different state would have too many cultural differences to educate students, and if a teacher were from a different country entirely, then she would have no chance at building positive relationships with their students at all. Of course, none of this is the case, and researchers such as Gehlbach et al. (2012) pointed out that focusing on teacher and student similarities rather than differences could help overcome this. Teachers and students will always have some similarities regardless of their more obvious differences. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) and Gehlbach et al. (2012)

encouraged fostering improved perspective taking and teaching students to perceive similarities at the same time as recognizing differences.

Providing Emotional Support

Something teachers can do very consciously in their classrooms is to provide emotional support for their students. Emotional support is necessary for building positive relationships with students; however, very few of the studies went into depth about what emotional support actually means or looks like in a classroom. Curby et al. (2009) described emotional support as teachers being warm and responsive. O'Connor (2010) also used warmth as an indicator of emotional support in the classroom, and as a descriptor, warmth was used in a substantial number of studies. Wentzel (2002) asked students to characterize what they thought constituted an emotionally supportive classroom and they focused on teachers who promoted democratic and respectful interactions, set high expectations, and provided constructive feedback that was nurturing. There was a focus on trust in the research as a primary building block for emotional support; indeed, emotional support cannot exist without trust. Goddard et al. (2001) stated, "We believe that trust is at the heart of strong relationships that help children learn, particularly disadvantaged children" (p. 3).

Hamre and Pianta (2001) claimed that high emotional support in classrooms was particularly beneficial for students who were at high functional risk because they displayed some combination of early behavioral, attention, social or academic problems. Students who are getting emotional support at school are more likely to attend school and be engaged in their learning, which in turn leads to improved academic outcomes (Klem & Connell, 2004). Wu et al. (2010) found students who felt a sense of security and support in the classroom felt higher levels of belonging in their school and Murray and Greenberg (2000) noted that this security and sense

of belonging could lead children to take educational risks and engage more in learning

challenges.

Finally, Stipek and Miles (2008) and Baker (1999) noted that high emotional support

leads to better behaviors from students which increases their happiness at school and can

mitigate some of the conflicts that arise when their behavior has to be addressed by the teacher.

Their overall perception that they are cared about and supported may help compensate for

negative but necessary disciplinary actions.

Creating a Safe Classroom Community

Running parallel to the idea that children need to feel emotional support from their

teachers to have a positive relationship with them is the importance of teachers creating a safe

classroom community. O'Connor (2010) found a positive classroom community slowed the

decline of relationships between teachers and students, particularly in fifth grade. Ladson-

Billings (1995) pointed out the importance of establishing a community of learners between

teacher and students and Wentzel (2002) claimed that in an atmosphere free of harsh criticism or

judgment, where students and teachers engage in learning together, students are more committed

to the learning process. Klem and Connell (2004) summed up the overall importance of the

classroom community:

> Students who perceive teachers as creating a caring, well-structured learning environment
> in which expectations are high, clear, and fair are more likely to report engagement in
> school. In turn, high levels of engagement are associated with higher attendance and test
> scores - variables that strongly predict whether youth will complete school and ultimately
> pursue postsecondary education and achieve economic self-sufficiency. (p. 270)

Different Aspects of Positive Relationships

Warmth, trust, and caring have all been identified as key components of positive

relationships between students and teachers (Adams & Forsyth, 2013; Baker, 2006; Copeland-

Mitchell et al., 1997; Curby et al., 2009; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Goddard et al., 2001; Gregory & Ripski, 2008; Haberman, 2010; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hatton et al., 1996; Hyson & Taylor, 2011; Klem & Connell, 2004; Murray & Greenberg, 2000; Noddings, 2005; O'Connor, 2010; Russell et al., 2016; Thijs & Fleischmann, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Wentzel, 2002). Teachers need to have knowledge of what each of these components looks like in a positive relationship and how to replicate positive relationships in their own classrooms. All three aspects are intertwined to some degree, as Noddings (2005) explained, "Caring in education differs from brief caring encounters in that it requires strong relations of trust upon which to build. Such relations take time and require continuity" (p. 64). Also, Hamre and Pianta (2001) found:

> These findings indicate that children's abilities to form warm, trusting, and low-conflict relationships with teachers in the early elementary years are salient markers of children's adaptation to the social environment and, as such, may forecast academic success, at least through the lower grades. (p. 626)

As positive relationships are made up of a combination of all three of these components, it becomes crucial that we study what these relationships look like in practice and how warmth, trust, and caring show up in a classroom.

Caring Relationships

Researchers have repeatedly noted the importance of care in positive student-teacher relationships because students feel more connected to teachers whom they perceive care about them academically and personally (Altenbaugh et al., 1995; Garza, 2009; Martin & Dowson, 2009; Schussler & Collins, 2006).

Nel Noddings created Care Theory to describe and explain the relationships between cared for people and those who are doing the caring. At its core, a caring relationship must be reciprocal to be truly called caring, according to Noddings (2012):

> Perhaps the greatest contribution of an ethic of care is its emphasis on the relationship and the role of the cared-for. Not surprisingly this is a feature rejected by many traditional ethicists. It insists that caring does not reside entirely in the attitude and intentions of the carer. We must ask about the effects on the cared-for. If A claims to care for B, but B denies that A cares, then the relation between A and B is not one of caring. (p. 234)

In order to be a carer, there has to be an encounter with another person, and during this encounter, the carer must become "engrossed" in the other person's situation in order to fully understand and appreciate what it is that they need. After this engrossment in the problem, the carer must then experience motivational displacement in order to put aside any motivation they had at the time, any personal struggles or preoccupations, in order to put the cared-for person's needs above their own in that moment in order to care for them (Noddings, 2012). Within a student-teacher relationship, care can be seen in teacher actions such as respect and encouragement, helping with academic work, having frequent interactions with students, showing equal and fair treatment across students, using positive approaches to discipline and classroom management, and offering students assistance with personal problems (Cooper & Miness, 2014).

According to Wentzel (2002):

> Of particular importance to the current study is that students have characterized caring and supportive teachers as those who promote democratic and respectful interactions, set expectations for performance based on individual differences and provide constructive, nurturing feedback. (p. 288)

Mayeroff (1965) also noted that caring is not simply the product of good intentions by a caring individual, but rather a consistent, strategic process aimed at helping another person grow. Therefore, in building these positive relationships, teachers must be consistent and intentional with their actions.

The Effect of Care on Academic Achievement. Having a caring relationship with a teacher has been found to have a positive impact on students' engagement in school. Noddings

(2012) noted, "Genuine education must engage the purposes and energies of those being educated. To secure such engagement, teachers must build relationships of care and trust, and within such relationships, students and teachers construct educational objectives cooperatively" (p. 244). Klem and Connell (2004) found, "Students who perceive teachers as creating a caring, well-structured learning environment in which expectations are high, clear, and fair are more likely to report engagement in school" (p. 270).

This benefit of a caring relationship is crucial as engagement is an important part of students finding success in school (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Hatton et al., 1996; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Klem & Connell, 2004). When students are engaged in the learning, they are more likely to participate and take risks, which leads to a more productive educational experience (Murray & Greenberg, (2000). Engagement in school, which leads to higher academic achievement, can also help students to change their economic circumstances, as they get older. Klem and Connell (2004) summed up the importance of engagement when they stated, "In turn, high levels of engagement are associated with higher attendance and test scores--variables that strongly predict whether youth will successfully complete school and ultimately pursue postsecondary education and achieve economic self-sufficiency" (p. 270).

Alongside increased engagement, students who have a teacher who cares about them have also been found to have better study habits, strengthened academic skills in reading, writing, and math and increased confidence in their academic abilities (Newcomer, 2018). Muller (2001) found, "In general, students who perceive that teachers care expend more effort at school (as reported by teachers)" (p. 253). This increased effort can lead to higher academic achievement for students.

Positive Impact on Behavior and Socialization. Teachers who have caring relationships with students find that students will have fewer behavior problems in school (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Ladd & Burgess, 2001). Conversely, high conflict relationships with teachers, situations in which the students do not feel cared about by their teachers, can lead to students acting out in disruptive ways in the classroom (Baker, 1999). Ennis and McCauley (2002) found, if teachers were able to show students they were cared for, previously disruptive and disengaged students were able to be convinced that they were worthy of such care and trust and, as a result, those students began to show more acceptable behaviors.

Newcomer (2018) noted many positive effects a caring relationship with a teacher could have on students' social skills. She found such teachers could help students learn how to interact with one another and with their teachers, which in turn helped them to develop greater communicative and social competence. Students saw their teachers modeling prosocial behavior and modeling is a key component of care theory (Noddings, 2012). Teachers modeled behaviors such as treating others with respect and learning how to resolve conflict. These social skills are key in students learning to be successful in their interactions, not only in a school environment but also in situations outside of the school (Newcomer, 2018). Finally, Baker (1999) found students who experienced more caring and supportive relationships with teachers expressed more satisfaction with school and had different patterns of behavioral interaction than students who expressed less satisfaction with school because of more conflicted relationships.

Warm Relationships

The concept of 'warmth' as a component of positive relationships between teachers and students is mentioned often in the literature (Baker, 2006; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Curby et al., 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hatton et al., 1996; Hyson & Taylor, 2011; Murray & Greenberg,

2000; O'Connor, 2010; Roorda et al., 2011; Thijs & Fleischmann, 2015). Warmth in a

relationship is characterized as being an aspect of emotional support and continuity in a

relationship. Student and teacher relationships are considered warm if there is positive emotional

support, sensitivity on the part of the teacher, and a feeling of connectedness between the child

and the teacher (Curby et al., 2009; O'Connor, 2010).

The Effect of Warmth on Academic Achievement. Warm relationships have a positive

impact on learning and academic achievement in much the same way that trust and caring do.

The primary function these relationship aspects seem to play is increasing students' engagement

in their school lives, which in turn leads almost directly to increased achievement. In regards to

warmth, specifically, Thijs and Fleischmann (2015) found students with warm relationships with

their teachers were more likely to be open to learning and more willing to increase their

academic skills. Baker (2006) also found having a warm bond with a teacher increased the

chances of positive school adjustment for students, this means that students had an easier time in

a number of ways including getting used to the routines and schedule of a school environment,

making new friends, adapting to changes in the school and classroom environment, and learning

how to socialize with a wider range of peers and adults. The overall importance of positive

relationships, relationships in which warmth is an important component is clear:

> These findings indicate that children's abilities to form warm, trusting, and low-conflict
> relationships with teachers in the early elementary years are salient markers of children's
> adaptation to the social environment and, as such, may forecast academic success."
> (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, p. 626)

Positive Impact on Behavior and Socialization. Along with the general positive

impacts that relationships have on students behavior, having a warm relationship seems to

indicate that students will be more inclined to model the behaviors that they see their teacher

engaging in (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Hyson & Taylor, 2011). Behaviors such as being more

sensitive to others and being more supportive of peers are prosocial behaviors that students may engage in more frequently if they observe their teacher making the same efforts. "According to attachment theory, warm and supportive relationships, characterized by open communication, trust, involvement, and responsiveness influence social and emotional development through internalized models of accessibility and support" (Murray & Greenberg, 2000, p.425).

This modeling was similar to teachers modeling caring for their students, which could positively affect their socialization, and teachers who model trust, in order to encourage more trustworthy behavior. Students who see all of these aspects of positive relationships, trust, caring, and warmth, are much more likely to imitate them (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Corrigan et al., 2010; Deutsch, 1958; Hyson & Taylor, 2011; Newcomer, 2018; Noddings, 2012).

Trusting Relationships

The research showed that children in poverty are at risk for low academic success for many reasons and that building positive relationships with them is a key way to ensure their success and it has shown that one of the critical building blocks of positive relationships is trust (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Crosnoe et al., 2004; Hatton et al., 1996; Klem & Connell, 2004; Liew et al., 2010; Pianta et al., 2008). Trust has a lot of definitions; however, most agree that when person A, puts their trust in another person, B, then B is aware of the trust of A. It is assumed that B will carry out whatever it is that A expects her to do, and if she does not the trust has been broken (Deutsch, 1958). Because of this, a trusting relationship can be seen as being interdependent (Kee & Knox, 1970). The relationship will always involve some amount of vulnerability on the part of A. How much vulnerability depends on what precisely A is trusting B to do (Goddard et al., 2009). If it's something as innocuous as taking out the trash when agreed, if B does not come through the relationship is likely to be affected only in a minor way.

However, if we are talking about A being a parent or student trusting B, a teacher, with the child's education and, therefore, later prospects in life, a failure of the teacher to deliver that proper education would be a major breach of trust.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) explained that, "Trust is a general confidence and overall optimism in occurring events; it is believing in others in the absence of compelling reasons to disbelieve" (p.342). Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) also outlined five attributes that B is expected to have if A trusts them and is willing to be vulnerable to them. These attributes are benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. In 2000, Hoy and Tschannen-Moran identified these characteristics after doing a thorough review of all the extant literature on trust and looking for common words or phrases used in different definitions of trust; therefore, this is the definition used in this paper. Benevolence refers to the expectation that someone you trust will act in your best interests (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) combined the importance of predictability with the positive results of benevolence to create the characteristic of reliability. Competence in the context of trusting relationships is the same as in other situations. People trust others to be competent at what they do. Honesty involves a commitment that statements made are truthful and conform to what really happened, at least from the individual's perspective. It is an assumption that if promises or arrangements are made, they will be kept. There has to be a harmony between what people say and what they do to convey an honest character (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Openness involves a reciprocal trust. It is the belief that information about either party will not be used against that party in the future. People who are guarded with the information they share may be seen to be untrustworthy as people wonder what they are trying to hide. Such people may be

treated with suspicion and in such circumstances, trust cannot grow (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

The Effect of Trust on Academic Achievement. Teachers must create classroom communities worthy of trust and build individual trusting relationships with students in order for students to increase their academic skills (Baker, 2006, Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Teachers who trust their students create classroom communities that facilitate student learning through meaningful connection and autonomy (Goddard et al., 2001). Students in high trust schools, therefore, have more control over their learning than in low trust schools. This autonomy creates more motivation to succeed.

Trust can pave the way for students to focus on their academic goals (Ennis & McCauley, 2002) and students who trust their teachers are more open to learning and more willing to improve their academic skills (Thijs & Fleischmann, 2015). Hamre and Pianta (2001) found that, just as teachers feel more motivated to work with children they trust, children will work harder for teachers they trust. Children who trust their teachers are more likely to succeed in math and reading, and trusting relationships, not SES or prior achievement, were found to be the primary reason for success in a study by Adams and Forsyth (2013).

Children coming from a disadvantaged background also benefit from having high trust in their teachers. These relationships can help students create social capital that allows them to access the dominant culture in schools, particularly if they come from a different ethnic or socioeconomic background than the mainstream (Goddard et al., 2001).

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) concluded by saying that when there is an atmosphere of trust in a school, students' entire attention and focus can be on learning because they do not

have to be preoccupied with keeping themselves safe. And as Noddings (2005) stated, "Students will do things for people they like and trust" (p. 36).

Positive Impact on Behavior and Socialization. Students who observe and believe their teachers to be trustworthy are more likely to exhibit trustworthy behavior themselves (Corrigan et al., 2010). Generally, students who are trusting, also end up being very trustworthy, and the same holds true for children who struggle to trust others (Deutsch, 1958). Goddard et al. (2009) also explain that, as it is almost impossible for bureaucratic systems to take into consideration every behavior imaginable in a school structure and account for all of those eventualities, it is much more beneficial to establish an environment of trust. In an environment of trust, every interaction and action does not have to be scrutinized or monitored. Students can be trusted to act in appropriate ways, and, therefore, more energy can be expended on supporting learning.

Students who have firmer and more secure attachments to their teachers are more likely to have high amounts of trust in their relationships. This level of trust serves the student well in social interactions that require cooperation and interdependence and students who have high trust relationships with their teachers are more likely to be prosocial towards their peers (Murray & Greenberg, 2000). Prosocial behavior is crucial for children to facilitate friendships and create a strong friendship group within the peers in their classroom (Copeland-Mitchell et al., 1997; Johnson-George & Swap, 1982).

Trust as a Mediating Factor. Interestingly trust has been found to have a mediating effect on achievement even when students come from a high poverty background that would typically put them at risk for academic failures. Trust has been claimed as a strong independent predictor of student success, and genuinely effective teachers in urban schools foster trusting relationships with their students as a matter of course. It is necessary then to look closer at how

teachers build trust with their students so that these positive outcomes can perhaps be replicated for more students (Goddard et al., 2001; Haberman, 2010; Wallenstein, 2012).

Conclusion

Care, warmth, and trust are all referred to as crucial components of positive relationships in the literature and it seems that caring relationships and warm relationships both need a solid foundation of trust. Noddings (2005) specifically called out the need for strong foundations of trust in a relationship of care, and stated the existence of such trust separates a true caring relationship from a brief "caring encounter" If a warm relationship is really to be built on emotional support and continuity, there must be a foundation of trust on which to build that emotional support.

The research clearly showed that relationship building was key to educating all students but particularly those students who entered school already at risk of academic failure because of outside influences in their lives. The amount of influence a warm, trusting, caring, relationship has on children's academic growth and, therefore, their chances of success throughout their lives is significant. Because of this, exploring these aspects of relationships, and how teachers can build them, is so important.

> To summarize, abundant evidence suggests that teacher-student relationships matter: how positive they are matters, how negative they are matters, they matter across numerous outcomes, they matter from 1 year to the next, and they matter for students of different ages. (Gehlbach et al., 2012, p. 692)

Summary and Research Questions

The research shows that in four major areas of student development; academics, engagement, behavior, and socialization, there are significant detrimental effects from living in poverty and having negative relationships, while there are important beneficial effects from positive relationships.

Poverty has a negative effect on students' academic outcomes. As Howse et al. (2003) reported: "It is well documented in the research and policy literatures that young children from economically disadvantaged homes often begin school with significantly poorer scholastic skills than do their more affluent peers and are at a much greater risk for school failure" (p. 151). Negative relationships with teachers also lead to poorer academic outcomes as Hamre and Pianta (2001) noted, "More specifically, negativity in teacher-child relationships marked by conflict and over dependency, emerged as a significant predictor of a wide range of academic and behavioral outcomes, even when controlling for other early indicators of these outcomes" (p. 634).

Positive relationships led to better outcomes for students' academic achievement. Children who have positive relationships with their teachers often perform better than those who do not, as Birch and Ladd (1997) found, "Specifically children who had positive teacher child relationships were expected to perform better academically than children with less close, more dependent, or more conflictual relationships with their teachers" (p. 64). Students' engagement and motivation could be inhibited by a background of poverty or by conflictual relationships with teachers. Hatton et al. (1996) observed, "Classroom life is pervaded by student reluctance to engage in many aspects of the school curriculum. Reading and writing are the areas which are resisted the most vigorously" (p. 46). And Klem and Connell (2004) found, "Elementary students reporting low levels of support were twice as likely as the average student to be disaffected; middle school students were 68% more likely to be disengaged when they report low levels of teacher support" (p. 270).

On the other hand, positive student-teacher relationships can lead to higher student engagement as Hughes and Kwok (2007) stated, " Thus, these findings add to the rapidly

accumulating evidence that social relatedness is critical to children's engagement and academic

success or, conversely, to disaffection and failure" (p. 45).

The low-income background some students come from can cause negative student

behavior. Dodge et al. (1994) found, "The relation between social disadvantage and behavior

problems appears to be a linear one; that is, the risk of behavior problems and the mean behavior

problem score increase linearly with decreasing SES, and deviations from linearity were

nonsignificant" (p. 661). Conflictual relationships with teachers can be caused by negative

behaviors but can create more negative behaviors depending on how the teacher reacts. For

example, Sabol and Pianta (2012) reported that:

> Children with externalizing problems are more likely to have conflict with teachers,
> potentially resulting in a maladaptive cycle of interactions. For instance, externalizing
> behaviors may result in conflict with the teacher, which may exacerbate children's
> externalizing behaviors, which then may sustain or increase the negative interactions with
> the teacher. (p. 220)

Positive relationships can have a moderating effect on negative student behaviors and can

prevent behaviors from becoming a bigger problem. Hughes et al. (2001) determined that,

"Children's and teachers' reports of relationship quality in Y1 predicted teachers' next-year

ratings of aggression. Positive teacher-student relationships were followed by less childhood

aggression the following year" (p. 180).

There were apparent negative effects on student's socialization when they grew up in

poverty, Baker (1999) found:

> Unfortunately, many at-risk students experience a more negative social context at school
> than do their more high-achieving peers. . . . These students seem not to have the social
> connectedness with adults at school that could function as a protective factor in the face
> of academic or life stressors. (p. 59)

There were also negative effects on socialization if students had conflictual relationships

with their teachers, "Teacher-child conflict may cause emotional distress, which constrains a

child's psychological resources and energy to be devoted to learning activities" (Spilt et al., 2012).

