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## From Outlaw to Outlier: The Role of Teacher Attachment Style in Addressing Student Behavior Problems in Kindergarten

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FROM OUTLAW TO OUTLIER: THE ROLE OF TEACHER ATTACHMENT IN  
ADDRESSING STUDENT BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS IN KINDERGARTEN

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A Dissertation  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education  
in  
Educational Leadership

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by  
Wendy Lee Durkee  
December 2017

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December 2017

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to add to the understanding of how teachers impact the emotional and behavioral development of kindergartners. This study looked at teacher beliefs, internal thought patterns about a student whose emotion regulation is immature, the behavior is disruptive, and challenging for his or her teacher. It examined multiple aspects of the teacher's response to the student's behavior in order answer the questions: Are the strategies used by the teacher for managing disruptive and challenging behavior consistent with her attachment style? How does this affect the academic trajectory of the student?

Based on results of the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) and the Teacher Relationship Interview (TRI), the primary findings of the study indicate that most of the teachers participating in the study were engaging with a challenging student from a secure attachment classification. The STRS provided information about the teacher's concern for the ability of the student to make an adequate adjustment to school. Those students with high conflict and low total scores were most likely to have behavior problems in 2nd grade. Also, the level of stress produced by the highly conflictual relationship was at times destabilizing for the teacher. Depending on whether the attachment status of the teacher was secure-continuous, secure-earned, or insecure, the ability of the teacher to be resilient in the face of the stress was affected.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project began when in my role as a marriage and family therapist I worked with students and teachers to resolve behavioral issues that interfered with a student's ability to function academically. I noticed that the response of the teacher toward student behavior seemed to make a difference in whether or not the student would progress. Dr. Schnorr listened to my ideas and affirmed my desire to explore this relationship in the doctoral program. Toward this end, my longtime friend, Teresa Constant, affirmed and supported my entry into the program. From then on, Dr. Piller continued this process. Dr. Piller's gentle encouragement and belief that this project was well worth doing made the difference for me. From beginning to end, the support of those in Cohort 3 has been amazing. Foremost, Dr. Brands has shared my interest in the topic of supporting teachers and students. As a member of my committee, she has been instrumental in helping me complete the project. Finally, the friends who have surrounded me with love and support over the years has kept me focused and determined to complete the task. To all, please know that my appreciation and gratitude is heartfelt. I know that none of us accomplishes anything of worth alone.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to the teachers and students who over the years have taught me so much about human strength and resilience in the face of sometimes overwhelming difficulties.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the 1999 massacre of students *by students* at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, investigators determined that our schools, like our culture, had become more contentious, volatile and polarized. Instead of lunchboxes and crayons, children began bringing weapons and drugs to school, reflecting the environmental circumstances in which they lived. Increasingly, students' behaviors crossed the line into violence over what seemed to be trivial issues. In response to these trends, "school boards were granted considerable latitude for establishing and interpreting their own disciplinary rules and regulations" (Cambron-McCabe, McCarthy, Thomas, & McCarthy, 2009, p. 167).

Policies adapted from criminological theories with zero tolerance underpinnings were adopted in the late 1990s (Plank, Bradshaw, & Young, 2009). A swift and punitive response sends the message that violent and criminal behavior will be met with immediate, severe consequences. The adoption of zero tolerance policies to eliminate or control dangerous behavior at school campuses was based on this line of thinking. Unfortunately, these practices resulted in unexpected negative consequences for students who were not targeted by these policies (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Reyes, 2006; Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Theriot, Craun, & Dupper, 2010).

Another study used the lens of institutional theory to explore and explain the unexpected outcome of these policies. One aspect of organizational behavior this study looked at was how governmental policies which are intended to reform school systems foster expectations that overwhelm the capacity of those systems to respond. The author explained that in response to the demands for reform, schools purchase services from private companies “that act as carriers of broader cultural norms that frequently reinforce the very practices they were hired to eliminate” (Burch, 2007).

A study by the American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force noted that the use of zero tolerance policies and procedures merited review. The study concluded that policies and procedures already in place in school districts should ensure the safety of every student attending school in that district, as well as protecting the integrity of the learning environment. However, the Task Force subsequently discovered that zero tolerance policies designed to hold at bay the most destructive behaviors of our adult culture did, paradoxically, foster those same activities in children. Those students, systematically excluded from the promised free and appropriate American education as a result of suspension and expulsion for disruptive but not dangerous behavior, were those most likely to choose drug use and criminal behavior as the next-best method for surviving in this world. Zero tolerance, it was found, actually increased the behaviors that it was intended to eliminate (American Psychological Association, 2008).

The school-to-prison-pipeline metaphor is employed to illustrate the connection between policies initially enacted to quell the rising incidence of violence and drug use (in adult American culture) and their eventual application in schools. It is an attempt to make sense of the difference between zero tolerance policies and the criminalization of disruptive (protest) behavior of students and asserting that it merits exclusion from school (Scheptet al., 2015). Historically, punitive sentencing of criminal behavior encoded as three strikes you're out policy exemplified zero-tolerance philosophy that began in the 1970s. This trend expanded to deal with drugs, gangs, and weapons found in schools to insulate and protect students from our culture's increasingly violent behavior. Subsequently, legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 ensured that failing students and schools would be penalized. The No Child Left behind Act operationalized exclusion of schools and students for failing to meet academic benchmarks. Additionally, the inclusion of police officers on staff was evidence that student misbehavior was increasingly perceived to be criminal. Unfortunately, schools using philosophies developed in the criminal justice system mimic actual prison dynamics. The result is the school to prison pipeline.

Wald and Losen(2003) identified the discriminatory nature of zero tolerance policies implemented in schools in the United States. The concepts and themes developed by these authors were presented at a research conference sponsored by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University Northeastern University's Institute on Race Injustice. They reported that minorities in the

student population were more likely to be excluded as a result of their minority status.

Approximately 68% of state prison inmates in 1997 had not completed high school. 75% of those under 18 who have been sentenced to adult prisons have not completed 10th grade. Within the juvenile justice population, 70% suffer from learning disabilities, and 33% are reading below fourth-grade level. The 'single largest predictor' of subsequent arrest among adolescent females is having been suspended, expelled or held back during the middle school years. 70% of women state prisoners have not completed high school (p. 11).

The authors pointed that gender discrimination is also an issue. They reported that "incarcerated girls and women are frequently victims of sexual and physical abuse, and this is often neither recognized nor understood by school officials (p.11)." Teachers and court officials may be making subjective judgments about a young person's potential for academic success based on their minority status.

Noguera (2003) made the point that school policymakers typically have not considered a child's academic and social development to be their responsibility. He asserted that the needs of the school were typically considered ahead of the needs of the students. To illustrate his point, he quoted a teacher who explained his use of suspension as follows: "Kids like him can't be helped (p. 342)." He went on to report his findings that suspension from school



is used to punish children with persistent behavior problems. He suggested that the benefit of this strategy is that when a student is suspended and placed on homeschool status, the school district is allowed to collect funds for average daily attendance. He went further to explicate a deeper issue involved which he described as follows:

An even closer examination of disciplinary practices reveals that a disproportionate number of the students who receive the most severe punishments are students with learning disabilities, students in foster care or under some form of protective custody, and students who are homeless or on free or reduced-price lunch (Noguera, 2003, p 342)

Additionally, this finding suggests that teachers in the classroom do not know how to address the needs of children whose behavior is disruptive. Regardless, children who are unable to meet academic requirements often externalize their frustration by acting out behaviorally which, depending on the response of the teacher, is disruptive.

The author further states that suspension and expulsion are strategies for maintaining social control and that schools have adopted our cultural response to behavior considered to be outside the norm.

Typically, schools rely on some form of exclusion or ostracism to control the behavior of students. Chastising a child who has misbehaved or broken a rule with a reprimand, or placing a child in the back of the room or out in the hallway for minor offenses, are common disciplinary

practices. For more serious infractions – fighting, defiance, cutting class – removal from the classroom or removal from the school through suspension or even expulsion served as the standard forms of punishment employed by schools throughout the United States (Noguera, 2003, p.342).

Finally, the author connects the practice of ostracizing students who act-out to the methods of social control used by society to punish adults who commit crimes.

Wilson (2014) characterizes the rise of zero tolerance policies and their implementation in American schools as a "culture of incarceration (p.49)." He points out that the culture of incarceration ignores the real needs of people who have difficult-to-solve social problems, thereby fostering family patterns that perpetuate those problems. He asserts that discipline that forces exclusion has been the cultural response to young people who have carried the burden of these social problems. He noted that while criminology was moving toward community policing strategies, schools continued to implement a one-size-fits-all response to threats to the safety of the school learning environment. Additionally, exclusion was identified as a tool used by teachers with poor classroom management skills to eliminate behavioral problems in their classrooms. He concluded, however, "The evidence is clear: policies that seek to exclude students from our schools and the educational process are not in the public's best interest (p.52)."

Cuellar and Markowitz (2015) identified districts across the United States that have implemented zero-tolerance policies to reduce violence and maintain optimal learning environments in schools. The analysis done in this study supports the idea that school suspension policies may have contributed to an overall increase in crime rates out of school. They admitted that the study did not account for the positive effects of improving the classroom environment for the students who remain in school and concluded that further study is necessary.

In response to the need for a change in policy to replace the zero-tolerance policy (Anyon et al., 2014; Burke et al., 2010; Feuerborn et al., 2013; Hopkins, 2002; Losen & Martinez, 2013), researchers began to look for an alternative. It is interesting to note that initially, the zero-tolerance policy was developed in the 1980s response as a political solution intended to combat drug use in the United States and was not intended to become policy for addressing student behavior in schools (Ward, 2014). At the time, however, it was thought that getting tough on disruptive and dangerous behavior was the best way to keep schools safe. However, it was found that this policy was increasingly being used to exclude students from the educational process through suspensions and expulsions for relatively minor disruptions in the classroom. Paradoxically, they found it lead to increases in the offending behavior. In an editorial, Gilliam (2009) explored what the goals of preschool should be and found that educators are likely to use IQ as a criterion for assessing readiness for kindergarten, leaving out the social-emotional components of development as well as the

involvement of the parents in the educational process. Other researchers looked for alternatives with a focus on restorative practices which incorporate the social-emotional aspects of the relationship (Feuerborn, 2013; Gilliam et al., 2016; Hopkins, 2002; Mitchell et al., 2013). Sutherland et al. (2003), using a transactional model with students most likely to engage in behavior that escalates disturbance, and their teachers found that the teacher-student relationship is reciprocal and can positively or negatively affect educational processes. This finding supports the search for more effective ways of dealing with disruptive behavior.

OLD PARADIGM - RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE		NEW PARADIGM - RESTORATIVE JUSTICE	
Misbehaviour defined as breaking school rules or letting the school down	1	Misbehaviour defined as harm (emotional/mental/physical) done to one person/group by another	
Focus on establishing blame or guilt, on the past (what happened? did he/she do it?)	2	Focus on problem-solving by expressing feelings and needs and exploring how to meet them in the future	
Adversarial relationship and process – an authority figure, with the power to decide on penalty, in conflict with wrongdoer	3	Dialogue and negotiation - everyone involved in communicating and cooperating with each other	
Imposition of pain or unpleasantness to punish and deter/prevent	4	Restitution as a means of restoring both parties, the goal being reconciliation and acknowledging responsibility for choices	
Attention to rules, and adherence to due process – ‘we must be consistent and observe the rules’	5	Attention to relationships and achievement of the mutually desired outcome	
Conflict/wrongdoing represented as impersonal and abstract: individual versus school	6	Conflict/wrongdoing recognised as interpersonal conflicts with opportunity for learning	
One social injury replaced by another	7	Focus on repair of social injury/damage	
School community as spectators, represented by member of staff dealing with the situation; those affected not involved and feeling powerless	8	School community involved in facilitating restoration; those affected taken into consideration; empowerment	
Accountability defined in terms of receiving punishment	9	Accountability defined as understanding impact of actions, taking responsibility for choices and suggesting ways to repair harm	

*Figure 1.* Hopkins (2002) Retributive and Restorative Justice in Schools.

Finally, Counsel (2014) reported that the state of California had enacted a law, AB 420, that eliminates the use of suspension and expulsion for minor offenses, including for defiance that is deemed to be willful for children in grades K-3. This law is the first of its kind in the United States and opens the way for

implementation of restorative practices in the classroom with students at risk for early social-emotional problems.

### Problem Statement

Prekindergarten and kindergarten programs throughout the United States are funded because research shows that children who start their academic careers earlier are more likely to graduate high school and be productive citizens. In his policy brief, Gilliam (2005) summarizes the National Prekindergarten Study findings from data collected by the 40 states that provide Pre-K programs. Key findings in this brief are as follows: (a) prekindergarten students are expelled at a rate more than three times that of their older peers in the K-12 grades; (b) although rates of expulsion vary widely among the 40 states funding prekindergarten, state expulsion rates for pre-kindergartners exceed those in K-12 classes in all but three states; and (c) prekindergarten expulsion rates vary by classroom setting. Expulsion rates are lowest in classrooms located in public schools or Head Start and highest in faith-affiliated centers and for-profit childcare (Gilliam, 2005). Because attendance in school is mandated, those students whose academic career has begun with expulsion have little hope for academic success. Gilliam proposes that understanding which children are being expelled at the prekindergarten level will help identify those that are most at risk for school failure later on. It makes sense, then, to look at what is triggering these expulsions. Because expulsion is intended to be a severe

disciplinary action that is taken when students behavior has escalated to the point that they need to be removed from school for safety reasons, it is problematic when used with those students who pose little danger and are just beginning their academic career.

In a pivotal study using mediational analysis, Graziano et al. (2007) studied the mechanisms that may lead to student academic success in the early grades. The authors began the rationale for their study by noting that the early childhood years are the ones in which various important skills develop. Among them are executive functions such as attention, inhibition and working memory, literacy and social skills. They indicate that academic performance tends to remain the same after first grade. Poor school performance would then be stable as well, and for this reason, researchers have explored factors outside of the classroom to explain the presence or absence of the skills that influence what they call adaptive functioning needed for academic success. They indicate that emotional and behavioral problems that become disruptive when externalized are a result of problems with emotion regulation. They define emotion regulation as involving efforts to contain emotional arousal in a way that facilitates adaptive functioning. They point out that a child with the inability to efficiently regulate emotion is unable to access executive functions of attention, working memory planning, or paying attention to and retaining new information presented by the classroom teacher. They were particularly interested in the role that emotion regulation plays in the success of kindergartners. They used a structural equation

model to examine an individual factor (i.e., behavioral problems) as well as a transactional or relationship factor (i.e., the student-teacher relationship). In their review of their findings, they hypothesized that the student-teacher relationship was the more salient mediator, they were interested in determining how emotion regulation skills contribute to student academic success in kindergarten. They pointed out that a positive relationship requires the ability of the teacher and the student to engage in the basic social interaction that facilitates positive interaction as well as inhibits aggressive expression of emotion. Unfortunately, when a student exhibits poor social skills, the teacher often responds in a critical, way that punishes the child. They further hypothesized that the student-teacher relationship would mediate between the emotion regulation skills of the student and his academic success, which would then increase the incidence of academic success for those students whose emotion regulation skills are immature.

Children grow and learn emotion regulation in the context of a dyadic relationship with parents or other caregivers. From birth on, the caregiver provides for the satisfaction of needs to the degree that the child cannot do this for himself. When this is done consistently, the child learns that he or she can depend on the caregiver to meet needs he or she cannot meet independently. In this way, the child eventually learns to self-regulate. This process is called co-regulation (Bath, 2008). An important aspect of this process is that while a child is learning that he can depend on his caregiver to provide for him what he cannot



provide for himself, he is also developing internal working models of relationship (attachment) that are secure and safe.

Experience with parents and their children suggest that co-regulation strategies implemented by an attuned, socially competent parent can provide the scaffolding for young children to learn to regulate and modulate their affect and behavior (Schoore, 2008). Some parents are sensitively attuned to their children; some are not. Children whose parents can attune learn the self-regulation skills that are typical of kindergartners. Children whose early attachment relationships are insecure may learn ways of dealing with internal emotional states that are immature and disruptive. These are the children whose behavior can be challenging to teachers. Anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers identify those students who are going to be disruptive to the order of the classroom within the first month of school (Graziano, 2007).

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to add to the understanding of how teachers impact the emotional and behavioral development of kindergartners. An adult who shares power with a child creates meaningful patterns of interaction between the child and adult which assist in the development of the child's self-regulation. This study will look at teacher beliefs and internal thought processes and patterns in their relationship with a student whose emotion regulation is immature and is expressed by externalizing behavior. It also will examine

teacher response to the disruptive behavior. Understanding the beliefs and automatic response patterns that culminate in how a teacher reacts to a disruptive student may lead to future creation and implementation of co-regulation strategies. If the teaching of methods for co-regulation has been successful with parents, one wonders if it can be equally successful with classroom teachers. Examination of educator beliefs and intrinsic, automatic behavior related to co-regulation will lay the underpinning for future training and research efforts.

