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Elementary students' perceptions of teacher-student relationships

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ELEMENTARY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to explore at-risk student's perceptions of teacher-student relationships and the context in which at-risk students perceived these relationships. The study was conducted in two phases: first a student self-survey was given and second two focus groups with students was conducted. The Children's Appraisal of Teachers as a Secure Base (CATSB) self-report was given to 145 fourth grade students of which 86 students were identified as at-risk and 59 students were not identified as at-risk. The results revealed two factors in which students perceived teachers as a secure base, "*Accepting/Available"* and "*Rejecting*". Although there was not a significant difference between at-risk and non-at-risk students in the area of teachers being perceived as "*Accepting/Available*", there was a significant difference between at-risk and non-at-risk students in the area of teachers being perceived as "*Rejecting*". After conducting the survey, two student focus groups were conducted with at-risk students who participated in the survey. The focus groups revealed that students perceive teacher-student relationships through teacher verbalizations and teacher actions. These verbalizations and actions are either "*Accepting/Available*" or "*Rejecting*" which corroborated with the CATSB survey. Students identified "*Accepting/Available*" interactions as a caring relationship while "*Rejecting*" interactions were identified as uncaring relationships.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the students I serve. Students are so much more than a number and I thank the students who have taught me what they are capable of doing when an adult cares and believes in them. I dedicate this work to the teachers who give so much of themselves in order to provide students with the resources and skills to be successful in life. I dedicate this work to future teachers who I hope will truly care about students in ways that lead students on paths of success.

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This has been a long journey which I wasn't sure I would complete. I would like to thank several people who have guided me and believed in me. First I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Karen Watt, Dr. Marie Simonsson, Dr. Stephanie Brickman and Dr. Shirley Mills who have provided me with lots of feedback and guidance in completing this work. Your feedback was meaningful and helped me to dig a little deeper with each revision I made.

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JC, without you this would have never happened. You pushed, scolded, listened, and pushed some more. There are not enough words to say how much I appreciate the support you have given me and the belief you have in me.

To my mom who would ask whenever I visited, "are you done yet?"

To my children, Rebecca, Raymond, and Nicholas. The loves of my life.

To Ray who started me on this journey all those years ago. Thank you.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The types of relationships teachers build with students influence many aspects of a student's life (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Davis & Dupper, 2004; Hamre, Pianta, Downer, & Mashburn, 2008; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). Significant adults, who include parents and teachers, contribute to a child's ability to maintain social relationships, cope with social environments, and develop their self-theories (Dweck, 2000; Hamre, Pianta, Downer, & Mashburn 2008; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009; Stuhlman & Pianta, 2001). The positive relationships teachers develop with students allow students to "develop and use effective social skills to negotiate and navigate challenges" (Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009, p.107). These relationships provide school support networks, secure attachments, motivation, behavioral supports and teach coping skills, all needed to be successful in school (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Stipek, 2006; Hamre, Pianta, Downer, & Mashburn 2008). Students who have positive relationships with teachers establish a pattern of success academically as well as socially throughout their school life. Students, who have negative relationships with teachers, tend to be more hostile, more aggressive, unable to form friendships, have negative feelings toward school, and are academically low achievers (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Mercer & DeRosier, 2010; Stipek, 2006).

The quality of teacher-student relationships begins when a child enters school and can predict future school performance (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005). Even children who have

significant behavior problems early in school life who form low conflict and dependency relationships with teachers will likely have fewer behavior problems later in their school life (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005, 2005). Hamre and Pianta (2001) found that the "quality of teacher-child relationships is a stronger predictor of behavioral than academic outcomes (p. 634)." The process of building teacher-student relationships and the influence these relationships have, is an important component of a child's success in school (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Mercer & DeRosier, 2010; Skipper & Douglas, 2015).

Lopez's (2009) Gallup Student Poll National Report confirms three indicators for school success; 1) hope, the energy and ideas about the future, 2) engagement, the interest and involvement in school, and 3) well-being, how students think about their experiences and their lives. Lopez surveyed 70,078 students in fifth grade through twelfth grade using The Gallup Poll and found that 95% of the students believed that they would graduate from high school while only 75% of the students actually graduate from high school. Lopez also found that the students who reported that they believed they would graduate also reported that they had "an adult in my life who cares about my future" (Lopez, 2009, p. 2).

Dalton, Glennie, and Ingels (2009) found that 83% of the students who dropped out from their high school sophomore class of 2002 stated that the reason was school related; 25% of those students stated they did not get along with the teacher, while 36% of the students stated they did not like school. Students from culturally diverse backgrounds report additional reasons for dropping out of school. Hispanic students who dropped out of school described poor teacher-student relationships as a contributing factor to dropping out along with other factors such as lack of parental support, language and cultural barriers, and student motivation (Hernandez & Nesman, 2004; Nesman 2007). These same students also stated that teachers did not

communicate acceptance or honesty to them about how they were doing in school nor were students encouraged to do better (Nesman, 2007).

Students drew on resources from teachers, parents, peers and those with fewer resources were more likely to drop out than students who had greater resources to draw from (Stearns, Moller, Blau, & Potochnick, 2007). Typically, students at-risk displayed several academic and social characteristics that demonstrated a lack of resources. At-risk students tended to have low or failing grades, low achievement test scores, below grade level performance, uncompleted homework, parents or caregivers who failed to encourage academic achievement, and students who were at-risk failed to connect academic achievement to future work. While the academic characteristics of these students are of concern for schools, their social characteristics also present challenges for schools.

Many students at-risk exhibited inconsistent attendance, behavior problems, were not engaged in school, lacked motivation and transferred from school to school (McLaughlin & Vachta, 1992). These types of social characteristics were created by problems at home, at school, and lead to grade retention and ultimately dropping out of school (Nunn & Parish, 1992). Numerous research studies have found a significant relationship between grade retention in the early grades and dropping out of high school (Jimerson, Anderson, &, Whipple, 2002; Stearns, Moller, Blau, & Potochnick, 2007). Moreover, retained students, "… have lower self-esteem, are more pessimistic about their future, are less engaged with school, and have fewer bonds with teachers than do continuously promoted students." (Stearns et al, 2007, p. 231).

Therefore, the social characteristics such as inconsistent attendance, behavior problems, and lack of motivation and engagement likely contributed to lower self-esteem, pessimism about the future and poorer relationships with teachers. Students came to school expecting to be

successful and to feel good about themselves and what they learned. As students moved through school from elementary to high school, many students began to have negative feelings about themselves and their ability to learn. They paid more attention to outside influences and external evaluations that were typical in the school setting (Akey and Manpower Demonstration Research Corp, 2006; Scott, Murray, Mertens & Dustin, 1996). How teachers behaved and interacted with students influenced how students thought about themselves. As they cognitively developed, students processed the feedback that was received for their achievement and their behavior from teachers, peers and parents (Mercer & DeRosier, 2010; Scott, Murray, Mertens & Dustin, 1996; Skipper & Douglas, 2015; Valeski & Stipek, 2001). It was the transaction between the student and their environment that influenced the development of the student and influenced the achievement trajectory for any student (Jimerson, Anderson, & Whipple, 2002; Anderson, Sinclair, Lebr. 2004). Every experience that a student had impacted how he or she interpreted later experiences. These interpretations propelled students towards a variety of pathways (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Jimerson, Anderson, and Whipple, 2002; Pianta, 1999). According to Bergin and Bergin (2009), "Children's socio-emotional well-being is critical to school success, and attachment is the foundation of socio-emotional well-being" (p. 141). Bergin and Bergin also state, "Attachment is a relationship, not a trait inborn in children. That is, it is the result of many interactions between a specific adult and a specific child" (p. 154).

Problem Statement

Students who were considered at-risk tended to have more conflicted relationships and fewer resources to access educational, emotional, and social support (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Nunn & Parish, 1992; Pianta, 1999; Stearns, Moller, Blau, & Potochnick, 2007). Given today's demands for accountability, teachers were more focused on the academic achievement of

students and less focused on their relationships with students (Stipek, 2006; Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Teachers might become more controlling and less patient with students when teachers felt pressured to perform and obtain high test scores on high stakes assessments. This lead to less time for teachers to develop and engage students in conversations about their interests and personal life or support them in a social context (Stipek, 2006).

Teacher-student relationships determined to what degree a student was able to cope with social environments, maintained social relationships, developed self-theories, and achieved success academically (Dweck, 2000; Hamre, Pianta, & Downer, 2008; Lind-Glenn, 2009; Stuhlman & Pianta, 2001; Skipper & Douglas, 2015; Stipek, 2006; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). According to Stipek (2006), the teacher-student relationship helped shape the academic and social characteristics that ultimately shaped the characteristics that put a student at-risk.

> When tests become high-stakes, teachers naturally focus their attention on the knowledge and skills the tests measure – leaving less time to engage students in conversation about personal issues or make them feel valued and supported. Feeling pressured to produce higher test scores, teachers become more controlling and less patient, particularly with students who lag behind (Stipek, 2006, p. 2).

The outcome goals established by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) were affected by the types of relationships teachers developed and engaged in with students. Teacher-student relationships were one of the best predictors of student effort which leads to high academic standards (Stipek, 2006). Although research had established the importance of teacher-student relationships in school success it was important to note that students' and teachers' views about classroom reality were not always the same (Weinstein, 1983).

Research has typically investigated the interactions of teachers and students from the teacher's perspective. The student's "voice" is rarely heard. When students felt that schools and teachers did not care for them, they were not motivated to be academically successful (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Hernandez & Nesman, 2004; Nesman 2007; Valeski & Stipek, 2001). Students' ability to confront the developmental tasks of academic achievement were inhibited when teachers were focused on academic achievement only and not on building secure attachment types of relationships with students, specifically with students at-risk (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Lind-Glenn, 2009; Stipek, 2006; Riley, 2011).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore student's perceptions of teacher-student relationships in the elementary setting. Furthermore, an attempt at understanding the context and setting in which students perceived these relationships has been described. To achieve this purpose, an explanatory sequential mixed method approach was utilized to discover the perceptions and beliefs of the students and their relationship with elementary teachers (Creswell, Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Fourth grade students who were identified as at-risk and non-at-risk from a South Texas school district were given the Children's Appraisal of Teacher as a Secure Base (CATSB) self-report scale in which children assess teachers as a secure base (Al-Yagon & Margalit, 2006; Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2006). The appraisal included the extent a child perceives a teacher as available and receptive in times of need, to be a caring figure, and if the teacher accepts a student's needs, feelings, and behavior.

Selected at-risk students were interviewed through two focus groups for more detailed descriptions of teacher-student relationships from the perspective of students at-risk. Students

were selected from the results of the CATSB and criterion sampling in which participants were selected because of matching a set of pre-identified criteria, along with parental permission (Creswell, 2007). The topic of the focus groups was teacher-student relationships. The data collected from the CATSB and the focus groups were analyzed separately, then merged and an explanation of at-risk student perceptions about teacher-student relationships was created.

The quantitative research method included a descriptive analysis, means, standard deviation analysis, and an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedure in which at-risk and non-students at-risk' perception of teacher-student relationships were examined in two subscales. The survey used was the Children's Appraisal of Teacher as a Secure Base (CATSB) survey which provided information from the selected population as a whole (Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2006). Two focus groups, one with at-risk students who responded on the *"Accepting/Available"* expression subset and one with at-risk students who responded on the *"Rejecting"* expression subset provided specific qualitative information related to teacher-student relationships (Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2006).

Design

An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used which consisted of two distinct phases (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In the first phase of this study, The Children's Appraisal of Teacher as a Secure Base (CATSB) was used to measure fourth grade students' perceptions of teacher-student relationships (see appendix A1). The participants were selected from a school district in south Texas. The population in the district was 17,830 K – 12 grade students with 1,307 fourth grade students. Of the total number of students, 57.4% were identified as at-risk (Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report, 2014-15). The fourth grade students attended eleven elementary schools

which were neighborhood schools, meaning the majority of the students attended the school closest to their home.

The data collected were analyzed in three ways using SPSS software. The first analysis was to obtain descriptive information using student demographics. Second, student CATSB survey responses were presented using means and standard deviations and the third analysis was an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedures in order to determine if differences exist among at-risk and non-at-risk students' responses on the two subscales of the CATSB.

Phase two consisted of the qualitative data collected through semi-structured focus groups, which explored fourth grade students' perceptions of teacher-student relationships in more depth. The data collected from the focus groups were analyzed using the Excel software which helped the researcher cluster comments and quotes into emerging themes. The purpose for collecting quantitative and qualitative data was to bring greater insight into the problem than would have been obtained by either type of data separately (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Research Questions and Null Hypothesis

The following research questions guided this study.

1. What are the significant differences, if any, between at-risk and non-at-risk students with regards to their perceptions about teachers as measured by the CATSB?

H_0 There is no difference in students' perceptions about teachers as a Secure Base between at-risk and non-at-risk students.