The positive effects of a strong student-teacher relationship were remarked upon by Copeland-Mitchell et al. (1997), "Simply, the more secure the child-teacher relationship, the more prosocial a child is toward his or her peers" (p. 35). Given the amount of problems students coming from poverty face in school and the fact that building positive relationships with them can help to ameliorate some of those struggles, it seemed clear that it was important to make a further study of relationships between teachers and students to see how to do that. Specifically, the importance of trust, warmth, and caring in those relationships needed to be recognized, and more specific teacher actions needed to be identified to help other teachers build trust in their classrooms. Finally, the students' perspective in these relationships needed to be taken into consideration and is missing from the majority of the research. When student perspectives did not align with teacher perspectives that added valuable insight into the findings of previous research. This is why the study addressed the following research questions:

Q1   What are the ways in which a teacher builds positive relationships with upper elementary students in poverty at the beginning of the school year?

Q2   How does the teacher maintain positive relationships?

Q3   How do students perceive their relationships with their teacher?

Q4   From the students' perspective in what ways does the teacher build positive relationships with her students?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to describe what actions a teacher in a Title I school took to build positive relationships with her students and to find out if students felt they had a positive relationship with their teacher. It was hoped, with a better understanding of teacher actions and students' perceptions of those actions, other teachers would be better prepared to create positive relationships with their students and in turn would see better academic outcomes for their students who live in poverty.

The following research questions were addressed:

Q1   What are the ways in which a teacher builds positive relationships with upper elementary students in poverty at the beginning of the school year?

Q2   How does the teacher maintain positive relationships?

Q3   How do students perceive their relationships with their teacher?

Q4   From the students' perspective in what ways does the teacher build positive relationships with her students?

I used case study, a qualitative research method, in order to address these research questions. Because I was looking at relationships, I believed this approach would serve me best as I was able cast a wider net with my observations and interviews than if I were trying to quantify the relationship. I also started with few preconceived hypotheses about what teacher actions I expected to see. I did expect to see a certain level of warmth from the teacher as I had seen her interact with students before and was familiar with her style in approaching students but as I had never seen her teach I did not know specifics about what her interactions might look like with

students in practice. I did not have preconceived hypotheses about what students might say about their teacher. I think students are rarely asked to seriously evaluate their relationship with a teacher in an honest way and so I did not know what to expect. As Egbert and Sanden (2014) explained in qualitative research, "a box is drawn around the entity to be studied, and a systematic exploration is made of everything that impacts that single bounded system" (p. 80). Using transcriptions of interviews and observations, I described everything I saw that impacted the relationships between the teacher and students after my systematic exploration.

The next section of this chapter addresses why I chose to conduct a case study. I then discuss my data sources and collection and how I conducted my data analysis. I also detailed ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness and finally, the limitations and delimitations of this study.

Qualitative Case Study

I conducted a case study in order to create a comprehensive narrative about the teacher actions involved in creating a positive relationship and how students responded to and felt about those actions. Out of the possibilities for qualitative research, case study was the most appropriate for what I was researching as I was not looking at one individual or phenomenon, but rather I was trying to identify processes and activities that an individual used in order to create positive relationships in her classroom (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It made sense to create a narrative so I could explain both perspectives fully and show how they influenced and were influenced by each other. A case study allowed me to give rich descriptions about what I saw in the classroom interwoven with information and insights I gained from my interviews, observations, and collection of artifacts.

Furthermore, a lot of the research on student-teacher relationships has been quantitative in nature, and so a qualitative study had the advantage of being a different approach and filling a gap in the current research (Ackerman et al., 2004a, 2004b; Ackerman et al., 2007; Adams, & Forsyth, 2013; Ahnert et al., 2006; Anderson et al., 2004; Baker, 2006; Baker et al., 2008; Birch, & Ladd, 1997; Breger, 2017; Copeland-Mitchell et al., 1997; Crosnoe et al., 2004; Curby et al., 2009; Davis, 2001; Duncan et al., 1994; Elicker et al., 1999; Gehlbach et al., 2012; Goddard et al., 2001; Goddard et al., 2009; Gregory, & Ripski, 2008; Hamre, & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Hughes, & Cavell, 1999; Hughes et al., 2001; Hughes, & Kwok, 2007; Hughes et al., 2008; Jerome et al., 2009; Klem, & Connell, 2004; Liew et al., 2010; Lynch, & Cicchetti, 1997; Meehan et al., 2003; Murray, & Greenberg, 2000; Murray & Malmgren, 2005; Murray et al., 2008; Myers, & Pianta, 2008; O'Connor et al., 2012; O'Connor, & McCartney, 2006; Russell et al., 2016; Saft & Pianta, 2001; Skalická, Belsky, et al., 2015; Skalická, Stenseng, et al., 2015; Spilt et al., 2012; Stipek, & Miles, 2008; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Van Maele, & Van Houtte, 2011; Wentzel, 2002; Wooten, & McCroskey, 1996; Wu et al., 2010). The majority of the research used the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (Pianta, 2001) to understand teachers' perceptions of their relationships with students; however, very few studies looked at corresponding students' perceptions (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Given the evidence that shows the lack of correlation between student and teacher perceptions (Hughes et al., 2001; Murray et al., 2008), this is a gap in the research. The studies that did include student voices (Davis, 2001; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Meehan et al., 2003) generally administered a survey with questions using a Likert scale alone and did not triangulate that data with other methods. I conducted interviews with students so they could expand on and explain the reasons for their

answers. I used a survey to identify my teacher participant and then conducted interviews and observations and collected artifacts in order to create a rich narrative.

Data Sources and Collection

Before beginning my data collection I got Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Appendix A) and approval from the district in which I was conducting my research (Appendix B). I collected data from one teacher and seven students from her class. I used a survey to identify my teacher participant and then conducted four semi-structured interviews with the teacher and one with each student. The interviews were audio recorded. I conducted 20 classroom observations and collected photographs of artifacts such as student work, behavior charts, mission statements, evidence of PBIS (positive behavior intervention and support) practices, and student roles. Interviews and observations, therefore, were run concurrently, interview questions were both planned ahead of time and based on what I saw in observations while my observations were informed by the interviews. They were then used together with the artifacts to construct a full picture of the classroom environment and how positive relationships were built and maintained by the teacher in the classroom (data collection schedule Appendix C).

Site

I conducted my research at a Title I school in the Rocky Mountain Region. The school has a population of 570 students, with about 85% of those students receiving free and reduced lunch. Because of the large proportion of students receiving free and reduced lunch at this school, there was a broader scope and more participant availability for my student interviews.

The school had been working to increase students' academic achievement as measured by the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) which was to third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students. In order to improve academic achievement, there has been a big move toward

improving the school's climate and culture, and work has been done amongst the whole staff to standardize expectations for behavior in public places as well as to align high impact academic practices across grade levels. The school has invested in more behavior support over the past year with the introduction of a behavior interventionist who supports classroom teachers with specific students.

The school has undergone a lot of changes in the past few years, which have led to marked growth in state assessments and, in the 2018-2019 school year, a drop in office referrals and suspensions by 20% from the previous year. Students in 3rd through 5th grade are given a Panorama Survey every year in December in which they can rate their experience of school in four overarching areas: student-centered environment, classroom management, classroom community, and student learning (Appendix D). The classroom management portion of this survey has been a focus for the school with a goal of increasing the number of positive responses from students, in the 2018-2019 school year 71% of students responded favorably to the classroom management questions compared to 57% the previous year. Administration is visible in the school and has a consistent presence in the classrooms and supports teachers taking time to build relationships with their students. The administration also encourages teachers to use behavior issues as teaching moments and opportunities to develop deeper relationships with students. For example, if there are behavior problems teachers are encouraged to ask an administrator or the behavior interventionist to step in and teach the class while the teacher addresses the behavior with the student in order to continue to build the relationship. Teachers are encouraged to ask for help from administration or the behavior interventionist in order to better address behavior issues independently and are given resources and tools to do that, such as

supplemental curriculums and lessons and ongoing assistance from a teacher partner or mentor, the behavior interventionist, or the assistant principal.

Teacher Participant

My research focus was on students in the upper elementary grades, so I focused on getting a teacher participant from third or fourth grade. I currently teach fifth grade at the school and so fifth grade teachers were not approached in order to try and avoid a influencing the data I collected. I chose to focus on the upper grades, third and fourth, as the lower grades have been more thoroughly covered in the research (Baker, 2006). Also, as students get older, and following Maslow's hierarchy, they begin to care less about making authority figures happy and begin to care more about what their peers think of them (Burton, 2012). This can make building relationships as an authority figure even more difficult, and so it is an important developmental stage to study. By focusing on one teacher and one classroom, I was able to observe and interview more frequently and create a more in-depth narrative about what the teacher was doing to build positive relationships. There are eight teachers in third and fourth grade, and from these teachers only one indicated that they would be willing to participate. To get more information about the teacher's history of relationships with students I used the modified version of Pianta's Student-Teacher Relationship Scale. The original scale requires the teacher to think of her relationship with a specific child in the classroom and rate their relationship based on the level of closeness and conflict with the child. The modified scale was created by Whitaker et al. (2015) to look at the quality of student-teacher relationships with students in a Head Start program and the modifications consisted of changing the questions so instead of the teacher focusing on their relationship with a specific child, the questions ask the teacher to rate their relationships with the children more generally (Appendix E). The survey was given to the teacher participant on the 8th

of August when staff returned to school after summer, but before students returned. As the

school year had not started, I asked the teacher to address her relationships with students in

general and in the past. The teacher rated herself as having low conflict in her relationships with

students and high warmth. Once she volunteered to participate and had filled out the survey she

consented to be part of the study (Appendix F).

I collected more demographic information on the teacher than the students in this study

because I was specifically looking at teacher actions. I asked the teacher to fill out a personal

data form before beginning interviews and observations (Appendix G). I asked the teacher her

age, ethnicity, how long she had been teaching, how long she had taught at the present school,

and if she had attended any professional development or learning around building relationships

with students. I wanted to know when she graduated from college and the highest level of

education she achieved. This additional information about the teacher's background could

potentially have shed more light onto the characteristic that help teachers build positive

relationships with students.

Student Participants

I sent home consent forms for all students in the classroom (Appendix H) and received

seven back who I then provided assent forms to sign (Appendix I). During my observations, I

was looking for students who seemed to have different relationships with the teacher. I found this

by paying attention to many things including but not limited to; how they engaged in the

classroom, how the teacher spoke to them, if they were a participant in the classroom or sat

quietly, if they volunteered to answer questions or do jobs for the teacher, if they were generally

positive towards the teacher, their attitude towards their work, their response to feedback and

redirections. I also used my teacher interviews to see if a particular student's name came up

regularly or if a student was referenced as someone the teacher thought she had a positive relationship with or a lot of conflict with. The seven students who were able to participate made up a good cross section of the classroom. I had five female and two male participants. Four students were Latinx and the other three were white. One of the girls had some serious externalizing behaviors, two of them were quite quiet and worked hard in class, and the fourth girl got along well in her homeroom but had conflict with other teachers. Of the boys, one had more externalizing behaviors and was identified as gifted and talented, and the other one was on an IEP and had some behavior issues that were generally well managed.

Observations

Specific classroom cultures vary, and so that is the context I was describing and observing carefully as I collected my data. I had a rough guide (Appendix J) of what I was looking for in the classrooms based on Russell et al.'s (2016) categories and examples of antecedents of trust. However, because I wanted to create as thorough a picture as possible, I did not limit my observations to just those in the table. The structure of the classroom, the roles of students, and expectations of behavior all contributed or showed the relationship between the teacher and her students, and so my study needed to describe those elements. Observations allowed me to confirm what I had been told in interviews and gave me potential questions or talking points for future interviews. Additionally observation gave me the opportunity to see the teacher and the students actually interact in their regular day-to-day setting and observe their behaviors (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), which was an advantage for me when it came to creating a narrative about what the teacher did to create and maintain positive relationships.

Students' first day back was the 15th of August, so for the first few days of school, August 15, 16, and 19, when the classroom community was just being built, and the teacher was

first establishing those relationships, I was in the room daily for a 30 minute observation. Subsequently, I observed the classroom once or twice a week for no more than 40 minutes a day. I observed at different times and on different days to get as broad a scope of information as possible. I conducted these observations until the first week of December, a total of 20 observations for a total of approximately 690 minutes.

The beginning of the school year is an important time for teachers to build classroom communities and introduce strong classroom management strategies based on the relationships they begin to build. The school and school district are aligned in this belief as the first two weeks of the new school year are focused primarily on relationship building, and routines and procedures before academics really get started. During my observations, I was focused specifically on the teacher's actions and corresponding students' actions but I also made a note of classroom culture and the atmosphere of the room. I was looking for things that showed consistency and stability in the classroom, things such as tight transitions and routines all the students knew and could expect every day. I was focusing on the teacher's interactions with students and how she communicated with students because tone of voice, body language, and the amount and type of communication between the teacher and students told me a lot about the relationships in the room. I was, as an observer/participant, able to ask students questions in the classroom environment and focus on how they were feeling about what they were working on and if they understood the purpose of what they are working on, however, I only did this about 10 times over the course of observations so as not to interrupt the flow of the classroom. During most of my observations, the teacher was doing direct instruction and so asking questions of the students during those times would have been more disruptive than beneficial. However, I did not help students academically with their work, as I did not want to enter into a "teacher" role in the

classroom. As I observed, I wrote down information as it came up, and I also made notes of anything unusual that might have warranted further conversation in an interview with the teacher or in my interviews with students. As observations and interviews were running concurrently the information I got from interviews helped to guide my observations as I could look for specific things the teacher mentioned doing, and I used my observations to help me guide subsequent interviews.

Teacher Interview

I conducted four semi-structured interviews (Appendix K) with the teacher participant over the course of the fall semester. Each interview lasted about 60 minutes for a total interview time of 240 minutes. Interviews took place after school in the teacher's classroom. The teacher was assigned a pseudonym for confidentiality.

I met with her initially during the week of the 12th of August in order to get some general information into how she ran her classroom, how she planned to build relationships with her students, and the importance she placed on those relationships (Appendix J). I followed up with interviews monthly, except for in November when a family tragedy took the teacher out of the classroom for two weeks, and these interviews focused on events I observed in the classroom or things that had happened over the course of the semester. I tried to focus some of these questions on how the teacher was maintaining positive relationships, particularly when disruptive or defiant behavior occurred. When there were students actively pushing back against the teacher's attempts to establish relationships, I asked questions about what she was doing to tackle that as well.

In my interviews, I found out not only the teacher's perceptions of what she did to create a trusting environment but what the students thought their teacher did. Student and teacher

perceptions do not always align, and so I compared both and used them to create a more complete picture of what was actually happening in the classroom. I needed to know how the teacher perceived her own actions that she used to build positive relationships in the classroom. I wanted to find out how she thought about her students and the effect her positive relationships had on her students. The way the teacher perceived her presence and role in the classroom gave me a sense of how she achieved positive relationships with her students.

Student Interviews

Student interviews were semi-structured and took place once in December (Appendix L). I interviewed 7 students from the class. Interviews ranged in time from 7 minutes to 30 minutes with most taking about 15 minutes. Interviews took place in the principal's office while he was absent. I interviewed students just once because I needed to find out the ways in which their teacher built a relationship with them and how they felt about that relationship. However, because I was asking students about a potentially sensitive topic, their relationship with their teacher, I thought I might need to conduct a second interview if they felt insecure or uncomfortable during the first interview. Students might not have trusted there would be no repercussions to telling me what they really thought about their teacher and, therefore, be reticent in the first interview. Luckily all the students were very forthcoming about how they felt about their teacher and how they perceived their relationship with her and so second interviews were not necessary. In order to help students recall incidents, I included some of my observations as examples for them or asked them directly about how they felt when their teacher did specific things, such as enforcing consequences on the whole class for one student's misbehavior. I was trying to find out if the students believed they had a positive relationship with their teacher and

what their teacher had done to make them feel that way. For students who believed they had a negative, or conflicted, relationship with their teacher, I wanted to know why they felt that way.

Although one-on-one student interviews had the potential to be intimidating for some students using a focus group would have been less effective because of the nature of what I was asking about. As Merriam and Tisdell (2015) noted, "A focus group is a poor choice for topics that are sensitive, highly personal, and culturally inappropriate to talk about in the presence of strangers" (p. 114) Students who report not feeling a positive relationship with their teacher might feel this was a sensitive topic for them to discuss in front of peers and. A semi-structured interview, on the other hand, felt like more of a conversation between myself and just the student so she could feel more comfortable speaking about the relationship if the student felt her experience was different than other students I might have spoken with.

The interviews provided me with an opportunity to collect more information and context for what had been observed. They also gave me more information about how the participants interpreted the same things I saw when observing and as this study was concerned with students' perceptions of their relationships with their teacher this was a critical component of the data collection. Creswell and Creswell (2017) stated that interviews allowed the researcher to gain more detailed information and provide more information about things, which cannot be easily observed, like the trajectory of a relationship in the classroom for example. It was also mentioned that "indirect information filtered through the views of interviewees" (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) could be considered a drawback to interviews, however, I particularly wanted to get at a filtered view from the teacher and student perspective so in the case of this research I did not consider that to be a drawback.

Students' perceptions gave me insight into how they received their teacher's actions. If students perceived an action or habit of their teacher as negatively impacting their relationship with her and yet the teacher was unaware of this perception it was important to identify and draw out in the research in order for others to avoid it next time.

Artifacts

Glesne (2015) says that artifact collection and photographs can be used to provide or develop rich description in qualitative studies. I took photographs of the classroom to help describe the classroom more fully and allow the readers to see parts of the classroom themselves. Photographs and general notes about the setup of the classroom were taken at a time when students were not in the room, separate from observations, both before and after the teacher interviews. Student work, behavior charts, mission statements, evidence of PBIS (positive behavioral interventions and supports), student roles, and more helped contextualize the environment in which some positive relationships were flourishing. For example, student work displayed on the walls showed students the value of what they completed in their classroom and that their teacher valued it as well. Students' roles, or jobs in the classroom, were a demonstration of the trust the teacher had in those students and made students feel more trusted. All of those things demonstrated positive relationships in the classroom. In order to maintain confidentiality, all names of students were blurred along with any identifying features of the school, such as logos or the name of the school on posters.

Summary

I was able to observe the actions the teacher took at the beginning of the year to build relationships with her students and then throughout the semester, observe how the teacher was maintaining those relationships. Interviews were helpful in clarifying what I had observed and

they allowed me an additional opportunity to ask specific questions of the teacher based on what I had observed or what they had experienced. Although I was able to observe student behaviors that demonstrated the relationship they felt they had with the teacher, my interviews with students were key to them reporting those feelings explicitly and tying them to specific teacher actions.

Data Analysis

All of these forms of data came together to help me create a deep and descriptive narrative of exactly how a teacher tried to build positive relationships with her students and how the students perceived their relationships with her and how they interpreted her actions. First round coding was completed as I collected my data. For this ongoing process I used open coding, specifically In Vivo coding. I used In Vivo coding because using the participant's own words to describe things, especially with something as ambiguous as a relationship, helped me to gain clarity into their perception of their relationships. According to Saldaña (2016) In Vivo coding is particularly useful in educational studies with youth, as children's voices are so often marginalized. This form of coding also helped minimize the risk of inadequate participant perspectives and inauthenticity. In Vivo coding and code landscaping allowed me to note consistencies in words and phrases throughout the data I collected, which helped me to create my initial categorizations. As I completed an interview or an observation, I would look over my notes for the first time. Once I got back transcripts of my interviews, I would read through them again looking at both the transcript and my notes together for each interview. After this second read through I began highlighting words or phrases that came up repeatedly in the participant's own words. In student interviews there was repeated use of the words 'fair' or 'unfair' in relation to behavior by the teacher, as well as talking a lot about wanting a teacher who 'helped' them. In

teacher interviews and observations phrases relating to 'caring', 'high expectations', 'involving family', 'negative experiences' and 'behavior management' were prevalent.

Once I had finished open coding, and collecting all of my data, I went back through the data using provisional coding. "The provisional list is generated from such preparatory investigative matters as: literature reviews related to the study, the study's conceptual framework and research questions, previous research findings, pilot study fieldwork, the researcher's previous knowledge and experiences, and researcher formulated hypotheses or hunches." (Saldaña, 2016, p.68). During my research I found warmth, caring, and trust were all referred to as crucial aspects of positive relationships with students. Upon further reading warmth and caring both seemed to need a solid foundation of trust in order to exist in a relationship over time. Therefore, I decided to look at the five facets of trust outlined by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1999), benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness and use those as my codes for this round of coding. Benevolence is the belief that the teacher will do what is in the students best interest, reliability is the expectation of benevolence over time, competence is how good the teacher is at her job, honesty refers to the expectation that the teacher will follow through with the things she says and any account of what has happened in the classroom will be accurate, and openness is the attribute that teachers will share things with their students and be open with their thinking and decision making when appropriate.