Children who have limited social-emotional skill when entering kindergarten are more likely to be removed from class or suspended than other children. These children externalize negative emotion because they have not yet learned to self-regulate efficiently, at a developmental level typical of their age. If the teacher misinterprets the cues from the student that signal a need for co-regulation, the student's behavior may escalate into a power struggle which often triggers a corresponding escalation in the teacher (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Often, this results in removal from class or suspension from school and is the first step in a trajectory that often leads to school failure.

### Research Questions

In this study, we will explore the choices that teachers make and what contingencies influence them when yielding this power in the classroom. The lens through which we will look will be that of attachment theory. Attachment

theory has a long history of research behind it. One of its main benefits is that it is a biologically based behavioral system that is present in humans throughout the lifespan. It is developed in the context of a dyadic relationship with a primary caregiver, typically a mother. Depending on the contingencies in the environment and the capacity of the mother to attend to the needs of her child, a secure or an insecure attachment is formed in the child who when attending school for the first time, knows no other way to get this need met. The study questions are as follows:

1. Does the teacher use strategies or interventions that manage or change disruptive, challenging student behavior?
2. Are the strategies or interventions used by the teacher effective in de-escalating disruptive, challenging student behavior?
3. What is the attachment style of the teacher?
4. Are the strategies or interventions used by the teacher for managing or changing disruptive-challenging behavior consistent with her attachment style?

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will use the concept of bricolage, an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to qualitative research, to examine how the social-emotional development of the teacher shapes the interaction that occurs between teachers and young children who have immature social-emotional skills. The role of the bricoleur is described in Denzin's and Lincoln's *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). A bricoleur is an artist who takes a little of this and a little of that to explore domains of social research that overlap and transform contradiction into paradox. The authors cited in this study will come from multiple domains of inquiry, including medicine, developmental psychology neuroscience and neuropsychology, school psychology, education and more. All will focus on emerging knowledge about how human beings acquire the ability to function in the social milieu of culture, and more specifically, in the culture found in school settings. In an interview with Dan Siegel, M.D., who is known for his work in the neurobiology of attachment relationships and the mind, Jon Carlson (Carlson, 2008) asked him about "consilience." Dr. Siegel defined it as "sharing of knowledge across disciplines." He explains that when seeking the truth through inquiry, with interest in a particular area, the outcome can be a strengthening of one's communal understanding of truth. It is with this value of

consilience in mind that the literature is presented to illuminate the complex dynamics of a modern classroom.

### Historical Background

In the earlier stages of inquiry into the underlying classroom dynamics that were causing difficulties for teachers and students, the research took a trial and error approach which helped identify what was and was not working and highlighted areas that could benefit from further research. This foundational body of research provides a context for the current literature findings and the direction for this study. What follows is a historical review of literature about classroom dynamics that was done both prior to-, and in the wake of-, the Columbine tragedy and the zero-tolerance policies that were developed to address it.

As concern mounted about the overuse of suspensions and expulsions, studies began to look at the unintended consequences of the zero-tolerance policies. A study by Losen and Martinez (2013) analyzed data from 26,000 schools in the United States and estimated that over 2 million middle and high school students were suspended during the 2009 – 2010 academic year. This study further identified that most of these suspensions were for minor infractions like disrupting class, being late, and violating the dress code. Violent or criminal behavior typically resulted in student expulsion. The study analyzed research that showed being suspended one time in ninth grade resulted in a twofold

increase from 16% to 32% in the likelihood of dropping out of school. The authors of this study, while reporting what they termed an alarmingly high percentage of secondary school students who were suspended, concluded that zero-tolerance environments in schools are not only harmful to individual students as a result of dropping out of school, but detrimental as well to our capacity to function as a democracy. In spite of this, in-school- and out-of-school suspensions and expulsions continued to be used to manage student behavior that was neither violent nor a danger to the safety of students. The following studies looked closely at classroom dynamics, the behavior patterns of teachers and students and the relationships that developed as a result.

A research team in Britain and Greece (Poulou& Norwich, 2000) focused their study on the responses teachers had when teaching children with emotional and behavioral difficulties. In this study, Greek primary teachers identified learning and behavioral problems as the most difficult to manage. Beyond that, disruptive behavior came second. Although internalizing behavior was identified as a problem as well, children with externalizing behavior problems were more disruptive and required extra help or attention by the teacher who met the criteria for the study. Teachers were asked to identify to what they attributed the cause of the students emotional or behavioral difficulty, how they responded emotionally and cognitively to those children, as well as how they coped with the difficult behavior. The authors noted that many studies found that teachers who work with children whose behavior is difficult to manage to attribute the cause

of the emotional and behavioral difficulty to conditions within the family or even within the child. Interestingly, the teachers in this study attributed the children's difficulties in learning to causes within the school setting. To explain this, they explored the concept of attribution bias.

The authors defined what they called self-serving attributions as acceptance of responsibility for positive outcomes and rejection of responsibility for negative outcomes. Although these teachers expressed their commitment to helping children overcome their problems, it was found that disruptive or externalizing aggressive behavior was not so easily tolerated. In conjunction with a decrease in tolerance for disruptive behavior, teachers favored the use of punishment and threats, especially if the students were perceived as capable of self-control and intentionally misbehaving. They further observed that acceptance of responsibility by teachers for negative outcomes not only improved the student-teacher relationship but modeled personal responsibility and promoted self-actualization in students.

Another study looked at the role of teacher well-being in the teacher-student relationship and hypothesized that a teacher's mental and emotional state is critical to children's success in school (Spilt et al., 2011). The focus on the impact of the student on the inner experience of the teacher is one important finding of this study. While stipulating that a teacher-student relationship in which conflict and mistrust are present is detrimental to a child's ability to learn, this study explored the effect that a student may have on a teacher's ability to stay a

positive and manage stress adequately. The authors propose a model that describes the key concepts and interrelations between those concepts to guide future research.

Pianta (1999) drew on research in social development and relationship-systems theory to describe the role of child-adult relationships to build a foundation for unraveling the complexity of classroom dynamics and understanding how teacher-student relationships impact student academic success. Also, he examined the context within which teacher-students interact. He identified reliable instruments to measure the constructs he was studying. In particular, he noted that adult-child relationships are instrumental in the development of a child's ability to self-regulate which he called processes that are characteristic of emotionally healthy systems. Finally, he provided case-study examples of teacher-student relationships that fit an attachment theory framework.

Birch and Ladd (1997) recognized the possibility that the teacher-child relationship is a key component to young children's successful adjustment to the school environment. They chose to study how three aspects of the teacher-child relationship impact a child's adaptation and adjustment to school. The three aspects studied were closeness, dependency, and conflict, and the authors noted Pianta's earlier work (Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995) in which he developed The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS). The STRS was originally designed to measure warmth/security, anger/dependence, and



anxiety/insecurity. These items were later modified to closeness, dependency, and conflict/anger. Birch and Ladd intertwined references to Pianta's work with references to the teacher-student relationship as a "secure base," which refers to an attachment theory concept. Perhaps more importantly, the authors looked beyond children's academic performance and included social-emotional factors as worthy of examination. They suggested that relationships with teachers and other students could very well have an important impact on students' early adjustment to school. They identified that concepts from attachment theory are at the forefront of describing aspects of a teacher-student relationship, noting that these concepts are taken from attachment theory.

#### Attachment Theory as a Factor in the Classroom

Cornelius-White (2007) completed a meta-analysis of literature exploring classical person-centered education. He chose this model because "the classical approach emphasizes teacher empathy (understanding), unconditional positive regard (warmth), genuineness (self-awareness), non-directivity (student initiated and regulated activities) and the encouragement of critical thinking (as opposed to traditional memory emphasis) (p. 113)." He used the concepts introduced by Rogers (1959), who was the founder of client-centered therapy. Cornelius-White observed in Rogers' model certain attitudinal qualities in the teacher that facilitated a relationship that supported learning through trust in students' ability to learn. He further noted that classical person-centered education includes

teacher "flexibility in teaching methods; transparent compromise with learners, school administrations, the public and the teacher's self; collaborative and student self-evaluation; and the provision of human and learning resources." The author mentions the attachment theories of Bowlby (1969/1982) and Stern (1977) in the context of explaining how the student's personality and ability to participate in relationships are impacted profoundly and long-lastingly by the relationship with his primary caregiver, usually his mother. He notes that secure and reciprocal attachments, learned in the mother-child relationship, are important in a teacher-student relationship as well. He posits that effective human relationships are the solution to emotional and behavioral problems in schools.

In an earlier study, Kesner (2000) identified teacher characteristics in the context of a teacher-student relationship as an important topic for study. Citing the work of Pianta (1999), which established that the teacher-student relationship is a legitimate focus of the investigation, Kesner reported that little research uses the attachment theory of Bowlby as a framework. He indicated that there might be a process occurring in the teacher-student relationship which is similar to that of the parent-child relationship. Van IJzendoorn and Tavecchio's (1987) asserted that these relationships could compensate for insecure attachment relationships with parents. Kesner, in his study, noted the similarities between child-parent relationship and child-teacher relationship. He explained that children were likely to look to the teacher for a sense of emotional security that functions in a way that is sensitive, responsive, and socially supportive similar to the caregiving of

an attentive parent. Kesner also suggested that the quality of the student-teacher relationship has a positive impact on a child's overall social development. Interestingly, he emphasized the differences between these relationships indicating that the relationship history of a person may be attributed as much to the quality of the child-teacher relationship as to the quality of the child-parent relationship. He argues that there may be an association between a teacher's attachment style acquired in childhood and her ability to relate to students in the classroom. He concluded that the attachment history of teachers could be a significant factor in the child-teacher relationship and that it has not been examined adequately in the literature. In his study, he looked at how attachment history affected preservice teachers' perceptions of the teacher-student relationship.

Researchers began to include social influences on teachers and students outside of the classroom in their studies. They found evidence that poor school performance could be linked to negative life trajectories for students unable to navigate the school environment (Cuellar & Markowitz, 2015; Noguera, 2013; Schept et al., 2015; Wald & Losen, 2003; Wilson, 2014). They called this negative life trajectory the school to prison pipeline (STPP). Osher et al. (2012) asserted that although the precursors to entry into the STPP were typically outside the control of the school system, schools play a key role in accelerating or preventing entry onto the STPP. The authors examined four factors that form a gateway to the pipeline and explored ways that educators can increase their capacity to

intercept vulnerable students and steer them toward successful academic and social achievement. These factors are racial disparities, poor conditions for learning (CFL), family-school disconnection and the failure to build the social and emotional capacity of youth. Two of these factors, the failure to build the social and emotional capacity of students and poor CFL, are pertinent to this study because they are within the purview of the teacher-student relationship.

The first pertinent factor emphasizes the importance of meeting student needs in the area of social and emotional capacity and addresses the role that educators have in establishing positive student relationships. The authors identified key competencies that educators must be able to demonstrate when teaching skills to students. These core social and emotional competencies were first identified by Devaney, O'Brien, Keister, Resnik, and Weissberg (2006). These competencies were: 1) self-awareness which is the ability to accurately assess one's feelings, interests, values, and strengths and maintain a well-grounded sense of self-confidence; 2) self-management which is the ability to regulate one's emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in addressing challenges, express emotions appropriately; and monitor progress toward personal and academic goals; 3) social awareness which is the ability to be able to take the perspective of and empathize with others, recognize and appreciate individual and group similarities and differences, and recognize and make best use of family, school, and community resources; 4) relationship skills which is the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships

based on cooperation, resist inappropriate social pressure; prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflict; and seek help when needed; and finally, responsible decision making which is the ability to make decisions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate social norms, respect for others, and likely consequences of various actions, apply decision-making skills to academic and social situations; and contribute to the well-being of one's school and community (Osher et al., 2012).

For the educator, social and emotional competence is evidenced by the ability to monitor and manage emotions, healthily engage others, and meet basic personal and social needs in a way that reduces conflict and increases student motivation to engage in the learning process. It is often difficult for teachers to deal with aggression and poor or immature self-regulation skills, but the students who exhibit these behaviors are the ones who are most vulnerable and likely to enter the school-to-prison pipeline. The author asserts that the best method for working with difficult students is to sidestep conflict in the first place.

The second factor, poor conditions for learning, interferes with the ability of the teacher to establish a positive relationship with students and provide an adequate environment for learning. The authors identified four conditions that are relevant to the success of students most likely to fall by the wayside.

- A felt sense of physical and emotional safety.
- The experience of being connected to and supported by the others in the classroom, including the teacher.

- Feeling engaged with, and then challenged by, the teacher.
- Achievement of the academic goals set for him.

What is most relevant to these studies is the focus on the influence the teacher has on the teacher-student relationship and student academic performance.

### Theoretical Framework for Teacher-Student Relationships

Sroufe (2011) identified attachment as another social influence on teachers and students that develops in and out of the classroom. He summarizes the development of attachment theory by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth and describes it as one that unifies social, emotional and interpersonal behavior. He points out that Bowlby's theory has two basic propositions. The first one is that the sum of a child's interactions with early caregivers shapes the quality of their attachment relationships. The second is that the attachment relationship developed with caregivers becomes the foundation upon which future attachment is based. Sroufe bases his assessment of the importance of attachment theory on fifty years of studies that support the idea that the emotional quality of our attachment experience as infants and young children is possibly the single most important influence on our development as human beings.

## The Evolution of Attachment Theory

The beginning of attachment theory was a result of Bowlby's military experience during World War II where he had an opportunity to observe the consequences of separation between mother and child. During the war, children were removed from London to spare them the nightly experience of bombs exploding in their neighborhood. Although they survived the war, many children were orphaned. Bowlby observed their distress at the loss of their mothers and the negative effect that loss had on their development. At that time, Freudian theory dominated the approach of researchers and practitioners who studied human behavior, many of whom thought that infants and children developed relationships with a preferred caregiver (usually their mother) because that person fed them. Although this model did not explain Bowlby's observations, he did not have an alternate theory to replace it.

Fortunately, other researchers began studying the interaction between mother and infant animals as well as the behavior of infants who were deprived of contact with their mothers (Bowlby, 1988). When Bowlby looked at animal studies to better understand the nature of the human mother-infant relationship, he concluded that these studies provided evidence more in line with his observations. At this point, he realized the need to study the nature of the organism, i.e., the effect of the mother-child relationship on the child (Bretherton, 1992). This ethological approach supported his view that children, much like young primates, look for a particular adult caregiver for protection. One challenge

in developing this theory was the need to construct a method to measure the impact of the mother-child relationship on the development of the child.

One of the major contributions to the development of attachment theory came from the work of Mary Ainsworth, who developed a way to measure attachment and its effects on the relationship (Sroufe, 2011). Initially, she became interested in the role of attachment while working with Bowlby at Tavistock Institute in London. When she left Tavistock, she took with her intense interest in attachment behavior. The author notes that Ainsworth began observing the relationships between mother and child while doing field observations in Uganda. What she noticed was what Sroufe called the “attunement” of mother to her child’s nonverbal cues. She began to look more closely at the sensitivity to-, and the timing and effectiveness of- the mother’s response and hypothesized that this was “the critical factor” in determining the type and quality of an infant’s attachment to the mother. Since Bowlby indicated that close bodily contact with the mother probably ends the attachment behavior that has been intensely activated (Ainsworth, 1989). It was at this point that she began to separate relationships into broad categories of secure and insecure.

As Ainsworth’s interest in assessment grew, she began the process of developing an instrument to measure the nature of a child’s attachment. The instrument she developed, Strange Situation, evolved from attachment theory’s basic premise that an infant seeks proximity to someone preferentially to use as a secure base when the child experiences distress. Because the Strange



Situation triggers an anxiety response when a child separates from his or her caregiver, usually, the mother, it is the reunion between the mother and child that gives the assessor information about the attachment relationship. When a child develops the ability to anticipate that a caregiver will provide adequate, reliable protection and support, he gains the confidence to move away from the secure base to explore the world; he is said to have a secure attachment. Ainsworth (1989) reported from the highlights of research completed from analysis of her Strange Situation and subsequent home visits by trained associates. She found that mothers who somewhat consistently responded promptly to infant crying from the beginning had infants who by the end of the first year cried relatively little and were securely attached. When the relationship is secure, the child may respond to the return of his caregiver by seeking physical comfort and when calm again, return to play. Other children make visual contact through gestures, smiles, and vocalization before returning to play. Characteristically, securely attached children initiate contact with the returning caregiver before returning to play. Again, using the Strange Situation assessment, Ainsworth was able to identify two types of insecure attachment. Insecure children have a different pattern of interaction when the caregiver returns. Those who have what she called an anxious/resistant attachment actively or passively resist comfort by their caregivers and those with what she called avoidant attachment, typically are not distressed by separation and avoid contact with their caregiver when she returns. Although these patterns of attachment change somewhat as a child

develops, the core attachment patterns, which can differ between caregivers, remain stable.

