IDENTIFYING, CONSTRUCTING AND MAINTAINING POSITIVE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS IN A SECONDARY SETTING

by

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DEDICATION

To Dr. Joseph Jones, the Frankenstein responsible for bringing to life this quest for the Ph.D., thank you for your continued effort to transform me into a respectable academic. To all other faculty forced to suffer at the hands of his creation and to my cohort of peers for enduring my company along the way, thank you, be free! To my parents, who promoted an early love of learning and have supported and encouraged my every curiosity and passion, this is not the culmination, but another stop on a decades-old journey of a lifelong learner- none of which would have happened without mom reading to a tiny little Adam, requiring homework be done at the table, indulging my shopping desires at the Scholastic Book Fair, redeeming Pizza Hut “Book-It” coupons, remaining involved to make sure I had good teachers in good schools and making all of the other efforts, small and large, that a great mom does. Finally, to all of those good teachers, particularly Ms. Lisa Boyd, who ever cared about me as a student, as a human being and in so doing, inspired me to teach and convinced me that a humanistic education is the only type worth practicing.
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ABSTRACT

ADAM REECE CROWNOVER
IDENTIFYING, CONSTRUCTING AND MAINTAINING POSITIVE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS IN A SECONDARY SETTING
Under the direction of ALLISON C. GILMORE, Ph.D.

This study articulates a vision for a relational pedagogy in education. In a policy era characterized by an overwhelming emphasis on accountability for teachers and students connected to content area assessment scores, a humanist recalibration of the priorities of education policy is needed. Rather than a fixation on performance data, I advocate for a consideration of the quality of the relational environment constructed by teachers based in part on the research which suggests that positive teacher-student relationships are connected to other positive outcomes for students, academic and otherwise. Accordingly, this research was guided by three questions: “what is the nature of a positive teacher-student relationship?”, “What is the relational climate between participating teachers and students,” and “what practices or behaviors have led to the establishment of these relationships?”

To address these questions, a sequential, mixed-methods phenomenographical study was conducted in three phases. Phase One featured open-ended surveys distributed to 55 students and 84 teachers with questions regarding the nature of positive relationships. These data were used to create the Crownover Student Relationship Survey, a 31-item instrument with relational indicators to which respondents provide feedback via a 5-point Likert-type scale. In Phase Two, the Crownover Student
Relationship Survey was administered to 90 sophomores and five teachers to explore student conceptions of the relationships with those teachers. These data were analyzed and qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with participating teachers to uncover practices connected with the student scores. A factor analysis of the Phase Two survey data produced three factors which were then used as deductive themes for organizing the teacher interview data.

This study illuminates components of the teacher-student relationship and has led to the creation of the Crownover Student Relationship Survey, a measure which can be used by teachers as way of assessing student perceptions of the relational climate created by the teacher. These data can serve to highlight strengths and areas for teacher growth in the various relational capacities. Subsequent discussion provides insight into practices corresponding to specific parameters. Furthermore, the Crownover Student Relationship Survey data serves as a starting point for exploring the relationships among the various relational variables included as parameters.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

What is the purpose of school? Is it to obtain academic success for students by way of achievement scores or college-readiness? Perhaps job skills and employability should be the primary focus of education? Alternatively, the designed function of school may be to produce a specific type of citizenry. Who makes this determination, students? Teachers? Parents? Lawmakers? Upon determining what the goals of school are, how do we attain them?

Today, the answers to these questions are perhaps less clear than at any point in the past century. Parental survey responses demonstrate mixed opinions in the matter. (Phi Delta Kappa, 2016). Individual responses are interrelated with other questions about the role of the teacher, charter schools, accountability, and standardization. As the world changes and becomes more “flat” (Friedman, 2005), the U.S. economy, connected to the global economy, is evolving. College attendance has risen dramatically and what was once a unique opportunity has become an assumption for many K-12 curricula, students and families. The federal government has become increasingly involved in education since the 1957 Sputnik launch spurred a feverish focus on math and science. A moon landing and a quarter century later, the field of education once more became the whipping boy for national insecurities in the 1983 Nation at Risk report. The federal government would seek to rectify these identified shortcomings with the
Goals 2000 initiative and later, with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and then the Race to the Top Initiative of 2009. These initiatives have featured an ongoing push for the development and implementation of national standards in the form of the Common Core Curriculum and increased accountability for teachers and schools (Laughlin, 2013). Federal involvement has, in part, been in an attempt to balance the inequality of educational experiences from students around the country. The combination of these forces has created a system where states have responded to the Federal policy movement with standards and assessments of their own. In these overlapping systems, students and teachers are under tremendous pressure to demonstrate a certain kind of success. In these systems, numbers and content are more important than the people and expectations regarding content transmission and acquisition have created a national set of conditions which are not ideal for the individual students, or the teachers involved, or the profession of teaching, generally (Ravitch, 2010). Unfortunately, this is not the first historic moment when an obsession with results and efficiency perverted and dehumanized an endeavor.

At the close of the 19th century, America ushered in a new era as a global, industrial power. With her extensive raw materials and labor, the United States rose to dominate the western hemisphere politically and economically. This moment in American history gave rise to some of the wealthiest individuals to have ever lived. The likes of Andrew Carnegie, Cornelius Vanderbilt, J.P. Morgan, and John D. Rockefeller were great “captains of industry” from one perspective and “robber barons” from another. In an era with no unions, no child labor laws, minimal anti-trust statutes, no consumer or
environmental protections, owners and managers were able to focus almost exclusively on the bottom line. The refinement of steam power, the harnessing of electrical power, the invention of the Bessemer process, automobiles, airplanes and the development of the assembly line also made this a period of technological marvels. In this context, Frederick Winslow Taylor developed his *Principles of Scientific Management*, believing that a properly applied scientific approach could increase productivity and profit (Taylor, 1911). Among other things, Taylor performed a study to figure out the ideal weight for a shovel-load of materials (21 pounds) and the appropriate shovel size for lifting 21 pounds of different materials. Ultimately Taylor (1911) developed four principles which summarize his approach to industrial management:

1. Develop a science for each element of a man’s work, which replaces the old rule-of-thumb method.
2. Scientifically select and then train, teach, and develop the workman, whereas in the past, he chose his own work and trained himself as best he could.
3. Heartily cooperate with the men so as to insure all of the work being done in accordance with the principles of the science which has been developed.
4. Ensure that there is an almost equal division of the work and the responsibility between the management and the workmen. The management takes over all work for which they are better fitted than the workmen, while in the past almost all of the work and the greater part of the responsibility were thrown upon the men.

This approach led a number of businesses to greater productivity and made a name for Taylor in his day. A closer look at Taylor’s principles may identify some common
themes with education today. First, a general fixation with results and efficiency undergirds the approach. The first principle suggests implementation of a new data-driven strategy. The second hints at a loss of worker autonomy in the name of efficiency — rather than allow the worker to discover best practices and learn how to do the job, the worker should be given a target and instructed specifically how to meet it. The third of Taylor’s principles, optimistically beginning with “heartily cooperate” is accountability under a poor guise. Specifically, the workers need to make sure they are meeting the scientific standards and the management’s responsibility is to ensure that this is so. Lastly, principle four revisits the theme of reducing the autonomy of the worker, placing responsibility upon management. This could be compared to today’s focus on teacher accountability for results. An underlying assumption of the inequality between workers and management colors this statement, and highlights Taylor’s philosophy that workers should be thoughtless drones and that the output is the only concern. Taylorism enjoyed widespread, yet fortunately brief, popularity as a management philosophy. Unfortunately, his approaches, or similarly-conceived schemes, have bled into other fields and have now plagued education policymaking for decades. With any luck, education will evolve in a manner comparable to managerial theory.

In the 1920s, Harvard’s Business School began conducting experiments at the Hawthorne Electrical Plant outside of Chicago. These experiments were Taylorist in nature, seeking to empirically improve productivity. Elton Mayo, an Australian psychologist originally studying the effects of monotony, boredom, and fatigue, was hired by Harvard, due in part to his interest in psychological variables at play in industrial
settings. In time, he became involved in the Hawthorne experiments. The most notable findings from his time at Hawthorne came from observing a group of women working in a relay assembly room. The women were in their 20s and 30s and enjoyed a good deal of freedom and autonomy in the assembly room (Anteby and Kurash, 2012). In short, the research team attempted to manipulate a number of variables to try to improve efficiency. Manipulating lighting, break periods, lunch schedule and even pay, the productivity of the women continued to generally improve. Even when unfavorable scheduling or pay might have suggested a reduction, the output results did not correspond. What Mayo and the research team inadvertently discovered was that the focus upon the women, the separate setting which allowed for socialization and relative freedom from management and the evolution of the relationships among the women, all played a larger role in determining output than the other manipulated variables (Mayo, 1933). In his *Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization*, Mayo relates an almost comically-sad epiphany: “there is the feeling that better output is in some way related to the distinctly pleasanter, freer, and happier working conditions.” (p. 131) For Mayo and the Harvard Business School, this knowledge would help chart a course away from Taylorist principles and Scientific Management and towards a human-centered approach to management. Today, human-centered management is a healthy paradigm in management education (Lepeley, Kimakowitz, & Bardy, 2016).

As a secondary social studies teacher for the past eight years, I find myself waiting for education policymakers to have a similar epiphany, that education is foremost a human endeavor and any effort which prioritizes scores, strategies or technology as the
key element to success in schools is a misguided one that diminishes the profession and future society by failing to create environments which foster true learning, empathy and creativity.

Problem Statement

In the quest for international competitiveness, employability, college readiness, achievement and accountability, schools have become increasingly concerned with efficiency: how can students be taught the most content in the least time, achieve the highest scores and GPA? Much like the reductionist scientific approach espoused by Taylor, these objectives have created an environment in today’s schools where the student has become a data point, to be nudged along a projected growth trajectory via policies, methods or strategies that are often implemented without regard to the specific strengths of challenges of each student. Additionally, the volume of mandated content and the necessary pacing and pressure to perform, coupled with lower-order, high-stakes assessment have all contributed to the deterioration of the classroom environment. Teachers today must find way to know and honor and ultimately educate the individuals in the classroom. Only through quality relationships can teachers enact the powerful humanistic change necessary to empower individual students, nurture emotionally-healthy human beings rescue education and society generally from the current Taylorist path. This study is an initial inquiry into the type of change that may be possible if the field re-orient itself to humanistic concerns and shifts it focus from numbers to people.
Research Questions and Hypotheses

According to Clark and Badiee (2010), three main elements “define the focus of any study: the content area, the purpose, and the research questions” (p. 276). For this study, the “content area” was the teacher-student relationship. The “purpose” was to explore the nature of such relationships and through an increase in understanding, formulate approaches to foster healthy relationships. Lastly, the three research questions guiding the study are, one, “what is the nature of a positive teacher-student relationship?” After obtaining responses regarding what teachers and students believe to be characteristics of ideal relations, I examined: “what is the relational climate between participating teachers and students?” Finally, having gathered data about the relational climate among participants, teacher interviews were conducted to try to uncover “what practices or behaviors have led to the establishment of these relationships?”

Research Objectives

This study is a mixed-methods phenomenography which sought to gain critical understanding about the relational state in the participant teachers’ classrooms. Then, after obtaining data regarding the nature of those relationships, a qualitative interview with each participant reflected upon and tried to uncover the practices and processes which led to the quantitative results. At minimum, students were given the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback about their perceptions of the classroom relational environment and the participant teachers specifically considered the role of relationships in their classrooms. Teachers’ participation and reflection in this study led to the creation of list of practices that correspond to high student ratings which may be employed to
improve the relational environment of the participant teachers or others who are exposed to this research. Perhaps this study, taken with other future studies, will help to better define what positive teacher-student relationships look like, generally. For this researcher, this was a first step in to what will hopefully be a career spent studying how to build better classroom relationships in order to re-humanize teaching and learning.

Conceptual Framework

This project espoused a conceptual framework of critical humanism. In short, I believe that education is in need of a paradigm shift. That shift should bring focus to the unique goals, challenges, talents and characters of individual students. The means by which this shift can be enacted are through quality teacher-student relationships. Once we know students, we may begin to genuinely educate them.

Modern humanism is a direct response to the trends of the 19th and 20th century. Modern humanists, such as John Dewey, were shaped by their historic-political context. Indeed, John Dewey must be credited for many things, among them, bringing humanist concerns into the dialogue of modern American education. Situated within the Progressive movement, an impulse which characterized an American reaction against the dehumanization which accompanied industrialization and urbanization, Dewey and others endorsed a Humanist Manifesto in 1933 to articulate their beliefs regarding humanism, particularly as it pertained to education. The Manifesto asserts:

We assert that humanism will: (a) affirm life rather than deny it; (b) seek to elicit the possibilities of life, not flee from them; and (c) endeavor to establish the conditions of a satisfactory life for all, not merely for the few. By this
positive morale and intention humanism will be guided, and from this perspective and alignment the techniques and efforts of humanism will flow. (Humanist Manifesto, 1933, para. 18)

These sentiments represent the critical humanist impulse which underlies the movement towards a relational pedagogy.

Assumptions

There are certain assumptions, supported by my personal teaching experience as well as related research, that should be noted. First, while providing supporting literature, this study assumes that relationships are important in education. In particular, teacher-student relationships are significant for the potential impact, both positive and negative, that those relationships can facilitate on young people. As a corollary, relationships deserve more consideration in the education and professional development of teachers. A second assumption of this study is that human beings, specifically teachers, have the capacity to become better participants in their relationships. That people possess the capacity to better understand themselves and others and put that knowledge into effect is a foundational tenet of the fields of psychology and counseling. The implementation of this study assumed honest responses from the students and teacher participants. To promote honest participation, student responses were collected digitally and anonymously without the subject teacher present. The relationship between the researcher and the teacher participants, as well as the positive focus of the third stage interviews, should encourage sincere participation.
Limitations

Due to the specific access required, as well as the time constraints of the degree program, a convenience sample has limited the number of participant teachers and students to the home school of the teacher. As a dissertation project, the program timeline for completion has restricted the type of study possible. With more time, or in a future study, the data from the survey and the interviews could lead to action plans and a future implementation of the survey could demonstrate longitudinal change in the relational variables, either naturally or with an intervention. The timeline for this project also did not allow for further pilot testing of the instrument, Crownover’s Student Relationship Survey (CSRS). However, a single pilot test was conducted, and this project was another opportunity to evaluate the instrument.

