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## An Examination of Teacher-Student Trust in Middle School Classrooms

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**AN EXAMINATION OF TEACHER-STUDENT  
TRUST IN MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOMS**

A Dissertation Presented

by

VIRGINIA L. DURNFORD

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts-Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated  
to the memory of my devoted parents,  
Jack and Virginia Durnford,  
and to the memory of my beloved aunt,  
Louise Gazverde, R.N.  
who believed in me,

and to my family

Cara Louise Durnford McPhee, John Durnford McPhee, and Carl McPhee  
who encouraged, nurtured, assisted, and sacrificed so that I could complete this work.

It was done for you but could not have been done without you.

I am deeply grateful to you all.

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Finally, I want to thank all of the students whom I have had the privilege to counsel and teach over the years. You taught me how to teach and why I teach.

Thank you all.

*Those who trust us educate us.*

T.S. Eliot

ABSTRACT

AN EXAMINATION OF TEACHER-STUDENT TRUST IN  
MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

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The purpose of this study was to explore: (a) how and to what extent teachers experience and express trust in relation to individual students and groups of students (b) how and to what extent teachers value and focus on specific attributes of trust over others and (c) how and to what extent the levels of teacher trust in students and the various attributes of trust impact the teachers' behaviors and choices in the classroom. Data were collected from teacher interviews, teacher questionnaires, classroom and school artifacts, and descriptive field notes from observations. Data were analyzed using content analysis and open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Results indicated that participants valued specific attributes of trust over other attributes of trust. Participants were aware that individual students expressed different levels of one or more attributes of trust and made specific behavioral and pedagogical decisions for students who demonstrated very low levels or very high levels of specific attributes of trust. Results also indicated that participants valued particular attributes of trust because those attributes facilitated and reinforced other attributes of trust. One attribute of trust could

be facilitated and reinforced by several other attributes of trust. Participants used pedagogical and behavioral means to attempt to increase students' expression of particular attributes of trust. Results suggested that teachers who adjust the classroom environment and use several alternative teaching strategies may be making choices that increase students' abilities to demonstrate attributes of trust. Teachers who use fewer teaching strategies and who do not adjust the environment adequately may be less able to increase the students' abilities to demonstrate attributes of trust. A clear understanding of teacher-student trust may help teachers to chart the degree to which particular teaching methods and behavioral practices work or do not work to increase attributes of trust.



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The literature on trust in the teacher-student relationship has focused primarily on the degree to which students trust their teachers. Researchers have studied how students experience trust in the teacher-student relationship and how trust impacts the academic and social lives of the students and how trust affects the school culture. Most of the researchers studying teacher-student trust have focused on only one side of the relationship, the students' level and experience of trust. Teachers' perceptions of trust have been explored in the context of the principal-teacher relationship and the importance of trust in terms of school reform and principal effectiveness has been explored.

Literature regarding trust in the teacher-student relationship which focuses on the teachers' perception of trust in their students and the degree to which teachers trust their students is sparse. Literature which explores how trust in the teacher-student relationship impacts the academic and behavioral choices that teachers make with regards to students is an area in need of further study (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Trust in the teacher-student relationship is not a one-directional experience but is a circular and dynamic experience in which both the teacher and the student assess and judge the trustworthiness of each other. Since trust is needed for both teachers and students to take academic risks and increase learning, the study of trust in the teacher-student relationship is important. Teacher-student trust improves students' academic performance (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001) and encourages learning in

the classroom by encouraging students to risk revealing what they do not know (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001).

Knowledge of how trust in the teacher-student relationship is perceived and experienced by teachers and how trust impacts the decisions that teachers make is important for teachers and teacher educators to understand. Some research has shown that teachers who do not trust their students tend to use controlling behaviors in order to keep a rigid level of control in the classroom (Cothran & Ennis, 1997). Researchers also suggest that teachers' trust in their students tends to encourage teachers to risk adjusting the balance of control in the classroom in order to allow students to have some choice and control over their learning (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001; Eshel & Kohavi, 2003; Byrk & Schneider, 1996).

Trust in the teacher-student relationship is an important element in improving classroom climate (Byrk & Schneider, 1996; Raider-Roth, 2005). Trust in the teacher-student relationship uniquely contributes to students' school adjustment, engagement in school, and avoidance of problematic behaviors in school (Wentzel, 1991; Van Petegen, Aelterman, Van Keer, & Rosseel, 2006; Baker, Grant, & Morlock, 2008; Rosenfeld, Richman, & Bowen, 1991).

Researchers agree that trust is a difficult concept to define and conceptualize (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, and Hoy, 2001). Most researchers have attempted to define and understand trust in the teacher-student relationship as a construct consisting of several attributes, elements of trust which both singly and together shape trust. One or more attributes of trust must be perceived to some degree before the teacher or the



student experiences trust (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, and Hoy, 2001; Wicks, Berman, & Jones, 1999; Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003).

Various researchers attempted to define trust by selecting essential elements needed for trust to exist. As research in trust has developed, researchers have sought to define the attributes which in turn define trust. Raider-Roth (2005) defines trust as the perception of authenticity and responsiveness in the context of a relationship along with a sense of physical and emotional safety. Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) and Lewicki & Tomlinson (2003) define trust as a concept that includes the perception of the other person as a competent, reliable, and caring person. Honesty has been named as an element of trust by many researchers including Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998), Lewicki and Tomlinson (2003) and Kennett (1999). Bryk and Schneider (1996) have defined trust in the classroom as consisting of individual respect, mutual understanding, and expectations around behaviors.

The theoretical framework used to understand trust in this study is based primarily on the research of Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, and Hoy (2001), who propose a definition of trust which names six attributes of trust in the teacher-student relationship: vulnerability, benevolence in motivation, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. This multi-attributed framework was chosen since it contains the most highly detailed attributes and allows for a dynamic and multi-dimensional exploration of trust in the teacher-student relationship. In this framework, each one of the attributes of trust is defined and examined. One or more of the attributes of trust might be found in a teacher-student relationship at any given time. Any combination of attributes is possible and

allows us to understand trust as a concept which is characterized by a variety of attributes and various degrees of trust over time.

For trust to exist in the teacher-student relationship, both the teacher and the student must assess and judge if a given attribute of trust exists in the other person and to what extent. Over time, a given attribute of trust may be perceived to increase or decrease and the subjective experience of trust may change. Trust is also perceived within the context of the relationship and the expectations which people bring to the relationship. In the teacher-student relationship, teachers and students judge the other by how well the other performs certain expected behaviors in the classroom. For example, behaviors that are expected in the classroom may include being on time, having some knowledge of the subject matter, and providing a safe environment in which learning can take place. When expectations for behaviors are met over time, trust may be expected to develop (Bryk & Schneider, 1996; Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998). While some people may be more inclined to trust than others, in all trust relationships a judgment or assessment of the person's motivation, the role, and the amount of time one has known the other person, play into a decision to trust (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

In the context of the classroom, a teacher's trust in a given student will be based on both the student's behaviors and the motivation that the teacher attributes to the behaviors. If the teacher believes that the student attended in class only because he wanted to avoid the behavioral consequences that the teacher might have imposed, the teacher's level of trust in that student might be mitigated. When the teacher judges the student's behavior to be motivated by a desire to sustain their relationship, learn new

information, or improve the quality of his work, the teacher's trust in the student might increase.

Researchers studying the impact of teacher-student trust in secondary schools have found that a trusting relationship with teachers is important and appears to influence adolescents' motivation and academic achievement (Wentzel, 1998; Rosenfeld, Richman, & Bowen, 1998; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). In addition, the perceived support from teachers was found to influence the pursuit of classroom rules and norms (Baker, Grant & Morlock, 2008; Wentzel, 1998; Ryan, 2001; Pomeroy, 1999).

The importance of teacher-student trust needs to be emphasized in schools. Studies are needed to explore how teachers experience and express their levels of trust in their students. Researchers also need to explore how teachers' levels of trust affect their decision-making processes regarding classroom behavioral management. In addition, studies are needed to examine how teachers' levels of trust affect their choice of pedagogy in the classroom. Trust impacts teacher behaviors, student behaviors, and student academic achievement. Trust impacts the decisions that teachers make about classroom management and teaching methods.

This study will explore teacher-student trust. Specifically, this study will focus on how and to what extent teachers experience and express trust and to what extent teachers' trust in students impacts teachers' behaviors and the academic and behavior management choices that teachers make.

### **Significance of Study**

Research in the field of teacher-student trust has tended to focus on the degree to which students trust their teachers (Cook-Sather, 2002; Dobransky & Frymier, 2004;

Eshel & Kohavi, 2003; Raider-Roth, 2005; Wooten & McCroskey, 1996). Other studies focused on the impact of trust in areas of school reform (Bryk & Schneider, 2003) or on the impact of trust on school climate (Myers, 1994). The few studies which have attempted to assess teachers' trust in students have used teacher surveys and test scores in reading and mathematics to measure the impact of teacher trust in students (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). Other researchers studying the impact of teacher-student trust did interview teachers and observe their interactions with students in order to explore how teachers increase students' academic achievement and students' trust in teachers (Ennis & McCauley, 2002).

Researchers have expanded our knowledge regarding teacher-student trust. However, there is limited research that attempts to understand the perceptions of teachers regarding trust in their students or the perceptions of teachers regarding how their level of trust in students might impact their pedagogical decisions or their implementation of behavior management systems.

This study will potentially extend the research on teacher-student trust in three ways: First, this study will focus on the perceptions of the teachers, their ideas and beliefs about their level of trust in students, and the impact that level of trust has on both pedagogical choices and behavior management implementation. Through the use of two formal interviews, teachers will have a voice. The interviews will allow teachers to reflect and express their thoughts about how and why they trust or do not trust their students. The teachers will also have a voice in explaining how and why they are making the decisions they make daily in the classroom.

Second, following my pilot study of trust in the teacher-student relationship in elementary school, this study will focus on teachers' perceptions of trust in their middle school students. This study expands the initial insight and knowledge regarding teachers' trust in students gained from the pilot study in an elementary school into the area of teachers of early adolescents, and will have implications for student teachers, veteran teachers, and teacher educators.

Giving teachers an opportunity to voice their perceptions and experiences regarding teacher-student trust is empowering to teachers and gives them a chance to participate in formulating knowledge and insight about trust in the teacher-student relationship. Knowledge about teachers' perceptions regarding trust and its impact on pedagogical and behavior management implementation is critical to formulating teacher education programs that are meaningful and promote teacher reflection.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to (a) explore the nature of trust as experienced by middle school teachers, and (b) explore how the level of trust which teachers experience in their students influences the pedagogical choices and behavior management choices that teachers make in the classroom. This study was limited to the exploration of the attributes of trust which were valued by the participants and to the investigation into how the participants understood, encouraged, and attempted to increase the various attributes of trust in their students. The examinations of classroom climate and classroom culture were outside the boundaries of this study. Likewise, teacher leadership development in the classroom, while alluded to in terms of teacher efficacy, was not examined in this study. How teacher-student trust might affect or interact with classroom culture and

teacher leadership development would be a valuable area for future research, but was not examined in this study.

### **Research Questions**

Teacher-student trust and the impact that trust has on the academic and behavioral decisions that teachers must make are the focus of this study. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How and to what extent do teachers experience and express trust in relation to individual students and groups of students?
2. How and to what extent do teachers value and focus on specific attributes of trust over others?
3. How and to what extent do the levels of teacher trust in students and the various attributes of trust impact on teachers' pedagogical and behavior management choices in the classroom?

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

In this literature review of teacher-student trust, I will draw on the work of researchers in the fields of education, social science, and business management to broaden the definition of trust and give the concept of trust an interpersonal context which can be understood as a whole and still allow the individual elements of trust to be highlighted and focused on.

I will divide this review into five main sections. The first section will be a basic overview of the basic concepts of trust in a school context. In the second section, I will explore research which illuminates the dimensions of trust, including the attributes, degrees, and stages of trust. The different types of trust and the circular interdependent nature of trust as it pertains to the teacher-student relationship will be highlighted. In the third section, research regarding how teachers demonstrate levels of trust by their pedagogical choices, the ways they structure their classes, and the ways they handle students' classroom behavior will be explored. Literature on how teachers' trust affects parents, students, and the classroom culture will also be covered in the third section. The fourth main section will explore the literature on the benefits and limitations of trust including the of students' socio-economic status on teachers' trust. Finally, I will make concluding statements to support my argument for the need to conduct research studies

on teacher-student trust in order to learn and understand how trust impacts teaching, classroom culture, and behavior management in schools.

### **Defining Trust**

In this section, trust will be defined in terms of interpersonal relationships. The different degrees of trust and the various attributes of trust as well as the dynamic nature of trust will be explored. Finally, researchers' findings regarding trust in the context of schools, specifically how trust is experienced in the teacher-student relationship, will be presented.

In schools, learning takes place in a relational context. Students and teachers are together in a classroom for 180 days of the year. In elementary schools, students and teachers are together for most of a 6 hour day, 5 days a week. During this time, relationships are developed and a relational atmosphere in the classroom is formed. The relational tenor of the classroom is read and responded to by students and teachers. Schools are, therefore, places where “children and adolescents learn to reach beyond early conceptualizations of family trust to initiate trusting relationships with classmates and teachers” (Ennis & McCauley, 2002, p. 15).

When the teacher-student relationship is characterized by authenticity, responsiveness, and physical and emotional safety, the participants experience a sense of trust (Raider-Roth, 2005). The impact that a sense of trust has on teachers' choices regarding behavior management systems and their choices regarding teaching methods has been understudied. Researchers have only recently begun to explore the impact that teacher-student trust has on student achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).



Since the 1950's and throughout the decades, trust has been studied by social scientists. In each decade, the study of trust has been explored through the social and political lenses of the day. Most recently, trust has been acknowledged to be an essential element in organizations and has been seen as necessary to effect communication and cooperation among people (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Dirks & Ferrin, 2001).

Most definitions of trust include one or more of the following attributes: vulnerability, benevolence in motivation, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000). The willingness to be vulnerable is an attribute of trust that relates to the condition of interdependence that occurs when one party relies upon another to behave in certain ways (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995).

Benevolence in motivation refers to the assessment that the other party is motivated by intentions to advance mutual interests and is concerned about the welfare of the other person and of the relationship (Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003).

Reliability, sometimes called predictability, refers to expectancies being met and behaviors being consistent over time. In interdependent relationships, reliability allows the participants to have confidence in the relationship (Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Competence, sometimes called ability, is another important attribute of trust. Competence refers to the assessment that the other person is capable of performing a skill or expressing their knowledge at a level that meets appropriate expectations (Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995).

Honesty refers to character and authenticity. A faculty's trust in their school has been linked with authenticity in teacher behavior and principal behavior (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998; Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003; Kennett, 1999). Openness is related to vulnerability in that it refers to the willingness to share personal thoughts and feelings. Openness also increases confidence in the relationship and diminishes the fear that one will be exploited (Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003).

Researchers suggest that trust is dynamic, containing attributes which can vary in degree. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) state, "Trust has been difficult to define because it is a complex concept. It seems by now well established that trust is multi-attributed and may have different bases and degrees depending on the context of the trust relationship" (p. 551). A definition of trust which incorporates the attributes of vulnerability, benevolence, reliability, honesty, openness, and competence allows us to see that trust is a "complex and multidimensional construct" (Wicks, Berman, & Jones, 1999, p. 444).

Lewicki and Tomlinson (2003) found that trust develops in stages, moving from an early stage in which one participant calculates the potential behavior of the other person based on the rewards or punishments that are likely to accompany the behavior. In this early stage, the use of rewards and punishments "form the basis of control that a trustor has in ensuring the trustee's behavioral consistency" (p. 3).

If participants become aware that they share certain goals and values and that they care about each other's needs, their level of trust may be raised. At a higher level of trust, participants assess the motivations of the other person to be based on caring and on

an interest in promoting shared goals and values. When participants in a relationship act in a trustworthy manner over time, the sense of trust increases. While some people may be more inclined to trust than others, in all trust relationships, a judgment or assessment of the person's motivation, the role, and the amount of time one has known the person, plays into a decision to trust (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Lewicki and Tomlinson (2003) suggest that trust is a highly valuable element of social interactions. Trust is the outcome of a relationship in which the parties are interdependent on each other to achieve desired outcomes. When deciding to trust another party, the inherent risk must be perceived as likely to result in a desired outcome. In order to trust, therefore, one must be able to evaluate and judge particular qualities and motivations in the other person.

Relational trust is a type of trust that is found in the classroom where students and teachers see each other and rely on each other on a daily basis. Relational trust is characterized by individual respect, mutual understanding, and expectations around behaviors. (Bryk & Schneider, 1996). Both formally and informally, student and teacher assess and monitor relational trust within the context of their relationship. They try to judge both the surface behavior and the underlying intentions that motivate that behavior. If a teacher, for example, observes students behaving in acceptable ways but thinks that the motivation behind their behaviors is questionable, relational trust is not achieved.

“As individuals interact with one another around the work of schooling, they are constantly discerning the intentions embedded in the actions of others. They consider how others' efforts advance their own interest or impinge on their own self-esteem. They ask whether others' behavior reflects appropriately on their moral obligations to educate children well. These discernments take into account the history of previous interactions. In the absence of prior contact, participants may rely on the general reputation of the other and also on commonalities of race, gender, age, religion, or upbringing. These discernments tend to organize around four specific considerations: respect, personal

regard, competence in core role responsibilities, and personal integrity” (Bryk & Schneider, 2003, p. 41-42).

Relational trust is increased when two requirements of trust are found: 1) participants must behave in expected and acceptable ways; 2) participants’ motivations must be assessed to be based on reasons that are not just self-serving and surpass what is required (Bryk & Schneider, 1996).

Since relational trust is not just outcome-based, it may be that in the context of the classroom, a teacher’s trust in a given student will be based on both the student’s behaviors and the motivation that the teacher attributes to the behaviors. If the teacher believes that the student attended class only because he wanted to avoid the behavioral consequences that the teacher might have imposed, the teacher’s level of trust in that student might be mitigated. If the teacher judges the student’s behavior to be motivated by a desire to sustain their relationship, learn new information, or improve the quality of his work, the teacher’s trust in the student might increase.

Teachers’ lack of trust in their students is demonstrated through the use of controlling mechanisms in the classroom. Cothran and Ennis (1997) found that the use of detention, withdrawal of privileges, and other controlling behaviors tended to increase disruptive behaviors in their students. In turn, the students’ disruptive behaviors tended to increase their teacher’s controlling behaviors. It may follow that as students demonstrate that they can self-regulate their behaviors and want to engage with the curriculum, teachers’ trust may increase. Teachers may then be much more likely to engage in trusting behaviors that encourage positive student behaviors.

Trust is an important element in a classroom (Byrk & Schneider, 2003). Whenever students are required to learn something new or to demonstrate what they know, there is an aspect of risk. The students must risk finding out that they are unable to learn the new skill, must risk looking dumb in front of others, and must risk getting a bad grade. The perception of trust in a classroom increases the willingness to risk this vulnerability in students and teacher (Tchannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). The perception of trust in a classroom increases a sense of confidence and benevolence in students and teachers. Trust in schools appears to increase honesty and openness in communications and increase the willingness to risk vulnerability in students and teachers.

In order to engage more fully in a reciprocal trusting relationship, teachers may need to recognize that a change in the balance of student-teacher control may be needed. A balance of control that lets students express and enact some control over learning experiences may result in increased student self-regulation and higher academic performance (Eshel & Kohavi, 2003). The balance of teacher-student control in the classroom may be a reflection of the teacher's level of trust in her students and her perceptions of their behaviors and underlying motivations.

Trust appears to impact both school behaviors and academic achievement. Trust is a key aspect of school climate which affects behaviors ( Bryk & Schneider, 1996; Raider-Roth, 2005). Relational trust is important in improving student achievement (Hughes & Kwok,2005; Daniels and Arapostathis, 2005; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001, Imber, 1973; Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Since trust can positively impact behaviors and academic achievement, it is important to understand the variables that affect the

experience and expression of trust. What causes teachers to trust or distrust their students?

Researchers have found that teachers' level of trust is negatively affected by the low SES of her students (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Solomon et al., 1996). Teachers in schools with many low socioeconomic status (SES) students tend to be less trusting of their students and more doubtful of their students' ability to learn. In schools with high levels of poverty, teachers tend to emphasize teacher control, allow fewer opportunities for students to interact with each other, and employ less constructivist approaches when teaching (Solomon et al., 1996). The impact of trust in the teacher-student relationship, the impact of trust on teachers' choice of behavior management and choice of pedagogy, and the impact of trust on student behavior and achievement are all areas in need of further study.

The work of Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, and Hoy (2001) and Solomon et al. (1996) suggests that teachers tend not to trust low SES students and their families and that teachers in poorer schools tend to emphasize teacher control and to employ less constructivist teaching approaches (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). More research is needed to explore how low levels of trust impact teachers' decisions in the classroom.

Trust between teachers and students is important. Trust impacts teacher behaviors, student behaviors, and student academic achievement. Trust impacts the decisions that teachers make about classroom management and teaching methods. Constructivist teaching methods may be mitigated by teachers' level of trust in students. In addition, how teachers think about and enact behavior management systems may be directly

influenced by their level of trust in students. Teacher trust in students is necessary to achieve a balance of teacher-student control that allows students to enact some choice and control over their learning, to improve school climate, and to increase student achievement.

### **Dimensions of Trust**

In this section, I will explore researchers' descriptions of the dimensions of trust which include the attributes of trust, the stages through which trust typically develops, the continuum of trust, the types of trust, and the circular nature of trust. I will explore the literature on the ways in which teachers and students express their levels of trust, the impact which trust has on constructivist teaching approaches, and the impact which trust has on teachers' behavior management choices.

### **Attributes of Trust**

Researchers on trust in schools, organizations, and various institutions have suggested that trust is a dynamic, evolving, and relative concept that takes form when certain conditions are met in a relationship. Inherent of most constructs of trust is the willingness to take risks, to be vulnerable to the actions of the other person, and the need for the other person to behave in certain predictable ways. Trust is a dynamic concept that is determined by an assessment of given qualities and motivations of the other party, resulting in a judgment that the risk involved in trusting the other is a relatively good one in which the gains will most likely mitigate any losses that may occur (Goddard, Tshannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998; Bryk & Schneider, 1996).

Trust is both defined and measured by its various individual attributes which include benevolence of motivation, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. The attributes of trust interact and impact each other to create a sense of trust that is complex and multi-attributed (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001).

The attributes of honesty and openness are closely related. Honesty is an attribute of trust that refers to the integrity a person demonstrates. The perception of honesty in the other person impacts the perception of benevolence and the reliability of the person's words and actions. Openness is the willingness to share information and not to hide information, disguise one's motives, or hide one's problems. An honest person will be open about his or her feelings and ideas. An open person is presumed to be honest about what he or she is revealing. These attributes are assessed at the beginning of the relationship and may be reassessed as the participants in the relationship experience each other over time (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001).

Expectations of teachers and students of each others' behaviors are not solely outcome-based. Teachers and students are attentive to the organizational structure of the school and to the process of teaching and learning. Teachers and students pay attention to what others are trying to do and assess the motivation behind their actions (Bryk & Schneider, 1996). If the trustor perceives that the other is not acting with goodwill and genuine interest in the mutual benefit of everyone concerned, the level of trust will be diminished. Under this construct, persons who are perceived to be acting out of self-interest, acting to gain rewards, or acting to further their own agendas might not be trusted (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001).



The perception that a person is reliable and competent requires experience with the other person over a period of time. If students do not have the necessary skills to perform a task, teachers will be unlikely to trust them on this attribute of trust. If teachers believe that their students are competent and reliable, teachers are more apt to create successful learning environments. Benevolence of motivation, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness are individual attributes which interact and impact each other to create a sense of trust that is complex and multi-attributed (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001).

### **Stages of Trust**

Trust appears to develop in stages. In the early calculus-based stage of trust, the participating parties attempt to assess or calculate how likely it is that the other will demonstrate ability or competence, integrity based on honesty and credibility, and benevolence of motivation. In the calculus-based stage of trust, the use of rewards and punishments tends to be more prevalent as the one party tries to increase the chances of the other party demonstrating the specific, desired behaviors (Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003). In the early stage of trust, the willingness to risk seems to be a necessary element. The initial risk to trust is encouraged by the other's reputation for trustworthiness (Kennett, 1999). Therefore, a student's reputation in the school might affect how quickly the teacher might be willing to trust him or her.

The perception of trust can grow to a higher level, the identification-based level of trust, in which an emotional bond and shared goals have helped each party to internalize each other's needs and objectives. (Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003). At the higher levels, trust is characterized by hope, faith, and confidence in the other as well as taking initiative in acting (Benamati, Serva, & Fuller, 2006). With increased trust, teachers

experience a mutual understanding and greater rapport with students. As trust grows, the teacher then has an increasingly positive influence on students' achievement (Ackley, 2003).