Relationship Contexts and Caregiver Support	Secure-Base Behavior and Representations
Sensitive, cooperative interaction.	Infant acquires familiarity, preference, and anticipation of caregiver behavior.
Caregiver monitors infant activities, retrieves, provides explicit secure-base instruction.	Onset of secure-base use.
Infant's exploration, practice, operant learning, improved locomotion, experience.	Secure-base use consolidated.
Caregiver encourages independence, continued supervision.	Secure-base representation becomes portable, supervision partnership.
Caregiver explicitly summarizes secure-base experience; early co-construction of attachment representations.	Script-like representation of secure-base experience.
Caregiver as experienced interlocutor; peers as ad hoc secure-base figures; peer demands for secure-base support.	Applying representations of past experience to organize secure-base use and service in romantic relationships; elaboration and consolidation of attachment representations.
Caregiver's reactions to relationship decisions; caregivers' and peers' relationships as models.	Discovery of implicit expectations, preferences, and sensitivities; reflection on successes and failures.

*Figure 2.A Secure Base from Which to Explore Close Relationships (Waters & Cummings, 2000).*

### The Structure of the Attachment Relationship

The development of attachment theory evolved over many years of observation and research by John Bowlby and his colleagues. Cassidy and Shaver (2008) have provided an overview of attachment theory that includes the initial findings as well as those from studies done more recently. As a result, it is possible to look at theoretical concepts that have been explored and honed through rigorous research.

An important concept embedded in the theory is an understanding that we are born with a behavioral system of attachment. One benefit of this concept is that a system that is innate can be expected to change over time in form but not in function. Additionally, the function of the behavioral system of attachment has

its own inherent motivation. Bowlby (1969/1982) linked the function of the behavioral system of attachment to the increased probability of survival of the young by seeking proximity to the mother for protection when threatened. It doesn't matter what behavior the child uses to get close to the mother, the function of the behavior is consistent with the need of the child for protection by the adult. Because the strategies used by the child to accomplish this with his mother are dependent on his level of development and the contingencies inherent in his environment when he perceives a threat, their variety is limited only by the child's creativity and continued need for survival. When the attachment system is activated, the child needs to be close to his mother, and when this is achieved, and protection has been accomplished, the attachment system is deactivated. In a mother-child relationship, the distance between the two is monitored by both for comfort and a sense of safety. This sense of safety is the state that is the goal of the child. Bowlby called this distance, and when these criteria are met, he called it behavioral homeostasis. He compared this behavioral homeostasis, which uses behavioral rather than physiological means to regain balance, to physical homeostasis which shares the function of maintaining the integrity of the body, and is also organized by the central nervous system (Bowlby, 1969/1982, p. 372).

### Contextual Activation of Attachment Behavior

Bowlby realized that the differences in a child's behavior when threatened were strategies for achieving closeness to the mother/caregiver. As behavioral homeostasis was renegotiated (Bowlby, 1969/1982), he wanted to know how circumstances contributed to activation and deactivation of the attachment system. His interest in this process led him to the understanding that there are two factors, danger, and stress, that trigger the activation of the attachment behavior. When the condition that motivates the child to move closer to his mother is no longer present, the child is free to explore his environment, as long as the distance between the mother and child is consistent with what each of them considers safe. It is fair to say that an infant or young child uses his mother as a haven or secure base when he experiences distress or threat.

### The Role of Emotion in Regulating Attachment Behavior

Bowlby's early observations of children's emotional response to losing their mothers during World War II played a large part in his understanding of the role of emotions in the behavioral system of attachment. Bowlby (1979) described the role of emotions and attachment as follows:

Many of the most intense emotions arise during the formation, the maintenance, the disruption, and the renewal of attachment relationships. The formation of a bond is described as falling in love, maintaining a bond as loving someone, and losing a partner

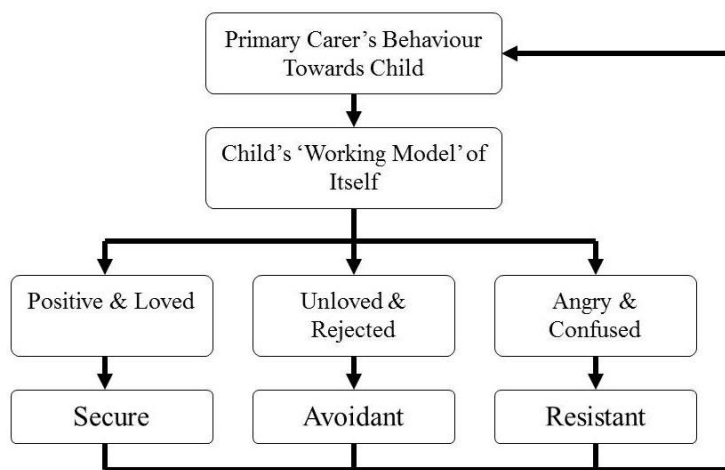
as grieving over someone. Similarly, the threat of loss arouses anxiety, and actual loss gives rise to sorrow, whilst each of these situations is likely to arouse anger. The unchallenged maintenance of the bond is experienced as a source of joy. (p. 130)

As Bowlby began to develop his theory of attachment, he identified the child's intense emotional reactions to the presence or absence of the mother. He viewed these emotions as evidence of the importance of the relationship first and as signals between the mother and child of the need for proximity/assistance. Since then, researchers who study attachment have noticed that differences in attachment security of the parent affect the manner in which emotions are regulated in the relationship.

### The Role of Cognition in Organizing Attachment Behavior

Bowlby theorized that as children mature and develop the capacity for speech, they begin to use their experience to build working models of what to expect from their physical and relational environment. Bretherton (1992) suggested that repeated attachment-related experiences could become organized as scripts, which would, in turn, become the building blocks of broader representation. Bowlby referred to these as representational models and as internal working models. According to Bowlby, these models allow individuals to anticipate the future and make plans, thereby operating most efficiently. Internal

working models are most effective when they conform to the expectations of the primary caregiver and are revised according to the demands of the environments in which they are developed. This evolutionary process results in differences in internal working models and the level of security experienced by the child, samples of which are illustrated in the diagram below.



*Figure 3. Samples of Diversity in Internal Working Models of Attachment.*Source: <http://www.simplypsychology.org/bowlby.html>.

### The Role of Dynamic Processes in Attachment Relationships

Bowlby recognized other representational models that were active but not specific to the behavioral system of attachment. He believed the behavioral system of fear and the behavioral system of exploration to be intimately related to the functioning of the behavioral system of attachment. Ideally, when a young child's fear system is activated in the presence of his caregiver, the attachment system is activated as well. When the fear system is deactivated (by interaction with the caregiver), the exploratory system is activated, and return to exploratory play is possible. When the exploratory system is dominant, attachment system activity is often reduced or eliminated. Cassidy (2008) explained that when a child's attachment system has been activated, and the caregiver indicates that no danger exists, the child who seeks closeness, i.e., wants to be picked up, can often be distracted by something that captures his interest. Regardless, when the need for bodily contact with the mother is strong, the behavioral system of attachment requires an attuned response by the caregiver.

### The Role of Behavioral Systems of Fear and Exploration

The conceptual framework that describes how the fear and exploratory behavioral systems interact with the behavioral system of attachment is captured in the image of a secure base from which to explore. Ainsworth (1963) noticed how very young children develop the balance between proximity with their caregiver and exploration of their environment, which she named the attachment-

exploration balance (Stayton, Bell, & Ainsworth 1971). The sensitivity and reciprocity between biological and behavioral systems benefit a child in a way that maintains closeness to the protective caregiver, and at the same time provides the child the opportunity to explore and learn about his world in a developmentally integrative way. Utilizing this secure base provided by an attuned caregiver, a child becomes increasingly motivated to enjoy ongoing and expanding exploration, ever aware of the distance between himself and the caregiver. As a child matures, his belief that the caregiver will be available if needed is an important element in determining the security he experiences while in exploration mode.

The fear behavioral system's focus, like that of the behavioral system of attachment, is protection. It plays an important part in ensuring the survival of those infants and young children who are sensitive to natural clues to danger (Bowlby, 1973). These clues include conditions such as darkness, loud noise, being alone and sudden or unexpected movements. Children who respond to these cues with fear and a need for attachment have an increased likelihood of surviving. The presence of an attachment figure decreases anxiety and increases the likelihood of a felt sense of security.

#### Honorable Mention - The Role of Sociable System

The behavioral system of attachment is not the only behavior system that increases the likelihood of survival for human beings. Children and adults form



social relationships with those with whom they have an affinity. Typically these relationships are with peers, and their biological purpose is to reduce opportunities for predators to overwhelm the resources of individuals and smaller groups. Additionally, interaction with others by way of division of labor increases a group's ability to meet basic human needs, including mating and having children. The desire for people to be close to those with whom they have social relationships is similar to - but not the same as - an attachment relationship. Bowlby recognized this, as did Cassidy (2008).

Ainsworth (1989) pointed out that animals have basic social needs that motivate them to want to be close to those with whom they have no attachment bond. In these relationships, there is typically some wariness of strangers that is inborn and adaptive. Harlow (1969) identified what they called the peer affectional system which indicates that warmth and affection characterize social relationships. However, the bonds in this system are different from parent-child bonds:

The sociable system is best defined as the organization of the biologically-based, survival-promoting tendency to be sociable with others. An important predictable outcome of activation of the system is that individuals are likely to spend at least part of their time in the company of others (Cassidy & Shaver, 2008).

Various researchers reported that animals and humans are similar in that there are significant differences between what activates attachment and what activates sociable systems.

### Unlocking the Mystery of The Caregiving System

Although Bowlby's observations of children deprived of their mothers during World War II was the impetus for developing his attachment theory, and his interest was primarily an understanding the behavior of the child, he did explore the role of the mother's ties to her infant/child. In a way similar to his approach to understanding the child's attachment behavior as biologically programmed, he considered the role of the caregiver as attachment-like behavior and ethological in nature. He called it the attachment-caregiving social bond. However, he left the parenting role to be researched and developed by others.

While other researchers focused on the reciprocity inherent in the parent-child relationship, George and Solomon (1996) approached their study of the caregiving system as an extension of the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth. They conceptualized the caregiving system as a complement to the behavioral system of attachment. They viewed this system as separate, organized and reciprocal to the behavioral system of attachment, which was a change in the focus of research at the time. Interestingly, they noted that the focus of scholarly interest had been on understanding the child's developing attachment needs as being distinct from those of the caregiver. Therefore, they saw the study of the

caregiver system as opening an extension of attachment theory. They provided a basic framework for conceptualizing and studying the caregiving system.

Cassidy (2008) identified that a parent may respond differently to a child when different parent behavior systems are activated (e.g., sensitive when teaching or feeding, yet insensitive when the caregiving system is activated). He continued to discuss the various ways that a behavioral system of attachments is established in a relationship with any given child and within any given family. He pointed out as well that a caregiver may be comfortable when she teaches her child who requires attention to a task, but less comfortable with the emotional and physical proximity required of the attachment relationship. According to Main et al.(2005),when a parent is uncomfortable with a child's particular behavior, the parent is interpreting the behavior in line with how her or his behavior was addressed by his or her parents, which activates anxiety and a lack of acceptance of that behavior. Because the purpose of attachment behavior is for the child and parent the maintain proximity, the child will change his behavior to whatever signals a need for protection. Because the parent is sensitive to the child's cues, the parent will come as close as necessary to protect the child. This reciprocal interaction is what Bowlby described as a dynamic equilibrium (Bowlby, 1969/1982, p. 236) that contributes to the concept of providing for a child a secure base from which to explore.

## Attachment Status and Its Effect on Child Development

Bowlby (1988) points out that he developed his attachment theory after he acquired an ethological approach to observing parent-offspring behavior. An ethological approach is one that is based on the study of animal behavior and human behavior and social organization from a biological perspective. Bowlby began to understand the attachment that children and animals have to their mothers. He saw this dependency, as a preprogrammed set of behavior patterns that show up in infancy and, depending on the individual child's or animal's ability to walk, allow the child to seek proximity to their caregiver when in distress. Similarly, he saw the response of the parent, usually the mother, as having strong biological roots. Each of these responses serves its biological function- protection, reproduction, nutrition, knowledge of the environment. He described what is now called attunement as sensitivity to a baby's movements, facial expressions, and vocalizations that occur in cycles in which the baby and mother are actively engaged with one another. He defines a sensitive mother as one who regulates her behavior so that it meshes with (the child's) behavior. He noted that this pattern of baby leading and mother following is typical of their reciprocal cycle of interaction. Its purpose is to understand what calms, soothes and pleases an infant. It brings benefit to the infant as well as to the parent because, by the time a child is ready to explore his environment, he has become willing to reward her by honoring her wishes.

The following section of this literature review discusses the ongoing evolution in the research focusing on an early childhood teacher's ability to deal with children with immature social-emotional skills, particularly those students whose behavior is often difficult to manage. It continues to connect the present-day situation of zero tolerance policy for what is considered dangerous behavior and according to some, the school-to-prison pipeline, to what goes on in the classroom when teachers interact with students.

#### Classroom Dynamics – What the Student Brings

Porges(2003), whose polyvagal theory is a description of the neurological substrate for social-emotional competence and engagement, outlined several points that pertain to how we as humans survive and engage socially. His theories include those aspects of social behavior that help us understand what happens when children can meet the demands of a kindergarten classroom and develop a relationship with a teacher to the benefit of both. It also helps us understand those students who have immature social engagement systems and are unable to regulate their emotions.

According to polyvagal theory, our perceptual ability to survive has evolved in such a way to determine friend from foe. The perceptual ability occurs without consciousness and behavior results based on our nervous system's assessment.

Regardless of the model of attachment or its dependence on cognitive, affective, behavioral, or biological constructs, the critical features that determine the valence of the interaction are related to perceived safety. Thus, the perception of safety is the turning point in the development of relationships for most mammals. The perception of safety determines whether the behavior will be prosocial (i.e., social engagement) or defensive (p. 39).

What this suggests, then, is that when a kindergartner enters a classroom on his first day, his nervous system will determine how he behaves. He probably will not be consciously aware of why he is behaving in a particular way, and given his immaturity, and lack of control over his environment, will probably not be able to modify his behavior without assistance. How his behavior is received will be a test of whether or not it is safe to engage in a social relationship in this environment. The ability to switch from defensive to social engagement strategies have been identified in much of the research on emotion regulation. The polyvagal theory establishes the neurological control of this process.

This author introduced the term neuroception to describe the process that the nervous system engages in continually. He describes its function as a safety-threat detection system capable of distinguishing among situations that are safe, dangerous, or life-threatening. He expressed his belief that one we understand the environmental context in which a child responds defensively we can support the development of strategies that increase the chances of social

engagement, which provides the rationale for understanding attachment in the classroom.

Graziano et al.'s study (2007) identified emotion regulation as an important element in the academic success of children in kindergarten. The authors used both teacher reports and literacy and math achievement test scores to document that success. Surprisingly, the student-teacher relationship was the primary predictor of academic success, not child behavior problems, although the behavior problems students had as a result of poor emotion regulation skills negatively affected the student-teacher relationship. The authors pointed out that for there to be a positive relationship in the classroom, both the teacher and the student need to have some social skills. If a child does not have the requisite social skills, this will be reflected in his behavior, which is typically poorly tolerated by teachers. It makes sense to look at what causes the low tolerance for behaviorally disordered children who do not exhibit appropriate social behavior.

The authors found that children with better emotion regulation skills were more easily able to interact positively with teachers and engage less in disruptive externalizing behavior. They linked this to another study that found that teachers have a low tolerance for children with behavior problems (Cunningham & Sugawara, 1988). Another study found that teachers interact more negatively with these children (Coie & Koepl, 1990). They identified their use of emotion regulation rather than a more general construct, i.e., behavior problems as the

specific issue that is troublesome for teachers. They suggested teachers were ill-equipped to deal with the demands of student emotion dysregulation.

The authors of another study (Denham et al., 2012) recognized the importance of self-regulatory skill early in children's school career and linked it to academic success. They developed a model that included three factors that are inherent in this skill and provide a structure for it. They identified compliance, cool executive control, and hot executive control as structural components of self-regulation. The purpose of their study was to test the validity of their model. They developed constructs defining self-regulation based on observations of the novel demands made on preschool children as they entered the classroom. They monitored cognitive, affective/motivation, and behavioral processes as the children adjusted to these demands and developed their model from these constructs.

Cool executive control is affectively neutral, slow acting and developing; hot executive control is more reflexive, fast acting, early developing and under stimulus control; prefrontal cortex contains higher order cognitive processes such as the activation of information in working memory, the flexible use of attention (i.e., focusing or shifting) and inhibiting a prepotent response while activating a subdominant response (p. 387).

The authors recognized that differently organized responses were expected when a fairly non-emotional learning task is involved vs. an affectively-charged request to refrain from touching a toy when it belongs to another child.