2. How do at-risk students identify and describe their positive and negative relationships with teachers?

Need for the Study

Teachers evaluate many things about students throughout the school day. They evaluate student's mastery of a lesson, student's assessments, the skills that are still missing, and student's behavior, along with how well their lesson plans are coming along. With today's demands for accountability, teachers are more focused on the academic achievement of students and less focused on their relationships with students (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Stipek, 2006). When students perceive that they have a caring relationship with their teacher, they are more motivated to be successful in academics and with social goals (Davis & Dupper, 2004; Stipek, 2006; Wentzel, 1997; Valeski & Stipek, 2001). Valeski and Stipek (2001) state, "Teachers who want to improve their students' academic learning clearly need to be concerned about all aspects of children's experience in school" (p. 1211). As early as kindergarten, teacher-student relationships begin to have an effect on students (Hamre &Pianta, 2001, 2005; Valeski & Stipek, 2001). In Hamre and Pianta's study (2001), "…the level of negativity in children's relationships with kindergarten teachers was a strong predictor of work-habits ratings and disciplinary infractions for the children that teachers also rated as having the highest levels of problem behaviors." (p. 635) Hamre and Pianta (2001) also stated that while this particular study did not focus on student perceptions of the quality of teacher-student relationships, future studies utilizing student perceptions would be valuable in understanding the quality of teacher-student relationships.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation to this study was only students were surveyed and interviewed. Ideally, students and their teachers would have been surveyed and interviewed to be able to compare each other's perception of their relationship. This would add another dimension to the

understanding of the quality of that relationship. The study was conducted at the end of the school year limiting access to students due to students leaving the school year early.

Definition of Terms

The following terms have special meaning in this study and wereas utilized to define teacher-student relationships. The first term is at-risk which is "…the likelihood that a given individual will attain a specific outcome, given certain conditions." (Pianta, 1999, p 12). Attachment "… is the bond felt by the care seeker for a particular individual who is thought by the care seeker to be "better able to cope with the world" (Bowlby, 1988a, p. 27)"(Riley, 2011, p12). Behavior is the actions a person takes. The next term is caring which is to demonstrate interest and concern about someone. A gatekeeper is "…an individual who is a member or has insider status with a cultural group." (Creswell, 2007, p125) For the purpose of this study the gatekeeper will be the contact person in the school assigned by the principal. Perception is the way a person thinks about or understands someone or something. Relationships are the way that two or more people interact with each other. A secure base is a relationship with a person who provides consistent sensitivity and responsiveness to meet the need of another.

Significance of the Study

This study allowed teachers and leaders to think about their interactions and relationships with students at-risk and how those relationship impacted an at-risk student's future achievement (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Davis & Dupper, 2004; Hamre, et al, 2009; Scott, et al, 2001; Stuhlman & Pianta, 2001). The study revealed the behaviors that teachers engaged in and how at-risk students perceived those behaviors. Jensen (2009) stated that a deepening of educational staff understanding of the back ground of poor students at-risk and utilizing empathy and cultural knowledge helped educators to teach poor and students at-risk effectively. It

provided teachers with behaviors that develop positive caring relationships with students at-risk that propelled students at-risk in directions that were more productive and conducive to academic achievement (Pianta, 1999; Hamre & Pianta 2001; Valeski & Stipek, 2001).

Summary

This chapter has presented the problem statement, the purpose for the study, the design of the design of the study, the research questions and null hypothesis, the need for the study, and the limitations of the study. Students who had positive relationships with teachers established a pattern of success academically as well as socially throughout their school life. Students, who had negative relationships with teachers, tended to be more hostile, more aggressive, unable to form friendships, had negative feelings toward school, and were academically low achievers (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005). This is an explanatory sequential mixed method study that used the CATSB survey and focus groups to discover the perceptions and beliefs of fourth grade students and their relationships with elementary teachers. Chapter 2 will provide a review of the literature related to the problem under investigation.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to explore student's perceptions of teacher-student relationships in the elementary setting. Furthermore, an attempt at understanding the context and setting in which students perceived these relationships has been described. In this section the underlining review of research is organized in the following subscales: (1) history of teacher-student relationships; (2) student perspective; and (3) students at-risk

History of Research on Teacher-Student Relationships

Research examining the concept of teacher-student relationships began to develop in the late 1960's and early 1970's. When Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968/1992) published *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, they created interest in teacher-student interactions. Rosenthal and Jacobsen claimed that teachers treated low achieving students differently than high achieving students (Brophy & Good, 1974; Good, 1981; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968/1992). Rosenthal and Jacobsen conducted an experiment where they told teachers at the beginning of the school year that certain students would "bloom" intellectually and would be expected to make large gains. The researchers felt that this would be a way to determine if teachers would behave differently in order to make sure the expectations for students would come true. In other words, they were looking to see if teacher expectations would function as self-fulfilling prophecies. Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) data confirmed that teacher expectation did function as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The results caught the attention of the media and soon critics began to question the

validity of the research. As a result of the controversy, researchers used a variety of methods to disprove Rosenthal and Jacobson's findings. Beez,(1968); Clariborn, (1969); Fielder, Cohen, & Feeney (1971); Flemming & Anttnen (1971) and Goldsmith& Fry (1971) (as cited in Brophy and Good,1974) found Rosenthal and Jacobson's concept of teacher expectations functioning as self-fulfilling prophecies to be true, but not always and not automatically (Brophy & Good, 1974). Research was now focused on teacher-student interactions.

According to Brophy and Good, (1974), many of the naturalistic studies look at teachers and how their behavior was directed towards an entire class. The data collected for these studies relied on observations and questionnaires that focused on teachers and teacher perceptions. When studies were focused on the individual students, data collection consisted of methods such as observing how many times a teacher interacted with an individual versus the group or even how many times the teacher verbalized and how many times students verbalized. Rarely were students considered as individuals nor were students' perspectives sought (Brophy & Good, 1974).

Robert Pianta (1999) discussed students' development in school as a pathway in which students encountered various branches that led them either to successful development outcomes or high-risk outcomes. Teacher-student relationships formed and shaped these pathways, which would create positive or negative outcomes for students. Pianta, (1999) concluded that when students reach third grade, their pathway through school was set and one could predict how well that student would do in future years in school (Pianta, 1999). Pianta called this the window of opportunity for teachers in the early grades. It was a time when teacher-student relationships could influence student development. He stated, "Every child in every elementary school (and middle and high school) has the opportunity to develop a relationship with an adult that can serve

as a buffer to at-risk resource for development." (p. 20). Unfortunately for many children, relationships with teachers were conflicted and could be a source of risk (Pianta, 1999).

Teacher-student relationships are fundamental to student development (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Hamre, Pianta, Downer & Mashburn, 2008; Henricsson & Rydell, 2004; Jensen, 2009; Pianta, 1999; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009; Stuhlman & Pianta, 2001). Positive relationships were marked by emotionally warm and sensitive teachers (Bergin & Bergin, 2009;Lind-Glenn, 2009). Children saw their teacher as a source of security, respect, and caring (Jensen, 2009; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). The teacher was attentive to and accurately interprets students' signals. They provided appropriate responses to student needs, took interest in student activities, and supported students through instruction, assistance, and encouragement (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). This type of relationship provided students with opportunities to engage in effective social skills, which, in turn, develops students' ability to negotiate challenges, form friendships and help adjust to a variety of settings (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005). Because of these skills, children in positive relationships demonstrated higher levels of academic achievement and were able to carry this through later years in school (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Jensen, 2009; Moritz, Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). Consequently, negative relationships were marked by high conflict between the adult and the child. Children exhibiting more aggressive behaviors were less engaged in school, were more likely to be retained, and had poor academic achievement (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Murray & Zvoch, 2011; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). Teachers in negative teacher-student relationships exhibited responses that were less supportive, gave more criticism, and tended to reject children with problem behavior (Henricsson & Rydell, 2004). Henricsson and Rydell's (2004) study demonstrated that daily conflicts and negative teacher behavior

contributed to maladaptation in children who exhibited external behavior problems. They also found that, "… the prosocial aspect of social skills may be a protective factor for problem children." (Henricsson & Rydell, 2004, p.134) Without positive relationships, students were less likely to be successful as they moved through school (Pianta, 1999; Hamre, Pianta, Downer, & Mashburn, 2008; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009).

In Hassinger and Plourde's (2005) study of high achieving bilingual Hispanic students and how they worked through adversity found themes of supportive relationships, student characteristics, family factors, teacher expectations, and future implications to be strong indicators of high achievement. Students stated they had at least one caring adult in their life, teachers had high expectations and were able to relay their willingness to have a positive relationship, and they believed in themselves because teachers believed in them (Davis & Dupper, 2004; Hassinger & Plourde, 2005).

Relationships develop patterns of feelings, beliefs, and expectations, which, through time and intensity, directed the behaviors, and interactions of those involved (Stuhlman & Pianta, 2001). The environment, student experiences and characteristics, and teacher experiences and characteristics contributed to relationships and how they developed. The interactions among teachers, students, and the environment determine the quality of the relationships that are formed (Henricsson & Rydell, 2004; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). These interactions were dyadic in nature. Teachers and students learn what to expect from one another. They learned the cues and signals that defined the relationship (Pianta, 1999). When children demonstrated anti-social behaviors, the teacher-student relationship was high in conflict and low in closeness. This developed into a negative teacher-student relationship (Murray & Zvoch, 2011; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). Teachers rejected students with anti-social behaviors, provided less

support and punished more than students who displayed conforming behaviors (Henricsson & Rydell, 2004; Jensen, 2009). Although students with behavior problems were seen to be in conflict, they may still have a positive relationship with a teacher and could develop positive social skills that would help them avoid behavioral difficulties in the future (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005).

In a study by Hamre and Pianta (2005), the researchers suggested that students who experienced stressful relationships with their teachers had lower classroom participation and achievement. The study confirmed previous studies (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004) in which children who struggle with conflicting relationships in the prior year were more likely to develop poor relationships with teachers the following year. When conflicted students were placed with teachers who provided high emotional and academic support, these students did as well as their better adjusted peers (Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

Dweck (2000) described feedback in two forms; personal such as, “You did a good job” and process such as, “You gave your best effort on this”. Dweck found that children who received personal feedback after a failure were more likely to see their relationships with teachers as negative and were less likely to persist in a challenging task while children who received process feedback after a failure were more likely to perceive their relationship with the teacher as positive and would persist in challenging tasks. Skipper and Douglas, (2015) studied the effects of teacher feedback on the teacher-student relationship. Just as Dweck (2000) found, the type of feedback students received affected their perception of the teacher-student relationship. While praise did not affect how students perceived teacher-student relationships, criticism after a failure did have an effect on how students perceived their teacher-student

relationship. Particularly when the criticism was in the personal form such as "you are not good at math." Students who received this type of feedback saw it as an attack on their relationship with their teacher and felt more negativity towards the relationship (Skipper & Douglas, 2015).

Student Perspectives

Literature is very limited when researching student perspectives. Many studies utilize teacher questionnaires and surveys about student behavior that are then interpreted for student perspectives. Weinstein (1983) provided an in depth look at the research that has been conducted up until 1983. She found that the research focused on student social cognition in terms of classroom processes.

She stated:

> … children are active interpreters of classroom reality and that they draw inferences about the causes and effects of behavior. However, these studies also indicate that such inferences are not always rational and that children's views and adults' views of classroom reality may not necessarily be synonymous. Such disparity in views may actually hinder communication. In turn, investigations of children's understanding of classroom phenomena can be informative about the role of classroom context in influencing children's thinking about schooling. (p. 288)

Until Weinstein's review (1983), very few studies were conducted on students' perceptions of what teachers were like or how they felt about them. When studies were conducted, researchers utilized a factor analysis of student ratings of teachers and their effectiveness in the classroom. These studies found that students perceived good teachers to be warm, friendly, and supportive. The ratings focused on teacher effectiveness or teacher

characteristics not individual relationships between the student and the teacher (Weinstein, 1983).

Valeski and Stipek (2001) studied young children's feelings about their academic competency, feelings about school, and how they felt about their teacher. Their data came from three different sources; assessment of children's academic achievement, teacher questionnaires about academic skills and relationships with students, and classroom observations. The researchers interviewed kindergarten and first grade students to obtain their perceptions about their academic competency, school and their teacher. The researchers found that by first grade, "…children's feelings about their relationship with their teacher have begun to correspond to their perceptions of their academic competencies" (Valeski & Stipek, 2001, p. 1210). The researchers also found that, "…children who perform relatively poorly in school, or at least think they do so, are doubly disadvantaged. In addition to having less confidence in their academic abilities, they have a perception of a more negative relationship with their teacher" (Valeski & Stipek, 2001, p. 1210). The scale that was used with children had 12 items in which only three of the items directly asked students how they felt about their teacher or how they perceived the teacher felt about them. These items did not assess the quality of the teacher-student relationship. While results showed that students who had positive relationships with teachers also had positive feelings about school and their academic abilities, the study did not elaborate on the quality of those relationships (Valeski & Stipek, 2001).

Johnson (2008) identified six characteristics which promoted resilience in school. Through student interviews, the researcher found, "… how everyday interactions with teachers helped them cope with adversities, and, alternatively, how they contributed to feelings of alienation and disaffection from school." (p. 390). The six characteristics which promoted

resilience that were identified from Johnson's (2008) research were that teachers needed to be available. Students remembered teachers who took an interest in them and continued to be interested long after students left their class. Another theme was listening. It was important to students that teachers listened to them and had open honest discussions. One theme that emerged was the idea of "the basics". Students expected teachers to teach them the basics so that they could be more successful later in school. An important theme that developed was being positive. Students identified with teachers who were encouraging and modeled positive self-talk. Intervening was another theme to emerge from student interviews. Students expected teachers to "do something" if their well-being was threatened. The last theme identified was labeled other human connectors. This theme included simple things like remembering a child's birthday, key sporting achievements, or other personal events in a child's life. These connectors built pro-social bonds between students and teachers (Johnson, 2008).