Time is necessary for such a trusting relationship between teacher and student to develop and grow. Typically, trust does not happen immediately (Herman & Gwaltney, 1999). When teachers and students work together cooperatively over an adequate period of time the classroom environment becomes a more trusting place (Ennis & McCauley, 2002).

### **Continuum of Trust**

Trust is not a static, all or nothing proposition. Rather it may be viewed on a continuum from a total lack of trust to complete and total trust in a person on one or more factors. When one person perceives another to be highly competent, honest, open, and reliable, a high level of trust may be experienced. When one person perceives that the other party possesses some but not all of the qualities necessary for trust, a lower level of trust may be experienced (Lewis & Weigert, 1985). The degree to which one person may trust another is based on a continuum of perception regarding the various attributes of trust.

Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman (1995) suggest that:

“If ability, benevolence, and integrity were all perceived to be high, the trustee would be deemed quite trustworthy. However, trustworthiness should be thought of as a continuum, rather than the trustee being either trustworthy or not trustworthy. Each of the three factors can vary along a continuum. Although the simplest case of high trust presumes a high level of all three factors, there may be situations in which a meaningful amount of trust can develop with lesser degrees of the three” (p. 721).

In each teaching situation, teachers may need to judge how much they trust their students in the different attributes of trust. For example, teachers may trust their students to be honest, open, and well intentioned but may not trust that their students to be competent in their ability to handle a given academic assignment. A teacher who trusts her students to behave well, but does not believe that they can do the academic work, may choose to modify her lesson plans. If the teacher, however, wishes to take her students on a field trip in which academic ability is not a requirement, she may feel that she has a meaningful amount of trust in her students' honesty, openness, and benevolence to conduct the field trip.

Teachers need to make realistic judgments about their students in order to maintain an appropriate amount of trust, a level of trust that encourages students' growth and development while avoiding taking academic and social risks that are likely to result in a diminishment of the students' confidence and a loss of learning opportunities. Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2000) suggest that it is unwise to trust too much and to trust too little. Rather, one must attempt to find an optimal level of trust. Trusting too little may result in missed opportunities for growth while trusting too much may result in taking dangerous risks. Therefore, finding an optimal level of trust in which the risks are appropriate and opportunities for growth and development are enhanced requires good judgment and a certain amount of wisdom.

Teachers and students may be impacted by prior experiences that may affect the level of trust they are able to develop. Teachers need to be aware that not all students begin school with the ability and skills necessary to meet the academic and behavioral expectations of their teacher. In addition, not all students have the ability or

desire to participate in a positive, trusting relationship with their teacher. Teachers also need to reflect on their own past histories which may or may not predispose them to being able to engage in a trusting relationship. The student's or the teacher's predispositions, beliefs, experiences, and abilities are likely to influence the level of trust that they can achieve (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Schools can be places where students learn to extend their experiences of familial trust to a larger community which includes teachers and peers. However, some students come to school without having had a positive experience with familial trust. Students who have not had positive experiences with trust within their own families may experience difficulty initiating and reciprocating trust in the classroom. In classrooms in which there are a number of students who are not able to engage in a trusting relationship with the teacher, the teacher may use consequences to ensure that obligations are met (Ennis & McCauley, 2002).

A low level of trust that a teacher may demonstrate toward a student can even have consequences beyond the classroom. "Students who fail to navigate successfully teachers' expectations may be at risk for a range of deleterious outcomes both within and beyond the school setting (e.g., academic underachievement and impaired social relationships)" (Lane, Wehby, & Cooley, 2006, p. 162). Whether academic underachievement and impaired social relationships are the result of the student's lack of positive qualities which are perceived to be lacking by the teacher or a result of the student experiencing a lack of teacher-trust in the classroom is an area that warrants further study.

The continuum of trust from the lowest level of little to no trust up to the highest level of complete trust is affected by a variety of factors. The student or the teacher's pre-existing disposition, past history, expectations, and perceptions of the other all affect the level of trust that will be experienced. Given the importance of trust in the academic and social life of the student inside the classroom and beyond the school setting, understanding how the variety of factors impact the level of trust and to what extent, is an important area for future research.

Trust may entail both a cognitive, rational component and an emotional component. Cognitive-based trust that is based on an assessment of another person's competence and skills may be developed relatively quickly (Jefferies & Reed, 2000). A teacher may be able to quickly assess a student's competence in a variety of academic subjects. The degree to which one demonstrates reliable role performance and competency in skills and abilities results in cognitive-based trust (McAllister, 1995).

It is possible for a person to have either a high level or a low level of trust in both the rational and emotional components, or a level of trust that is mixed. Levels of affective trust may impact performance in that low levels of affective trust may result in less sharing of information and less cooperation with the other. In addition, high levels of trust result in an environment in which questions can be asked without fear and cooperation is increased (Jefferies & Reed, 2000).

## **Types of Trust**

Bryk and Schneider (1996) suggest that there are three forms that trust can take: organic, contractual, and relational. Organic trust is an unquestioning, unconditional trust in a person or institution that is based on a moral bond. Organic trust may be found in small communities, fundamentalist religious schools, or any community in which one truth, or one way, is followed by everyone. Contractual trust is found within a binding, legal framework. The contract defines the responsibilities of all the parties. If one party does not fulfill the contract, there may be legal actions taken. Relational trust refers to the trust which develops between parties who interact with each other over a period of time. Relational trust differs from organic trust in that the parties do not necessarily agree that there is one truth or one way to do things. Rather, relational trust is built upon the enactment of specific obligations and expectations and judgments about motivation.

Relational trust differs from contractual trust in that it is informally monitored and violations of trust result in a withdrawal of trust on one or both sides of the relationship.

“In sum, relational trust entails a dynamic interplay of actual behavior and a discernment of the intentions in the context of the obligations shared by various parties. Trust is diminished when individuals perceive that others not acting in ways that manifest these common commitments. Thus, the fulfillment of obligations on which relational trust rests entails not only doing the right thing but also doing it for what is perceived to be the right reasons” (Bryk & Schneider, 1996, p. 7).

Affect-based trust that is based on the assessment of the other party’s benevolence of motivation and honesty requires social interaction over time. Feelings of safety, closeness, and comfortableness may be required for a level of affective trust to be experienced. Since affect-based trust is based on a perception of motivation, good

conduct is not enough to achieve affect-based trust. The perception that altruistic motives are driving the good conduct is necessary for affect-based trust to occur.

Once affect-based trust is ascribed, it tends to be permanent. Even when the trusted person behaves in ways which could disconfirm positive motives, the transgressions are discounted or explained away. In other words, once a person has affect-based trust for another, he or she tends to persist in trusting even when evidence is to the contrary (McAllister, 1995).

Trust tends to persist and to expand. Once a person has been found to be trustworthy, other positive attributes are assigned to them. In the classroom, students who trust their teachers are not only more likely to find them credible, but are more likely to attribute other positive attributes to them as well (Myers, 1994).

Several types of trust are found in the teacher-student relationship. Trust in the teacher-student relationship is cognitive-based in that the teacher must judge the academic competence of her students while the students judge the teaching competence and reliability of their teacher. Trust between teachers and students is relational in that the parties have specific obligations and expectations of the other and spend a great deal of time together over the course of the school year. The trust is also contractual in that teachers sign a contract to do the work of teaching and may suffer consequences if they do not behave in socially acceptable ways or do not meet specific obligations regarding their students.

Teachers and students also experience affect-based trust based on an assessment of benevolence of motivation. The dynamic interplay of attributes, stages, levels, and types

of trust afford insights into the complex and unique experience of trust in any given teacher-student relationship.

### **Circular Interdependence of Trust in Teacher-Student Relationship**

Trust in the classroom is both a result of interactions between teachers and students and an influence on the behaviors of teachers and students. The classroom behavior of the teacher and the student is interrelated and circular. The teacher-student relationship not only consists of behavior and perceptions but affect behavior and perceptions as well. The behavior of the teacher both influences and is influenced by the behavior of the students. Likewise, the teacher's perceptions regarding their interactions with students affect the student's perceptions which in turn affect the teacher (Fisher, Rickards, & Newby, 2001; Harvey, Prather, White, & Hoffmeister, 1968).

Trust creates the conditions under which positive perceptions are more likely to occur. A perception of trust also influences one's assessment of another's motivation, affects how one predicts the future behavior of another, and results in "more positive attitudes, higher levels of cooperation... and superior levels of performance" (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001, p. 451).

The act of trusting may increase the chances that a student will act in a trustworthy manner. "We need to attribute the best possible motive to a student's actions. By attributing a worthy motive to an otherwise unworthy act, teachers can assist the students in constructing an attainable picture of themselves as ethical persons" (Noddings, 1988, p. 223-224).



Within the teacher-student relationship, relational trust is reciprocal. When teachers demonstrate their trust in their students by listening and responding to them, encouraging them to express themselves, and adjusting the environment to increase their success, the students learn to trust that their teacher will treat them fairly and will assist and guide them respectfully. Students respond by engaging with the curriculum, behaving appropriately, and reacting to learning experiences with increased thoughtfulness (Cothran & Ennis, 1997).

In the relationship of teacher and student there is a level of interdependence. At the beginning of the student-teacher relationship, the student relies on the competence and caring of the teacher while the teacher hopes that the student will be able and willing to learn and cooperate in the classroom. Both teacher and student must take the risk that the other will perform adequately and will be motivated appropriately. The interdependence inherent in the student and teacher relationship results in a need for trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

Trust is not an all or nothing experience. People choose whom they will trust, which aspects of that person they will trust, and under what circumstances they will trust. An individual will be more or less open, honest, and vulnerable with a friend, teacher, banker, or surgeon. People will also value openness, honesty, competence, and reliability differently depending on the nature of the interdependence in the relationship. Decisions regarding trust are made based on what the trustor considers to be good and important reasons given the circumstances (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

The teacher's decision to trust students may be based on what she considers the most essential attributes of trust in her classroom. A teacher may value honesty in students above all other attributes of trust. Another teacher may value reliability and competence in students more than the other attributes. In addition, a teacher may trust that her students are well-intentioned, honest, and open but may not trust that they are competent academically. Likewise, a teacher may have a great deal trust in her student's intellectual abilities and competencies in an academic lesson but may not trust that the student is honest or motivated by benevolent attitudes towards his classmates. Teachers, therefore, must weigh the importance of each attribute of trust given the circumstances of her classroom and make judgments about her students' abilities to demonstrate each attribute of trust before making decisions regarding trust.

### **The Impact of Teacher-Student Trust on Students' Academic Achievement and Classroom Behaviors**

Teachers' trust in their students can impact students' academic performance and students' classroom behaviors. In this section, researchers' investigations into the expression and impact of teachers' trust in their students will be explored. The impact that teachers' trust of students has on the learning environment, the influence that trust has on teachers' willingness to engage in constructivist teaching practices and the impact that trust has on teachers' choices regarding behavior management will be highlighted. Finally, research regarding the impact of teacher trust on the parents of students will be briefly discussed.

Trust can affect students' academic achievement and test scores in direct and indirect ways. When teachers create learning environments in which students feel comfortable, students will be more apt to interact with their peers in a positive manner and focus on learning. (Ennis & McCauley, 2002). Students who perceive that their teachers like them, are fair, and have high expectations of them tend to show high levels of engagement, including paying attention, staying focused, and participating more in class. High levels of engagement in learning are associated with school attendance and higher test scores (Klem & Connell, 2004). Schwarzer & Buchwald (2000) suggest that interpersonal trust can be a protective factor during an exam. Interpersonal trust may lead the student to exhibit more cooperative and pro-social behavior.

In their study of strategies used to reach disengaged and disruptive students by teachers in urban secondary schools, Ennis and McCauley (2002) found that the development of a trusting relationship between teachers and students is essential to creating an effective learning environment. Ennis and McCauley found that teachers demonstrate their trust in students in a wide variety of social and pedagogical ways. Teachers who trust their students are more willing to reconstruct traditional curriculum and use alternative strategies to address students' needs. Teachers "confirm their trust and care for students by permitting them to follow alternative curricular avenues while guiding them to expand effort and devote time to learning" (p. 161).

Researchers suggest that teachers and students influence each others perceptions and behaviors and that the use of a dyadic systems perspective on relationships is appropriate for the study of the teacher-student relationship. Students' classroom behaviors affect teachers' perceptions and classroom behaviors. Students' and teachers'

behaviors in the classroom reinforce and confirm each others beliefs and expectations of the other (Schwarzer & Buchwald, 2000; Stuhlman & Pianta, 2001).

In the following subsections, Constructivist Teaching and Trust, and Behavior Management and Trust, I will highlight the ways in which trust impacts the decisions that teachers make in the classroom. I will present research that suggests that teachers' choices to engage in constructivist teaching methods require a relatively high level of trust in students. Researchers also suggest that teachers' choices regarding behavior management strategies reflect the level of trust that teachers have in their students.

### **Constructivist Teaching and Trust**

Constructivist teaching requires teachers and students to be engaged in learning activities and engaged in a learning environment that is attentive to students' previous learning constructs and encourages students' ownership and voice in learning. Teachers engaged in constructivist teaching must be willing to share their power and control with students, serving as guides while students have an active role in constructing their own learning. Respectful relationships, real conversations, purposeful talking, and shared ownership and responsibility in behaving and learning are required of students and teachers in a constructivist learning environment (Rainer, Guyton & Bowen, 2000). In order for constructivist teaching and learning to take place, the students and teacher must experience and exhibit some level of trust in the other.

A teacher-student relationship that is based on trust and respect is essential to a constructivist approach to teaching (Herman & Gwaltney, 1999). The very act of engaging in constructivist teaching approaches can be viewed as a demonstration of teacher trust. Constructivist teaching methods require that the teacher trusts her students.

For a teacher to fully support and engage in constructivist lessons, she must trust that her students will participate and cooperate in appropriate and meaningful ways (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Trust enables people to take risks (McAlister, 1995). Teachers who believe that their students are able to construct their own learning, may be more willing to engage in group activities, real conversations, shared ownership and control of academic pursuits. Constructivist teaching methods require that teachers trust that “children are capable of creating their own knowledge” (Rainer, Guyton, & Bowen, 2000, p. 10).

Teachers demonstrate trust by giving students many opportunities to connect with their peers as well as with the educational materials. Ennis and McCauley (2002) found that “teachers created webs of trust by engaging students in a range of meaningful and relevant curricular activities central to opening up the ‘oyster shells’, and inviting students to share in a sense of community in their classroom” (p. 156). In dealing with disruptive and disengaged students, teachers demonstrate their trust by encouraging them to be responsible for curricular tasks and by giving students second chances to behave appropriately and connect with the teacher in the classroom. In addition, teachers demonstrated and increased the trust they had with students by consciously treating students with respect, joked with them in appropriate ways and tried to make the students feel important (Ennis & McCauley, 2002).

In order to create a classroom climate that is conducive to trust and promotes cooperation and learning, teachers require both skill and motivation. Teachers demonstrate their trust in students when they show determination, flexibility, responsiveness and a personal initiative, persistence, and commitment to students to

make learning possible and meaningful. Holding high and realistic expectations while encouraging students' input is essential in the demonstration of teacher trust (Hansen, 1998; Ennis & McCauley, 2002).

Herman and Gwaltney (1999) emphasize the need for a healthy teacher-student relationship which encourages trust and lowers defensiveness so that constructivist instruction can be successful.

“The adoption of a constructivist approach to teaching and learning implies that particular elements of human relationships are adopted for successful instruction. For example, unhealthy, dictatorial, and teacher-centered styles of relating to others are in general antithetical to constructivism. In sharp contrast, teachers who have properly adopted a constructivist approach are guiding thoughtful students toward the discovery of defensible answers rather than telling students the answers that are simply ‘right’ or ‘wrong.’ The facilitation of learning through the use of constructivism also will demand greater openness; depth of understanding; congruence between thoughts, values, beliefs, and behaviors; a non-judgmental atmosphere; and great patience” (Herman & Gwaltney, 1999, p. 8).

The constructivist teaching approach further requires that the teacher and the student tolerate a certain level of vulnerability. The student must feel enough trust in the classroom to take risks and expose his or her ideas in the classroom. The teacher must experience enough trust in his or her students to share some level of decision making and control in the classroom (Rainer, Guyton, & Bowen, 2000; Herman & Gwaltney, 1999).

Ennis and McCauley (2002) in their qualitative study of urban classroom communities found that teachers who engendered and encouraged trusting relationships with their students demonstrated qualities of persistence and commitment. In addition, teachers who achieved and maintained trusting relationships with students adapted traditional curriculum so that marginalized students could better engage, provided students with opportunities to voice their opinions, and encouraged students to share in

deciding how they would learn and how they would use the knowledge they gained in the classroom.

“By acknowledging that each individual already possessed valuable knowledge, teachers affirmed their belief that all students could participate as legitimate members of the learning community and use their knowledge as a foundation for more in-depth learning. They encouraged student learning by providing many opportunities for student success. In this safe, comfortable environment, teachers invited students to make learning a priority and find the time to complete their work. They worked slowly and persistently to weave the web of trust essential in learning communities” (Ennis & McCauley, 2002, p. 169).

Ennis and McCauley (2002) found that teachers who believed that their students could be academically competent and would be willing and able to participate in a learning community, structured their classes to be safe learning environments that encouraged in-depth learning.

### **Behavior Management and Trust**

Teachers have certain expectations regarding the behavior of students in the classroom. Teachers typically require students to behave in ways that facilitate instruction and demonstrate self-control (Lane, Wehby & Cooley, 2006). In this section, the impact of teacher-student trust on how teachers encourage pro-social behaviors in their students will be explored.

The teacher-student relationship is interpersonal but is not an equal, peer relationship. The teacher holds a greater degree of power and control and has greater status than the student (Dobransky & Frymier, 2004). In a relationship in which one party holds most of the power, there is little room for listening to the less powerful party or for authorizing their perspective. Only through the authorization of the student perspective and the sharing of power in the classroom can constructivist approaches to education be enacted. To be able to share power, authorize student perspectives, and

engage in constructivist approaches to education, the teacher must move toward a trusting stance with students (Cook-Sather, 2002).

Inherent in any trusting behavior is the willingness to relinquish some degree of control over situations that are important to the trustor (Tanis & Postmes, 2005).

For a teacher to share power and authority with her students, she must be willing to relinquish some control and assume a certain level of risk. “Even though the form of the risk-taking depends on the situation... the amount of trust for the other party will affect how much risk a party will take” (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995, p. 727).

Many researchers maintain that trust is the basis of the teacher-student relationship and the basic premise upon which educational practice rests. When the educators have a low level of trust in students, educational and behavioral practices are developed to keep students under control and passive recipients of their own education (Goddard & Tschannen-Moran (2001); Ennis & McCauley (2002); Cook-Sather (2002).

Leblanc, Lacey, and Adler (2000) found that teachers who maintained a high level of control and a traditional philosophy and style in their classrooms, generally demonstrated mistrust of their students. In turn, the students mistrusted their teachers. Students in such classes tended to have less self-regulation. A combination of distrust, strong teacher control, and extrinsic rewards were found to be “barriers to further student development of self-regulation and trust” (p. 17). For the most part, the purpose of teacher control in a classroom is to suppress the influence of the peer group. However, an increased use of teacher power and control in a classroom tends to result in an increased rebelliousness in students (Larking, 1975).



Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) suggest that a strong organizational control system “could inhibit the development of trust, because a trustee’s actions may be interpreted as responses to that control rather than signs of trustworthiness” (p. 727). In terms of classroom management, strong external controls may decrease the perception of trust in the classroom. Teachers have a great deal of control over what kinds of interactions take place in their classrooms and over what behavior management system is used. Consequences, rewards, and punishments may elicit a certain student behavior but may carry an unwanted price in terms of the teacher-student relationship. “Controlling mechanisms such as withdrawal of privileges, dismissal from the classroom, and detention and suspensions, convey distrust and domination rather than confirmation and trust” (Ennis & McCauley, 2002, p. 165).

The need for teachers to trust their students and to share control in the classroom may affect both the students and the teacher herself. Herman and Marlow (2005) suggest that a high level of conflict is experienced between teachers with predetermined beliefs about their role as an authority figure and oppositional children who do not trust authority. Teacher-student conflict may be mitigated when teachers define themselves as leaders who are helping to direct and nurture their students rather than authority figures whom student must obey.

When a teacher willingly relinquishes some of her control over the classroom in order to share control with her students, she is authorizing student perspective and authority. Teachers who maintain a stance of total control and authority may create the rebellious classroom that they are trying to avoid. The student’s power often can only come from resisting the teacher’s authority and control. Students may rebel and refuse to

participate in class or cooperate with the teacher's plans in order to gain a degree of power. Students also gain power when the teacher allows them to have power through shared control of one or more aspect of the learning environment (Dobranksy & Frymier, 2004).

Shared control, trust, and intimacy are increased in students who feel closer to their teachers and are more positive about their class and their academic work (Dobranksy & Frymier, 2004). Teachers who choose to accept the level of risk and vulnerability necessary to trust their students and allow students to share in the power and control of the classroom are more apt to create a classroom community of learners. Ennis and McCauley (2002) found that in trusting urban schools, teachers who provided "strategies of second chances, positive interactions and student ownership" created "a stable foundation of trust predicated on the development of four essential elements: shared expectations, persistence, commitment, and voice. These elements were planned purposefully and implemented flexibly" (p. 26).

### **Teacher Trust and Parents of Students**

Bryk and Schneider (1996) remind us that "teachers are human, that their humanness is very much a part of their practice, and that they respond to basic social amenities like everyone else" (p.16). Teachers require parental support and hope to have positive relationships with the parents of their students. "Particularly at the primary level, where the school is literally an extension of the family, teachers expect to be acknowledged as having a special role in a child's life, akin to that of an extended family member" ( p.16).

Parents and students increase their trust in teachers when teachers take a deep, personal interest in the education and well-being of students and demonstrate a caring ethos that goes beyond what is formally required. When parents and students perceive the teacher to be a committed, caring person, their trust in that teacher deepens (Bryk & Schneider, 1996).

Bryk and Schneider (2000) found that the initiative of the teacher may be required to establish a trusting relationship with parents, especially with poor parents. Teachers have expectations of parents of elementary school children which include the parents supporting their child's school attendance and participating in solving school problems as they arise. In turn, all parents and particularly poorer parents in urban school communities are dependent on the benevolent motivations and intentions of teachers.

“In general, poor parents typically do not have the educational expertise and skills that teachers have to help children learn. This imbalance in knowledge places a poor parent in a subordinate status with her child's teacher, especially when determining what specific actions should be taken at school and at home to improve the child's learning. The establishment of trusting relationships in such a situation often depends on the initiative of the teacher, who recognizes this inequality, and the sense of vulnerability it breeds and seeks to ameliorate it” (Bryk & Schneider, 2000, p. 16).

The trusting relationship between parents, students, and teachers is necessary in creating collaboration (Mitchell, 2004). Teachers need to take an active role in reaching out to parents. When teachers work to create a trusting relationship with parents, increased support and collaboration may result. How trust impacts the teacher-parent relationship as well as how such trust may affect the student are areas needing further research.

## **Teacher-Student Trust and Adolescence**

Teacher-student trust continues to be important throughout the grade school years and into middle school and high school and can affect teachers' educational practices (Cook-Sather, 2002; Liang, Spencer, Brogan, and Corral, 2007; Martin, Romas, Medford, Leffert, and Hatcher, 2006; Ryan and Patrick, 2001 ). Murray and Pianta (2007) suggest that teacher-student trust can be affected by teachers' behaviors in the classroom. They found that when teachers provide "positive praise and positive feedback to every student in the classroom...the provision of such support can promote warmth and trust within classroom settings" (p.109).

Cook-Sather (2002) suggests that educational practice is based on "trust - whether or not adults trust young people to be good (or not), to have and use relevant knowledge (or not), and to be responsible (or not)" (p. 4). Ryan and Patrick (2001) found that in addition to the "perceptions of teacher-student relationships as being supportive...teachers' messages about student-student relationships may also contribute to the classroom social environment (p. 440).

Petegem, Aelterman, Van Keer, and Rosseel (2006) suggest that trust in the classroom setting may be enhanced by enthusiastic teachers who create a "stimulating environment and use a variety of teaching methods, (to) create a sense of well-being in students" (p. 280). Students who experience a sense of well-being "perform their assigned tasks because it is fun in a structured yet relaxed milieu" (p. 288).

Adolescent students appear to value trustworthiness in adults who mentor and teach them. Liang et al. (2007) found that adolescents cited "mutual trust and fidelity" as the most important features of adult mentors. Similarly, Martin et al. (2006) found that

“the top three adult qualities preferred by adolescents were respect, time shared and openness,” qualities that are implicated in the concept of trust (p. 7).

While trust has been found to be an important element in the teacher-student relationship, educational practices in the United States do not always reflect the experience of trust, nor do they cultivate trust between teacher and students. Although teacher-student trust may affect educational practices and the classroom environment, Cook-Sather (2002) maintains that historically and currently, educational practices in the United States “reflect a basic lack of trust in students and have evolved to keep students under control and in their place as the largely passive recipients of what others determine is education” (p. 4). Since teacher-student trust needs to be cultivated in schools, it is important that teachers “spend time critically reflecting on their own beliefs and the way they enact these beliefs” as they interact with students (Murray & Pianta, 2007, p. 109).