I wanted to do In Vivo coding first in case my provisional codes were not appropriate for the data. One of the drawbacks of provisional coding is that it is possible to become so attached to the codes that the researcher becomes unwilling to change them (Saldaña, 2016). I wanted to give the participants voices a chance to stand for themselves before I went back to see if they would fit with the provisional codes. I was inclined to use the five components of trust as codes

and because of that I was wary of limiting my research to just those components. As a result, when I looked through my data for first-round coding I deliberately steered myself away from using those codes and just focused on the In Vivo coding to let the participant voices create the codes. However it did become clear that the provisional codes of benevolence, competence, reliability, openness, and honesty would help to organize the data and so for second round coding I moved ahead with using those codes. I found that the In Vivo codes all worked well within those provisional codes. Saldaña (2016) stated, "Sometimes the participant says it best; sometimes the researcher does. Be prepared and willing to mix and match coding methods as you process with data analysis" (p.109). I found the codes I had created in my first cycle of coding; such as fair and unfair, high expectations, behavior management, caring, could belong under one of the five facets of trust. While I was coding using my provisional codes I noted instances where the behavior was either not happening, or, as was more common, was perceived to not be happening by the students. This allowed me to see clearly some of the discrepancies between the teacher's actions and intentions and how they were then perceived by the students which was a key point of this study.

Finally I divided my student participants into two separate groups based on what they had shared about their home lives or previous school experiences and categorized those two groups as either having secure or insecure attachments according to attachment theory. During interviews three students offered up examples of traumatic or difficult past experiences in school or at home that I had not specifically asked about. Those three students were also the ones who spoke about unfair behavior the most, being 'picked on' by teachers, and in the case of two of them, not having very many friends. All three of them referenced conflicts with previous teachers, which seemed to illustrate a pattern of having negative relationships with adults or

authority figures. According to attachment theory students who have insecure attachments will have a harder time making friends because they are wary of taking risks, they may not be inclined to trust adults, and they may feel like they get blamed for things often (Ahnert et al., 2006; O'Connor et al., 2012). I also observed these students exhibiting externalizing behaviors in class, such as shouting out, being defiant, and work avoidance, and the teacher told me about specific instances of these children either pushing her away when she tried to get close, or always believing that she was trying to get them in trouble and treating them unfairly. All of this data together led me to believe these three children had insecure attachment styles.

According to the research Ahnert et al. (2006) and Elicker et al. (1999) found secure attachments with a maternal caregiver and primary non-parental caregivers had positive effects on children's psychological adjustments, social competence, and cognitive functioning. Verschueren and Koomen (2012) found secure attachments with teachers are very important as they act as a secure base from which children can explore the world around them; therefore, from an attachment perspective, the affective qualities of the student-teacher relationship are paramount. Secure teacher-child relationships are recognized as being high in closeness and low in dependency and conflict (Birch & Ladd, 1997; O'Connor, 2010; Roorda et al., 2011).

The other four students I interviewed reported always being happy in school and liking all of their teachers. None of them shared anything bad that had happened at home, and three of them told me specifically they liked being at home too and would share any troubles they were having with their parents as well as their teachers. Three of these students had lots of friends, and the third shared she had one or two close friends but she was very shy. In observations these students were mostly working hard and participating well in class, one of them did show externalizing behaviors but as he was receiving services for these behaviors with a specific

diagnosis it did not seem to be caused by insecure attachments and as I found no other evidence

of that I placed him in the 'secure' group. The teacher spoke about these children referencing

how well behaved they were and even in the case of the boy who did show externalizing

behaviors she shared she was quickly able to come up with interventions and adjustments that

led to an improvement in his behavior. The fact that these students made friends easily, trusted

and liked their teachers, and had low conflict in their relationships with others lead me to

categorize these four students as having secure attachments (Birch & Ladd, 1997; O'Connor,

2010; Roorda et al., 2011).

Ethical Considerations

To protect the identity of the teacher and student participants I asked them to choose a

pseudonym and then kept any corresponding identification, such as their real names, in a locked

filing cabinet in my home. In a setting such as a school, it would be naive to think it would not

be noticed that I was interviewing and observing a specific teacher. I did not think participating

in the study itself needed to be kept confidential as again; I was researching positive and

beneficial practices. However, what the teacher said in interviews was not discussed with anyone

else, and the transcripts and recordings were kept on my personal laptop. This laptop is password

protected and was secured in a locked filing cabinet in my classroom when it was needed at the

school, and the rest of the time is kept in my home. Photographs of artifacts were taken on my

phone, which requires a fingerprint match to unlock, and transferred to my laptop as soon as

possible and deleted from the phone. I did not have any major findings that could cause trouble

for my teacher participant as the administration at the school is very relationship focused and has

conveyed that belief to the staff on several occasions. The issue I had predicted was the teacher

being anxious about telling me if they were giving up academic time to teach their students a

social or emotional lesson that is pertinent or to address some behaviors that are arising. I did not

find that to be the case, however, and the teacher participant was very forthcoming about

teaching social or emotional lessons in the moment when possible and using some behavior

issues as "teaching opportunities." This aligned with my knowledge of the administration

encouraging teachers to take "academic" time to reiterate procedures, classroom expectations,

and relationship building, such as asking the vice principal to cover teaching the class while the

classroom teacher deals with a behavior issue in order to build upon the relationship and not lose

that valuable opportunity to connect with the student. At the beginning of the year the staff was

specifically directed to take the time to restate and clarify expectations and build classroom

community. I think this support for building positive relationships based on trust from the

principal lead to a very honest and open interview process. I was also a colleague of this teacher

and so there was a basis of trust there on a professional level and she believed the study to be

important and wanted to participate.

Students were encouraged to choose their own pseudonyms. I interviewed students in the

principal's office which is one of the few private spaces in the school. The principal was absent

on the day of interviews so his office was available. Students did not need to be concerned about

being overheard or getting into trouble. I wanted to make sure the students felt comfortable

working in the principal's office and so I joked it meant we were important. For interviews the

students and myself sat at a small circular table in the corner of the principal's office rather than

at his desk which would have created a distance between us and felt more formal and perhaps

more intimidating to students. I assured students our conversation was entirely confidential and I

would not tell anyone, including their parents, what was discussed. In the assent forms for

students I explained they would be recorded and at the beginning of each interview I asked the

students again if it was ok if I recorded them on my phone. I took notes on paper as I thought would be less distracting to the students than if I had been typing on a computer. If students became anxious or worried, the interview would have been stopped, and they would be allowed to return to class with the reassurance that they did not do anything wrong. I did not need to stop any interviews, however, one of the participants was quite shy and gave one word answers to most questions and so I did not continue to push her to give me more information when she was not comfortable.

The teacher was given a consent form to sign, and students took home parent consent forms and signed assent forms. These forms informed participants about the study so I could obtain informed consent, and the voluntary nature of the study was made clear. It was made clear to students they could refuse to assent to the study even if their parents had consented, that not participating would not get them into trouble and that they could decide to withdraw their assent at any time during the process. The teacher and parents were made aware of their prerogative to withdraw themselves or their children at any time.

Trustworthiness

I collected rich, detailed, and abundant perspectives from my participants by conducting extensive and continuing interviews and being present in the classroom numerous times. In this way, I avoided the issue of inadequate participant perspectives and having only surface level understandings of what was going on. Also, it seemed clear to me that the more of my participants' experiences and voices I could include in my research, the less need there would be for me to "fill in the blanks" as it were for my readers. I wanted to let my participants do most of the talking. Including students' perspectives helped with this, as their voices added to my understanding of the data and the observations I was making in their classrooms. I asked the

teacher participant to look through my notes on the interviews we had and my observation notes to make sure I had portrayed what I saw and heard in what she felt was an accurate way.

As a researcher, I did have a bias towards the importance of trust in a classroom. I personally believed trust was one of the most important elements in building positive relationships with students and that students in poverty need positive relationships with teachers in order to achieve their full potential which could lead to bias. Having self-awareness and the desire to find whatever my research lead me to kept this from becoming a threat to my research. By using as much of my participants' voices as I could, and not adding my own interpretation and belief system to what I reported, went a long way to minimizing that threat.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study was limited by the fact that I was only researching a teacher who generally did have positive relationships with her students and not teachers who did not. The teacher had self-identified as having positive relationship with students and was the only one who volunteered to be part of the study. If I had interviewed or observed such teachers, I might be able to communicate a clearer picture about not only the practices that work but those that do not work. However, the student interviews did shed light on a few behaviors the teacher participant did that negatively impacted her relationships with her students so I was able to see some of both sides. I was only looking at third and fourth grade, and so I was limited to eight potential participants. Student participation was affected by the number of consent and assent forms received. I received seven consent forms from parents and, therefore, interviewed all seven children instead of using other criteria to narrow down my student participants. The students that were included happened to have a lot of the different characteristic I would have looked at to narrow down the field had I had overwhelming numbers of consent forms. Finally, the current culture in the

school values relationships and so that could have influenced how effective teachers are able to be when establishing those relationships, this means results may not be transferable beyond schools with a similar culture.

Summary

This chapter began with an explanation of why I chose case study as my methodology of choice for this research. It went on to explain in more depth the participants of the study, teachers, and students, and the information I gathered about those participants. I explained I used semi-formal interviews, observations, and artifacts to collect my data and used In Vivo coding and provisional coding to analyze my data. The chapter ended with any ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness and finally, the limitations and delimitations of this study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine how a teacher in a Title I elementary school was able to create positive relationships with her students and how her students perceived those relationships. Building relationships with children in poverty can be difficult because of the elements of their upbringing that can lead to them having insecure attachments and internal working models of relationships that predispose them to assume negative intent from the adults around them (O'Connor et al., 2012). At the same time, a positive relationship with a teacher can mitigate a lot of the negative effects of the children's socioeconomic status and help them to achieve more in school by improving their academics, engagement, behavior, and socialization (Howes & Ritchie, 1999; Hughes et al., 2001; Myers & Pianta, 2008; Thijs & Fleischmann, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Improving academically is the most powerful tool these children have to escape from poverty as they get older and thus break the cycle (Hatton et al., 1996; Ladson-Billings, 2017; Milner, 2013). By understanding specific actions teachers can take to build these relationships, and crucially understanding how children perceive those actions, the research can be used to further our understanding of what exactly teachers need to be focusing on to improve their relationships with students. The following research questions guided the study:

Q1   What are the ways in which a teacher builds positive relationships with upper elementary students in poverty at the beginning of the school year?

Q2   How does the teacher maintain positive relationships?

Q3   How do students perceive their relationships with their teacher?

Q4   From the students' perspective in what ways does the teacher build positive relationships with her students?

Data collection was completed at a Title I school in the Rocky Mountain Region. The school has a population of 570 students, with about 85% of those students receiving free and reduced lunch. There were 8 third- and fourth-grade teachers in the 2019-2020 school year and of those, one third grade teacher agreed to participate in the study. This teacher had 22 students in her class. I sent home parent consent forms with 15 of those students and received 7 back. All seven of those students signed assent forms and were interviewed. All the data were analyzed using in vivo coding and provisional coding connected to five facets of trust and attachment theory. It became clear early on in the coding that the students split into two groups, those who had secure attachments and positive previous experiences in school and those students who had insecure attachments and negative past experiences in school. These two groups perceived[1] the same actions from their teacher in different ways.

In this chapter, I discuss the site and teacher participant, giving details about the school, the teacher and her classroom and the regular school day, and then the student participants. Then I break down the idea of trust into its five components: benevolence, reliability, competence, openness and honesty, and for each one show the teacher's actions and perceptions and the students' perspectives. I end each section with a conclusion tying the teacher and student perspectives together and directly comparing them.

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[1] For the purpose of this study I will be referring to the actions of the teacher that are "perceived" in certain ways by students rather than declaring that they are that way. For example, a teacher's action will be characterized as "perceived as unfair" rather than simply an "unfair action." This decision was made in order to preserve participant voice as much as possible while recognizing that the intention of the teacher's actions sometimes did not come across in how those actions were received by the students.

Site and Teacher Participant

In this section I will discuss the school itself and the surroundings in which this study took place. I go on to describe the teacher participant and what her classroom looked like, and finally I give an explanation of what a regular school day looked like for the students and the teacher. All of these descriptions provide a richer narrative for the reader and helps them to visualize the context of this research.

School

The school in which this study was conducted was built in the 1970's. It is an unusual building in that it is made up of four circular 'pods' centered around one central 'pod'. The building is surrounded by grass on all sides and the playground backs up to a city playground the students are able to use. The campus has many big old trees and a healthy population of squirrels and crows who do not seem to be put off by all the children. Inside the school looks old but well loved. There are cracks in some of the tiles, and patches on the ceilings where there have been leaks. However the walls are covered with student work throughout the year. The teachers have painted inspirational quotes about leadership through the hallways and decorated some of the student's bathrooms to try and make them more pleasant. The pods each have 6 classrooms in them, which are divided up by grade level as much as possible. There is a kindergarten pod, a first grade pod, and a second grade pod. Third grade is split between the kindergarten and first grade pods, and the cafeteria is in the fourth pod.

The school was built for far fewer students than it has now. At the time of the study the school had an enrollment of 560 students. A long hallway was added as the school got bigger and that leads to the gym and the fourth and fifth grade classrooms. There are portables outside for the onsite preschool and the music room, which was moved outside when more classrooms were

needed inside the building. The computer lab had to be removed to make room for another classroom. Interventionists teach at tables in the pods and in small rooms throughout the building and breezeways have also been used as small office spaces or for individual intervention with one student and one teacher at a desk. Despite these challenges the building looks neat and organized and is kept clean and surprisingly quiet.

All of the classrooms in the pods are shaped like pieces of pie which makes them a little difficult to arrange furniture in. They do not have built in storage space and so teachers have a variety of furniture and closets for teaching materials. The pod classrooms do not have windows. All the classrooms are lit with fluorescent lighting but most teachers have lamps and light covers so the fluorescents are not too harsh. The fourth and fifth grade classrooms do have big windows and are rectangular, showing the difference in the time period in which they were built. The school is pretty quiet throughout the day except for near the cafeteria during lunch hours. As you walk through the building you can hear the buzz of teaching coming from each classroom and the pods but most teachers keep their classroom doors closed to help with the noise level. The school is a cheery place and students and staff seem to be positive and happy to be there.

Teacher Participant

The teacher participant, Ms. Prince, had been teaching for 3 years with one previous year at this school in the same grade level. Ms. Prince graduated in 1995 with a bachelor's degree in biology. She was a stay at home mother for some time while she raised her 7 children. Ms. Prince is white and originally from Canada. She lives in a different, more affluent city, than the one she teaches in and where this study took place. Ms. Prince was on the leadership team at the building level and had attended one professional development course that focused on building relationships with students as part of the leadership team. Ms. Prince is an artist who loves to

paint and take photographs in her spare time. She is generally soft spoken and smiles a lot with her students. She got excited about what she was teaching and the students picked up on that excitement and became more engaged because of it. Ms. Prince referred to her students as "friends" or "dear" and expected they spoke to each other with the same manners and kindness she used with them. She did not get frustrated very easily and had a lot of patience with students who needed a little more time to get things done. She reminded her students frequently she loved them.

Ms. Prince shared, "It's easier to build relationships with the kids who work super hard, who listen, who are doing all the things they are supposed to. . . . They're more compliant, they want to please you--so, therefore, they are going to want to connect with you and love you." Because those students show hallmarks of having secure attachments and have experienced positive relationships with teachers in the past they enter their relationship with a new teacher with those same expectations and so when the teacher meets their expectations it solidifies the relationships more quickly. However, students who have insecure attachments are more difficult to build relationships with and Ms. Prince noted one student in particular started to deliberately pull away from her when he realized she was making a close connection to him. When I asked if she felt that any students were putting up walls with her she said, "I feel like that a little bit yeah. . . . Like he is thinking 'She's getting too close.'" Because he did not seem to want that relationship with a teacher due to his expectation of an insecure relationship and one without trust he consciously decided to try and pull back from Ms. Prince. She kept on trying, however, and explained to me that, even though it was harder, her relationships with those students were often more rewarding, "It's not as superficial . . . it's not as surface, top layer, kind of easy 'hey

you are a great kid' . . . it's more like 'I truly believe in you and I love you so much and you don't even know.'"

Classroom

I observed Ms. Princes third-grade classroom with 22 students, 13 boys and 9 girls. 85% of the students were Hispanic and the rest were Caucasian. All of the students were eligible for free and reduced lunch. Ms. Prince's classroom was next to one other third grade classroom in the kindergarten pod. Her classroom was large and pie shaped and had a mismatch of furniture in it to store teacher supplies. The school had provided some of this furniture and some of it was from Ms. Princes own home. Ms. Prince wanted her students to feel happy and safe in her classroom and she wanted her classroom environment to reflect that. Ms. Prince worked hard to create a culture of error in her classroom so students felt comfortable giving hard things a try and making mistakes, knowing that true learning came from making mistakes and learning to fix them (see Figure 1).
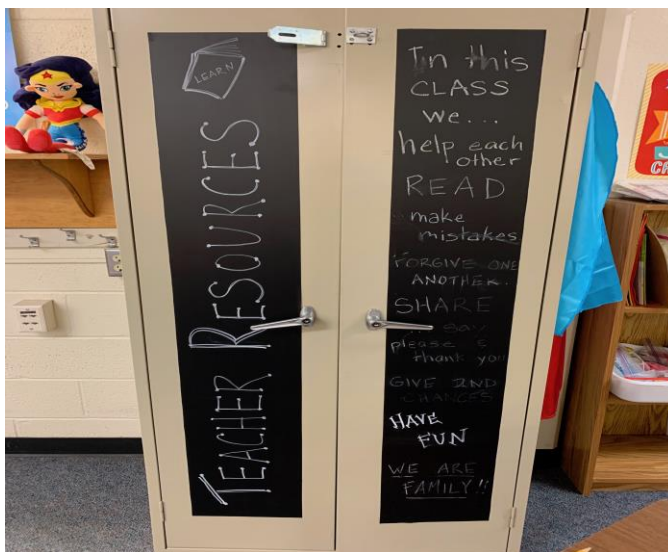
Figure 1. Closet door showing class expectations, which include making mistakes.

Ms. Prince encouraged participation from all students and valued student voice. Although this group of students was significantly more difficult than students Ms. Prince had in previous years, she still had very high expectations of them as she said, "I lay out my expectations. And so many of them have risen to the occasion." Ms. Prince still expected the best of her students all the time, and she still spent more time celebrating the positive things the students were doing than correcting the negative. Ms. Prince's classroom was decorated nicely with bright inspirational posters and superhero touches throughout as shown in Figures 2, 3, and 4. As the semester went on, the walls were also decorated with anchor charts recording the students learning.

Figure 2. Inspirational posters.
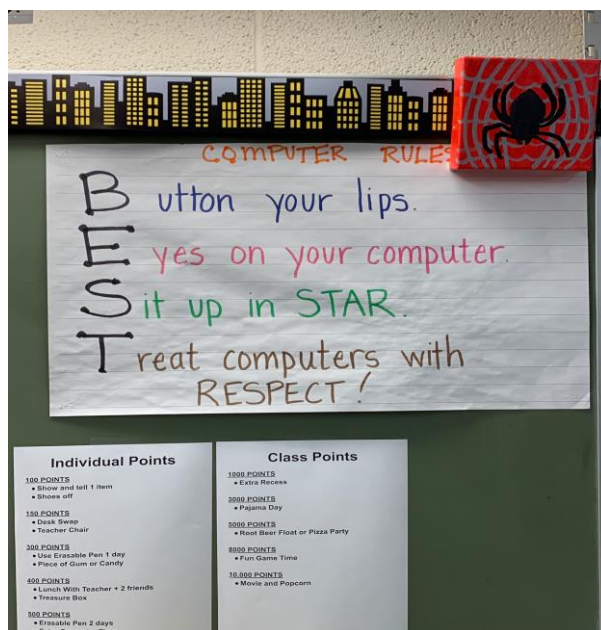
Figure 3. Anchor chart with computer expectations explained
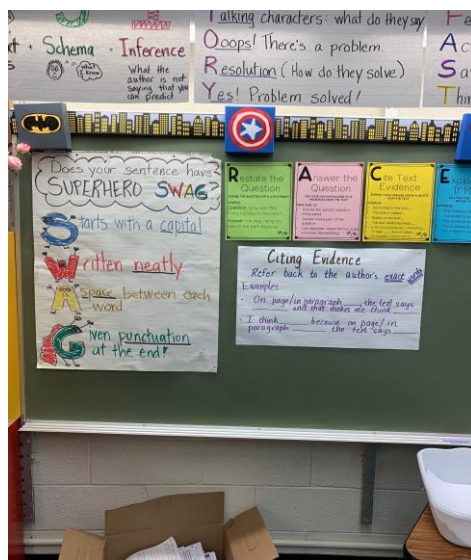
Figure 4. Academic anchor charts coordinated with the superhero theme in the classroom.

Ms. Prince's classroom was bright and cheerful and, while it was a little cluttered, there were clear spots for everything the students needed like the rainbow drawers shown in Figure 5. There was a cozy corner (Figure 6) for reading or quiet time and each student had his or her own desk and chair pocket.