Student interviews and perspectives were addressed in another study conducted by Sheets (2002). She studied the perceptions of Chicano students and discipline. The researcher wanted to know if racial and ethnic identity and cultural position played a role in teacher-student conflict. She found, "… student teacher confrontations that resulted in disciplinary action were often perceived by students as discriminatory and racist behavior on the part of the teacher." (Sheets, 2002, p120). The students reported that liking was important in terms of respect, but their actions did not support this perception as students continued to be absent from class and academic achievement continued to suffer. The researcher noted that there were inconsistencies in regards to how infractions and punishment were determined and because of this, felt that, "These Chicano students' stories of how they cope, and why they choose to act in ways that place them

at-risk, may provide important information for educators interested in improving schooling opportunities for our students." (p. 121)

Factors that Contribute to a Student Becoming At-risk

The term at-risk was often used to describe individual children who had certain characteristics that might or might not allow them to be successful in school or as Pianta (1999) described, "… risk status is a way of describing the likelihood that a given individual will attain a specific outcome, given certain conditions." (p.12). In a school setting, students were at-risk of dropping out of school if they met certain criteria. In the Texas Education Code (1995), there was a list of criteria that had been identified as factors that might lead students to become at-risk of dropping out of school. A student who met at least one criterion would meet the eligibility to be labeled as at-risk. (See appendix B)

One risk factor that affected students' academics as well as their ability to build and sustain relationships with adults and other students was poverty (Jensen, 2009). While there are six types of poverty, the effects of each type of poverty are the same and have an effect on students and their learning. Four primary factors affected families living in poverty. The first factor was emotional and social challenges. Students had a limited emotional repertoire of emotional responses which led to acting-out behaviors, impatience and impulsivity, gaps in politeness, a more limited range of behavioral responses, inappropriate emotional responses and less empathy for other's misfortunes than other students (Jensen, 2009).

Acute and chronic stressors was another factor that affected students at school. Families who lived in poverty experienced high levels of unhealthy stress which their children experienced and had a negative impact on students in school (Jensen, 2009). They tended to have more absences, had trouble concentrating and focusing, they have reduced cognition, diminished

social skills, reduced motivation and were more likely to have depression. Students from families who lived in poverty had cognitive lags. They entered school academically, socially, and emotionally behind other well-off students. Because students were behind, there were low academic expectations which created a cycle of low academic performance. Lastly, health and safety issues were higher for students living in poverty. They did not have access to resources such as food, medical resources, or healthy living spaces. This led to school absences, tardiness, and undiagnosed illness. These factors contributed to a child's ability to perform successfully in school (Jensen, 2009).

Another factor that affected students at-risk' abilities in school was their psychosocial and affective processes. The researchers, Nunn and Parish (1992), found that high school at-risk students were less motivated, had lower self-concepts and liked informal and non-traditional ways of learning. Students at-risk didn't believe that they had any personal empowerment, nor could they affect any change in their situations along with not having confidence in their abilities. Students at-risk were typically one to two years older than their classmates, had attendance problems, had difficulty with school discipline, did not participate in school activities, and often transfer from one school to another (McLaughlin & Vachta, 1992). These factors along with the poverty factors create an environment at home and in school where students did not believe they could be successful academically, developed relationships with other students and teachers, or felt like they belong in school (Jensen, 2009; McLaughlin & Vacta, 1992; Pianta, 1999).

In a study by Knesting and Waldron (2006), at-risk high school students were interviewed to identify what motivated them to stay in school. Through these interviews and observations, the researchers identified several factors that kept students at-risk in school. Three

themes developed: goal orientation, willingness to play the game (follow the rules), and meaningful connections. While the first two themes were a large part of what kept students in school, it is the third theme, meaningful connections, that was the factor that allowed students to persist in their goals and willingness to play the game. Students stated that it was a supportive teacher or administrator rather than a school program that kept them from dropping out. While the teachers interviewed stated that the reason students stayed in school was because of the programs in place (Knesting & Waldron, 2006).

In a study by McHugh, Horner, Colditz and Wallace (2013) adolescent students described their relationships with teachers as bridges, in which teachers were perceived as intentionally making the effort to connect with students, or barriers in which teachers were perceived as inattentive and stereotyping. The barriers the students described demonstrate a lack of investment in the student as an individual. The researchers identified an essential process which teachers and students working together constructed boundaries for their relationship. These boundaries formed a protective structure for students especially in the face of determining which teachers are "safe" to build a relationship with. Without these boundaries, students were cautious about their relationship with their teacher (McHugh et al. 2013)

Psychological disengagement among minority student in elementary school was studied by Strambler and Weinstein (2010). The study looked at three aspects of psychological disengagement; valuing academics, devaluing academic, and alternative identification using first through fifth grade low-income, minority students. The researchers found one school aspect, individual level negative teacher feedback to predict devaluing of academics by students along with a trend of classroom level teacher care which also predicted devaluing of academics. The results demonstrated that students who perceived that their teacher gave them negative feedback

also indicated they devalued academics more. Strambler and Weinstein posited that psychological disengagement effects the relationship between teacher-student interactions and academic achievement.

Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this study was to explore student's perceptions of teacher-student relationships in the elementary setting. Furthermore, an attempt at understanding the context and setting in which students perceived these relationships has been described. In this section the theoretical framework and its underlining review of research.

Nel Noddings, (2003) is a prominent figure in the care theory's development. She has described caring in two ways, the caring–for and the caring about. Noddings stated that,

> "Caring-for is the direct face-to-face attempt to respond to the needs of a cared-for. It uses the response of the cared-for in monitoring and shaping what it does to meet these needs …" (Preface to the second edition, para. 13).

Caring-about moved from face to face interactions to a more public realm. Caring-about allowed us to care for others at a distance (Noddings, 2003).

Noddings (2005) further described a caring relationship as, "…in its basic form, a connection or encounter between two human beings – a carer and a recipient of care, or cared-for." (Chapter 2 paragraph 2). The caring for characteristics included engrossment and motivational displacement. Engrossment or attention happened when the caring for were open and receptive to the cared for. The caring for is really listening and understands what the cared for is expressing. The caring for then responded to the cared for in an appropriate way. Motivational displacement was the feeling that caring for had when they were engrossed in the cared for and wanted to respond to the cared for in a way that helped them. It was a universal

human characteristic to know that one is cared for. Students in school were no different. They wanted to be cared for in a genuine way. This required the caring for to be engrossed or pay attention to the cared for by utilizing motivational displacement by really listening, seeing, and feeling what the cared for was expressing (Noddings, 2005; Noddings, 2012).

Caring in the education environment has been described as teachers demonstrating several caring behaviors such as showing interest in a student, empathic listening, treating students with respect, and providing academic support (Garza, Ovando, & Seymour, 2010). Kim and Schallert (2011) found that students need to feel a sense of trust with the teacher to view their relationship as a caring relationship. They also found that, "The caring relationship built between teacher and each student seemed to guide their understanding and constructions of themselves. When students could perceive the teacher's caring for them, they developed an image of themselves that was confirmed by the teacher, becoming more confident in themselves…." (Kim & Schallert, 2011 p. 1066.). Students who did not perceive teacher caring had trouble seeing themselves as good and had more negative encounters with teachers (Kim & Schallert, 2011).

Students identified several teacher behaviors as being perceived as a caring supportive teacher. Teachers would. "…look for the good in students, and pointed it out to them and shared it with the class." (Knesting & Waldron, 2006, p. 607). By celebrating the students, teachers were contributing to students' belief that they were valued and appreciated. Several other characteristics of teacher support identified by students were that supportive teachers didn't give up on students even if students made mistakes in the past, teachers discussed the future with students, teachers knew about students' lives outside of school and how that affected student

persistence, and teachers had high expectations for students regardless of their situation (Knesting & Waldron, 2006).

Meehan, Hughes, and Cavell (2003) found that aggressive African-Americans and Hispanic students were more receptive to teachers' efforts to provide a warm caring relationship which in turn promoted the students' sense of belonging to the classroom and created a stronger commitment to academic and social norms. Teachers who recognized, understood and respected their students built caring relationships with students and could then provide opportunities for students to learn academically as well as socially (Noblit, Rogers, & McCadden, 1995).

In a study by Garza, Ovando, and Symour (2010) about Latino and White high school students' perceptions about teachers and how their behaviors indicated caring, the researchers measured whether ethnicity and gender influenced students' perceptions about teacher caring. The survey included three subscales which described types of behaviors that teachers utilized to demonstrate caring: validating student worth, individualizing academic success, and fostering positive engagement. The researchers found that ethnicity did not play a significant influence in student perceptions of their teachers' caring behavior, while gender did have a significant influence on student perceptions of teacher behaviors (Garza, Ovando, & Seymour, 2010).

While Garza, Ovando, and Seymour (2010) did not find that ethnicity influenced student perceptions about teacher caring, King and Chan (2011) did find that African Americans and Hispanic high school students perceived teacher caring attributes differently than Caucasian students. African Americans and Hispanic students perceived teacher caring differently in the areas of classroom management, inter-personal relationships, and respect and trust. The only theme where these two ethnic groups perceived teacher caring similar to Caucasian students was academic support (King & Chan, 2011).

Jeffery, Auger, and Pepperell (2013) found three overarching categories of fourth grade student perceptions of teacher-student caring relationships. Students perceived caring from teachers in the ways teachers met their physical needs such as safety where teachers keep students safe and meeting basic needs such as feeding students or giving them a break. Students also described teacher caring as fostering emotional well-being. Teachers provided comfort, connected in personal ways, and made students feel valued through positive recognition. The final category was providing strategic assistance in academics such as helping students when they did not understand. Teachers also provided assistance in personal issues such as helping students deal with anger of a death in the family.

Carol Gilligan's (1993, 1996) work in relationships with self and the world described psychological growth in the context of relationships.

> She states," Relationship requires connection. It depends not only on the capacity for empathy or the ability to listen to others and learn their language or take their point of view, but also on having a voice and having a language. (Gilligan, 1982, 1993 p.xix).

She described three specific times when the psychological development of humans either develops further or there is a disruption. The first took place at infancy. Relationships began at infancy with the infant and parent learning each other's signals and cues. When the infant cried, the parent interpreted the cry as hungry, wet, or uncomfortable. If the infant was hungry and the parent interpreted the cry as wet, the infant learned to change the cry in order to get what it needed from the parent and the parent learned the signal.

In a patriarchal society, boys around the age of five, are pressured to take on the patriarchal expectations of society as being a "real man" or a "real boy". For little boys this meant being hurt without feeling hurt, to separate feelings from actions, not participating in

activities that were seen as “girly” or demonstrate nurturing types of actions. Boys disconnect from what they know in order to comply with societal pressures (Chu, 2014; Gilligan, 1993, 1996; Raider-Roth, 2005).

Girls reach this crossroad in their adolescence. Brown & Gilligan (1993) discovered through their five year longitudinal study of girls at the Laurel school, observed girls struggle with listening to their own voice and that of others as they moved through adolescence. Girls who were once confident in their own knowledge and self were either silenced by themselves or others in order to avoid open conflict or disagreements that might lead to isolation. Girls began to dissociate and began to use the phrase, “I don’t know” to hide what they know from themselves and others. The world around them was telling them that no one wants to know what girls know so to be accepted, girls and women disconnected from themselves in order to have relationships with others (Brown & Gilligan, 1993).

According to Raider- Roth (2005), “… the learning process is inherently relational; it is a process embedded in students’ braided relationships with self, teachers, and peers.” (p.18). One important factor in students being relational learners was trust; trust in the knowledge gained, trust in the teachers, and trust in themselves. Raider-Roth (2005) described four features in trustworthy teaching-learning relationships. The first feature was the teacher’s ability to connect with students. Teachers who connected with their students had a mutual empathy in which the teacher assumes the experience of the students and the student in turns feels the engrossment of the teacher. This allowed student to feel part of the classroom community and learned that they could communicate, have their needs met and meet the needs of others. Learning became relational (Raider-Roth, 2005).

A teacher's genuine interest in students and their ideas was the second feature in a trustworthy teaching-learning environment. Teachers demonstrated interest in student ideas and expressed curiosity about the idea and would often explore the idea in collaboration with the student. This leads to the third feature: teacher-student collaborative inquiry. Teachers who demonstrated that they were also learners would craft new knowledge with students creating collaborative trusting relationship. The fourth feature: an environment of safety, involved creating an environment in which trust could grow and develop. Students in the study stated that they would only share their learnings if the teacher would hold conversations in confidence. This environment includes permission to disagree and allowed everyone to be heard (Raider-Roth, 2005).

Students in Raider-Roth's (2005) study described reading relationships in their classroom and making decisions about what to share and how to share what they knew. Students understood that teachers formed conceptions of students regardless of how the students viewed themselves. Students were able to access their teacher's conceptualization and determine how, what, and when they would respond to their teacher about their knowledge. Many times this would include telling the teacher what he/she wanted to know rather than stating what the student was really thinking or knowing (Raider-Roth, 2005).

Noddings (2003) stated that, "…we cannot justify ourselves as carers by claiming "we care." If the recipient of our care insists that "nobody cares," caring relations do not exist." (Preface to the second edition, para. 7). Those being cared for had to acknowledge that they were being cared for in order for a caring relationship to exist or there was a relationship without caring (Garza, Ovando, & Seymour, 2010; Noddings, 2003; Tosolt, 2009,). According to Chaskin and Rauner (1995), "… caring is a value that is grounded in the kinds of relationships

that good teachers have cultivated for years." (p. 673). Students academically and socially benefited from caring relationships with teachers (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Garza, Ovando, & Seymour, 2010; Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Noddings, 2003, 2005, 2012; Stipek, 2006; Tosolt, 2009).