### **Benefits of Trust**

Many benefits are related to a trusting relationship between teacher and student. High levels of trust are positively related to affective learning (Dobrasky & Frymier, 2004). Trust is an important component to academic achievement, especially for non-majority students (Young, 1998; Wooten & McCroskey, 1996). Trust is a significant positive indicator in student achievement (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001).

Students’ relationships in school shape how they see themselves in the learning process (Raider-Roth, 2005). Students who are engaged in a trusting relationship with their teacher are often more willing to voice their ideas and actively engage with academic material (Ennis & McCauley, 2002).

Trust is “crucial to the development of behavioral norms in the school that support the learning of all school community members” (Young, 1998, p. 18). Trust can be a powerful way of keeping participants in a school community behaving in appropriate, consistent ways. Persons who do not act honestly, behave with benevolence of motivation, or perform competently will lose the support, help, and goodwill of those persons who are negatively affected. Since schools are places in which participants depend on each other and must interact with each other in on-going relationships, earned distrust will cause problems while trust will ease the accomplishment of one’s goals (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001).

From the earliest years of elementary school, students can learn the benefits of behaving in a trustworthy manner. The teacher-student relationship can serve as a positive model for future relationships that include some degree of dependency, behavioral expectations, and some level of trust. Since the benefits of teacher-student trust are so essential to the growth and development of the student, trust should be planned and included in the curriculum and explicitly taught and discussed in the classroom (Ennis and McCauley, 2002).

### **Conclusions**

Based on my exploration of the literature on teachers’ trust in students, I have drawn several conclusions that support the need for research in this area. In this section seven major conclusions based on the literature will be discussed. Each conclusion will be illustrated with examples that illuminate how trust impacts the teacher-student relationship and the choices which teachers must make in their classrooms. Finally, implications for further research will be discussed.

1) Trust may be defined as an interpersonal judgment based on the perception that the other person possesses one or more of the attributes of trust including honesty, openness, benevolence of motivation, vulnerability, reliability, and competence. Researchers in the area of trust agreed that one or more of the attributes of trust must be present for one person to have some trust in the other.

2) Trust is a dynamic phenomenon which is experienced on a continuum. Trust may increase if one or more attributes of trust are highly developed or if many or all the attributes of trust are present to some degree. In different circumstances one or more attributes of trust may be more important than others. Persons must also make decisions about which attributes of trust are most important to them given their needs and roles at any given time. For example, in visiting a dentist, a person may value the attributes of competence and honesty much more than whether or not the dentist is able to share his or her feelings openly. A first grade teacher may begin the school year caring more about her students' ability to be honest and open about their feelings than she might care about her students' reliability.

3) Trust is an element in the teacher-student relationship and is a uniquely important aspect of school life. The classroom is a collection of people who teach, learn, and live with each other for 6 hours a day, 180 days a year. Teachers and students assess each other along the various attributes of trust. Ennis and McCauley (2002) state that trust should be a planned part of the curriculum since it can encourage teachers and students to take risks that lead to positive academic as well as social outcomes. Teacher-student trust allows both teachers and students to try new teaching methods, go on field

trips, investigate new ways to demonstrate knowledge, and explore social and personal issues in the classroom.

4) There are specific perceptions which teachers hold regarding their students.

Some of these teacher perceptions are preconceived while others are formed over time in relationship with students. Teachers, like their students, do not begin each school year as blank slates. Rather, their beliefs about education and their perceptions of each other are impacted by previous school experiences, both positive and negative. High school students who have experienced a great deal of academic failure may have low levels of trust in their teachers' benevolence of motivation. A teacher who has experienced students cheating on tests the year before may not trust this year's students to be honest.

5) Teachers enter the classroom with certain expectations of themselves. Teachers expect to be the adult leader in the classroom. While some teachers expect to hold all the control and power in the classroom, others expect to share the responsibility with their students. A teacher who expects to hold all of the power and control in the classroom, may not need to trust students as much as the teacher who expects to share authority and responsibility with students. Teachers expect students to behave in predictable ways. Depending on the past experiences of the teacher, she may expect students to be more or less unruly, more or less willing to work, and more or less interested in learning.

6) Trust in a teacher-student relationship is a circular, interdependent, dynamic phenomenon. As the student demonstrates qualities of honesty, openness, competence, reliability, and positive motivation, the teacher begins to develop trust in the student. As the teacher expresses her trust in the students, the students may respond with an increase in trustworthy behaviors. While it is possible to tease out and highlight one or more



strand in the circular and interdependent teacher-student relationship, it is necessary to study trust as a phenomenon within the context of a relationship.

7) The perception of trust increases the likelihood that the trusting party will be willing to take risks, thus impacting how people behave. Teachers' level of trust in their students may affect the choices that teachers make regarding classroom instruction and behavior management. A teacher who has a relatively high level of trust in her students' honesty, openness, reliability, and competence may be much more willing to engage in constructivist teaching methods which require the teacher to share some power and control with students in the classroom.

Findings from research regarding teacher-student trust indicate the need for further research to determine how teachers' perceptions of trust are formed, how student behaviors influence teacher perceptions, and how the interaction between the teacher and student influences the growth or diminishment of trust. Studies are needed to explore how teachers experience and express their levels of trust in their students. Research on the impact of trust on teachers' decision-making in both academic areas as well as behavior management has been neglected in much of the research on trust. Further research on the influence that trust may have on the various choices that teachers make concerning both academic and behavior management could have implications for teacher educators.

Teachers' behaviors and perceptions regarding trust can be elicited in interviews. The use of teacher interviews to study teachers' perceptions of their students is necessary to understand the multidimensional nature of the teacher-student relationship (Stuhlman & Pianta, 2000). In my research into teachers' trust in their students, I will make use of

teacher interviews in order to study how teachers perceive both their level of trust in students. Teacher interviews and classroom observations will be used to explore and how teachers' trust levels impact the teachers' choices and behaviors in the classroom. Teacher questionnaires will be created to confirm the findings of the interviews and observations.

In my research, I have explored how trust in the teacher-student relationship impacts teachers' pedagogical decisions and behavior management decisions in the classroom. My ultimate goals have been to (1) empower both teachers and students to have strong voices in making choices that encourage academic learning, develop healthy relationships, and create a positive and dynamic classroom culture, and (2) provide the basis of a conceptual framework which will give a new structure for pre-service teachers and veteran teachers to use in reflecting on their educational practices.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**METHODOLOGY**

**Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how middle school teachers understand and experience trust in their students and how teachers' trust in students influences the pedagogical decisions and the behavior management decisions they make in relation to their students. First, in order to examine how teachers perceive the trustworthiness of the students they teach, I explored (a) how teachers perceive the trustworthiness of the students they teach, (b) how the teachers think and feel about the concept of trust in relation to their students, and (c) how teachers perceive their level of trust in students. Second, in order to understand how the teachers' level of trust in students might have impacted their choice of teaching methods, I focused on (a) the pedagogical choices the teachers made, (b) how they presented materials, and (c) how they attempted to increase student learning. Third, in order to understand how the teachers' level of trust in students impacted their choice of behavior management systems, I focused on how the teachers implemented behavior management techniques, including how they reward, reinforce, and punish students, talk to students, and relate to students.

The following research questions guided my data collection and data analysis:

1. How and to what extent do teachers experience and express trust in relation to individual students and groups of students?

2. How and to what extent do teachers value and focus on specific attributes of trust over others?
3. How and to what extent do the levels of teacher trust in students and the various facts of trust impact the teachers' pedagogical and behavior management choices in the classroom?

### **Grounded Theory Research Design**

To gain insight about how teachers perceive trust in the student-teacher relationship and how teachers perceive the impact of trust on the pedagogical and behavior management choices they make, I selected a grounded theory design. The theory of trust is an evolving theory which has been limited in its understandings of and application to the teacher-student relationship (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Since grounded theory is “both a checking and a creative process,” it was selected so that new insight could emerge that could enlarge and improve the theory of trust (Goldkuhl & Conholm, 2003, p. 178) in the teacher-student relationship. The grounded theory research design was chosen since it offers insight, enhances understanding, and provides a meaningful guide to understand the action of a phenomenon (Straus & Corbin, 1998). Within the grounded theory methodology, the theory emerges and develops from the data (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

I chose to limit my study to three participants within the same school in order to allow for a deep, rich study of each participant over the entire amount of time that I had to devote to data collection. Limiting my study to three participants also allowed the participants time to come to know me as a researcher, and be more willing to express their thoughts and feelings around the issue of teacher-student trust. I chose to observe

each participant with the same class of students each time I observed. By observing each participant with one class of students, I was able to explore how trust between the participant and his students developed, and I was able to chronicle the relationship of the participant with individual students as well as with the class as a whole.

### **School Site**

This study took place in a suburban middle school in a university town in the Northeast. During the 2008-2009 academic year in which the study was undertaken, the school had 567 students in grades seven and eight. Of these students, 66% were white, 12% were Hispanic, 8% were Asian, 7% were multiracial, 6% were Black, and less than 1% were Native American/ Alaskan Native. In this school, 24% of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch compared to 30% statewide.

The student body was organized into teams, with three teams per grade level and approximately 100 students per team. Each team had English, science, and social studies teachers who were tasked to work collaboratively. The teams also had math, special education, and English language learner teachers assigned to them. In addition, students took physical education and exploratory courses (computer, health, and technology education) as well as elective courses in world language and music.

Seventh grade students began their day in the Advisory Program in which a small group of 10 to 12 students met together with an advisor. The advisors' goals were to get to know each student and to become a mentor and guide to the students, helping the students to become acquainted with the school and its procedures, to adjust to the school and to stay academically organized. The school day began at 7:45 a.m. and ended at 2:20 p.m. with after school support and school clubs available three days a week.

### **Ethical Considerations**

To utilize the school selected as the site for this study, I obtained approval of the superintendent and the Principal of the school. I applied to the University's Institutional Review Board and received authorization to conduct this study. A Letter of Introduction which introduced me and my research study to the teachers was given to the Principal who had the letter placed in the mailboxes of all the teachers. Three teachers responded to the Letter of Introduction and contacted me to meet and discuss the possibility of their participating in the study. After a face-to-face meeting with each potential participant, in which they were able to ask any questions they might have about me and my study, all three teachers agreed to participate. The three participants each signed a Letter of Informed Consent (Appendix), which explained the purpose of the study, risks inherent in the study, and rights of participants in the study. The Letter of Informed Consent also stated that participants' anonymity would be protected with pseudonyms utilized for the names of participants and the school.

Prior to beginning my observations, I met with each of the participants to discuss which of their classes I would observe. I told each participant that I wanted to observe them with the same students each time. In order to coordinate my observations of the three participants, the choice of which class I would observe them teaching was primarily guided by which day the class met and what time of day the class met.

### **Researcher Background and Biases**

In order to ensure trustworthiness of data it is important for the researcher to understand her own personal history and potential research bias. As an elementary

school student, I felt profoundly limited and constrained by my well-intentioned but rigidly controlling teachers. In class, we were to sit perfectly still, keep silent unless called upon to answer a question, and were not allowed to express ourselves or make any meaningful choices during academic time. I would have to say that I never felt that my teachers trusted the students to behave well or to have the ability to make appropriate academic choices. While junior high school and senior high school allowed a bit more freedom of movement, the structure of the classroom and the authoritarian stance of the teachers and administrators stayed basically the same as in elementary school.

After graduate school, I taught middle school special education students for several years. I then became a licensed social worker and was employed to give counseling and help to oversee the administration of special education services in one school district at the elementary schools, middle school, and high school. My work in special education and social work gave me a unique perspective on school culture, classroom culture, and the perceptions of teachers and students. I began to notice that teachers who liked and trusted their students had very different classrooms in terms of behavior management and academic methods than teachers who expressed negative, untrusting opinions of their students.

While attaining both my Master's degree in special education and my Master's degree in social work, my professors stressed the importance of gaining and maintaining a positive, trusting relationship with students and/or clients. In special education, the relationship with the student is important in that special education teachers are often asking their students to attempt to learn and express knowledge in areas where the students have previously failed. My professors told us that the relationship we as

teachers had with our students could offset the students' fear of risking failure. In social work, the relationships with our clients needed to be safe and trusting relationships in which clients could risk facing issues that were difficult and painful to face. I was taught that I needed to reflect and be consciously aware of my perceptions of my clients so that I could be aware of any perceptions that could either help or hinder my client. As a special educator and as a social worker, I was trained to value the trusting relationship with students and/or clients as crucially important.

I worked to maintain awareness of my biases throughout each phase of this study. I used self-reflection and documentation to remain alert as to how my biases might affect the study and my interpretation of data. I believed that the use of a grounded theory design helped me to identify my biases as the study progressed.

My personal life experiences and professional training have influenced my interest in teachers' trust in their students. The goals of this study are three-fold: (a) to encourage teachers to be aware of their perceptions regarding their students and to reflect on the degree to which they trust or distrust their students so that the choices they make in the classroom are appropriate and helpful to their students, (b) to empower teachers to be able to challenge their students to take academic risks and to be self-controlled in the classroom, and (c) by increasing the self-reflection of teachers and empowering teachers to be more dynamic in the classroom, to improve the educational experiences of students.

### **Participants**

Three teachers volunteered to be participants for this study. The participants included: Mr. Wright who taught a Computer course for seventh grade students, Mr. Williams who taught an English course to eighth grade students, and Mr. Villanova who



taught a Latin course to seventh grade students. During my initial meeting with each participant, we discussed which of their classes I would observe. I told each participant that I wanted to observe them with the same students each time. In order to coordinate my observations of the three participants, the choice of which class I would observe them teaching was primarily guided by which day the class met and what time of day the class met. Each of the three participants was willing to let me observe any of their classes and each was active in choosing which of the time slots were mutually suitable.

All three of the participants were white males who had been teaching for many years. Mr. Wright was a veteran teacher of 18 years who had taught in the local school system for 7 years from 1973 to 1980. After a long hiatus, he returned to teaching in 1998 and at the time of this study taught the 7<sup>th</sup> grade course in computer skills, the only computer class in the entire local K to 12 school system. Mr. Wright had a B.S. in mathematics and was certified to teach math, science, and computer skills. Mr. Wright's class was comprised of 17 seventh graders, 10 girls and 7 boys who were racially and ethnically representative of the school as a whole.

Mr. Williams was a 14 year veteran teacher who was in his 8<sup>th</sup> year at Middle School. He earned an M.A. in Education with a focus in critical and creative thinking and was certified in English and as a Generalist. There were 19 students, 8 girls and 11 boys, in Mr. Williams' 8<sup>th</sup> grade English class. The students were racially and ethnically representative of the school as a whole. Mr. Williams had taught the same 8<sup>th</sup> grade students English the year before when they were in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

Mr. Villanova was a veteran teacher of 25 years, teaching in middle school and high school Latin in the same school district. He had a M.A. in Latin and Classical

Languages. There were 13 students in Mr. Villanova's 7<sup>th</sup> grade class who were racially and ethnically representative of the school as a whole.

### **Pilot Study**

In the fall of 2007, I conducted a pilot study with 3 teachers at an elementary school in the Northeast region of the United States. The purpose of this pilot study was to explore the teachers' experience of trust in their students and how the level of trust which teachers had in students impacted the academic choices and behavior management choices they made in the classroom.

The pilot study provided some insight into teachers' experiences and perspectives on trust and how teachers' level of trust might impact the choices they make in the classroom. This study supported the concept that for each teacher there were specific attributes of trust which were valued and encouraged by teachers in the teacher-student relationship. The study suggested that an additional attribute of trust, supportiveness, may be an important attribute in the teacher-student relationship. Although this study provided valuable insight on teachers' perceptions of trust in the teacher-student relationship, the investigation was limited to three elementary school teachers in the first, second, and third grades. The study did not explore how teachers of early adolescents might perceive trust in their teacher-student relationships and how trust might impact the choices that middle school teachers make.

The pilot study informed the next steps of this proposed study in several ways. First, knowledge about teachers' perceptions of trust and the ways and degrees to which they value the various attributes of trust was imperative to establish research methods that engaged teachers in reflecting deeply on their perceptions and the impact their

perceptions had on their pedagogical and behavior management choices. Formal interviews were highly effective in eliciting information about teachers' perceptions of trust, the degree to which they value the various the various attributes of trust, and how they believe trust in the teacher-student relationship impacts the choices they make. Second, teachers' reactions to students during classroom activities (direct instruction as well as informal interactions) can clearly and dramatically demonstrate aspects of trust in the teacher-student relationship.

Third, a concise yet comprehensive teacher questionnaire can be an important tool in helping teachers to reflect on their perceptions and their practice. A questionnaire allows teachers to reflect and answer questions without the pressure they might experience in a face-to-face, time-limited interview. Since the pilot study highlighted the teachers' tendency to value specific attributes of trust over others, the questionnaire used in this study was written to explore whether certain attributes of trust were valued over others and to what degree certain attributes were valued over others. To aid in ensuring the usefulness of the questionnaire, it was piloted before it was utilized in this study.

Based on these findings, I decided to begin my research by interviewing the participants at the start of the investigative process. Since this study focused on the perceptions and actions of the teacher in the teacher-student relationship, an early initial interview helped to focus my observations in the classroom and provided a context for the interactions and activities I observed.

Since middle school teachers teach several different classes of students, each of the three teachers participating in the study were observed teaching just one of their classes over the course of three months and for a total of 10 to 12 observations per each

participant. The classes to be observed were selected based on the scheduling needs of the teacher in relation to the scheduling needs of the other teachers so that all three teachers will be observed at least once a week.

A second interview, completed near the very end of my classroom observations provided an opportunity for teachers to respond to any questions I had about the observations and provided an opportunity for teachers to further reflect and clarify how trust in the teacher-student relationship has changed over the course of three months.

### **Data Collection**

Multiple data sources were implemented to explore how middle school teachers experience and perceive trust in their students and how trust impacts the choices that teachers make regarding their teaching methodology and the behavior management systems. Data were collected from the following sources: (a) two formal teacher interviews, (b) one teacher questionnaire, (c) classroom observations, and (d) classroom and school artifacts.

### **Formal Teacher Interviews**

The first formal teacher interviews took place early in the first month of the study. The goal of the first interviews was to explore teachers' perceptions of trust in the teacher-student relationship. These interviews served as a baseline for the teachers' perceptions about trust and the degrees to which they value the various attributes of trust in the teacher-student relationship. These interviews allowed the teachers to reflect on whether or not they perceive that trust in their relationship with students impacts the choices they make in the classroom. These early teacher reflections served as baseline data which helped to inform the classroom observations I made.

The second formal teacher interviews took place within the third month of classroom observations. The goals of these interviews were: 1) to clarify any questions I might have regarding observations made, 2) to explore the teachers' perceptions of trust in the teacher-student relationship after several months of interaction, and 3) to explore the teachers' perceptions around the degree to which trust may have impacted their pedagogical choices and their implementation of behavior management.

### **Teacher Questionnaire**

The teacher questionnaire was given to the teachers during the second month of observations. The questionnaire allowed teachers to privately reflect and take as much time as they would like to respond to questions around trust in the teacher-student relationship. The questionnaire served to confirm, expand, or contradict findings derived from teacher interviews or classroom observations. The teacher questionnaire utilized a Likert-like scale to ask teachers to evaluate the degree to which they believe their students to be open, honest, driven by benevolent motivation, competent, and caring.

### **Field Observations**

Descriptive field notes were taken over the course of three months. Observations were made of each teacher interacting with the same class for 10-12 class periods. Participants' verbal and non-verbal interactions with students, teaching methodology, and implementation of behavior management techniques were observed. Descriptive field notes were word-processed into a narrative after each observation along with observer comments that provided interpretations of what was observed. Data from observations informed questions in the formal interviews as well as prompted questions during

informal interviews with teachers. Informal interviews with teachers included conversations initiated by teachers before, during, or after classroom observations.

### **Classroom and School Artifacts**

Hand-outs and other written materials were collected. These artifacts served to augment, confirm, or challenge the data from teacher interviews, the teacher questionnaire, and from descriptive field notes.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was done using content analysis and the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This methodology was useful in exploring my research questions as it allowed me to obtain "...intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.11). Grounded theory offered a framework with which I could elaborate and extend upon the research that has been done around the issue of trust and allowed me to "offer insight, enhance understanding," and provided "a meaningful guide" to potentially fruitful areas for future research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 14).

Each observation was word processed into field notes on my laptop computer and printed out within days. Field notes were filed according to the date and subject of the observation. Formal teacher interviews were audio taped and word processed verbatim within days. Each interview was filed according to the date and subject taught by the interviewee. Teacher questionnaires were word processed, printed out, and given to each of the participants at the time of one of the observations. Teachers' responses to the questionnaires were collected one week later, at the following observation. Classroom

artifacts including activity packets and handouts as well as photographs taken of the classroom layout and posters were collected and filed according to date and subject. In addition, a log of my thoughts, impressions, questions, and interactions with participants during observations, and any changes to my plans was kept on a weekly basis.

At the end of each week, after compiling, downloading, and filing field notes, and after downloading and filing teacher interviews, I conducted initial data analysis. In my first response to the field notes I allowed myself to express my opinions and judgments from a personal perspective. Expressing my personal perspective enabled me to identify where my beliefs and biases might be affecting my interpretation of the data and helped me to formulate questions to ask participants during the formal interviews. For example, after Observation 1-22 English, I wrote:

Many students who are consistently off-task sit at the sides and corners of the room. Why does the teacher sit students where he can't see what they're doing? The most off-task students are placed in the seats where they can easily hide what they're doing. Why does he let them sit there? Why is the room set up this way? Wouldn't it be better to seat them where he can monitor them more closely? (Memo, Observation 2-3, Computer).

After reviewing my personal responses, I was better able to develop a less judgmental stance regarding teaching choices that might be different from those I would make and to formulate non-judgmental questions that would allow the participant to express his experience of his students and his perspective regarding the choices he had made in the classroom. During teacher interviews, when I asked questions derived from my personal responses, the participants explained their reasoning and perspectives regarding their teaching choices and I was given a deeper understanding of how the participants experience and express trust in their students.

A second read through of the field notes allowed me to create broad categories. After creating categories I began to develop properties and dimensions for the categories. The process of developing properties and dimensions for the categories continued throughout data analysis. I considered properties and dimensions of categories. For example, for the category of competence, I developed the properties and dimensions of: on task versus off task, focused versus unfocused, and skilled versus unskilled.

I found that after three observations, my field notes yielded enough data to start the process of axial coding. I then created properties and dimensions for subcategories. For example, for the category of competence I developed the subcategory of perseverance. For the subcategory of perseverance, I developed the properties and dimensions of: trying versus giving up, completing tasks versus not completing tasks, and assertive behaviors versus passive behaviors.

Throughout the analysis of the field notes, I allowed myself to remain open to any changes which data from the formal interviews might bring. Since my research questions were related to teachers' experiences, perceptions, behaviors, and choices, I expected that data from the teacher interviews would clarify and enrich my analysis of the data. Strauss and Corbin (1998) state, "If one studies structure only, then one learns why but not how certain events occur. If one studies process only, then one understands how persons act/interact but not why. One must study both structure and process to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of events" (p. 127). By observing and interviewing the participants, I felt that I would be able to study how they behave in the classroom during observation and learn why they behaved as they did during the interviews.



The first teacher interviews were conducted after I had observed several times in each of the three classrooms. The second teacher interviews were conducted near or after the end of all the classroom observations. By conducting the first teacher interview after I had made several classroom observations I was able to have a context for the interview data I had already collected. I was also able to ask the participants questions about what I had already observed. The first interviews also helped to guide my analysis of the observations I made after the interview.

After I had transcribed and downloaded each interview, I began initial data analysis. I read and reread each interview to get a sense of the data. I noted my thoughts in memos, developed questions for further consideration, and began to make connections between data from my field notes and data from the interviews. I then began to organize the data into categories and started to formulate properties and dimensions for the categories. I continued to compare the data from my first interviews with the field notes made before and after the first interviews and continued the process of developing an overview, followed my microanalysis, and continued to generate refinements in properties and dimensions. At this stage, I began to develop and refine diagrams, making “visual representations of the relationships among the concepts” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 241). I began to develop diagrams for each of the participants which visually represented how each participant expressed and experienced the concept of trust in his classroom.