Scope and Delimitations

Because relationships are unique to participants and the moment, the data from this study only provided relational data that pertained to the teacher and his or her students in the given moment. Ideally, these data revealed areas of strength and weakness in the pattern of responses across the approximately 100 relationships per teacher. The data also gave some indication of specific relational items which correlate with a high relational score, and suggested differences among student subgroups. However, the findings here may be, at best, an entry point into a study of relationships for these teacher participants. While the data may provide some useful insight for non-participants, the data will not generalizable. If the CSRS continues to demonstrate reliability and validity then, teachers in other secondary settings may conduct their own
administration and act on their own results. That being said, the Phase Three interview responses tied to specific indicators may prove useful to teachers in other settings without the specific data from a self-study.

Significance of the Study

If the findings of the study are not likely to be generalizable, who then benefits from the study? Fortunately, the teacher participants in the study worked in a school which had identified building quality relationships as important to student success. To this end, the school started an advisory program to provide an opportunity for students to interact with faculty on a consistent and casual basis, which facilitated the construction of such relationships. Furthermore, the teacher participants expressed more than a willingness to be involved in the project as a form of grade-level professional development. This study provided specific student data that those teachers can use to inform their own practice. It also provided an opportunity for discussion and collaboration in the creation of a best-practice list to be shared. Personally, I was excited that some of our grade level meetings as well as the administration and follow up interviews were time devoted to thinking about building good relationships. If this process was beneficial to the teacher participants and if they are effective in using the feedback and tweaking their practice, then future students of those teachers stand to benefit as well. The data obtained from this study may also be compared against future implementations to gain a better sense of patterns of relation and the relationships among relational variables and classroom practices. The study also provided an opportunity to gather more data on the instrument, the Crownover Student Relationship Survey.
Summary

I, along with others (Aspelin, 2014; Combs, 1982; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Laughlin, 2015; Noddings, 1992; Pianta, 1999; Ravitch, 2010; Sidorkin, 2000) believe that the pendulum in education has swung too far in the direction of testing and accountability and that the greater field of education needs to be refocused on creating environments in which students can be respected, feel secure, and enjoy all aspects of school life. The key component of this effort will be the development of positive teacher-student relationships. Through this study, initial steps towards establishing a conscious relational approach were taken by identifying the characteristics of positive relationships and then seeking to identify those characteristics enacted. Finally, the study identified classroom practices that have contributed to the development of such practices.

Chapter two will feature a discussion of the pertinent literature upon which this relational project is situated as well as literature from other fields that informed the course of this project. Chapter three will focus on the methodology for this sequential mixed-methods study. The fourth chapter will feature results from the study and chapter five will include a discussion of the findings and implications of the study.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study involved a journey into fields as seemingly-unrelated as nursing, industrial psychology, and counseling in order to uncover a means by which education may be relationally re-oriented. The following chapter is a discussion of the findings from those diverse fields, as well as the foundational work which has already occurred within the field of education in order to advance the cause of prioritizing relationships in schools.

Humanistic Education through Caring Relations

As a teacher frustrated to work in this age of accountability, saddened to see good students brow-beaten over the quest to temporarily grasp insignificant minutiae, I have worked to swim against the tide and create an island refuge in the middle of this endless stream of assessments. My research is an effort to identify a way to swim upstream and perhaps even redirect the current away from standardization, dehumanization, an obsession with the cognitive domain of education, and toward a system in which students feels acknowledged, inspired and empowered, a system in which the goal is not to produce the smartest young people, but the happiest, most well-rounded young people. This approach is connected with a deep tradition of humanism within education and seeks to develop and utilize teacher-student relationships as medium through which the most important sort of human work might be achieved. I will examine the connection between
a framework of humanism, a relational ontology, a relational epistemology and ultimately a relational pedagogy and the goals of this research. In short, unlocking human potential is possible through powerful relationships and the classroom provides perhaps the best venue for constructing these kinds of relationships.

Humanism and Humanistic Education

From the widest lens, this is a project grounded in a personal affinity for the tenets of modern secular humanism. First, some disambiguation of the term “humanism” is necessary. Historically, humanism was an intellectual movement originating in Europe, specifically Italy, in the 14th century. Generally speaking, humanism grew contrary to the predominant philosophy of learning: medieval scholasticism. Humanism brought with it an appreciation of “classical” knowledge and texts surviving from Ancient Greece and Rome. These texts and their gradual dissemination in the vernacular had a dramatic impact on European thought. Unlike medieval scholasticism, which was largely Biblically focused on the sinful nature of man, the classical texts offered an optimistic view of human nature and human capabilities in a wide variety of subject matter, from law, to drama, to poetry. This movement provided an intellectual foundation for the Renaissance, which continued to celebrate human form, human emotion, and a new sort of education in the “humanities.” This historic movement is loosely related to the modern day philosophy of humanism as it connected the emphasis on the individual to the importance of learning, the ultimate goal of which was to enable a human flourishing.

Today, “humanism is an open worldview that stresses personal autonomy and humanity… education from a humanist perspective focuses on developing rationality,
autonomy, empowerment, creativity, affections and a concern for humanity” (Veugelers, 2001, p. 1). While there are many interpretations and applications of humanism, it is no longer married exclusively to a curriculum of classical, liberal education and has come to be understood more generally as a worldview concerned with the agency, potential and value of human beings.

I am interested in the modern manifestation of humanism encompassed within critical theory. The works of Paulo Freire (2000), Henry Giroux (1983, 2011), and Peter McLaren (2007) are particularly salient for their emphasis on critical pedagogy or a re-imagining of the system of education, which might lead to the liberation or empowerment of students. The notion of using education as a medium of dramatic social change is at the heart of this project. This critical, pedagogical impulse, paired with the approaches and insights from humanistic psychology, have the promise of creating positive change.

In psychology, Carl Rogers (1959, 1969, 1989, 2013) and Arthur Combs’ (1962, 1965, 1979, 1982) advocated for a person-centered approach to therapy and as well as other helping professions, particularly education. Their humanistic work revolutionized the field of counseling but has yet to be incorporated into educational practice, unable to withstand A Nation at Risk (1983) and the decades of accountability-focused reform that would follow; the person-centered initiatives by Combs, Rogers and others would give way to the paranoia of underperformance and international impotence.

In this research study, I hoped to place developing and maintaining positive teacher-student relationships at the center of the educational endeavor and through these relationships, effect a foundational change in the student experience. This approach
combines critical pedagogy with the methods and insights of person-centered psychology in order to advance the goals of humanistic education: to acknowledge and empower students. The medium through which this change is to be enacted is the teacher-student relationship. By fostering powerful relationships, teachers can fully appreciate the student as a person and only then, effectively assist in the student’s human development.

The Relational Approach

Relationships are “enduring connections between two individuals, uniquely characterized by degrees of continuity, shared history, and interdependent interactions across settings and activities” (Wentzel, 2012, p. 20). Not only are relationships central to this study and education generally, but to all of human existence. What follows is a discussion of the significance of human relationships with regard to the ontological, epistemological and pedagogical stance of the researcher. Each of these philosophical positions acknowledges the centrality of human interconnectedness and the implications of this aspect of the human phenomenon for the way we live, grow, learn, think, and ultimately, how we should educate.

Relational ontology

The significance of relationships extends beyond the classroom to the metaphysical level. A relational ontology posits that all of human existence occurs in relation. Wildman (2010) asserted that:

the basic contention of a relational ontology is simply that the relations between entities are ontologically more fundamental than the entities themselves. This
contrasts with substantivist ontology in which entities are ontologically primary
and relations ontologically derivative. (Wildman, 2010, p. 55)

Even the self is always a socially-situated self. There can be no conception of an “I”
without a conception of “other” or “not I.” All knowledge and learning and existence
relational ontology has been espoused by existential philosophers Heidegger (1962) and

The relational ontological position has risen in contrast to the long-standing
Cartesian framework, in which the individual is thought to be separable from the social
environment and independently analyzable and understood. In a relational ontology, the
extraction of person from environment is not possible. Gergen (2009b) occupies an
extreme position among relational theorists, that humans exist in relationships and the
individual is a mere abstraction, only an aspect or byproduct of relationships. For
Gergen, there is only the relation. His theoretical perspective leaves no room for any
individual agency, or persistence of behaviors and characteristics of the individual across
social contexts, or for there to be an impact upon the individual by institutions or
nonsocial elements such as the physical world or the human body. (Westerman, 2013).
The approach advocated by Westerman, the “participatory perspective” (2004, 2013)
more closely aligns with the beliefs of this researcher, as it allows for individual agency
while still according human relations a central position for human social development.

While considering human relation at a metaphysical level, Buber (2002)
articulated distinct categories of human interaction. His conceptualization is a dichotomy
between relationships characterized either as “I-it” relations or “I-Thou” relations (Buber, 2002). The I-it relationship features interactions in which humans regard one another essentially as objects. In contrast, the I-Thou relation is poetically described as a circumstance in which one person turns away from himself or herself and toward another person metaphorically and then “opens” to fully acknowledge and accept the other. No relation is fixed and two people may enjoy both types of interactions between them in different circumstances, however, the I-it type of relational interaction characterizes most human exchanges. Buber further classified interactions between individuals as either “monologue” or “dialogue” (2002). The monologic action occurs in an I-it relation, there is a single direction for communication with little regard to the spoken to. This type of exchange may occur when ordering a meal from a fast food restaurant—words are spoken but rarely is the form of genuine human acknowledgement described by Buber in an I-Thou relation achieved. Frighteningly, these types of interactions may be too commonly found in classrooms as well. Buber advocated for dialogic interactions in which “each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them” (Buber, 2002, p. 19). These types of interactions are rich, significant, desirable, and should constitute the majority of teacher-student interactions. Such a teacher would be a genuine teacher interested in the whole student “both in the actuality in which he lives before you now and in his possibilities, what he can become” (Buber, 2002, p. 123).
Famous sociologist Nobert Elias (1984) outlined a similar relational dichotomy between the *homo clausus*, a subjective and closed individual, capable of a predominately inward focus despite being socially situated, and a *hominis aperti*, an intersubjective, open, and relational being. In education, the plural, social, *hominis aperti* (opened men) are capable of participating in the type of relation which might affect the most change. Educators should consider these dichotomies and reflect upon their own positionality theoretically and relationally. Buber encourages striving for establishing I-Thou as a goal across all contexts, yet acknowledges that this is not possible. Even for people closely connected, some of the individual exchanges may not involve the level of acknowledgement accorded to an I-Thou relation. The goal is to maximize the frequency of such occurrences. Not only are humans fundamentally situated in relation, this situatedness means that all knowledge is obtained and transmitted in this necessarily social context.

Relational epistemology

“We come into being in and through relationship…. It follows that our knowledge of the world is mediated by our relationships with those around us, particularly those to whom we are most attached” (Lysaker & Furuness, 2011, p.187). A relational ontology naturally begets a relational epistemology. Our knowing is colored by the fundamental circumstances of our existence. Epistemology is, in short, the nature of knowledge and knowing. As with ontology, a number of competing beliefs about knowledge exist in the arena of academic thought. An epistemological stance necessarily answers questions about how knowledge is created or established and transmitted. The
dominant epistemological view from the Scientific Revolution until the middle of the 20th century was one which held knowledge to be objective and capable of encapsulating universal Truths. This epistemological view treats knowledge as a thing existing “out there” to be discovered by individuals using reason.

Postmodernists, feminists and pragmatists alike have challenged this prevailing epistemology on a number of grounds. Barbara Thayer-Bacon (2009) has been a strong advocate for a “relational epistemology.” A relational epistemology embraces a social constructivist view of knowledge. Thayer-Bacon (2009) asserted that: “we become knowers and are able to contribute to the constructing of knowledge due to the relationships we have with others” (p. 2). Social constructivism as an epistemology is well founded in education. Lev Vygotsky’s (1978) “zone of proximal development” situates learning and development firmly within a social context. Furthermore, Vygotsky emphasized the importance between adults and children (or pairings between persons stronger and weaker in a certain capacity) for growth. Unlike Buber’s (2002) assertion that relations must be mutual to have genuine “dialogue,” Vygotsky provided a framework which more naturally adapts to a specific educational context. Relatedly, Bandura’s (1977) Social Learning Theory outlines a process by which external social stimuli become internalized as knowledge. He stated:

Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed,
and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. (p. 22) Together, these researchers have outlined the social nature of knowledge and knowledge transmission.

While I am reluctant to attribute the generation of all knowledge to the social context, certainly knowledge regarding the phenomenon of the relation is socially constructed, as the relation itself is. Furthermore, the relational epistemological stance advocated by Thayer-Bacon allows for a joint exploration into subjective realms of knowledge. There are no absolutes regarding relationships; any inquiry into the phenomenon will necessarily be situated and subjective or at least negotiated from such positions. This framework allows for a move away from absolutist conceptions of knowledge and helps erode the dichotomies of mind/body and rational/irrational—dichotomies which Thayer-Bacon (2009) posited to constitute an “androcentric epistemology” (p. 6). By dividing body and mind, rational and irrational, the latter of each pairing has been prized and associated with men while the former has been subjected and related more strongly to feminine forms of knowledge. A relational epistemology allows for a conception of knowledge that can be both affective and epistemological, involving what Thayer-Bacon (2003) called the “wholistic bodymind” (p. 4). This approach might be considered a critical epistemology as it seeks to challenge the “hegemony of epistemology” (Siegfried, 1997), and embrace gynocentric modes of thought. A relational epistemology is appropriately-tailored for an inquiry into human relationships in that it allows for a constructed view of the phenomenon, allows for affective input and represents a break from traditional “objective” epistemological views.
and all that they represent and value. It “allows not only for empirics but also for the advancement of aesthetics, ethical values, intuition, personal knowing, spiritual insights, along with a process of discovery, creating imagine, (and) evolving forms of inquiry” (Watson, 2008, p. 4). For education, new knowledge must be sought, constructed and prized so that revolutionary, effective, humanistic pedagogy might be established.