Therefore, they termed the first cold executive control and the second, hot executive control.

The demands of cold executive control are not as complex as the ones requiring hot executive control. The capacity to delay gratification, a hot executive control, was found to be predictive of long-term success in life throughout the lifespan when it is present in preschool. The ability to comply with a teacher's requests and to follow expectations for behavior based on social requirements is another important aspect of self-regulation, especially since it typically requires letting go of personal desires/needs for the good of all. The authors identify the teacher's assessment of a student's readiness for school as crucial and reflect a teacher's role in predicting student potential for academic success.

In a previous study, Denham et al. (2003) described how typically developing children at preschool and kindergarten age manage emotional and social interactions in a competently in the school environment. Although the context of that study was on the social competence with peers, those children who were successful with peers have also were linked with success with teachers. Those successful children who were typically ready and able to adjust to school entry had secure attachments and the social, emotional skills to that support their success.

In that study, the authors made the connection between social-emotional competence, secure attachment and positive relationships with teachers and

school readiness and adjustment. Likewise, they connected the maladjustment to school, peer and teacher relationships, and aggressive behavior to those children who were less competent in the social-emotional arena.

The authors rated emotional competence as a precursor to social competence and made the precursor, emotional competence, the focus of their study. Further, they broke down emotional competence into personal and environmental resources, the first of which was emotional expressiveness. They then separated expressiveness into positive and negative aspects and ascribed expression of positive emotion as socially attractive and negative emotion as socially unappealing and repellent.

Finally, the authors identified the most important ingredient of emotional competence as emotion regulation. They defined emotion regulation as the ability to modify their emotional expression to meet goals and expectations of the child or social partners.

The developmental status of preschoolers was noted, and the expectation that they may need external support to be able to modify their emotional expression was addressed without suggesting they were emotionally incompetent.

In a study by Finzi et al. (2001), information was provided about how attachment behavior develops in the context of early experience in a parental/caregiving dyad. In this case, the authors studied both children who had experienced physical abuse and neglect and children who had not experience

them. They wanted to learn whether or not these experiences accounted for the differences in their attachment style and levels of aggression.

The results of the study indicated that physically abused children were more likely to behave in ways consistent with the avoidant attachment style and were significantly more aggressive. The neglected children were more likely to behave in ways consistent with the anxious/ambivalent attachment style. The researchers found that the physically abused and neglected children behaved similarly in relationships outside the family. They concluded that physically abused children because of their avoidant attachment style are often characterized by antisocial behavior including being suspicious of others. Neglected children often experience social withdrawal, find themselves marginalized which results in a feeling of social incompetence.

Smiley et al. (2016) associated what they called negative emotion with avoidance behavior. They included sadness, shame, and anger in this general category. They noted that in this light, they would expect people to withdraw from a challenging task when they experienced anger and would be less able to perform tasks as a result.

Their review of the literature also found that infants and children under certain circumstances express anger when they are frustrated in getting what they want. The focus of the study then was on this seeming contradiction of anger producing engagement in a task sometimes and avoidance of a task other times. It also provided an overview of research that described how emotional

behavior is connected to motivation through the process of socialization by parents. The socialization process parallels attachment processes using acceptance and nonacceptance of specific emotions as an indicator instead of safety and insecurity. This study defined the use of conditional regard (CR), i.e. either withdrawing affection and attention when a child fails to suppress negative emotion or providing added affection and attention when a child successfully suppresses negative emotion. This was associated with suppressive emotion regulation which eventually leads to dysregulation. This study found that the way a child is socialized to express anger had a predictable effect on whether or not the child was resilient in the face of failure on a task.

Reviewers Baer and Martinez (2006) looked at more than 80 studies to validate the primary causes of insecure/disorganized attachment. The authors examined the effect of maltreatment in the development of insecure and disorganized attachment. Study results indicated that infants who were maltreated were significantly more likely to have an insecure attachment than controls.

Adopted children presumably have histories of institutional care, maltreatment, and neglect, similar to those children that other researchers have found to have developed insecure attachments. Van den Dries et al. (2009) developed a study that provided evidence that a safe environment in which caregivers are sensitively tuned in to the needs of their child and consistently able to meet basic needs is the factor that is most likely to result in a move

toward a secure attachment.

They found that one variable of importance was that when children are placed with an adoptive family and their developmental potential is open to changes in attachment, they are more likely to attach securely to a caregiver. When a child is at this developmental stage, whether adopted or not, is exposed to increased sensitivity and attunement by a maternal caregiver, the result was the same, i.e., more secure attachment. These researchers made the point that when intervention occurs for a child early enough, it may be easier to prevent insecure attachment than to change insecure attachment. They found that their meta-analysis suggested that adopted children can overcome early adversity and risks and form secure attachments as often as their normative counterparts. The same was true of fosterchildren.

In their earlier study, Finzi et al. (2000) identified the impact on attachment styles in children of particular types of trauma/maltreatment. Understanding the etiology of particular attachment behavior, especially in a child's early efforts at adjusting to the classroom, can be useful to a teacher attempting to establish a secure attachment relationship with a child with immature emotion regulation skills.

Based on Ainsworth's (1978) conclusions, a child's attachment style would be evident in a relationship with a teacher or other adult in the classroom. Children with a secure attachment style are the children more likely to establish a relationship with the teacher that does not require intervention.

Children with anxious/ambivalent style may be overly dependent on a teacher and trigger maladaptive responses in the teacher that attempt to force self-reliant behavior. Children with an avoidant attachment style may seem to be self-sufficient until attachment behavior is triggered and the child becomes aggressive and defiant. Aggressive and defiant behavior may then trigger a maladaptive response in the teacher who attempts to force compliance which escalates the aggressive behavior of the child.

Attachment relationships and needs extend throughout our lifetime. They are fundamental to the individual functioning at all ages and each attachment style affects several areas (e.g., social skills, functional/dysfunctional relationships, affect regulation, coping in stress situations). Both teacher and student are likely to behave in the way they have experienced attachment throughout their lifetime. These findings point to the etiology of aggressive and defiant behavior that is so disruptive in a classroom.

Anda et al. (2005) reviewed the neurobiology of childhood trauma using Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs). This study described how childhood maltreatment changes brain structure and function as well as stress-responsive neurobiological systems.

Zilberstein and Messer (2010) explored the measures that can be taken to provide a secure base for a child whose internal working model of attachment is disorganized. The authors reiterated a basic tenet of attachment theory which is that the presence attachment relationships are biologically driven (Bowlby,

1982). They also summarized aspects of Bowlby's model and explained that the type of attachment a child internalizes is determined by the attachment style of the caregivers in his life. They further stated the regulatory skills needed to succeed in school are more likely to emerge when a child has secure attachments. They add that the caretaker who is emotionally tuned in to a child's emotions and who accepts emotional expression provides the best environment for the development of emotion regulation skills.

Other attachment styles, i.e., various forms of insecure attachment, which are present in children develop when caretakers are emotionally unavailable or are sometimes available. Additionally, when children are mistreated and neglected, the consequences add to the insecurity and attachment problems.

What differentiates the securely attached and the insecurely attached is how sensitivity parents respond when their children are in distress. Unfortunately, when children cannot depend on their caregivers to provide protection, soothing and guidance, they only have their inner resources to fall back upon and are easily and often overwhelmed by the challenge. If this pattern is chronic, it becomes the default position when children are stressed and or distressed. Bowlby (1982) theorized that a child's internal working models were internalized by the age of three and therefore present in preschool.

Those children with attachment patterns compromised by trauma and neglect tend to resort either to "helplessness or coercive control" which may

emerge in kindergarten when environmental demands begin to grow in complexity and challenge.

The authors point out that attachment behavior is dyadic and can be viewed as an interplay between both student and teacher who add their working models of attachment to the attachment opportunities available to them in the environment. The opportunities can be initiated by important persons in the school environment such as teachers and friends.

By studying how an intervention program affects emotional regulation in students who have problems with externalizing behavior, Graziano and Hart (2016) implicitly acknowledged the importance of managing these behaviors in the classroom. These researchers examined the usefulness of three programs developed specifically for these behaviors. They included in their description of externalizing behavior those that cause problems in the classroom: aggression, defiance, inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.

The lens used in this study was self-regulation skills which were separated into executive function skills (EF), the ability to attend to the teacher despite classroom distraction, and emotion regulation (ER) skills, the ability to modulate arousal to avoid impulsive action in favor of a more adaptive one. The presence of self-regulation skills has been noted to facilitate the acquisition of a positive teacher-student relationship. The authors hypothesized that early intervention programs focused on emotion regulation skills would benefit the students'



academic achievement. Their study found that this was the case in all three programs.

### Classroom Dynamics – What the Teacher Brings

Sroufe (2011) noted that, because they provide the foundation for personality development, early attachment patterns allows us to predict the developmental trajectory of a student. Sroufe explained that Bowlby's attachment classifications describe a child's capacity for emotional regulation and the formation of mental representations of self and others. Further, he pointed out that teachers, too, with no knowledge of the child's history, treat children in the various categories of attachment differently. For example, coders, who were blind to the child's history, but who watched videotapes of interactions between teachers and each child, rated teachers as treating those with secure histories in a warm, respectful manner. They set age-appropriate standards for their behavior and had high expectations for them (as evidenced by actions such as moving on to take care of other tasks after asking the child to do something). With those having resistant histories, the teachers were also warm, but highly controlling. They didn't expect compliance, set low standards, and were unduly nurturing (taking care of things that five-year-olds should do for themselves). With the avoidant group, teachers were controlling and had low expectations, displayed little nurturing, and became angry most frequently.

Kesner (2000) noted that there is significant research identifying how the student-teacher relationship affects the academic success of students. He added that there is a dearth of research on this relationship using attachment theory. As a result, the purpose of this study was to look at, among other things, the relationship history of teachers. He suggested that the attachment style in teachers was developed when they were children and that their capacity for relationship, whether secure or insecure would affect the quality of the relationship that forms with students in the classroom.

In this study, preservice teachers were examined regarding their memories of their relationship with parents and their perceptions of a child-teacher relationship. Those that remembered a less harsh parental discipline as a child viewed the child-teacher relationship as having more closeness. Other factors were found to influence perceptions of the child-teacher relationship as well, so the author concluded that relationship history could not explain their perceptions exclusively.

The author also pointed out that the role of parents and teachers in the development of social-emotional competence has significant, though subtle differences. These differences are found in the emphasis placed on caregiving and instructing. Typically, parents give care primarily and instruct secondarily, although each is an important ingredient in the child's social-emotional development. Teachers, on the other hand, view their primary role as being an instructor. Certainly, social-emotional skills required of a kindergarten student on

the first day of school, if immature or inadequate, would elicit the caregiving skill of a teacher.

The author made the connection between the relationship history of the teacher and the concept of internal working model (IWM) adopted by Bowlby (1982) and those who followed. Further, he connected the recollection by the teacher of the closeness of their parental relationships to a secure attachment.

A team of researchers (Buyse et al., 2011) based their study on attachment theory. Firstly, they studied the connection between close teacher-child relationships and the reduction of aggression in the classroom. Secondly, they looked at how teacher sensitivity affects the ability of an insecure child to develop a close relationship with a teacher.

Even though studies were done to understand the attachment needs of students who have an insecure attachment to their mothers, the authors point out that little research has been done to understand how teachers can impact attachment style for those children at risk for aggressive behavior in kindergarten. They reported the argument that the behavior of the teacher in the classroom, more specifically, the teacher's sensitivity to a child's needs, has not been studied. Therefore, they examined the role of the teacher moderated the teacher-child relationship quality in kindergarten. The authors defined closeness as warm and open communication between a teacher and a child. Closeness includes using the teacher as a secure base when distressed. The finding of this study was that even when a child has an insecure attachment to his mother, high

closeness between teachers and individual children are no longer at a significantly higher risk for aggressive behavior than children with the higher quality of attachment to their mothers. This finding supports the hypothesis that secure attachment between child and teacher supports the acquisition of social competence and cognitive skills and lowers the risk of aggression in the classroom. They found that this sensitivity was a function of the dyadic affective relationship between a child and his or her teacher. This relationship affects the child's behavioral adjustment in school.

Because the relationship that most powerfully impacts a child's behavioral adjustment in the classroom is dyadic, a study that explored how a teacher's perception of how the dyad affects his or her security is relevant. Riley (2009) examined the reality that one cannot be a teacher without at least one student, which makes a teacher dependent on a student for professional identity. He noted that the prevailing model of attachment is that a teacher is the caregiver and the student is the care seeker. This view left out the reciprocity and shared the power of any dyad. He pointed out that some teachers choose their profession unconsciously looking for corrective emotional experience and at least in the beginning, are ill-equipped to respond with confidence to the emotional needs of the students. The authors suggest that teachers with this expectation are met with rejection which engenders aggressive behavior toward students. In another study, Riley et al. (2010) identified the types of aggressive behavior that occurs commonly in the classroom and studied how teachers explain the use of

this kind of behavior. They found that teachers not only do not have a common explanation or theory with which to explain aggressive behavior but resist establishing a theory.

Hyson (2002) explores issues of student emotional competence in the context of professional development and public policy. In her article, she identifies a child's social-emotional developmental needs as foundational for successfully making the transition to a kindergarten classroom. She continues by outlining how teachers can support the developing competencies of kindergartners. Her strategies are ones that are typical of teachers who use their secure attachment skills to develop and safe, supportive learning environment.

Finally, Bath (2008) This author reviews information from neuroscience and clinical research about the effect that trauma, neglect and attachment breaks have on how children develop self-regulation. He discusses the power struggles that often occur in a classroom. He calls them conflict cycles and addresses the prevalent belief that it is necessary to correct behavior by handing out consequences as punishment in the hope this reduces the behavior, which it typically does not. He proposes a model for supporting children whose hope for a calming response is not typically forthcoming. He calls it co-regulation. He discusses the emerging evidence from neurobiology that co-regulation occurs across the lifespan and can be modified by practice. He takes the position that for those who are learning self-regulation, co-regulation is the first step on the pathway to self-regulation.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

Policies enacted as zero-tolerance policies were put in place to protect the integrity and safety of our education system. The practice of establishing codes of conduct to protect the right of students to learn in a safe environment and the ability of school districts to be able to control student conduct on their campuses is supported by law and upheld in courts. This change in policy was necessary and effective in a time of turbulence and insecurity. However, one of the unforeseen consequences of the enforcement of the policies is that students whose behavior did not rise to the criteria of violent and dangerous behavior, but whose behavior did disturb the peace and order of a classroom, were suspended for varying lengths of time. Suspensions varied in degrees from an in-room time-out box where the student could continue to hear the teacher and do his work to out-of-school suspensions for periods up to 10 days. The laws enacted were enforced with care to protect as much as possible the reputation and school record of the students (Cambron-McCabe, McCarthy, Thomas, & McCarthy, 2009). In spite of this, it was found that although teachers and administrators needs for resolving problems with difficult to manage students were met by excluding the student from the classroom, the students themselves were saddled with long-reaching consequences detrimental to their ability to succeed

academically and in many cases, graduate from school (Dupperet al., 2009).

Eventually, zero tolerance policies were challenged as being implemented disproportionately on Black, Latino, low-income, at-risk and special education students and therefore discriminatory (Reyes, 2006). Skiba and Peterson (2000) expanded on this theme citing the over-representation of African-American students who were over represented in the use of corporal punishment and expulsion, and were underrepresented in the use of milder disciplinary alternatives. Mendez and Knoff (2003) had similar results.

Theriot et al. (2010) took the issue a step further in their study by examining school as well as student characteristics. They concluded in their results that there is a need to change the way students behave in school and to do that, they need teachers, administrators, and staff to participate in this process. Finally, Graziano et al. (2007) found evidence that the relationship between the teacher and the student predicts student academic success. The review of the research has much to say about the importance of the teacher in the teacher-student relationship, but not much is known about the relationship skills that a teacher possesses that modifies student behavior. The purpose of this study is to add to the understanding of how a teacher's internal working models that are part of everyone's automatic response to distress, conflict, and disruption, impact the emotional and behavioral development of kindergartners as expressed by their behavior in the classroom. The questions posed in this study are listed below:

Does the teacher use strategies or interventions that manage or change disruptive, challenging student behavior?

Are the strategies or interventions used by the teacher effective in de-escalating disruptive, challenging student behavior?

What is the attachment style of the teacher?

Are the strategies or interventions used by the teacher for managing or changing disruptive-challenging behavior consistent with her attachment style?