During the second month of the study, I administered the questionnaire to each of the participants. The questionnaire required the participants to choose a response from a Likert-like scale. On a separate paper, attached to the questionnaire, I gave the

participants detailed instructions and encouraged them to email me with any questions. At the end of the form I allowed room for the participants to record any other comments they wished to make. In creating the questionnaire, I wished to create a tool that would enable the participants to consider questions concerning their perceptions over a period of time. In developing the questionnaire, I followed the following principles: “use simple language; avoid jargon; keep questions short and specific; avoid ambiguities; avoid leading questions; avoid hypothetical questions” (Williams, 2003, p.5). After I wrote the first draft of the questionnaire, I piloted it on two teacher volunteers. Once I had gotten their feedback, I rewrote several questions to make them less ambiguous. I then formulated a chart with which I could record, describe, and analyze the data from the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were given to each of the participants in the second month of the study, after about half of the classroom observations had taken place and after the first interview had been completed. I handed the questionnaire to each participant at the end of a classroom observation. The participant kept the questionnaire, completed it, and handed it back to me after one of the classroom observations one week later.

In analyzing the data from the questionnaire, I first looked for any inconsistencies or outliers. I then described the range of responses to each question and began the process of coding using content analysis and the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I used the questionnaire as a guide during the second participant interviews. I asked the participants any questions I had formulated relating to their responses on the questionnaire. Frequently, I asked the participants about any outliers in their responses. I also asked them to explain any responses that seemed to contradict

other responses they gave. After the participants had clarified how they had interpreted the questions and why they had responded as they did on the questionnaire, I refined my analysis of the questionnaire data accordingly.

I conducted the second participant interviews in the third and final month of the study. During the second interviews I was able to ask any questions that I had formulated during my continued analysis of the data. I asked teachers to explain incidents I had observed during my classroom observations. I also allowed time for the participants to make any comments or ask me any questions they had.

By the time of the second interview, I had developed several categories and subcategories and had begun the cross analysis within categories and across categories to identify common themes and perspectives. I was able to use the second interview to ask the participants questions that would clarify and enlarge my understanding of the themes and perspectives I was starting to identify. For example, before I conducted a second interview with one of the participants, I had begun to consider the concept of “internal motivation” as a sub-category of benevolence of motivation. I was also working on the concept of confidence as a unifying theme between benevolence of motivation and competence. During the second interview, I was able to ask the participants to tell me what “internal motivation” meant to them and to ask questions that added to my understanding of how teacher confidence functions in unifying different attributes of trust.

I continued to engage in constant comparison between the observations, interviews, and questionnaire responses. I continued to expand on the attributes of trust, creating new categories, subcategories, developing properties and dimensions, and

formulating unifying themes and perspectives. In order to ensure a more complete development of my analysis, I created diagrams as I neared the end of my analysis of the data. By creating diagrams, I hoped to "...show the density and complexity of the theory.... And to "finalize relationships and discover breaks in logic" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 238). I created several diagrams, including integrative diagrams that translated parts of the theory and diagrams that focused on the major concepts and categories.

### **Establishing Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of this study was enhanced in several ways. (1) Engagement in the study was relatively prolonged as I collected and analyzed data over the course of three months. I conducted a series of 12 observations, 1 questionnaire for each of the three participants, and 2 in-depth interviews for each of the three participants (Merriam, 1998). (2) I triangulated my data by drawing on multiple sources including observations, interviews, questionnaires, and documents (Merriam, 1998). (3) I analyzed my data during the data collection period. As my data began to develop into categories with the theme of teacher-student trust, I searched for negative cases. (4) During my on-going analysis of the data, I engaged in memo writing in order to relate categories and develop properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and to make my analysis "progressively stronger, clearer, and more theoretical" (Charmaz, 2003). (5) I utilized member checks, asking the participants if my tentative interpretations of the data were reasonable. (6) I engaged a critical friend to provide a check to my interpretations of the data and to engage with me in discussions concerning my findings, and to suggest alternative interpretations of my data.

## **Considerations in Establishing Trustworthiness**

### **Small Number of Participants**

The fact that this study was limited to three middle school teachers in one suburban middle school is a factor when considering the internal validity of the findings. In addition to the small number of participants, each of the three teachers taught a different subject (Computer, English, and Latin) and each class presented with different circumstances. The English teacher had taught the same group of students during the prior academic year. Both the Computer and Latin teachers were teaching students who had never previously taken either a Computer or a Latin course. Since the Computer and Latin teachers were teaching students new to their subjects, they may have tended to focus more on skill acquisition than the English teacher.

Limiting this research to three participants in one middle school also provided me with an opportunity to study in depth the participants' experiences and expressions of trust to a degree that would not have been possible with a larger set of participants. With a small set of participants I was able to describe a more complex and detailed picture of the classroom environments and was able to identify and explore inter-related attributes of trust in more depth. The richness of the data may allow for other researchers "to come up with either the same or a very similar theoretical explanation about the phenomenon under investigation" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.267).

### **Gender, Racial and Cultural Differences**

While the participants' students were racially diverse and representative of the school as a whole, the three participants were white, middle class, college educated men. It is possible that the race of the teacher and the socioeconomic status and racial

composition of the students in each class may have affected the teachers' perceptions of the students to some degree (Yoshimitsu & Shouse, 2008). However, during my interviews with the participants, none of the participants ever mentioned gender, racial, or cultural differences as possible factors impacting teacher-student trust. Rather, the participants expressed sincere desires for all of their students to engage with them in a trusting relationship that would result in the students' academic and personal success. However, the impact of gender, racial, and cultural differences may have a subtle and not always consciously known effect on teacher-student relationships. To the extent that the impact that gender, racial and cultural differences may have had on the findings of this study are not explored, the usefulness of the data was limited.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Introduction**

Attributes of trust including competence, support, honesty, openness, vulnerability, and benevolence of motivation were valued by the participants in this study. Each participant valued particular attributes of trust more than others and made efforts to increase those attributes in his students. The participants made pedagogical and behavior management choices which they hoped would increase the degree to which students demonstrated specific attributes of trust. In addition, findings suggest that two of the participants tried to increase some attributes of trust in their students in order to increase the students' academic competence.

This chapter will provide a more complete description of these findings. Each participant, his students and his classroom environment will be described. How each of the three participants experienced and expressed trust in relation to their students will be explored. The key attributes of trust which each teacher valued will be described. The ways in which each teacher tried to increase his key attributes of trust will be explored. Findings regarding the interaction among the participants' attributes of trust will be explained.

Findings related to teacher-student trust will be represented for each of the participants. Each main section will begin with a brief description of the participant and his classroom. For each participant the findings will include: (a) a description of the teacher, his students, and the classroom environment, (b) the key attributes of trust, and (c) the influence of the key attributes of trust on pedagogical and behavior management

choices. Findings, including the differences and similarities among the experiences of trust of the three teacher participants, will be summarized at the end of the results section

### **Mr. Wright and his 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Computer Skills Class**

#### **Mr. Wright**

Mr. Wright is a veteran teacher of 18 years. He taught in the local school system for 7 years from 1973 to 1980. Then, after a long hiatus, he returned to teaching in 1998. Currently, he teaches a 7<sup>th</sup> grade course in computer skills, the only computer class in the entire local K to 12 school system. Mr. Wright has a B.S. in Mathematics and is certified to teach math and science, and recently earned his certification in instructional technology.

#### **Description of Students**

The class was composed of 17 seventh graders, 10 girls and 7 boys who are racially and ethnically representative of the school as a whole. At the start of this study, Mr. Wright had been with this particular class for approximately one month, since the start of the second trimester which began in November of 2008.

#### **Classroom Environment**

When Mr. Wright first started the computer class, there were two rows of desks with twelve computer desks in each row. He found that that arrangement didn't work. He decided that he wanted to have students paired up, so he put eight of the computers into the computer room next door. Since the school was just about to wire the network, Mr. Wright requested that the school drop poles into the center of the room so that the computers could be wired in clusters in the center of the room as well as against the wall (Interview, 3-10-09).



The classroom is now set up with computers placed on desks that are arranged in clusters. Along two walls, pairs of desks are placed with computers back to back. In the center of the room four clusters of computers on desks are arranged around two poles through which the computers are wired. The teacher's desk is placed along the far wall with a computer that the teacher can use to project the monitor onto a large white screen located against the wall. This screen allows all the students to see the teacher's monitor whenever he wants to conduct a group lesson. The decision to cluster students' desks and to have students work in pairs allowed students to problem-solve together and limited the number of questions Mr. Wright would have to deal with during class (Interview, 3-10-09).

In a typical class period, Mr. Wright provided packets (about 15 pages stapled together that explain a themed activity) gave directions, both written and graphic, and provided a space or chart where the students would answer given questions or record their data. Mr. Wright conceived of and wrote all of the packets that his students use. A packet could take the students days or even weeks to complete. One example of a packet was titled "Green Meadows Mowing Service." This packet described a scenario in which four teenagers, 2 boys and 2 girls, with four pickup trucks and four mowers go into the lawn mowing business. Mr. Wright's students were to pretend to be the teenager whose job it was to use Access computer software in order to pay all the bills, print customer invoices, and pay all of the teenagers. In order to engage the students' interest, the packet told a background story with cartoon illustrations and provided examples of what each computer screen would look like as the students proceeded with the task.

Mr. Wright's class was organized around the use of the packets (Interview, 1-20-09). At the start of each new lesson, Mr. Wright would gather the students around a large table in the classroom, hand out and explain the new packet, and answer students' questions. He would then demonstrate how to begin the packet by having one student sit at his computer and follow his directions while all the other students watched the computer monitor that was projected onto a large white screen at the front of the room (Field notes, 1-20-09; 2-23-09). Once the demonstration was completed, the students would be sent to their computers to sit alone, or more commonly, in pairs. The students would then begin the assignment, following the instructions in the packet. Mr. Wright would walk around the classroom, responding to students' requests for help. He encouraged students to work together, and to help each other complete the packets. When all the students had completed the packets, Mr. Wright would use a list of rubrics in order to grade the students. He would then give the rubrics back to the students and allow students who wanted a higher grade to make corrections to their work until they achieved a perfect score or a score high enough to please them (Field notes, 1-13-09).

Mr. Wright especially valued the attribute of competence in his students, especially in the form of persistence, focus, and independence. He also valued the attribute of supportiveness in his students as well as honesty and openness. Mr. Wright worked to increase these attributes of trust in his students through the various pedagogical and behavioral choices he made.

## **Attributes of Trust: Mr. Wright**

### **Competence**

At the start of this study, Mr. Wright had been with this particular class for about one month, since the start of the second trimester which began in November, 2008. He described his students as “a wonderful group, a heterogeneous group with skills all over the place, with kids who are very comfortable... competent and can read the packet and get it...and other kids who don’t have the wherewithal to do the packet...and need a lot of support” (Interview, 1-20-09). Mr. Wright’s statement suggests that he believes that students who can read and follow the directions in the packets which he provides are competent. Some students are able to understand and follow the directions in the packet, but other students need help to complete the task (Interview, 1-20-09).

Mr. Wright accepted that students may not have the skills to perform at a high level in the classroom. He believed that it was his job to teach students at the level they were at when they entered his class and to work at improving their skills.

He stated,

“You have to be able to deal with the kids in here because this is a public school. These are the kids in our town and it’s our job to educate them. My purpose here is to take them all in and move forward so that at the end of the line they know more than when they came in here” (Interview, 3-10-09).

Mr. Wright believed that helping students to become increasingly competent, was a process that began with providing an appropriate physical environment, creating engaging lessons, and providing the structure that allows students to succeed. For Mr. Wright, one of the most important aspects of competence is being able to work

independently and with others in order to solve problems and accomplish tasks.

Students in Mr. Wright's class were expected and encouraged to solve problems and find solutions alone and in cooperation with others (Interview, 3-10-09).

## **Independence**

### **Use of Packets to Increase Independence**

Mr. Wright worked hard at constructing packets for each of the different projects that make up the curriculum of his course. He tried to make them clear and comprehensive so that there was enough instruction and so that students could read and follow the packets with a degree of independence.

The packets together with the grading system provided a level of structure that Mr. Wright believed would increase the students' level of competence.

“I have to provide them a structure that will allow them to be successful, all of them, so the packets that we use are a big part of that. The packets are a big deal. If I make them readable then the kids can be pretty independent. The grading system comes next. What am I working towards? What is the value of the project I'm doing right now? They understand that they're going to get points for completing it and that's very helpful to them. It gives them a structure” (Interview, 1-20-09).

Mr. Wright was also aware that while the packets provided structure for the students, they also had the potential to hide what the students did not know. He stated,

“I'm aware that there is enough instruction in those packets that the kids can complete the packet perfectly and still really not understand what the heck they're doing. So, I'm aware that I need to test for understanding. That's the more informal assessment that I do as I go around and help the kids. I see what their questions are, what gets them stuck. I see how well they read. I see whether or not they're reading for understanding and really getting the program... I get that feedback and I try to work with those kids to get them to the bigger picture” (Interview, 3-10-09).

Mr. Wright realized that while the packets could help to create the structure necessary to increase the students' level of independence and thereby contribute to increasing the students' competence, he could not rely on the packets alone. Students could feasibly follow the packets without having an understanding of what they were doing. Mr. Wright believed that competence was not demonstrated in just the written work students might be able to produce. For Mr. Wright, competence included the student's understanding of the process, and he realized that he needed to use his teaching skills to ensure students understood the material. To increase the students' independence and overall competence, Mr. Wright worked to use himself in the classroom in such a way that he could assist students while increasing their ability to work independently.

### **Use of Self to Increase Independence**

In order to encourage independence in his students, Mr. Wright made a point of not responding right away to every student request. Instead, he waited to see if the student or pair of students could figure the problem out on their own. During most observations, students raised their hands or called out to the teacher for help. Mr. Wright did not, however, run to help the student but waited to see if another student will give assistance or if the student with a question would figure it out on his or her own. "You still have a question? I was hoping you'd figure it out by now" (Field notes, 12-23-08). Very often, students did solve their own problems or were able to successfully ask another student for assistance. It was only when the students were not able to work either alone or together to figure out a problem that Mr. Wright intervened. Mr. Wright gave the students ample time to try to work out problems on their own. By waiting to see if students could solve problems without his assistance, Mr. Wright was sending a message

to students that independence was one of his expectations and that he trusted students to work at becoming increasingly independent and competent students (Field notes, 1-28-09; 2-3-09).

During one observation, students working on a video project were laughing uproariously and appeared to be very self-conscious and embarrassed by having to speak and appear on the video. Another student approached them and offered to help them by holding the camera. The boy stated, however, that he wanted to be sure to get credit for this project and was worried that if he didn't hold the camera, the teacher might not give him credit. The students argued this point and finally asked Mr. Wright to come over and settle the dispute. Mr. Wright, though, was busy helping another student and did not respond to their request for help. After several minutes of discussion, the boy took the camera and he and the girl stopped laughing long enough to finish the video. Seeing that the students seemed to have figured out the problem, Mr. Wright did not come over but moved on to help another student. Mr. Wright's behavior, not coming over to students who clearly had a problem working together and who had asked for his help, was an example of the degree to which he valued students' independence. Mr. Wright was willing to tolerate a certain amount of disruption and was willing to give a significant amount of time to students who were trying to work out problems for themselves (Field notes, 2-23-09).

### **Use of Seating Arrangements to Increase Independence**

Mr. Wright tried to create a classroom environment that would be conducive to the students being able to work and complete tasks as independently as possible. Because he

wanted students to be able to figure out problems on their own, Mr. Wright chose to create a seating arrangement that allowed students to work alone or in pairs.

Asked about the set up of the room, Mr. Wright stated,

“I set it up. I decided early on that I wanted to have kids paired up. So now I have a room that’s easy to walk around and gives the kids contact with kids in a limited way. The pairs reduce the number of questions I have to answer.... I pair them up most of the time with a set of instructions so that they can have a conversation. Two heads are better than one. It works out pretty well” (Interview, 3-10-09).

In addition to sitting the students in clusters, Mr. Wright was careful about where particular students were seated. Competent, well-behaved students were seated near the middle of the room. Mr. Wright made sure that in this class, a particularly competent girl sat in the middle of the room among a group of clusters so that she could help her classmates. He stated,

“You put that girl here and she influences all the kids around her.and what is she doing? She’s answering questions about this and that. And when she asks me questions, all the kids around her are listening to the answers. So I’m lucky to have her there” (Interview, 3-10-09).

Equally important to Mr. Wright was to seat students who were not supportive, but were distractible and distracting to others, on the edges of the classroom where their behaviors would have a minimal impact on other students and where they would have fewer distractions and they would have the best chance of doing well (Interview, 3-03-09).

During several observations, Mr. Wright spoke directly to students about his desire for them to be independent. Some students expressed trepidation about being independent. Mr. Wright told one boy that he was going to start working on the next task alone at the computer.

Mr. Wright stated, “We’re cutting the cord. You’re going to be independent.”

The student responded, “I hate being independent.”

Mr. Wright insisted, ‘Nah, being independent is the best’ (Field Notes, 1-6-09).

After the above exchange, Mr. Wright proceeded to move the boy to a free computer and helped him to begin working without a partner. Quickly, the boy was able to do the task alone once Mr. Wright had helped him to begin the task (Field notes, 1-6-09).

In other instances, a student would present Mr. Wright with more of a challenge. One of Mr. Wright’s students was a girl frequently spent the class period talking off-topic to those around her and walking over to other students to socialize. She always worked with a partner and when she was not socializing, tended to sit passively while her partner did all of the work. During one particular observation, she walked over to another student’s work area, eating a donut while she leaned over their computer. Meanwhile, back at her work area, her partner did all the work (Field notes, 1-28-09).

Mr. Wright intervened, insisting that she sit by herself at a computer and attempt the given task alone. The task was a SIMS project in which the students were to create a town and become the mayor who would create businesses and run the finances of the town. They would need to build roads, power plants, water and sewage systems, and maintain the town budget. Everything they did would have to be recorded in their packets (Field notes, 1-28-09).

Mr. Wright moved the girl to another computer saying, “I want you to do this because (the other student) is doing all the work and you’re not doing any of the work.” Mr. Wright then sat next to the girl at her own computer, and helped her to get started on



the task. When he left her alone at the computer, she announced to the students sitting near her, "I'm going to suck. I can't run my own city" (Field notes, 1-28-09). Soon the girl was once again walking around the room socializing. Seeing this, Mr. Wright redirected her back to her seat and stayed with her to refocus her back on task. As soon as he left her the second time, the girl sulked, staring at the computer screen but doing nothing. Finally she asked other students to help her. Another girl walked over and helped her for a minute, showing her where to find the data and writing the data down for her. Left alone again, the girl asked a boy to help her. The boy walked over and helped her figure out what to do next. (Field notes, 1-28-09).

Although Mr. Wright had moved the girl to sit alone at a computer, she did not start to work independently. When the other students helped her, she let them take of the task completely, even writing the data down in her packet for her. Mr. Wright intervened again, interrupting a boy who had responded to the girl's request for help, stating, "Thanks for helping out, but she doesn't need it anymore" (Field notes, 1-28-09).

Mr. Wright then sat next to the girl but turned his chair away from her. By sitting next to her Mr. Wright was able to prevent her from asking for help from the other students while he remained readily available to answer her questions but letting her work on her own (Field notes, 1-28-09).

After several class periods in which Mr. Wright insisted that the girl work independently, she began to realize that she could do the work on her own. However, she still tried to avoid the situation. Frequently, she would ask to leave the class to get a drink of water, insisting that she was dehydrated. Mr. Wright would not let her leave the class. Instead he would sit with her and redirect her back on task. Later, during the same

observation, the girl was starting to work independently. She was focused on the task, stopping only to write in her data. When she did ask another student for help, she would listen to their comments and once she understood them, would continue doing her own work. When Mr. Wright returned to her area to check her work, he told her, “Guess what? That’s very good!” Mr. Wright used his seating arrangement to help increase his students’ independence. Mr. Wright’s trust in his students was demonstrated in his willingness to seat students where they could work best and then to demonstrate his trust that the students could do the work and do it independently (Field notes, 2-3-09).

### **Persistence**

Mr. Wright stated that to do well in his computer class, a student should be able to be persistent and to tolerate frustration when doing tasks. He stated that students needed patience and to “...understand when it’s time to get help, understand that you can get frustrated but you can have the perseverance to deal with that emotional feeling while you’re waiting for someone to help you out” (Interview, 3-10-09).

### **Checking-In to Increase Persistence**

Mr. Wright believed that most students who misbehaved in his class were acting out because they were having difficulty with the present task, stating, “Then once they get stuck ... then the child reverts to whatever their coping skills (are)” (Interview, 3-10-09).

In response to his students’ off-task behaviors, Mr. Wright frequently checked in with students who had weak coping skills. Checking-up consisted of Mr. Wright walking over to the students’ work areas and asking them to show their work both on the computer monitor and in their packet. He would then offer any help or guidance they

might need. Mr. Wright believed that only the most needy, least competent, and least independent students needed frequent teacher check-ins. He believed that more competent students did not need frequent teacher check-ins (Interview, 3-10-09).

Students who had a difficult time dealing with the frustration inherent in waiting for someone to help them, behaved in one of several possible ways. The students would start to socialize, joke, and act out. Other students, who did not seem to mind their inability to do the task, would just sit quietly (Field notes, 2-23-09; 1-13-09; 1-28-09). Mr. Wright found that it was relatively easy to identify and help the louder, acting out students. But, the quiet students were more difficult to identify (Interview, 3-10-09).

Mr. Wright described one of his quiet students as "...a very serene individual. He'll say, 'That's fine that I'm not getting it done. I don't understand...that's okay, that's alright.' So I can't pick it up. There's nothing visual" (Interview, 3-10-09). When the student handed in packets that were not complete, Mr. Wright discovered that the student needed more attention. Consequently, Mr. Wright began to check in on him frequently.

Mr. Wright believed that students who were persistent were students who were able to handle feelings of frustration and remain focused on the problem at hand. He referred to one student whom he had purposely sat in the middle of the room whom he believed to have remarkable persistence.

Mr. Wright described the student as:

"... a girl who has the coping skills of a mature 25 year old woman. She could get hired by any law firm as an office worker right now, she's so competent. You give her instructions and she says, 'Thank you.' If you answer her little, quick questions, she'll do it" (Interview, 3-10-09).

Mr. Wright believed that he could trust her to handle the stress of sitting around clusters of students. She was able to handle the other students talking nearby and to handle the frustration of being interrupted frequently when other students asked her for help. Since Mr. Wright believed that off-task students were students who were unable to handle frustration, his response to them was to offer check-ins in order to assist them in remaining persistent in completing tasks.

### **Focus**

#### **Use of Engaging Lessons to Increase Focus**

Mr. Wright believed that it was very important to present students with lessons that were as engaging as possible. He created lessons that he felt the students would be interested in and made the packets as appealing as possible. Lessons that Mr. Wright felt would engage his students included creating a website all about themselves, creating a SIMS city, creating a poster for a famous character of their choice, and creating a data base for a lawn mowing service. His goal was to make his lessons both engaging and challenging to the students. With an engaging context in place, Mr. Wright believed that “you can get them learning” (Interview, 1-20-09).

The SIMS task appeared to be one of the most engrossing and fun for the students. The SIMS task required the students to create their own city, create all the necessary utilities, and try to induce SIMS citizens to move in. During observations in which the students worked on the SIMS tasks (Field notes, 1-20, 1-28, 2-3, and 2-4), students tended to be more focused and on-task than during other observations. Even when the teacher needed to leave the room for a brief time, students continued to work quietly on the SIMS task (Field notes, 2-3-09).

Mr. Wright believed that his students get off-task when they do not find the task engaging or when they are stuck on a task. While he believes that he is fortunate to be able to work with computers which are inherently engaging, at times students have trouble engaging with the tasks they must accomplish. He finds that often students are not engaged with the material because they are stuck and do not know how to proceed with the task.

"I verbally note that they are not on task. I'll say, 'Stop looking in the hallway. Come back in here and do your work.' I say that all the time. When I find myself saying that frequently, I stop. I don't like that kind of conversation coming from me. I want to be having different kinds of conversations with kids. So when I hear myself saying that, I step back and say, 'All right, I need to alter this situation a different way...because telling people stuff doesn't really work. You've got to find another way to get them to change their behavior and that's when I usually go and pull up a chair beside them" (Interview, 3-10-09).

Mr. Wright finds that by sitting with an off-task or misbehaving student, he is better able to assess the problem which may be causing the student's behavior. He stated, "In the past I've done my share of yelling at kids and I've been wrong a fair amount of the time, misjudging the situation.... I've learned that I've got to find out what's going on first." Because Mr. Wright trusted that his students did want to learn and he believed that lessons that were not engaging could cause problems for his students, he tried to use engaging lessons. Mr. Wright found that the use of engaging lessons helped most of the students to focus on their work and to increase their competence (Interview, 3-10-09).

### **Use of Computers to Increase Focus**

Mr. Wright believed that computers were intrinsically engaging for his students. For Mr. Wright, computers were engaging for students because they are innately entertaining and could be a window to the world. Mr. Wright believed that, "If you give

kids context, they will perform....because you're giving them a reason and that's a fundamental way of showing them respect....I am lucky to have computers. I can bring in the whole world now" (Interview, 3-10-09).