Relational pedagogy

If ontologically, all of human existence occurs in relation and knowledge is, at minimum, heavily influenced by social context, then the significance of relationships and their existential primacy and educative potential must be acknowledged, studied and harnessed towards great humanistic purpose. Stronge (2002) describes means and importance of establishing a relation pedagogy thus:

Teachers and students spend most of the day interacting academically however, it is the social interactions that give the teacher opportunities to demonstrate caring, fairness and respect, important elements of teacher effectiveness. A teacher’s ability to relate to students and to make positive, caring connections (plays) a significant role in cultivating a positive learning environment and promoting student achievement. (p. 26)

An understanding of the significance of a positive relation in education might be traced even to Socrates, who gave consideration to the compatibility of teacher and pupil attributes before recommending tutors (Mintz, 2007). The relation is particularly important because education occurs not in the mind of the student or the actions of the teacher, but in the relational space that connects them. Biesta (2004) notes, “It is the gap
itself that educates“ (p. 18). The act of reaching, connecting across difference and space and the reshaping to accommodate the experience that results from these actions, is learning. The relationship is the site of, and the medium through which, education occurs. The intuitive premise that relationships have potential to aid or hinder the educative process is one not likely to be disputed by any individual who has spent time in a classroom and loved or hated a teacher and experienced the residual effect on feelings and performance in the class. Certainly any educator with a larger data set regardless of different ages, subjects, or students can speak towards a pattern of cooperation and success or conflict and a lack of success for students. Nonetheless, it is worth reviewing the literature about the potential impact relationships may have on the educative process and student experience.

As I began to explore this topic, I conducted exploratory surveys to students and teachers to try to assess whether or not the importance of relationships was a specific feature in my approach to teaching or whether others shared the sentiment. Eighty-two teacher respondents at a public high school were asked: “How important are positive-teacher student relationships to student success?” On a 10-point Likert scale, with 1 being “not at all important” and 10 being “essential,” the average response from teachers was 7.4. The same question, posed to 96 freshmen students, received an average response of 7.8. Interestingly, among the students, two honors classes with a higher average socioeconomic status and comprised of predominantly of Caucasian students responded to this question similarly to two non-honors courses populated by mostly minority students. The means for each group were 7.7 and 7.9 respectively. Yet, their
responses to the follow up questions about the nature of the ideal relationship differed, a subject for later discussion. However, this rudimentary inquiry seemed to suggest that teachers and students generally see some value in positive relationships and that inclination is reinforced by the recent literature.

Significance of Relationships

Recognizing the importance of relationships, a growing number of researchers (Hattie, 2009, Nodenbro et al. 2008, Kolverket, 2009; Aspelin, 2012 (as cited in Aspelin, 2014)), have suggested that a relational capacity in teachers has potential for positive change across a number of indicators. According to meta research by the American Psychological Association (2015), “positive teacher student relationships …have been shown to support students’ adjustment to school, contribute to their social skills, promote academic performance and foster resiliency (Battstich, Schaps & Wilson, 2004; Curby, Rimm-Kaufmann, & Ponitz 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Rudasill, Reio, Stipanovic and Taylor 2010)” as cited in Rimm-Kaufman and Sandilos (2015, para. 2). Further research suggests that students in positive teacher-student relationships have better attendance, show more individual initiative, are more cooperative and demonstrate increased engagement (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Decker, Dona, & Christenson, 2007; Klem & Connell, 2004). These types of positive relationships have also been linked to an increase in motivation (Wentzel, 2009). Students who reported positive relationships also reported liking school more overall (Birch & Ladd, 1997). This body of research suggests that teachers able to build strong relationships may witness a number of positive effects in their students and classrooms. The next consideration must be: “what does a
positive teacher-student relationship look like?” Ultimately, “how can teachers go about the process of creating and maintaining these relationships?”

The Nature of the Teacher-Student Relationship

The teacher-student relationship is unique. These are relationships with an agenda, sometimes opposing agendas, relationships which inherently include an imbalance in power and often an age or generational gap, sometimes a racial, gender or cultural gap as well. Oftentimes, these relationships feature many of those potential expanses between teacher and student. The asymmetrical nature of the relation too often serves as a barrier towards construction of the most productive kinds of learning relationships, as many teachers are unable or unwilling to modify the power dynamic, which is predicated upon institutional authority invested in the teacher; the ability to punish the student, power over the student’s academic outcomes, a disparity in age and relevant knowledge. That being said, it is possible to establish rich relationships with students.

In education or otherwise, trust is an important component to any relationship. Trust allows the student to accept the information, advice, or care of the teacher (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004; Noddings, 2005). Positive classroom relationships are characterized by “low self-conflict, a high degree of closeness and support, and little dependency” (Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2015, para. 2). They are “emotionally close, safe, and trusting [and] provide access to instrumental help and who foster a more general ethos of community and caring in classrooms” (Wentzel, 2012, p.19). Furthermore, “relationships with a personal sense of power and agency, predictability and safety,
useful resources and reciprocity are believed to be optimal for the internalization of social influence (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007, as cited in Wentzel, 2012, p. 20). Students describe inclusive, caring, egalitarian environments as including clear expectations and constructive feedback (Hoy & Weinstein 2006). Teachers with a strong relational capacity can relate to student’s actual person and potential existence (Buber, 2002). On the other hand, negative relationships have been related to increased levels of anxiety and depression in students (Murray & Greenberg, 2000). One approach to fostering ideal relationships with students is by caring for the person rather than the outcome and through care, identifying how we as teachers can help students realize their own aspirations rather than those we have assigned to them.

Nodding’s Curriculum of Care

Surely teachers all already care for students? Why else join a relatively low-paying and evermore scrutinized profession? Nel Noddings (2005) has defined a vision of caring that stretches beyond the prevailing general concern about student success which is non-specific and non-effective. Within the predominant model of the current system, the individual is irrelevant. The system is designed to mass-produce a person with some fleeting grasp on arguably trivial content minutiae. For policymakers, the students are nameless, faceless, future cogs in the economy. Much is at stake if the system continues on its present course. A system without care produces citizens without care and educators frustrated by the current orientation of the field are not alone.

Voices in the diverse fields of economics, bioethics, philosophy, education and social sciences, poets and street singers alike, along with both historic and
contemporary writers and scholars in nursing and caring science acknowledge the real ethical, moral and philosophical consequences for society, for civilization, for humanity and for the survival of our planet when our values do not address social/moral justice for humankind but instead perpetuate a noncaring ethos.

(Watson, 2008, p. 56)

Echoing Watson’s urgent call for a more-caring world, Nel Noddings, noted educational scholar and feminist, has long advocated for a caring reconceptualization of the mission of education. She described her approach to education through caring as a “pre-theoretical.” “My particular philosophy of education is important to me… but the living other is more important than any theory, and my theory must be subordinate to the caring relationship” (Noddings, 2005, xviii).

While embracing constructivist approaches and student-centered pedagogy generally, Noddings (2005) urged for a reconsideration of the enacted purpose of education. She lamented the “single-minded emphasis” on academic achievement as interpreted by test scores (Noddings, 2005). Others have echoed this sentiment regarding the “trivialization of education” (Noddings, 2005, xiii), that an over-emphasis on cognitive learning as the primary focus of modern education leaves students with a “deficit of emotional skills” (Boyd, McNeil, & Sullivan, 2006). Noddings suggested an approach in which caring takes center stage as the goal of education as well as the medium through which education might occur.

If polled, surely most teachers would answer in the affirmative with regard to concern or care for their students (Noddings, 2005). However, her work. A Curriculum
of Care, is careful to distinguish between a type of care which is patriarchal, predetermined, controlling—a sort of “father knows best” approach to schooling and care and one which truly identifies and responds to individual student attributes and aspirations and challenges. She described this preferred type of caring as “engrossment,” in which the “soul empties itself of all its own contents in order to receive the other” (Noddings, 2005, p. 16). This style of caring involves an interruption in self-focus, at least temporarily, to be able to fully consider the needs or aspirations of another, in this case, of the student.

More importantly, the caring assertion of any teacher is less important than the acknowledged care on behalf of the student. Without the feeling of care by the cared-for, there can be no “caring relation,” the signals are not being received, the package is not being delivered and the end result is an incomplete circuit of caring. Noddings (2005) cited disheartening statistics from a Girl Scouts of America survey (1989) in which only one third of the students felt that their teachers cared for them. This survey was administered in a pre-No Child Left Behind era and one might imagine a re-administration in this present “age of accountability” might yield an even lower figure. As class sizes have grown and assessments dominate teacher concerns, education has taken great strides towards sterilizing and standardizing the student experience. This trend towards dehumanization must be reversed. Regarding explicit and reductionist academic objectives, tied to standards created by distant policy-makers, Noddings (2005) noted:
Teachers are not interchangeable; they cannot be regarded as delivery systems or treatments. Nor are children interchangeable. One impish grin in the middle of a lesson can change what follows… people are not reducible to methods… this form of reduction is called automation and it simply does not apply to interpersonal activities. (p. 8)

Human relations are infinitely complex and while no handbook with provisions on how to masterfully navigate each one with guaranteed success will ever exist, I hope that a conscious, relational approach will yield some helpful insight and practices for use, a method by which teachers may begin to evaluate their own relational capacities.

The homogenization of education fails to consider the unique human variables involved and this approach can count tens of thousands of students among its casualties. Students who failed, or dropped out, or felt like a number or a part on an assembly line, who tolerated education instead of loving it, who “went through the motions” and passed, who studied for a test and immediately forgot the personally meaningless material afterward, who felt like a failure because their intelligences (Gardner, 2003) were not those prized by the system, who achieved great academic success with little-to-no moral development or respect for mankind— all of these kids have been underserved by the current system.

Knowledge of the disciplines need not be sacrificed in this re-imagined system for education. Indeed, academic content can serve as a powerful medium for the goals of humanistic education. As a social studies teacher, my curriculum is rich with content matter to explore human capacity and through such exploration, connect the individual
students to the content, to one another, and the world. Beyond content as a means to a humanistic end, there is surely some base knowledge that each student might find useful and necessary regardless of his or her ultimate pursuits. The nature and content of this essential corpus is a matter for consideration another day but I would generally advocate for a reduction in the current volume of “essential knowledge” to allow more room and time for the pursuit of students’ interests and reduce the number of consequential assessments over such required knowledge. At present, the tendency to prioritize academic content to the extent that all else is neglected or sacrificed is to reduce the significance of schools and teachers. In such a system, teachers become peddlers of factual trinkets yet the mission of education is far grander.

If the school has one main goal, a goal that guides the establishment and priority of all others, it should be to promote the growth of students as healthy, competent, moral people. This is a huge task to which all others are properly subordinated.

(Noddings, 2005, p. 10)

The neglect of this charge in recent decades has been to the detriment of students, the reputations of schools, and the teaching profession.

For a teacher, much of value can be accomplished regardless of whether or not a student can “Use the method of completing the square to transform any quadratic equation in \(x\) into an equation of the form \( (\Box - \Box)^2 = q \) that has the same solutions” or, “Compare prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells in terms of their general structures (plasma membrane and genetic material) and degree of complexity” (North Carolina Extended Standards, 2016). A student failing to accomplish either of these objectives might still
learn to study and communicate effectively with teachers and peers and identify other interests within science and math that lead to productive careers. Students may also possess interests entirely outside of these subjects and live incredibly fulfilling lives in pursuit of those interests. This criticism is not to dismiss the standards movement or accountability entirely, but rather to advocate for a recalibration which allows for a consideration of other indicators of school success. This study hoped to produce a different kind of data for teachers to implement into their professional growth.

Beyond the standardized goals or desired academic outcomes which might be connected to subject matter, school is a place of personal social growth and experimentation. Schools play a vital role in socialization (Jones, 2014), giving students a space to discover themselves and their beliefs, develop their social capacities and practice skills that will be more of more consequence to them across a lifetime of social interactions than those cognitive skills or factual knowledge proscribed by content standards. Teachers should acknowledge and aid this process as they are able. Noddings (2005) has discussed at length the inappropriateness of a liberal education for all, citing: “most of what we teach… is not necessary for every life, and much of what is necessary never appears in that curriculum” (p. 37). The affective domain of education is important and should not be sacrificed in pursuit of the cognitive. Noddings asserted that schools need to help students approach existential questions of values and selfhood and importantly, the situated nature of the self via relations to others and the world. Noddings’ Curriculum of Care provides an approach to this objective through a reimagination of the curriculum that places the humanity of the student as the focal point.
and that, after existing within a climate of care, students might go forth to be carers themselves. Noddings has developed a vision and theory of caring that has yet to find its way into systemic practice. To advance these goals in education, it may prove beneficial to analyze other social, helping professions that have had more success in implementing human-centered practice.

In the field of nursing, Jean Watson has been able to move care from a theory into a conscious, embodied practice and her impact on nursing science has been to help shift the profession away from a merely custodial, administrative, functional field, to something elevated; where real caring transactions occur and humanity bridges the gap between practitioner and patient.

Watson’s Human Caring Theory

“This caring science seeks to honor the depth, humility, connection, compassion, responsibility and concern for human welfare and optimal human development” (Watson, 2008, p. 58).

Jean Watson is an eminent scholar in the field of nursing and pioneer in the field of Caring Science. Her work over decades has led to the development of Watson’s Caring Theory, which has influenced this study in a number of ways. First, Watson created an initial list of ten carative factors, or attributes demonstrated by carers enacting Watson’s theory. The carative factors, listed in Table 1, provide an overview of the nature of caring-in-nursing as envisioned by Watson.
A brief review of the carative factors reveals that, general in nature, these factors express sentiments easily understood in an educational context. Indeed Watson’s theory, while designed with nursing in mind, is exportable to other helping professions, such as education, in which caring behaviors may be demonstrated. In time, Watson’s carative factors evolved into clinical caritas processes (Table 2). Watson’s factors and processes provide a rich framework for a relational approach to nursing. Furthermore, they provided a foundation upon which curriculum of caring practice in nursing could be developed. In fact, such a curriculum has been developed and is actively implemented. This project hopes to develop a similar set of essential caring attributes, behaviors and practices for education.