Figure 5. Drawers labeled for student supplies
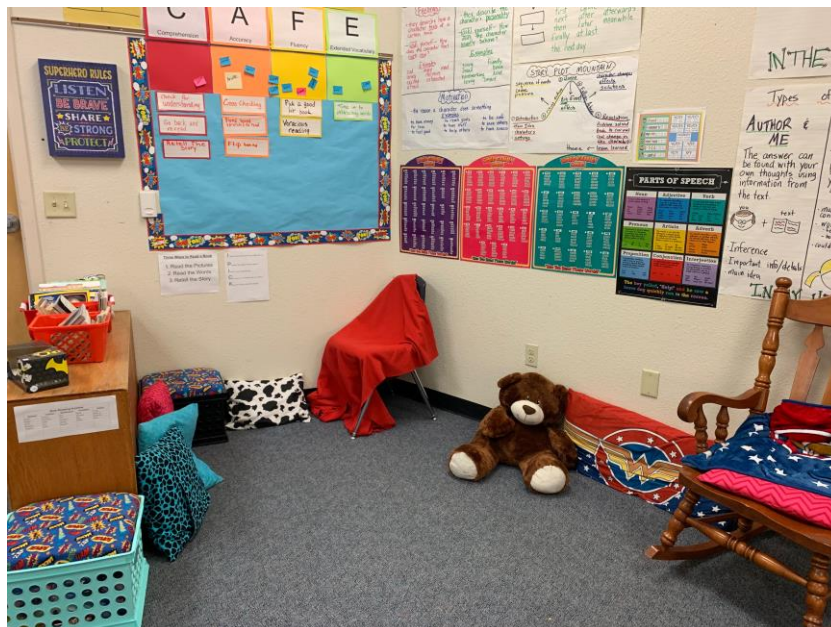
Figure 6. Cozy corner for reading

Ms. Prince spent time showing the students how to store their belongings so they could find them easily and be happy with their personal space. The desks were arranged in rows facing the front of the room with two desks set up separately in "islands" for students who need to work alone because they distracted others or became distracted themselves. I noticed in observations Ms. Prince used proximity to manage her classroom and so students whose behaviors needed to be monitored closely sat at the front of the room near her teacher station. However, unless you were aware of the seating arrangement, there was nothing else that indicated that these students were separated. Outside the classroom, student work was hung in the hallways, as shown in Figure 7, and changed about monthly in order to show the students the value of what they work on in class.
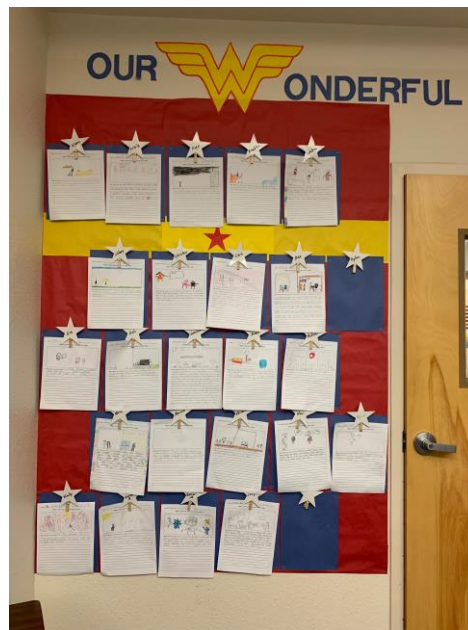
Figure 7. Student work displayed outside of classroom.

It was clear from being in her room and seeing the time she had spent on it having a well cared for environment was important for Ms. Prince as she believed her students were worth

putting in that effort for. She began decorating her classroom before the school year started and worked long days to make sure it all came together before the first day. For the students, they walked into a classroom that was set up with them in mind. They could see the effort Ms. Prince had put in and the bright colors and inspirational posters made the room feel like a happy and welcoming place. This was the first, and unspoken, way Ms. Prince made her students feel valued and respected. She wanted them to enjoy where they were learning. She made sure they each had their own space that was respected and treated as their own. She also made sure her decorations did not dominate the classroom. There were still spots that were uncluttered and calm. There was a cozy corner designed so that students who needed a break could go and have some time away from everyone else. And there were big blank walls, which would get filled with student work as the year progressed.

School Day

The school day started at 7.40 am when the first bell rang. Students entered the school and settled in the hallways outside their classrooms to read a book. This morning arrival was different from previous years and was an attempt to start the day in a calmer way than before when students would be out on the playground with minimal supervision. There were two teachers on duty in each pod and students were greeted multiple times. The students were let in through the front doors by the principal who gave each of them a handshake as they walked in. There were teachers on duty throughout the hallways who greeted the students as they got to their classrooms, and then the teachers on duty in the pods were there with a smile as well. Having multiple points of contact with positive adults as they entered the building was planned to help students feel welcomed and cared about. At 7.50 students put away their books and lined

up and were welcomed into the classroom. Students entered one by one and greeted the teacher on their way in.

Every day started with 30 minutes of time dedicated to social and emotional learning. Ms. Prince and a number of other teachers used this time for a morning meeting. After eating breakfast students would gather in a circle in Ms. Princes gathering spot. They would then greet the person next to them and Ms. Prince would lead them all in a conversation, or to answer a prompt to start the day off in a positive way. Although there were only 30 minutes specified in the schedule for this learning, social and emotional learning and relationship building carried on throughout the day. Ms. Prince modeled how she wanted her students to interact and stopped class or rearranged her schedule to address issues if they arose. Every time she spoke to a student she was modeling how the students should treat each other even it was unintentional. She would say please and thank you and keep her interactions respectful. Every interaction she had had an effect on the relationships between her and her students.

Students spent most of the day in their classrooms. They left once a day for 50 minutes to go to specials; music, PE, art, or library. They received a 20-minute recess and a 20-minute lunch break with an additional 10-minute recess at the teacher's discretion. Special education, English Language support, and Gifted and Talented support all 'pushed in' to classrooms as much as possible rather than pulling students out into small groups.

The repetition and structure of the classroom meant that it felt very predictable for both the students and myself. The student's math and literacy classes were differentiated as much as possible using a small group model. The school had one to one devices and so digital learning was used to supplement and enhance what Ms. Prince was teaching. Differentiating learning based on student need lead to better results for the students and the feeling that their learning was

more relevant to them. The daily schedule inside the classroom was the same every day. I knew

if I went into the room after lunch they would be sitting quietly reading after the transition to

Targeted Instruction time. Sometimes that transition took longer than others, but the expectation

they would all get into their seats and sit and read was always the same. Similarly, if I went in in

the mornings at 8.30 am the students would most likely be up and moving around the room or

working in small groups on science content. Conversely, when I observed literacy it was mostly

direct instruction with students remaining in their own desks and Ms. Prince at the front of the

room doing a mini lesson before they broke up into small groups for differentiated instruction.

Student Participants

Seven students participated in this research. After listening to interviews, speaking with

Ms. Prince, and observing them in the classroom I identified a group who had previous insecure

attachments and negative experiences at school or at home (Nora, Arthur, and Mary) and a group

of 4 who had generally had secure attachments and positive experiences in school in the past

(Jake, Rose, Solma, and Chloe). In the following sections I provide a description of each child

and their behaviors which lead me to identifying their attachment styles.

Nora

Nora was a quiet student who usually worked hard in class and enjoyed school for the

most part. She was quite serious and did not smile very often but she had a kind heart and wanted

to do the right thing. She had few friends and, for the most part, kept to herself in class.

Occasionally she had conflicts with other teachers and times that she believed teachers treated

her in an unfair way. Nora stated things seemed, "Unfair sometimes" and, "I'm the one who gets

in trouble and they get away with it." Nora also explained her mother had had a number of court

dates in the past, her older sister was recently arrested, and her older brother had been shot and

killed by the police 6 years ago. In her interview, she said, "I was going to enter the classroom but she stopped me because she saw my face. I answered but I was kind of sad because of my mom . . . she had court. And then my sister she got arrested . . . I had two brothers but one died . . . they shot him." These traumatic incidents at home seemed to correlate to Nora's feeling that sometimes she was not treated fairly by authority figures in the school. Nora trusted her classroom teacher, Ms. Prince but seemed to have less trust in teachers who she did not know as well.

Arthur

Arthur was an incredibly intelligent child and is identified as gifted and talented. Because of this, and his own knowledge of how intelligent he is, he referred to himself as "the Gandalf of the third grade" in his interview, he sometimes exhibits disruptive behaviors in class. Although he is a fun child to have a conversation with he can be a difficult student because he believes he has nothing to learn in third grade, the other students are not as clever as him, and he gets bored and frustrated easily. Although academically he is advanced he is behind when it comes to social and emotional intelligence. When he is bored and frustrated he has no problem making that known to the teacher and everyone around him. He has a reputation among his peers of being more intelligent than they are which leads to rifts between him and the other students in his class. He struggles to build friendships with them because he perceives them as being less clever than he is and he gets annoyed when he makes jokes or references that they do not understand. He said other students "Tell on him for things they shouldn't tell on him for." Arthur has had a traumatic home life. The SWAT team arrested his father last year while Arthur watched from the back of a police car, ". . . he had a car crash then I had to get in the back of a police car, which I mean, that wasn't too bad. I was just kind of tired and nervous." This incident has furthered his

desire to be self-sufficient and he commented a few times on the fact that he did not like to ask for help or get emotional support from teachers because he preferred to deal with his emotions himself, "I just kind of deal with it because I can . . . I don't really like focusing on the bad much." Similarly to Nora he mentioned feeling that teacher's actions, including Ms. Princes, were sometimes unfair and he did not always trust Ms. Prince to do the right things for him, particularly with the level of work he was being given, "I want more harder things but not where I have no idea what I'm doing. Basically what I'm saying is I want to learn."

Mary

The last student who exhibited externalizing behaviors in class and indicated a past history of difficulty in school was Mary. The difference between Mary, and Nora and Arthur, was that she did not open up about any trauma from her home life that might have contributed to her difficulty building relationships with teachers but it was reasonable to assume there was some home-based reason for her insecure attachments to peers and teachers. Mary was a smart girl; she was quite talkative and cheerful, however, she struggled to build relationships with both her peers and her teachers. Mary said she had had many teachers she disliked over the years and indicated that they always blamed her for things she did not do. Mary also complained about not having many friends because other students are always mean to her for no reason. There was a clear pattern when Mary was talking about her believing other people did not like her because of their problems, not because of her own actions. In class Mary argued with other students, she shouted at students and told them what to do, she demanded the teacher's attention constantly and was rude and defiant when she did not get her way. She often sulked or cried if she did not get what she wanted immediately, and work refusal was very common. She particularly seemed to have a hard time with Arthur because, in previous years, she believed herself to be the

cleverest one in the class and now she was in a class with Arthur she thought he was cleverer than her. She demonstrated very little self-awareness and very little trust in her teachers. When she was redirected, she immediately said she did not do what the teacher said she did. In her interview with me, she consistently said she did not do anything wrong and the reason she got into trouble was a combination of other kids doing the wrong thing and her getting blamed, and the teacher just not liking her and making things up. In second grade, Mary was eventually moved out of her classroom because the relationship between her mother and the teacher deteriorated significantly due to the teacher consistently reporting the negative behaviors Mary was showing. However, this course of action only served to convince Mary she was right and she was getting "picked on" by the teacher which, in turn, had fed her distrust of teachers and continued to cause problems for her. Mary struggled with her relationship with Ms. Prince as these feelings of being picked on or singled out continued into third grade. Mary's desk was at the front of the classroom away from other students. In her interviews Mary told me she did not distract others and she was nice to people because she wanted to have more friends.

Summary

Nora, Arthur, and Mary all had similar issues with friends and their teachers. All three of them were quite solitary in school and, while Nora and Arthur seem okay with that, it upset Mary that she did not have many friends. All three of them had criticisms of their teachers and characterized certain teacher actions as unfair. They complained that they got blamed for things other students did, and Nora and Mary specifically talked at length about unfair teacher actions. Arthur seemed to understand the reasoning behind his teachers' decisions more than the other two, however, he felt other students treated him unfairly as well.

Chloe

Chloe was a quiet hard-working student who enjoyed going to school. Chloe said she liked hard work because, "I am only getting better." **I**n her interview, she was quiet but she seemed comfortable in answering my questions. She said while she liked school she liked being at home and if she was having a problem at school she would feel comfortable telling Ms. Prince but would probably talk to her family first. Chloe felt like she was treated fairly by her teachers and she got along well with her peers. Although she struggled academically, particularly in literacy, she saw these things as a challenge and viewed the challenge in a positive way. Chloe was well behaved in class though she did not participate much. She was happier working with a partner than speaking in front of the whole class.

Solma

Solma was a hard worker. She said she had always enjoyed school and she liked being there. She was quite a high achiever academically and enjoyed being pushed further and further. She had a lot of friends and was always willing to participate in class and answer questions. She had good relationships with all of her teachers and said she had never had a teacher she did not like. Solma explained when the whole class got a consequence for the behavior of only a few students she felt more "annoyed with the kids" behavior rather than annoyed at her teacher. She felt cared about and supported in the classroom and liked having Ms. Prince as a teacher. Because Solma had so many friends she did sometimes get distracted in class and I saw Ms. Prince have to ask her to stop talking once. Solma did so immediately and did not seem to be upset with Ms. Prince for redirecting her.

Jake

Jake is a cheerful and generally easygoing student. Jake struggles with his behavior in class, mainly with self-regulation, and is on an IEP for math and reading. However, there were numerous structures in place to help him be successful. During the first couple of weeks of school, he acted out occasionally and could be defiant, but he quickly settled into the routine and got used to Ms. Prince. He was generally well behaved when I was observing in the classroom and when he was having a hard time he could be corrected with a quick redirection. In his interview Jake told me that he liked school and liked all of his teachers. He was pretty distracted even during our interview and for a while would only give yes or no answers. Jake told me that he believed when he got into trouble it was just his teachers trying to help him, but he did not like getting into trouble anyway. He did not think he was treated unfairly by teachers and did not deny the behaviors that got him into trouble in the first place.

Rose

Rose was the quietest out of all the students who participated in the study and from my observations and conversations with Ms. Prince I found out she was always very quiet. She told me she enjoyed school and liked being there. She said she liked Ms. Prince and she had really liked her kindergarten teacher. She did not participate in class and even when working with a partner she would not share first or speak much. She worked hard but struggled in math and literacy. She was a very pleasant child and liked to help the teacher and do the right thing.

Summary

Chloe, Solma, Jake, and Rose all generally enjoyed school and had positive experiences there and at home. They made friends easily and trusted the people around them. Even when

teachers did things they did not like they were able to see that their teachers were just trying to help them improve and get better.

Building Trusting Relationships

In this section I begin by reviewing trust as a construct and how it is used in this research. I then take each of my provisional codes and give a brief definition of what that component of trust means in terms of a student and teacher relationship. Then I present the relevant data from the teacher's perspective and then the students' perspective, ending with a conclusion that compares the two perspectives. This serves to highlight specific instances of each component of trust and also breaks down and compares the teacher's intentions with the students' perceptions.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) explained, "Trust is a general confidence and overall optimism in occurring events; it is believing in others in the absence of compelling reasons to disbelieve" (p. 342). Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) outlined five attributes that B was expected to have if A trusted them and was willing to be vulnerable to them. These attributes were benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. In 2000, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy identified these attributes after doing a thorough review of all the extant literature on trust and looking for common words or phrases used in different definitions of trust; therefore, this is the definition used in this paper. Further explanation of each of these attributes is given below along with teacher and student perspectives of these attributes in the classroom.

Benevolence

Benevolence refers to the expectation that someone you trust will act in your best interests (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). It is based on the expectation of good intentions and mutual goodwill. In the context of a student-teacher relationship, benevolence could be the students trusting that even if they are being asked to engage in an activity they do not particularly

like or have an interest in, it is for the good of their continuing education, not just a time filler to serve the teacher. This assumed goodwill is crucial when it comes time for a teacher to discipline or give consequences to a student. As this will happen with every student at least once over the course of the year it is important that the teacher can provide consequences that the student will not be happy with, but that the students can still understand consequence within the larger scheme of the teacher having their best interests at heart. The way in which Ms. Prince showed benevolence and how her students perceived it is discussed next.

Teacher Perspectives

In her interviews, and in my observations, it was clear that Ms. Prince cared deeply about her students. She placed building relationships with them very highly on her list of priorities and believed in seeking the positives in every interaction with every student. Although she recognized that she would not be the one to fix all the difficulties her students had or had experienced in previous years she still pushed herself to do as much as she could in the time she has with them. She did not believe in giving up on students or giving them a pass on negative behaviors or incorrect work because of how they would respond. She believed it was her job to keep on pushing them and teach them how to handle the negative emotions that came with failing sometimes rather than avoiding the emotions altogether. She felt protective over her students and when a student who had been struggling had a positive day, she felt a great sense of pride in them and happiness for them. Ms. Prince stated, "I have always told myself, when I began teaching, that if I can make a difference in even only one student life then I have accomplished a great thing. This isn't always academically inclined."

Ms. Prince worked hard at the beginning of the year to get to know things about not just her students but also their families. She said at the beginning of the year,

> I did have a questionnaire from the families that I'm having returned . . . about each student from the family's perspective, from the parents. Like their strengths and weaknesses, their fears, what they like, what don't they like, what works best for them? . . . And that way I can use that information to help me throughout the year, and hopefully make a positive difference for them.

She saw the family as a valuable resource if a student was struggling with behavior in class as she could reach out and ask if something had changed at home or if the student had shared that she had done something at school to upset them that she could then rectify. If a student had a very good day at school she made a point of making a positive phone call home to the parents to communicate the student's success.

Ms. Prince does not look through previous years' documentation for behavior issues and does not ask previous teachers about her students:

> Because I didn't want to have a predisposition against any child. Because everything is brand new. And I still try to approach that attitude every day. Like today's a new day, we don't have to act the same way.

Because she has her students' best interests at heart she spends a lot of time at the beginning of the year on activities which help the students get to know each other and her better. These activities include getting to know you games such as a matching game where students list things they like or dislike and try to find someone to match. She plays name games with them where students stand in a circle and recite their name and a fact about themselves and the next student has to remember it. She pairs students up in lots of different ways during the first few weeks of school so they can get to know new people in their class. She spends time figuring out the best way to support individual students and although her expectations at the beginning of the year are the same for the whole class she starts to differentiate those expectations and tailor them to suit individual children as she gets to know them, "It (her reactions to and treatment of kids) is starting to get more tailored . . . I guess it's just an ongoing process really." Ms. Prince said she

always begins the year with very high expectations and most of the time the kids meet those expectations. She believes in them and believes they can do well in school and in turn, they want to show her that she is correct, "I lay out my expectations. And so many of them have risen to the occasion." Ms. Prince expects all of her students to treat each other with kindness first, she models the way in which she expects students to speak to each other using I statements. Ms. Prince expects her students to participate in class either by raising their hands or by talking with a partner. At the beginning of the year Ms. Prince modeled what she wanted the students' hands to look like when they raised their hands to speak and they practiced multiple times. In order to get the students to feel comfortable speaking with partners she would ask fun questions and then ask the students to 'turn and talk'. Ms. Prince had a protocol for this turn and talk so that one student would share first, then the other student would share. Ms. Prince often asked a student to share their partner's thoughts with the class in order to hold them to the expectation that they were listening to what their partners said. Ms. Prince had routines for most of the basic procedures in the classroom and practiced them with the students multiple times until they were correct. She had procedures for up at the door at the beginning of the day, coming into the classroom, hanging up coats and backpacks and getting breakfast, bathroom breaks, behavior in the lunchroom, and expectations when moving around the building. All of these expectations were explained to the students in the first days of school when the time came to use them. For example, before the student's left the room to go to specials for the first time Ms. Prince stopped class earlier than she would have normally and explained what she wanted to see when the students lined up. She explained they would stand up when she said 1, push in their chairs when she said 2, and turn to face the door when she said 3. She would then send them a row at a time to line up. After her explanation Ms. Prince then modeled what she wanted the students to do.

She then had students practice the routine a piece at a time and finally altogether. If the routine was not perfect she would have them all begin again and would encourage them to get it right the next time. As the year went ton Ms. Prince needed less and less time before specials to get the students lined up correctly as they got used to the routine. In the first few weeks of school all corrections made were said in a positive tone of voice and Ms. Prince specifically pointed out students who were doing the right thing and praised them publicly while she tried to correct students who needed redirection in a quieter, more private way.

Ms. Prince also stated the importance of humor in building relationships with her students and trying to connect with them on a personal level beyond their school lives, such as discussing a favorite television show or movie. She said, "I do joke around, I think at this age most of them get that… It kind of breaks the ice a little bit. I think humor tends to do that in general." Ms. Prince had a 'Daily Joke' written on a small whiteboard by her front door. Her sense of humor was most often silly and not sarcastic. She knew that most of the students loved the joke books that were available through Scholastic and in her classroom library and she commented even the students who were shy would giggle when she told jokes from those books or told a funny story. She shares her own experiences in school as a way to connect with the students as she struggled in elementary school herself and so that is something a lot of her kids can relate to, "I'll use myself as an example, very, very often because I struggled in elementary school." When her students were struggling she spent time with them one-on-one to try and break down where the struggle was occurring, is it something academic they did not understand, or has something happened at home that was affecting their ability to learn? She took the time to understand what was going on before reacting to it and by doing that she made her students feel valued and cared about.