## **Supportiveness**

### **Working In Pairs to Increase Supportiveness**

Mr. Wright relied on the supportiveness of his students in order for the class to function. Because he could not be constantly available to all of his students as they worked on projects, he needed all the students to be willing to offer help to their fellows whenever they could. While paired groups could help each other most immediately, often the paired students needed assistance. They needed to be able to call upon other students for help (Interview, 3-10-09).

Mr. Wright also believed that students working in pairs, who were willing and able to help fellow students who needed assistance, were an essential element of the classroom culture. Most of the students worked in pairs, sharing the decision-making and sharing the task of writing down their progress. In addition, students' supportiveness allowed all students to work at their highest level of ability and promoted the students' independence (Interview, 3-10-09).

Mr. Wright was aware that under the guise of supportiveness, some paired students might rely too heavily on the other student in their pair, letting them do all the work. Mr. Wright told me, "I need to do a couple of solo projects every trimester so I'm not getting kids who are letting the other kid do all the work. I have to really watch out for that; and you've seen me split them up when I've seen that" (Interview, 3-10-09).

Mr. Wright trusted his students to work productively in pairs and to share problem-solving and work tasks fairly and cooperatively. Mr. Wright's trust in his students' ability to be supportive was so strong that he planned his classroom activities around his students' ability to work together (Interview, 3-10-09).

### **Sitting In Clusters to Increase Supportiveness**

In order to increase students' supportiveness, Mr. Wright sat most of the students in pairs and placed their computer desks in clusters. The seating arrangement allowed students more easily to help each other accomplish tasks. The clusters of desks also allowed Mr. Wright to have several students listen in when he helped one student with a problem. All the students listening in to Mr. Wright's explanations would benefit and he would only have to explain how to accomplish a task once instead of several times (Interview, 3-10-09).

### **Honesty**

Due to the set-up of his classroom, if Mr. Wright sat at his desk or walked around the room, he could only see 1 or 2 of the students' computer screens at the same time. He could not see what most of the students were doing on their computers. During all of the observations, Mr. Wright moved around the room working with one or two students at a time, leaning over or sitting at the computers. Occasionally, Mr. Wright would look up to scan the room and to speak to any students who appeared to be off-task. However, since he could not see the computer screens, he would only speak to students who demonstrated clearly off-task behaviors which most commonly included loud talking or raucous laughter (Field notes, 12-16-08; 2-23-09; 1-06-09; 1-13-09).

Mr. Wright depended on his students' ability and willingness to do the work necessary to fill out their own packets, rather than just copy from their partners. He also depended on the students to refrain from playing on the computers, going to off-task sites, or doing personal emailing during class. Students would have to sneak such off-task computer activities while pretending to be working on the given assignment. In this way, students' behavior would be dishonest. While most students did their own work and did not sneak forbidden activities or lie to get out of class and then wander the halls, the few who did, did so frequently (Field notes, 12-16-08; 12-23-08; 1-06-09; 1-20-09). While Mr. Wright was aware that some of his students were sometimes dishonest, on the whole, he did trust that his students were honest, both in terms of telling him the truth and in terms of following the rules and doing their own work (Interview, 3-10, 09).

On the first day of my observations, Mr. Wright told me that the day before he had been absent. The substitute teacher had left him a note saying that three boys had been sending personal emails during class. Since this is not allowed, Mr. Wright decided that he needed to find out what the boys thought about the incident. He told me that he was not sure how honest these boys were since he had not known them for long (Field notes, 12-16-09).

Mr. Wright told me, "I'm going to ask the boys about their behavior with the sub. I don't know these boys yet and I want to see their reactions." Mr. Wright walked out into the hallway with the boys and confronted them with the sub's note. When they returned to the classroom, I noticed that the first two boys to return looked miserable but the third boy to return was smiling and appeared completely undisturbed. A few minutes later, Mr. Wright stepped out of the classroom to confer with another teacher and the



students used this opportunity to discuss what had transpired out in the hall with the three boys. Asked by several students what had happened out in the hall, one of the boys stated that they were now not allowed to email for two weeks. The boy said, however, that he was undisturbed because he'll just use someone else's email (Field notes, 12-16-09).

During all of my observations, five students who were seated at the outer edges of the classroom regularly engaged in a variety of off-task, disallowed behaviors on their computers. These behaviors include using the computer to send personal emails, to google off-task sites, and to play computer games. While the off-task students sat quietly, they could appear to be focused on a task, presumably the task that was assigned. They were actually engaged, however, in studying computer sites that: showed a pictorial history of Michael Jackson's noses (Field notes, 1-26-09), demonstrated various ways to create graffiti (Field notes, 2-10-09), and emailing (Field notes, 1-28-09). The students were always careful to keep a tab on their monitor with appropriate work minimized so that when the teacher approached they could hit the tab and bring up an appropriate screen. Several times, they raced to bring up the on-task screen before the teacher reached them (Field notes, 2-10-09).

During one observation, a group of four students were huddled around a computer looking at an off-task site when the teacher began to walk towards them quickly. One student left the group to waylay the teacher to buy time for his fellow students to close down the inappropriate site and bring up the correct task on the monitor (Field notes, 3-3-09). During all of my observations, no students were ever caught in these activities.

Regarding the students who are most frequently off-task, Mr. Wright was hopeful.

He stated,

“My thinking is, ‘I have them.’ I have them hooked. They’re not alienated towards me personally. I’ve managed to keep them engaged with me as a person and they have started to engage with the assignments I have given them. If I had more time with them I would be able to draw them further in and show them that they have some skills”  
(Interview, 3-10-09).

Mr. Wright described one student who was frequently off-task and regularly sneaking drink and food into class. Mr. Wright had discussed this student with some of his other teachers in an attempt to understand the boy better. Mr. Wright discovered that the student had difficulty managing his frustrations and would make up stories so that he could leave the classroom. Mr. Wright stated,

“...other teachers tell me things about him: that he has habits that get him into trouble. He quickly loses interest in your standard assignment, does not tolerate information verbally given from the teacher to the whole group, doesn’t do well there.... He’s going to be quickly saying, ‘Can I go get a drink? I need to go to the bathroom,’ and then (will) go out and cut through the library and then see a friend... So that’s his story” (Interview, 3-10-09).

However, Mr. Wright believed that if this student could be engaged he could focus on tasks, be supportive, and would not need to be dishonest. Mr. Wright remained positive about the student stating:

“He’s also shown me that when you set it up so you get him engaged, he will become a resource for you because I see him jumping to run down over there (other corner of the room) to help a boy who sometimes doesn’t get it. He goes down and tries to help him. And I know that things are going well when he does that” (Interview, 3-10-09).

Mr. Wright trusted most of his students to be honest with him most of the time.

Mr. Wright believed that dishonesty in students was due to the fact that the students were not engaged and not able to handle frustration well. He believed that over time, even his more difficult students would increase in honesty (Interview, 3-10-09).

### **Openness**

Mr. Wright believed that some of his students were open with him while others were not. For the students who did express their thoughts and feelings Mr. Wright believed that he had to look at their body language in order to assess how they were feeling and whether or not they were becoming frustrated (Interview, 1-20-09).

Mr. Wright believed that one of the reasons that some of his students were not open with him was because of his physical presentation. Asked if he wanted students to be more open with him he stated,

"Yes, and I am not successful with that...some of the times because I'm a big, hairy, older man. And some of the kids don't ever open up. Some kids are naturally shy. Some kids are intimidated by me.... So I have to find ways of taking me out of that. When I come into this room, I want them to feel like it's their room, that they can feel comfortable here" (Interview, 3-10-09).

Mr. Wright believed that his physical presentation was at least partly responsible for the students' difficulties in being able to form a classroom community at first. In the beginning of the trimester, Mr. Wright had a great deal of difficulty holding class meetings. He told me that the students were "very, very edgy" and not able to sit together around the big table at the side of the room. They would argue and challenge each other and were not able to listen to the teacher's instructions. As a result, Mr. Wright stopped having class meetings for a while and focused on getting the students to "get to know me and get relaxed with me" (Interview, 1-20-09). Since Mr. Wright was

concerned that his physical presentation might intimidate students and cause them to be less open with him, he strove to present himself in a non-threatening manner and to check in with students who were quiet but needy.

### **Use of a Calm, Soft-Spoken Manner to Increase Openness**

In an effort to increase students' ability to be open, Mr. Wright believed that he should avoid scolding students for misbehavior in the classroom. As a result of his belief, Mr. Wright maintained a calm, soft-spoken manner during all the observations I made.

"So one thing I've learned from these kids is if I'm yelling all the time, nobody likes it. And these kids will stick together. ...I need to find a respectful way, respectful in the eyes of all the kids to deal with it, respectful because they all have to listen to it. They all have to listen to the teacher yelling at kids. They don't want to hear it" (Interview, 3-10-09).

### **Checking In to Increase Supportiveness**

Mr. Wright believed that a lack of openness could cause problems in identifying students who needed extra assistance with tasks. Students who openly demonstrated off-task behavior by talking, laughing, or walking around the room were easy for Mr. Wright to identify as needing help. But students who sat quietly pretending to be working at the computer posed a difficulty. Mr. Wright referred to one boy who "Really needs me to be there frequently but doesn't give out any clues." Mr. Wright reports that he learned to check in with such students frequently. "I know I need to be there, need to be on site, checking in" (Interview, 3-10-09).

Mr. Wright valued the attributes of competence, especially in terms of independence, persistence, and focus, as well as supportiveness, honesty, and openness in

his students. He worked to increase and reinforce each of these attributes through a variety of pedagogical and behavioral choices.

### **Mr. Williams and his 8<sup>th</sup> Grade English class**

#### **Mr. Williams**

Mr. Williams was a 14 year veteran teacher. He was in his 8<sup>th</sup> year at Middle School during the time period of this study. He earned an M.A. in Education with a focus in critical and creative thinking. He was certified in English and certified as a Generalist.

Mr. Williams stated that he had been active in creating and developing units for the English department. He reported that while the English Department required the faculty to teach certain units, they were given some flexibility regarding how they would teach them. Mr. Williams stated that each teacher was allowed one discretionary unit a year.

“I’ve had a lot of say in developing the units so I’m pretty happy with them all”

(Interview, 3-12-09).

#### **Description of Students**

There were 19 students, 8 girls and 11 boys, in Mr. Williams 8<sup>th</sup> grade English class. The students were racially and ethnically representative of the school as a whole. Four students were on IEPs.

Since English teachers at his school leap with their 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, Mr. Williams had taught the same group of students English the previous year, when they were in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. He was able, therefore, to reflect on their behaviors and skills over the course of two years. Mr. Williams found that students in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade are much more capable of abstract thought but, because of the influence of hormones, have more off-task behaviors.

Mr. Williams stated,

“In 7<sup>th</sup> grade there were far fewer behavioral issues. The kids were much more focused and whatnot. But, their capacity for abstract reasoning and everything else is markedly different....In the 7<sup>th</sup> grade for most kids, the hormones haven't really kicked in yet so there's less behavioral stuff but there's also less that they are capable of doing. So the beginning of 8<sup>th</sup> grade you start seeing more of the thinking and capacity to infer and stuff like that so the conversation becomes much more interesting. But then the behaviors start kicking in because their hormones are really going So there's the posturing stuff. There's the 'let me try on this behavior of being the cool kids and see how it works.' You start seeing that.” (Interview, 1-14-09).

### **Classroom Environment**

The students' desks were arranged in a large semi-circle with a group of 6 desks clustered in the middle of the circle. Mr. Williams frequently stood at the opening of the semi-circle in order to see all the students at once and in order to have easy access to the blackboard.

Asked why Mr. Williams used this seating formation, he explained:

“I did that with *To Kill a Mockingbird* because we were doing dramatic reading. So the kids who were inside (the circle) were the readers and the kids on the outside were following along and then I sort of left it like that.... In the past, I've had rows and a circle, groups of four. Actually what I've done most often is groups of 2” (Interview, 1-14-09).

The walls are adorned with photographs of famous authors and with pictures which illustrated various literary terms drawn by students. On a typical day a few students would trickle in before the bell sounded and walk to the windows to use the wide ledge to pile their backpacks. Several students would enter the class when the bell rang and several more would enter after the bell. Mr. Williams would tell the students to take their seats. While some students would comply, many more of the students would remain

standing by the windows, talking, rummaging in their backpacks, and laughing. Mr. Williams would tell the students to sit down several more times before the remaining students would slowly take their seats.

Once the class had started, Mr. Williams would typically stand in front of the class near the blackboard and introduce the lesson of the day. He would either tell the students that they would be working on a task from the previous day or he would introduce a new lesson. While some of the students appeared to listen with some interest to the instructions, most of the students appeared to be more engaged in trying to communicate with their fellow students by whispering, making faces, or gesturing. Typically, several students appeared to be disinterested in either the instructions or their classmates and sat with their heads down.

Mr. Williams valued competence, openness, vulnerability, and benevolence of motivation. He worked to increase these attributes of trust through classroom activities and verbal encouragement.

### **Attributes of Trust: Mr. Williams**

#### **Competence**

Mr. Williams acknowledged that his students were a combination of students who tried to do well and students who would not do assigned work. He described his students as being very capable but not always willing to put in the effort required to do well. He stated, “I think they’re all very capable.... Even the kids that struggle...work really hard to do well. Then there are some kids in the class that are highly capable that just won’t do their work” (Interview, 1-14-09).

Mr. Williams’ statement that some students “won’t” do their assigned work

suggests that he believes that even though the students are capable of doing their work they are refusing to do the assignments he gives them. Mr. Williams, therefore, trusts his students' ability to do the work but does not trust them to comply.

During most of my classroom observations, the students in Mr. Williams' class tended to demonstrate a lot of off-task behaviors. After Mr. Williams had given the students either writing assignments or small group assignments, I frequently observed a third to half of the students talking and joking among themselves and generally appearing to be completely off-task for long periods of time. In addition to the louder off-task students, a small number of students were regularly sitting quietly but staring into space or doodling. Students who were on-task appeared to be reading, writing, or engaging in group discussions appropriately (Field notes, 2-04-09; 2-05-09; 2-09-09).

While Mr. Williams stated that he believed some of his students were able to do their work competently, he expressed concern about the students who tended to be off-task and did not follow through on assignments. He frequently tried to engage all of his students with activities he believed would interest them and frequently reminded them to stop their off-task behaviors and try to complete their assigned tasks (Field notes, 1-22-09; 2-05-09; 2-09-09; 2-12-09; 2-24-09; 2-26-09).

### **Independence**

Mr. Williams could not trust most of his students to work independently. Students appeared to have the most difficulty when working alone on a given task. When Mr. Williams set them a task which required them to work alone, most students tended to be off-task, whispering to each other, joking, teasing, and throwing paper or shooting a rubber band at each other (Field notes, 1-05-09; 1-14-09; 1-22-09; 1-22-09; 2-04-09; 2-



09-09). While some of the students acted out, several students responded to being told to work alone on a task by sitting very quietly and staring into space, doodling, or texting on their cell phones (Field notes, 2-22-09; 2-24-09; 2-25-09).

During one observation, the students were told to look into their reading books and find quotations that could illustrate major motifs in *To Kill A Mockingbird*. This task required the students to make inferences based on their reading and then to choose a major motif (for example, racial prejudice) and to write down the quotes they wanted to use. The students were to work alone. Most of the students appeared to have a great deal of difficulty working independently on the task. They were frequently engaged in off-task behaviors. When they were on task, it was for brief periods of time, up to 5 minutes at the most (Field notes, 1-14-09; 1-22-09).

During one class activity, Mr. Williams told the students to write definitions of the meaning of various literary terms. The students had difficulty working alone and the task was taking quite a long time to complete. Mr. Williams decided to change the task:

“I’m going to change how we’re doing this. Because it’s not your fault, but it’s sort of dragging on. So, I’m going to have you be in pairs and draw a picture of an example of the definition. Brainstorm together how you’re going to do both drawings. It’s not okay for one of you to say that I’m not a good drawer, so you have to do it. I’m going to assign you guys the words and give you the tools to draw” (Field notes, 2-05-09).

By changing to task from writing to drawing and by having the students work in pairs rather than singly, the students were much more able to accomplish the task. In this example, Mr. Williams made both a pedagogical change and a behavioral change which worked to increase the students’ ability to work more competently on the assignment (Field notes, 2-05-09).

## Persistence

Small groups or pairs seemed able to focus and persist in working on a task better than students working alone. The small groups or pairs persisted best if Mr. Williams joined the groups and guided the discussions (Field notes, 2-04-09; 2-05-09; 2-09-09). However, as soon as Mr. Williams walked away most of the students became unfocused and off-task (Field notes, 2-04-09; 2-05-09; 2-09-09).

In an attempt to encourage the students to persist in the tasks he had given them, Mr. Williams frequently reminded the students that they needed to complete assignments within a time limit. He also told the students that he wanted them to focus and challenge themselves to persist in tasks that they might perceive to be difficult. However, these statements and reminders did not appear to increase the students' abilities to persist in their work. (Field notes, 1-05-09; 1-14-09; 1-22-09; 1-22-09; 2-04-09; 2-09-09).

Mr. Williams did not trust many of his students to focus or persist in given tasks. He believed that persistence was a skill that students at this age generally don't have. He also believed that the students were not persistent because they didn't have a high tolerance for frustration. Asked the reason why he believed that some students had trouble persisting in tasks and focusing during class, Mr. Williams stated,

“I think some of it's developmental. The research shows that kids lack impulse control at this age - like in their brains it's just not there. So I think for some of these kids it's just that. And some of them just haven't learned to not call out, some of them just haven't learned those behaviors yet. Then there are a few kids that get frustrated, or don't know what's going on, and then act out” (Interview, 1-14-09).

Mr. Williams, in trying to explain why his students did not focus or persist in given tasks, maintained that early adolescence was a developmental stage which was

characterized by a lack of impulse control. In addition, he believed that his students had never learned basic classroom behaviors such as raising their hands to be called on.

Finally he believed that some of the students had not learned how to handle their own frustration.

In an attempt to explain why sometimes some of his students did persist and focus Mr. Williams wondered if that was because of something he was doing. Asked to describe his students' difficulty with focusing Mr. Williams stated,

“... there is more difficulty or inability to focus for a long period of time. But, I hesitate to say inability because that makes it sound like there's nothing I can do about it and that's not true because there are times in class when everybody's quiet and doing what they're supposed to do” (Interview, 1-14-09).

Asked what he believed he could do to help the students focus, Mr. Williams said,

“One thing that I think helps is when the expectations are very clear and I'm strict which doesn't come naturally to me. I'd much prefer to not be as strict. But when I'm really strict and I come down hard on the few kids who are talking out then everybody else is like, 'Okay, he's really serious and I have to shut up.' So that helps. And I think with this group in particular, when there's very clear, more structured activities, which again, I don't prefer to do (and other groups do well with more open-ended activities) but that group as a whole benefits from that” (Interview, 1-14-09).

In the statement above, Mr. Williams acknowledged that with more structure and with very clear expectations, his students appear to do better. His acknowledgement that his pedagogical and behavioral choices affect his students' abilities to focus on tasks suggests that Mr. Williams' trust in his students' ability to focus could increase if he were to make specific changes.

On the teacher questionnaire, Mr. Williams stated that the students were lacking in basic student skills. Asked to explain his questionnaire response, Mr. Williams stated that the skills that his students lacked included:

Mr. Williams stated,

“...raising your hand when you want to make a comment, using your assignment book, turning in work that you complete... things like that, just the basic things. Like they’ll finish the work but not turn it in. They don’t have the impulse control to raise their hands and wait to be called on...” (Interview, 3-12-09).

Asked why he believed that the students seemed unable to follow through and persist in class activities, Mr. Williams expressed his belief that in general, persistence is not a trait found in teenagers, stating, “I find that’s a skill that I want to teach kids that they don’t necessarily have at this age” (Interview, 1-14-09). Other factors that he believed would affect students’ ability to persist in tasks included work that is too hard or “chaos in their home life” (Interview, 1-14-09). Mr. Williams also believed that “a poorly designed activity” (Interview, 1-14-09) could also impact the students’ ability to follow through on a task.

Mr. Williams explained that in an attempt to increase his students’ persistence, he does not change the activities for these students, but he does make certain adjustments to the delivery of the material. For example, he may take longer explaining the activity to the class and he might ask the entire class to work on the first task together before asking them to work individually (Interview, 1-14-09).

### **Checking In to Increase Persistence**

Trying to encourage greater persistence during class activities, Mr. Williams would frequently check in on small groups who were working on given assignments. If

he found that they were off-task or unable to do the task, Mr. Williams would join in with the group, directing them and giving them suggestions. Mr. Williams could trust his students to be able to persist during activities in which Mr. Williams joined in with the group (Field notes, 2-04-09; 2-05-09).

During check-ins, Mr. Williams would sometimes make announcements to remind the students about how much time was left in the class and that the work needed to be completed. Sometimes Mr. Williams would tell the students the number of minutes left in the class. Other times he would tell them how many days they had left to accomplish a task. For example, during one observation Mr. Williams announced, “Okay, people are still talking. Remember you only have 2 days to do this.” The students appeared to take no notice of his announcement and continued to be off-task. It appeared that the behavior management practice of reminding students to complete their work did not increase the students’ level of persistence and therefore did not help to increase Mr. Williams trust in his students’ ability to persist (Field notes, 1-05-09).

When students were consistently off-task, Mr. Williams tried to check in and refocus the entire class. At times, he tried to remind them that their grades might be affected if they did not focus and complete the given task. During one observation, Mr. Williams stated, “I’m grading whatever you have done next Friday. So after today, that’s it. So, I want you to start working now.” The students did not appear to increase their persistence in the task. The technique of reminding students that their grades might be lowered due to their lack of focus and persistence, did not appear to change the students’ behaviors (Field notes, 1-22).

At times, when check-ins did not work, Mr. Williams tried to get the students' attention and to refocus them by warning them that their class work, if unfinished by the end of the period, might be assigned as homework (Field notes, 2-12-09).

Mr. Williams stated, "I want you to stop and listen. Stop and listen does not mean start talking. Many of you decided that because this was not a pleasant task that you wouldn't do it. But this is not going to go away. It may become homework." (Field notes, 2-12-09). Mr. Williams' reminders, warnings, and statements about consequences did not appear to affect the students' behaviors in positive ways. Consequently, while Mr. Williams believed that some of the students were persistent in their work, his level of trust did not increase in most of the students' abilities to persist in tasks.

Since many students in his class were unresponsive during discussions or were off-task during activities, Mr. Williams perceived the classroom culture to be one of students not being fully engaged in classroom activities. He believed that one reason for this lack of enthusiasm and participation in class might have been that the students did not trust each other. He also thought that the students' lack of competence in their abilities and lack of self-confidence might have been part of the reason that the students did not participate in class more fully. Mr. Williams stated,

"I do the same discussion with the other class and there'll be tons of discussion. I think part of it is having to do with the level of trust in the room: That kids don't necessarily overtly make fun of each other but I'm not sure that they all trust each other....Then part of it's like this classroom culture. Each class has its own culture. In this class the culture is less one of participation and enthusiasm for what we're doing. And I take some responsibility for that. But it's also a more difficult group to develop that in the culture. So I think that might get in the way and other times I think it also is not having... the confidence to share or like the vocabulary to verbalize it."(Interview, 3-12-09).

Mr. Williams did suggest that he was aware that there may be a lack of trust in his classroom. He believed that the students may not trust each other. If they do not trust each other, they may be less likely to participate in class. In addition, he wonders if the students' lack of enthusiasm and participation may be due to a lack of trust in themselves. If, in fact, students do not trust themselves or each other, it could account for some of their lack of participation in lessons. Mr. Williams continued to struggle with what he could do to improve his students' level of focus and persistence.

### **Openness and Vulnerability**

During his second interview, Mr. Williams explained that one of the main reasons he teaches English is to encourage students to think about their lives and to make a difference in their lives. For Mr. Williams, the content of the subject matter, English literature, was a vehicle that he could use to have students explore their own lives.

“I teach English because the relationships are really important to me. But, the other really important thing in terms of why I teach is to have kids think about this kind of stuff in their lives, make a difference in their lives. With English I think you can get away with that because you can relate it to the literature because literature's about life. So that's why I'm teaching English mainly, to get them to think about their lives and how they run their lives” (Interview, 3-12-09).

Asking students to think about their lives and to explore, write, and discuss their lives in class, requires the students to have a high degree of openness and to risk a high level of vulnerability. Mr. Williams asked his students to engage in learning activities that required them to have a high level of vulnerability and openness with their fellow students. In order to engage in personal and sensitive topics, a high level of trust would be needed for students to participate in class (Field notes, 2-24-09; 2-26-09).

## **Lesson Regarding Self-Perception**

In one instance, Mr. Williams asked the students to fill out a survey that asked the students questions about how they perceive themselves. Mr. Williams began the lesson by asking the students to expand on a previous journal entry they had written that asked them to do some self-reflection (Field notes, 2-24-09).