**Table 1**

*Watson’s Carative Factors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Formation of a humanistic-altruistic value system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Instillation of faith-hope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Cultivation of sensitivity to one’s self and to others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Promotion and acceptance of expression of positive and negative feelings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Promotion of interpersonal teaching learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Provision for supportive, protective, or corrective mental, physical, sociocultural, and spiritual environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Allowance for existential-phenomenological-spiritual forces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

*Watson’s Caritas Processes*

| 1: Cultivating Practice of Loving-Kindness and Equanimity Toward Self and Other |
| 2: Being Authentically Present: Enabling, Sustaining and Honoring Faith and Hope |
| 3: Cultivation of One’s Own Spiritual Practices and Transpersonal Self, Going Beyond Ego-Self |
| 4: Developing and Sustaining a Helping-Trust Caring Relationship |
| 5: Being Present to, and Supportive of, the Expression of Positive and Negative Feelings |
| 6: Creative Use of Self and All Ways of Knowing as Part of the Caring Process; Engage in the artistry of Caritas |
| 7: Engage in Genuine Teaching-Learning Experience That Attends to Unity of Being and Subjective Meaning – Attempting to Stay Within Other’s Frame of Reference |
| 8: Creating a Healing Environment at All Levels |
| 9: Administering Sacred Acts of Caring-Healing by Tending to Basic Needs |
| 10: Opening and Attending to Spiritual/Mysterious and Existential Unknowns of Life-Death |


Another feature of Watson’s caring theory is the transpersonal caring relationship. In this relationship, the carer “goes beyond an objective assessment, showing concerns toward the person’s subjective and deeper meaning regarding their own… situation” (Cara, 2003, p. 53). Reminiscent of Buber’s *I-Thou*, the transpersonal relationship features moral commitment to enhancing human dignity, and a full embodiment of the other, so that the person is never reduced to the status of an object (Watson, 1999). The term “transpersonal” refers to the act of moving beyond one’s own self, crossing the distance between to individuals for a full, spiritual embrace of the other. The final goal is to protect and enhance and preserve the person’s “dignity, humanity, wholeness and inner harmony” (Cara, 2003, p. 53). This transpersonal relationship is
comprised of a number of “caring moments,” described by Watson (2008) as being:
“informed action guided by an intentionality and consciousness of how to be in the
moment- fully present, open to the other person, open to compassion and connection,
beyond the ego-control focus that is so common” (p. 5). This is Buber’s “dialogue” and
Noddings’ vision of a caring relationship.

To advance caring science theory, scholars within nursing have developed a
number of measures geared toward understanding the experience of the cared-for.
Watson (2015) hoped to “take (caring) from the margins, as ad-hoc practices and make it
a full, mature professional practice model to transform ourselves and our systems from
the inside out” (vii). Toward this end, the non-profit Watson Caring Science Institute was
founded in 2008 in Boulder, Colorado. The institute offers training, creates materials and
publications, conducts conferences, sponsors guest speakers, offers post-doctoral
fellowships and participates in other endeavors to promote caring science
(www.wastsoncaringscience.org). The institute is also involved in research, notably, the
production of the Watson Caritas Patient Score (WCPS), developed for use in caring
science research projects. This instrument is used to obtain patient feedback about the
caring behaviors and caring experiences which may have occurred during their hospital
stay (WSC1, 2016). In addition to the WCPS, at least 22 instruments have been designed
and implemented in order to assess or explore factors related to a caring approach
(Watson, 2009). These instruments will be explored in greater depth in relation to the
methodological approach for this project, but they should be mentioned here as a notable
part of Watson’s and others’ efforts to formalize an approach to caring, to create a caring “science.”

Measuring Care

Despite the title, caring is artistry, often incompatible with an institution’s policies or procedures, in an attempt to remedy this, caring science has done much to formalize an approach to care and has lent itself to the development of a number of instruments designed to measure patient experiences with an eye to the humanistic and caring elements of their patient experiences (Watson, 2009). In the field of psychology, Barrett-Lennard (2015), who studied with Carl Rogers, and who shares his humanistic approach, has been working on developing an instrument, the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (BLRI) for more than 50 years (Barrett-Lennard, 2015). This popular and statistically credible instrument is used to examine relationship quality, predominantly in counseling settings and will be explored further in the methodology section of this paper. However, education can and should make similar steps towards formalizing a caring approach and assessing caring and caring environments by utilizing student feedback.

Robert Pianta is perhaps the foremost scholar working in formal relational assessment in education. Beyond instrument development, he has created an entire system of evaluation for classrooms, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS-S), and has founded the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL). Despite the success of his programs and the center, his focus and methods are not entirely appropriate for my theoretical framework, nor this project, though his general approach toward improving relationships and the student experience is foundational.
Pianta’s earliest attempts were to gain insight into relationships by administering a Likert-type survey to teachers. The Student Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS), developed by Pianta (1992), was focused on relationships between elementary school students and teachers, and perhaps student reporting at such a young age is more problematic than with older students, hence the teacher-centered approach. His more recent approach to assessing the classroom environment, the CLASS-S evaluation system, relies on contracting trained observers to conduct four, fifteen-minute classroom observations (University of Virginia, 2015). While these measures have been validated and widely used, I believe that the student voice should be represented in an inquiry into the classroom or relational environment.

The inclusion of the student voice has many advocates. Most notably, a recent initiative by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project, published the report: “Asking Students About Teaching: Student Perception Surveys and their Implementation” (2012). The report noted that: “student surveys produce more consistent results than classroom observations” (p. 2). In this vein of student inclusion, Harvard Professor Ron Ferguson has developed a framework called Tripod which involves student surveys. The Tripod includes content, pedagogy and relationships as its three “legs,” or channels to impact the educative process. As represented by the content and pedagogy legs in the analogy, the Tripod is still tied to strongly to academic content and student achievement. As the model was presented to North Carolina educators who were to be evaluated using Tripod, the dimensions of student success were stated as: achievement gains, development of healthy dispositions,
and quality of life (Ferguson, 2011). The Tripod has helped to establish a framework of “7 c’s” that, along with the student input via Likert-type surveys, is certainly germane to the goals of this project. The 7c’s framework, established by the Tripod and the data from its instruments, seeks to identify effective teaching in the categories of: care, confer, captivate, clarify, consolidate, challenge and classroom management. While a number of these categories, such as captivate or consolidate, are certainly a part of quality teaching, they and the overall focus of the Tripod initiative are primarily academic. Indeed the Tripod was first developed as a means to close the achievement gap and so, the humanistic focus of Dr. Ferguson’s efforts and the inclusion of student data still exist as means toward academic ends, foremost.

Other organizations have created similar instruments; the Survey of Teacher Practice (STeP) was created by My Student Survey, an organization created in 2010 as a part of Georgia’s Race to the Top application (“Our Story” http://mystudentsurvey.com). STeP is used as a way for teachers to gain insight into their performance across all of the various roles that a teacher must play: presenter, manager, counselor, coach, motivator, and content expert. This instrument has been used in grades 3-12 with more than 10,000 students and was, along with the Tripod survey, featured in the MET project in addition to other validating studies. This instrument, particularly the role of “counselor,” is related to the current study but retains an overall concern about performance.

Pianta’s STRS, Ferguson’s Tripod and the STeP work are important in their success at raising interest in measuring performance aspects of schools and teachers beyond standardized test scores and academic growth. Though none of these instruments
goes so far as to abandon all regard for achievement, I appreciate the concern
demonstrated by each for the holistic student experience and believe schools should shift
towards focusing on variables that suggest student well-being versus achievement alone.
As Noddings (2005) inquired: “for what should schools be held accountable? Surely
…more than test scores in basic reading, mathematics and science” (p.xiv)? The mission
of teachers is a human one, nobler than instruction within the academic disciplines alone.
The research of Pianta, the MET project, the Tripod project and the STeP survey
represent an important move to include the human experience in the way we evaluate
success in education. This study seeks to continue in that vein and specifically focus on
the process of understanding caring relationships in the classroom as perceived by
students, that teachers may use this information to improve practice and create a better
environment for fostering human growth and student success in the broadest sense. This
goal, while not entirely divorced of all consideration of academic achievement,
supersedes that objective and holds that building positive relationships and creating
positive relational environment is an end worth pursuing in its own right. While
academic achievement is likely to be increased in such environments, and relational goals
are not mutually exclusive from achievement goals, this project’s focus is on individuals
in relation with little concern for academic outcomes. The CSRS is a means by which
teachers can start to focus on the student experience of relational variables and begin to
“take public responsibility for raising healthy, competent, happy children” (Noddings,
Conclusion

Watson’s work “emerged from (her) quest to bring new meaning and dignity to the work and the world of nursing and patient care” (1997, p. 49). Tremendous progress towards these ends has been accomplished. Caring science has been developed into a formal approach to the practice of nursing and features in the curricula of nursing programs around the country, as well as in hospitals themselves. Furthermore, practitioners possess methods by which patient input can be obtained and a formal assessment of the caring mission can occur. This connection between theory and education and practice is my ultimate goal. I hope that a similar accomplishment might occur in education: for caring to be promoted within colleges of education, espoused by individual teachers and supported in schools. First, an exploration into the nature of relationships in education is necessary. Noddings, Sidorkin, Wubbels, Aspelin, Rogers, Combs, Barrett-Lennard and Watson herself have begun the process of imagining such a reality and even discussing potential steps towards its realization. “What tomorrow needs is not masses of intellectuals, but masses of educated men- men educated to feel and to act as well as to think” (Silberman, 1970, p. 7). Scholars like Pianta and Ferguson and initiatives like STeP and MET and Tripod have recently begin to introduce these concerns into the dialogue of school and teacher success. Situated firmly within an epistemological and ontological framework that highlights the fundamental interconnectedness of human existence, I hope to focus exclusively on the relational environment in order to explore and ultimately improve teacher-student relationships,
that they can be the medium through which the highest humanistic ideals for education
might be obtained.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Developing positive teacher-student relationships is a complex, yet vital task. Intuitively, any individual who has spent time in a classroom as a teacher or student should be able to observe the pattern of positive relationships between teachers and students and an increased likelihood that the goals of education may be obtained. Rather than rely on the intuitive argument alone to justify a relational study, a growing body of research, discussed in chapter two, suggests that fostering strong teacher-student relationships may lead to a number of desirable educational outcomes, from student motivation and engagement, to attendance, to better behavior, and increased academic performance (Aspelin, 2012, 2014; Battstich, Schaps, & Wilson, 2004; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Decker, Dona, & Christenson, 2007; Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Klem & Connell, 2004; Wentzel, 2009, 2010, 2012). A relational approach to education, which is concerned foremost with the individual human experience of the student, constitutes a break from today’s content-oriented, scores-obsessed conception of education.

In addition to the outcomes which might be positively influenced by a relational focus in education, such an approach aligns with my philosophical stance as a critical humanist. Change is needed and the reorientation required is person-centered. In this chapter, I will outline my approach to exploring teacher-student relationships through an exploratory, sequential, mixed-method design in a critical, phenomenographical study. I
hope that such an exploration has led to greater understanding of the specific relational context of the participants. In turn, perhaps the nature of the teacher-student relationship as perceived by those in relation may provide insight into how positive relationships might be developed and maintained.

Participants

Participants in this study were teacher and student volunteers in a small STEM school in the southeastern United States. Approximately 95 students were involved in the study, along with five teacher participants. These participants represented a convenience sample. However due to the required vulnerability of teacher participants in subjecting themselves to this kind of anonymous and potentially critical student feedback, the pre-existing relationship between teachers and the researcher was important. The teachers were all members of the sophomore grade-level cohort. The members of the cohort were teachers of English, math, engineering and civics, as well as an academic facilitator, all of whom taught at least one course to all of the students involved. I have personally conducted a pilot study to test the instrument and also to demonstrate to other potential participants what might be gained by allowing student feedback. By publicly sharing my own results with potential faculty participants, I hoped to enlist their involvement by demonstrating a higher level of vulnerability than they were asked to endure, as they did not publicly share results. Furthermore, I was able to share the insights into my own practice from the pilot. With the level of teacher participation, the required amount of time to administer the instrument across so many class sessions would have also proven difficult at a foreign site—particularly as I, the researcher, am a full time teacher. Each
teacher participant required four separate administrations of the survey to four separate classes at four times of the same day. The familiarity and trust, the time required, and the potential to contribute positively to professional development in my own school were reasons for this convenience sampling. I conducted follow-up qualitative interviews with each teacher participant but gave the teachers the option to decline to discuss their results after they had an opportunity to view the student feedback. Each teacher was willing to participate in the follow-up interview.

Regarding student participation, 95 students were given the opportunity to provide feedback about each of their participating teachers. Most students seemed willing if not glad to do so, both to express their views as well as to help me complete my research. The average administration time was approximately 6:30, so the task did not require a tremendous amount of effort from the students or teachers. One valuable characteristic of this setting is that teachers within grades shared every single student. So, different students providing different responses was not a variable of concern; the same students assessed relationships with different teachers, with the exception of daily fluctuations in attendance.

Demographic Information

Total school enrollment was approximately 275 students at the time of study but, as each additional class is added, 100 more students enter the student body as the rising junior class moves to a nearby college campus. Only the approximately 95 students constituting the sophomore grade at the home campus were eligible for participation. Class sizes ranged from 20 to 33. The demographic breakdown of the school as
compared to the district and nation are provided (Table 3) to illustrate the diversity of the school. The school had a slightly larger number of male students than female students in both of the grades potentially being surveyed and an ethnically diverse population. The level of student diversity, while beneficial to the school and students, may have contributed to results that would differ from a more normally distributed population. While generalizability was not a primary goal of this study, the specific population distribution may mean that subsequent administrations of the Crownover Student Relationship Survey could yield different results.