Finally, Ms. Prince was very aware of her student's emotional state and emotional needs in the classroom, "I swear they all need me. They almost all need me more, which makes it harder . . . because then I wish I could spend more one on one time with each of them." She started every day greeting the students at the door and if she noticed something seemed off she would pull that student aside to try and get to the bottom of what was bothering them. She was also very conscious of the fact that some of her students who showed more externalizing behaviors were getting a lot more of her attention at the beginning of the semester and so she took steps to adjust that so that students who were always well behaved but quiet would feel like they were getting her attention too,

> I have 21 other students that deserve my attention and my teaching. So I'm losing teaching time because you want to mess around and that's not ok . . . I say, 'I have all these other students who deserve to be taught and you are stealing their learning time because I have to stop and deal with you.

In this way, she modeled for the students that there were positive ways to gain her attention not just negative ways to do it, "I will tell them that I know it's hard but I'm really proud of the way they handle things and do their work. I try to praise those kids in front of the whole class to show positive praise is better than negative attention."

Ms. Prince knew that a lot of students needed a lot of support from her and tried to carve out time for that, while still managing to teach. She noticed when students did the right thing and she called them out on it so they also get positive attention from their peers. When her students have a good day she celebrates that success with them so that they know how important it is when they do well, "I see these beautiful moments with him where he's helping another student or I see him get excited about what we are doing. . . . So I should really call Mom today and say, 'He had an amazing day . . . that way she gets that praise at home too.'"

Ms. Prince was flexible with what she did on any given day based on how her students were doing. She gave the example of a test they had taken where they did not perform as well as she had expected. She decided to not give them the test back that Friday because they had another test they had to do and she did not want to ruin their motivation, "I don't want to give it back to them this week because they have another test on Friday, especially not the ones who didn't do well." Ms. Prince adjusted her approach for different kids so that she gets the best out of them and works with what she knows about them and what they respond well to because she cares about how they feel, "I think he does better when he's apart from other friends so I started to notice that… The other day I had him sit with me and he did much better work. Again it's finding those little things. I feel like he needs more of that one on one attention and he seeks that one on one attention."

Student Perspectives

Every single student I spoke to said they believed Ms. Prince cared about them and would notice if something was wrong. They all knew if they needed to talk to her about something, whether they had done this or not, they could talk to her and she would take them outside of the room to chat. Chloe said, "Yeah, she's done it with other kids… she takes them out of the classroom and asks them what's wrong?" Because they had seen her do this with other students they knew she would make time to do that for them as well if they needed her to. Students said their ideal teacher was someone who was nice, funny, and helped them to learn. When speaking about a teacher they would not like to have they mentioned 'mean' teachers or teachers who 'liked to yell' at kids.

Even though they believed Ms. Prince cared for them Arthur, Nora, and Mary still believed she treated them unfairly sometimes, particularly when they got blamed for things they

did not believe were their fault. Mary said, "Sometimes I'm not the problem." Nora stated, "So I'm the one who gets in trouble and they get away with it." And finally, Arthur claimed that, "I get into trouble for things I should not get into trouble for."

Conclusion

While it was clear that Ms. Prince acted with benevolence and that her students recognized benevolence by itself was not enough to create a strong relationship with all of the students. It was interesting that these students were able to simultaneously believe that their teacher cared about them but at the same time they did not fully trust her to treat them fairly. This aligns with attachment theory as these students had insecure attachments with people at home they love and care about. The idea that loving students and caring about students is not enough to build positive relationships with them is not something that had previously come out in the research and was not something I was expecting to see so clearly in the data.

Reliability

Reliability in this sense is the combination of both predictability and benevolence. Deutsch (1958) commented predictability alone is not enough to build a trusting relationship. Someone can be predictably late or predictably mean or self-serving after all and that in no way would engender trust from another person. Therefore, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) combined the importance of predictability with the positive results of benevolence to create the characteristic of reliability. Again in a student-teacher relationship, this could be the student relying on the teacher to always make time to answer questions and help those who are struggling, or the student may trust the teacher to reliably hold her accountable for completing work. Students might also be able to predict how the teacher will react to certain behaviors because teacher expectations of work and behavior should be extremely reliable.

Teacher Perspectives

On the days I observed Ms. Prince's class at the same time as I had previously, the work the students were doing, the subject they were learning, and even the teaching methods used, were consistent. Ms. Prince recognized the necessity of being reliable over time in building relationships with her students. Even though sometimes it felt she was taking baby steps and making very small amounts of progress, overall, she saw improvement in her relationships with children from the beginning to the end of the semester. As Ms. Prince said, "It's like little baby steps . . . slowly. . . . And that's the tiring part."

Ms. Prince also utilized a consequence progression (see Figure 8) to make the consequences for misbehavior or off-task behavior very clear to her students, "Yeah consequence progression and they seem to be reacting to that actually better than just points." The students needed to know that if they acted a certain way there would always be a consequence for that and they could rely on the consequence being appropriate for what they had done, delivered without anger, and then they and Ms. Prince would both move on.
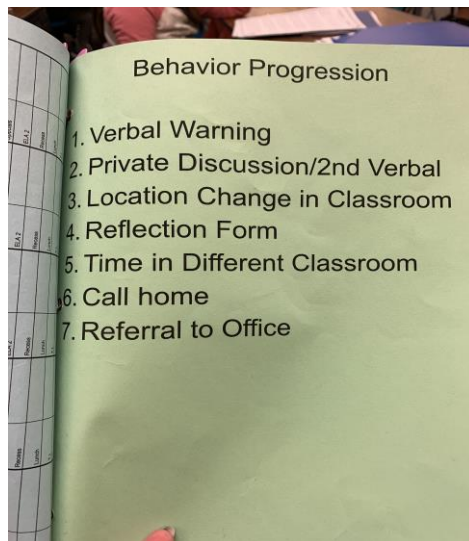
Figure 8. The consequence progression Ms. Prince used.

With some of her more difficult children, Ms. Prince had conferenced with the behavior interventionist and the administration and one of the consequences was sending the student to the office. I saw this happen a few times, but it was done in a careful and intentional way. Ms. Prince was never visibly frustrated with her students when she sent them out. It was always said in a calm voice, "Ok, you may take that attitude to the office, goodbye." Ms. Prince sometimes took the time to explain the reasoning behind this specific consequence; that the student or students who were being sent from the room were being highly disruptive and taking learning time from everyone else. This served the dual purpose of showing the students who needed to be redirected that this consequence was not going to change and she would always follow through with it, but it also showed the other students in the room that their time and learning was being valued and if a classmate was disrupting their learning the teacher would not prioritize continually redirecting their behavior over teaching the students who were doing the right thing. Ms. Prince explained to

her class, "Which is why we did three strikes you're out. I have 21 other students that deserve my attention and my teaching."

Ms. Prince used specific interventions for behavior management in her classroom and she was always consistent with them and kept them the same for long periods of time before deciding they did not work. Typically, she used an intervention, such as a point sheet, or yoga ball, or a student sitting separately, for about 4 to 6 weeks before making a change. This reliability meant the students knew what to expect, what rewards they might get alongside what consequences existed, and were never confused about why things happened.

I observed Ms. Prince making time to have one on one conferences with students who were struggling academically as a regular routine in her classroom. She always had the patience for students with questions and she would typically get down to their level, lower her voice, and talk them through what they were struggling with. She started every day by shaking the kids' hands at the door as they came in and keeping an eye on their faces and demeanor as they walked into the room. Finally, Ms. Prince always ended each day with a hug, handshake, or high five for every single student regardless of how rough their day had been. This showed the students that no matter what happened, they were still loved and cared about and could come in the next day with a clean slate, "At the end of the day I always like to give them hugs and let them know 'I love you' . . . no matter what."

Ms. Prince worked hard to make her classroom a reliable environment for her students. She had consistent and clear routines, the daily schedule stayed the same, and the way she spoke to her students stayed calm and predictable. Her expectations did not change as the year went on and she did not relax her expectations from the high standards she set at the beginning of the year. She tried to create an environment where students knew exactly what to expect next. She

wanted to treat all of the students the same way and have clear and consistent follow through and feedback for academic and behavioral struggles for all students.

Student Perspectives

When talking to the students the fact that Ms. Prince always noticed the student's emotional state was repeated in student interviews multiple times. Because all the students recognized she would notice if they were upset, and then take the time to follow up on it, that repeated action became proof of her reliability. The students were confident that if, something were wrong, she knew them well enough to pick up on it, even if they did not want to talk about it. As Nora said, when asked if Ms. Prince might not notice someone being upset one day, "No, she's always kind of on it."

The consistency from day to day in the classroom was something the students commented on appreciating, and the fact that they recognized Ms. Prince from previous years. The school has had a lot of turnover in staff and Jake, Solma, and Rose mentioned liking certain teachers because they have been at the school for a while. Jake said he liked one teacher in particular because, "She has been at the school a long time and I have been at the school a long time." It seems that building relationships with teachers, only to then have them leave and never see them again, causes some insecurity in these students because they cannot rely on the teachers to return. Because Ms. Prince was someone they had seen around the previous year the students may have felt she was more reliable and someone who would not leave them unexpectedly.

Mary was the only student who mentioned something that made her believe Ms. Prince was actually unreliable and that was she will asked a question in class and be told to wait for just a second until Ms. Prince could get to her, and then Ms. Prince never came. She said she felt like she never got the help she needed because she was always told to wait and then forgotten about.

Mary said, "I asked her when is the right time and then when I go and ask her she doesn't have time. And then everybody cuts in front of me to ask her for something and then she doesn't have time when I'm at the end." Given that Mary seemed to have the least positive relationship with Ms. Prince, this perceived lack of reliability would have been a component of that.

Conclusion

The routines and procedures of the classroom and the day to day business of learning were things that Ms. Prince worked hard to keep reliable and consistent for her students. The students recognized this reliability and appreciated it and felt secure in the knowledge that one day would look very like another. However, in terms of reliability in the way the students were treated there seemed to be a slight different between how Ms. Prince felt she treated the children and how the children perceived how they were being treated. Ms. Prince tried to treat each student the same and give each student the time they needed from her for academic or behavioral growth. Yet in Mary's interview she stated she often felt that Ms. Prince did not have time for her and she always had time for others, this led Mary at least to feel that Ms. Prince was not reliable. The other students did not report this feeling but there may have been other students in the class who I did not interview who felt the same way or felt that they got less of Ms. Prince's attention than others. Also, although Ms. Prince spoke in her interviews quite a lot about the behavior sheets she had made and the consequence progression she had worked on, none of the students mentioned them. Ms. Prince's goal in creating both of these things was to make the link between behavior and consequences very predictable to the students. The fact that none of the students mentioned them could show that they placed less importance on them than Ms. Prince and perhaps in the students view these things did not make Ms. Prince seem more reliable to them.

Competence

Competence in the context of trusting relationships is the same as in other situations. People trust others to be competent at what they do. A novice teacher may have wonderful intentions and a genuine urge to help students succeed, however, if she has no content or pedagogical knowledge and no classroom management skill, children will not trust her to give them the education or academic skills that they need (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).As learning and knowledge around teaching practices evolves and changes teachers need to keep up with current best practices in order to remain competent at their jobs and provide the best learning environment for their students. Students and families need to believe that their teachers are good at their jobs and will be able to help them succeed. Ms. Prince's competencies in her job, and the way the students regarded her competency are discussed in the following section.

Teacher Perspectives

When looking at the ways in which Ms. Prince was competent her practices in the classroom fell into three distinct categories: competence in teaching academics, competence in teaching social and emotional regulation, and competence in classroom management.

Competence in Teaching Academics

Ms. Prince has been rated 'effective' by the principal in both of her summative evaluations since she started teaching at this school. She seems to have strong content knowledge, and teaching the same grade level for two years in a row certainly helps with that. She employs a lot of the strategies that the school and the district had deemed "best practices" and she did them well. For example, Ms. Prince aggressively monitored around her classroom while students were working. This means that she knows exactly what she wants to see the students doing, she has an exemplar, and she has a checklist where she can keep track quickly of

who has understood the concept, who needs a little more help, and who is completely lost. She then can use this information to make timely decisions about small group instruction, who to pull for reteaches, and who to provide extensions to. Since she keeps this data she can then track patterns over time, "So there is progress but I often have to backtrack just to get them back on the right path… there have been many improvements in general… academically these kids are so, so intelligent and their scores are showing it." Because she is consistently monitoring student work Ms. Prince can also make sure that students are practicing concepts correctly and she can have them make in time adjustments to what they are doing so they do not spend significant amounts of time working on something incorrectly. Ms. Prince said, "And I don't want him to practice incorrectly, so that's part of our job, to make sure that they're practicing things correctly. And it's really hard because he just doesn't want to do it."

Ms. Prince insisted on the very best effort from her students and pushes them to redo work that is not completely correct, even if it something the student thinks is unimportant, like making sure they always include units in their math problems. Ms. Prince spoke at length about one student who refused to complete his multiplication problems using the standard algorithm, which is one of the third grade math standards. He had devised his own way of doing it, which did not always lead him to the correct answer, but he was convinced it was easier. Ms. Prince knew that every time she corrected this student it would be a battle and he would get upset and defensive and sometimes shut down completely. However, she kept showing how to do it correctly in multiple ways and with multiple approaches because she would not let him get it wrong. When I asked if she ever felt tempted just to let him be for a day so she did not have to get into an unpleasant power struggle with him she said no, she would just keep trying to get him

to understand in different ways, "I don't have it in me to give up like that . . . if it's wrong it's wrong."

Ms. Prince altered her teacher voice throughout the semester to match what her students needed. At the beginning of the semester, she was always soft-spoken and would repeat directions cheerfully until they were followed, as time went on and she recognized the students needed a more authoritative figure at the front of the room she began to use a sharper tone, while still keeping a level and calm voice. For example, when a student was leaving their seat in the middle of a lesson Ms. Prince said, "You need to sit down now, please." She was still polite with the student and did not raise her voice, but her tone was more clipped than usual and she did not ask the student to sit, she told them to sit.

Competence in Teaching Social and Emotional Regulation

When teaching social and emotional regulation and appropriate behaviors to the students, Ms. Prince used a couple of different approaches. The first was to have preplanned lessons, first thing in the morning, which tackled a particular subject, like bullying or lying. Her other approach was to address things as they happened and use the students' own behavior as a teaching opportunity. The most frequent example of this was when the students would come back into the room after recess and lunch after there had been an incident either outside or in the cafeteria. This is where the students struggled the most with their behavior because it was the least structured time of the day. Ms. Prince would either deal with what had happened in the moment or she would make time the following day to discuss it, "It's like a teaching moment. Those usually aren't planned at all. If something happens at lunch or the cafeteria a lot of times that will become the teaching moment." In both circumstances, she would use that time to talk to

all the students about how they could have reacted better or differently or in a more productive way. Negative behaviors were regularly seen as a learning experience for the whole class.

Ms. Prince directly and explicitly taught her students how to address each other as well as other adults in the school. She would give them scripts in order to address each other and she would encourage students to help or correct their peers politely if they were off task or struggling to follow directions. These explicit scripts meant that students could help manage each other but in a way that was non-threatening and more productive than what a third grader might typically be expected to say to a peer who was annoying them. She encouraged the students to use I statements when talking to each other about behaviors that upset them and she was committed to giving them those communication tools that could help them, not only with small interpersonal conflicts in the classroom but later in their lives. "I tell them 'Use your I statements.' 'I don't like it when you do this it hurts my feelings. I don't like it when you do this because it keeps me from doing my work.' I'm trying to give them those tools."

Competence in Classroom Management

The classroom management required of Ms. Prince with this particular group of students was pretty significant and difficult to navigate. She had a number of students who were highly disruptive and fed off each other to make the classroom a very difficult place in which to learn. Ms. Prince had to use multiple tools and ideas to keep her classroom under control and while it did not always work she had more success than the other third grade teachers who were handling similar classrooms. Ms. Prince tried multiple interventions for her students and she always adapted what she was trying to better meet the need of specific students rather than trying the same thing for multiple children. Additionally she had the benefit of getting to know her students well at the beginning of the year and so finding structures and routines that would work for their

personalities and work styles was a little easier for her. She committed to each intervention for between 4 and 6 weeks and did not try too many things at once, as she was very aware of overwhelming the students with too many different things. Once an intervention seemed to stop working or became less effective Ms. Prince would change it, or try something new entirely, and she was willing to admit when things she had created were no longer working as she had hoped.

In November Ms. Prince created point sheets for her students, shown in Figure 9, and used those to encourage positive behavior and keep track of negative behaviors. However, after she got back from an absence she noticed that the students seemed to be doing better without the point sheets. She considered that maybe the sheets were a constant reminder of times they had struggled and were becoming demotivating rather than a tool for encouragement for the students and so she decided to step back from using them to see how things developed without them. She told me:

> I don't know, I'm kind of curious now to know if the point sheets are making them more aware of their behavior and so causing them to act out more, or not do work more . . . I don't know if there's like a different mindset but I'm almost nervous to reintroduce the point sheets that I made. . . . Maybe it was a happy mistake that I haven't had their point sheets back to them.

This flexibility and willingness to change show not only that she was prioritizing what was best for the kids but also that she had enough knowledge of her classroom and the tools she could use for management that she could see when those tools were no longer serving their purpose.

Figure 9. A point sheet used by a student in Ms. Prince's class.

Student Perspectives

The students had less to say about Ms. Prince's level of competence in particular but they all remarked that their ideal teacher, or a teacher they had really liked in the past, could help them learn new things and teach them hard things. Mary said she would like a teacher, "that can help me," Solma wanted a teacher, "that helps everybody in class." Rose's ideal teacher was someone who was, "helpful" and Chloe liked the fact that Ms. Prince, ". . . before we do anything, she makes sure she explains it so we don't do it wrong . . . she also, if we're struggling, she'll help us. But she won't give us the answers, she'll just help us." All the students, therefore, recognized they wanted their teacher to be competent at teaching, but they did not get into specifics about what that might look like. Mary mentioned sometimes when she asked if a math answer was correct she had to wait because Ms. Prince had to take a minute to work out the answer, "Ms. Prince always has to figure everything out . . ." and that frustrated her. She believed Ms. Prince could not help her make friends because she had tried but she was unable to find people who were nice to Mary.

In his interview Jake commented he got into trouble sometimes. When I asked if he thought Ms. Prince was trying to help him behave in a better way next time or to improve his reactions to things he said yes. He seemed to understand Ms. Prince was doing things to help him succeed more in class. He was the only student who mentioned rewards he got for positive behavior even though he did not specifically refer to the use of points sheets. He told me though that he was able to earn iPad time for staying on task and was getting more iPad time in December than he had been at the beginning of the year. This shows he improved his on task behavior with the support of Ms. Prince.

Conclusion

In terms of professional practices in the classroom Ms. Prince had a lot of very solid skills and routines that made her a good teacher. She incorporated a lot of what she was taught in professional development classes into her teaching with intentionality and fidelity. Ms. Prince was always willing to try new instructional practices and be flexible and change them as and when she needed to. Ms. Prince had good practices when it came to teaching her students social and emotional regulation. She was consistent in providing feedback to students on how they were doing and she frequently modeled how students should respond to different situations and how they could manage their emotions. Mary was the only student who thought sometimes Ms. Prince showed less competence. If Mary asked Ms. Prince if she had an answer correct in her workbook Ms. Prince could not always tell her quickly, and sometimes had to stop and work it out herself before she was able to give feedback. I observed Ms. Prince using exemplars, prewritten answers to questions she would ask students that helped her see if they were correct or not quickly and efficiently, in literacy. I did not see her use them in math and so perhaps that

would have helped her be more responsive to Mary in a way that would give Mary more confidence in her.

With regards classroom management Ms. Prince did have some reliable and generally effective tools that she used with her class. However, the needs of this class pushed her to try a lot of new things and to navigate situations with students' behavior that were new to her. There were more students in the class who needed more behavior management than she was used to giving. This meant that her classroom management was probably the area in which she was less competent when compared to academic and social and emotional competence. In spite of this Ms. Prince tried to find support outside the classroom, like asking for support from the behavior interventionist, and educate herself quickly on how best to resolve these issues once she had reflected on the fact that this class needed more classroom management than her previous groups. Other than Jake, who talked about how he believed Ms. Prince was trying to help him behave better, none of the other students said anything about her classroom management. Even students who were receiving interventions, such as Mary or Arthur, did not talk about them in interviews. This could mean they either just did not think to mention them, or that the interventions were not as effective in helping the students recognize and manage their behavior as Ms. Prince thought.

In these first three facets of trust-building in order to create a positive relationship Ms. Prince herself felt that she had areas of strength and those things were confirmed either through my observations, or through student interviews, or both. The following areas of openness and honesty, however, were weaker, and either Ms. Prince acknowledged that in her interviews or I had noticed it in observation. It came out quite clearly here that there was a disconnect between what Ms. Prince thought she was doing in the classroom and how the children perceived what

she was doing, particularly among the group of students who had insecure attachments to begin with.