Summary

This chapter presented a review of literature related to the problem under investigation. Many studies have been conducted about students and teachers and their interactions with each other. Beginning in the early 1960s and 1970's, the studies were observing and surveying teachers and how they thought students interacted with them (Brophy & Good, 1974; Good, 1981; Pianta, 1999; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992; Weinstein, 1983). Students' perceptions were not considered other than to identify teacher behaviors (Weinstein, 1983). As researchers had begun to study teacher-student relationships, which included student voices, a trend was developing where teachers who demonstrated caring behaviors towards students developed more positive relationships with those students (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Garza, Ovando, & Seymour, 2010; Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Noddings, 2003; Stipek, 2006; Tosolt, 2009). These positive relationships, notably with students at-risk, provided students with the resources they need to be successful academically and socially (Jensen, 2009; Kim & Schallert, 2011; Knesting & Waldron, 2006; McLaughlin & Vacta, 1992; Pianta, 1999; Noblit, Rogers, & McCadden, 1995). Chapter 3 will present the methodology and research design of the study.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to explore student's perceptions of student-teacher relationships in the elementary setting. Furthermore, an attempt at understanding the context and setting in which students perceive these relationships were described. This chapter contains the description of the design and methodology that was used in conducting this study. It is divided into the following sections: (1) research questions; (2) research design; (3) participants and site selection; (4) access to site; (5) Instrumentation; (6) data collection; and (7) data analysis.

Research Questions and Null Hypothesis

The following research questions guided this study.

1. What are the significant differences, if any, between at-risk and non-at-risk students with regards to their perceptions about teachers as measured by the CATSB?

H_0 There is no difference in students' perceptions about teachers as a Secure Base between at-risk and non-at-risk students.

2. How do at-risk students identify and describe their positive and negative relationships with teachers?

Research Design

An explanatory sequential mixed method approach was utilized in this study (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The quantitative method includes a descriptive analysis, means and standard deviation analysis, and an Analysis of

Variance (ANOVA) procedure utilizing the Children's Appraisal of Teacher as a Secure Base (CATSB), in which a student self-survey assessed student's appraisal of their homeroom teacher as a caring figure, whether teachers are available and receptive, and if they are willing to be receptive to student feelings, needs and behavior (Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2006). This survey was given to all fourth grade students in four randomly selected elementary schools in a South Texas school district. Each school has about 120 students in fourth grade which could generate between 400 to 480 participants. This survey method was chosen to investigate at-risk and non-at-risk students' perceptions of teacher-student relationships which provided as explained by Creswell (2014), "a numerical description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (p. 156).

The qualitative method utilized was focus groups of at-risk and non-at-risk fourth grade students selected from two of the four elementary schools surveyed in the school district based highest and lowest number of students at-risk. The data were analyzed separately and integrated into an explanation of the results (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011).

Phase I Quantitative

Participants and Site Selection

A South Texas school district was utilized for this study in the interest of feasibility and time. This school district resides ten miles from the Mexican/American border. The city in which the school district resides, has a population of 37,601 people as of the 2010 U.S Census. The median household income is $37,057 and has a poverty rate of 27.7%. Eighty-five percent of the population is Hispanic (United States Census, 2010). The school district consists of two high schools, four middle schools and eleven elementary schools for a total of 17,329 students in early childhood through twelfth grade. Of those students, 66% were identified as at-risk and 98% of

the students are Hispanic. Four out of eleven elementary schools were selected for this study using a simple cluster sample for the student survey (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The four elementary schools had between 73% and 81% at- risk students, the highest among the eleven elementary schools. These schools had between five and eight classrooms and each student could possibly see two to five teachers on a daily basis. The total number of students among the four schools was 445 students of which 145 students participated in the survey.

Fourth grade students were selected because this age group was in the Concrete Operational Stage in Piaget's developmental stages. Students in this stage were able to demonstrate logical, concrete reasoning and their thinking becomes less egocentric and are increasingly aware of external events. They also began to realize that one's own thoughts and feelings are unique and may not be shared by others or may not be part of reality (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969).

During the quantitative phase, 145 fourth grade students in the four selected elementary schools who had parental consent to participate, were invited to participate and complete the Children's Appraisal of Teacher as a Secure Base (CATSB) scale which is a self-report survey created and researched by Al-Yagon and Mikulincer (2006).

Parent and student permissions were sought before any research activity was started. Student confidentiality was maintained through the use of alphabetical and numeric codes for each participant as well as the elementary school they attended (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). A statement describing the purpose, nature, and benefit of the study was provided to the parents and participants before conducting the study. All participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time. They were

informed that all personal and identifying information would be kept confidential (Moustakas, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Access to Site and Participants

The researcher contacted and requested permission, through a written statement, to conduct the study from the superintendent of schools in the school district selected for the study (See appendix C1). Once the Superintendent granted permission, IRB approval was granted. The researcher contacted the four elementary schools in the district and requested permission, from the schools' principals. Once permission was granted, the researcher contacted each school and requested that they identify a "gatekeeper" or a person who was the contact person for the researcher (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This gatekeeper assisted the researcher in obtaining demographic data of the students participating in the study, scheduling times when the researcher could go into the schools to conduct the survey and focus groups, and was the point of contact with parents. The researcher requested written permission from all parents of the students in fourth grade at each of the four elementary schools selected to conduct the CATSB self-report scale (See appendix C3).

Instrumentation

The main quantitative data were collected from the Children's Appraisal of Teacher as a Secure Base (CATSB) as developed by Al-Yagon & Mikulincer (2006). Al-Yagon & Mikulincer (2006) developed the Children's Appraisal of Teacher as a Secure Base (CATSB) with three major goals in mind. They wanted to create and evaluate the validity of an instrument which tapped into children's appraisal of teachers as a secure base, second, they wanted to examine the specific sense of attachment security and their global attachment. And thirdly, they wanted to examine how the CATSB scores contributed to their socio-emotional and academic adjustments.

In the study, Al-Yatgon & Mukulincer (2006) used four self-report measures for children and one for teachers. The *Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire* was developed by Asher et al in 1990 and focused on student's feelings of loneliness, the *Children's Sense of Coherence Scale* developed by Margalit and Efrati in 1995 which focused on children's sense of confidence, the *Attachment Style Scale* developed by Finzi et al. in 1996 which focused on children's attachment style towards others, and the scale being developed in the study, CATSB. The teacher instrument utilized in the study was the *Teacher Assessment of Student Academic Functioning* developed by Margalit in 1995.

The CATSB was developed in two phases. The first phase included interviews with teachers, students and experts in the field of attachment theory. The interviews revealed two major characteristics in the perceptions of teachers as a secure base, the first being positive expression of teachers being available and accepting and the second being negative expressions of teachers being unavailable and rejecting. In the second phase of the development, the researchers created a preliminary survey with twenty-eight items based on the expressions revealed through the interviews. Thirty-eight students completed the survey and they were asked to provide feedback on the survey. Based on the feedback, two items were deleted for repetition and several had changes in language. As a result of phase two, the current survey consisted of twenty-six items, eighteen which tapped into positive expression of teachers and eight items which tapped into negative expressions of teachers (Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2006).

A factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to determine internal validity of the CATSB which explained 38% of the variance. One item was deleted due to high loading on both factors. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was high, $\alpha = 0.90$, for the seventeen items on availability and acceptance, and the coefficient alpha was acceptable, $\alpha = 0.72$, for the eight item

rejection factor and implied adequate internal validity according the researchers. The researchers summed up the items that corresponded to each factor and determined the higher the score the higher the appraisal of teachers as accepting or rejecting (Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2006).

Pearson correlations were conducted with the CATSB and the global attachment style. The correlation revealed a significant but moderate association between the two CATSB scores and the attachment styles. Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the contribution of the CATSB to children's socio-emotional and academic adjustment and it was found that there was a "…significant contribution of the set of attachment variables. $F(5, 502)=51.36$, $p < 0.01$…" (Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2006, p. 10). Overall, the researchers found that their findings supported the validity of the CATSB.

The CATSB has two subscales, *Available/Accepting* expressions and *Rejecting* expressions. In the Available/Accepting expression subset, students responded to statements such as; *My teacher makes me feel welcome in the class, My teacher is always there to help me when I need her, My teacher always gives me lots of attention, and my teacher trusts me*. The *"Rejecting*" expressions subset included statements such as; *My teacher tends to complain about me to other adults, My teacher makes me feel unneeded in the class, and My teacher makes me feel unwanted*. Students responded to each statement using a Likert scale to determine the degree in which students identified with the statement. The Likert scale consisted of seven degrees which were: *(7) applies very much, (6) Applies, (5) Applies somewhat, (4) Applies to a medium degree, (3) Does not apply much, (2) Does not apply, (1) Does not apply at all.*

Permission to use the CATSB was requested and granted from Michal Al-Yagon on June 26, 2011. (See appendix A3)

Data Collection

Data were collected through the student survey, CATSB, developed by Al-Yagon, (2006), about their perceptions of student- teacher relationships. Four hundred and fort-five fourth grade students in four elementary schools in a school district in South Texas were invited to participate in the study. The researcher obtained class rosters with demographic data which included whether or not a student was identified as at-risk. After obtaining parental permission, 145 students participated in the survey. The researcher entered each of the four elementary schools and conducted the CATSB scale to all students whose parents provided written permission to participate in the survey. To assure confidentiality, class rosters with a number code next to each participating student was utilized. Students were given the CATSB survey instrument which had the number code at the top of the questionnaire which correlated with the class roster. Students completed the questionnaire at their school as a group. Scripted directions, which included an explanation of the Likert scale, was read at the beginning of each questionnaire session. (See appendix A2) Questionnaire samples were read aloud to ensure participant understanding of the questionnaire. All questionnaire data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet software and then converted into a SPSS software file. This allowed the researcher to filter students by school, at-risk or not at-risk, and by subsection of the CATSB and facilitated the selection process for the focus groups utilized in phase two.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the CATSB self-report scale were entered into an Excel software sheet and was converted to SPSS file. An exploratory analysis as the extraction method: principal component analysis, the Eigen value, and varimax rotation was conducted to validate the results of the CATSB. This reduced the data to two factors which explained 54% of the total

variance. Cronbach's alpha reliability co-efficient was computed for the two factors of the survey; *Available/Accepting* which consisted of ten items from the CATSB and *Rejecting* which included seven items from the CATSB.

A descriptive and exploratory analysis was utilized to provide demographic information about at-risk status of the students who participated in the survey and how they responded. Responses provided by students has been presented as means and standard deviations and confirmatory Analysis of Variance procedure was used to determine any significant differences among students' perceptions of teacher-student relationship between at-risk and not at-risk students, the independent variable. The dependent variables were delineated by the two subscales on the CATSB; availability/acceptance and rejection. The data was analyzed by the subscales and between at-risk and non-at-risk students (Pallant, 2013).

Phase II Qualitative

Participants and Site Selection

During the qualitative phase, the researcher utilized the sampling to achieve representativeness or comparability, specifically confirming and disconfirming cases. This type of sampling… "involves selecting units of analysis that either verify or refute patterns in the data that have emerged (or were defined a piori) in order to further the understanding of the phenomenon under study" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009 p. 175). Students were selected to participate in the focus groups from the group of students who participated in the survey based on being at-risk, how they responded on the survey subscales, location, and parental permission.

Parent and student permission were sought before any research activity was started. Student confidentiality was maintained through the use of alphabetical and numeric codes for each participant as well as the elementary school they attended. A statement describing the

purpose, nature, and benefit of the study was provided to the parents and participants before conducting the study. All participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. They were informed that all personal and identifying information would be kept confidential (Moustakas, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Access to Site and Participants

Once the survey was conducted, the researcher requested additional parental permission for six to eight students at two of the elementary schools to participate in a student focus group. The six to eight students were selected utilizing a cluster sampling from the group of students who participated in the CATBS and provided parental permission (see appendix C4). The survey results had been recorded using Excel software and were filtered so that only at-risk student response were visible. The survey responses were separated into the two subscales; Accepting/Available items and Rejecting items. Each subscale was totaled for each student. The students with the highest total in each subscale were selected as a possible participant. Students were then filtered by school and the two schools with the most students were selected. The selected students were provided with a parental permission form. Four students from one school and eight students from the second school for a total of twelve students participated in the focus groups.

Data Collection

The second phase was qualitative and consists of two semi-structured focus groups with twelve fourth grade at-risk students in order to obtain more in depth understanding of student perceptions of teacher-student relationships (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher utilized the data

from the CATBS to identify at-risk students who answered in the high and low range of the scale and sent written notice explaining the nature and purpose of the study and requested permission to participate in the focus groups. Once permission was received, the researcher began conducting focus groups with the participants at two of the elementary schools. One focus group consisted of at-risk students who responded on the positive expression subset of CATSB and the other group consisted of at-risk students who responded on negative expressions subset on the CATSB. The groups consist of 4-8 students and was conducted in a quiet room at the school they attended. Every effort was made to schedule the focus group at a time that is best for students and the researcher. The first focus group was conducted in the school library's classroom during the students' elective period which was near the end of the day. The second focus group was conducted in the school's break room during the students' elective period. This time was near the end of the day when the breakroom was not in use. The focus group was audio and video recorded to ensure accurate information. Video recording was utilized so that the researcher could identify the speaker and observe body language. The audio recording was utilized by the researcher to assist in transcribing the conversation (Polgar, 2013). While conducting the focus group, the researcher built rapport with the participants by asking basic questions about the participants' interests, hobbies, and daily life (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Gibson, 2007). Once rapport was established, the researcher asked open-ended questions about students' perceptions of their elementary teacher relationships.