Table 3

Demographic Comparison of School, District and Nation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Multi</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Totals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Total</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>57957</td>
<td>3490</td>
<td>8966</td>
<td>32119</td>
<td>42934</td>
<td>146140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Totals</td>
<td>161,000</td>
<td>2,769,000</td>
<td>161,000</td>
<td>660,100</td>
<td>3,075,000</td>
<td>9,338,000</td>
<td>16,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. National data from the National Center for Education Statistics, 2015

Research Questions

According to Clark and Badiee (2010), three main elements “define the focus of any study: the content area, the purpose, and the research questions” (p. 276). For this study, the “content area” was the teacher-student relationship. The “purpose” was to
explore the nature of such relationships and through an increase in understanding, formulate approaches to foster healthy relationships. Lastly, the research questions guiding the study were, first, “what is the nature of a positive teacher-student relationship?” After obtaining some sense of what teachers and students believe to be aspects of ideal relations, I then examined: “what is the relational climate between participating teachers and students?” Finally, having gathered data about the relational climate among participants, I explored: “what practices or behaviors have led to the establishment of these relationships?” I hoped to learn what teachers and students value in their idealized relationships in Phase One (qualitative) and to explore, in Phase Two (quantitative), the relational environment to discover the degree to which those ideal attributes exist in the actual relations as perceived by students. Finally, I explored the classroom and personal conditions and teacher practices which contributed to positive relational aspects in Phase Three (qualitative).

Mixed Methods Research

As early as 1959, researchers such as Campbell and Fiske began to employ creative approaches to research (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, & Collins, 2009). These approaches initially began as using multiple types of data within the same research tradition. This multiple methods approach has since evolved into mixed methods. Referred to as the “third research community” by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009, p. 4), mixed methods research has emerged in the past three decades as an alternative to the dichotomy of qualitative and quantitative research methods. According to Creswell (2014), “mixed methods involves combining or integration of qualitative and quantitative
research and data… qualitative data tends to be open-ended without predetermined responses while quantitative data usually includes closed-ended responses such as found on questionnaires of psychological instruments” (p. 14). A true mixed-methods approach is “methodologically eclectic” and integrates “the most appropriate techniques from a myriad of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods to more thoroughly investigate a phenomenon of interest” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010, p. 8). I will discuss the appropriateness of mixed methods generally, and then the appropriateness of my specific research design as it connects to my own paradigmatic position and the stated purpose of this study.

Legitimizing Mixed Methods

The field of mixed methods research has garnered a growing amount of attention in the past decade, evidenced by an increasing number of textbooks dedicated to mixed methods (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010; Curry & Nunez-Smith, 2014; Hesse-Bilber, 2010; Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Additionally, popular general research textbooks often include chapters on mixed methods (Creswell, 2014; Mertens, 2015). In addition to an increase in textbook publication, journals devoted to mixed-methods such as the Journal of Mixed Methods Research and the International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches have been publishing quarterly and bi-annually, respectively, since 2007. The past decade has also observed a rise in the number of graduate student projects employing or discussing mixed methods (Table 4).
Number of Dissertations and Theses with “Mixed Methods” in the Title

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-2014</td>
<td>5838</td>
<td>255%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2009</td>
<td>2290</td>
<td>700%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2004</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>696%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1999</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>522%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1994</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>180%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-1989</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number represents the number of dissertations and theses which contained the words “mixed methods” or “mixed-methods” in the title or abstract. This search was conducted using the dissertation service ProQuest (ProQuest Search Engine, 2016).

The increase in the level of interest from the scholarly community in mixed methods is indicative of a gradual acceptance by the community of mixed-method approaches. Consequently, this focus has also contributed to the establishment of identifiable frameworks and models as well as a refinement in techniques for conducting mixed-method studies. Nevertheless, the popularity of mixed methods is not an adequate reason for choosing to conduct mixed methods research. Creswell (2013) noted that one should “choose your method based on your problem” (p. 18).

Justifying Mixed Methods

Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) discussed a typology of mixed methods research purposes to help identify sound reasons for selecting a mixed-method approach beyond the general trendiness of doing so (Table 5). For this project, “the mixed-methods research paradigm offers an important approach for generating important research questions and providing warranted answers to those questions” (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, & Collins, 2009, p. 129).
Table 5

*Potential Reasons for Selecting Mixed Methods*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Purpose</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>Seeks convergence, corroboration correspondence of results from the different methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementarity</td>
<td>Seeks elaboration, enhancement, illustration, clarification of the results from one method with the results from the other method.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Seeks to use the results from one methods to help develop or inform the other method, where development is broadly construed to sampling and implementation, as well as measurement decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiation</td>
<td>Seeks the discovery of paradox and contradiction, new perspectives of frameworks, the recasting of questions or results from one method with questions or results from the other method.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion</td>
<td>Seeks to extend the breadth and range of inquiry by using different methods for different inquiry components.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This study may be classified under a number of outlined purposes. One goal of the project was *development*. From the quantitative instrument to the list of best practices and perhaps ultimately, curriculum development, these methods were undertaken with products in mind. The sequential format of this study was predicated upon interphase development, in which the processes of one phase are dependent upon the results of a preceding phase. By utilizing quantitative factors from Phase Two as coding themes for the interviews in Phase Three, this work may also fall under the *initiation* rationale, though this is perhaps the least significant of my three potential purposes. The mixture of methods in this project also fits the description of *expansion*, as the pairing of each method serves to balance breadth of the quantitative measures with the depth of the qualitative, particularly the Phase Three interviews. By Greene, Caracelli, and Graham’s
Aligning/Situating Mixed Methods as a Research Paradigm

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) assert that a paradigm is a set of beliefs that guide action and which should, specifically in the research context, reflect the researcher’s worldview. While the structure of this study was designed to reduce the opportunity for bias in interpretation by giving voice to teachers and students and using quantitative data to explore patterns of relation rather than say, researcher observation, the study itself is born of my personal beliefs about the purpose of public education, discussed in chapter one, and my desire to see systemic change to a more human-centered approach to teaching young people.

For Mertens (2010), “paradigmatic stances are the beginning point for decision making in research” (p. 10). The paradigmatic stance provides a theoretical, philosophical footing which helps orient the researcher. While the approach should connect to the researcher’s ontological and epistemological beliefs, some consideration must also be given to the specific task at hand. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008) suggest “the use of whatever philosophical and/or methodological approach (that) works for the particular research problem under study” (p. 9). It is important that a framework be consciously selected or identified and communicated. In protest of a common trend in mixed-methods research, in which seemingly no consideration and certainly no discussion of paradigm occurs, Mertens (2010) states, “I am explicitly rejecting an a-paradigmatic stance” (p. 10). Because mixed-methods research is a still a course or set of
courses being charted, one should establish a link between paradigm and research to give guidance, deeper understanding and indeed, legitimacy to mixed-methods projects. To help articulate my paradigmatic stance, and so as to satisfy Mertens’ (2010) assertion that “we have a responsibility to present the major paradigmatic perspectives” (p. 16), I will use Katrin Niglas’ (2001) research map (Figure 1).

Kuhn (1970) noted that paradigms only served temporarily to inform a community of researchers about possible pathways to conducting research and the underlying beliefs of those pathways as well as the governing norms regarding their implementation. This statement highlights the flexible and fluid nature of paradigms, which are ever-evolving and subject to some level of interpretation. Still, at a given moment, it is possible to generalize and discuss some of the prevailing approaches to research and the distinctions among them. For Creswell (2014) and Mertens (2015), postpositivism, constructivism, transformativism, and pragmatism are the four major paradigms in social science research today. Glesne (2016) listed positivism, interpretivism, critical theory and poststructuralism as the four major “paradigmatic families” (p. 6). Mack (2003) highlighted the positivist, interpretivist and critical paradigms in her work. This list is only to show that, depending on the authority, the number and nature of major paradigms varies. For this study, the naming, categorization or inclusion and exclusion of paradigms are not of interest. Rather, I adopt a more fluid conceptualization of paradigms.

Thomas Kuhn, the father of paradigms himself, explicated a “middle ground” among the litany of paradigmatic views. He stated, “there are circumstances… under
which two paradigms can coexist peacefully” (1970, p. 9). Over time, others have taken
the baton further. Some, such as Bryman (2004) and Morgan (2007), advocated for a
move away from the paradigmatic debate with its lack of productivity and artificial
boundaries. They advocated for the adoption of a flexible position that identifies the
common threads amongst paradigms and which seeks to capitalize on the strengths of
each approach. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) described this scenario as “paradigmatic
synthesis.” Moving away from the “paradigm wars” of the 1980s, I have adopted a multi-
paradigmatic approach to research as advocated by Niglas (2001).

One of the advocates for abandoning the rigid conceptualization of paradigms is
Katrin Niglas. Niglas (2001) favors blurring not only the categories of the paradigms
themselves but also the lines demarcating the paradigms from research methods. For
example, post-positivism is nearly synonymous with the scientific research methodology.
Contrarily, a pragmatic approach could involve an infinite mixture of methodologies and
so, to identify a study as “pragmatic” does little to inform the reader. To communicate
her expert understanding of the interrelatedness of these concepts, she has developed a
visualization which links paradigms to methods. On this graphic, she placed each
element on two separate axes: a vertical axis that classifies each item on a spectrum of
“methodology” to “philosophy” and a horizontal axis to illustrate which elements are
typically quantitative or qualitative. The methodology characterization suggests a very
specific and concrete executable approach in research, like “action research,” while the
philosophic end of the continuum features general ideas regarding how to approach
research, like “phenomenology.” Her paradigmatic scheme (Figure 1) will be utilized to discuss my positionality.
Figure 1. Niglas’ (2010) Multidimensional Model of Research Methodology

While there is much to consider in this figure, the ovals have been added to represent the included elements of my hybrid paradigm. Numbers have been added as a reference and guide the ensuing discussion. I will address items involved in or related to this study as they are included within or perhaps adjacent to, the numbered sections in Figure 1. First, this study is partially a phenomenological inquiry (1), in the most general sense as “phenomenological questions are targeted toward understanding in the meaning of lived experience and the essence of a particular concept or phenomenon” (Schram, 2003, p. 72). For this study, the phenomenon is the teacher-student relationship. Husserl (1907, 1931) is generally recognized as the founder of phenomenology as a qualitative theoretical framework. Husserl’s (2012) original conception of phenomenology, then, was a study of things as they appear (phenomena). The approach is descriptive rather than explanatory and is used to uncover a clear, undistorted description of the ways things are. However, rather than focus on hypothetical ideal and essential essences of things, as advocated by Husserl (2012), my approach owes more to Heidegger’s (1982) conceptualization of phenomenology, which emphasized using situated practicality to explore phenomenon, rather than hypothetical imaginings. Finally, I share the monistic conception of Merleau-Ponty (1989) that the mind and body are inseparable and are both involved in experiencing and interpreting phenomenon. This stance is in contrast to any
cognitively focused theoretical frameworks divorced from affective concerns. Thus, phenomena should be explored in context, as experienced. Due to the situated-ness of this approach, an inherent level of social constructivism (1) is assumed. However, while the relationship is a socially constructed phenomenon, and knowledge of the relationship will always be socially situated (1), I adhere to the post-positivistic view (1) that there is a reality which can be better understood, if never fully known, beyond this subjective, socially-constructed reality. This study will examine a relational phenomenon which exists beyond the conception of the researcher or the mind of the student and teacher, yet partially accessible through each. Still, the grounded social element is of interest in this relational project, if not to the researcher generally.

This study is situated in the existential framework outlined in my theoretical chapter in which all things exist forever in relation (Buber, 2002; Heidegger, 1962; Noddings, 1992), a fact which characterizes every other aspect of human existence. A person-centered approach to therapy by psychologists like Carl Rogers and Arthur Combs has also impacted the scope of this project. Combs (1982), in particular, theorized about transferring the person-centered approach from a clinical setting in to schools. Unfortunately, the following year, the Nation at Risk (1983) report would steer the course of education from these person-oriented impulses towards more content-focused and results-driven concerns. However, the influence of Rogers and Combs on Godfrey Barrett-Lennard led him on a person-centered career path which would also evolve into a concern with assessing relational variables. To this end, he has created a number of assessments for measuring relational perception in the helping profession
(Barrett-Lennard, 2015). His *The Relationship Inventory: A Complete Resource and Guide* (2015) is an invaluable resource which discusses his decades of experience in creating and validating instruments (3). This project was modeled after the work of Barrett-Lennard, Pianta, Ferguson, and others who have used survey instruments in similar research.

Next, this study includes phenomenological elements (1) and may be a first step towards understanding the general phenomenon or teacher-student relationships, however, the immediate focus of this study is on the individual experiences and perceptions of the lived relationships of the study participants, which is more appropriately classified as a phenomenography. As this theoretical approach to research features heavily in my study, and according to Larsson and Holmström (2007) is “a research approach (that) is not very well known” (p. 55), further discussion of phenomenography is warranted. Phenomenography as a theoretical framework is distinct from phenomenology and associated with Ference Marton (1981). It is an approach to research which is “strongly empirical, rather than theoretical or philosophical” (Åkerlind, 2005, p. 321). Marton and Booth (1997) note:

> phenomenographic research is a way of experiencing something… and the object of the research is the variation in ways of experiencing phenomena. At the root of phenomenography lies an interest in describing the phenomena in the world as others see them, and in revealing and describing the variation therein, especially in an educational context. (p. 111)
Phase Two of this study was designed to gain insight into the different ways in which each student experiences and interprets his or her relationship with the teachers in question. In this phase, student responses are confined to the pre-constructed, Crownover’s Student Relationship Survey. This quantitative data is an irregular feature in a phenomenography, which typically features qualitative interviews so that the participant has more latitude to characterize the phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2007; Larsson & Holmström, 2007; Richardson, 1999). Phase Two may be more appropriately classified as phenomenographical but Phase Three involved a more orthodox approach to phenomenography, utilizing qualitative semi-structured interviews.