### Research Design

The design of anything is a preliminary activity done in preparation for the successful completion a major task. The design must fit its purpose as well as it's context. It has a structure that allows for the interaction between the parts of the design, which include theories, research questions, goals, methods and validity threats with the expectation of a dynamic process that guides completion of the task (Maxwell, 2005, p. 3). In this case, the major task was the development of an understanding of what teachers experienced when a decision needed to be made in response to an escalating conflict with a disruptive student. The approach that was best suited to the task was qualitative research for its emphasis on exploration, discovery, and description. In this study, the qualitative approach used was a phenomenological one that was applied to a single case with a deliberately selected sample of six kindergarten teachers at one school. The characteristics of a phenomenological approach most useful in this study



were its focus on the experience of the participant and their perception of the meaning of that experience. In her exploration of phenomenology, Flood (2010) proposes that the meaning of things comes through humans' experience of them and after it is filtered through consciousness, leads to new action. She noted that phenomenological knowledge reforms understanding and leads to more thoughtful action through constructionism. Lester (1999) agrees when he says that phenomenological methods are particularly effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their perspectives, and therefore at challenging structural or normative assumptions.

#### Data Collection Procedures

The kindergarten teachers completed their school year at the time of the study and were no longer on campus. Therefore, two methods of data collection were done via online measures in a question-and-answer format. The first measure, Relationship Attachment Style Test (Jerabek & Muoio, 2006) was completed by participants online. PsychTests AIM, Inc. provided the questions, and the interpretation of results and the responses of the participants were scored and tabulated by them. A charge was remitted by the participant for the results which was reimbursed by the researcher. The second measure, the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale-Short Form (STRS-SF) (Pianta, 1992), with modifications by Kooman et al. (2012) and pertinent demographic information, was transferred to a survey to be completed online. The third data

collection method was the Teacher Relationship Interview (TRI) (Pianta, 1999), a 45-60 minute semi-structured interview used to identify a teacher's internal working models of relationships with a particular student. It was conducted off-campus in a place that was convenient for the participant. The interview questions were semi-structured and open-ended to allow the researcher and interviewee to engage in conversation. The give and take during the interview allowed us to establish the rapport necessary to explore personal experiences deeply safely (Lester, 1999). The interview was audio-taped and transcribed.

### Permissions

Permission was first obtained from the District Superintendent and the School Principal. Then each participant was contacted by phone or email. Finally, they were provided a letter of informed consent which included information about the purpose of the study, a description of how the data would be collected, and how long it would take to complete it, and other information pertinent to participation in the study, including permission to audio record.

### Data Analysis

Transcriptions of audio recordings of the interview and analytic memos were analyzed using the process described by Friese (2014) for use with ATLAS.ti 8 for Windows qualitative analysis software. The interview

transcripts were uploaded into the application to create a new project. Coding is a process of analysis that identifies words or phrases that occur in the body of data and assigns it a word or phrase that symbolically expresses its essence or most salient attribute. Charmaz (2001) has expressed her view that coding is the process of data collection and the extrapolation of meaning. When a participant uses phrases often, it is useful to track these codes. When we can demonstrate that the themes and concepts are interrelated, it is possible for a theory to emerge. According to the process provided by the software, a coding list was constructed using definitions of codes in the TRI coding manual (Pianta et al., 1999). Each participant's interviews were scored according to the coding manual guidelines. The STRS was scored according to the guidelines in the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale: Professional Manual (Pianta, 2001).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Overview

The initial impetus for this study was a realization that as early as kindergarten, teachers can identify students that are, because of their disruptive and challenging behavior, likely to have difficulty succeeding academically and socially in school. This realization came after years of working with students and teachers in an effort facilitate improved social-emotional functioning by the researcher. The task of intervening in a way that improved the trajectory of social and academic functioning was often difficult. By the time the problem was identified, the student had developed a pattern of externalizing behavior that had the purpose of removing the student from the demands of the classroom, an overwhelmingly stressful environment in which he/she was not succeeding. This pattern was reinforced by policies put in place to preserve the safe and orderly classroom learning environment required for the greatest number of children. Fortunately, educators and education policymakers have read the research that identifies that exclusion of students from the classroom for disruptive behavior is no longer tenable and are looking for alternatives that allow inclusion of students with social-emotional difficulties (Burke et al., 2009; Maag, 2001; Teasley, 2014). The problem, then, becomes how do teachers manage student behavior that is

disruptive? The purpose of this study was to shed light on the problem and perhaps a solution.

Much of the early research focused on the behavior and attributes of the children or the teacher. Interestingly, the research supporting attachment theory describes a dyadic interaction between a child and a caregiver that has antecedents within the caregiver that reaches back to the foundational experiences between the caregiver and his/her primary caregiver. As Siegel (1999) points out, attachment, like other implicit memories, is an unconscious process in children and adults that guides, in a developmentally sequenced way, responses to others throughout the lifetime. For this reason, attachment theory provides a bridge between teacher and student that connects what is common in both.

As early researchers studied the complex interaction in a typical classroom, they took a trial and error approach. They identified the dynamics and important constructs that affect teacher satisfaction and student academic success (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Losen & Martinez, 2003; Poulou & Norwich, 2000; Spilt et al., 2011). Although these studies identified important aspects of teacher and student interaction in the classroom, they lacked a coherent, common approach to assess the complex interactions that occur there.

One researcher, Robert C. Pianta (1999), drew on his experience as a special education teacher in a middle school early in his career. Because he was able to work with many of the same students over a three-year period, he

became aware of how his relationship with his students deepened over time. He noticed that students whose behavior he expected would be difficult to manage was not. He also noticed that these same students were able to tackle more difficult tasks beyond what he expected and made academic progress. He attributed this finding to the strength of the relationship between teacher and student. He also noticed that some relationships were more challenging than others. What he learned about these relationships is that some children want to be in charge of the relationship when the child is stressed and the struggle for control left him angry or feeling helpless. Because he had access to support, he was able to overcome these feelings and deal more effectively with these students. These experiences became the foundation for his approach designing research studies first, then reliable instruments to measure the complex interaction between teacher and student in the classroom (Pianta, 1999).

To explain the process, he followed while developing the instruments, Pianta provided an overview of a child's growth with a focus on the importance of a child's ability to regulate and modulate physiological arousal. He explained that infants develop the ability to regulate and modulate levels of arousal in a relationship with a caregiver who consistently responds in an attuned, effective manner that meets the infant's needs in a timely and consistent way. This process explains how a child learns to expect a sense of security about others. An infant's whose needs are met inconsistently learns to expect insecurity.

An insecure infant may show a tendency toward over- and under- arousal, be unable to establish feeding and sleep routines, have little interest in interaction or have difficulty being soothed. As a result, caregivers become increasingly stressed and unpredictable. The unfortunate outcome for the child for whom this has become a natural state is a tendency toward dysregulation and inability to modulate physiological arousal, all of which is automatic and unconscious.

#### The Teacher Relationship Interview (TRI)

The Teacher Relationship Interview (TRI), (Pianta, 1999) was developed as a way for teachers' representations of their relationships with students to be scored. It also up ways for those persons who assist teachers in discussing classroom experiences, both positive and negative. It was based on another interview instrument, the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI), (Main & Goldwyn, 1994) developed to assess the internal attachment representations of parents that, when paired with Infant Strange Situation assessment, explains parent-child reciprocal attachment representation. Table 1 below shows the classifications assessed by the AAI. Siegel (1999, p.74) summarized them from Main, Kaplan, and Main (1985) and Main and Goldwyn (1984, 1998). It is provided here as a guide to understanding teacher attachment classification in the TRI.

Table 1

Adult State of Mind with Respect to Attachment

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Secure/autonomous (F)

Coherent, collaborative discourse. Valuing of attachment, but things objective regarding any particular event/relationship. Description and evaluation of attachment -related experiences is consistent, whether experiences are favorable or unfavorable. Discourse does not knowingly violate any of Grice's maxims.

Dismissing (Ds)

Not Coherent. Dismissing of attachment-related experiences and relationships. Normalizing ("excellent, very normal mother"), with generalized representations of history unsupported or actively contradicted by episodes recounted, thus violating Grice's maxims of quality. Transcripts also tend to be excessively brief, violating the maximum quantity.

Preoccupied (E)

Not coherent. Preoccupied with or bypassed attachment relationships/experiences, the speaker appears angry, passive, or fearful. Sentences often long, thematically entangled, or filled with vague usages ("dadadada," "and that"), thus violating Grice's maxims of manner and relevance. Transcripts often excessively long violating the maximum quantity."

Preoccupied (E)

Not coherent. Preoccupied with or bypassed attachment relationships/experiences, the speaker appears angry, passive, or fearful. Sentences often long, thematically entangled, or filled with vague usages ("dadadada," "and that"), thus violating Grice's maxims of manner and relevance. Transcripts often excessively long violating the maximum quantity."

Unresolved/disorganized (U/d)

During discussions of loss or abuse, individual shows striking lapse in the monitoring of reasoning or discourse. For example, an individual may briefly indicate a belief that a dead person is still alive in the physical sense, or that this person was killed by a child who thought. Individual may lapse into prolonged silence or eulogistic speech. The speaker will ordinarily otherwise fit Ds, E, or F categories.

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One of the strengths of the TRI is that the questions are typically easy and non-threatening for the teacher answering them and allows for the underlying dynamics to be explored (Pianta, 1999). Teacher Relationship Interview Coding Manual provides scoring guidelines (Pianta et al., 1999) that are used to code teacher narratives to determine the presence or absence of the constructs possible in the interview. The scoring guidelines include the following:

Coders should make overall qualitative judgments based on all the information in the interview. Certain dimensions might have stronger emphasis on responses to certain questions, but even in those cases, coders should consider the interview as a whole (p. 2).

The general score definitions are listed in Table 2 below. Each construct is first defined. Then, each participant is scored for that construct. Quotations from the interviews are provided that illustrate how the score was determined.

This scale measures the teacher's approach to behavior management in the classroom with the particular student. Higher scores indicate more sensitive and proactive modes of management with the student. Lower scores reflect less preventative and more reactive responses by the teacher, whereby the student seems to trigger the teacher's response.

Table 2

*Descriptions of Teacher Relationship Interview Scores Across All Constructs*\_\_\_\_\_

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High End = 6, 7 (4, 5 for Coherence)

The teacher articulates the construct in a clear way and gives fresh examples that seem natural and come to life in the interview. Clear evidence of the construct is provided. Details or elaboration are provided to support the presence of the construct.

Mid-Range = 3, 4, 5 (3 for Coherence)

There is amixed presentation of the construct. The teacher provides some evidence of the presence of the construct, but the explanations and support are less rich and less clear. The teacher might also provide examples that occlude the construct are provided inconsistent information regarding the dimension.

Low End = 1, 2 (1, 2 for Coherence)

There is very little or no evidence of the construct.

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(Pianta et al., 1999)

Results of Teacher Interviews

The semi-structured interview questions in the TRI are scored below. The code element that describes the criteria for the score is listed with quotations that demonstrate the score given that participant in that particular construct. It is not uncommon for a response to an interview to have more than one score. The codes were derived from descriptive criteria for scoring the narratives.

Construct: Sensitivity of Discipline

Participant 1. Score: Low End 1 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct.) This teacher did not answer the question specific to the discipline and did not address discipline issues during the interview.

Participant 2. Score: High End 6 (Teacher provided proactive responses to prevent undesirable situations. Teacher helps the student learn from conflicts.)

For him, I would most likely give him his space. I know that he likes to read books independently, so sending him over and giving him a safe, quiet zone to calm down, chill out, regroup, and it was effective, so that's what we went with most of the time. (Participant 2, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 3. Score: High End 6 (Teacher provides proactive responses to prevent undesirable situations. Teacher provides reasons for rules and expectations).

Instead of being negative I pulled her back here, and I had her working on something she needed help with. When kids act out that way, and after I've given them several reminders or whatever I didn't really think of it as a punishment, it was something she liked to do. (Participant 3, Interview, August, 2017)

That's one thing I taught her to. We would always do mindful breathing.

I do things very... What's the word? Best practice? Not best practice just more with dignity.(Participant 3, Interview, August, 2017)

I tried to deflect the situation from her and I and then when the kids are working I come back, and we have a conversation.

Participant 4. Score: Mid 4 (Need for rules, not always stated.) and Score: High End 6 (Teacher helps the student learn from conflicts. Teacher talks to a student about circumstances to explain other ways to behave).

Struggle, it was towards the beginning of his time within my classroom. I think he had knocked over something on purpose, probably either out of... I don't know if it was anger, but out of some kind of frustration. Prior to that, a recommendation was given to me, make sure whatever messes he makes he cleans up. It was one of those moments of, okay, this is your mess. You're going to be cleaning it up. Kind of that struck that's what came to mind. Definitely just the struggle of communication, the struggle of following rules, and just consistent. (Participant 4, Interview, August, 2017)

Okay, just in the beginning, I felt like we were really into different pages, to separate different pages. I think toward the end we finally did start to....I remember I would take away, I tried to express to him, "When you play in my classroom, that means you will not be allowed to play on the playground." I would choose to because we actually have practice at that school, I would choose to stay there during basically my free time, and

I would talk to him. I would more than anything; I would try and prompt him and listen to make sure... Because I would ask him, “why are you sitting here?” “I don’t know. I don’t know.” We’d work backwards, “remember when this happened? (Participant 4, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: High End 5 (Little guidance to prevent misbehavior; Little praise).

It was just this outburst. I had to call the administration, and I had to explain to him, “you need to go to the office because we cannot use those kinds of words.” (Participant 4, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 5. Score: Mid-Range 4 (Controlling field to teacher; Little processing).

I can think of a time when he had a girlfriend, and I don’t remember exactly what happened, but it was a matter of, no you’re not sitting next to her. Score: Low End 2 (Overly focused on compliance or leniency).

This is what he wanted to do, it was not something that I was going to, it was not a battle you’re going to win, and it’s just not going to happen, and if you can’t handle it, you need to leave. And that was pretty much, and it had to do with another student who liked him, they’re 5-year-olds, and he was very angry, and that stuck with him a long time. (Participant 5, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 6. Score: High End 6 (Teacher provides reasons for rules and expectations. Teacher talks student about circumstances to explain other ways to behave).

So I'm going to sit down the law, the rules, and say here's what I need you to do, here's what I need you to say. And then I gave the stories from the parent; I'm like oh my gosh, oh my gosh. I've been doing what I've been doing for 6 weeks for the last 4 years, all you adopted this little one who is not even your own, or you took this on, and here you have another child whose, and it just goes on and on and on, and I'm just like oh my gosh thank you for loving this child. Thank you for loving this child as much as I will invest in her now as well. (Participant 6, Interview, August, 2017)

... But when you have a child needs the attention or needs to have a turn, you have to say, or I say to her specifically, or I'll ask a question or be engaging outside, this is something we're all not going to get a turn to answer. Lots of times and I have a small classroom; they can all have a turn, they can turn and tell their friend if they don't have time to tell me. But if I don't give her that opportunity, it goes bad really quick and everything about me I'm teaching the other kids, sometimes we get a turn sometimes we don't get a turn. That is something you have to learn in life. It's a real-life skill. And they get more turns than if there are 30 kids because there's only 15 of them. (Participant 6, Interview, August, 2017)

#### Construct: Secure Base

This scale measures the teacher's ability to express, either through statements of their beliefs and through behavioral examples, the understanding

that her emotional support is linked to the student's social, emotional, and cognitive competence. At a high level, the teacher understands and acknowledges her role as a secure base for the student, allowing the student to actively explore and learn while they serve as a source of comfort, reassurance, and encouragement. Particularly salient are instances in which the teacher describes the importance of the teacher-student relationship to the student's development (academic, emotional, or social).

Participant 1. Score: Low End 1 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct). This teacher did not address secure base issues during the interview.

Participant 2. Score: High End 6 (Behavior of teacher is comforting, attuned. Relationship is consistently emotionally secure).

Where he trusted me and I became kind of his person. He was actually not even in my classroom to begin, but he developed trust with me and could depend on me. Maybe depend was more than loyalty. The trust and the dependability were two main factors. He didn't have a lot of stability in his life, and so I think I just became that motherly figure that he could trust, and we really developed our relationship there. (Participant 2, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: High End 6 (Emotions are accepted and processed with help from the teacher. Relationship is consistently emotionally secure. Behavior teacher is comforting, attuned).

Well, the class that he was in did not have the greatest role models, and so he did not have the greatest role models at home, and so he was using my room as a sanctuary to have a timeout from the other teacher, but I was not just letting him have a timeout I was helping him learn expectations in school. I think just having it be the sanctuary... I can't remember the exact moment that it happened that I think he just came here and luckily, I had a really good class it was just calm and accepting an understanding and just call. That's the best way to describe it when he would come into this environment, it was just completely different, and you could see him defuse, and you could see him join in and do things that he wasn't doing in his other classroom until eventually, he just became part of our class, so I just think that.(Participant 2, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 3. Score: Mid Range 4 (Teacher examples of these secure base are vague).

It was her behavior was the same, and I approached the same, and she went from doing that to maybe a half hour to 5 minutes. Her and I had a great relationship, so I felt that was part of it. Not that I felt old, that fixed everything but I'm like, "oh, I finally found something that works for her and that's going to be better, not perfect."(Participant 3, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: High End 6 (Relationship is consistently emotionally secure).