Openness

Openness involves reciprocal trust. It is the belief that information about either party will not be used against that party in the future. People who are guarded with the information they share may be seen to be untrustworthy as people wonder what they are trying to hide. Such people may be treated with suspicion and, in such circumstances, trust cannot grow (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). For a teacher, this could mean sharing appropriate aspects of her personal life with her students or being open about struggling with a new educational concept herself. In these cases, she is relying on her students not to use the little bit of information they have gained about her in a negative way. In a similar way to apologizing, teachers being open about their struggles, appropriately and professionally, make significant gains in deepening their trusting relationships with students.

Teacher Perspectives

Ms. Prince said in her interviews, and I observed in her classroom, that she did not often explain her reasoning behind specific decisions she made in the classroom unless there was a pushback or questioning from the whole group. In fact, she said she had responded to questions about why the students had to do things with, "Because." This response shut down any further conversation with the student and also reminded the student that the teacher was the one with all the power in the classroom. This approach seemed to be at odds with the care and attention to detail Ms. Prince showed in other areas of relationship-building but seemed to stem from a deeply held belief that as the teacher it was her job to tell students what to do and they should do it without argument. A lot of the time though, when students were asking for the reasons behind

things or why they had to do things, there was a genuine curiosity or confusion about what they were being asked to do. Although some students were using those questions to challenge Ms. Prince's authority, the majority were not, and shutting them all down, in the same way, led to some distrust amongst the students.

This lack of openness was apparent when Ms. Prince modified her approach to different students based on what they needed. While this practice was good and effective at showing how much she cared for those students, it leads other students to feel a lack of understanding. For example, if the class saw one student "getting away" with something that they knew they would get in trouble for, they would be confused and believe they were being treated unfairly. For example there was one student who often shouted out in class and after trying to remind him multiple time to raise his hand Ms. Prince decided to try something different and instead would just ignore his comments and call on someone who did have their hand raised. Ms. Prince of course intentionally ignored the behavior, however, because she did not explain that to her students they came up with their own ideas about why that student was being treated differently. This could be perceived by the children to be a lack of consistency or reliability as it meant in a small way they could not predict how Ms. Prince would react to something like shouting out. Ms. Prince stated she did not like to explain her thinking about those types of things because she did not want to single any child out, "I try to treat them the same . . . because I don't want them to feel different than everybody else." What she did not realize, however, was that the child was already being singled out by her treatment of him or her and that in the absence of an explanation from the teacher, the students were creating their own stories about why they were not being treated the same.

For students with secure attachments, they might have understood implicitly that they were all being treated differently based on what they needed because they knew that Ms. Prince cared about them all and loved them and so they would have no reason to be suspicious of her behavior. However, with students who had insecure attachments, certainly the three I spoke to and perhaps with a significant minority of the students in her class, this lack of openness led to them deciding they were treated differently because Ms. Prince did not like them as much, or thought they were less intelligent, or she was picking on them. They automatically attributed negative intent to Ms. Prince's actions and those feelings were allowed to fester and grow because Ms. Prince never explicitly explained herself.

Although she struggled with not explaining her thought process for decisions, Ms. Prince was open with the students about her own difficulties in school and how she had overcome them. She connected with her students on a personal level and was comfortable letting them see her as a full person rather than just a teacher. She would share stories about her family with her students and would use herself as an example of how to react when things went wrong or things were hard. It is sometimes difficult for teachers, especially new teachers, to walk this line of appropriate openness with students because of course some things should not be shared with students. However, opening up a little and appropriately so that students see their teachers as real people can be very effective. The line drawn is to not make students feel responsible for the teacher's emotional needs or regulation.

Ms. Prince walked this line exceptionally well after a family tragedy in November. She took two weeks off for bereavement leave after the death of her young grandchild. When she returned she was able to explain to her students what had happened, how it had affected her and her family, and how she was dealing with it. She was able to do all of this without ever making

the students feel they had to be responsible for helping her through this hard time, she was just sharing it as an important thing that had happened in her life. She also used it as an opportunity to model for the students that sometimes, things in our lives go very wrong, and yet we have to keep going and keep pushing forward. When recounting how she told them she said:

> Overall they did really great and I said, 'Well we have to keep moving forward.' I was a little bit nervous, but I knew they wanted to know . . . to be a real person with them, in one way, like 'hey this is life. Life just happened to Ms. Prince and it wasn't fun, and I don't feel good about it.' And I said . . . 'It's just the way it is.'" Her willingness and ability to be open about the situation with her students led to a greater understanding between them.

Student Perspectives

The students did not voluntarily mention any instances of Ms. Prince being open with them or sharing aspects about her life with them, although that clearly did happen. None of them said they wanted to know the reasons behind certain decisions or consequences, however, when Mary, Nora, and Arthur talked about things they perceived as unfair it was clear they believed they were being treated unfairly because they did not understand the reasons for the way the teacher was treating them. Part of this is that they are not considering the teacher's side of things, which is not too surprising given their age, but part of the problem is that Ms. Prince and other teachers they encountered did not explain themselves at all and so the students were left to fill in the gaps. Because Mary, Arthur, and Nora all had insecure attachments they filled in those gaps with phrases such as, "She doesn't like me," "She is always picking on me," and "I can't do anything right." These perceptions of how they are being treated by teachers are very damaging to the ongoing relationship the teacher is trying to build with these students because it is setting them up to regard every action from their teacher as coming from a place of dislike.

Conclusion

On a personal level Ms. Prince tried to be very open with her students and wanted them to be open with her. She shared stories about her life and how she had struggled in elementary school. She asked students about their home lives and was interested when they told her things they had done on the weekend. However when it came to her professional practices Ms. Prince did not spend much time explaining her reasoning behind her decisions. Ms. Prince did carefully consider every action she took in the classroom and always had reasoning behind how she was treating students, or how she was reacting to behaviors, or why she was changing up her instructional practices. She just did not share that reasoning with the students. Because the students did not know or realize that she had put a lot of consideration into the things she did they had to come up with their own conclusions. For students who trusted Ms. Prince they assumed she was doing things for the right reasons and because it would benefit the class as a whole, or they just didn't even give it much thought. However, for students who did not trust Ms. Prince or who were predisposed to have insecure attachments this lack of openness led to some distrust and suspicion about why students were being treated differently. Their assumed a more negative intent from Ms. Prince which was detrimental to their overall relationship with her.

If Ms. Prince had shared some of her thinking it would have reassured the students who were more inclined to distrust her that she was doing things for the right reasons. She would not necessarily have to explain everything, and she would not explaining as a way to open up her choices to arguments or in order to justify herself. She would have just been shedding more light on why things in her classroom were the way they were and taking some of the mystery out of it for students who maybe already felt insecure.

Honesty

Honesty involves a commitment that statements made are truthful and conform to what really happened, at least from the individual's perspective. It is an assumption that if promises or arrangements are made, they will be kept. There has to be a harmony between what people say and what they do to convey an honest character

(Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Teachers could be seen to be honest if they agreed to tutor a child at lunchtime and kept that appointment. Teachers can also show honesty by acknowledging mistakes. For example, if a teacher speaks to a child impatiently and the child is upset, the teacher can listen to the child's version of events and apologize rather than dismissing them.

Teacher Perspectives

Ms. Prince strived to remain honest with her students as much as possible. Her aim was to follow through on everything she said she was going to do, "I work really hard not to do that (not following through with consequences) I'm sure I have, I give them way too many chances." In observations as well I noticed that often she would tell a student that they were on their last warning, or that they would not get redirected again, and then she would give them another chance or another redirection. It seemed that at the beginning of the year when Ms. Prince used countdowns to get the students ready to work quickly she would hold them to the countdown, as the year went on, however, she would still do the countdown but would then start teaching regardless of whether the whole class was ready or not. Similarly with the expectations and routines, at the beginning of the year, Ms. Prince waited and repeated things until everyone in the class was doing it. She would insist on 100% no matter what. This was a phrase used commonly in the school to mean that all students are doing exactly what they need to be doing at all times with no exceptions. As the year went on, even though most of the time she still insisted on

everyone following directions all the time, sometimes she let it slip and accepted students not being in line properly, or not raising their hands, or wandering out of their seats. In the context of a classroom this variability on what expectations she was going to follow through on and which ones she would let slide led to a disconnect between what she said she expected, and what she actually accepted. This is a form of dishonesty when looked at in a classroom context.

The other part of honesty between teachers and students is the idea that teachers will make statements that are truthful and conform to what actually happened. I found this to be an area with a lot of discrepancy between what students perceived and what Ms. Prince was intending to do. Ms. Prince had to redirect a lot of behaviors in her classroom and while she tried to be evenhanded and fair she did not always get things right. There were times when she would make a mistake in regards to which student was acting out, and in those cases, if she did not pick up on the mistake and apologize it could have left a feeling of distrust behind.

The other difficulty that lies within this idea of honesty is that, even when Ms. Prince did not make a mistake and rightly corrected off-task or disruptive behavior, if the student did not accept that they were in the wrong, then the outcome of distrust remained the same. Ms. Prince recognized this disconnect in one student in particular and tried to address it with him. Whenever she would redirect him, even for something minor, he would immediately deny it without even thinking about it. Once Ms. Prince noticed this ongoing pattern she talked to him about it. "You are lying to yourself and then lying to me about it. But really you're trying to convince yourself that you weren't doing anything wrong out of a coping mechanism to not get in trouble." Once she had explained what she was seeing him do, and what she believed was causing it, this student's knee jerk reaction to deny his behaviors improved slightly. However, if there were

other students in the class who felt the same way, but were not as vocal about it, they did not get the same benefit of having their behaviors and Ms. Princes reaction explained to them. This area seemed to be the one where perception mattered most of all and the difference in perception between the teacher and the students was starkly obvious.

Finally, Ms. Prince was always very willing to apologize to her students if she made a mistake, "And I will totally have no problem apologizing." She recalled an incident when a student told her in the hallway he had forgotten his homework folder. Once they got into class and she was checking homework she forgot he had told her that and asked to see it, he told her again that he had left it at home and reminded her he had told her outside. Ms. Prince apologized for not remembering. Ms. Prince has told her students multiple times that she makes mistakes too and is not perfect, "I tell them all the time, I make mistakes too." Once again Ms. Prince owning her mistakes and being quick to take responsibility and apologize is modeling very effective behavior for her students.

Within Ms. Prince's classroom she had a small but significant group who displayed insecure attachments and externalizing behavior making her job of building relationships with them all the more difficult, but much more necessary. Three of those students participated in this study however they were not the only students who showed these behaviors in the room. The pressure and stress that building relationships like this can have on the teacher should not be overlooked. Continually trying to chip away at students who are fighting to not have a relationship or who are perceiving everything you do to be coming from a negative place is extremely draining, "Some days I am just worn out mentally, physically and emotionally." Because balancing these relationships takes so much emotion it is hard to separate out the personal from the professional with the students sometimes which can lead to student failures or

acting out to feel personal. Ms. Prince commented in her interviews that she was struggling more than she had in any previous years, she said, "It's been tough. It's probably been one of my toughest years. Like I said I already cried once, I'm so tired." Ms. Prince was also at a disadvantage as she was building relationships in the way that felt natural to her, which is how most teachers approach this aspect of teaching, and it had been effective for her in the past. This meant that when things were going badly Ms. Prince was not always aware of why, and without that knowledge, she continued to engage in behaviors that lead some of her students to distrust her.

Student Perspectives

The four students I interviewed who had secure attachments and had had good experiences in school did not have much to say about the level of honesty they perceived in their teachers. However, the three who had insecure attachments all mentioned teachers had reported behavior or reprimanded them for behavior that they had not been engaging in.

Mary talked about this the most and said it had happened with former teachers as well. She referenced her teacher from second grade and said she was telling her mom things that were untrue:

> They just keep telling my mom everything that I didn't do. Because Ms. Beech (second grade teacher) told my Mom that I keep saying bad words, but I had never said bad words ever, I never said bad words in my life.

Mary either truly believed she had never done anything wrong that she was getting into trouble for or she had convinced herself of that fact. Either way, even though her perception of how she was treated was skewed by her own lack of self-awareness, it still led to a breakdown in her relationships with teachers and still caused tension between her and Ms. Prince. Mary's inability to understand and acknowledge her own behavior was definitely a sticking point when Ms.

Prince was trying to build trust with her. If Ms. Prince had been aware of this disconnect between what was happening in reality in the classroom and what Mary was thinking had happened she might have had more success in addressing that.

Although Nora did not mention issues with Ms. Prince, she did talk about another teacher who she believed treated her unfairly. The situation was quite similar to Mary's in that Nora believed she got into trouble a lot when the teacher did not understand what had actually happened and was dishonest in how she portrayed Nora's behavior. For Nora, the example she gave was when she was working and asked another group of girls to be quiet. She got into trouble for talking and the girls who had been talking to start with did not get into trouble, "I tell them to be quiet, but then I'm the one that gets in trouble because it looks like I'm talking but I'm telling them please be quiet." Using the phrase, 'it looks like I'm talking' to describe what is happening here shows that Nora really does not think the teacher understands the full situation or that the teacher just picks on her instead of the other girls and lets the other girls, "get away with it." Of course, in this case, Nora really was talking too, she had to speak to ask the other group to be quiet, and so to the teacher, it looks like she is talking because she is talking. However, Nora's perception of the situation is focused more on the other girls and their behavior than her own. Again this situation was one that probably had happened in every elementary school classroom at one time or another, and as a one-off situation, it probably would not affect the relationship between a teacher and a student too much, and in a student with secure attachments perhaps they would see that the teacher made an honest mistake. The difference in this instance though was that Nora generally has insecure attachments and so with a teacher she did not know as well as Ms. Prince she did not feel comfortable enough to explain to the teacher what had really happened. She told me she did not explain herself to the teacher because she believed she would

still be in trouble anyway and so there was no point. In this situation, Nora expressed a lack of trust that her bringing a mistake to the teacher's attention would lead to a positive outcome, "If I went up to her and told her it wasn't me, that I was trying to tell them to be quiet, I feel like they would also get in trouble, but I'm still in trouble."

Arthur expressed frustration primarily with a lack of perceived honesty on the part of his peers. He talked about how he would try and makes jokes to his classmates and they would 'tattle' on him for being mean even though he was not being mean, "There have been a few times where people are just telling on me for things they shouldn't tell on me. Like sometimes when I make a joke and they think I'm not making a joke." In turn, the teacher would believe the other students and Arthur would get into trouble. Once again this disconnect between what the students think has happened and what the teacher believes has happened leads to a feeling of distrust towards the teacher.

Conclusion

The biggest thing that lead to a breakdown in trust between Ms. Prince and her students was the students perception that they were sometimes blamed for things they did not do. This problem is not unique to Ms. Princes classroom and this aspect of honesty is probably the most difficult to get right in a classroom. If something happens in the classroom, such as a student talking out of turn, there are going to be two different versions of what happened. The first is from the teacher's perspective; the student was talking out of turn and perhaps this is the fifth or sixth time she has had to ask the class for quiet so she is quite curt when telling the student to stop. The next was from the talkers perspective; they were justified in some way for talking, or it was the first time they had spoken all day, and the teacher overreacted by snapping at them.

Unless the teacher and the student can come to some honest agreement about what happened this can lead to a breakdown in trust.

The perception of honesty can be bolstered by teachers explaining their thinking to students, not just in the moment but at other times throughout the year. Teachers can tell students that sometimes they might be incorrect when they redirect a student and that it is an honest mistake and they will always apologize, this is something Ms. Prince was very willing to do. Teachers can explain to students that there are a lot of them and only one of her and so while it might be the first time that student has acted out, from the teachers point of view it is one more thing on top of a pile of other things that have happened in the classroom that day. Teachers of course should always strive to react to everything in the classroom based on its own merits but, in reality, that will not always happen. If teachers take the time to explain this to their students, it could help ameliorate some of the sting when a student feels they have been treated unfairly or accused of something they did not do.

For students like Mary, where she believes she has never done anything she has been accused of, this would be a much longer process and would probably need to involve some outside support to help her with her own self-reflection, but for most students just hearing their teachers explanation and seeing that they are willing to apologies when they are wrong would go a long way towards building that perception of honesty.

It was the goal of this research to discover and explain teacher actions that help to build and maintain relationships, but to explain the students' thought processes a little better. I believe through the student data collected more clarity was given to the actions teachers take that unintentionally undermine the work they are putting in to build positive relationships with their students.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the data collected during research and explained the patterns found in relation to each facet of trust; benevolence, reliability, competence, openness, and honesty. A qualitative case study approach was used and data were collected from research observations, teacher interviews, student interviews, and artifact collection. The data collected showed that, while the teacher valued building relationships in her classroom and was strong in the areas of benevolence, reliability, and competence, she was weaker in the areas of openness and honesty. The teacher recognized she was not always very open with her students, however, she believed she was very honest with them.

The student participants broke into two groups; those with secure attachments and those with insecure attachments caused by previous negative experiences either at home or at school. The students who had secure attachments perceived their teacher's actions in the same way the teacher did. They believed she was strong in benevolence and reliability and could speak clearly to that. Although the students did not mention specific examples of competence, openness, or honesty, overall they had positive relationships with their teacher.

The group of students who had insecure attachments had more differences between how they perceived actions in the classroom and what the teacher intended. Although they agreed with the other group of students that their teacher was benevolent and reliable, they spoke at length about the lack of openness and honesty in the classroom. One student who has had past struggles in school every year perceived the teacher to be lacking in every area other than benevolence, while the other two only had negative things to say regarding openness and honesty.

       Chapter V further discusses these results in relation to the research questions, the implications and limitations of the research, and the opportunities for further research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study used a case study approach in order to better understand how a teacher built and maintained positive relationships with her students in a Title 1 school and how her actions were perceived by her students and the students' overall perception of their relationship with their teacher. This study aimed to better explicate and understand how teachers can build relationships with students who come from a background of poverty and are, therefore, more likely to have insecure attachments and be more difficult to build a relationship with (Howes & Ritchie, 1999; Hughes et al., 2001; Myers & Pianta, 2008; Thijs & Fleischmann, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Given the importance of relationship-building to student's success, academically, emotionally, and socially, having more information on how to build these relationships could be crucial for teachers in Title 1 schools.

This chapter discusses the research questions and the implications of the study. I then addressed the limitations of the study and opportunities for future research.

Discussion and Implications

It became clear throughout this research that the teacher, Ms. Prince, valued relationships with her students and did her best to build positive relationships with them. However, sometimes her actions were not perceived by the students in the way she intended them. In fact, some of her actions directly undermined her attempts to build those relationships. It is not enough that the teacher acts in such a way to promote trust these actions must be recognized as such by the

students for trust to be established and maintained (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Russell et al., 2016).

Ms. Prince had an incomplete understanding of all the aspects that made up a positive, trusting relationship and, therefore, had areas in which she was lacking which affected the overall relationships she had. The areas where she was less strong, openness, and honesty, seemed to have the most detrimental impact on her relationships with students who had insecure attachments. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) found, "Among teachers and principals, all aspects of trust seem to carry significant importance; that is, benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness all come together" (p. 558).

Overall it seemed that Ms. Prince managed to build generally positive relationships with children by acting in ways she felt were right which just so happened to coincide with the actions needed to build some trust between teachers and students. However, if she had had more knowledge of all the aspects of trust and how to build them and worked on those things intentionally rather than just coincidentally, her relationships with students could have been much more powerful.

Research Question 1

Q1   What are the ways in which a teacher builds positive relationships with upper elementary students in poverty at the beginning of the school year?

Ms. Prince allowed each of her students to begin the year with a blank slate. She took the time in the first few weeks of school to build routines and procedures and insisted on 100% from her students at all times. Redirections were made in a clear kind voice and she did not lose her patience or show frustration with her students when they did not meet her expectations or had to practice multiple times. Ms. Prince treated all of her students in a positive way and made a point to give them the benefit of the doubt in those first few weeks and assume positive intent.

Extending them this courtesy and trust encouraged the students to reciprocate. Students who observe and believe their teachers to be trustworthy are more likely to exhibit trustworthy behavior themselves (Corrigan et al., 2010). Generally, students who are trusting, also end up being very trustworthy and the same holds true for children who struggle to trust others (Deutsch, 1958).

Ms. Prince treated included families in her process of getting to know the students in order to make them feel included and get their voices heard. Her mindset was that she and the parents were on the same team and she used information from home to adjust her style for students that needed it. When teachers' behaviors are seen to be motivated by the students' best interests conflicts that sometimes arise between students and teachers or parents and teachers are more easily navigated. As everyone has the same intent at heart, any miscommunication can be addressed, and the assumption that everyone is working toward what is best for the child can help alleviate some of those tensions (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Russell et al., 2016).

As Ms. Prince got to know the students and their families she provided plenty of time for the students to get know each other through games at the beginning of the year and then as time went on through encouraging them to participate with students they had not worked with before or students who were in a different row or part of the class. This level of trust served the students well in social interactions that required cooperation and interdependence, and students who have high trust relationships with their teachers are more likely to be prosocial towards their peers (Murray & Greenberg, 2000). Prosocial behavior is crucial for children to facilitate friendships and create a strong friendship group within the peers in their classroom (Copeland-Mitchell et al., 1997; Johnson-George & Swap, 1982). Ms. Prince stated the year with high expectations and with the assumption that the students could achieve at those high levels. By doing this she

allowed her students the opportunity to do things right by themselves without her having to force it from the beginning. She intentionally showed them that trust and respect to reinforce the idea that this was a new year and they could begin fresh with her as their teacher.