Mr. Williams asked his students the question, “How do you know who you are and what were some of the ideas you came up with?” A couple of students responded, suggesting that the choices they make reflect on who they are. Mr. Williams tried to enlarge on the students’ comments and asked for more input from the class, but was met with silence. None of the other students seemed able to comment or add to the statements their two classmates had made (Field notes, 2-24-09).

Mr. Williams told his students, “I’m wondering what’s going on with all the silence?” When he did not get a response to his statement, Mr. Williams asked, “Do you agree that part of your identity is your relationships with people?” The students did not respond. Instead of responding to the question, some of the students began to joke around and tried to get other students to laugh while some students sat quietly staring into space (Field notes, 2-24-09).

Mr. Williams then told the class, “You’re going to fill out a survey about how you see yourself and others.” He explained that the students would answer questions about how they see themselves. After each student filled out a survey about him/herself, each student would fill out a survey about a fellow student randomly selected by Mr. Williams (Field notes, 2-24-09).



Concerned that students might become upset by personal comments another student might make about them, Mr. Williams told his students, “If you’re going to be upset if someone says something about you, cross that [question] out because I don’t want to get you upset” (Field notes, 2-24-09).

Mr. Williams advised his students, “Everybody doing this is taking some sort of a risk. So, make sure you’re not joking around when you’re doing this so no one gets their feelings hurt. So, please don’t be showing it to your friends or fooling around out of respect” (Field notes, 2-24-09).

When the class finished filling out the survey for themselves and for another classmate, Mr. Williams told them, “When I give them back to you I want you to read it over and if there’s something that seems unkind to you or upsets you, I want you to tell me about it because I don’t want anybody to go home feeling upset.”

None of the students approached him to complain about comments that the other student made about them. After all the surveys were completed and handed back to the students, Mr. Williams told his students that for homework they were to write a journal entry about the survey answers their fellow classmates made about them, which answered the question, “Does this change the way you see yourself?” During this lesson, the level of class participation was minimal. The level of student-student and teacher-student trust may well have affected the participation in the class activity (Field notes, 2-24-09).

### **Lesson Regarding Relationship with Parents**

Another activity that required the students to be open and vulnerable with the entire class was centered on the students filling out a survey in which they rated their perceptions about their relationship with their parents. During this activity, Mr. Williams

asked the students to pick one parent, saying, “Pick the one you’re having the most conflict with right now.” He then handed out a survey that required the students to answer questions about their relationship with their parents (Field notes, 2-26-09).

The survey asked students to respond to such statements as: “I am honest with my parents,” “My parents are honest with me,” “My parents know what’s best for me.” The survey had a Likert-like scale that ranged from 1 to 5 and indicated responses from strongly disagree to strongly agree. When the students had completed their survey, Mr. Williams wrote the words “strongly disagree” on one end of the chalk board and “strongly agree” on the other end of the chalk board. He then read some of the questions aloud and invited the students to stand in front of the chalkboard to indicate how they had answered that question. In this way, the students would see how their responses matched up with their fellow students. In this highly personal activity, a very high degree of vulnerability and openness was required (Field notes, 2-26-09).

Mr. Williams also told the class that they did not have to participate if they were uncomfortable in doing so. Two girls chose to remain seated while the rest of the class participated in disclosing several of their answers. The two girls who chose not to participate sat together and kept their heads down. They did not look up to see where the other students stood at the board. Since this survey involved the students’ home life and their personal relationships with their parents, there may be many reasons why given students might not have wanted to reveal their answers and why the level of vulnerability and openness required in the task might have exceeded the level students could handle (Field notes, 2-26-09).

Mr. Williams then engaged the class in a general discussion regarding their answers on the parent-child survey. He asked the students how they had answered various questions and asked why they answered as they had. Mr. Williams concluded the lesson by telling the students that their homework would be to answer a final question in their journals. The question was, “Are you willing to share this [survey] with your parents and if not, why?” Mr. Williams also encouraged the students to show their parents the survey they had filled out. In asking the students to talk to their parents about such a potentially intense survey Mr. Williams was asking the students to demonstrate a very high level of vulnerability.

Mr. Williams requested that the students explain why they would not show their parents the survey. Since there are many personal reasons why a student might not choose to share the survey with their parents, Mr. Williams was again asking the students to demonstrate a very high level of vulnerability and openness with him. Mr. Williams’ trust in his students’ ability to be open and vulnerable with him was very high (Field notes, 2-26-09).

Asked if he believed that his students were open with him about their academic needs and limitations, Mr. Williams stated that some of his students were open and forthcoming while others were not:

“Some kids raise their hands to ask a question and that’s good, especially for the ones that are needy. Others, I’ll know that they need help and don’t know what to do because they’re talking with their friend or asking to go to the bathroom. So, for some yes and for some no. I usually find if kids are upset with me, saying, ‘This class sucks,’ or that sort of thing, what they’re really saying is, ‘I’m frustrated, I don’t know how to do what you’re asking me to do’ or ‘I don’t think I can do what you’re asking me to do’ ”(Interview, 1-14-09).

It is interesting to note that while Mr. Williams trusted his students to be highly open and vulnerable with him regarding personal matters, he did not trust many of them to be open and vulnerable with him regarding academic issues.

### **Supportiveness**

Mr. Williams frequently asked his students to work in pairs or in small groups. Over the course of several classroom observations, he asked the students to work in small groups discussing the character traits and motivations of some of the characters in the novels they were reading. The students sat in groups of 4 to 5 students and used tape recorders to record their discussions. Later, Mr. Williams would listen to the recordings in order to know how the students were progressing in their understanding of the characters. During the small group activities, the students needed to listen and respond to each other (Field notes, 2-04-09; 2-09-09).

Asked if he believed that his students were supportive of each other, Mr. Williams said that he thought that in general they could be very supportive. They never made fun of each other or teased each other if a mistake was made. However, Mr. Williams also stated that sometimes the students would encourage each other to get off-task and to joke, chat, and generally fool around in class. By encouraging off-task behaviors in each other, Mr. Williams felt that the students were supporting each other in not working (Interview, 1-14-09).

### **Benevolence of Motivation**

Mr. Williams believed that, in general, people want to do well in school. Ultimately, he believed that while students want to do well in class, they make their own choices and may choose to do or not do their work. Still, he recognized that he had a

responsibility to create an environment that encouraged students to choose to work and succeed.

“I have a basic belief that everyone wants to do well. Everybody wants to succeed and is always making their own choices. I can create an atmosphere that makes it harder for them to do well, unintentionally obviously. So, when things aren't going well, I take more responsibility for that. I don't take all the responsibility for it. When kids are doing their work, I can create an environment for that but ultimately it's they who are choosing to do well.... I definitely believe that they want to do well” (Interview, 3-12-09).

In the above statement, Mr. Williams suggests that while he needs to create a positive learning environment, ultimately it is the students who choose to do well or not.

### **Internal Versus External Motivation**

Mr. Williams cared about why students wanted to do their work and succeed in his class. He wanted students to be motivated by the love of learning and not by external rewards. He stated that he wanted students to experience the classroom learning activities as intrinsically rewarding and wanted his students to want to do the work and succeed (Interview, 1-14-09).

Mr. Williams believed that grades were an external reward. He did not want students to value grades but rather to experience learning itself as an internal reward.

Mr. Williams did not want to give students external rewards. He believed that giving his students external rewards would not be respectful.

“I was telling them that grades in middle school are pointless. The only thing you use grades in middle school for are getting into vocational or private school and to determine if you're going to need remedial classes in high school. And I said that it doesn't mean that I think what we're doing is pointless. I think the grading is pointless, but I have to do it. And if that's a source of stress or conflict and kids identifying themselves as worthy or not because of what grade they get.... [then] I definitely don't like rewarding kids. You know, sometimes kids say, 'You ought to bring in candy,' and I say, 'I have more respect for you guys than that. I'm not going to throw you a piece of candy because you answer a question right.' So, I'm not about the external rewards at all” (Interview, 1-14-09).

### **Modeling Benevolence of Motivation**

Mr. Williams was careful to approach students who appear to be misbehaving with an open mind, assuming that the students had a positive motivation compelling them to act as they were. Rather than assuming he understood what was going on and accuse them of misbehaving, he would ask the students to explain their behaviors and motivation. Mr. Williams consciously demonstrated to the students that he did not assume the worst of them (Field notes, 1-22-09; 2-05-09). He treated the students in ways that demonstrated that he was giving them the benefit of the doubt. He was aware that if he were to assume that their motivations were bad, he would be risking losing their trust.

“One of the things I’ve discovered in teaching is if someone is doing something wrong or whatever, instead of going over to them – I used to go over to them and say, ‘You need to stop doing x,’ – and then often that would be initiating... an argument with the students, basically of defensiveness. Instead I’ve started just coming over and asking, ‘What’s going on here?’..... It sort of maintains my integrity in their eyes, that I’m not seeing something that didn’t happen or whatever or accusing them of something that they didn’t do. Cause then I’m losing their respect or trust” (Interview, 3-12-09).

An example of Mr. Williams’ modeling benevolence of motivation occurred during one classroom observation (Field Notes, 2-22-09). Mr. Williams was confronted by a student who spoke to him in a rude and confrontational manner. Mr. Williams had asked the student to move and to please start working. He had asked her to move because she was off-task, talking to the girl next to her, and refusing to do the writing assignment he had given to everyone in the class. The student refused to do the assignment, refused to move her seat, and told Mr. Williams that no one could make her do her work. Mr. Williams agreed that it was her choice to work or not. However, he did continue to ask

her to move her seat to a place where he could more easily help her. The student refused to move at first, challenging Mr. Williams to give her a good reason for moving.

Mr. Williams remained calm, soft-spoken, and non-confrontational as he asked her again to move her seat. The student finally moved to another seat. Mr. Williams waited several minutes and then quietly walked over to where the student was sitting and sat down in an empty seat next to her. He asked her to show him what she had written so far, and started to help her organize her work and figure out what steps she needed to take next. Within a few minutes, Mr. Williams had refocused the student and she was back on task. By responding calmly and pleasantly with this student, Mr. Williams had not only avoided escalating a tense and negative confrontation, but had demonstrated to the student his trust that she was ultimately well-intentioned, wanted to do well and only needed help and redirection (Field Notes, 2-22-09).

### **Trust as a decision**

Mr. Williams was direct with his students about the attitude he chose to have about them and their motivations. He told the students that there was a direct link between their classroom behaviors and his actions as a teacher.

“I tell them the first or second day of 7<sup>th</sup> grade that some teachers will be told to start out really strict and you get them in line and then you can loosen up. And I tell them I’m not going to do that. I’m going to trust you to be responsible and act like good students and then if you give me reason to not do that, then I’ll tighten down as I need to.... I don’t know that my trust in them has increased because I’ve come in trusting” (Interview, 3-12-09).

Mr. Williams believed that he was able to come into the class on the first day trusting his students because of his self-confidence. He believed that teachers who have a fear of losing control of their class suffer from a lack of self-confidence. He believed that

the fear of losing control could result in a teacher demonstrating behaviors that could be oppressive in the classroom. Mr. Williams' confidence came, in part, from his belief that he had many strategies which would enable him never to lose control of his class. As a result of his confidence, he felt that he could be open and trusting with his students (Interview, 3-12-09).

Mr. Williams stated, "I think the teacher has to have some level of confidence in himself, because that oppression comes from fear of losing control. I've been teaching long enough to know I'm not going to lose control of this class. I have all these strategies so I can come in with that sort of openness" (Interview, 3-12-09).

### **Mr. Villanova and his 7<sup>th</sup> grade Latin class**

#### **Mr. Villanova**

Mr. Villanova is a veteran teacher of 25 years, teaching middle school and high school Latin in the same school district. He has a M.A. in Latin and Classical Languages. Mr. Villanova was an energetic teacher who moved and spoke quickly, keeping the pace of the class lively. His manner in the class was upbeat, positive, encouraging, and very pleasant. He was remarkably consistent in his upbeat manner and enthusiasm for his subject while keeping up a brisk pace through several learning activities per class and insisting that all students keep focused throughout the class.

#### **Description of students**

There were 13 students in Mr. Villanova's 7<sup>th</sup> grade class, with one student on an IEP and two students on 504 plans. The students were racially and ethnically representative of the school as a whole. Mr. Villanova's students had never studied Latin before the start of the academic year. At the start of this study, the students had been



studying Latin for approximately three months. Mr. Villanova stated that while some people might think that Latin gets an elite group of students, that that is not the case. Mr. Villanova found that the students in this class had an academic skill range which included students who have fairly weak writing skills (Interview, 3-03-09).

Mr. Villanova stated that students who chose to take Latin were not better students or more motivated students than the rest of the student body. He also stated that he liked to have a range of ability represented in the students in his classroom. He believed that students with a range of ability made for a much more interesting classroom community. "...They have a spirit that often lifts the level of the class. And I like having that all mixed together. And that's the reality. That's the world they're going to live in" (Interview, 3-3-09).

### **Classroom Environment**

Eleven of the students sat at tables in rows facing the blackboard at the front of the room. One student sat at each of the two tables placed at the sides of the room, perpendicular to the other tables. Students were free to choose where they wanted to sit, but most students consistently chose the same seats. Examples of students' work filled two of the walls, and included cartoons of Ancient Roman life with Latin captions. Latin phrases were also on the walls as were pictures of Roman ruins. Several large stuffed toy penguins, the class mascots, sat on Mr. Villanova's desk. Mr. Villanova himself was always standing, walking, moving around the room as his students participated in the lessons.

On a typical day in Mr. Villanova's room, students would arrive just before or right when the bell rang. Students and teacher would greet each other enthusiastically

with “Ave!” Immediately, students would take their seats and get their books and notebooks out. Within seconds of the bell ringing, the students would be ready to start the class and Mr. Villanova would delve into the first lesson. Referring to each student by their chosen Latin name, Mr. Villanova would begin the day’s lesson, either a homework review or a new topic for the day. A variety of activities would reinforce the lesson and give the students a chance to practice and use the language by reading, writing, and speaking Latin throughout the period. The atmosphere in the class would be one of enthusiastic participation with the students’ high spirits channeled toward the learning of Latin.

Mr. Villanova highly valued the attribute of competence in his students, especially in the forms of focus and persistence. He also valued supportiveness, openness, vulnerability, and benevolence of motivation in his students. Mr. Villanova made various pedagogical and behavioral choices to attempt to increase the desired attributes of trust in his students.

### **Attributes of Trust: Mr. Villanova**

#### **Competence**

Mr. Villanova highly valued competence in his students (Interviews, 1-15-09; 3-03-09). He worked diligently to increase the students’ ability to focus during lessons and to persist in all learning activities. Since his students were novices in Latin they were not yet able to work completely independently. However, the students were sometimes able to translate short texts and answer questions about the text, and engage in projects with minimal to no help (Field notes, 12-23-09; 1-13-09; 1-20-09; 1-28-09; 2-10-09; 3-3-09).

Mr. Villanova stated, “Here our basic focus is to learn how to translate and

interpret and read basic Latin”(Interview, 3-03-09). One of Mr. Villanova’s main goals is to “make sure that every day is productive for all the students, that they are making progress every day toward the academic goals” (Interview, 3-03-09). Asked what his overall goals are for his students, Mr. Villanova stated that he wants students to learn the basics of Latin and to have a positive experience learning it: He stated,

“... and the nice thing about our middle school set-up is that we really have 2 years to cover a traditional high school Latin 1. So it allows us to do it with lots of practice, starting something, going off to something else, and coming back and doing it a little deeper, a little richer. So I know that sometimes people are going to be out to lunch, and sometimes people aren’t going to get things right away, but the goal is to have a positive experience so they stay with it long enough so that eventually they get down the basics and go on to other levels.... I think that’s a really important thing: to make that experience positive for them” (Interview, 1-15-09).

Mr. Villanova focused on helping his students become increasingly competent in Latin through practice, using a variety of activities including flashcards, cartooning, reading stories in Latin, writing translations, and creating grammar charts. He tries to make the students’ experience in his class positive and rewarding so that they will continue to study Latin and continue to grow and develop their competence in Latin (Field notes, 12-09-08; 12-16-08; 12-23-08; 1-13-09; 1-20-09; 1-28-09; 2-03-09; 2-10-09; 2-24-09; 3-03-09; 3-10-09).

### **Use of Praise to Increase Competence**

In order to encourage the students in their tentative attempts to work independently and in their abilities to focus and persist, Mr. Villanova consistently praised the students for any attempts they made to speak or translate Latin, telling the students that their contributions were “beautiful, totally good, fully good, or ultima !” He encouraged the students to ask questions and frequently stated, “That’s a really good

question!” (Field notes, 12-09-08; 1-20-09).

### **Use of Teacher-Led Instruction to Increase Competence**

While Mr. Villanova was a strong leader in the classroom, he believed that the students were not passive followers. He believed that his teaching style required the students to be engaged in activities that allowed them to speak and write in Latin, and to be active in asking questions and making comments whenever they chose (Interview, 1-15-09). The students appeared to be active during lessons and expressed a great deal of enthusiasm for learning Latin. Frequently, students vied for the opportunity to participate in class, to answer questions, or to read aloud (Field notes, 1-13-09; 1-20-09; 1-28-09; 2-03-09; 2-10-09; 2-24-09; 3-03-09; 3-10-09).

Asked to explain his teaching style, Mr. Villanova stated,

“A lot of the success for the focused pace is that a lot of it is teacher-led instruction. I think teacher-led gets a bad name. We learned it as “chalk and talk” because it can be a lecture format. You may notice that my class is teacher-led but it’s not me telling them something. It’s me directing them to be active learners... it’s not just me up there lecturing but it’s me making sure that the activity is purposely directed” (Interview, 3-03-09).

As a director of learning activities, Mr. Villanova demonstrated an energetic and enthusiastic manner, teaching “bell to bell” and constantly checking in with students to be sure they were focused and fully involved in every activity (Field notes, 2-03-09; 2-10-09; 2-24-09; 2-24-09; 3-03-09; 3-10-09).

Another reason that Mr. Villanova chose to have teacher-led instruction was because his students were in the early stages of learning Latin and could not yet speak it correctly. Mr. Villanova explained that one issue in any language class, including his, is the tension inherent in the teacher wanting the students “to be talking to each other” in the foreign language, but then having the novice language students making mistakes in

grammar and punctuation thereby “modeling it inappropriately for each other” (Interview, 1-15-09). Mr. Villanova tried to solve this problem by having students take turns reading and speaking Latin aloud to the whole class so that he could correct them as needed (Field notes, 2-03-09; 2-10-09; 2-24-09; 2-24-09; 3-03-09; 3-10-09).

Mr. Villanova’s trust in his students’ competence was demonstrated by his pedagogical and behavioral choices in the classroom. Within the structure of Mr. Villanova’s teacher-led instruction, he encouraged the students to ask questions and give their interpretations of the subject matter (Field notes, 1-28-09; 2-03-09; 2-10-09; 2-24-09; 3-03-09; 3-10-09). Mr. Villanova allowed the students to make jokes and play around as long as they quickly return to the topic at hand (Field notes, 2-10-09; 2-24-09; 2-24-09; 3-03-09; 3-10-09). He also gave individual students the responsibility of translating the Latin texts while their fellow classmates wrote down the English translation of what they said (Field notes, 1-13-09). Mr. Villanova usually gave the students the responsibility of choosing which student would be called on next to answer a question or read a passage (Field notes, 12-16-09; 12-23-09; 2-10-09).

### **Persistence**

Mr. Villanova believed that persistence was necessary for students to succeed in learning Latin. He believed that students had to practice Latin regularly and work at understanding the grammar and vocabulary.

“I recognize that their motivation is going to vary from day to day and waver from subject matter to subject matter. So, I guess what works is when they have the follow-through. My job is to set up what they need in class so they have a Follow-through to work outside of class on practicing their vocabulary” (Interview, 3-03-09).

Mr. Villanova felt that every student had to do their Latin homework if they were going to learn Latin and do well in class.

“I make a big thing in all my classes [that] there is no way to do badly in this class if you do the homework. I’ve never had a student fail Latin who did the homework. It’s impossible. You can’t do it. But some students, their lives are in such disarray, or I don’t know, but they can’t do the work outside of class” (Field notes, 3-03-09).

During one classroom observation, Mr. Villanova called on a student to read his translation of some Latin. The student was not prepared to answer because he did not have his homework completed. The homework had been to translate some Latin sentences. Since the student had done some but not all of his homework and did not have that sentence translated, he could not answer Mr. Villanova’s question. Mr. Villanova stated, “Fortunately, we have our knowledge and intelligence which we can apply to the sentence.” The student proceeded to correctly translate the sentence (Field notes, 2-10-09). When the student did not have the follow-through and persistence that Mr. Villanova wanted, he chose to encourage the student and remind him that he was competent and able to do the work (Field notes, 1-13-09; 2-10-09).

### **Focus**

Mr. Villanova required the students to maintain complete focus and to participate throughout the entire class period. To encourage the students’ on-task, focused behavior he offered his students a variety of ways to demonstrate what they knew. To increase the students’ interest and focus, Mr. Villanova would, during any one class period, lead activities including reading, speaking, and writing activities. He would also include the use of creative projects such as: writing a story about Roman characters in English (Field notes, 12-09-08), drawing pictures of Roman gods on note cards to be used later in a game

(Field notes, 12-23-08), and creating cartoons with a Latin text. Mr. Villanova trusted that his students would and could engage in these creative and challenging activities in a timely manner and with a high degree of competence (Field notes, 2-10-09).

In addition to the use of high interest activities, Mr. Villanova was sure to intervene before a slightly off-task behavior could become a problem. Mr. Villanova watched the students carefully for any sign of a lack of focus. In response to a lack of focus on the students' part, Mr. Villanova was quick to make a non-judgmental statement, in a pleasant tone of voice, which re-focused the students. His statements reflected his trust that his students could focus and simply needed to re-focus themselves. For example, Mr. Villanova stated:

“Can we come together folks? We’re getting a little distracted” (Field notes, 12-09-08).

“Keep that away, please, so we can stay focused” (Field notes, 12-16-08).

“I’m going to ask you to put that away because it keeps giving you a distraction (Field notes, 1-28-09).

“Things move fast, you have to stay with us” (Field notes, 2-03-09).

### **Correcting Off-Task Behavior to Increase Focus**

*“It’s about intervening when it’s a tiny issue so the big issues don’t come up”*  
(Interview, 3-03-09).

Mr. Villanova stated that catching the smallest of off-task behaviors and quickly refocusing the students is the best way to prevent bigger problems from occurring. Mr. Villanova believed that it's very important to stop off-task behavior before it gets out of hand. As soon as a student appeared to start to get off-task, Mr. Villanova quickly refocused him. In order to increase his students' ability to focus, Mr. Villanova tried to intervene immediately to refocus their attention. He watches the students to see if they

stay focused and refocuses them when necessary. Mr. Villanova's efforts to improve his students' focus worked to not only increase their focus but to increase his trust in their ability to focus. (Field notes, 12-09-08; 12-16-08; 12-23-08; 1-13-09; 1-20-09; 1-28-09; 2-03-09; 2-10-09; 2-24-09; 3-03-09; 3-10-09).

"I try to do it before it becomes an issue. That comes from my personality too. If you make a big deal about the small, little, piddley stuff, then the big stuff doesn't happen.... If you focus on the little stuff and doing that then the big things, it seems to me, won't come up and I can keep some sort of sense of order" (Interview, 1-15-09).

Mr. Villanova worked to make his behavioral and academic expectations of the students explicit. He checked in with students to ensure they knew exactly what they were doing and what was expected of them. During one observation a student expressed some concern that he found the lesson confusing. Mr. Villanova reassured the student and made his expectations explicit, telling him that the material was confusing because it was new and stating, "This is an overview. I don't expect you to understand and memorize and know this all right now" (Field notes, 2-03-09).

Mr. Villanova relied on his relentlessly positive attitude and a wide variety of learning activities to encourage his students to remain on-task. As a result, he found that he rarely had to use consequences to control students' behaviors. "I'm rarely punishing kids in the class. I'm just assuming they're doing what they're supposed to be doing and I'm reminding them what that is" (Interview, 3-03-09).

### **Use of Fun to Increase Focus**

While Mr. Villanova insisted that students maintain a very high level of focus during class, he tried to ensure that his classes were enjoyable and fun for the students in order to increase their focus and persistence in learning Latin.



"The fun is not for its own sake but to the end that helping them to have a positive experience and to getting them to stay with it long enough to get the long term benefits.... We try to have a light-hearted enough attitude and we also try to get a lot of work done" (Interview, 1-15-09).

Students frequently joked and made comments during class. Mr. Villanova would also frequently make a quick joke and then refocus back onto the task at hand. His modeling of joking and then returning to the subject was imitated by his students so that joking and having fun never interrupted the class, but created a pleasant and up-beat atmosphere to the learning activity (Field notes, 12-09-08; 12-16-08; 12-23-08; 2-03-09; 2-10-09).