I felt that my time is valuable and so is theirs but when I felt a success is one of these kids it didn't always happen but even if it was a small little glimmer of hope or something I felt an immense satisfaction felt like, "okay, I have a relationship with him now," because that, for me, takes a long time to build that trust.(Participant 3, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 4. Score: Mid Range 4 (Teacher understands the role of building trust) and High End 6 (Behavior of teacher is comforting, attuned).

Because of the group, you develop this relationship. I realized I was out at a training one day, and so I had him go into an upper-grade classroom. I realize I had this level of mama bear-ness with him. I remember telling him... I had this level, I realized and explaining to him what I do and whatever, I found myself realizing that there was an attachment there within me that had grown through the struggles and through the... Which did surprise me, I think. I think that there was such a high level of almost protectiveness over him because I think you just grow in the struggle.  
(Participant 4, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 5. Score: Low End 1 (Teacher consistently rebuffs student attempts to make contact.), Low End 2 (little evidence that teacher understands the need to provide a secure base for student.), Mid Range 3 (Teacher does not understand the importance of security for the student).

And there were times when he would then go that way and the office....I'd say, "well he's leaving the building." He didn't go terribly far. He did try to

climb the fence one day when we were outside, and another teacher ran over and grabbed him. I know one of the questions, there was one question, I think it was on the survey monkey about physical tension, I'm at the point in my career I don't, I shake hands with my students, and that's it. I don't let my students hug me, and I don't my students. Which makes me very sad, because when I started teaching I started in kindergarten and I have my students every morning when they came through the door, we have. (Participant 5, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 6. Score: High End 6 (Behavior teacher is comforting, attuned. Emotions are accepted and processed with help from the teacher. Relationship is consistently emotionally secure).

And in particular to this child would be how you know the attention that's needed and it needs to be done in love. And being a human person who comes to work every day with my own hurts and pains entire days or whatever days, those are the days that I'm a very good advocate for her. And it's not dependent on her, it's dependent on me, and so I find myself having to do and use all the tools I try and teach kids. Breed, smell the flowers, blow out the candles, walk in a circle, come back in a minute, let it happen right now and will deal with it in a minute. (Participant 6, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: High End 6 (Relationship is "warm" or "close." The relationship is consistently emotionally secure).

When she has a meltdown she does this, “I don’t have to listen to you,” and everything in me went “oh yes you do,” and all, of course, you want to listen to me, what are you talking about, kids love me. All those adult, real-life things, maybe not consciously they go through my head. But as she is having a meltdown I literally and physically have to wrap my arms and engage with her and talk smoothly and say this is not okay, we’re going to move over here. And we moved to another place, and the kids know to play rock paper scissors or whatever. They’re not; you have one in every class kind of thing, they’re just different levels. But in that moment when someone is kicking you, and you know that you are just doing everything you can do to do right, you just want to say stop, this is a 5-year-old, and then you’re like oh wait this is their 5-year-old. (Participant 6, Interview, August, 2017)

Construct: Perspective-Taking

This scale measures the quality of the teacher’s awareness of a student’s internal states, and her ability to put herself in the position/mindset of the student. The teacher’s response indicates that she views the student with independent states, thoughts, and feelings that are tenable and believable, and not misattributions. If teachers describe the idea of taking the student’s perspective, without more detail, they tend to score in the mid-range. To score on the high end, the teacher must provide consistent examples indicating awareness of the student’s perspective, including a description of the student’s

state and the reason for that state. Much of the feel for the teacher's score on this scale will be derived from the questions that ask her how the student felt in different situations.

Participant 1. Score: Mid-Range 4 (Teacher may recognize an emotional state without understanding the context).

Every day was difficult. I just couldn't get through to him. I couldn't get him motivated. I couldn't... He made everything difficult. Everything was a tug-of-war. Everything was a power struggle. Everything was, no, I don't have to listen to you. No, this. No, that. Everything was, no, I'm not going to do it. No, I don't like you. I hate you. It was the worst experience, the most difficult experience I've had in 14 years of teaching. (Participant 1, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: Mid-Range 4 (When reflecting, student's emotional state is based on behavior rather than attunement to the internal state).

To get to you I'm going to do this, is what he looked like. He was like a 25-year-old man in a 5-year-old body. He knew exactly what he was doing. (Participant 2, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 2. Score: High 6 (Teacher appreciates and takes into account the unique perspective of the student. Teacher can put self in mindset/position of the student. Teacher understands how the student views the world).

Humor. He responded very well to my sarcasm towards him and towards his situations instead of maybe getting frustrated that he was laying on the

floor and he wouldn't get out. I would say, "come on lazy bones" or just that light-hearted kind of humor, and he responded well to that instead of me saying, "get up now, I'm going to count to three," and then he wouldn't respond, he would shut down, so the humor that we develop, and then he was really funny back towards me too, so that kind of humor just developed our relationship.(Participant 2, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 3. Score: High 6 (Teacher appreciates and takes into account the unique perspective of the student).

I know that some kids respond differently to different strategies, but I'm not a person that's going to try something on a child once and then just "oh, that didn't work," because I know things take time.(Participant 3, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: Mid Range 4 (Teachers of student behavior is based hypothetical perspective taking).

I think when she first came she was very scared of not older children but adults, so she was very challenging to build a relationship with because she was a little not just timid, really afraid of me at first. She came into my class near the end of the school year so she didn't know any kids and the environment was scary to her there was a lot of background stuff with her that went with that.(Participant 3, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: High 6 (Teacher understands how the student views the world).

She still needs a lot of work, but there was a lot of things that, I think, in her mind, she felt very comfortable with adults. I would see her anytime anybody would come in and maybe even our school nurse just to...

Because she was late every day and a school nurse would bring her breakfast every morning, and she would run away from her. I like, "oh no, we have to make sure that you have enough food, so you have the energy for the day," I knew she would run away from her. I knew something was going on with adults in her life, so I was just trying to make everything positive. (Participant 3, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 4. Score: High End 6 (Teacher understands how the student views the world).

He would give hugs, and he would smile, but he wasn't very relational. He really was not. Yeah, that was kind of a missing component for him, I feel. I would assume he had a very emotional background in the sense of emotional abuse because he would yell at students and he would yell at me. Just a lot of yelling. This very natural instinct to go back to yelling. (Participant 4, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: Mid Range 4 (Teacher may recognize an emotional state without understanding the context. Teacher's reflection of student behavior is based on hypothetical perspective-taking).

It didn't feel like he had an understanding of what normal communication was, truly. His talking with the other students was just very immature. Like I said, he was on a speech IEP. (Participant 4, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: High End: (Teacher views the student as a separate person with unique experiences about other people in the world).

Actually, I take that... He would push sometimes out of immaturity, but it didn't seem like it was an aggressive, I'm going to beat you up.

(Participant 4, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 5. Score: Mid Range 4 (Teacher may recognize an emotional state without understanding the context. When reflecting, student's emotional state is based on behavior rather than attunement to internal emotional state).

The student was very angry at the world and would lash out. I was not in a position where I could step back and watch enough to ever figure out what we create this temper tantrum. So it was that difficult experience of, okay it's happening, it's an explosion right now, everybody out and that was very difficult for me because I didn't know what set it off, I didn't really see it coming as he walked in the door with his head down and grumpy, then I knew, okay where's the support. I had tons of support with family and staff but really made it difficult because it was a 5-year-old kicking me, pulling my hair, and hitting me, and throwing things in the classroom. (Participant 5, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: High End 6 (Teacher is able to put self in the mindset/position of the student).

I didn't know if he talked to his mom or was supposed to talk to his mom the night before that it was going to be a very difficult day. (Participant 5, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: High End 6 (Teacher appreciates and takes into account the unique perspective of the student).

There were definitely times that I could identify what motivated him, but even though he was very highly motivated doing something...did not necessarily prevent an explosion from going on. They definitely were not connected at all. 'Cause he could be happy, very hard-working, interested in what he was doing and something just changed. Whether it was the time of day, a lot of times if he could finish, if we quit something before he was finished and leave the room, that was a very tenuous time because he was not going to, he needed to finish whatever he was working on. So giving him the opportunity to finish his things and to be the expert were the ways that we could connect probably the most. (Participant 5, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 6. Score: High End 6 (Teacher can put self in the mindset/position of the student).

And they'll even asked me, all do we all get to turn this time? Like oh no no, this one we only have 3 minutes that, I'm going to pull the sticks



whoever's turn it is, that's how many we'll have. But I always know, for her, she needs to have some sort of turn. It doesn't have to be with me, but it can be tell a friend, or it could be let a friend tell you, she's even okay with that. (Participant 6, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: High End 6 (Teacher views the student as a separate person with unique experiences about other people and the world).

It might go partly with perseverance, but to me, the engagement part of it is. Personally, there are kids who when you have so many kids that are easy to love on, and there's others that are really hard because they're not expressive lovingly back. Their hurts and their pain and their whatever's our "I hate you, I don't want to be here." And so, QTIP, quit taking it personal. It's not an option to take anything personal from a 4 or 5-year old. Because when they are having their meltdown, or I hate you or they're hitting you or kicking you, then I stay engaged in I know they need me more in that moment. (Participant 6, Interview, August, 2017)

Construct: Neutralizing Negative Affect

The overriding theme of this scale is the teacher's attempts to distance herself from the NEGATIVE affective component of the question. The code is akin to the avoidant or dismissing strategy in discussions of attachment, in which negative emotion in the context of a discussion/interaction is dismissed, neutralized, or avoided. If the result of the response does not seem to neutralize negative affect or somehow avoid the question, neutralize should not be scored at

the high end. Teachers who delay responding to the question, but then talk at length about something else or discuss other feelings are not neutralizing. The scale is designed to reflect the degree to which teachers "back away from" discussion of negative emotion in the interview, and may take many forms—including not responding to a question about feelings ("I don't know"), or more sophisticated forms in which the teacher responds with great detail for events, but does not provide any information about their feelings. Teachers who refuse to respond to questions without providing believable support for their lack of ability to provide an example or response are more likely to be scored on the high end of the scale. Teachers who neutralize tend to be less willing to respond to questions that probe for more difficult situations or negative emotions. (The scores for this construct are reversed: 1, 2 = High End; 3, 4, 5, = Mid-Range; 5, 6 = Low End).

Participant 1. Score: High End 2 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct).

This teacher did not engage in neutralizing negative affect issues during the interview

Participant 2. Score: High End 2 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct).

This teacher did not engage in neutralizing negative affect issues during the interview.

Participant 3. Score: High End 2 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct). This teacher did not engage in neutralizing negative affect issues during the interview.

Participant 4. Score: High End 2 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct). This teacher did not engage in neutralizing negative affect issues during the interview.

Participant 5. Score: High End 2 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct). This teacher did not engage in neutralizing negative affect issues during the interview.

Participant 6. Score: High End 2 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct). This teacher did not engage in neutralizing negative affect issues during the interview.

Construct: Agency/Intentionality

This scale reflects the teacher's feelings of effectiveness within the classroom. The teacher's sense of agency may be reflected in any area of her job in which she feels particularly effective (e.g., instruction, discipline, inspiring creativity). At the high end of the scale, the teacher describes particular incidents in which her specific actions had the intended effect upon the student's behavior. At the low end, the teacher is less sure of her influence on the student or may give more generic statements about the efficacy of her teaching. The essential feature of this scale is that the teacher is describing events as teachable

moments; she is seeking opportunities to promote the student's growth in either social or academic domain.

Participant 1. Score: Low End 2 (Little evidence of teacher attempt to influence the child.(Teacher does not believe actions have an impact on the student; student behavior is a characteristic less open to influence by the teacher.)

It was basically every day. Every day was difficult. It made me not want to come to work. I just couldn't get through to him. I couldn't get him motivated. I couldn't... It was the worst experience, the most difficult experience, I've had in 14 years of teaching.(Participant 1, Interview, August, 2017)

I felt like, okay, maybe I'm not that good of a teacher if I can't get through to this kid. Because usually, I can get through to the kids. They're not perfect, by any means. I'm not perfect, by any means. But it was just very frustrating because I'm used to succeeding in what I do, and excelling in what I do. Even though I'm not the best out there, I feel like I do a decent job at what I do. And I just felt like, I was doing my job well.(Participant 1, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 2. Score: High End 6 (in response to the "misbehavior" or "push" question, the teacher often describes actions as effective).

I had to play hardball and say, "no, this is independent. I'm not helping you right now. You need to go give me your 10 minutes. You need to try. You

need to try,” and sure enough, he started to rise. He had a lot of gaps. I admit that, but he was able to do a lot more independently than what he had thought he could. (Participant 2, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: High End 6 (Teacher adapts her actions based on the characteristics of the student).

I discovered that he was really artistically skilled. When we would do guided writing, he would immediately jump to the picture and want to do the picture, and would make it beautiful, and never really want to do the writing, so I was able to use that as a motivating tool to get more out of him, yeah, that’s always a struggle with every kid is “how much do you push in? What’s going to send him over the edge and making shutdown?” (Participant 2, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 3. Score: High End 6 (Teacher adapts her actions based on the characteristics of the student).

I know that things take time... that some kids respond differently to different strategies, but I’m not a person that’s going to try something on a child once and then just, “oh, that didn’t work,” because I know you take time. (Participant 3, Interview, August, 2017d)

Score: Low End 2 (Teacher does not believe actions have an impact on the student; student behavior is a characteristic less open to influence by the teacher) and Mid Range 4 (Teacher is less sure of her influence on the student).

She was very self-harming so she would try to hurt herself a lot. For me, I was frustrated and the fact that maybe some days the strategy I gave her wasn't working. For instance, she would slam her head on the ground, and I was worried about her safety. The one strategy we went over, maybe, four months, and it was working for her and then, I guess, part of it was I couldn't figure out what was the onset of the behavior. Like, there was not a trigger, I couldn't find it. It was frustrating because she would continually bang her head on the floor and I was concerned about not only her but, like I said, everybody and the fact that the strategy that I thought was calling her down and helping her was no longer working.(Participant 3, Interview, August, 2017)

High End 6 (Teacher consistently influences student purposefully even when efforts are unsuccessful).

I felt that my time is valuable and so is theirs but when I felt a success with one of these kids it didn't always happen but even if it was a small little glimmer of hope for something I felt the immense satisfaction, and I felt like, "okay, I have a relationship with him now," because that for me it takes a long time to build that trust. It was rewarding for me to know that I made a difference and sometimes the families would tell me a conference... I would tell them about the strategies, and they would be so thankful.(Participant 3, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 4. Score: High End 6 (Teacher consistently influences student purposefully even when efforts are unsuccessful. Teacher adapts her actions based on the characteristics of the student).

Issues will arise. Obviously, the students would have a hard time, because the student, for example, cannot do the whole group, at all. Pretty much he literally would not stay with the whole group and participate. He oftentimes, I needed to put him on a computer, which was an effort. At the beginning, of course, the students would struggle with that and question it and all of that. (Participant 4, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: Mid Range 4 (Teacher's perception of her potential influence on the student is mixed).

Just simply that it's something, he was not able to do. I had to find something that he was able to do, and that was still academically beneficial to him. (Participant 4, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: High End 6 (Teacher adapts her actions based on the characteristics of the student).

I just think my explanation of having a high level of expectation. This is something I know you can do; I know you're capable of doing. Specifically, his writing comes to mind he did not enjoy that. Like you said, he wanted to be on the computer. He did not want to use his fine motor skills. He didn't have any interest. Just that explanation to him that I have

a higher level of expectation. I've seen you do this. (Participant 4, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 5. Score: High End 6 (Teacher adapts her actions based on the characteristics of the student.) Mid-Range 4 (Teacher is less sure of her influence on the student. Teacher is vague about either intent or how behaviors have influenced the student).

It happened more than once, but it... I needed someone to be able to just be here watching to be able to say, "okay this is what it was." We can never really put a finger on what would turn an okay day, or even a great day into falling apart. So I think frustrating was my 2<sup>nd</sup> one, which turns into what was so frustrating for me was that I could never find any cause, so there was nothing I could ever fix. (Participant 5, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: High End 6 (Teacher adapts her actions based on the characteristics of the student).

Now we have made great progress with the student. Made tremendous progress and there were lots of things that I could do that I changed to be able to for sure make them less frequent so that they weren't happening all the time. (Participant 5, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 6. Score: High End 6 (Teacher linked her behavior in the intended response and student. Teacher consistently influences student



purposefully even when her efforts are unsuccessful. The teacher has the intent to change student's behavior in a way that makes her feel effective in her job).