A discussion of the definition of relationships was conducted before specific questions about teacher-student relationships were asked. Students were asked to think about their elementary teacher and describe their relationship with that teacher. Examples of focus group questions were; What do teachers do to show they care? How do teachers behave when they care

about students? How do teachers behave when they do not care about students? What are some things your teacher does that makes you feel good? Do you ever get yelled at? (Jeffrey, et al (2013); Pianta, 1999). (See appendix B for semi-structured focus group questions) After each focus group, the researcher transcribed the audiotape/video tape and reviewed the data collected utilizing Excel Software (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Data Analysis

The data collected through the focus groups was video and audio recorded. The video recording was viewed and a typed transcription was created. The audio recording was listened to and used to confirm the typed transcription from the video. The transcription was analyzed along with the researcher notes from the focus groups using color coding of the transcript and Excel. This procedure allowed easy generation of clustering significant statements, quotes and allowed emerging themes to develop (Moustakas, 1994).

The researcher utilized structural coding when analyzing data from the focus groups. The researcher began with a start list of codes, or deductive coding derived from the research questions, the student survey utilized in the quantitative phase, and information from the literature review. As a preparatory approach to the data coding, the researcher holistically and manually coded each focus group's transcript and researcher's notes by color utilizing the codes derived from the student survey and review of literature. (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

The second cycle of coding was pattern coding which entailed grouping the bits and pieces of data coded from the first cycle into emerging, categories, themes, and constructs (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The pattern codes were mapped into a matrix display using Excel and color coded by themes and patterns that emerged in order for the researcher to reflect,

draw conclusions, and conceptualize the patterns. Reoccurring themes across the focus groups were identified (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Coding significant statements and/or quotes provided an understanding of how the students perceived student-teacher relationships. Clustering pieces of coded data into themes assisted the researcher to write the structural and textual description of the, context and setting in which students' experience teacher-student relationships (Creswell, 2007).

Summary

This chapter presented the methodology and research design of the study. The purpose of this study was to explain students' perceptions of teacher-student relationships in the elementary setting. Furthermore, an attempt at understanding the context and setting in which students perceived these relationships was described. This section described the design and methodology that was used in conducting this study. The study used an explanatory sequential mixed method approach which consists of two phases. The first phase was quantitative and included a descriptive analysis, means, and standard deviation analysis, and an Analysis of Variance. The second phase was qualitative and consisted of two semi-structured focus groups in which data was coded and clustered into categories. Chapter 4 will present the results of the CATSB student survey.

CHAPTER IV

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore student perceptions of teacher-student relationships in the elementary setting. Furthermore, an attempt at understanding the context and setting in which students perceive these relationships were described. This chapter reports the results of the data collected from the CATBS survey as described in chapter III. The data analysis answered the research question: What are the significant differences, if any, between at-risk and non-at-risk students with regards to their perceptions about teachers as measured by the CATSB? One null hypothesis was tested in the study. The results of the exploratory and confirmatory analyses are presented in this chapter.

In Al-Yagon and Mikulincer's (2006) study, the survey originally contained 26 items, eighteen items that represent students' perceptions of teachers as Available/Accepting and eight items that represented students' perceptions of teachers as *Rejecting*. The researchers eliminated one item in the available and accepting factor owing to the fact that the item loaded on both factors which implied redundancy (Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2006). This created two factors; *Availability/Accepting* and *Rejecting*.

For this study data were collected from 145 fourth grade students using the Children's Appraisal of Teacher as a Secure Base (CATSB). An exploratory factor analysis utilizing Principal Component analysis as the extraction method, and varimax rotation was conducted to explore the constructs of the CATSB. The twenty five items initially yielded five factors which

were reduced to two by eliminating items to seventeen. The Cronbach's alpha was used to analyze the reliability of the two factors, *Available/Accepting* and *Rejecting*. The Cronbach's alpha for the *Available/Accepting* factor was .91 using 10 items (3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17, 22, and 24). The Cronbach's alpha for the R factor was .83 using 7 items (6, 7, 12, 15, 18, 19, and 20). The two pure factors explain 54% of the total variance. When all of the items were used it explained 58%, so removing 8 variables only reduce this by 4%.

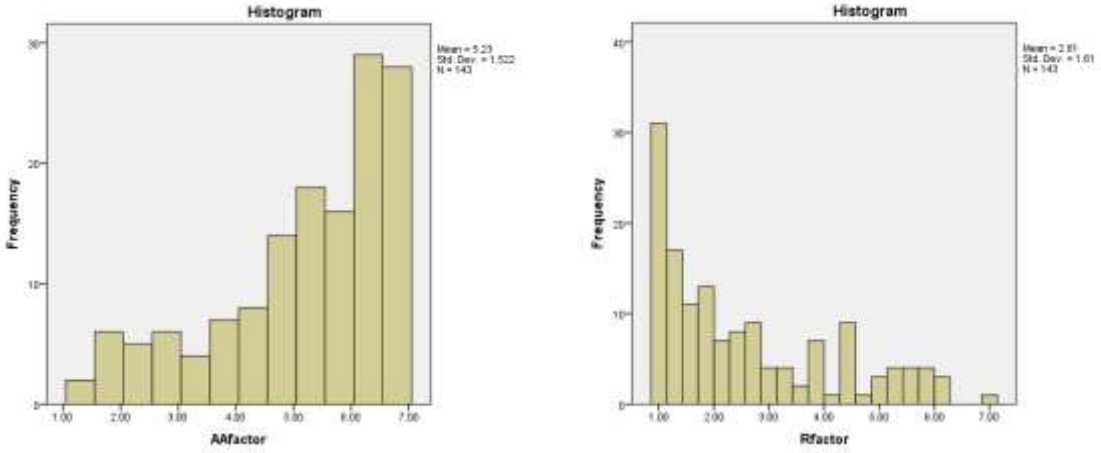
Thus, factor scores were generated by averaging items 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17, 22, and 24 into factor AA (*Availability/Acceptance*), and items 6, 7, 12, 15, 18, 19, and 20 into factor R (*Rejecting*). Exploratory analyses revealed that Factor AA (*Availability/Acceptability*) was negatively skewed, Factor R *(Rejection*) was positively skewed, and the kurtosis measures for both factors were within normal range. Table 1 contains the descriptive statistics for Factors AA and R (Table 1), and Figure 1 displays histograms of the factors. Furthermore, Box-and-Whisker's plots initially displayed two outliers which were removed reducing the sample group to 143. Kolmogrov test of normality yielded a .14 for factor AA and .16 for factor R, $p < .05$, which indicate that the distributions were not normal.

Table 1

Means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis statistics for the combined group (N=143) of at-risk and non-at-risk students' perceptions

Group	M	SD	Skewness	$SE_{skewness}$	Kurtosis	$SE_{kurtosis}$	N
Factor AA	5.23	1.52	-.92	.20	-.09	.40	143
Factor R	2.61	1.61	.87	.20	-.38	.40	143

Figure 1 Histogram of Factor AA, and Factor R, n=143



Means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis measures for at-risk and non-at-risk students for Factor AA and Factor R are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis statistics for subjects' Availability/Acceptance (AA factor) and Rejection (R factor) perceptions x at-risk/non-at-risk subjects

Subjects	M	SD	Skewness	$SE_{skewness}$	Kurtosis	$SE_{kurtosis}$
AA factor of at-risk	5.09	1.57	-.77	.26	-.41	.52
AA factor of non-at-risk	5.42	1.44	-1.21	.31	-.76	.62
R factor of at-risk	2.99	1.68	.58	.26	-.86	.52
R factor of non-at-risk	2.05	1.33	1.46	.31	1.38	.62

Factor AA was negatively skewed whereas Factor R was positively skewed, and the kurtosis were normal with the exception of Factor R for non-at-risk students. Outliers were detected for non-at-risk students for Factor AA and Factor R, but not for at-risk students. To explore the data further and test the null hypothesis despite the lack of normality, a multivariate analysis of variance was performed yielding significance. Thus, the univariate analysis of variance results are presented in the forthcoming tables (Table 3 and 4).

Table 3

Summary Table for the Acceptance/Availability factor between at-risk and non-at-risk students

Source of Variation	SS	dt	MS	F	*p*	Partial eta^2
Between subjects	3.82	1	3.82	1.66	.20	-
Within subjects	325.19	141	2.31			
Total	4237.44	143				

The means for *Acceptance/Availability* as a secure base were 5.09 and 5.42 for the at-risk group and the non-at-risk group respectively were not different, $p>.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected. However, the means for *Rejection* as a secure base were 2.99 and 2.05 for the at-risk group and the non-at-risk group respectively were different, $p<.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 4

Summary Table for the Rejection factor between at-risk and non-at-risk students

Source of Variation	SS	dt	MS	F	*p*	Partial eta^2
Between subjects	30.51	1	30.51	12.74	.00	.08
Within subjects	337.61	141	2.39			
Total	1341.04	143				

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the CATBS student survey. Data were collected from the sample of 145 fourth grade students using the CATSB. An exploratory factor analysis utilizing Principal Component analysis as the extraction method, and varimax rotation was conducted to explore the constructs of the CATSB. The twenty five items initially yielded five factors which were reduced to two by eliminating eight items. The Cronbach's alpha was used to analyze the reliability of the two factors, Available/Accepting and "*Rejecting*". The Cronbach's alpha for the Available/Accepting factor was .91 and the Cronbach's alpha for the R factor was .83. The two pure factors explain 54% of the total variance.

The Exploratory analysis was conducted and revealed Factor AA was negatively skewed while Factor R was positively skewed. Two outliers were identified and removed which reduced the sample size to 143 students. A Kolmogrov test was conducted and indicated that the distributions were not normal. A multivariate analysis of variance was conducted despite the lack of normality. The univariate analysis of variance results in the means for at-risk and non-at-risk students on the "*Accepting/Available*" as a secure base factor as showing no significant difference and thus the null hypothesis is not rejected. The means for at-risk and not-at-risk on

the "*Rejecting*" as a secure base does indicate a significant difference and does reject the null hypothesis. Chapter 5 will present the results of the student focus groups.

CHAPTER V

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore student perceptions of teacher-student relationships in the elementary setting. Furthermore, an attempt at understanding the context and setting in which students perceive these relationships will be described. This chapter reports the analysis of the data collected through two focus groups as described in chapter III. A total of twelve at-risk students, three males and nine females, participated in the two focus groups. Two categories emerged from the data collected for understanding students' perspectives of teacher-student relationships. The two categories consist of *Accepting /Available* interactions and *Rejecting* interactions. Two themes, teacher actions and teacher verbalizations developed within each category and in each theme, two patterns emerged as how at-risk students describe their relationships with teachers; academic interactions and personal interactions.

Focus Group One

The first focus group consisted of four at-risk, female, fourth grade students. All of the students spoke Spanish and English. During the rapport questions, students stated they liked reading and math and didn't like writing. They liked to go to places such as the beach and they liked to read on their tablet. One of the students indicated that she liked to solve problems. This group had the highest rating on the Rejecting subset of the Children's Appraisal of Teachers as a Secure Base (CATSB).

During the actual semi-structured questions, they hesitated to answer questions about their own interactions with teachers. When follow up questions were asked about their observations of their teachers interacting with other students, they seemed to hesitate less. All questions were answered with short phrases or statements such as, “She helps you a lot.”, “teach us”, “help us”, “care for us”, ‘ignore us”, “scream”, and “they don’t listen to us.” One student spoke more than the other three. She spoke in longer sentences such as: “because they yell at you when you are doing something wrong”, and “because when a student foes up to her and tells her that they wanted. They wanted her to help them and then she doesn’t want to help them.” The other three students would answer when prompted to and they would repeat words, phrases and statements when asked to explain further or use another word that meant the same thing or something similar such one student’s response:

Student: she helps you a lot.

Researcher: what do you mean by that?

Student: that she helps you with everything.

This group was unable to describe what relationships meant to them. Definitions and some examples of relationships they may have such as their family and best friend at school were provided.

Focus Group Two

The second focus group consisted of eight at-risk students, three males and five females and all students spoke English This group had the highest results in the *Accepting/Available* subset on the CATSB. This group was more talkative and seemed to feel more comfortable talking about relationships with teachers. They asked questions before we started, talked and joked with each other, and laughed often. One student in particular was saying things, sometimes

inappropriately, to get the rest of the group laughing. This students also tended to exaggerate such as when he spoke about having to write stories and correct them all day and all night.

When asked questions during the rapport building time, all hands would go up and were trying to be the first to answer questions. Students shared that they liked reading, math, science and one student liked writing because she got to write about things that happened to her. Their least favorite subject was writing because they had to write a whole paragraph. Outside of school. The students enjoyed going to the pool, playing sports such as basketball, soccer and baseball. The students' answers were longer and more in depth, but also included the short phrases that the first focus group used. This group would occasionally build on other student answers through agreeing or disagreeing with other student statements.

The second focus group emphasized that they liked teachers who let them do what students wanted to do such as play on computers, play games, draw or draw on the whiteboard. This group described relationships as best friends who can keep secrets and someone they trust. These relationships also consisted of getting together, saying nice things, and having confidence in each other.