This research employed two types of survey: (3) qualitative in Phase One and quantitative in Phase Two. The data from the surveys in Phase One led to the construction of the instrument for Phase Two. Each of these surveys will be discussed in more detail below. According to Niglas’ (2010) map, my beliefs and approach are positioned squarely in the center of her continuum of qualitative/quantitative research approaches (4), further confirming the appropriateness of a mixed-research approach to this study. A mixed method approach to this topic has evolved naturally, or pragmatically (6) and the types of phenomenology advocated by Heidegger (1982) and Merleau-Ponty (1989) are situated in real perspectives of the participants. Furthermore, this dissertation study was conceived as a result of my real experiences and observations as a classroom teacher and based on that personal experience, I believe that a relational approach “works” or has distinct advantages, and a failure to consider the human
elements of the educational endeavor may have potentially catastrophic educational consequences.

Both “reflective phenomenology” and “heuristic inquiry” (5) are concepts applicable to this project. The feedback from the quantitative surveys in Phase Two allowed teachers to reflect on their practices with regards to establishing relationships. The qualitative, semi-structured interviews in Phase Three were another occasion for reflection. Beyond Phase Three, the insight gained from data may lend itself to the creation of materials for use in professional development. The ultimate aspiration of this project was that an inquiry into the nature of teacher-student relationships will yield insight about the phenomenon that will allow the individual teacher participants to refine their practice and perhaps generate some understanding of the ways in which relationships are experienced that may be beneficial beyond the study. The qualitative analysis in Phase Three was fundamentally heuristic (5) (Glesne, 2016, p. 201). Perhaps most importantly, this study is critical in that it hopes to promote a change in practice.

Glesne (2016) posited:

A central concept of critical theory research is that ideologies work to distort reality. The role of critical theorists is to reveal and critique these distorting ideologies and the associated structures, mechanisms, and processes that help to keep them in place. (p. 16)

Glesne and others (Creswell, 2013; Fay, 1987; Schram, 2014) have characterized critical theory and critical research as being inherently interested in creating social change, challenging hegemony, and empowering the traditionally disadvantaged or
neglected. Mertens (2010, 2014) has spent a tremendous amount of academic energy exploring and advocating for a “transformative” paradigm and its potential for mixed-methods research. First, the transformative paradigm is essentially a critical paradigm. Mertens (2014) has acknowledged that many mixed-methodologists employ a pragmatic approach for its flexibility but she expresses reservations about prioritizing utility. If the pragmatic approach is most interested in “what works” and is results-oriented, perhaps insufficient attention is being paid to the results-being-pursued or the motives of the goal-setters. Her transformative approach is a humanist one, focused upon the well-being of the participants. For Mertens (2015), the transformative and pragmatic are the two approaches “salient in the mixed methods research community” (p. 308). This false dichotomy is misleading, not only is Niglas’ (2010) paradigmatic approach more nuanced and better articulated, it helps move beyond the arbitrary boundaries which have been established between qualitative and quantitative research, or among different paradigms. For instance, this project is both pragmatic and transformative in scope. Indeed, any sort of critical, humanist study in education will have an overlap between “what works” and “what is best for the participants.”

Data Collection/Data Analysis

Creswell (2014) described exploratory sequential mixed methods as an approach in which “the researcher first begins with a qualitative research phase and explores the views of participants” (p. 16). The data are then analyzed and the information used to build into a second, quantitative phase. One way in which the phases may connect is that: “the qualitative phase may be used to build an instrument that fits the sample under
study” (Creswell, 2014, p. 16), or, more generally from Mertens (2015), “one data provides a basis for the collection of another type of data” (p. 307). I collected data from qualitative surveys (Phase 1), used the responses to develop a quantitative instrument, the Crownover Student Relationship Survey (Phase 2) and then used responses from the instrument to direct semi-structured interviews (Phase 3). Figure 2 provides a visual summary of the research process.

Figure 2. Research Process Summary

Phase 1: Qualitative Surveys

Because of the phenomenological approach to this phase, it is appropriate to seek input from teachers and students regarding their relational views or expectations for teacher-student relationships. I collected these data from brief surveys (Appendix A), which allowed for open responses. The responses were then compiled and analyzed using conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) for themes but ultimately
converted into a quantitative instrument, which featured each distinct element mentioned by the teacher groups and students. The teacher responses were collected via a Google form and the student responses were submitted in writing due to technological access.

I have long believed relationships to be the key element in my philosophy of teaching and I have, in eight years of teaching, developed a general approach toward prioritizing relationships. However, this study was not entirely about trying to sell my product; I was interested to know how others approached this task as well as identify areas of improvement for myself and learn of successful practices by other teachers. An important aspect of conducting a phenomenology is the ability to bracket the beliefs of the observer. I sought to accomplish this by including every distinct aspect mentioned in the student and teacher responses on the qualitative instrument. This inclusion is in part due to the exploratory nature of this research and the small sample size. As I used the instrument, the data revealed that all relational items do correlate with other measures and warrant future inclusion. If the goal of this project was to find ways to make more students feel welcome and included and connected, then, it was worth including an indicator which may not be very important to most students but which may matter to a few. One example of an indicator that only two respondents mentioned was professionalism (parameter 28). This was an item that I did not feel was significant in the process of relationship construction. Still, the sentiment was included on the Phase Two instrument, the Crownover Student Relationship Survey (CSRS), and the data supported its inclusion.
This study began with open qualitative survey questions to teachers and students to try to more broadly understand how others view relationships in education. Qualitative research is a research approach that attempts to comprehend the social setting of a system of participants from their own perspectives, rather than making predications or testing hypotheses (Key, 1997). Other than the premise that relationships matter and the assumption that humans have the capacity to improve in our ability to interact with others, I attempted to bracket my opinions about the nature of the relationships to allow a genuinely open inquiry into the topic of enacted relationships. Another reason for seeking qualitative input, particularly from students, was to give them some voice in the process. The student feedback in Phase One was entirely unrestricted. Mertens (2009) notes that providing voice to populations which have historically been excluded from such conversations is a key component to conducting critical qualitative research. This first qualitative survey allowed me to construct an instrument to examine the relational context for the factors most significant to the students and teachers. The second phase allowed for controlled, direct student feedback, specific to each participant teacher.

Phase 2: Quantitative Surveys

Having identified a number of relational factors important to teachers and students, the development and administration of a quantitative instrument, the Crownover Student Relationship Survey (CSRS) (Appendix C), allowed for a broader analysis of the compiled phase 1 data. Rather than conduct a few interviews with students or use “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) to try to encompass the essence of a single teacher or student or observer’s perception of a relationship, the survey responses offered a wider view of
how a teacher may have been successfully fostering certain relational elements with a range of students. On the CSRS, the demographic data provided insight about these relational elements across race and gender. This broad quantitative data may be more appreciated by some audiences, such as policymakers or administrators; having such data may help reify these relationships as things that are palpable, significant, and measurable. The quantitative survey was administered via the SurveyMonkey website. This component of the project is phenomenographical, with the quantitative data as an expression of student experiences and using factors to uncover themes not addressed by any of the reviewed literature. Because this phase did not permit participants the ability to freely describe individual experiences, it may not be appropriate to classify it as a phenomenography proper. However, Giddens (1979) argues that some individuals may not be able to readily articulate their views and experiences of social phenomena — language may serve as a barrier, limiting understanding. In this light, the survey instrument may have provided a better medium for expression than the favored methodology, semi-structured interviews. It certainly allowed for the collection of data from more participants. While Pianta (1999, 2015) attempted to evaluate relationships first from the teacher lens exclusively and later through trained observers, I favor Sidorkin’s (2000) notion that “One cannot describe a relation by observing individual or group behavior, for human relation always has a hidden component of emotion, attitude, past history, and social context” (p. 3). The student data have provided some insight into this hidden component. Quantitative surveys of this type are already being employed to great effect in nursing (Watson, 2009), where the client experience, particularly the
human elements of the experience rather than the technical success or failure, are prioritized. Similar instruments exist in clinical counseling, which shares some fundamental concerns about the well-being of the individual (Barrett-Lennard, 2015). In education, surveys such as the Tripod Student Survey (Ferguson, 2001) and the Survey of Teacher Preparedness (STeP, 2011) include relational variables as a component of their instruments. Ultimately, I am exclusively interested in the phenomenon of relation, how students perceive the relational climate, and how teachers establish that climate. Using observations as research data would only serve to reintroduce the biased lens of the researcher, furthermore, observations do little to inform about the complex internal processes underlying visible actions (Schutz, 1967). In order to obtain student feedback specifically on the perceived relational climate, the Crownover Student Relationship Survey was developed.

Crownover Student Relationship Survey

The instrument used in this study, the Crownover Student Relationship Survey (CSRS), was researcher-created. The instrument includes demographic data, as well as relational items on a five-point Likert scale. The scale responses are “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “neutral,” “agree,” and “strongly agree.” There is much debate regarding the format of Likert and Likert-type instruments. Researchers appear divided on the ideal number of response items, the inclusion of a midpoint, or even how to treat the response variables, statistically. Initially, the CSRS included a four-point Likert scale with the belief that denying respondents a middle option would polarize responses and produce more useful data for teacher participants. However, the instrument was modified for this
study in order that it might be more appropriately considered an interval scale.
Furthermore, research by Nadler, Weston, and Voyles (2015) yielded higher reliability
when comparing a four-point scale with a five-point scale with a neutral response option
on an instrument with identical items. Dawes’ (2008) study produced an identical mean
for 5- and 7-point scales, suggesting that results may not vary greatly between a 5- or 7-
point scale. If this is taken to be true then, Preston and Colman’s (2000) study, revealing
that participants found a 5-point scale easier to use than other scales with 2-11 items or
even a scale including 101 items was cause for selecting the 5-point scale.

Validity and Reliability of the CSRS. Because this study involved a researcher-
created instrument, a discussion of the quality of the instrument is warranted. Validity
and reliability are best realized over multiple administrations of an instrument, a luxury
not available during this project. A pilot study was conducted, with promising results
regarding the overall alpha score, the inter-item correlations, and factor analysis.
However, the instrument was modified afterward and so the administration of the CSRS
as a part of this study was in some ways a first testing of the instrument. Still, there are a
number of ways in which the validity of reliability can begin to be established.

Quantitative Validity

For the purposes of this study, the question of quantitative validity might be
reduced to: “whether one can draw meaningful and useful inferences from scores on the
instruments” (Creswell, 2005, p. 160). In particular, the validity of the Crownover
Student Relationship Survey (CSRS) was a critical concern for this project. Kimberlin
and Winterstein (2008) note that “validity evidence is built over time, with validations
occurring in a variety of populations” (p. 2279). As this study represented the genesis of the instrument, it could also only be a beginning in the process for establishing validity. Regarding the weakest category of validity, face validity, the survey has parameters comparable to the counselor/client relationship forms used by Barrett-Lenard (2015) in that parameters pertaining to the themes of trust, communication, understanding, and comfort are all represented. Additionally, the Panorama Student Survey Supportive Relationship Subscale (2017) features questions regarding the level of interest of the teacher in a student’s outside life and hobbies. This instrument was also cursorily reviewed by at least six university faculty members, thirteen secondary teachers and has now been administered to students close to 500 times without any voiced concerns over the parameters or survey format. While face validity is highly subjective, it serves as an entry point into considerations of validity. To continue this process, three major categories of validity will be considered: content, construct and criterion validity. It should be noted however, that these types of validity and indeed validity and reliability as categories are not mutually exclusive and that the overall trustworthiness of the instrument is more important than the specific categorical, discussions that follow.

Content Validity. Content validity may be defined as “the degree to which elements of an assessment are relevant to and representative of the targeted construct” (Haynes, Richard, & Kubany, 1995, p. 273). In this case, the construct is the relational environment of the student and teacher participants. According to Hinde (1976), “the first stage in the scientific study of interpersonal relationships should be one of description and classification” (p. 1). To this end, the relationship is specifically and
uniquely the teacher-student relationship, which, among relational studies, has received less attention than romantic or familiar relationships (Farooqi, 2014). As much of the research about relationships is devoted to these other types of relationships, and the literature pertaining to teacher-student relationships is either dated or comes predominantly from teacher or scholar opinions about these relationships, or is mixed with general school climate data, this study sought to incorporate student input in defining and assessing teacher-student relationship quality. By enlisting student participation in the creation of the CSRS, I hoped to create a measure that would encompass the aspects of relationships important to students. According to Kimberlin and Winterstein (2008), “content validity usually depends on the judgment of the experts in the field” (p. 2279). With an interest in improving student experience and understanding what they, as participants, viewed as significant and essential to a positive relationship, the students were taken as experts in expressing their own individual preferences for the purposes of this study. The exclusion of the student voice by Pianta (2001) with his Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) may have been due to the age of the students and classrooms being considered. With younger students, the ability to adequately articulate ideas and feelings about this topic, and also to respond to an instrument, is less than with older students. However, since this study was concerned with the secondary setting, the ability of students to articulate their views and complete an instrument accurately was assumed and such a view has been supported by research from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s Measures of Effective Teaching Project (2012). A 2012 study conducted as part of the project: *Asking Students About Teaching:*
Student Perception Surveys and Their Implementation, found that: “student surveys produce more consistent results than classroom observations or achievement gain measures” (p. 2). The study also supported using instruments to gather student feedback as early as kindergarten so long as efforts were made to create an appropriately-leveled instrument. To help ensure that this instrument was appropriately leveled, much of the language of the survey parameters mirrors the exact language used by students in the phase 1 qualitative interviews. The previously-mentioned Tripod student survey project (Ferguson, 2001) also uses adapted instruments as early as kindergarten. Seemingly, seeking student and teacher input about relationships and then using those responses as the source of the parameters on the CSRS has enhanced the content validity by attempting to include various perspectives on teacher-student relationships as well include the entire domain of the relation as a variable (parameter 22) with which individual parameters may be quantitatively compared. Such a comparison was conducted and reported in chapter four, confirming the relationship between every other parameter and the primary construct, the student perception of the relationship with each participating teacher.