All those things that they are, not everything is in response to the teacher, but how I handle it makes, in my opinion, the biggest difference. How I respond to it because stuff happens all the time as a teacher, these kids are 4 and 5-year-olds, you never know what's going to happen so that 10% of it. 90% of it is what I do with that whenever it happens, whatever happens. So perseverance to me is huge because I might have to start over again in 5 minutes and do it a little bit better or I might have to start over tomorrow is going to be a different day. So it truly feels like the responsibility is on me and how I respond. (Participant 6, Interview, August, 2017)

#### Construct: Helplessness

This scale reflects teachers' feelings of hopelessness and ineffectiveness within the classroom. Teachers' sense of helplessness may be reflected when they report that their efforts to help a student (socially, emotionally, or academically) have failed, that they do not know what a student needs to succeed in her classroom, or that they are not able to provide what the student needs to succeed. At the high end of the scale, the teachers may describe particular incidents in which their specific actions were ineffective or when they felt at a loss as to how to work with the target student or with the class as a whole in problem areas. Teachers scoring at the higher end seem to have "given

up,” feel upset about the lack of progress and have stopped trying to make the desired changes in the student’s progress. At the low end, teachers may make more benign statements regarding her uncertainty about the effectiveness, and it is evident that they continue to develop new plans intended to affect the student positively. Often, the question inquiring about the teacher’s doubts and how she deals with her doubts is very useful in helping to conceptualize the teacher’s score on this scale. (The scores for this construct are reversed. 1, 2 = High End; 3, 4, 5, = Mid-Range; 5, 6 = Low End)

Participant 1. Score: Low End 6 (Teacher recount specific incidents in which they were unable to have a positive influence on student behavior/performance. The teacher often feels worried, confused, depressed, or disappointed in student’s lack of progress or response to teacher intervention).

This one time I was asking him to do a task, or learning activity or whatnot, and he absolutely refused. He got up, he looked at me, and he saw this bucket of books on the table... He looked at me, and he went... And just rest my room. Like, what am I in for this year? I’ve never had that happened to me before, so it was very humbling. Because you think, all, that only happens to teachers that don’t have a good relationship with their students. Like, oh, okay. I’m finally getting one of those. I’ve never had one of these before. So, yeah, it wasn’t a struggle. (Participant 1, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: Low End 6 (Teacher communicates an overall sense of hopelessness).

Helpless? Kind of going back to frustrating. I've tried giving him goldfish crackers for compliance. The positive praise, I would say, praise, praise, praise, praise. I felt like I was pulling every trick out of my bag. Mom would come in when she could. I would call mom on my cell phone. I was trying every trick in the bag, and nothing was helping. Nothing. I just felt like a failure, because I could not get to do this kid. (Participant 1, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 2. Score: High End 2 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct). This teacher did not express helplessness during the interview.

Participant 3. Score: High End 2 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct). This teacher did not express helplessness during the interview.

Participant 4. Score: High End 2 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct). This teacher did not express helplessness during the interview.

Participant 5. Score: Mid-Range 4 (Teacher's perception of her potential influence on a student is mixed).

And that becomes, as a teacher that becomes really frustrating because I have now given up and he has one. This 5-year-old is one. He wants to do this, I want him to do this, but I can't force it, so I give up. And as the adult, we don't want to give up to those, to what the kid wants to do. (Participant 5, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 6. Score: High End 2 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct). This teacher did not express helplessness during the interview.

Construct: Anger/Hostility

This scale measures the extent to which the teachers express anger or hostility regarding their relationship with the student. Teachers who are scored at the high end of the scale explicitly and consistently express anger. (The scores for this construct are reversed. 1, 2 = High End; 3, 4, 5, = Mid-Range; 5, 6 = Low End.)

Participant 1. Score: Low End 2 (Teacher may express references that imply hostility or anger when dealing with challenging or difficult student/situation, but is not directly expressed). High End: 7 (Teacher speaks in a critical manner about the student or the relationship with the student).

You need to learn this, but you can't push it because you're not even really complying anyways. Let me think. There was a time... So, he knew a lot. He was really smart, for not paying attention. I attribute that to the preschool. So, what I had him do one time is, okay, go around and make sure everybody else got it right. Oh, this. Got it right. Okay. Keep going. All, that person... Okay. He'd gone. So, I involved in that way I think we were doing 3+3 or something like that. Go see, did they get it? (Participant 1, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 2. Score: High End 2 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct). This teacher did not express anger/hostility during the interview.

Participant 3. Score:High End 2 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct).This teacher did not express anger/hostility during the interview.

Participant 4. Score:High End 2 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct).This teacher did not express anger/hostility during the interview.

Participant 5. Score:High End 2 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct).This teacher did not express anger/hostility during the interview.

Participant 6. Score:High End 2 (There is very little or no evidence of the construct).This teacher did not express anger/hostility during the interview.

#### Construct: Positive Affect

This scale measures the extent to which the teacher expresses feeling positive affect in their relationship with the student. Examples of positive affect include happiness, joy, close, pride, loving, etc. The teacher may also provide examples that include physical affection between the teacher and the student such as a hug or holding the student in an affectionate manner.

Participant 1. Score: Low End 2 (Teacher reports little evidence of positive affect throughout the interview, or only reports the student's positive affect).

What am I in for? Like, what am I in for this year? I've never had that happened to me before, so it was very humbling. Because you think, oh, that only happens to teachers that don't have a good relationship with their students. Like, oh, okay. I'm finally getting one of those. I've never had one of those before. So, yeah, it was the struggle. (Participant 1, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 2. Score: High End 6 (Teacher gets positive feelings from a relationship with a student. Teacher reports positive affect in response to the “click” or “satisfaction” questions. The teacher seems to enjoy teaching the student and is supportive and friendly in her interactions).

I end up developing a pretty good relationship with the student’s mom, and I was pretty blunt with her about his day and how things were happening. By no means do I toot my own horn or anything like that, but I do job share with another teacher, so right then and there, he has two teachers when he’s in here throughout the week, but he had already had a different kindergarten teacher or whatever. (Participant 2, Interview, August, 2017)

It was about a week later after teacher appreciation week, but the student’s mom had him quite a bit of time glittering, where you cut the little squares of tissue paper, and you glue them down to make them like a 3-D, and it said, “World’s Best Teacher” or something like that, that they had spent a lot of time on. I was the only one that got it so you could tell... It was great. It was great. He was so proud to give it to me and just so excited to give it to me, so that’s why we do this. (Participant 2, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 3. Score: High End 6 (Teacher gets positive feelings from a relationship with student. Teacher seems to enjoy teaching the student and is supportive and friendly in interactions).

For me, I love the whole academics. I can't believe when I see how many of my kids... Especially my writing wall, to me is powerful because reading it's hard for parents to see. I do portfolio when you can see the first day they came, and now it's a huge thing. For me, it's more the relationship and are they going to be successful socially in first grade or whatever? We do a lot of cooperative groups and talking, and problem-solving. For me, that's what I celebrate the most about: are they are confident learn? (Participant 3, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 4. Score: High End 6 (Teacher gets positive feelings from a relationship with a student).

Because the speech therapist was actually retired after that year, she wanted to make sure she had her paperwork and what not in place. In that process, I also remember thinking, "Man, I do have a level of protectiveness." I almost just pictured in my mind that bird with their nest and their baby eggs. Like I mentioned before that, the mama bear instinct almost.... Just wanted to make sure that is best was of interest in that paperwork and through that paperwork.

Maybe it was out of gratitude over just the amount of progress we did make.(Participant 4, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: Mid-Range 4 (Teacher reports some positive affect regarding the relationship with the student but affectis less evident throughout the interview).

Yeah, he would give me hugs. I think there was probably the moment when I felt like he was listening to me and I felt like he had comprehension of....(Participant 4, Interview, August, 2017)

Participant 5. Score: Low End 2 (Teacher does not appear to be positively emotionally connected to the student).

We worked, talked, a lot of communication with grandma and grandpa. Just me telling them, this is what occurred, this is what he said, and we need to get into counseling, we need to do all of these steps, that we need to get some more help because he needs to be doing a lot more than I can provide for him and a lot more than you can provide for him.(Participant 5, Interview, August, 2017)

Score: High End 6 (Teacher uses “I” statements that reflect that they benefit from serving as teachers).

I feel very glad that he did make it through the year. And I think he left me with some strategies, if he recognizes them and remembers them, that will be helpful for him to be able to hopefully have some success in the next year. I’m hoping where he’s moved is not so rigid that it just undoes the rest of whatever he is left is holding him together as a six-year-old now moving out with so many problems that is experienced already, I’m hoping you can draw on some of those things. (Participant 5, Interview, August, 2017)



Participant 6. Score: High End 6 (Teacher tends to provide more positive adjectives describing the relationship with the student).

And we set up a thing where, as she continues to make good choices, I asked mom to what are her favorite things? Oh, she just loves to wear these, I don't even remember now, some kind of shoe that she loves to wear. And like, oh, let her wear them, oh, because I think they were open-toed sandals and we're not supposed to have those, so I said "oh, you never wear those. I said, "when I tell you she has a great day, you send her the next day in those shoes. And she comes on this day, look. And I said, how does that make you feel? You got to wear your most precious shoes. And she says I think that my, and it wasn't about her shoes, she went to a place where it was about the kids, I don't want them to be afraid, and I know that a lot of the words her mom has empowered, she's heard them for me, so she has been given the language to it. (Participant 6, Interview, August, 2017)

#### Construct: Global Coherence

The Coherence scale measures the teacher's ability to present and assess experiences reasonably and understandably. There are several positive indices of coherence, as well as aspects that render a transcript incoherent. These positive and negative indices of coherence are described below. They are followed by the rating guidelines, ranging from 1 to 5. At the low end of the scale, a teacher is extremely incoherent, frequently contradicting herself and very

difficult to understand. At the high end, the teacher is very coherent, providing a steady and well-developed flow of ideas.

Participant 1. Score: Mid-Range 3 (Teacher's responses tend to make sense, but are vague and are sometimes difficult to follow. Teacher may be coherent through most of the interview, with brief periods of incoherence).

Participant 2. Score: High End 5 (Teacher provides a steady and well-developed flow of ideas throughout the interview).

Participant 3. Score: High End 4 (Transcript has many positive indices of coherence).

Participant 4. Score: High End 5 (Teacher is at ease with the topic. Teacher provides a steady and well-developed flow of ideas throughout the interview).

Participant 5. Score: High End 5 (Teacher is at ease with the topic.

Teacher provides a steady and well-developed flow of ideas throughout the interview).

Participant 6. Score: High End 4 (Transcript has many positive indices of coherence).

A summary of the scores of the TRI is shown below in Table 3.

Table 3

*Teacher Relationship Interview Scores*

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Sensitivity of Discipline	2	6	6	5	4.2	6
Secure Base	2	6	6	4.3	3.6	6
Perspective-Taking	4	6	5.7	5.1	5	6
Neutralizing Negative Affect*	2	2	2	2	2	2
Agency/Intentionality	2	6	5.9	5	5.3	6
Helplessness*	5.7	2	2	2	2.5	2
Anger/Hostility*	4.5	2	2	2	2	2
Positive Affect	2	6	6	4.6	3.9	6
Coherence**	3	5	4	5	5	4

\* Scores are reversed

\*\*Scale is 1-5

### The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS)

The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) (Pianta, 2001) is the self-report measure that was developed to assess the teacher's perception of a particular student-teacher relationship. He intended it to be part of an intervention program he and colleagues developed to "prevent or to intervene early in the course of development of adjustment problems in school." In his review of the history behind the development of the measure, he noted that relationships with teachers are similar to relationships with parents. In a classroom, relationships between a teacher and a student would be expected to

vary widely depending on the characteristics of the relationship. To define the range of variability he chose three dimensions of student-teacher relationships: Conflict, Closeness, and Dependency. He chose these dimensions based on research by Birch and Ladd (1977) that identified general characteristics of children's behavior as follows: moving toward predicts closeness, moving against predicts conflict, and moving away predicts isolation (Pianta, 2001).

"Validity studies have indicated that the STRS correlates in predictable ways with concurrent measures of behavior problems and competencies in elementary classrooms (Pianta, 1999). Table 6 below contains the STRS scores of the participants. All six participants responded to all of the items. The Normative Comparison Group chosen for scoring purposes was the Total Sample.

The student-teacher relationship scale was developed to assess a teacher's perception of the student-teacher relationship so that teachers and school psychologists can identify in the early grades those students who may need support and other types of intervention. The measure mixes together theory on attachment between an adult and a child with research on the importance of early school experiences that determine the trajectories of children's progress in school. (Pianta, 1999).

**Conflict Scores:** Measure the degree to which the teacher perceives his or her relationship with the particular student and negative and conflictual. A teacher endorsing high conflict scores tends to struggle with the student, received the student as angry or unpredictable, and consequently feels

emotionally drained and believes himself or herself to be ineffective with the student.

**Closeness Scores:** Measure the degree to which a teacher experiences affection, warmth, and open communication with the particular student. A teacher endorsing higher closeness scores sense is that the student as well, the student views the teacher is supportive, and the student effectively uses the teacher as a resource.

**Dependency Scores:** Measure the degree to which a teacher perceives a particular student as overly dependent. A teacher endorsing higher dependency indicates problems with the child's overreliance on him or her. Also, higher dependency scores indicate that the student tends to react strongly to separation from this teacher and often request help when not needed.

**Total Scale Scores:** Measure the degree to which the teacher perceives his or her relationship with the particular student overall is positive and effective. Higher total scale scores tend to reflect lower levels of conflict and dependency, higher levels of closeness, and a more positive relationship.

**Interpretation:** All STRS scale and subscale percentile should be considered when interpreting the STRS. Percentiles at or above 75 for the conflict and dependency subscales indicate high levels of concern on the teacher's part. Percentiles at or above 75 for the closeness of scale and the total scale reflect a significantly high level of positive qualities. Closeness or Total

scale percentiles at or below 25 indicate significantly low levels of a positive relationship attribute (Pianta, 2001).

Table 4

*Summary of Student Teacher Relationship Scale Scoring Results*

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Conflict Scores						
Raw	50	39	25	48	37	42
Percentile	99	92	68	98	89	94
Closeness Scores						
Raw	27	44	39	25	33	46
Percentile	2	40	25	1	8	50
Dependency Scores						
Raw	12	21	16	15	10	13
Percentile	70	99	92	88	10	80
STRS Total						
Raw	67	86	100	64	88	93
Percentile	<1	7	21	<1	8	12

## Relationship Attachment Style Test

Relationship Attachment Style Test (Jerabek & Muoio, 2006) was completed by participants online. PsychTests AIM, Inc. provided the questions, and the interpretation of results and the responses of the participants were scored and tabulated by them. The instrument asked questions in the context of a primary romantic or friendship relationship. The attachment attributes are listed as follows:

Intense Need for Security: Refers to a fear of abandonment and rejection which often causes clinginess.

Avoidance of Closeness: Tendency to maintain an emotional distance from a partner

Self-esteem: Degree to which you consider yourself valuable and worthy of love and respect.

Need to Please: Refers to an excessive and extreme desire to make others happy, even at the expense of personal pleasure.

Indecisiveness: Refers to a discomfort with or inability to make decisions.

Need to Control: Desire to be in command of every aspect of a partner's life, and the relationship itself.

Extreme Altruism: Refers to an excessive and intense desire to help others.

The attachment style of each participant is provided in Table 5 below.

Table 5

*Summary of Relationship Attachment Style Results*

Participants	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
<u>Attachment Traits Assessed</u>						
Intense Need for Security	24	23	11	10	16	6
Avoidance of Closeness	63*	23	4	21	58**	20
Self-Esteem	83	92	100	93	94	88
Need to Please	33	23	11	13	11	18
Indecisiveness	31	29	20	24	19	31
Need to Control	36	34	19	29	12	16
Extreme Altruism	32	18	13	30	2	16
Secure		X	X	X	X	X
Insecure	X					

\*Unhealthy trait

\*\* Potentially unhealthy trait

### Summary

The results of this study illustrate an interesting phenomenon. The focus of the study was the teacher's relationship with a student. This relationship was measured from the teacher in three different ways with a view toward understanding whether or not a teacher's attachment style was consistent with strategies the teacher used with a student whose behavior was challenging or disruptive. Attachment style was chosen as an element of the study because it



offers promise as a cohesive method for seeking clarity to a complex, challenging aspect of social, relational functioning.

In this study, the method of measuring the relationship, even though the person providing data about the relationship was the same person, the teacher, it differed in approach. The STRS measures the teacher's concern for the child, the teacher's assessment of how the student relates to her, to what degree the student overly depends on the teacher. The focus of the inquiry is the student. What we know about the student is viewed from the perception of the teacher and says little about the teacher. The TRI is similar in that the perception of the teacher is the focus of the questions. However, because the TRI is a narrative, and our way of speaking reveals our internal representations of ourselves as we relate to another, we can identify both points of view. "In the discourse, and indeed in our daily conversations, how we talk with people reflects our internal processes and our response to the social situation of a conversation with another person" (Siegel, 1999, p. 79).