Focus Group Results

During the first cycle of analysis of the structural coding, two categories; *Accepting/Available* and *Rejecting* emerged from the data collected during the two focus groups. These categories aligned with the subsets, *Accepting/Available* and *Rejecting,* of the survey conducted during the quantitative phase of the study. The second cycle of analysis consisted of clustering and coding statements to discover themes and patterns. In this study, two themes emerged, student perceptions of teacher-student relationships through teacher actions and teacher verbalizations. While coding the transcripts for the emerging themes, it became apparent that

there were two patterns developing from the student data. Each theme and category had academic interactions and personal interactions. Academic interactions were about how students were doing academically in class and how the teachers supported or did not support students academically within the classroom. For example, students commented: “She helps a lot.” or “they tell the kid he did everything wrong.” Personal interactions were specific to the students themselves. For example: students stated, “You’re a great kid.” or “They call you names.” The statements students shared were about them as a student and personal rather than how they did the work or learned the concepts being taught. Students described perceived personal interactions with greater detail than any other type of interaction. These are the comments or actions teacher say and/or do to students as individuals that may not have anything to do with academics (see appendix D for table 5 and table 6 with at-risk Student Perceptions of Student Teacher Relationships).

“Accepting/Available” Interactions

The first category describes students’ perceptions of teacher-student relationships as “*Accepting/Available*”. Within this category, two themes and patterns emerged. Students described their relationships as teacher actions and teacher verbalizations and within each theme students described teacher actions and verbalizations in terms of personal interactions and academic interactions. Students described “*Accepting/Available*” interactions as teachers helping students solve problems, sitting next to students and working with them. One student in particular described a teacher as being “*Accepting/Available*” with the statement, “She helps you a lot.”

Teacher actions consisted of “*Accepting/Available*” statements of what teacher did. When asked what teachers do to show they care about students, students replied with statements like,

"she helps you with everything." and, "she helps you understand." One student stated, "When you don't understand something, the teacher sits with you and they talk about it."

Student perceptions of teacher verbalizations was the second theme to emerge from the data collected. These are all the things teachers say to students throughout the day. Students describing "*Accepting/Available*" type statements shared that teachers said things such as, "You did a good job." and, "You did well." or, "they will tell you nice stuff." Academic interactions that were perceived as "*Accepting/Available*" consisted of both teacher actions and teacher verbalizations. Students described teacher academic interactions as helping students when they needed help. This included helping students understand what is being learned and letting students know that they were doing well. Teachers also used activities to help students. As one student said, "they talk [about] activities so that we can learn better."

Students described "*Accepting/Available*" personal interactions as teachers telling students that they are good, saying nice things about students, and as one student said, "When you are misbehaving with somebody who misbehaves a lot, they tell you not to hang out with them." Another student, who responded to a student who stated that his teacher didn't care about his grades, with the comment, "Ms. W says it's okay, don't worry." Both of these statements were perceived as teachers being accepting and available to the students who were in need.

"Rejecting" Interactions

The second category describes students' perceptions of teacher-student relationships as rejecting interactions which consist of statements that describe teachers rejecting students in times of need. Students describe rejecting interactions as the teacher ignoring them, not paying attention to them, calling students names, and saying they don't care about student grades. For

example, students stated, “they are not paying attention.”, “They don’t listen to you.” They call you names.”, or “ tell you that you are not doing good.”

Several students described teachers, who they felt didn’t care about them, as using what they called the teacher look. When asked what the teacher look was, a student made a stern face and stared. Students around him were nodding their head yes in agreement as to what the teacher look looked like to them.

When asked how teachers behave when they do not care about you, students described teacher actions as rejecting such as, “They are on their phone and doing something else.” or “They’re on the computer.” or, “they don’t help you.” Teachers making the teacher face was stated by several students along with, “they [teachers] don’t listen to you.” Students also described teacher actions as ignoring and not acknowledging students when students need their help. While rejecting teacher verbalizations were described by student statements such as, “screaming [at students].” or, “yelling when they [students] don’t behave.” Students described teachers as saying, “I don’t care.” and, “They yell at you when you do something wrong.”

Academic interactions that were perceived as rejecting interactions also consisted of teacher actions and verbalizations. Students’ discussions centered on both themselves receiving the rejecting interactions and observing other students receiving the rejecting interactions. The types of verbalizations students described were teachers yelling at students for not doing the work correctly or calling them names. One student said, “Because when a student goes up to her and tells her that they wanted, they wanted her to help them and then she doesn’t want to help them.” Another perception students had of rejecting interactions centered on grades. Comments made by students were, “When you get a bad grade, they [teachers] say I don’t care.” and, “They (teachers) say it’s not my grade.”

Students described their perceptions of rejecting personal interactions as teachers not caring about them by not respecting students, not listening to students, ignoring students, yelling and screaming at students, and talking bad about them to others. An example of how students perceived ignoring was stated by one student as, "[teachers] ignore them, they [students] raise their hand and she [teacher] doesn't call on them." Students described yelling and screaming in terms of students not doing what they are supposed to and not following teacher directions. In terms of teachers not respecting students, students perceived statements such as, "they [teachers] say GO OVER THERE!" and saying, "Hey you!" instead of their name as demonstrations of rejecting interactions.

Another perception students described was when teachers didn't let students do what they wanted to do or redirected students for misbehaving or doing something wrong. Students described feeling mad and perceived this as a rejecting interaction. One student said, "They make me feel mad when they don't let me do whatever I want." Another students stated, "They make me mad when I get in trouble."

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the student focus groups. At-risk Students perceive teacher-student relations in two basic dimensions; "*Accepting/Available*" interactions and "*Rejecting*" interactions. Within these two basic dimensions, at-risk students perceived teacher-student relationships as either academic interactions or personal interactions through teacher actions and teacher verbalizations. At-risk students described their teacher-student relationships in terms of academic interactions which were about how they were doing academically and personal interactions which were about students personally, outside of academic performance. Teacher actions were the things teachers did, whether it was helping or not helping students, or

whether it was using their body language, such as used a teacher look, that conveyed "*Accepting/Available*" interactions or "*Rejecting*" interactions. Teacher verbalizations were the things teachers said to students or about students that conveyed either "*Accepting/Available*" interactions or "*Rejecting*" interactions. Chapter 6 will present a summary, conclusions, recommendations, and implications of this study.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATONS, IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore student's perceptions of teacher-student relationships in the elementary setting. Furthermore, an attempt at understanding the context and setting in which students perceived these relationships were described. The research questions that guided this study were: 1) What are the significant differences, if any, between at-risk and non-at-risk students with regards to their perceptions about teachers as measured by the CATSB? and 2) How do at-risk students identify and describe their positive and negative relationships with teachers? The conclusions drawn from the data analysis in both quantitative and qualitative phases of the study are discussed in this chapter. The chapter concludes with recommendations and implications of the study.

Summary

An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used which consisted of two distinct phases (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In the first phase of this study, The Children's Appraisal of Teacher as a Secure Base (CATSB) was used to measure fourth grade students' perceptions of teacher-student relationships (see appendix A1). The participants were selected from a school district in south Texas. The population in the district was 17,830 K – 12 grade students with 1,307 fourth grade students. Of the total number of students 57.4% were identified as at-risk (Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic

Performance Report, 2013). A total of 145 students from four elementary schools participated in the survey, 86 were identified as at-risk and 59 were not identified as non-at-risk.

Items from the survey were read to the students and students selected the appropriate number on a Likert scale matching their perception of statement. The scale ranged from 7) applies very much, 6) applies, 5) applies somewhat, 4) applies to a medium degree, 3) does not apply much, 2) does not apply, and 1) does not apply at all. Examples of the statements read to students were: "My teachers makes me feel welcome in the class." "My teachers makes me feel that what I do is important." "My teachers make me feel unneeded in the class." "My teachers are embarrassed that I am their student." Student responses were analyzed using an exploratory factor analysis to determine validity. The data were reduced to two factors, *Available/Accepting* and *Rejecting* through eliminating items on the CATSB from twenty-five to seventeen items. A Cronbach's alpha was conducted on each factor with (AA) factor at .91 and factor (R) at .83.

The data collected were analyzed in three ways using SPSS software. The first analysis was to obtain descriptive information using student demographics. Second, student CATSB survey responses was presented using means, skewness and kurtosis of the factor scores of the whole group and at-risk and not at-risk groups, standard deviations and the third analysis was Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedures in order to determine if differences exist among at-risk and non-at-risk students' responses on the two subscales of the CATSB.

The exploratory analysis was conducted and revealed Factor AA was negatively skewed while Factor R was positively skewed. Two outliers were identified and removed which reduced the sample size to 143 students. A Kolmogrov test was conducted and indicated that the distributions were not normal. Brown's (1997) discussion on skewness included a section on violations of skweness in which a violation of skewness may be a desirable outcome depending

on the type and purpose of the test. Considering the purpose of the CATSB as whether or not students perceive their teacher as a secure base, the skewness results can be interpreted as a desired outcome as students perceiving their teachers as a secure base is a desired outcome (Brown, 1997, April). A multivariate analysis of variance was conducted despite the lack of normality and it showed significance. Therefore the researcher performed univariate analysis of variance resulted in the means for at-risk and non-at-risk students on the AA factor as a secure base factor as showing no effect size for the Partial eta^2 which resulted in no significant difference between the two groups. The means for *Accepting/Available* factor of at-risk students was 5.09 and 5.42 for not at-risk students indicating that teachers as *Accepting/Available* applies somewhat for both groups of students. Students perceive teachers as being *Accepting/Available* somewhat. Thus the null hypothesis was not rejected based on the *Accepting/Available* factor.

The means for at-risk and not-at-risk on the *Rejecting* factor as a secure base does indicate a significant difference. The means for the at-risk showed an effect size for the Partial eta^2 of .08 indicating a significant difference between students who were identified as at-risk and not at-risk. Thus the null hypothesis was rejected based on the significant difference between groups in the *Rejecting* factor. The mean for at-risk students in the *Rejecting* factor was 2.99 indicating that teachers as *Rejecting* does not apply much. The mean for not at-risk in the *Rejecting* factor is 2.05 indicating that teachers as *Rejecting* does not apply. At-risk students perceive their teachers as more rejecting than not-at-risk students.

Phase two consisted of the qualitative data collected through semi-structured focus groups, which explored fourth grade students' perceptions of teacher-student relationships in more depth. The data collected from the focus groups were analyzed using the Excel software which helped the researcher cluster comments and quotes into emerging themes. The reason for

collecting quantitative and qualitative data was to explain the two forms of data to bring greater insight into the problem than would have been obtained by either type of data separately (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

During the second phase of the study, two semi-structured focus groups with a total of 12 at-risk students participated in the focus groups. At-risk students whose parents provided consent to participate were selected to participate in the focus groups based on data from the CATSB student survey. Once rapport was established, questions such as: 1)"How do teachers behave when they care about students?" and 2) "How do teachers behave when they do not care about students?" were asked. Student responses were analyzed utilizing Excel software through two analysis cycles, deductive coding and pattern coding. During the first cycle, deductive coding, two main categories emerged from the analysis of the data collected which aligned to the CATSB survey subscales: acceptance/availability and rejection. The second cycle of analysis, pattern coding, revealed two themes: teacher actions and teacher verbalizations and two patterns: academic interactions and personal interactions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Conclusions

The current findings partially support the hypothesis in the study concerning at-risk and non-at-risk student perceptions of their relationships with teachers as a secure base as measured by the CATSB. The findings revealed student perceptions did not significantly differ among all students in the area of "*Accepting/Available*". Students agreed that teachers who were "*Accepting/Available*" gave students lots of attention; praised their abilities; were there for students when they needed them; and made them feel they were an asset to the classroom. This finding is in line with several studies that indicated students see their teacher as a source of security, respect, and caring (Bergin & Bergin, 2009, Jensen, 2009, Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman,

2009). At-risk student perceptions of teacher-student relationships did significantly differ from non-at-risk students in the area of "*Rejecting*". At-risk students perceived teachers as "*Rejecting*" when teachers did not make students feel welcome or as though students did not exist, and kept students at a distance. Students felt unneeded, unwanted, and felt teachers were embarrassed to have the student in their classroom (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005, 2005; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). Al-Yagon and Margalit's (2006) previous study utilizing the CATSB found similar results with little or no significant difference among children on the "*Accepting/Available*" factor, and a significant difference the "*Rejecting*" factor (Al-Yagon & Margalit, 2006).

At-risk students perceived their relationships with teachers through the lens of teacher actions and teacher verbalizations which students interpreted as either "*Accepting/Available*" or "*Rejecting*". When asked about their relationships with their teachers, at-risk students described how teachers spoke and what they did that either led students to believe they had a caring relationship or an uncaring relationship with them. Many of the teacher comments that students reported were about how students were doing academically or about students personally.

The first focus group of at-risk students in the study appeared shy at first. They had a difficult time describing specific teacher verbalization and actions and when they did speak it was in short phrases using limited vocabulary. When the questions were reframed to ask if they ever saw or heard teachers exhibiting caring and uncaring behaviors towards other students, they were able to describe more interactions. This particular group of students may have needed more rapport time and by asking them how they saw other teacher-student relationships may have given them more time to feel comfortable (Gibson, 2012; Morgan, Gibbs, Maxwell, & Britten, 2002). The first groups interactions could also be attributed to the beginning stages of Gilligan's

(1995, 1996) study where the expectations of the society pressured adolescent girls to disconnect from themselves and others about the knowledge they have. These girls may have chosen not to share what they were really thinking and say what they thought was expected from them. The second group of students were more forthcoming and they seemed to like sharing their perceptions of teacher-student relationships. This group answered questions quickly, would agree with others in the group, and would also repeat what another had said.