"I like the give and take of having the students say things that come to their mind not to the point where they're rude to each other or disruptive of the class.... I like them to feel comfortable when they come to class that this is a class where they will be able to experience a variety of things and say things that come to mind" (Interview, 3-03-09).

Mr. Villanova tried to instill enthusiasm for Latin by modeling it and by bringing in a variety of Latin-related subjects. His purpose in demonstrating his enthusiasm for Latin was to increase the students' enthusiasm, interest, and ultimately their willingness to focus during class and persist in the study of Latin (Field notes, 12-09-08; 12-23-08; 2-10-09).

"... In Latin class, there's so many things you can teach. You can do the drama, the culture, the history... I try to bring to the class my enthusiasm for all those things and let the students try and find what's exciting to them about it so they can be turned on to it" (Interview, 1-15-09).

During all of my classroom observations, Mr. Villanova's students appeared to be remarkably focused and enthused about Latin, by hands in the air to volunteer to read, translate, answer questions, or give ideas.

## **Confidence in Self, Curriculum, and Students to Increase Competence**

### **Use of Confidence in Self to Increase Competence**

Mr. Villanova believed that his confidence in himself, his curriculum, and his students was essential to his success in teaching Latin. His confidence in himself was based in his expertise in Latin and his integrity as a teacher. He believed that over the course of his career he had learned more skills and kept growing and developing more skills. He believed that the teacher needed to be explicit, honest, to mean what he said, and to be a strong leader. He hoped that his explicitness, honesty, and leadership skills as a teacher worked to increase his students' competence in Latin (Interview, 3-03-09).

He stated:

“It sets up a bad precedent that what I say is not important. And no way am I going to let that happen in my class. If I say it, I meant it. And that's why I don't like fake rules that aren't real. I don't like to spend the first 3 days going over what the rules are in the classroom because they're just about treating each other decently and everyone knows them ahead of time.... You can't be there up in front of the class and be uncertain because then they don't know what to do. I say, you got to take charge because that's what they want. They want to know what they're supposed to do” (Interview, 3-03-09).

### **Use of Confidence in Curriculum to Increase Competence**

Mr. Villanova's confidence in the curriculum gave him confidence that what he was teaching was important and worthy of his and the students' efforts. He stated, “I think it's because of my confidence in the value and the depth of the curriculum. I know that what we're doing is worthwhile” (Interview, 3-03-09). Because he knew that the curriculum was important, Mr. Villanova was adamant that he did not want to waste time. Mr. Villanova started his class the second the bell rang and continues to teach until the bell sounded at the end of the class. Because of Mr. Villanova's confidence in his

curriculum, he expressed an enthusiasm for Latin to his students which he hoped they would catch. The students' enthusiasm for Latin, he hoped, would increase their focus and persistence in accomplishing learning activities (Interview, 3-03-09).

Asked why he took every second of the class to teach, Mr. Villanova stated,

“That’s because I want to do so much with them.... Bell to bell! They need to know that when you’re in class that the class has begun.... I don’t want them to have an idea that they can drift in late, ‘cause you hear students say, ‘Oh I’m going to be late for such and such a class... She won’t care,’ and I don’t want them to be saying that about me when they’re in the halls. I want them to know that I expect them to be there from the beginning because that’s when the class starts” (Interview, 03-03-09).

### **Use of Confidence in Students to Increase Competence**

Mr. Villanova kept each student’s name on an index card. He used the deck of index cards to select students to participate in classroom activities. He believed that by using the cards he was giving the students the message that he believed they were all competent and able to participate in the activity.

“That’s why I pick up the cards. Everyone should be able to answer the question. And I love doing that to make sure that everyone is involved. The strong message is, ‘I think everyone is going to be able to do this’” (Interview, 1-15-09).

Mr. Villanova regularly referred to students as “eager” students. For example, during one observation, Mr. Villanova asked a student to select an index card to pick a classmate or just call on someone, saying, “Do you want to pick a card or pick one of your eager classmates?” (Field notes, 12-23-08).

Mr. Villanova hoped that by referring to the students as “eager” he would help the students to see themselves that way and even start to see each other as enthused about learning. He stated, “At first it’s like a joke, but then they internalize it and start referring

to each other that way” (Interview, 1-15-09).

### **Use of Relentless Optimism to Increase Competence**

Mr. Villanova believed that what he called his “relentless optimism” (Interview, 3-03-09) or “relentless positivity” (Interview, 1-15-09) would be internalized by the students and become reality. He believed that his positive attitude would increase the students’ desire to learn and to become increasingly supportive of each other. By regularly expressing his trust in his students as learners, he hoped to increase the degree to which his students demonstrated their competence and the degree to which his students supported each other in learning Latin.

“The idea that: We all want to do this. The more I express that as a given, the more I think it has a chance of becoming reality. That they recognize that 'Okay, I want to do this and we're all going to help each other do it.’” (Interview, 3-03-09)

### **Supportiveness**

*“... a lot of first person plural” (Interview, 3-03-09).*

Mr. Villanova believed that his students would and could help each other and described his class as “a really sweet group” who are “generally nice to each other” (Interview, 1-15-09). Mr. Villanova attempted to find ways to set up a learning environment in which all the students could feel that they are thinking the academic problems through together. He verbalized his belief that all the students wanted to help each other. When a student did not know an answer, Mr. Villanova had another student try to help. Typically, he would ask, “Should we have our good friend, “S” to help us out?” When a student forgot a vocabulary word, he stated, “You forgot, but fortunately, “S” is going to help us.” (Field notes, 2-10-09).

Students regularly assisted their fellow students when they do not know an answer. It was common to see students trying to clarify their fellow students' confusion without Mr. Villanova having to say anything. Thinking out loud and group problem-solving was encouraged. At times students' answers were discussed and even debated by the other students under Mr. Villanova's direction with Mr. Villanova asking, "Who wants to defend your answer? Do you agree with that?" (Field notes, 2-10-09).

As Mr. Villanova explained, "Sometimes I bring another student in.... Sometimes I'll say 'I don't get it,' and I'll ask them to think out loud. So I try to make it clear that the point is that we're learning." Mr. Villanova modeled vulnerability and encouraged his students' supportiveness in order to increase their supportiveness and ultimately increase their competence in learning Latin (Interview, 1-15-09).

### **Openness and Vulnerability**

Mr. Villanova valued openness in his students and tried to create an environment in which the students could be open and able to express their feelings and ask questions when they did not understand some aspect of the subject. He always praised students for asking questions which revealed what they did not understand. In addition, he would take a student's question and show how it was important, using it to teach a particular point of grammar or vocabulary. (Field notes, 12-09-09; 1-13-09; 1-20-09).

"It has to be the environment I set up in the classroom. I think they're fairly open because I try to make that an easy thing to do... by establishing an environment where we recognize that everyone's going to make mistakes because we're trying new things. I try to be very enthusiastic when someone asks a question. I try to rephrase it in a way that shows how it's important to a point that we're studying. So, I try to be supportive of them when they do that" (Interview, 1-15-09).

Mr. Villanova described one student in the class who asked a lot of questions and regularly stopped the class to ask for clarification or just to announce his concern when he was confused. Mr. Villanova stated, "He wants to know how it works and if he doesn't get it, he'll let you know. I mean, students like that are valuable" (Interview, 3-03-09). Mr. Villanova also recognized that the student was "so useful to have in class because he stops and makes me explain, and there are always kids who don't get it....and then (he would) be able to articulate very clearly what the exact steps are to getting the answer." (Interview, 3-03-09). Mr. Villanova found that the student's openness, his ability to express his confusion, helped not only himself but the whole class understand the material at a clearer, deeper level (Interview, 3-03-09).

A regular activity in Mr. Villanova's class was reading and translating Latin texts out loud in front of the entire class. These novice Latin students had to accept a level of vulnerability as they frequently made mistakes and were unsure of how to conjugate verbs or pronounce and translate the Latin. In order to encourage his students to risk being incorrect when participating in class, Mr. Villanova never called attention to their mistakes. Rather, he always praised their attempts and encouraged them to try to either figure out the answer on their own or call on one of their classmates for help. During all my observations, Mr. Villanova's students appeared to be willing and even eager to try to read, translate, and conjugate Latin (Field notes, 1-13-09).

Mr. Villanova modeled vulnerability for his students. During one observation, he answered a student's question and then asked the student, "Do you know what I mean?" The student replied that he did understand the explanation. Mr. Villanova said, "Really? Because I don't think I explained that well." In this interaction, Mr. Villanova showed

the students that sometimes it is difficult to explain and understand Latin grammar and that it is okay to have difficulty. In response, students were frequently vulnerable in class, stating that a given lesson was confusing or that they had made mistakes and needed clarification from the teacher (Field notes, 1-20-09; 1-28-09).

The purpose of Mr. Villanova's efforts to increase the students' openness and vulnerability was not to increase the emotional or social connectedness of the class but to increase the students' competence (Interview, 3-03-09). By being open about what they did not know, being willing to attempt difficult tasks, being willing to ask what might be embarrassing questions, and being able to admit mistakes, the students were able to alert Mr. Villanova to points in the curricula that he might have to review or clarify for the students (Field notes, 1-20-09; 1-28-09; 2-03-09; 2-10-09).

### **Benevolence of Motivation**

*"I like to pretend I assume they're all interested" (Interview, 3-03-09).*

Mr. Villanova believed that if he chose to believe that his students had the best intentions and were internally motivated to learn. Mr. Villanova believed that his assumption that the students are internally motivated and interested in learning would eventually become his students' belief as well.

"This is something that I do in Latin class: They're here. It's fun. It's going to be interesting. I always want to be acting as if the assumption is this is something interesting for us all to be doing because I think eventually they might cave in and believe it, even if they're not willing to be public about that" (Interview, 3-03-09).

Mr. Villanova strongly felt that the way to create a functional classroom community, encourage reliability and internal motivation is for the teacher to be "relentlessly positive." He hoped that his positive attitude reflected his trust in his

students and encouraged his students to demonstrate attributes of trust (Interview, 1-15-09).

As a result of his assumption that the students would be interested in the subject matter and would do what was expected of them, Mr. Villanova believed that his class would become a learning community (Interview, 3-03-09)

“One thing I’ve learned from another teacher many years ago is the way you sort of have to approach the classroom is with assuming the best intentions on all your students’ part. So, you assume they all did the reading, though you know probably some of them didn’t, because if you start the class saying, ‘Did you do the reading?’ Just sort of raising those questions, it’s the wrong environment, the wrong atmosphere. If you just keep relentlessly acting as though you expect them all to be interested in this, you expect them to care, you expect them to have done what they’re supposed to do, they do actually rise up to that.... It makes this class work as a community and they do at some point catch onto it. So, I recognize there’s a variety of internal motivation but I think we can, by the way we create the environment in the classroom, help build it (Interview, 3-03-09).

Mr. Villanova realized that on a day to day level, students don’t necessarily want to do the work necessary to learn a new subject. But, he was also sure that overall; students really do want to learn. He stated,

“There’s no group of customers that wants worse service than students. They want the teacher to be absent, want to hang out, to do just nothing at some level. But they also know in the long run, they want to learn. But on the day-to-day level, they get excited when they don’t have to do anything, even though they’re the ones being cheated” (Interview, 3-03-09).

Mr. Villanova believed that while most students wanted to learn, some students were not highly motivated to learn. While he assumed that the reason for their lack of motivation might come from their home environment, he did not try to find out the cause. Rather, he felt that it was important for him to continue to assume that all the students were interested in learning Latin. He believed that his best hope for engaging the



students and encouraging their motivation was to continue to be positive and assume the best intentions of all his students.

“It’s clear that some of them come here all fired up (to learn) and some of them don’t. I think a lot of that really has to do with the environment they’re in outside of the classroom where they come from a home where there’s a lot of expectations about academics, about behaviors, about homework, about what sort of level of education the parents have had.... I assume it has to do with the home environment more than anything else, but I don’t really know and I’m comfortable not knowing because that allows me to assume... I like to pretend I assume they’re all interested.” (Interview, 3-03-09).

### **Summary of Results**

#### **Mr. Wright**

Mr. Wright valued specific attributes of trust in his students: supportiveness, honesty, openness, and competence. Because Mr. Wright could not possibly individually answer all the various problems his students might have as they attempted tasks and learned new skills on their computers, he valued supportiveness in his students. Students who demonstrated supportiveness were able to help each other problem-solve, and complete given tasks. In order to encourage supportiveness among his students, Mr. Wright clustered the students’ computer desks and had students work together in pairs. He was careful to seat very competent and very supportive students near the center of the room where they could be available to other students clustered near them. He sat less competent and less supportive students further away from other students, near the edges of the room.

He valued honesty in his students. Since the students’ desks were clustered in order to increase supportiveness, Mr. Wright could not see most of the computer monitors at any given time. He trusted his students to be honest in terms of following the

rules and prohibitions regarding the use of their computers. To encourage and increase honesty in his students, Mr. Wright attempted to provide his students with high interest materials and to check-in and offer help to students who demonstrated off-task behaviors. He valued openness in his students and wanted them to be able to tell him when they were confused or unable to do a task. Mr. Wright found that some students were able to be verbally open with him, while others showed him their inability to complete a task through their body language. To help students be more open, he tried to create a classroom environment in which openly asking for assistance was acceptable.

The students' supportiveness, honesty, and openness were important to creating and sustaining a learning environment in which competence was possible. Mr. Wright valued competence, especially the quality of persistence. He wanted his students to persist in tasks and complete them. Mr. Wright tried to increase the students' persistence in accomplishing tasks by encouraging supportiveness and openness. He tried to create interesting, highly engaging packets that the students could follow and complete.

### **Mr. Williams**

Mr. Williams valued specific attributes of trust in his students: namely, openness, vulnerability, supportiveness, competence, and benevolence of motivation. He valued openness and vulnerability for two reasons: (1) He wanted to have a relationship with his students, and (2) He wanted his students to engage in learning activities which required them to be open and vulnerable regarding their self-perceptions and their perceptions of their relationships with their parents. Mr. Williams valued supportiveness in his students and frequently structured learning activities to be done in pairs or small groups so that his students could interact and discuss literature and personal perceptions.

Mr. Williams valued competence and tried verbally to encourage his students to focus and persist in the learning tasks which he set before them. Mr. Williams also valued benevolence of motivation, and wanted his students to be internally motivated and want to learn the material that he tried to teach them. In order to try to increase his students' competence and benevolence of motivation, Mr. Williams tried to present the students with learning activities that he thought they might want to do.

### **Mr. Villanova**

Mr. Villanova valued specific attributes of trust: openness, vulnerability, supportiveness, benevolence of motivation, and competence. Mr. Villanova valued openness and vulnerability in his students which allowed the students to try to speak and read aloud a new language. He wanted his students to be able to tell him when they were confused so that he could review the material they needed to hear again. He wanted his students to risk making mistakes in front of their classmates as they sometimes struggled to understand and speak a new language. Mr. Villanova valued supportiveness in his students since he believed that if the students helped each other to problem-solve in class, they would all learn more material. He encouraged the students to increase their supportiveness, praising them for their attempts to help each problem-solve.

Mr. Villanova valued benevolence of motivation and wanted his students to be internally motivated and to want to learn the material he was teaching. To increase their benevolence of motivation, Mr. Villanova verbally praised the students and expressed his belief that they were "eager" students who wanted to learn Latin. He believed that his "relentlessly positive" attitude would be adopted by his students and that they would internalize his view of them and become internally motivated learners.

Mr. Villanova valued competence, especially in terms of focus and persistence. For Mr. Villanova, the attributes of openness, vulnerability, supportiveness, and benevolence of motivation all served to reinforce and encourage the students' abilities to be focused and persistent learners. To aid his students' ability to focus, Mr. Villanova provided a variety of learning activities and refocused students as soon as they began to lose their focus. Mr. Villanova believed that his students needed to persist in their study of Latin. He verbally encouraged his students to persist and praised them when they did persist. Mr. Villanova believed that his confidence in himself, his students, and his curriculum enabled him to maintain his positive attitude which increased the students' internal motivation and increased his students' competence.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate trust in the teacher-student relationship and to explore how trust in the teacher-student relationship affects teachers' pedagogical and behavior management decisions in the classroom.

The following research questions guided my data collection and analysis:

1. How and to what extent do teachers experience and express trust in relation to individual students and groups of students?
2. How and to what extent do teachers value and focus on specific attributes of trust over others?
3. How and to what extent do the levels of teacher trust in students and the various attributes of trust impact the teachers' pedagogical and behavior management choices in the classroom?

In this chapter, I will summarize my major findings and discuss how my findings relate to past research. After restating each research question, I will state my findings, relate my findings to the literature and follow with examples from my data. Finally, I will conclude the entire chapter with recommendations for future research.

#### Major Findings

In this subsection, I will respond to each of the research questions, summarizing and discussing the major findings of this study and providing connections between the findings and previous research.

**Research question 1: How and to what extent do teachers experience and express trust in relation to individual students and groups of students?**

**FINDING 1:**

Participants valued specific attributes of trust over other attributes of trust. Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, and Hoy (2001) define trust as a construct based on six attributes including: benevolence of motivation, the willingness to be vulnerable, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. In order for trust to be experienced in any relationship, one or more of these attributes of trust must be perceived. In my pilot study, I found that teachers also valued supportiveness among students as an important attribute of teacher-student trust.

Findings derived from this study support previous research on teacher-student trust. This study adds to the research in that it suggests that individual teachers may favor one or more attributes of trust over others. Each of the three participants in this study enunciated specific attributes of trust which they perceived in their students and which they consciously tried to increase in their students. Mr. Wright, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Villanova valued specific attributes of trust over others. Mr. Wright especially valued supportiveness among his students. Supportiveness was essential to Mr. Wright being able to run his class. Mr. Williams especially valued openness and a willingness to be vulnerable in his students. Mr. Villanova highly valued competence in his students.

Previous researchers found that assessments concerning the presence of one or more of the attributes of trust are made and play into the decision of whether or not to trust the other person (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003; Bryk & Schneider, 1996). All three of my participants made assessments concerning the

presence of specific attributes of trust in their students. Among all of the attributes of trust, participants valued some attributes over others and assessed whether their students demonstrated the attributes of trust which the participants valued.

**FINDING 2:**

Participants were aware that individual students expressed different levels of one or more attributes of trust and participants made specific behavior management and pedagogical decisions for students who demonstrated very low levels or very high levels of specific attributes of trust.

The findings of this study support previous research in finding that teachers did adjust their pedagogical choices and their behavioral choices when students demonstrated either high or low levels of trust (Ennis & McCauley, 2002). Each of the participants in this study assessed their students both as individuals and as a group of students. Mr. Wright, while perceiving his class to be competent on the whole, described individual students who were very high competence and other students who were quite low in competence. Mr. Williams found that individual students varied in their ability to be open and vulnerable. Mr. Villanova perceived his group of students to be quite high in competence but was aware that individual students varied in their levels of competence.

In response to individual students who demonstrated low levels of competence, Mr. Wright chose to make frequent check-ins with those students. He would frequently check the students' work, give them extra instruction, and direct their efforts. Students who demonstrated low levels of competence and were frequently off-task were seated by Mr. Wright on the outer edges of the classroom where they would be less distracted and would be less distractible to other students.

Mr. Williams, who recognized that students as a group regularly displayed low levels of competence in terms of focus and persistence, tried a variety of strategies in an attempt to increase his students' ability and willingness to engage with the material presented. His strategies included: having individual students work in pairs or small groups, giving students additional time to complete work in class, and using tape recorders to assist small groups to stay on topic. When the use of a variety of alternative strategies did not work, Mr. Williams warned students that if they did not do their work in class, it would be assigned as additional homework. This finding supports the findings of Ennis and McCauley (2002) who found that when students do not demonstrate attributes of trust at all or at a low level, teachers may opt to use consequences in an attempt to assure that the students' obligations in the classroom are met.

Mr. Villanova, who perceived his students to be focused and persistent in their class work, moved quickly through lessons, and used a variety of activities both to teach and to review material during class. During one class period, Mr. Villanova would typically ask his students to call out answers to flashcards, to listen quietly to direct teaching, to read aloud from the text, to translate written materials, to stand in front of the class and read original stories, to ask a lot of questions, and to help answer other students' questions.

The large and varied questions which students asked in Mr. Wright's and Mr. Villanova's classrooms support the findings of Jefferies and Reed (2000) who found that high levels of trust increased cooperation in the classroom and increased the tendency for students to ask questions and engage with the curriculum. Both Mr. Wright's and Mr.



Villanova's students appeared to be regularly engaged with the curriculum and appeared to ask questions in order to maintain their engagement with the lessons presented.

**Research Question 2: How and to what extent do teachers value and focus on specific attributes of trust over others?**

**FINDING 3**

Participants valued particular attributes of trust because those attributes facilitated and reinforced other attributes of trust.

Findings from this research support the findings of researchers who have found that teacher-student trust positively affects students' behaviors and increases students' academic achievement (Ackley, 2003; Bryk & Schneider, 1996; Raider-Roth, 2005; Hughes & Kwok, 2005; Daniels & Arapostathis, 2005; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Researchers (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995; Lewicki, McAllister & Bies, 1998; Bryk & Schneider, 1996) have suggested that the increase in students' academic achievement may be related to the finding that teacher-student trust increases the willingness to take positive risks. These risks include the students' willingness to try to learn new skills and willingness to ask questions, thereby risking looking foolish or risking being judged negatively (Jefferies & Reed, 2000). Students in Mr. Wright's class and Mr. Villanova's class were asked to learn new skills. The students frequently asked questions and were willing to reveal what they did not know.

Teachers have been found to respond to increased teacher-student trust by listening to students and encouraging them to ask questions and adjusting the curriculum and environment to increase success (Cothran & Ennis, ). Mr. Wright and Mr. Villanova

perceived their students to be competent, supportive, usually engaged in the curriculum, eager to ask questions, and willing to try new skills.

Findings from this research study expand on the work of previous researchers, suggesting that the behaviors and pedagogical choices that teachers make may increase one attribute of trust in order to facilitate and reinforce other attributes of trust. For example, Mr. Wright made behavioral and pedagogical choices that used the students' attribute of supportiveness to facilitate and reinforce the attribute of competence. Mr. Wright valued the attribute of supportiveness in his students for two major reasons. Mr. Wright's course, Computer Skills, required students to use computers to accomplish tasks that Mr. Wright set before them. Since Mr. Wright did not have an assistant, he alone would have to respond to the numerous questions and requests for help regarding computer glitches that would arise during a class period.

In order to conduct the course, Mr. Wright assigned his students into pairs at each computer and then clustered the computers into groups. Seating the students near each other and encouraging them to help each other problem-solve any issues that arose thereby allowed Mr. Wright to give individual and in-depth attention to students and to conduct his class.

Mr. Wright valued the attribute of supportiveness because it allowed his students to ask most if not all of the questions they had and to problem-solve together, thus increasing the students' level of competence. By seating most of the students close together, encouraging the students to ask questions and express their ideas, and creating learning packets which directed the paired students in their work together, Mr. Wright

increased and indeed relied on the students' supportiveness in the service of increasing students' competence.

#### **FINDING 4:**

One attribute of trust could be facilitated and reinforced by several other attributes of trust.

In defining the attributes of trust, researchers recognize that some attributes are related to other attributes. For example, the attribute of openness refers to the willingness to share personal thoughts and feelings which requires the attribute of vulnerability. In addition, openness is also seen as an attribute which may increase one's confidence and thereby increase one's willingness to be vulnerable (Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003).

Research regarding how attributes of trust might affect each other, how one attribute of trust might assist or increase other attributes, is scarce and research regarding how teachers might work to increase one attribute of trust in order to facilitate another attribute of trust has not been fully explored. The findings of this study expand on our understanding of teacher-student trust by suggesting that teachers can and do use one or more attributes of trust to increase students' level of other attributes of trust.

By diagramming the attributes of trust valued by each of the participants, I was able to illustrate how each attribute worked to facilitate and reinforce other attributes, and thereby show the "density and complexity" of the emerging theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 238). The diagrams afford a visual picture of how each participant experienced and expressed trust and how each participant used attributes of trust to increase students' success in achieving increased levels in one or two attributes. In the following diagrams, the attributes of trust valued by each of the participants are represented. The diagrams

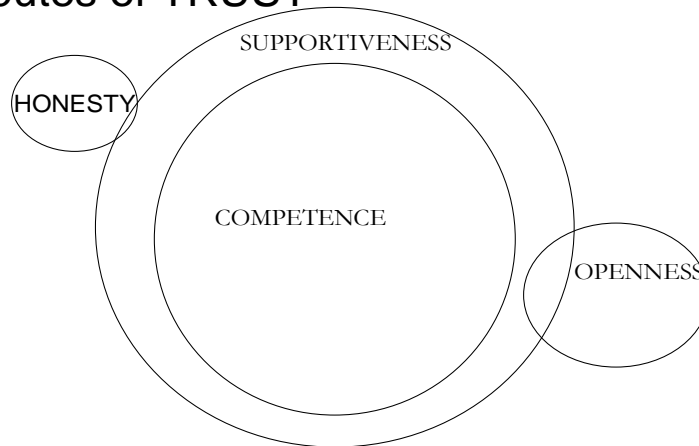
show my analysis of how each of the participants used attributes of trust to facilitate and reinforce other attributes of trust. The differing sizes of the attributes in each diagram represent my interpretation of the relative degree to which the attributes were valued by the participants.