Two of the measures, the STRS and the TRI, were developed by Robert Pianta and his team at Curry School of Education, University of Virginia, as part of larger projects to support teachers confronted with students whose behavior is often disruptive and challenging. The attachment style measure was developed by for use as a personal assessment of attachment style Although the third instrument was developed for personal information about attachment style when

in a romantic or important friendship, the questions were consistent with other self-report measures of attachment style, which is not the same as

Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS). Total scores: All of the teachers' ratings of their relationship with a particular student fell in the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile or less indicating that they viewed the relationship as a negative attribute. Conflict scores. Five of six teachers rated the element of conflict 75<sup>th</sup> percentile or more indicating the relationship was negative and contributed to struggles that were emotionally draining. Closeness scores: Four of six teachers rated closeness in the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile or less indicating that there were little warmth and open communication in the relationship and little or no evidence that the student used the teacher as a secure base. Dependency Scores: Four of six teachers rated over-reliance on the teacher to be in the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile or greater. Clearly, for this group of teachers, disruptive and challenging students introduced a stressful and concerning element to their classrooms.

Teacher Relationship Interview (TRI). Because the TRI was modeled after the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI), representations of the nine constructs assessed in the TRI are factors that are attributes of secure, insecure and disorganized relationship functioning in adult caregivers, including teachers (Hesse & Main, 2000; Main, 2000; Pianta, 1999). Three of the teachers in the study scored in the High End for all constructs except Coherence. A fourth teacher's scores were in the High End except for Mid-Range in Secure Base and Positive Affect. This teacher's overall scores were affected by insecurity in the

first part of the school year but increased to High End as she was able to understand the needs of her student better. A fifth teacher's scores were a mix of High End and Mid-Range scores. Finally, the sixth teacher's scores were in the Low End throughout except for a High-End score on Neutralizing Negative Affect.

Relationship Attachment Style Test. The authors (Jerabek&Muioio, 2006) developed the Relationship Attachment Style Test for personal use by readers of Psychology Today but permitted inclusion of the teacher's scores in this study. All six teachers accessed the website and provided a copy of the results. The measure scored five of the participants' responses to secure attachment style and one to dismissive-avoidant attachment style.

Two of the measures focus on the teacher-student relationship of six kindergarten teachers working at the same school. The third measure provides an insight into how that teacher functions in important relationships. The next step will be to discuss how attachment does or does not influence how the teacher responds to disruptive, challenging behavior in the classroom. It is in this context that the results of the participant teachers' responses to the multiple sources of information gathered in Chapter Four will be interpreted in Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to add to the understanding of how teachers impact the emotional and behavioral development of kindergartners. This study looked at teacher beliefs, internal thought patterns about a student whose emotion regulation is immature, the behavior is disruptive, and challenging for his or her teacher. It examined multiple aspects of the teacher's response to the student's behavior in order answer four major questions:

1. Does the teacher use strategies or interventions that manage or change disruptive, challenging student behavior?
2. Are the strategies or interventions used by the teacher effective in de-escalating disruptive, challenging student behavior?
3. What is the attachment style of the teacher?
4. Are the strategies or interventions used by the teacher for managing or changing disruptive-challenging behavior consistent with her attachment style?

### Discussion

The role of teachers in the social, and emotional, as well as the academic development of children in kindergarten has been of increasing interest to researchers. In onestudy,Pianta (1995) found that students in kindergarten who

had close, warm relationships with their teachers had similar experiences with their teachers in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Similarly, students in kindergarten who had conflictual relationships with their teachers at the same kinds of experiences with their teachers in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. This pattern contributed to poor school adjustment as classroom adjustment is a pattern that Pianta asserted is established in kindergarten. Also, he pointed out that what happens in school is what affects school performance throughout a student's academic career and reduced the status of parent-reported behavior problems to a minor risk factor. It became even more important to him at this point to find a way to measure a teacher-student relationship accurately. He developed the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) for this purpose (Pianta, 2001). Although he was quick to point out that other factors impact student achievement in school, he emphasized that the emerging data supported taking a close look at the teacher-student relationship. Further, Pianta indicated that when a teacher can keep the conflict level low with her student, other aspects of classroom processes are more likely to occur. On the other hand, high conflict interferes with a teacher's ability to function in her role as a teacher in a way that satisfies her expectations for effectiveness as a teacher. All of the participants' STRS total percentile scores were greater than the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile which indicated a critical level of relationship problems. The manual indicates that high Conflict and Dependency Scores given by their kindergarten teacher correlated positively with first-grade teacher reports of behavior problems and negatively with student competencies. Five of six

teachers met this condition. In a study of relations between Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) outcomes and data from questionnaires on attachment style, the self-report questionnaires for attachment style were found to be not suitable for obtaining information about attachment working models as assessed by the AAI (DeHaas, 1994). The STRS then can function as a screening tool for teachers and those who evaluate teacher-student relationships to assess which teachers need assistance quickly.

Initially, the Relationship Attachment Style Test was included to provide support for the outcomes of the AAI. However, a study by George (2011) explained in more depth the DeHaas' position that the RAST was not suitable for assessing attachment working models. They pointed out that it is essentially an attachment reinterpretation of a model of personality and not based on attachment theory. Individuals who complete the RAST report in a general way their feelings and perceptions about themselves and how they relate to others, typically romantic partners, and primary friends. The researchers assert that theorists from both traditions agree that there is no overlap in the two models. In spite of this limitation, the results of the RAST were similar to the findings on the TRI, which follows the structure and format of the AAI.

The AAI is considered by most researchers and theorists to be the main instrument for assessing mental representation. It has a long history of research attesting to its validity as a measure (Bakermans-Kranenburg & van IJzendoorn, 2009; George, 2011). Many studies that use the AAI as an instrument report how

the measure reflects attachment status. Few studies do the same for the TRI. Because the TRI shares basic attributes with the AAI, the following research using the AAI will be assumed to be possible also for the TRI.

The AAI classifications primarily reflect the state of mind concerning attachment. During the interview, autonomous (secure) participants, the parents, provide balanced and coherent narratives of mental representations of attachment experiences. Negative aspects of the relationship with parents are not withheld. Contradictions between positive evaluations of the relationship the ability to recall positive events suggest that the participant is idealizing relationship with the parents. The preoccupied pattern of insecure attachment is present when a person whose mental representations are still enmeshed in negative childhood experiences. The respondent often expresses anger toward parents, and when events are recalled, they may be described incoherently. Studies show that autonomous (secure) parents have secure relationships with their children. Children whose parents are preoccupied have an ambivalent (insecure) attachment, and those whose parents are dismissing, have an avoidant (insecure) attachment. The researcher attributes the differences between secure and insecure attachment patterns to the sensitivity of responses to the child's attachment needs (DeHaas, 1994).

An interesting development has come from research suggesting that adults who have experienced insecure parenting may no longer have insecure attachment relationships because they have been able to work through

attachment difficulties now have an attachment classification of earned-secure. Earned-secure attachment is evidenced by a coherent narrative of their negative early attachment to insecure parents. The researchers compared earned-secure to continuous-secure adults' parenting under the every-day hassles of life. Results of the study suggest that earned-secure parents do not parent in the same way they were parented. The researchers caution that earned-secures can only claim to have broken the cycle of intergenerational harsh insecure parenting if they can provide caregiving under high stress. However, they tentatively concluded that the working through and the establishment of a "corrective emotional experience" that occurs in therapy result in a new, integrated internal working model that can process attachment information accurately and respond sensitively. Also, they found that adults who have an insecure attachment status can provide appropriate parenting under optimal conditions. They found, however, that under significant stress, insecure adults were unable to maintain the level of positive parenting and fell back into the negative behavior patterns learned as children. (Phelps et al., 1998).

### Conclusions

The most sensitive instrument for assessing the attachment status of the teachers in this study is the TRI. Because little research has been done to validate its usefulness standing alone, the conclusions reached are tentative. The TRI is included in a suite of measures that assess classroom dynamics



(Pianta, 1999). The discussion above that identified continuous-secure attachment status and differentiated it from earned-secure attachment status as measured by the AAI, may or may not apply to the results of this study. However, the information about earned secure, its strengths and limitations is encouraging and is useful for understanding the results. Certainly, the level of concern that the teachers expressed on the STRS indicates a high level of stress when the behavior of the challenging student escalated into conflict. None of the teachers hesitated to express the negative effect that conflict engendered emotionally. One of the teachers was unable to handle the stress of the student effectively. This teacher had low scores throughout and was eventually able to transfer this student out of her class. This experience was her first exposure to a difficult student, and she was overwhelmed by the demands. Four of the teachers scored in the high end consistently throughout the interview. Although some of the scores were reduced somewhat, it took time for them to develop and master strategies for managing the behaviors of the student, so the scores were lower at the beginning of the year. One teacher's scores were mostly in mid-range.

Those teachers scoring consistently at the high end were able to provide a secure attachment environment for their most difficult student. The success of their strategies and interventions was successful sometimes and sometimes not. The high level of concern for the welfare of the student was expressed via the STRS.

## Recommendations

It is perhaps safe to say that kindergarten teachers are the cornerstone of academic achievement. The research shows that the pattern of the relationship established with the teacher in kindergarten follows the student into second grade and beyond. The TRI and the STRS are part of a series of assessments designed to identify and address problems in the classroom between teachers and students. The research also shows that kindergarten teachers are stressed by and concerned for students who enter their classrooms with insecure attachment history who are distressed by the novelty of the classroom. Whether or not their teacher can provide a secure base of support for that child may depend on the support she gets for herself when feeling overwhelmed. The researcher who developed the STRS and the TRI benefited from the support of a more experienced teacher who was able to help him when he was a new teacher (Pianta, 1999). He and his team of researchers have developed an intervention to implement a program of classroom observation that provides teacher education, professional development that is individualized and ongoing, curricular resources, ongoing evaluation and feedback to support changes in classroom dynamics.

Another type of support for kindergarten teachers, Teacher-Child Interaction Therapy (TCIT), was found to reduce conflict by increasing positive interactions between the teacher and student. As positive interactions increased, disruptive behavior decreased (McIntosh et al., 2000). TCIT is an offshoot of

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy which was found to decrease parental stress, child disruptive behavior and increases the parent-child relationship(Brestan et al., 1998). In the study, TCIT was provided by a school psychology doctoral student who coaches the teacher weekly directly at the school, but outside the classroom. The teacher practiced the skills in the classroom daily. The training sessions occurred weekly for twelve weeks. The researcher indicated that the benefits of this program were mixed and that more research is needed to verify its efficacy.

#### Limitations of Study

The focus of study on the teacher-student relationship is limited by the dearth of research on measurement tools. The use of the TRI is based on the validity of its cousin, the AAI, and requires further validation of its validity and efficacy in assessing attachment status. Of equal importance is the need for study of the role of teacher attachment status on her performance in the classroom when under high stress.

#### Recommendations for Educational Leaders

The process of researching followed by Pianta and his team of researchers is one that can be replicated in school districts and research projects going forward. What is emerging, however, is an understanding of the importance of the attachment status of kindergarten teachers for young students.

APPENDIX A  
TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## TEACHER INTERVIEW

### Instructions to Interviewers:

Always refer to the child by NAME during the interview. Your style should be conversational but stick to the questions on the form. When possible, probe for particular experiences or examples of a teacher's response. Consistent probes are very important for coding the interview so please make sure to ask all follow-up questions unless the teacher has already answered them.

### Instructions to Teachers:

For the next hour or so, I will be asking you some questions about your relationship with name of study child. We are interested in your relationship with name. As you know, we know a lot about children, but we'd like to know more about teachers' relationships with children.

### RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILD

1. Please choose 3 words that tell about your relationship with name.

Now, for each word please tell me a **specific** experience or time that describes that word. (Re-ask the question twice to get specific experiences. If needed, say, "Like for "fun"; tell me about a time when your relationship with name was fun.) Go through each word separately. Make sure that they give a specific example, if at all possible.

2. Tell me about a **specific** time you can think of when you and name really "clicked." (Probe if necessary: Tell me more about what happened. How did you feel? How do you think name felt?)
3. Now, tell me about a specific time you can think of when you and name really weren't "clicking." (Probe if necessary: Tell me more about what happened. How did you feel? How do you think name felt?)
4. What kind of **social** experiences do you feel have been particularly difficult or challenging (hard, tough) for name?

5. Teachers wonder about how much to push a child to learn what is difficult (hard) versus how much not to push. Tell me about a time that this happened for you with name. How did you and name handle this situation? How did you feel in this situation? How do you think name felt?
6. Tell me about a time recently when name misbehaved (probe for a **specific** situation). What did you do? Why? How did you feel in this situation? How do you think name felt?
7. Tell me about a time when name was upset and came to you. What did you do? Why? How did you feel in this situation? How do you think name felt?
8. Every teacher has at least occasional doubts about whether they are meeting a child's needs. What brings this up for you with name? How do you handle these doubts?
9. Do you ever think about name when you are at home? What do you think about?
10. What is your relationship like with name's family?
11. What gives you the most satisfaction being name's teacher? Why?

## CLOSING

Thanks very much for participating in this interview. I hope it has been interesting for you to have a chance to talk about this important relationship. I appreciate your sharing these personal thoughts and experiences with me. As always, if you have any questions, please call us or write us a note. Thanks.

(Pianta, 1999)

APPENDIX B

STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP SCALE



# **STRS Student-Teacher Relationship Scale™** **Response Form**

Teacher's name \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M F Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M F Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Please reflect on the degree to which each of the following statements currently applies to your relationship with this child. Using the point scale below, **CIRCLE** the appropriate number for each item. If you need to change your answer, **DO NOT ERASE!** Make an X through the incorrect answer and circle the correct answer.

1 Definitely does not apply	2 Does not really apply	3 Neutral, not sure	4 Applies somewhat	5 Definitely applies	
					1. I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child.
					2. This child and I always seem to be struggling with each other.
					3. If upset, this child will seek comfort from me.
					4. This child is uncomfortable with physical affection or touch from me.
					5. This child values his/her relationship with me.
					6. This child appears hurt or embarrassed when I correct him/her.
					7. When I praise this child, he/she beams with pride.
					8. This child reacts strongly to separation from me.
					9. This child spontaneously shares information about himself/herself.
					10. This child is overly dependent on me.
					11. This child easily becomes angry with me.
					12. This child tries to please me.
					13. This child feels that I treat him/her unfairly.
					14. This child asks for my help when he/she really does not need help.
					15. It is easy to be in tune with what this child is feeling.
					16. This child sees me as a source of punishment and criticism.
					17. This child expresses hurt or jealousy when I spend time with other children.
					18. This child remains angry or is resistant after being disciplined.
					19. When this child is misbehaving, he/she responds well to my look or tone of voice.
					20. Dealing with this child drains my energy.
					21. I've noticed this child copying my behavior or ways of doing things.
					22. When this child is in a bad mood, I know we're in for a long and difficult day.
					23. This child's feelings toward me can be unpredictable or can change suddenly.
					24. Despite my best efforts, I'm uncomfortable with how this child and I get along.
					25. This child whines or cries when he/she wants something from me.
					26. This child is sneaky or manipulative with me.
					27. This child openly shares his/her feelings and experiences with me.
					28. My interactions with this child make me feel effective and confident.



APPENDIX C  
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

12/4/2017

CoyoteMail Mail - IRB-FY2018-8 - Initial: IRB Expedited Review Approval Letter

12/4/2017



Wendy Durkee <001804451@coyote.csusb.edu>

## IRB-FY2018-8 - Initial: IRB Expedited Review Approval Letter

1 message

mgillesp@csusb.edu <mgillesp@csusb.edu>  
To: 001804451@coyote.csusb.edu, bpiller@csusb.edu

Thu, Aug 3, 2017 at 12:32 PM



August 03, 2017

### CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Expedited Review

IRB# FY2018-8

Status: Approved

Ms. Wendy Durkee and Prof. Bonnie Piller  
College of Education Doctoral Studies Program  
California State University, San Bernardino  
5500 University Parkway  
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Ms. Durkee and Prof. Piller:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "From Outlaw to Outlier: The Role of Teacher Attachment Style in Addressing Student Behavior Problems in Kindergarten" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The informed consent document you submitted is the official version for your study and cannot be changed without prior IRB approval. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended using the IRB Cayuse system protocol change form. **Your application is approved for one year from August 02, 2017 through August 01, 2018. Please note the Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is up for renewal and ensure you file it before your protocol study end date.**

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following 4 requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years. Please notify the IRB Research Compliance Officer for any of the following:

- 1) Submit a protocol change form if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your research protocol for review and approval of the IRB before implemented in your research,
- 2) If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research,
- 3) To apply for renewal and continuing review of your protocol one month prior to the protocols end date,
- 4) When your project has ended by emailing the IRB Research Compliance Officer.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required. If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/?ui=2&ik=14a7b263d9&jsver=oadh6Bq9AQ8.en.&view=pt&search=inbox&th=15da99593713dce5&siml=15da9959371...> 1/2

12/4/2017

CoyoteMail Mail - IRB-FY2018-8 - Initial: IRB Expedited Review Approval Letter

*Caroline Vickers*

Caroline Vickers, Ph.D., IRB Chair  
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

CV/MG

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