Overall, at-risk students described more *Rejecting* types of interactions than "*Accepting/Available*" interactions which aligns with the results of the CATSB where at-risk students perceived teachers as more rejecting, M = 2.99, than non-at-risk students, M = 2.05. Students were able to be more specific and the responses were more varied when describing "*Rejecting*" interactions which is aligned to what Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, and Lehr (2004) found which was that students with higher risks had less favorable social engagement than students with lower risks. The students in the study indicated that there was less social engagement by the teacher which led to perceptions of not caring. The "*Accepting/Available*" interactions were vague and students had a more difficult time describing teacher verbalizations and actions in detail. At-risk students have a more limited emotional and behavioral repertoire than non- at-risk students which could explain why student responses were short, brief and repetitive (Jensen, 2009).

Strambler and Weinstein (2010) found that how minority and low income students perceive their learning environment and what their level of psychological disengagement was, depended on their perception of teacher-student relationships. The more negative feedback students perceived from teachers, the more likely they would devalue academics which effects achievement. While the students in this study never spoke about their academic status, they did

speak about teachers not valuing their work or effort. Several times students brought up that teachers would tell them they didn't care that the student's grade was failing and that it was the student's grade not their (teacher) grade. The students in this study perceived that since the teacher did not care about their grades, then teachers do not care about them as students which results in disengagement in school.

Noddings (2012) describes a caring relationship as a connection with another human being. This connection consists of engrossment or attention by the caring for at which point the caring for must engage in motivation displacement or setting aside their own thoughts and needs to fully attend to the cared for. The cared for must receive and acknowledge the engrossment or attention and send back a signal that indicates the cared for received the attention to complete the caring interaction. At-risk students may not be receiving a feeling of engrossment from the teacher and thus, does not feel cared for by the teacher based on student comments such as: "They are not paying attention." or "They are on their phone and doing something else." These are teacher behaviors that send a signal to students of not caring.

Gilligan (1993, 1996) and Chu (2014) also describe relationships as requiring a connection. But this connection has societal repercussion as students grow and learn. There are expectations of boys beginning at five years old where they have to be a "real boy" which means not to show emotions or do anything that may seem "girly". Thus boys disconnect from themselves in order to fit in societal norms. The boys in this study spoke about other students and rarely about themselves. They spoke of being able to do whatever they wanted and seemed mad when teachers would not allow them to.

For girls, the societal impact happens around adolescent. Girls disconnect from themselves and their knowledge in order to fit into accepted norms. Girls become selective about

who and what they talk about and feel. Many times the girls in Gilligan's (1993, 1996) study would say "I don't know" rather than share their knowledge or ideas. The girls in this study exhibited some of the same characteristics from Gilligan's studies (1993, 1996). The girls would say, "I don't know." or they would smile and hesitate to answer as if they were trying to figure out what the interviewer wanted them to say. This way of disconnecting made it difficult to get more specific information about how students and teachers perceive their relationships and may have kept students from sharing their experiences and knowledge.

Relationships develop patterns of feelings, beliefs, and expectations, which through time and intensity, direct the behaviors and interactions of those involved (Stuhlman & Pianta, 2001). Teachers who are in poor or negative relationships with students, exhibit responses that are less supportive, give more criticism, and tend to reject students with behavior problems (Henricsson & Rydell, 2004). "*Rejecting*" verbalizations and actions by teachers are described in research as providing little or no support, provide fewer resources, and giving up on students which were characteristics described by at-risk students in this study and led students to perceive that teachers do not care for them (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Henricsson & Rydell, 2004; Stuhlman & Pianta, 2001).

Mercer and DeRosier (2010) described student perceptions in terms of teacher preference. Teachers who preferred low conflict students displayed more positive interactions with students who engaged in low conflict. While high conflict students received more negative interactions which led to more conflict. Students are aware of teacher preference through verbal and non-verbal actions. At-risk students, who tend to have more conflicted relationships perceive teacher actions as more "*Rejecting"* even when teachers try to conceal negative feelings (Mercer & DeRosier, 2010). The students in this study did not discuss teacher preference, but did indicate

that bad behavior received negative interactions that seemed to carry over to whether or not the teacher would support them such as not calling on students when their hand was up or ignoring students when they asked for help.

At-risk students in this study felt strongly about teachers listening to them and respecting them which aligns with what Johnson (2008) states, "Listening, it would seem, is one of the most basic ways teachers convey their respect for their students as fellow human beings. To 'not listen' signals more than just being too busy to attend to students – it shows disrespect." (p. 392). Not listening takes several forms such as teachers ignoring students when they raise their hand and don't call on them or when students ask for help and teachers don't help. These dyadic interactions send cues and signals through verbalization and actions, which students perceive as rejecting. The quality of the relationship is diminished as a result of rejecting verbalizations and actions which may lead to more anti-social behaviors from students (Moritz, Rudasill, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). Relationships become a cycle of teachers verbalizing and exhibiting rejecting actions which at-risk students perceive as not caring which leads to more anti-social behavior which begins the cycle of rejecting relationships over again (Henricsson & Rydell, 2004). Students also devalue academics and disengage in the learning environment when at-risk students perceive the teacher-student relationship as deteriorating and becoming more negative. This devaluing of academics affects then places students at risk of struggling academically (Strambler & Weinstein 2010).

"*Accepting/Available*" teachers are able to experience motivational displacement where they begin to think about what they can do for those they care for as carefully as they do for themselves. They become seized by the needs of students. Students receive the caring in the forms of verbalizations and actions, who then respond to the caring and show the teachers that is

has been received. This reception, recognition and response to caring completes the caring interaction (Noddings, 2012).

Teachers in caring relationships with students begin the caring process by being attentive to and accurately interpreting students' signals. For at-risk students, this attentiveness is perceived in several forms such as teachers being nice to students, teachers recognizing when students are struggling and helping students understand the lesson they are working on, or more importantly, listening to students. This attention to at-risk students' needs sends the cues and signals of engrossment and motivational displacement to students who then acknowledge the caring, which begins the cycle of an expanding caring relationship between the teacher and the student (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Noddings, 2012; Pianta, 1999).

Noddings (2012) states that those being cared for must recognize they are being cared for in order for a caring relationship to exist, otherwise, a caring relationship does not exist. For students to perceive a caring relationship, it is required that the "carer" (Noddings, 2012, chapter 2, para 2), teachers, to pay attention to the cared for, students, by utilizing motivational displacement. Teachers have to stop thinking of their own projects, needs and concerns and focus on the needs and concerns of the student, by really listening, seeing and feeling what the student is expressing so that the teacher can respond appropriately in a way that helps the student meet the needs they are expressing (Noddings, 2012).

Recommendations

Teacher-student relationships are important to the future of a student's success in school (Bergin& Bergin, 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005). Being able to identify and implement the caring types of interactions which help students be successful would assist first year teachers and

teachers who struggle with positive relationships with students, build "*Accepting/Available*" relationships that send students on a path of success. Teacher preparation programs focus on instructional delivery and content knowledge with little focus on teacher-student relationships. On-going professional development in the area of teacher-student relationships where teachers are able to learn, discuss and receive feedback on teacher-student relationships they are in, would provide relevant and immediate continuous learning for teachers creating more positive relationships with students.

Schools, school districts and teacher preparation programs must create and support policies that build teachers' capacity to recognize and implement positive interactions with students. Schools can find creative ways to allow time for teachers to interact with students in non-academic ways in order to get to know their students in non-academic ways. Mentoring programs where the most critical students have the opportunity to regularly meet with a caring adult who has their success in the forefront changes that student's trajectory from high risk to on track to be successful academically as well as emotionally and socially (Stipek, 2006).

Relationships are built over time (Stuhlman & Pianta, 2001). The more time a teacher spends with a child, the greater opportunity for the teacher and the student to develop a positive, caring relationship. One way to increase time is to have teachers "loop" with their students. This would require a teacher to move up grade levels with a core group of students for two to three years then move back down to pick up another core groups of students. At-risk students would have the most benefit from this type of school practice. When students have the same contact with the same teacher for more than an academic year, the relationship deepens, intervention is more strategic, and at-risk students are more successful. It is a practice that fosters a sense of family and consistent teacher-student relationships. "Looping" is correlated to improved reading

and math performance, emotional stability, stronger bonds among students, teachers and peers, and an overall sense of belonging in school (Jensen, 2009; Pianta, 1999).

Student transitions is another area to review for providing more time for students and teachers to build relationships. In most elementary schools, students report to several teachers in one day. Unlike most kindergarten classrooms where students spend the whole day with one or two adults, the upper elementary students transition to various teachers for content instruction. This can take anywhere from two or three transitions to six or seven transitions. This many contacts with different teachers can be disruptive for an at-risk student and affect their sense of security and feelings of having a secure base (Pianta, 1999). Reducing the number of transitions will allow at-risk students more time with one or two teachers in which to develop an effective relationship.

The findings of this study raises more questions about teacher-student relationships and how those relationship develop and are perceived by students and teachers. Future studies in which students and teachers' perceptions are explored would contribute to the way teachers and school administrators interact with students and specifically when interacting with at-risk students. Long term studies in which at-risk students and their teachers are observed and interviewed for each other's perspective of the relationship would shed light on how relationships are built and how their interactions influence the paths the relationships take (Strambler & Weinstein 2010).

Future studies should include attachment styles of students and their teachers with a focus on the effect of one style versus another has on the teacher-student relationship. Specific areas to include would be student and teacher internalizing and externalizing behaviors, the social-

emotional functioning of students, and the effects of these areas on the teacher-student relationship (Al-Yagon & Mukulincer, 2006; Strambler & Weinstein 2010)

Implications

The first implication for the findings of this study is the importance of student perceptions of teachers as caring about them. The teacher-student relationship is an important aspect of school and student success. Teachers who take the time to build positive nurturing relationships with students help their students down a pathway of successful development outcomes (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005, Stipek, 2006). The findings of this study suggest that actions and verbalization from teacher to student affects student's perceptions of their teacher as either "*Accepting/Available*" or "*Rejecting*". Teachers who do the following: listen to students, acknowledge students, provide feedback that is specific to the task, specific praise for effort, support students academically, and care about student grades are perceived by at-risk students as "*Accepting/Available*" and thus caring about them.

The importance of teacher preparation program's role in developing the pre-service teacher's awareness of relationships and how those relationships affect students is paramount to a student's academic success (Newberry, 2010). Preservice teachers enter the teaching field with beliefs of what teaching is based on their twelve to fourteen years as a student. They have observed and experienced a variety of teacher-student relationships and teaching. They feel they only need to be in the field to demonstrate their expertise as teachers. Preservice teachers do not perceive the need to acquire further skills (Books, Byers, & Freeman, 1983). This perception leaves room for pre-service students to be unaware of how to develop positive teacher-student relationships. While it is important for pre-service teachers to be able to deliver instruction and

have classroom management, developing the skills to build caring relationships with students is an important aspect to investing students in the instruction that is being delivered.

Second, a culture of caring throughout the school would provide consistency in relationships with students. This culture must include discussions among teachers and administrators about what behaviors students perceive as caring and how teachers and administrators demonstrate those behaviors. If every adult in the school is behaving and interacting with students in "*Accepting/Available"* ways, student will improve their academic performance, be able to overcome the effects of poverty, and build successful relationships among school staff. It is not enough to deliver instruction and expect students to be successful. At-risk students need to know that the adults in their life care about them and their education in order to be successful (Noddings, 2012; Jenson, 2009).

Lastly, schools, leadership, and educators need to understand and overcome the challenges at-risk students face at home and at school. At-risk students have several factors that prevent them from being successful in school. The types of responses from the students in this study demonstrate that at-risk student have a limited emotional repertoire of emotional responses (Jensen, 2009). Their responses were short answer and very similar to one another. Educators can provide the role models, examples, and support for at-risk students to expand their repertoire of emotional responses that help students develop more resources to be successful in school. School leaders and educators can send a student down a path that leads to success and mitigates the risks students face through supporting the whole child, hard data, accountability, relationship building and developing an enrichment mind-set among all the adults at-risk students interact with on a daily basis (Jensen, 2009; Pianta, 1999).

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A1

CHILDREN'S APPRAISAL OF TEACHER AS A SECURE BASE SCALE (CATSB)

(Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2006)

Code:_____

Participants respond by circling the appropriate number along the following seven point scale: (7) Applies very much, (6) Applies, (5) Applies somewhat, (4) Applies to a medium degree, (3) Does not apply much, (2) Does not apply, (1) Does not apply at all.