Construct Validity. According to Heale and Twycross (2015), there are three ways in which an instrument might demonstrate construct validity: homogeneity, convergence, and theory evidence. A split half reliability calculation was used to assess homogeneity, however, no mathematical tests to demonstrate convergence were conducted, partially due to a lack of other comparable instruments measuring the same
construct. Finally, theory evidence supporting of the findings, or the relevance of the included parameters was introduced in the review of the literature.

**Homogeneity.** One measure reflective of both construct validity as well as reliability is homogeneity, which is a calculation of the level of internal consistency of the instrument (Korb, 2012). One method for measuring internal consistency is a split-half reliability test. While there are better ways to consider homogeneity, the split-half data may serve as lesser, supporting evidence. A division of even and odd items and subsequent comparison yielded a high correlation between forms, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .965$ and a Guttman Split-Half Coefficient of .982. Still, as the split-half method compares one grouping of variables against a second grouping, it is less specific than an alpha score for the entire instrument, which examined reliability between each and every variable. For this administration of the Crownover Student Relationship Survey, the instrument demonstrated high reliability, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .972$, n=31.

**Criterion Validity.** Criterion validity for this study proved to be problematic as this study was exploratory in nature. There was no established criterion or relational measure that the CSRS results may have been used to predict. Furthermore, lack of comparable instruments which may have been used to establish concurrent validity prevented any such considerations. Given this lack, item 22, “I have a good relationship with this teacher” was a means of cursorily establishing a connection between the Phase Two results and an emerging construct of relation from Phase One responses. Future research may allow for the modification of a related instrument to be administered in conjunction with the CSRS for the purposes of establishing criterion validity. CSRS
scores may have been compared to course test scores to affirm a connection between strong relationships and academic performance, yet this study explicitly sought to avoid making such a connection, asserting that development of positive teacher-student relationships is an end worth pursuing in its own right, regardless of an anticipated positive correlation between CSRS results and student academic results.

Quantitative Reliability and Internal Consistency

Kirk and Miller (1986) identify three types of reliability referred to in quantitative research, which relate to: (1) the degree to which a measurement, given repeatedly, remains the same (2) the stability of a measurement over time; and (3) the similarity of measurements within a given time period (pp. 41-42). Though a pilot test of the CSRS was conducted and the instrument demonstrated high reliability, Cronbach’s α = .944, the student participants were not the same and so, test-retest reliability was not able to be measured. Furthermore, the original intent of this study was to provide two separate administrations, one in each semester to try to evaluate change over time in the relational variables but scheduling did not allow for a second set of administrations to the same students.

Phase 3: Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews

Unlike quantitative researchers who seek causal determination, prediction, and generalization of findings, qualitative researchers seek instead illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations (Hoepfl, 1997). In some respects, even the quantities second phase of this study was qualitative in conception, if not in method, as it sought to explore rather than confirm or prove. Regarding qualitative
validity, Kirkhart (2005) claims that quality human relations are necessary between the researcher and participants in the research environment to produce valid information. Trust between the researcher and the participants helps the research move towards honest representation and cultural validity (Henry, Stafford, Gerunda, & Veronica, 2010). This type of relationship allows for the designing an appropriate research project, identifying appropriate methods, asking the right questions and garnering quality responses. The intimate knowledge of participants and environment and the rapport are important parts of culturally valid research. This is especially true in qualitative research, and desirable for phenomenographical research (Richardson, 1999). As endorsed by the literature (Åkerlind, 2005; Dortins, 2002; Larsson & Holstrom, 2007; Marton & Booth, 1997; Richardson, 1999; Sin, 2010), this phenomenography will featured semi-structured interviews. The interviews had two components: questions designed to elicit information from teachers about the way in which they viewed and experienced the relational aspects of teaching, or “categories of description” (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 125) and then, a sharing of teacher results and a reflective discussion of those results.

One of the primary assumptions of the phenomenographical method is that each of the separate categories of description are inextricably linked and logically connected as a result of their phenomenal focus (Åkerlind, 2005). All of the responses together exist in the “outcome space,” which is comprised not only of the categories but “distinct groups of aspects of the phenomenon and the relationships between them” (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 125). The outcome space, after undergoing analysis, should yield patterns in the ways in which teachers experience relationships. These patterns may be
hierarchical (Marton, 1981; Richardson, 1999) in that they reveal a preferred arrangement among the ways in which teachers experience relationship. At the onset, there was no explicit best way to approach relationships in this study. Indeed the purpose of the study was to perhaps identify successful approaches.

Using the data from the second phase, Crownover Student Relationship Survey, descriptive statistics indicated average scores on each of the specific indicators. I conducted semi-structured interviews in order to better understand the factors leading to the high scores. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility, as the interview topic is predetermined but the interviewer is still allowed to develop questions during the interview (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Another benefit to this format is that it allows the participant to have some control over the direction of the interview. Each teacher interview focused initially on best practices which may have contributed to those scores, but teachers were allowed to reflect on other results if they chose. Setting a positive agenda for the interviews helped to assure the participant that my intentions were to focus on strengths which cast the teacher in a role which inherently gives them an authority in those capacities but the semi-structured format allowed for flexibility in case the teachers wanted to explore other results. The semi-structured interviews with the positive emphasis served to negate some of the potential vulnerability that participating teachers might have felt. To avoid another potential source of discouragement, teacher scores were not shared among teachers, nor was a compilation of mean of scores across teachers shared. To some extent, the interview allowed for member checking as teachers could...
dispute or qualify results if they chose. The interviews were recorded in the teachers’ own classrooms for comfort and convenience.

The recordings were transcribed and coded in order to conduct a thematic analysis. According to Glesne (2016), “the goal of thematic analysis is to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of some social phenomenon through understanding the processes that tend to involve that phenomenon as well as the perceptions, values, and beliefs of people toward it” (p. 184). This purpose was well in line with the general objective of the project: to conduct a cursory exploration into the teacher-student relational phenomenon of the participants. The project was not explicitly employing a grounded theory methodology but it is possible that explanatory theories arose from the data, particularly theories on how to develop certain facets of relation. I conducted deductive analysis, using factors from Phase Two as themes for analysis during the qualitative third phase. Ultimately the interview analysis will be “an iterative process, based on constant sampling, comparison, and analysis of transcribed excerpts” (Richardson, 1999, p. 70). Larsson and Holmström (2007) provide a script (Table 6) that I adopted and followed in conducting the analysis. Specifically, step five used pre-formed categories for grouping and responses were fit into the structure created by the quantitative factors.
Table 6

Larsson and Holmström’s Interview Analysis Sequence

1. Read the whole text.
2. Read again and mark where interviewees responded to main questions.
3. In these passages, look for what the focus is and how the interviewee describes this focus
4. Read every text in the aforementioned manner.
5. Group descriptions into categories based on similarities and differences, formulate categories of description
6. Look for non-dominant ways of understanding
7. Find a structure in the outcome space
8. Assign a metaphor to each category of description.


Within the third step of the analysis script, I will use, in part, Taylor and Gibbs’ (2010) list of twelve categories of items which can be coded (Table 7).

Table 7

Taylor and Gibbs (2010) Categories for Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What can be coded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Behaviours, specific acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Events – short once in a lifetime events or things people have done that are often told as a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Activities – these are of a longer duration, involve other people within a particular setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Strategies, practice or tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. States – general conditions experienced by people or found in organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Meanings – A wide range of phenomena at the core of much qualitative analysis. Meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Participation – adaptation to a new setting or involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Relationships or interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Conditions or constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Settings – the entire context of the events under study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Reflexive – researcher’s role in the process, how intervention generated the data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this list, I coded for behaviors and specific acts, activities, strategies, settings, states, relationships or interaction. The phenomenographic component of the interview utilized questions derived from Bowden and Walsh’s (2000) list of foci from their meta-analysis of phenomenographic studies, specifically: focusing on the “what” and “how” aspects of the phenomenon and focusing on similarities and differences within and between categories.

From the interviews, I sought to compile a list of best practices from the interviews as they correspond with each relational indicator and each factor. This constituted a tentative first step towards finding ways to improve relationships.

Qualitative Validity

Creswell (2005) notes that qualitative validity is interpreted differently than quantitative validity and is related to conceptions of “trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility” (p. 201). To achieve this, Creswell provides a list of eight validity strategies, show in Table 8 that might be employed to enhance a study’s qualitative validity.
Table 8

Creswell’s Eight Validity Strategies

1. **Triangulation** - using different sources of information to build themes and enhance understanding of the topic of study
2. **Member Checking** - confirming emerging findings, major themes or conclusions with research participants
3. **Thick Description** - discussing of the findings is thorough, providing information beyond the reported data that might provide context or greater understanding beyond the instrumental data
4. **Clarify Researcher Bias** - including an open and honest reflective discussion about the researcher’s bias and how it may impact the research design, collection and interpretation of the data.
5. **Present negative or discrepant information** - presenting contradictory evidence and discussing the nature of that contradiction and the implications for research rather than merely including all of the supporting data
6. **Gain familiarity** - spending an increased time in the field contributes to a greater understanding of the site, the participants and the phenomena which adds validity to the insight and interpretation of the findings.
7. **Use peer debriefing** - having an individual familiar with qualitative research and located outside of the study review the research and formulate independent interpretations to be included in the discussion
8. **Use external auditor** - similar to the peer debrief except with no connection to the research or the researcher, having an individual objectively review the research design, the data and the interpretation enhances validity.


For this study, a combination of these methods was used to achieve greater qualitative content validity: member-checking, clarifying researcher bias, and gaining familiarity. Carter et al. (2014) described four methods of achieving triangulation: method triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and data source triangulation. This project does involve some degree of method triangulation through the mixed methods approach to gaining greater understanding about relationships and the relational climate among participants. In turn, the qualitative and quantitative data
provide some degree of data source triangulation, though it may be argued that the data being obtained is not precisely focused on the same phenomenon, as the Phase One surveys are focused on the nature of relationships, generally, the Phase Two student data are focused on the relational climate specifically and the Phase Three qualitative teacher interviews are focused on the student data. So, there is no direct intersection among the data for confirmatory comparison.

Member checking or participant validation is another potential method to reduce researcher bias in the interpretation of the data by including the participant voice as a part of the interpretive process. However, member checking is a disputed practice. Birt, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016) thoroughly chronicled the debate surrounding member-checking, providing five designs in which member checking is commonly used in educational and medical research, as well as some of the concerns for each use. This dissertation project employed a hybrid type of member checking which is a fusion of “member check interview – using the analyses of a single participant’s data” and “member check using synthesized analyzed data” (Birt, et al., 2016, p. 1804) as the basis of the Phase Three interviews. One of the theoretical issues with member-checking is the decision of which party ultimately has interpretive power (Birt et al., 2016). For instance, in an ethnographic study, if the researcher has observed and interpreted events in a manner that the participant later refutes in the member checking, how are those opposing viewpoints to be reconciled? There is also some concern that participants will defer to the researcher’s interpretations and that member participation in member checking can be “tokenistic” (Estroff, 1995). In this study, the member checking
occurred regarding student interpretations of the relational climate. The participants could consider, discuss, refute or qualify any aspect of the data but ultimately, their comments and interpretations have been juxtaposed with the student data to provide a greater depth of understanding but not as a filter of the student data. According to Harper and Cole (2012), member-checking can in fact have positive therapeutic benefits for participants. Hutchison, Wilson and Wilson (1994) report that participation in research interviews can lead to “catharsis, self-acknowledgement, sense of purpose, self-awareness, empowerment, healing, and providing a voice for the disenfranchised” (p. 161). Positive outcomes were certainly a hoped-for consequence of this process for participants and the member checking was organized in such way that participants were shielded from aggregate data to avoid potentially harmful comparison. The focus of the interviews was specifically the top relative results so that the conversation gave participants an opportunity to celebrate successes and be empowered to explain the methods that led to success.

This research project did not include many opportunities to provide thick description (Geertz, 1973) of participant actions or environments. Data were collected via the CSRS and through participant interviews and the interpretive focus of the Phase Three qualitative interviews was on the direct transcript of the participants versus any ethnographic observation. The decision to structure this research to avoid researcher observation was a conscious one and connected to the methodological belief that external observations are neither the most logical nor beneficial approach to accessing information about the relational climate. However, the familiarity of the researcher with the school
setting, the participants and the students allowed for greater insight into the data. The researcher had worked at the site for two years and in a high school setting more generally for eight years. The researcher had known each of the participating teachers and students for at least eight months and some for two years.

Finally, while not entirely meeting Creswell’s definition for either peer review or independent audit, this project was a dissertation project overseen by a committee that included six different individuals at different stages of the process. The methodology was subject to approval by the Institutional Review Board and the dissertation committee and data interpretation was supervised by college faculty with expertise in the subject area and with research design.

Clarification of Researcher Bias

An additional method of increasing the qualitative validity of a study is the clarification of researcher bias. Malterud (2001) notes that: “A researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions” (pp. 483-484). As discussed previously, I, as a researcher, am a critical realist, believing that there is a relational reality but that it may only be partially known through individual perceptions of that reality. This framework has impacted the design of this study in ways previously discussed.

In an attempt to consider the role of researcher bias, I believe that it is necessary to discuss researcher positionality, not only with regard to epistemological and theoretical
framework, but also regarding the various cultural lenses through which I as researcher view this project and the data. As a white male millennial growing up in the southeastern United States, my own background and experiences have impacted the design and course of this project in ways perhaps unrecognizable to me. Still, it is important to acknowledge those areas in which my own bias and motives have, sometimes consciously, impacted this project.

First, the sum of my political socialization has resulted in my holding a set of political beliefs that may be fairly classified as “far left.” This political orientation has created an anti-capitalist bias in me and has also resulted in my disdain towards conceptualizations of education that are highly competitive or individualistic. My political persuasion has also contributed to my rejection of many of the common assumptions that guide educational policy-making today. Most importantly, I do not identify with the notion that P-12 schooling exists primarily to prepare students for college and career. While college and career readiness is important, the manner in which those goals are framed is where I take issue. The underlying impetus for these goals across the system as it exists is marketability and global competitiveness. Students are taught that college will allow them to get “better” jobs as defined by income potential and policy conversations are too often concerned with test scores compared to other nations and participation in STEM fields, fields considered most essential when framed in a national security context and typically most profitable. My teaching career, spent at urban schools with diverse student populations, has helped to reinforce my disdain for a system which creates winners and losers, particularly when each student has different
obstacles and advantages. This disposition has fueled my interest in humanistic education and a focus on relational pedagogy.