Figure 1 visually represents how Mr. Wright used various attributes of trust to reinforce and facilitate other attributes of trust. Mr. Wright valued competence, supportiveness, honesty, and openness in his students. In Figure 1, competence is imbedded within supportiveness, to visually represent how Mr. Wright used supportiveness as the essential attribute that facilitated and reinforced competence. Honesty and openness were valued by Mr. Wright to a lesser degree than supportiveness and competence and are represented by smaller circles which reinforce supportiveness.

**Figure 1: Diagram 1 Mr. Wright-Computer**

## Mr. Wright - Computer

- Attributes of TRUST



Mr. Wright worked to increase students' levels of openness and honesty in the service of supportiveness. The largest circle in the center of the diagram, the attribute of

supportiveness, was valued by Mr. Wright since it facilitated and reinforced students' competence. In fact, the attribute of supportiveness was essential to enabling the students to experience competence in his class (Interview, 3-10-09).

Figure 2 visually represents how Mr. Williams used various attributes of trust to reinforce and facilitate other attributes of trust. Mr. Williams valued openness, vulnerability, benevolence of motivation, competence, and supportiveness in his students. Since he especially valued openness, benevolence of motivation, and vulnerability to a high degree, they are represented with larger, but equally sized circles (Interview, 3-12-09). Since Mr. Williams valued competence to a somewhat lesser degree than openness, benevolence of motivation, and vulnerability, it is represented by a smaller circle. A small circle representing supportiveness is used to illustrate how supportiveness helps to facilitate competence. In Figure 2 my analysis of the data is illustrated with openness, benevolence, and vulnerability standing separate from competence and supportiveness since my analysis of the data is that they are not facilitating or reinforcing competence and supportiveness.

Mr. Williams worked to increase students' openness, vulnerability, and benevolence of motivation and used these attributes to facilitate and reinforce each other. The attribute of supportiveness did reinforce competence in his students to a limited degree (Interview, 3-12-09).

**Figure 2: Diagram 2 Mr. Williams-English**

## Mr. Williams – English

- Attributes of TRUST

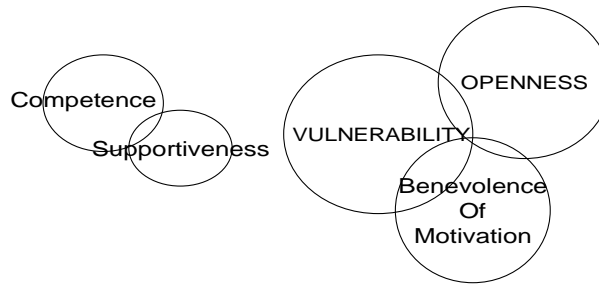
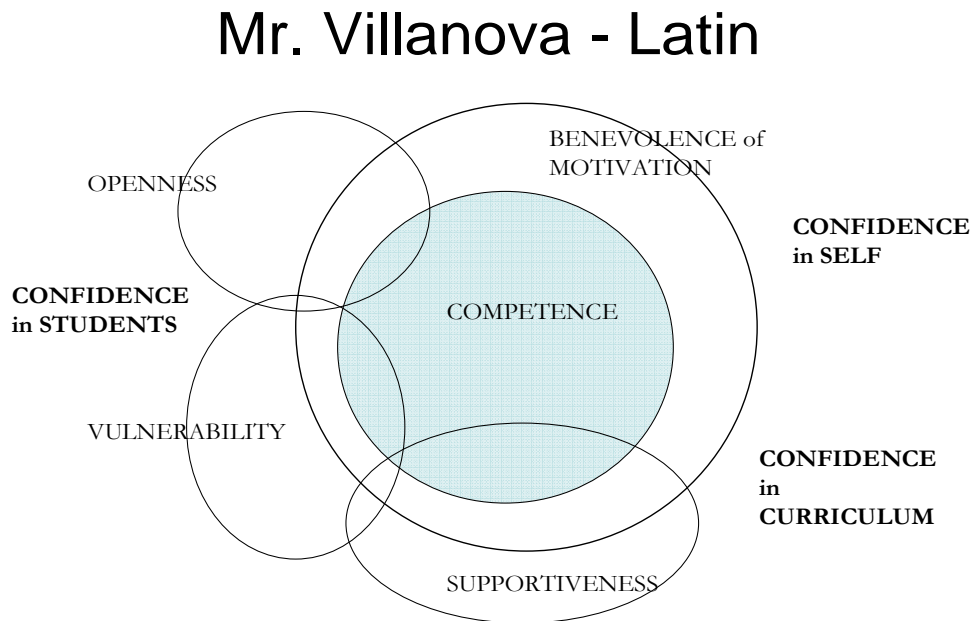


Figure 3 represents how Mr. Villanova used various attributes of trust to reinforce and facilitate other attributes of trust. Mr. Villanova valued competence, benevolence of motivation, openness, vulnerability, and supportiveness. In Figure 3, the attribute of competence is imbedded in benevolence of motivation and facilitated and reinforced by openness, vulnerability, and supportiveness. Since Mr. Villanova highly valued competence and benevolence of motivation, they are represented by larger circles than the attributes of openness, vulnerability, and supportiveness. Since Mr. Villanova's confidence in himself, his students, and his curriculum infused and saturated the classroom environment, it appears in Figure 3 to be surrounding the attribute circles.

**Figure 3: Diagram 3 Mr. Villanova-Latin**



Mr. Villanova highly valued students' competence. All of the other attributes of trust served to facilitate and reinforce students' competence. Mr. Villanova's use of "relentless optimism" which included his assumption of students' best intentions, facilitated and reinforced students' benevolence of motivation, which in turn reinforced competence. Openness, vulnerability, and supportiveness were also valued by Mr. Wright and used to reinforce benevolence of motivation and competence. Mr. Villanova's confidence in himself, his students, and his curriculum was evident in his classroom culture and ultimately served to facilitate and enhance students' competence (Interview, 3-03-09).

**Research Question 3: How and to what extent do the levels of teacher trust in students and the various attributes of trust impact the teachers' pedagogical and behavior management choices in the classroom?**

**FINDING 5:**

Participants used pedagogical and behavior management means to attempt to increase students' expression of particular attributes of trust.

Since the choices a teacher makes in the classroom influence the behavior of the students, and the behavior of the students informs the teacher's perceptions of those same students (Fisher, Rickards & Newby, 2001; Harvey, Prather & Hoffmeister, 1968), it is important to explore teachers' behavior management and pedagogical choices in the classroom.

The participants in this study made pedagogical and behavior management decisions that were meant to increase specific attributes of trust. Findings in this study support research done by Cothran and Ennis (1997) which suggests that when teachers demonstrate trust in their students by encouraging them and adjusting the environment to increase their success, students respond by engaging actively with the curriculum and behaving well.

Participants in this study encouraged students and adjusted the learning environment by: making specific seating arrangements, having students work in pairs or in small groups, presenting lessons which necessitated the use of one or more attributes of trust, making adjustments of the teacher's manner and tone of voice, using praise, and using negative consequences. Mr. Wright clustered pairs of students together in order to increase supportiveness in his students.



Mr. Williams created specific lessons which required students to be open and vulnerable as they revealed personal thoughts and feelings. Mr. Villanova continually praised his students to encourage them to be competent and motivated learners. Mr. Villanova also engaged in what he referred to as “relentless optimism” in which he consistently attributed positive motivations to his students in an attempt to increase their vision of themselves as eager, engaged students. By consistently attributing positive motivations to his students, Mr. Villanova reflected the assertion of Noddings (1988) that by attributing positive motives to students’ actions, the teacher can help students build a positive picture of themselves.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Teacher-student trust is a dynamic and multi-layered construct, the study of which offers many important implications for the pedagogical and behavioral choices teachers make. Based on the findings of this study, I would like to propose conclusions that suggest areas for future research and hold implications for teacher education.

1. It appears that some of the pedagogical and behavior management choices that teachers make are more effective than other choices in helping students demonstrate increased levels of specific attributes of trust.
2. Teachers appear to make specific behavior management and pedagogical decisions for students who demonstrate very low levels or very high levels of specific attributes of trust.
3. Increasing teachers’ awareness and explicit understanding about trust in the teacher-student relationship has practical implications for teacher education, teacher development, and teacher supervision.

It is important to state that it is not correct to think of teacher-student trust as intrinsically good or bad. Rather, it is more appropriate to understand relative levels of trust in the teacher-student relationship as a given which a teacher can modify and consciously adjust to meet the needs of his or her students. Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2000) suggest that teacher-student trust needs to be at an optimal level which allows for appropriate risks opportunities for growth and development. Teachers need to gain insight and understanding of teacher-student trust in order to correctly assess and utilize teacher-student trust to optimize their students' learning and increase appropriate classroom behaviors in their students.

### **Pedagogical and Behavior Management Choices**

Teachers value specific attributes of trust in the teacher-student relationship. The specific attributes of trust that a given teacher values affects the pedagogical and behavioral choices he or she makes in the classroom. It appears that teachers who adjust the environment and use several alternative teaching strategies may be making choices that increase students' abilities to demonstrate attributes of trust. Teachers who use fewer teaching strategies and who do not adjust the environment adequately may be less able to increase the students' abilities to demonstrate attributes of trust. A clear understanding of teacher-student trust may help teachers to chart the degree to which particular teaching methods and behavioral practices work or do not work to increase attributes of trust.

Teachers appear to be well aware that individual students in their class can vary widely in their abilities to demonstrate attributes of trust. Some students may be able to demonstrate competence and supportiveness at high levels almost every day, while other students may not be able to demonstrate those attributes at all or rarely. Teachers need to

be able to have strategies that allow them to work with all the students in their class. Teachers need to employ strategies that enable students with low levels of the attributes of trust to increase their abilities to demonstrate higher levels of trust so that they are more able to participate fully in learning activities. In addition, teachers need to organize their classrooms and choose seating arrangements which help students' ability to demonstrate trust.

### **Practical Applications for Teacher-Student Trust in Teacher Education**

While teachers appear to be aware that there are attributes that they hope to see in their students, they are not necessarily aware of how they might increase the positive attributes they hope to perceive in students. It is, therefore, essential that teachers learn the importance of trust in the teacher-student relationship, increase their knowledge of the attributes of trust, and learn how they can enhance these attributes in the students they teach. Teachers who are unable to manage their students without resorting to controlling behaviors lose an opportunity to teach attributes of trust which students will need to be successful in the world, and lose an opportunity to teach students in creative and constructive ways.

Self-reflection is an essential component in teacher education and is an important element in the process of teaching. An explicit understanding of the importance of teacher-student trust would provide the teacher with a way to make sense of the complex and dynamic elements in the teacher-student relationship. A better understanding of teacher-student trust gives teachers a way to think about their relationships with their students, provides teachers with a way of understanding what is happening in the

classroom, and guides teachers in planning ways to improve the dynamics in the classroom.

Diagramming teacher-student trust for an individual teacher can provide a visual representation of how that teacher uses trust to promote one or more valued attributes of trust. With such a visual representation, a teacher would be able to see not only how the attributes in his or her class work together, but would also be able to see where improvements could be made so that valued attributes were better facilitated and supported.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There are many avenues to explore regarding teacher-student trust. It may be that teachers who facilitate and reinforce one attribute of trust by increasing students' ability to demonstrate several other attributes of trust are more successful in developing high levels of trust in the teacher-student relationship. More research into the dynamics involved in clustering trust attributes in order to facilitate and reinforce another valued attribute of trust may prove to be a fruitful line of research.

More research is needed to explore which behavioral choices and teaching strategies best enable students to improve their abilities to demonstrate higher levels of various attributes of trust. This study was limited to three teachers in one middle school. Future research might consider increasing the scope of teachers, including teachers from different grade levels and teachers from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Future research might also consider including a wide variety of schools, including schools which are located in communities of various socio-economic levels. Enlarging the scope of study could help us to understand how teachers affect students' abilities to demonstrate

attributes of trust and could provide teachers with tangible means to increase learning and pro-social behaviors in their classrooms.

Another important area of research involves studying how teachers' expectations and beliefs concerning their students affect teacher-student trust. While Goddard, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) and Solomon et. al. (1996) found that teachers have less trust in students who have lower socio-economic status and that teachers use more controlling strategies in teaching those students, there is still much we do not know about how various qualities of students might affect teachers' levels of trust. Research concerning teachers' perceptions of their students and how teachers' perceptions affect teacher-student trust could afford teacher educators with understandings that could help to direct and improve teacher self-reflection.

The impact of teacher efficacy is an important area in need of further study. Does teacher efficacy increase teachers' trust in students? How does teachers' confidence in their curriculum impact their ability to promote students' levels of competence or other attributes of trust? Does the development of specific skills during teacher training promote self-confidence and increase teacher-student trust? Research which addresses these questions could prove useful in exploring the effect of teacher efficacy on teacher-student trust.

Teacher-student trust is a complex and dynamic construct that affects academic and behavioral choices teachers make. Teachers can benefit from increasing their knowledge and understanding of teacher-student trust. This study has demonstrated that teachers who have not previously learned about the attributes of trust in the teacher-student relationship make pedagogical and behavioral choices that they hope will

increase specific attributes in their students. It is therefore important for teachers to become aware of the theory of trust as it applies in the teacher-student relationship so that they may consciously make the best decisions they can on behalf of their students.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **OVERVIEW OF STUDY DESIGN**

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How do teachers experience and express trust in relation to individual students and groups of students?
2. Do teachers value and focus on specific attributes of trust over others?
3. Do the levels of teacher trust in students and the various attributes of trust impact on the teacher's behaviors and choices in the classroom and if so, to what extent?

#### **SETTINGS & PARTICIPANTS**

- \* 1 regional middle school (grades 7-8)
- \* 3 middle school teachers

#### **METHODS**

- \* 2 formal teacher interviews
- \* Descriptive field notes from observations
- \* 1 teacher questionnaire
- \* School and classroom artifacts
- \* Informal interviews

#### **DATA ANALYSIS**

- \* Transcripts, field notes, and documents will use open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
- \* Concepts will be established through initial analysis of all data sources, which will establish categories, subcategories, properties, and dimensions.
- \* Cross analysis will be conducted within categories and across categories to identify common themes and perspectives.
- \* Research journal will be kept to explore the process, decisions I make, and questions I ask myself during the selection of the site, collection of data, and data analysis.

## APPENDIX B

### LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO THE TEACHERS

My name is Virginia L. Durnford and I am a Doctoral candidate in Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I am in the TESI program, which stands for Teacher Education and School Improvement. I hope to teach in higher education in the area of teacher training upon completing my Ed.D.

This fall, I am starting the research needed to complete my dissertation. I am interested in looking at how teachers make the choices and the myriad of decisions they must make every day concerning the delivery of curricula and the implementation of behavior management in the classroom. Specifically, I am looking at how teachers' perceive their students and their students' needs along certain criteria and how that impacts their choices.

For many years I was a Special Education teacher at the middle school level. I also worked as a school adjustment counselor at the elementary, middle school, and high school level. My research is guided by my deep respect for teachers and my desire to find ways that help student teachers become more confident and more effective in the delivery of curricula and in the implementation of behavior management techniques.

To conduct my research I am looking for 3 teachers who would be willing to participate in my research. Participation would include:

- 1) Allowing me to observe in their classroom for a limited and mutually acceptable period of time totaling no more than 12 observations over the course of no more than 3 months. The observations would only require me to be quietly present in the classroom. I would not need to talk with the teacher before or after the observations.
- 2) Filling out one teacher questionnaire, which should take approximately 10 minutes.
- 3) Participating in 2 interviews, each lasting approximately 45 minutes. The first interview would take place during the first month and the second interview would occur during the third month of the research.

Please be assured that I will use pseudonyms to protect your identities and will be most sensitive to the need to protect confidentiality. You will also have the right to review materials and withdraw from participating in this study at any time without question and without prejudice.

I would greatly appreciate your willingness to participate in this study. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at 413-549-5757 or email me at [vdurnfor@educ.umass.edu](mailto:vdurnfor@educ.umass.edu).

Thank you,  
Virginia L. Durnford



## APPENDIX C

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Ms. / Mr. \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Virginia Durnford and I am a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts- Amherst, in the School of Education. I am writing to request your consent to participate in a study. The essence of the study is as follows:

#### **Purpose of Research:**

I am interested in learning about how middle school teachers think about students individually and collectively and how they make decisions regarding pedagogy, behavior management, and classroom operations. How teachers perceive their students along certain criteria and how they think about their students and make classroom decisions is an understudy area. I believe that understanding teachers is important and I want to increase our understanding of teachers.

#### **Procedures:**

Participation in the study would include the following:

1. Complete a ten minute teacher questionnaire.
2. Participate in two formal interviews. Each interview will take no more than 45 minutes. The first interview will take place at the start of the study. The second interview will take place near the end of the study. I would make every attempt to schedule the interviews at times that are convenient for you. The interviews will be taped recorded. After I have transcribed your words verbatim, the recordings will be destroyed.
3. Allow classroom observations. Observations will take place about twice a week over the course of several weeks. It would not be necessary to talk to me before, during, or after any of the classroom observations unless you wish to do so. I would save any question I might have for the scheduled formal interviews.

#### **Risks and Discomforts:**

There are no risks of participating in this study.

#### **Benefits:**

The primary goal of this study is to learn how teachers' perceptions of their students might impact the decisions they make in their classrooms. I would hope that the reflections and insights you might share with me, the researcher/ interviewer, would prove to be helpful to you and would provide insightful information to the researcher and other teachers. Once the study is completed, you are welcome to have a copy of the results if you choose.

#### **Costs and Compensation:**

N/A

#### **Alternatives to Participation:**

You may choose not to volunteer to be a part of this study without any consequences.

**Subject enrollment/ Length of Study:**

You will be asked to participate in this study for approximately 3 months. The study will begin in September and will last until the December break.

**Confidentiality:**

I will use pseudonyms to protect the identities of participants and will be most careful to keep your identities private in this and any future use of the report generated. Your data will be identified by the pseudonym you select prior to the interviews. The audiotapes and written notes will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Only the researcher of this study will have access to the key to the file cabinet. My committee advisor will not have access to the data without first seeking permission from me.

**Dissemination:**

The data that are collected from this study will be used for dissertation requirements for my doctoral program. Papers will be produced for my committee members. Based on the data gathered, potential journal articles and conference presentations may be formulated.

**Request for additional information:**

Please contact the researcher, Virginia Durnford, to get more information about this study or to get a copy of the results. She can be reached via email at [vdurnfor@educ.umass.edu](mailto:vdurnfor@educ.umass.edu) or telephone at 978-853-0364

If you would like to speak with my advisor regarding this research study, you may contact Professor Linda Griffin at the University of Massachusetts via email ([lgriffin@educ.umass.edu](mailto:lgriffin@educ.umass.edu)) or telephone (413) 545-6985.

**Subject statement of Voluntary Consent:**

You understand that you may stop participating at any time without penalty. If you withdraw, the notes collected from the interviews will be thrown away and the audiotapes used for the interviews will be taped over and not used in this study. If a question makes you feel uncomfortable at any time during the interviews, you can choose not to answer.

When signing this form I am agreeing to voluntarily enter this study. I understand that, by signing this document, I do not waive any of my legal rights. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I use and understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. A copy of this signed Informed Consent Form has been given to me.

Participant's Name (Print or Type)\_\_\_\_\_

Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

**Study Representative Statement:**

I have explained the purpose of the research, the study procedures, the possible risks and discomforts, the possible benefits, and have answered any questions to the best of my ability.

Virginia L. Durnford

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX D**

### **CHART OF PROCEDURES**

- 1. Obtained signed consent forms.**
- 2. Conducted initial meeting with participants to discuss study and plan field observation schedule.**
- 3. Conducted initial field observations.**  
**Preliminary data analysis and formation of specific questions for participant interviews.**
- 4. Conducted initial participant interviews.**  
**Preliminary analysis of interviews.**  
**Reflection and early stage formation of categories and coding.**
- 5. Continued to conduct field observations and collected artifacts.**  
**Data analysis continued.**  
**Diagram development begun.**  
**Worksheets obtained and photographs of classrooms taken.**
- 6. Conducted second teacher interviews.**  
**Category development and coding of data continued.**  
**Diagrams finalized for each participant.**  
**Participant feedback obtained.**
- 7. Report of final results written.**

## APPENDIX E

### TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDES FOR FORMAL INTERVIEWS

#### **Teacher informational questions:**

1. How many years have you worked as a teacher?
2. How many years have you worked at this school?
3. What is your degree?
4. Are you certified or in the process of being certified?
5. Do you have other earned degrees?

#### **Classroom culture:**

6. Describe your classroom to me.
7. How do you think your classroom system fits in with the culture or norms of the rest of the school?
8. What are your behavioral goals for your classroom environment?
9. What activities do you believe best helps you reach those goals?
10. What are your goals for the students' academic achievement?
11. What activities do you believe best helps reach those academic goals?

#### **Academic expectations and evaluations:**

12. What teaching methods do you believe are the best ways for students to learn?
13. What are your favorite teaching methods, teaching styles, and/or teaching techniques?
14. In many classrooms, there are students who seem more motivated to learn than others, what do you think causes that?
15. What do you think causes some students to seem less motivated to learn than others?
16. Describe a student you have had who you feel was an excellent student / a really poor student.
17. Give me an example of when you know a student is ready for more independent learning.

**Behavioral expectations and evaluations:**

17. In many classrooms, there are students who act out. What have you found best helps those students?
18. Why do you think some students behave well?
19. Describe a student you have had who you feel was an exceptionally well-behaved student/ a very poorly behaved student.
20. What would you say is the greatest predictor of how a student is going to behave in your class?

**Overall impressions:**

21. Give me 3 or 4 adjectives that best characterize your students.
22. What do you believe to be the most important characteristics of a good student?
22. If someone were to drop into your classroom, what would impress them most?
23. What else would you like to tell me about your classroom?

**NOTE:** The goal of the interview is to elicit the participants' beliefs and perceptions of their students in relation to teacher-student trust. The questions listed above are intended to be guidelines for the researcher. During the Formal Interviews it will be important for the researcher to follow the participants' line of reasoning and to ask many follow-up questions.

**APPENDIX F**  
**TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Directions to the Teacher:**

With this questionnaire, you are asked to circle a number on a Likert-like scale:

1= almost never    2= infrequently    3= sometimes    4= often    5= almost always

You are asked to choose a number that reflects how you perceive your students and/or what your experiences have been with your students. Select responses based only on students in the one specific classroom that we have selected, which I have been observing.

In some instances, your responses may be subjective while in other cases, your answers may be based on experiences you have had. Both types of responses are valid and there is no right or wrong way to answer any of the questions.

If you have any questions, please contact me in person or at 549-5757 or at [vdurnfor@educ.umass.edu](mailto:vdurnfor@educ.umass.edu).

**THANK YOU** for taking part in this questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Gini Durnford

## TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

1= almost never    2= infrequently    3= sometimes    4= often    5= almost always

### **In general, when these students behave well it is due to**

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. the rewards I offer                         | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 2. their desire to avoid negative consequences | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 3. their desire to please me                   | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 5. their desire to get along with classmates   | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 6. their desire to learn                       | 1...2...3...4...5 |

### **In general, when these students misbehave in my class it is due to**

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| 7. the home environment                              | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 8. a lack of negative consequences                   | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 9. a lack of positive consequences                   | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 10. positive consequences are not rewarding enough   | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 11. negative consequences not strong enough to deter | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 12. students wanting to impress fellow students      | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 13. students wanting attention from the class        | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 14. students wanting attention from the teacher      | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 15. students not knowing how to do their work        | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 16. boredom  | 1...2...3...4...5 |

### **Students in this class**

- |                                   |                   |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 17. care about learning           | 1...2...3...4...5 |
| 18. care about what I am teaching | 1...2...3...4...5 |







1= almost never    2= infrequently    3= sometimes    4= often    5= almost always

48. be willing to reveal what they don't know    1...2...3...4...5

49. ask questions about what they don't know    1...2...3...4...5

40. hide what they don't know    1...2...3...4...5

**The classroom behavior management system**

51. works with MOST students    1...2...3...4...5

52. remains the same throughout the year    1...2...3...4...5

53. changes during the year    1...2...3...4...5

**My teaching methods (which may consist of one or more of the following: individual seatwork, group work, lecture, discussion, etc.)**

54. Are helpful to most students    1...2...3...4...5

55. Remain the same throughout the year    1...2...3...4...5

56. Change over the course of the year    1...2...3...4...5

57. Are adapted to individual students    1...2...3...4...5

**Below, or on the back of this sheet, please feel free to write any additional comments you would like to make.**

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**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE**

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