1 My teachers make me feel welcome in the class.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
2 My teachers make me feel that what I do is important.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
3 My teachers are always there to help me when I need them.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
4 My teachers always give me a lot of attention.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
5 My teachers tend to complain about me to other adults. (For instance: parents, teachers, principal). [o]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
6 My teachers make me feel unneeded in the class. [o]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
7 My teachers make me feel unwanted. [o]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
8 My teachers trusts me.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
9 My teachers is aware of my good qualities.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
10 When I am worried or sad my teachers help me feel better.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

11 My teachers believes in my abilities.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
12 My teachers are embarrassed that I am their student. [o]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
13 My teachers are pleased with my behavior.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
14 My teachers praise my abilities in front of other people.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
15 My teachers would prefer me to be someone else. [o]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
16 My teachers make me feel I am an asset to my class.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
17 My teachers believe that I mean to make an effort.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
18. My teachers make me feel as though I do not exist.[o]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
19 My teachers do not appreciate what I do. [o]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
20 My teachers keep me at a distance. [o]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
21 My teachers express their appreciation of me even when I try but fail.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
22 My teachers praise me when they are pleased with me.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
23 I feel free to talk with my teachers.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
24 My teachers praise me when I do a good job.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
25 My teachers try to get me to be closer to them.[a]	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Modified by the researcher

[a] Theses items loaded on the availability and acceptance sub-scale.

[o] These items loaded on the rejection sub-scale.

APPENDIX A2

SCRIPT FOR CONDUCTING THE CATSB

Researcher will state the following:

Hello boys and girls. I am Ms. Pocquette and I am a student like you. I am a student at the University of Texas Pan American and just like how you work on projects where you gather information and then write a report, I am also gathering information to write a report. The information that I am gathering is how students perceive their relationships with teachers. This means that I want to know what you think about how you interact and get along with your teacher. I am hoping that you will help me out by completing a survey today. I have your parents' permission to give you the survey; however I would like to have your assent or agreement to do the survey. If you agree to complete the survey please write your name on this form. You can stop completing the survey at any time if you feel uncomfortable with any of the statements on the survey. (Pass out the assent form for students to sign)

Now I am going to pass out the survey. Each survey has a number code at the top. This code will let me know who completed the survey. The information you give me will be confidential, meaning that I will not share how you completed the survey with anyone. When I write about it in the report I will not use your name or where you go to school. I will say, "a student or a school". Please do not write your name or your teacher's name on the survey. Please do not begin the survey until I give you directions. (Pass out the survey).

This survey has statements or sentences about how students may or may not feel about their teachers. I will read each statement and you will select a number which describes how you feel about the statement. Here is what each number means: (write the Likert scale on the board along with its descriptor) (7) Applies very much. That means it happens all the time or your feel that way all of the time. (6) Applies. This means it happen most of the time or feel that way most of the time but not every time. (5) Applies somewhat. This means that it happens once in a while or you feel that way once in a while. (4) Applies to a medium degree. (3) Does not apply much. This means that rarely happens or you rarely feel that way at. (2) Does not apply. This means

that it has rarely happened or you have rarely felt that way (1) Does not apply at all. This means that it never happens or you never feel that way.

Here is an example: (write this on the board. I like to read. (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1)). The statement is: I like to read. Now I think about the statement and choose a number that I think fits how I feel about the statement. I can choose 7 applies which means I love to read all the time. 6 applies which means that I like to read most of the time. 5 applies somewhat which means that I am ok with reading. 4 applies to a medium degree which means I will read when I need to. 3 does not apply much which means I will read when I have to. 2 does not apply which means that I don't like to read. And 1 Does not apply at all which means I hate reading.

Who can tell me what you are supposed to do? (Call on several students to check for understanding

Do you have any questions about what you are supposed to do? (answer questions)

Let's begin. I will read the statement and give you time to circle the number you feel best fits how you think or feel about the statement.

Read each statement and allow time for students to circle a number.

When all the statements have been read say:

Thank you for helping me gather some information about how you think about your relationship with your teacher. Once again I will not share how you answered with anyone. I will use your answers to figure out how boys and girls like you usually see your relationships with teachers. I will share the summary of all your answers in my dissertation which is like your reports. I am hoping to let teachers know what they can do to have a good relationship with students so that they can help students be successful in school.

APPENDIX A3

PERMISSION TO USE CATSB VIA E-MAIL

Alyagon

To Me

Jun 26, 2011

Dear Jayne,

You have my permission to utilize the CATSB scale. I will be happy if you could keep me informed of your results.

Sincerely,

Michal Al-Yagon

Michal Al-Yagon, Ph. D.,

Constantiner School of Education

Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv 69978, Israel

Telephone: W - 972-3-6407120; H - 972-3-938-2740

Fax: 972-3-902-3144.

E-mail: alyagon@post.tau.ac.il; alyagon@bezeqint.net

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT

Good _____ (morning/afternoon). My name is Ms. Pocquette. Thank you for joining me today.

I am a student at the University of Texas – Pan American. I am conducting a research study about how students see their relationships with their teachers. I have invited you here today so that I can conduct a focus group about your experiences related to this topic. A focus group is a group of people who get together to talk about a topic. The focus group is expected to last approximately one hour. Your individual responses will be treated confidentially, which means that I will not share your responses with anyone. Statements made by other group members should also be treated confidentially and should not be shared outside of this group. Your participation is completely voluntary; although you have all shown interest in participating in this group, you are free to withdraw from the focus group at any time and can choose not to answer specific questions."

Your parents have given permission for you to participate in the focus group. You do have a choice in participating in the focus group. If you agree to participate, please sign this agreement form. If you do not choose to participate, you can leave at this time.

I will be videotaping and audio taping our conversation. The purpose of video and audio taping is so that I can get all the details and at the same time pay attention to the conversation with the group. Your comments will remain confidential. I will be putting all of your comments together into a report which may have some students' comments without any individual names.

During our discussion, please do not use any teacher's name. You can say "my teacher" or say "Mrs P" for example. I will be asking several questions for the group to discuss. There is no right or wrong answer. Please answer from your point of view. You do not have to answer any question you are uncomfortable with. Let's begin with a few simple questions.

Establishing rapport and context questions:

1) What is your favorite subject in school? Why?

2) What is you least favorite subject in school? Why?
3) What do you like to do when you are not in school?
4) What does the word relationship mean to you?

Questions that address the research question:

1) What are some things teachers do to make you feel good?
2) How do teachers behave when they care about students?
3) How do teachers behave when they do not care about students?
4) Do teachers every make you feel sad or mad?
5) What do teachers do that make you feel sad or mad?
6) Do you ever get yelled at or punished? When?
7) Do you every get praised or rewarded? When?
8) Does the teacher pay attention to you? If so, how? If not, how? Why do you think that?
9) What are the things a teacher does to make you think that you have a positive/good relationship with them? Why do you think that?
10) What are the things a teacher does to make you think that you do not have a good relationship with them? Why do you think that?

Exit question:

1) Is there anything else you would like to say about your relationship with your teachers that we have not discussed?

Thank you for participating in this focus group. Your responses will be kept confidential and the video and audio recordings will be stored in a secure place. The recordings will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study.

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

AT-RISK CRITERIA

SUBCHAPTER C. COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Sec. 29.081. COMPENSATORY, INTENSIVE, AND ACCELERATED INSTRUCTION. (a) Each school district shall use the student performance data resulting from the basic skills assessment instruments and achievement tests administered under Subchapter B, Chapter 39, to design and implement appropriate compensatory, intensive, or accelerated instructional services for students in the district's schools that enable the students to be performing at grade level at the conclusion of the next regular school term.

(b) Each district shall provide accelerated instruction to a student enrolled in the district who has taken an end-of-course assessment instrument administered under Section 39.023(c) and has not performed satisfactorily on the assessment instrument or who is at risk of dropping out of school.

(c) Each school district shall evaluate and document the effectiveness of the accelerated instruction in reducing any disparity in performance on assessment instruments administered under Subchapter B, Chapter 39, or disparity in the rates of high school completion between students at risk of dropping out of school and all other district students.

(d) For purposes of this section, "student at risk of dropping out of school" includes each student who is under 21 years of age and who:

(1) was not advanced from one grade level to the next for one or more school years;

(2) if the student is in grade 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12, did not maintain an average equivalent to 70 on a scale of 100 in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum during a semester in the preceding or current school year or is not maintaining such an average in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum in the current semester;

(3) did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument administered to the student under Subchapter B, Chapter 39, and who has not in the previous or current school year subsequently

performed on that instrument or another appropriate instrument at a level equal to at least 110 percent of the level of satisfactory performance on that instrument;

(4) if the student is in prekindergarten, kindergarten, or grade 1, 2, or 3, did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or assessment instrument administered during the current school year;

(5) is pregnant or is a parent;

(6) has been placed in an alternative education program in accordance with Section 37.006 during the preceding or current school year;

(7) has been expelled in accordance with Section 37.007 during the preceding or current school year;

(8) is currently on parole, probation, deferred prosecution, or other conditional release;

(9) was previously reported through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) to have dropped out of school;

(10) is a student of limited English proficiency, as defined by Section 29.052;

(11) is in the custody or care of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or has, during the current school year, been referred to the department by a school official, officer of the juvenile court, or law enforcement official;

(12) is homeless, as defined by 42 U.S.C. Section 11302, and its subsequent amendments; or

(13) resided in the preceding school year or resides in the current school year in a residential placement facility in the district, including a detention facility, substance abuse treatment facility, emergency shelter, psychiatric hospital, halfway house, or foster group home.

(d-1) Notwithstanding Subsection (d)(1), a student is not considered a student at risk of dropping out of school if the student did not advance from prekindergarten or kindergarten to the next grade level only as the result of the request of the student's parent.

(e) A school district may use a private or public community-based dropout recovery education program to provide alternative education programs for students at risk of dropping out of school. The programs must:

(1) provide not less than four hours of instructional time per day;

(2) employ as faculty and administrators persons with baccalaureate or advanced degrees;

(3) provide at least one instructor for each 28 students;

(4) perform satisfactorily according to performance indicators and accountability standards adopted for alternative education programs by the commissioner; and

(5) comply with this title and rules adopted under this title except as otherwise provided by this subsection

(f) The commissioner shall include students in attendance in a program under Subsection (e) in the computation of the district's average daily attendance for funding purposes.

(g) In addition to students described by Subsection (d), a student who satisfies local eligibility criteria adopted by the board of trustees of a school district may receive instructional services under this section. The number of students receiving services under this subsection during a school year may not exceed 10 percent of the number of students described by Subsection (d) who received services from the district during the preceding school year.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 260, Sec. 1, eff. May 30, 1995. Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1588, Sec. 1, eff. Aug. 30, 1999; Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 725, Sec. 1, 2, eff. June 13, 2001.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1312, Sec. 4, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 690, Sec. 1, eff. June 19, 2009.

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

TABLE 5 AND TABLE 6

Table 5 At-risk Student Perceptions of Student Teacher Relationships

Accepting/Available Interactions			
Teacher Actions		Teacher Verbalizations	
Personal Interactions	**Academic interactions**	**Personal Interactions**	**Academic interactions**
·They make you feel better about yourself ·care for us ·they let you like play games ·good to you · They listen to you · They are nice to you · (Teachers praise when) they are impressed with you · They miss you	·She helps you a lot ·When you don't understand something the teacher sits with you and they talk about it ·she helps you by, she helps you understand it ·help you understand ·she helps you with everything	·when you're misbehaving with somebody um that misbehaves a lot, they tell you not to hang out with them · Ms W says its okay, don't worry ·they tell you nice stuff ·you're a great kid ·say good things	·you did a good job ·you did well ·you're a great student ·they talk (about) activities so that we can learn better

Table 6 At-risk Student Perceptions of Student Teacher Relationships

Rejecting Interactions			
Teacher Actions		Teacher Verbalizations	
Personal Interactions	Academic interactions	Personal Interactions	Academic interactions
·they are not paying attention ·they are on their phone and doing something else or ·they're on the computer ·being mean ·by looking at you with a look (teacher look) ·They don't listen to you ·They don't respect you ·they make me mad when I get in trouble ·they make me feel mad because they don't let me do whatever I want ·mad cause when they get after you ·Ignore them (students) ·Ignore them, they (students) raise their hand and she (teacher) doesn't call on them ·when they get mad at you ·staring down ·making the teacher face	·they don't help you ·they want you to flunk ·because when a student goes up to her and tells her that they wanted, they wanted her to help them and the she doesn't want to help them ·because he did something wrong	·say I don't care ·When you get a bad grade they say I don't care ·they say It's not my grade ·because they yell at you when you are doing something wrong ·They say GO OVER There! ·they call you names ·yelling when they (students) don't behave ·yelling don't follow instructions ·scream ·when they (teachers) talk, when they talk bad about you ·say Hey you	·calling names like you don't know anything ·they tell the kid he did everything wrong. ·tell you that you are not doing good.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jayne S. Pocquette attended the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh during 1976 through 1979. She took time off to begin a family and returned to college in the Fall of 1987. Jayne attended Drake University in Des Moines, IA and received her Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education in May of 1989. That fall, Jayne began working as an elementary teacher for the Weslaco Independent School District. During the time that Jayne was teaching, she attended the University of Texas Pan American from 1993 through 1995 where she received her Master of Education – Reading Specialist degree. She continued to attend the University of Texas Pan American and added the Mid-Management certificate in 1998. After teaching for seven years, Jayne was promoted to assistant principal with Weslaco Independent School District where she stayed for fifteen years. From 1995 through 2005, Jayne was an adjunct instructor with the University of Texas Pan American where she taught undergraduate classes in the education department. These classes included: reading instruction courses, early childhood courses, adolescent, growth and development, and classroom management courses. Jayne left Weslaco Independent School District in 2010 to join IDEA Public schools as an assistant principal. She was promoted to principal in 2012 and continues in this position with IDEA Public Schools to this day. In 2016, Jayne received the Doctorate of Educational Leadership at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Jayne lives at 897 Quail Hollow Drive, Weslaco, TX 78596.