This relationship building period at the beginning of the year is key and shows the importance of allowing teachers the time and tools necessary to work with their students at the beginning of each school year on activities which build routines, expectations, relationships, and trust rather than diving right into academics. In the school observed the teachers used learning targets and measurement topics created by Marzano research (Simms, 2016). This research, as outlined in the whitepaper written by Simms, found teachers often got overwhelmed with the amount of content they had to teach and that throughout students K-12 careers there were about 15,000 hours of work necessary to cover each topic in the learning standards adequately (as estimated by teachers) and optimistically students would spend about 9,000 hours through their K-12 career learning. Clearly the research found teachers are expected to cover more material than there is time for. Because of this mismatch teachers often feel pressure to dive right into academics and do not spend the necessary time getting to know their students, building up classroom community, and teaching, reviewing, and practicing routines and procedures. When these things do not get addressed in-depth at the beginning of the school year the teacher is then forced to reset expectations repeatedly throughout the year leading to the amount of accumulated time wasted to be greater than the time they could have spent at the beginning making sure those things were strong.

Teachers may have not received much instruction, either in college prep classes or in ongoing professional development, about ways to build relationships with students past certain 'getting to know you' games and activities. Ms. Prince told me she had only attended one

professional development class on building relationships with students and as that class was offered to only building leadership teams not all teachers were given the opportunity to attend. Teachers need to receive explicit instruction in not only what key components of positive relationships look like but, in the case of teachers in Title 1 schools, where their students are coming from and why it might be harder to build relationships with them. If students come from a family dealing with poverty, they could have insecure attachments with their parents, and this can lead to them having distrustful internal working models of relationships with adults (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; O'Connor et al., 2012). These models can make it much harder for teachers to establish positive relationships with students, but it is crucial for students' success, as positive relationships can have mediating effects on the other challenges that could leave students vulnerable to academic failure.

Teachers are unlikely to enter schools with a theoretical knowledge of the effect of poverty on children or the different attachment styles children come into the classroom with unless they made a specific effort to focus on that during their own education. Ms. Prince received her bachelor's degree in Biology and her teacher license later in 2015 so during her education she did not get specific instruction on the effect of poverty on children or on teaching in general. Yet the effect that poverty has on school achievement is profound. The low-income background some students come from can cause negative student behavior. Dodge et al. (1994) found, "The relation between social disadvantage and behavior problems appears to be a linear one; that is, the risk of behavior problems and the mean behavior problem score increase linearly with decreasing SES, and deviations from linearity were nonsignificant" (p. 661).

Therefore, it was crucial that this information and learning was given to teachers in order to extend their knowledge and their abilities to make connections and build relationships with

students in poverty. Having more information about why some of their students have insecure attachments, and then what that leads to in terms of students being more resistant to teachers connecting with them, would give teachers more tools to approach their students.

Understanding the components that go into creating trust and, therefore, building a positive relationship with students; benevolence, reliability, competence, openness, and honesty, would give teachers a chance to self-reflect on which aspects they believe they are strong in and which aspects might be weaker. If teachers do not know what specific things build trust then they cannot correct their own actions that might be destroying trust and they cannot build upon actions that are creating that trust effectively. Trust has been found to have a mediating effect on achievement even when students come from a high poverty background that would typically put them at risk for academic failures. It is necessary then to look closer at how teachers build trust with their students so that these positive outcomes can perhaps be replicated for more students (Goddard et al., 2001; Haberman, 2010; Wallenstein, 2012).

In short, teachers need to have much more information available to them about the myriad ways they can build positive relationships with their students to be more successful at it. The more informed they are the more intentional they can be in their practice and the more success they will have when building relationships with students in poverty.

Research Question 2

Q2   How does the teacher maintain positive relationships?

Maintaining trust is a little easier than establishing trust; however, actions need to be consistent and time is crucial. Trust grows out of repeated social exchanges that conform to expected behavior for the role the individual has (Adams & Forsyth, 2013). For example, a

teacher who repeatedly showed that she put her students first and reliably acted in their best interests would build trust with students, other teachers, and parents.

Ms. Prince was very strong in the areas of benevolence, reliability, and competence and these things helped her to maintain her relationships with her students. As the year went on she continued to show them how much she cared about them by adjusting her teaching based on what they needed. Ms. Prince changed and implemented interventions that were tailored to individual students. Ms. Prince showed the students she noticed and cared about their emotional state by greeting them all individually at the door and she took care to notice how they looked and what their demeanor was on entering the classroom. From there she consistently would make the time to check in with them later in the day to talk or just to give them a hug and some reassurance if they did not want to share why they were upset. Open communication is a hallmark of responsiveness, and research has found even if students themselves were not particularly responsive, they reported feeling high levels of trust in teachers who recognized their needs and desires (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Wooten & McCroskey, 1996).

Ms. Prince ended each day with a hug, handshake, or high five at the door and made sure each student knew that they were still loved and appreciated no matter how their day had gone. Tschannen-Moran (2001) referred to this development of trust, from trust based on a person's actions to trust based on knowing the person better, as knowledge-based trust. She notes that it is based on people knowing each other and feeling able to predict how one will act in different situations. Reliability in previous actions leads to assumptions of positive intentions in subsequent actions, because the students had seen Ms. Prince check in on them whenever they were upset, and she ended every day in a predictable and caring way, they began to trust her based on an assumption of continued benevolence and reliability. Tschannen-Moran (2001)

pointed out that trust could then become self-sustaining as people react in cooperative ways and the cycle of trust continues.

Ms. Prince made it clear to students that they would start each day fresh and could always fix any mistakes they made. She explicitly taught students how to communicate with each other in order to encourage peer accountability and promote a sense of community in her classroom. Ms. Prince's class was on a very regular schedule with regular teaching practices used throughout the day. Her expectations throughout the year remained the same and the routines and procedures that were practiced at the beginning of the year were used throughout the semester. Granting rewards for appropriate behavior consistently and following through on promises with actions all communicate reliability on the part of the teacher (Russell et al., 2016). Unfortunately, too many strict rules and regulations can demonstrate distrust, but students thrive on structure and predictability, and so there is a careful line to walk. It is important to note that the way in which these expectations and guidelines are introduced and referred to, as a preventative measure rather than a punishment, helps students understand the intention behind them. Ms. Prince could have spent more time on these introductions and explanations to build more trust among the students who just saw them as punishments.

Ms. Prince used best practices in the classroom such as aggressive monitoring, insisting on full participation, and using exemplars to track student work (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2016). She also showed good content knowledge and was able to help the students with things they did not understand. Ms. Prince's excitement about teaching certain topics led to more engagement from the students. Ladson-Billings (1995) explained teachers who showed a passion for what they were teaching and taught it with enthusiasm and vitality were looked upon with more trust by

their students. These teachers could also spot skills deficiencies in their students and worked with the students to fill those gaps and help them continue to succeed.

Maintaining trust requires consistency and time and while it is easier than building trust in the first place it still requires an ongoing, conscious effort by teachers to keep their relationships with students strong. Ennis and McCauley (2002) pointed out that, "The climate of trust developed in this relationship, and every trusting relationship, is affected by the trusting persons' satisfaction with past experiences and the length of time in which parties have been involved in a trusting association" (p. 150).

As trust grows and is developed in a relationship, people tend to start viewing the actions of the people they trust in a more positive light because they have come to believe that the other person has their wellbeing at heart (Rempel et al., 2001). Therefore, students who trust their teachers are likely to interpret teacher's actions positively, even if the actions in question are ambiguous or the intention is unknown. This means that teachers will be more able to differentiate for students without other members of the class feeling that the difference in treatment is unfair. Instead, they will trust that their teacher is doing what is best for students based on their past experiences and growing trust.

Ms. Prince, for example, did not know that her lack of openness and honesty with her students was undermining all the great work she did in showing them benevolence and reliability and being competent in her job. Because she did not know where her own gaps were she could not fill those gaps. And just as students who trust their teachers will assume positive intent, students who do not trust their teacher swill assume the opposite as was seen in Nora, Mary, and Arthur's recollection of unfair treatment in the classroom.

Teachers at the beginning of the year in this district are encouraged to make time to check in with their students, however, as the year goes on those activities and conversations die down and give way to purely academics. As is shown in the district calendar for math content the first week of school is reserved for beginning of the year activities and 'week of inspiration' which is not academic content but instead is math work students can do in teams to build a classroom community (District 6 3rd Grade Math CG Coversheet, 2019). However, as the year goes on teachers may feel a time crunch with getting through everything (Simms, 2016) and, although Ms. Prince did a wonderful job of making time for students who were visibly struggling, she did not make the same time for students who were just quietly observing things in the classroom and coming up with their own conclusions about why things were the way they were.

It would be helpful for teachers to make more of a habit or consistent practice of eliciting feedback from their students about their own performance. Anonymous surveys would be an effective way to do this. The school that Ms. Prince taught did give the students in third through fifth grades a survey once a year but the results were not reviewed unless the teacher made a special effort to dive into them, action plans were not made from the results, and the survey was given just once. If this became more of a routine practice teachers could perhaps course correct faster and address issues in their own teaching and approach in the classroom that were damaging to their relationships with students.

Finally, teachers need to understand they are always maintaining relationships with their students. Every single interaction with a student, every time the teacher enters the classroom, looks around the room, shows different facial expressions, has conversations within earshot of the students, all of these are opportunities to either make the relationship stronger or damage it. It

takes a long time for trust to be built up and it relies on consistent positive outcomes and reassurance of benevolent intent (Rempel et al., 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Too many teachers believe they do not have time to build strong relationships with their students because they have to cover so many academic standards (Sturgis & Abel, 2017). However, relationship building happens within all of those things as well as before and after (Kratzer, 1997). Teachers sometimes forget that they are the focus of the room. The classroom can be a reflection of a teacher's mood, as Ms. Prince found when she was struggling and impatient some weeks, her kids began to struggle and be frustrated too. This means that there is great importance in everything teachers do, whether intentional or not, and they have to be cognizant of that and careful with what they do with that power. Many researchers have noted that trust, although it is hard to establish and difficult to maintain, is extremely easy to break. Trust can be destroyed with a comment, a betrayed confidence, or an unwise decision that violates the expectation of care (Baier, 1986; Rempel et al., 1985; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Because trust is so easy to break, teachers need to be prudent with how they handle frustrations and disappointment in classrooms, especially if they teach children who are more likely to have insecure attachments and are, therefore, more likely to read negative intent into actions which are perhaps neutral at best and careless at worst.

Research Question 3

Q3   How do students perceive their relationships with their teachers?

In general, all the students indicated that they liked Ms. Prince and even Mary, who has had difficulties with every teacher said things this year were going better than they had before. The students were confident that Ms. Prince cared about them and loved them. The students who had secure attachments, Rose, Solma, Jake, and Chloe all indicated general happiness at school

and seemed to perceive more positive intent from their teachers. None of them mentioned 'unfair' behavior from their teachers and none of them used language such as getting "picked on" or "blamed" by their teacher.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) listed actions that could cause distrust including public criticism, incorrect or unfair accusations, and insults. Being the victim of unjust or public criticism also leads to a breakdown of trust. Students who are criticized in front of the class experience a breakdown of the personal safety and security they have come to expect in the classroom. Once this has happened, it takes a very long time for the students to take such a risk and put themselves out there again and the trust in the relationship is ruined either permanently or for an extended period. Mary, Arthur, and Nora all had insecure attachments and they focused a lot more on perceived 'unfair' behaviors in their interviews. They all reported getting into trouble for things they did not do which indicates a lack of honesty in their minds on the teacher's part and could be caused by a lack of openness. Because they did not understand why they were treated in certain ways, which were sometimes different from other students, they filled in the narrative themselves usually with a perceived negative intent on the part of the teacher. These beliefs of negative feelings the teacher had towards them then became the lens through which all interactions were seen and slowly this undermined the relationships that Ms. Prince was trying to build.

Controlling actions such as withdrawal of privileges, dismissal from the classroom, suspensions, and expulsions all convey distrust and domination. In situations such as these, it becomes more important for teachers to demonstrate their power and control than their trust (Ennis & McCauley, 2002). Rules are seen as a substitute for trust and a means of keeping people in line. Frequent attempts to completely control students' behavior can hinder the

development of a relationship and damage efforts to promote a positive school environment for students (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Without trust, teachers attempt to control students with threats or incentives, neither of which help the student develop self-regulation and control and send the message that the student cannot be expected to demonstrate integrity or do the right thing unless there is some external gratification (Adams & Forsyth, 2013). Depending on the age of the student external motivation is entirely appropriate, however, once again it needs to be used in a preventative capacity rather than as a punishment or a demonstration of authority.

As the year went on and Ms. Prince struggled more and more with some students' behavior she moved further into this area of controlling her students with strict rules and consequences, including withdrawal of privileges, removal from the classroom, and suspensions, because she did not trust her students. With the small group of students Ms. Prince struggled the most with her lack of trust in them became apparent to the students through the measures she used to control them and facilitated an even faster breakdown in trust between them. This lack of trust leads to less autonomy in the classroom and, therefore, fewer opportunities for the students to engage in meaningful learning. The research showed this lack of independence could lead to more student disruptions as they revolt against lessons that do not reflect their own lives in any way and are perceived to be boring. These ongoing disruptions can lead teachers to feel the need to enforce even tighter control, however, teacher-directed pedagogy and strict disciplinary attitudes communicate the message that students are not trusted. (Haberman, 2010; Hatton et al., 1996; Margonis, 2004; Russell et al., 2016).

In general, the relationships between Ms. Prince and her students seemed to be lacking in openness and honesty. I did not observe any instances of openness and honesty from the teacher

and when it was mentioned in the teacher interviews it was with non-examples, such as Ms. Prince saying she did not explain her thinking behind decisions she made in the classroom. The students did not talk about any examples of openness and again only gave non-examples of honesty, such as them perceiving Ms. Princes version of events to be untrue if they got into trouble. This, of course, did not mean that openness and honest were not happening, as it could be hard to observe in short visits to the classroom because these actions were observed through follow-through, which would need to be monitored over a length of time. However, Ms. Prince admitted to not explaining why she chooses to do certain things sometimes, using the phrase "because I said so." This can lead to tension with students who are already predisposed to distrust her. Ms. Prince admitted to having some trouble following through with consequences, although it is something she is working on, and this lack of "honesty" and kids not always being able to confidently predict what will happen when they act out could be leading to some uncertainty in the classroom. Ms. Prince indicated a lack of openness with students for fear of "singling students out" when, in fact, it could help make choices clearer and mean students understand why some kids get to do things that they could not get away with.

It seems that students can believe two seemingly opposite things at once; they can believe that their teacher cares about them while still not fully trusting their teachers. For teachers who have had secure attachments their whole lives this duality is hard to understand. Because most teachers are white, middle class, females, they may not have had the same lived experiences as many of their children, especially if a majority of their students have grown up in poverty or are not white (Riser-Kositsky, 2019). Because of this there could be an almost unconscious narrative in their minds about how students should view teachers and a belief that if they care about their students that is enough to have a positive relationship with them. From the research, it is clear

that that is not always true as Ms. Prince cared about her students, but they did not all feel that their relationship with her was always positive. Students with insecure attachments are used to the people who care about them, and they care about, being unreliable so they apply that same expectation to their relationships with teachers (Myers & Pianta, 2008). If teachers understood more about the effect of insecure attachments on their students they could find ways to improve the level of trust in the relationship rather than relying on 'care' or 'love' to make the relationship work.

Teachers need to have more understanding of the fact that their relationships with their students are two-way streets and reciprocal. Teachers take actions that they believe will help to maintain relationships with their students, but if those actions are not received in that way by the student then they have wasted that time. Teachers need to practice a lot of self-reflection and have a lot of self-awareness to acknowledge that some of the things they are doing, with perhaps the best intentions, are actually creating problems in their relationships with students. This realization also requires a lack of defensiveness on the part of the teacher and a willingness to remove themselves from the very personal parts of building relationships to take a critical look at their practice and evaluate it honestly. Viewing relationship building as a professional practice, just like improving instruction or using data more effectively, could help teachers analyze and self-correct more often and lead to better relationships with students. Ms. Prince was very self-reflective and thought about her professional practices and the way she approached her students a lot. However she did not often ask for their perspectives on her actions and when students viewed her actions as unfair or questioned her she sometimes leant on her authority as the teacher, saying things like, "because I said so" or "because I'm the teacher", rather than taking the time to explain herself.

Research Question 4

Q4   From the students' perspective in what ways does the teacher build positive relationships with her students?

The students all referenced the fact that Ms. Prince would notice if they were upset or worried about something and would try to help them with it. It was clearly an action she took that stood out for the students and was meaningful to them. She built relationships with them by getting to know them and their lives outside of school. The students all appreciated the fact that Ms. Prince was reliable and that routines and procedures in their classroom were predictable. They talked about the fact that Ms. Prince could teach them new things, could help them when they got stuck, and would encourage them to keep trying when things were difficult. Although sometimes Arthur and Mary indicated frustration when they did not get the help they wanted right away or when something was 'too hard' the other students appreciated that Ms. Prince was giving them just enough help that they would have a productive struggle. Above all the students were all confident in their belief that Ms. Prince cared about them.

The students had little knowledge of everything that Ms. Prince attempted to do to build relationships with them. It seems that a lot of the intentional actions teachers take to build relationships are not recognized as such by students although they do recognize the effects. The students knew that they cared about Ms. Prince and cared about them, some of them even characterized their relationship with her as "good" but they did not mention any specific actions she took beyond checking in on them if they were sad. This implies that they do not have a full appreciation perhaps for all that teachers do to get to know them and strengthen their relationships. If teachers were clearer about the reasons behind their actions then it could serve to convince students of how hard they are trying and, with knowledge of the effort their teachers are making, students might be more inclined to appreciate those efforts. Knowing that someone

is working very hard for them is a great way of convincing students that their teachers believe they are worth the effort and worth the time which could lead to more understanding between students and teachers and a stronger, more trusting relationship. This is a further extension of openness between teachers and students. Teachers should feel comfortable enough, and see the value in, telling their students that they want to have a strong relationship with them in order to help them.

The downside to this sort of openness is teachers and students blurring the lines between having a strong relationship and having a "friendship". The difference being in this case that a friendship does not serve the needs of students in their relationship with their teachers. Effective teachers are not friends with their students. Teachers need to be able to discipline their students, to make them do things they do not always want to do, and this means they have to be very specific about what their end goal in a positive relationship with a student is. There is also a power differential in student-teacher relationships that must be recognized and not exploited. Teachers should not be aiming for their students to like them, as this leaves them open to all sorts of missteps and risks them mishandling situations or not being as strict as they should be for fear of upsetting their students. Margonis (2004) talked about this pitfall when he recounted a teacher's early attempts to circumvent his student's disaffected attitudes by becoming friends with them. He managed to improve their attitudes in the classroom, but no academic growth was made, and because he had given up his power in the relationship the teacher could not demand academic excellence. Teachers can, and should, love, trust, and respect their students, but they cannot, and should not, be their friends. Ms. Prince was good at walking this line and she did not shy away from having difficult conversations with her students for fear of them disliking her. She was able to open up with her students about some things in her personal life, like when she

lost her grandson, without blurring those boundaries or making the students feel as if she needed their emotional support.

Teachers sometimes have to make choices that can lead their students to dislike them. The fear of having negative interactions with students that will destroy the relationship can lead newer teachers to potentially try and avoid difficult conversations or holding students to high expectations (Hatton et al., 1996). However, there needs to be the understanding that having negative interactions, having consequences, and having difficult conversations with students, is all a part of building positive relationships and trust. In some extreme cases, teachers will have to explicitly break the trust a student has placed in them, in the case of child abuse reporting or similar situations. On the surface, these actions can be seen to be the opposite of building and maintaining positive relationships but again, the students' best interests are in the teacher's heart and with the right amount of openness and honesty about the situation, and with a strong relationship to begin from, student and teacher relationships can survive even the worst-case scenarios.

Conclusion

Teachers in Title I schools need to have a thorough understanding of how living in poverty might affect their students' attachment styles and in turn how that affects their students' expectations of adults when coming in to school. With this knowledge teachers can better understand why their students might struggle to have positive relationships with their teachers. Students who have insecure attachments benefit from a secure attachment with a teacher, particularly in elementary school, as it can help to rework their internalized models of attachment and make them more inclined to trust other teachers in the future.

However, just the knowledge of the problem, that students may have insecure attachments, is not enough and as this research has found we need to go one step further. Teachers who understand the importance of a positive relationship built on trust also need to understand what specific pieces make up a trusting relationship in order to be more intentional about how they are building relationships with students. If teachers are more aware of what components make up trust they can identify their areas of strengths and weaknesses and adjust their behavior with students accordingly. Having this knowledge and understanding, therefore, should help teachers have more positive relationships with their students which will then lead to more academic, social, and emotional success and wellbeing. Professional development and ongoing education could be a way to relay this information to current teachers as our understanding of how relationships affect academics grows. Teacher preparation programs could use this information to create coursework or classes that explicitly cover the effect of poverty on children and how that in turn affects their relationships with other people.

Finally, it would be helpful for teachers to have more information on the differences in how their actions are intended and how their students may perceive them. Even teachers with a thorough understanding of attachment theory and trust may still make missteps if they do not try to understand things from their student's point of view. Student perceptions can differ from teachers in such a way as to undermine the relationship subtly and without the teacher being aware of it. Eliciting more student feedback could provide teachers with crucial information about how they are perceived by students. Teachers need to engage in honest reflection on their practices and, if they find an actions has been misconstrued by a student, they either need to be open and willing to change that action, or at least explain it more clearly in the future so their intentions are not misunderstood by the student.

Teachers need to have positive, trusting relationships with their students in order to give them an education that empowers them to choose the life they want.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are that it is a case study of one teacher and one group of students over a relatively short period of time. The teacher identified herself as having positive relationships with students and no other perspectives from colleagues, the principal, or former students, were taken into consideration. The number of student voices is a limitation as more students could have confirmed or contradicted the patterns found here. Because the research was conducted in one classroom in a Title 1 school it might not be transferable beyond that situation. The fact that the classroom observed was in third grade could mean that the themes brought out in the data analysis might not hold true for students in fourth or fifth grade. I used provisional coding in my data analysis, which could have narrowed my view of what I saw in the field. Another researcher using a different form of coding may have come up with different results.

Further Research

This research focused on how one teacher built and maintained positive relationships with her students in a single classroom in a Title 1 school and how those students perceived her actions. The research found although the teacher was able to show benevolence, reliability, and competence with her students she was weaker in the areas of openness and honesty. The research also found a stark difference between the way in which students with secure attachments perceive her actions and intentions when compared to students with insecure attachments.

Further research would be beneficial to see if these patterns hold true over a longer period of time and in multiple classrooms. A longitudinal study could show whether the relationships built in the first semester were maintained over the second semester and how that was achieved.

Research with more participants, multiple classrooms, and more student voices could serve to show whether the results of this study are transferable. It could be useful to look into a variety of teachers who have strengths and weaknesses with different aspects of trust to see if they are all equally important in student-teacher relationships, as Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) claimed, "Among teachers and principals, all aspects of trust seem to carry significant importance; that is, vulnerability, benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness all come together" (p. 558).

This research did not focus on the racial makeup of the school or the students and teacher involved. Given the fact that Latinx and African American families are generally overrepresented in Title 1 schools, this could be an area of further research to see if those students' perceptions are dramatically different from white students' perceptions. It would be beneficial to know if a teacher of the same racial background as her students was perceived in a more favorable way. Internalized racism and bias on the part of white teachers plays a role in how they treat their students if they are not racially aware. These inherent biases can be extremely damaging to children and would make any meaningful relationship building extremely difficult. Given the nature of the achievement gap in the United States, this is a very important avenue of further study.

More research is needed into the attachment styles of students in relation to how they perceive their teachers' actions. In this study, it seemed clear that the students with insecure attachments were generally more distrustful of their teacher. If a study was done with more students with a variety of attachment styles it would be interesting to see if all the students who were having behavior problems or a hard time in school indicated some sort of past negative experiences either at home or at school. It would be beneficial to know how some students who

have insecure attachments are able to do well in school, perhaps because they have more

internalizing behaviors than externalizing behaviors, and then see if any of their coping

mechanisms can be taught or replicated with children who struggle more.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

Institutional Review Board

DATE: July 29, 2019

TO: Alice Pendlebury
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1455117-2] Building Positive Relationships in Title I Schools: Teacher and
                    Student Perspectives in the Elementary Classroom
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS - **WITH CONDITIONS**
DECISION DATE: July 29, 2019
EXPIRATION DATE: July 29, 2023

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of
Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to
federal IRB regulations.

**Thank you for completing the requested revisions. Your study is *Approved with
Conditions*, therefore the following must be submitted through IRBNet before you may begin your
data collection. Please note that once you hit "Submit this Package", you are free to begin your
research; you do not need to wait for confirmation from the IRB.**

   * **Written permission from the participating school district (on school letterhead or an email)
     indicating you are allowed to conduct research with their staff and students.**

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Morse at 970-351-1910 or nicole.morse@unco.edu.
Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

APPENDIX B

DISTRICT APPROVAL LETTER

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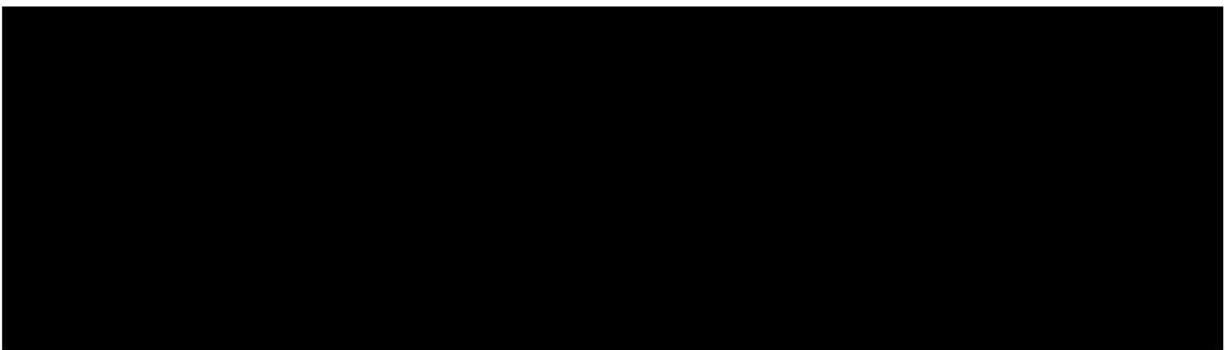
August 14, 2019

To: Alice Pendlebury
University of Northern Colorado
RE: Research Request

Dear Ms. Pendlebury,

[redacted] has approved your application to conduct the research project entitled *Building Positive Relationships in Title 1 Schools: Teacher and Student Perspectives in the Elementary Classroom*. This approval is contingent on receiving student participant/parent approval and teacher participation. We look forward to hearing the results of the study when you are finished.

Sincerely,

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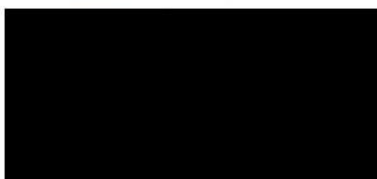
of Academic Achievement

APPENDIX C

DATA COLLECTION SCHEDULE

Data Collection Schedule

August 2019						
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

September 2019						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	1	2	3	4	5

October 2019						
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2

November 2019						
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

December 2019						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14

15	16	17	18	19	20	21

Key			
Observations	Teacher survey	Week of teacher interviews	Student interviews

APPENDIX D

PANORAMA SURVEY

Panorama Survey

The survey is taken online. Students answer all questions using the following scale:

Never
Some of the time
Most of the time
Always

Responses of 'Most of the time' or 'Always' are considered positive responses

Student Learning
In this class we learn to correct our mistakes
My teacher tells us what we are learning and why
My teacher asks questions to be sure we are following along
My teacher talks to me about my work to help me understand my mistakes
My teacher writes notes on my work that help me do better next time

Classroom Community
My teacher cares about me
In this class I feel like I fit in
I ask for help when I need it

Classroom Management
My classmates behave the way my teacher wants them to
All of the kids in my class know what they are supposed to be doing and learning

Student Centered Environment
My teacher knows what makes me excited about learning
Students feel comfortable sharing their ideas in this class
My teacher teaches us to respect people's differences
My teacher knows what my life is like outside of school

Students are also given one 'free response' in which they can type their own answer to the question: What is one way your teachers support you in school and one way they could better support you?

APPENDIX E

YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM

Your Relationships With Children In The Classroom

Please reflect on how much each of the statements below currently applies to your relationship with the children in your classroom. All relationships are individual, but in responding, please think about your relationships with the children in your classroom in general. Use the scale below to choose the appropriate response for each item.	
Definitely does not apply Not really Neutral, not sure Applies somewhat Definitely applies 1 2 3 4 5	
1. I share an affectionate, warm relationship with the children	
2. The children and I always seem to struggle with each other	
3. If upset, the children will seek comfort from me	
4. The children are uncomfortable with physical affection or touch from me	
5. The children value their relationship with me	
6. When I praise the children, they beam with pride	
7. The children share information about me about themselves, even if I don't ask	
8. The children easily become angry with me	
9. It is easy to be in tune with what the children are feeling	
10. The children remain angry or are resistant after being disciplined	
11. Dealing with the children drains my energy	
12. When the children are in a bad mood, I know we're in for a long and difficult day	
13. The children's feelings towards me can be hard to predict or can change suddenly	
14. The children are sneaky or manipulative with me	
15. The children openly share their feelings and experiences with me	

Whitaker et al. (2015)

APPENDIX F

TEACHER CONSENT

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Building Positive Relationships with Students in Title I Schools: Teacher and
                       Student Perspectives in the Elementary Classroom
Researcher: Alice Pendlebury, Doctoral Candidate
                       School of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
E-mail: pend4213@bears.unco.edu

Purpose and Description: The primary purpose of this study is to determine what kind of things a teacher can do to build a positive relationships with the students in her classroom. The study will also be looking at how students view their relationship with their teacher and what their teacher does that affects that relationship.

I will need to interview you five times over the course of fall semester; one preliminary interview in the days before school starts and then once a month after that. The interviews will last no more than 90 minutes and will be held wherever you feel comfortable chatting and outside of school hours. The interview questions will cover aspects of the way you build relationships with students such as what you do at the beginning of the year to build a classroom community, how you start to build relationships with students, and what role positive relationships play in your classroom management. Subsequent interviews will ask questions about how the year is progressing in terms of maintaining those relationships with students and will also include questions based on my observations.

I will be conducting observations concurrently with interviews. I plan to be in your classroom twice a week for no more than 40 minutes at a time, although for the first few days of school, the 15th, 16th and 19th of August I will be in every day. While I am observing I wish to see the regular, everyday activities that happen in your classroom. I will be focused specifically on your actions and corresponding students' actions but will also make a note of classroom culture and the atmosphere of the room. I will also be looking for things that show consistency and stability in the classroom, things such as tight transitions and routines all the students know and can expect every day. I will not be participating in the teaching however I may get up from time to time to ask a student a specific question such as what they are working on or about interactions I see them having in the classroom. I might also ask students about their level of engagement in the lesson. I will not be providing academic help to the children and I will not interrupt their work for an extended amount of time.

Finally, I will be collecting some artifacts. I intend to take photographs of the classroom in order to help describe the classroom more fully. Photographs and general notes about the setup of the classroom will be taken at a time when students are not in the room, separate from observations. Student work, behavior charts, mission statements, evidence of PBIS practices, student roles, and more could help contextualize the environment in which these positive relationships are flourishing.

I will be audio recording the interviews to back up the notes I take. Be assured that I intend to keep the contents of the recording private. To further help maintain confidentiality, I will assign you a pseudonym, which I will then use in all my notes. The names of subjects will not appear in any professional report of this research. Anything said during the interview will remain confidential and not be shared with anyone else. Observation notes will be typed and not include any identifying information. I will share my interview transcripts with you in order to check that I understood what was said clearly. Data collected for this study will be kept on my cell phone or my personal laptop, which is password protected. Information on my cell phone will be transferred to my personal computer within 24 hours.

The risks inherent in this study are no greater than those normally encountered during regular classroom teaching.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Sherry May, IRB Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, 25 Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

_____   _____
Subject's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher's Full Name/Signature   Date

APPENDIX G

PERSONAL DATA FORM

Personal Data Form

Name: _____   Age: _____

Ethnicity: _____

How long have you been teaching in your own classroom? (Substitute or paraprofessional positions not included)

_____

How long have you been teaching at this school?

_____

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

_____

When did you graduate with your highest level of education?

_____

Have you ever attended a PD or class that focused on building relationships with students? If so, please write down the date(s) you attended and what were your biggest takeaways from the class?

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX H

PARENT CONSENT

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Building Positive Relationships with Children in Title I Schools: Teacher
and Student Perspectives in the Elementary Classroom
Researcher: Alice Pendlebury, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education and
Behavioral Sciences
Phone Number: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
E-mail: pend4213@bears.unco.edu
Research Advisor: Dr. Brian Rose
E-mail: Brian.Rose@unco.edu

I am currently working towards my doctorate and I am researching how teachers can build positive relationships with students in Title I schools and also how students feel about their relationships with their teacher. If you grant permission <u>and if your child indicates to us a willingness to participate</u> we will adjourn to a quiet area near the classroom, no more than twice in November, for 20-30 minutes for an interview. The interview questions will consist of some general questions about how your child is enjoying school this year, any favorite teachers they have had in the past and what their ideal teacher would be like. The interview will also include more specific questions about your child's relationship with their current teacher, such as do they think their teacher treats them fairly, would they go to their teacher if they were having a problem, and do they believe they have a good relationship with their teacher.

I foresee no risks to subjects beyond those that are normally encountered in the classroom. Your child's participation will not be solicited during lunch or recess. If your child feels uncomfortable at any point during the interview we will stop and your child can go back to class. Your child might enjoy chatting to someone about how they feel about school and they might also like having their opinions heard and their voice valued.

I will be audio recording the interview to back up the notes I take. Be assured that I intend to keep the contents of the recording private. To further help maintain confidentiality, your child will choose a fake name for themselves which I will then use in all my notes. The names of subjects will not appear in any professional report of this research. Anything said during the interview will remain confidential and not be shared with anyone else.

Please feel free to phone me if you have any questions or concerns about this research and please retain one copy of this letter for your records.

Thank you for assisting me with my research.

Sincerely,

_____

Page 1 of 2 _____
(Parent's initials here) _____

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to allow your child to participate in this study and if (s)he begins participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Sherry May, IRB Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, 25 Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

_____   _____
Child's Full Name (please print)   Child's Birth Date (month/day/year)

_____   _____
Parent/Guardian's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher's Signature   Date

Page 2 of 2 _____
(Parent's initials here) _____

APPENDIX I

STUDENT ASSENT

ASSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Hi!

My name is Miss Pendlebury and I'm a student at the University of Northern Colorado. I am doing some research on the relationship between teachers and the students in their class. That means I would like to study how students get along with their teachers and what teachers do to build a good relationship with their students. I would like to ask a few of the kids in your class about their relationships with the teacher. If you want, you can be one of the kids I talk with.

If you want to talk with me, I'll ask you if you enjoy school and what you enjoy about it. I will also ask you which teachers you like, what your ideal teacher would be like, and what your teacher does that makes you like or dislike her. For each question I will want you to explain your answer. But, this isn't a test or anything like that. There are no right or wrong answers and there won't be any score or grade for your answers. I will write down what you say, but I write down your name, instead, you can choose your own fake name! It will take about 30 minutes for you to answer my questions about your relationship with your teacher. I'll ask your teacher for the best time to talk with you so that you don't miss anything too important.

Talking with me probably won't help you or hurt you. Your parents have said its okay for you to talk with me, but you don't have to. It's up to you. Also, if you say "yes" but then change your mind, you can stop any time you want to. Do you have any questions for me about my research?

If you want to be in my research and talk with me about your relationship with your teacher this year, sign your name below and write today's date next to it. Thanks!

Student's Signature	Date

Researcher's Signature	Date

APPENDIX J

OBSERVATION GUIDE

Observation Guide

Teacher actions	Examples
Demonstrate emotional caring and establish a physically safe environment	Attitudes such as "everyone makes mistakes, everyone messes up;" behaviors such as "speaking kindly with others and allowing others to vent without judging;" "keep the class running and keep me (the student) safe"
Be consistent, predictable, reliable, fair	"If you say you are going to do something you do it;" "don't make a promise you can't keep or do something the complete opposite of what you said you would do;" ''be straight across the board"
Communicate expectations by setting limits and rules	"Set limits;" "explain why I reacted the way I did;" "we talk about respect as one of the major class rules"
Model positive interactions	"Model with my instructional aide appropriate interactions that reflect trust;" "your relationships with other teachers could help create trust with your students"
Provide autonomy and choice	"Let them run errands;" "give them space to have a little bit of control over stuff in the classroom"
Engage in helping and supportive behavior	"I have no problem pulling up a chair and sitting next to a child . . . and helping them;" "I'll work with you (the student)"
Utilize teacher efficacy	"Trust in your own abilities and confidence in yourself;" "I trust myself and who I am"
Rely on social roles	"We are the adult in the situation;" ''I speak like a grandmother to them;" "I speak like a brother to them, a peer"
Make personal connections: self-disclosure	"Talk about your own interests, personal life;" ''open yourself up to vulnerabilities;" "genuine with your feelings"
Make personal connections: expressions of interest	"Ask what's going on when a student acts out;" ''ask for feedback from students;" "make lessons relevant to their lives"
Use specific instructional approaches	"Anytime you teach them something and then they have to use that in a few days;" "giving the kids an opportunity to teach other kids things"

Student actions	Examples
Demonstrates emotional caring, respect	"Respects the teacher;" "smiles at the teacher;" v. ''violent, unapproachable, condescending, frequent outburst of anger"
Is consistent, predictable, reliable	"Consistent, relatively predictable;" "when I've needed him he's stepped up to the plate;" v. "broken promises"
Makes personal connections: self-disclosure	"She would reveal stuff about herself;" come to me for advice when they see other students doing things they shouldn't do
Expressions of interest	"Asks how the teacher is doing;" "talks about a topic they like with the teacher;" "treat me as one of their peer"
Engages in helpful and cooperative behavior	Students "engage in volunteering and fundraising;" "he just wanted to start being helpful . . . always helping me push my cart"
Complies with social rules and norms	"When I ask them (the students) to do something they don't argue with me;" v. "willing to go way over the rules and limits"
Engages in academics	''Always prepared''; ''really trying hard most of the time''; v. ''wanders around the room pacing''
Is honest and personally responsible	"They are forward and honest';" v. "known to make up lies;" "they put it on like a politician;" "will take things or do things if he thinks he can get away with it"

APPENDIX K

TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Teacher Follow Up Interview Questions
(October, December)

1. How do you feel the students are doing at this point in the year
    academically/socially/emotionally/behaviorally?

2. Are there any students whom you thought would have a hard time who are doing well?
    Why do you believe they see that success?

3. Is there anyone you struggled to build a relationship with at the beginning of the year
    who you now feel you have a good relationship with? Why?

4. Conversely, is there anyone who was doing really well at the start but is now struggling?
    Why is that? Are you changing any expectations that may have caused the change? How
    will you deal with it?

5. Are you still doing any activities that build relationships with your students and among
    your students?

6. Have there been any behavior issues that you have dealt with that you feel led to the
    improvement of your relationship with the student?

7. Do you feel there have been any moments so far that have led to the relationships
    between you and a student, or all the students, to break down at all? If so what did
    you/are you doing to address that?

8. Has there been a time this year when you agreed to a reward or consequence that you did
    not/ or were not able to follow through with? How did you address that?

9. How often do you explain your reasoning behind the decisions made in your classroom?
    How often do you let the students have a say in those decisions?

* Questions will also be asked based on observations

APPENDIX L

TEACHER INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Teacher Initial Interview Questions

1. Do you find speaking with students' former teachers to be helpful or do you prefer to find out about them yourself?

2. The school provides little information sheets on each student; do you spend much time looking at these?

3. Do you check IC (the districts online system) to find out information about attendance, behavior, or academics before the students start? After they start?

4. Do you ever look in Cumulative Files to find information about students before school starts? After school starts?

5. Is there value in giving the students a clean slate at the beginning of the year and finding things out about their previous school years from them?

6. What role do positive relationships play in managing your classroom?

7. At the beginning of the year, are there specific activities you do to build relationships with the students? What are these activities? How do they help?

8. Do you do the same activities every year or change them up? Do you plan things throughout the year?

9. Do you have specific students whom you know/have heard/suspect are going to need extra relational support or extra time invested to build relationships? If so, do you go out of your way to make them feel included and welcomed or try to treat them the same as everyone else?

10. If you do have certain students in mind as needing extra support how do you go about that? Do you ask them personal questions about themselves? Make sure to call on them a lot? Give them a job and sustained positive feedback? Use humor?

11. To what extent do you take your cues from the student and adapt your style to fit what they need/want?

12. If you find a student seems resistant to your efforts to build a relationship in those early days what do you do?

APPENDIX M

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Student Interview Questions

1. Are you enjoying school so far this year?

2. Do you usually enjoy school or have you sometimes struggled before?

3. Do you like your teachers?

4. Who is your favorite teacher? Why?

5. What do you want your ideal teacher to be like?

6. Do you feel like you have a good relationship with your homeroom teacher? Can you tell her things?

7. Does your teacher make you mad sometimes? When does that happen? Does it bother you or is it not such a big deal?

8. Do you ever think your teacher treats you unfairly? Why do you think that?

9. If you were having a problem at school would you tell your teacher? Would you tell her if she didn't ask?

10. Do you think your teacher would notice if you were upset about something?

11. If you were having a problem at home would you tell your teacher? Would you tell her if she didn't ask?

12. Do you think you have a good relationship with your teacher?