One of the efforts taken to minimize the impact of researcher bias was the solicitation of teacher and student input in the creation of the CSRS. Had the instrument been researcher-created without any additional input, items such as “my teacher conducts himself or herself professionally,” “my teacher provides high and clear expectations for academic performance,” “my teacher is reasonable with grading and the class workload,” and “my teacher manages the classroom well,” items 28, 10, 27, and 24 respectively, would not have been included. Prior to conducting this study, I would not have believed that those items were related to positive teacher-student relationships as I conceived them. However, this study has demonstrated, both by the inclusion of those items from teachers and students in the Phase One instrument creation as well as their statistical relationships from the phase 2 data analysis, that those academically-oriented items are a part of relationships. The CSRS instrument and data analysis from its implementation were both designed to minimize my own bias about what makes a good relationship and to allow other voices to be heard in this process. This methodology was also selected in contrast to the observational techniques employed by Pianta (2015), which, despite researcher training and calibration, necessarily involve some outside interpretation. An additional attempt to reduce bias came in the form of using the quantitative factors from phase 2 as themes for coding the interviews in Phase Three. Rather than analyze the interviews for what “spoke” to me as a researcher, I instead tried to reconcile the teacher responses to the student data.
The discussion of researcher positionality is not to argue for an absence of bias throughout the project, merely to acknowledge the impact of that bias and to discuss ways in which the research has been designed to minimize the bias. Beyond the cultural characteristics of the researcher and the theoretical framework of the study, it should also be stated the project was undertaken with the explicit assumption that relationships matter in education and that more attention should be given to this dynamic of the educational experience. The motive behind this project has always been to bring the discussion of relationships to the fore and to perhaps find a method to better understand the relational climate in classrooms of the participants and how teacher practice can impact that climate.

Qualitative Reliability

In qualitative research, reliability is akin to consistency (Yin, 2009) or “dependability” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 300). Taken with validity, and perhaps more generally, “trustworthiness” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 602). Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim that validity and reliability are not mutually exclusive and that demonstration of validity necessarily establishes reliability. The distinction is less clear in qualitative research than quantitative to the extent that Stenbacka (2001) asserts that reliability in the positivist sense is irrelevant to qualitative research. This study was certainly not interested in replicability, as relationships are specific to the individuals and the moment. Still, one might assume that separate administrations of this study using the CSRS would not yield wildly different results for the participant teachers without an intervention and future studies may demonstrate consistency in the relationships among the variables even with
different student participants. So, reliability in quantitative sense of replicability is not an objective of the study. Instead, by demonstrating the validity of the this study, I hoped that a sufficient level of trustworthiness has been established such that, three of four of Guba’s (1981) trustworthiness concerns have been addressed: the truth value concern that findings are genuine, the applicability concern that these procedures may be used elsewhere to achieve useful results, and the neutrality concern that the findings come from the participants and have not been unduly influenced by the researcher.

Summary

For this inquiry into the understood nature of teacher-student relationships, I used a three-phase, sequential, exploratory, mixed-method study. My study is situated within a methodological framework of critical realism and theoretical framework of critical humanism, as the ultimate goal is to change education by refocusing on the individual student and his or her well-being in the context of the relational environment. A move away from the obsession with test scores and standards filled with content knowledge and towards whole-human education and promoting student happiness and development over knowledge retention will do more to create a desirable global society than proffering content facts absent any social or emotional grounding. This is not to say that content knowledge has no place in schools. It can be a powerful medium through which teachers do the more important human work. This study has provided a starting point for practicing teachers to refocus their energies on the relational aspects of teaching by assessing that environment, identifying areas for growth and providing some concrete ideas of practices which may influence relational variables. Beyond this study, I hope to
develop more formal professional development to communicate the message to in-service teachers as well as a curriculum for teacher education course grounded in a humanist, relational approach.
CHAPTER 4
QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESULTS

This chapter presents both the quantitative results from the administration of the Crownover Student Relationship Survey (CSRS) as well as the follow-up teacher interviews. The CSRS was constructed through a previously described qualitative research project. A prior study sought to explore the first research question: “What is the nature of a positive-teacher-student relationship?” That study asked participating students \( (N = 55) \) to complete the Teacher-Student Relationship Questionnaire (Appendix A) and participating teachers \( (N = 84) \) to complete the Teacher Relationship Questionnaire (Appendix B). Having obtained feedback from teachers and students, the CSRS was created from those responses. The CSRS was later pilot-tested in a subsequent study and now this project sought to implement the CSRS to gain student feedback about relationships with participating teachers and then gain insight from participating teachers into classroom practices and dispositions to further illuminate students results.

The data obtained from the CSRS informed the second research question: “What is the nature of the relational climate between participating teachers and students?” This data established a basis for the exploration of the third question: “What practices or behaviors have contributed to the establishment of these relationships?” using the
qualitative data from teacher interviews. The primary tool used for quantitative analysis was IBM SPSS Statistics 23 while the qualitative analysis was conducted through manual coding of teacher interview transcripts.

The purpose of this sequential mixed-methods study was to gain data regarding the nature of the relational climate between participating students and teachers. Additionally, the study hoped to gain insight into teacher dispositions and actions which may have contributed to specific climatic components.

Data Collection

Data were collected from students using the CSRS from March 24, 2017 to March 30, 2017. The survey was administered to an entire 10th grade class of 91 students. As the survey was given on different days, the number of respondents for each teacher varied, but ultimately, 389 surveys were taken across five administrations, one for each of the five teacher participants. Students took between three and ten minutes to complete each administration, which included demographic questions and 31 items on a five-point Likert-type scale. The surveys were administered via the SurveyMonkey website and students used personal mobile devices or Google Chromebooks to access the survey. The average time to complete each survey was 5:35.

After the student data had been obtained, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher participants. Each teacher was asked a series of general questions about teaching and relationships (Appendix D) and then the interview focus shifted to mean scores from the student responses and teachers were asked about their highest scores. Specifically, teachers were asked to consider those scores and discuss any
classroom practices or dispositions that may have contributed to the student responses. Teachers were given a copy of the general questions as well as a copy of their mean scores in advance of the interviews. Each interview took between 13 and 22 minutes and was recorded using Audacity software on a laptop and with the voice memo functionality of iPhone 7 as a backup.

Student Response Rates

Because this survey was administered over the course of five school days and at different times of the day, some variance in the number of student respondents occurred. While most students had a similar core class schedule and were accessible for these administrations, a small number of students, who transferred to the school after attending and gaining different credits elsewhere, may not have had each participating teacher and were instructed not to complete the survey for teachers they did not have or have not had. At the same time, student absences contributed to differences in the number of responses on a given day. Furthermore, participation was voluntary and students were not required to complete any surveys. Students could elect not to participate in any one of the surveys or all of the surveys. Neither students nor teachers were compensated for their involvement in this study.

Of the 91 students who submitted 389 computer responses, 3 declined to take the survey and expressed such after logging in. One student opted out and did not access the web link. Then, on each of the given days of the administration, between 71 and 87 students completed the survey. Assuming perfect attendance each day, this would indicate a range in response rates from 78% to 96%, with a mean of 85%. Using data
from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2011), which reported secondary attendance rates for the state in question at 90.8%, response rates would be calculated out of 83 students potentially present daily. This would create a range of response rates from 86% to 100% and a mean response rate of 94.2%.

In order to ensure that the response rate was acceptable, a response rate calculator created by Ramshaw (2017) was used. According to the calculator, in order to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 0.5 margin of error, and with standard deviations of each item ranging from .91 for item 3: “I respect my teacher” to 1.27 for item 16: “My teacher would come to support me at a school extracurricular activity,” each item would need between 13 and 25 respondents, or between a 3% and 6% rate. The 85% mean response and the 94.2% adjusted mean satisfy the criteria from the response rate calculator.

While the statistical requirements for an adequate response rate are an important consideration, other scholarship has focused on this question with different results. Biersdorff (2009) compiled meta-research on the topic and reported nine proposed acceptable response rates from scholars working in quantitative research, ranging from 25% to 75%. A further examination of the literature reveals myriad recommendations and results that vary based on the type of survey, the audience selected, the medium of administration (web, mail, face to face). A faculty resource published by the University of Texas at Austin (2015) describes 80-85% as a “good” response rate for a face-to-face administration of a classroom survey. This recommendation appears most appropriate for the setting of this research project and the high level of the expected response rate was satisfied.
Faculty Cooperation Rates

The research process began by discussing the project in grade level team meetings with a brief overview of the goals and methodology. Then, an email was sent to eight adults who worked in some capacity with the class of students in question with a reminder about the goals and procedure of the research and also asking for a response to “opt-in” to the research. Some of the adults worked in more of a counselor-type role or leadership role within the school but each had experienced some classroom time in at least a nominal instructional role with the students through the seminar course. Of the eight adults contacted, six expressed a willingness to participate and two did not respond to the email. Out of the six adults interested, the researcher decided to proceed with five, the sixth teacher was excluded because she only had worked with approximately 20% of the students being surveyed and only for a period of about two months. The five included participant teachers worked with or had worked with, 92% of the students for teacher three, 94% of the students for teacher and 100% of the students for teachers one, four, and five. Teacher one had worked with most of the students for a full year and then another two-thirds of a school year. The same was true for teacher three. Teachers two, four and five had worked with the students for two-thirds of a school year. Calculated using the formula provided for Cooperation Rate 1 (COOP1) by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), the 75% cooperation is less than the 100% desired. However, neither the 2016 Definition Report from the AAPOR, nor the Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods (Lavrakas, 2008) provides a guideline for an acceptable cooperation rate. Arfken and Balon (2011) report that a similar cursory
examination of the literature also did not yield an overall target percentage. Any time the response or participation rate is less than 100%, it is worth considering whether or not those non-participants have contributed significantly to research bias.

Non-participants

When designing this research project, special consideration was given to teacher recruitment. Teachers and participating students represented a convenience sample. Additionally, as participation in the research presented some potential discomfort for teacher participants receiving anonymous student feedback, I hoped that the existing collegial relationship between researcher and participants would help potential participants to feel comfortable enough to participate. Furthermore, I hoped that the relationship and trust between students and the researcher would encourage honest participation. In both cases, all parties knew that participation in the process helped me to complete my research project and many expressed a specific willingness to contribute on those grounds in spite of the inconvenience or potential discomfort involved with participating. At the same time, the specific relationships may have created a barrier for some would-be participants. For the two adults who did not respond to the email to specifically solicit and confirm participation, each had previously expressed an interest in the project and the feedback from students and I believe the relationship to the researcher was not a barrier. Whether or not it was a conscious decision to abstain from participation or merely an overlooked email, I did not follow up with an inquiry into reasons for not participating. I wanted the decision for the teachers to be made with minimal pressure. There were a number of entirely legitimate reasons relating to the
level of vulnerability that participation required, or inconvenience due to the time involved, that an individual might have not wanted to participate.

Results of the Quantitative Analysis

The first broad snapshot of the results from the CSRS is the teacher mean data for each parameter included in the instrument. As shown in Table 9, the average for each teacher provides some indication of how students perceive that particular relational variable. Individual student responses were not provided to the teachers in order to protect student anonymity and to synthesize the data in order to look for prevailing trends. Collectively, the scores may serve as some representation of the students’ perceptions of the relational climate. Each teacher received his or her own composite mean data, which featured as a component of the stage three qualitative interviews. Participating teachers did not receive the mean scores of other individual teachers or the overall mean to avoid potentially negative comparisons and to keep the professional reflection self-focused upon relative high and low scores for each participant.
### TABLE 9

**Mean Scores from Crownover Student Relationship Survey (CSRS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Teacher Number and Mean Score</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My teacher has a positive attitude on a daily basis.</td>
<td>4.45 2.93 2.83 3.84 4.58 3.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My teacher cares about my academic and social well-being.</td>
<td>4.23 3.15 2.81 3.61 4.46 3.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My teacher greets/acknowledges me in the hallway.</td>
<td>3.88 3.20 2.84 3.41 4.28 3.52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My teacher knows about my hobbies/life/interests outside of the classroom.</td>
<td>2.72 1.94 2.06 2.42 3.93 2.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I respect my teacher.</td>
<td>4.55 3.66 3.58 3.87 4.62 4.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I like my teacher.</td>
<td>4.11 3.13 3.24 3.61 4.64 3.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My teacher is fun/funny</td>
<td>3.42 2.78 3.09 3.36 4.68 3.44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My teacher tries to make class fun</td>
<td>2.96 2.86 2.97 3.12 4.65 3.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My teacher acknowledges effort through recognition and praise</td>
<td>3.47 2.62 2.85 2.85 3.71 3.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My teacher provides high and clear expectations for academic performance.</td>
<td>4.38 3.46 3.34 3.49 3.80 3.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. My teacher takes the time to assist individual students who need help.</td>
<td>3.88 3.59 3.24 3.30 4.00 3.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. My teacher is generally nice/friendly.</td>
<td>4.47 3.48 2.97 3.84 4.64 3.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My teacher is a good communicator.</td>
<td>3.81 3.16 3.03 3.68 4.42 3.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. My teacher tries to be fair.</td>
<td>3.88 3.23 3.24 3.53 4.39 3.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I trust my teacher/my teacher is honest.</td>
<td>4.34 3.24 3.37 3.67 4.59 3.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. My teacher would come to support me at a school extracurricular activity.</td>
<td>3.07 2.05 1.87 2.42 3.71 2.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. My teacher made an effort to get to know me.</td>
<td>3.31 2.47 2.28 2.70 4.13 2.97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. My teacher understands me.</td>
<td>3.05 2.53 2.46 2.69 3.94 2.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. If I had a problem with something not related to the class, I would feel comfortable going to this teacher.</td>
<td>2.82 2.29 2.01 2.66 3.99 2.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I enjoy coming to my teacher’s classroom.</td>
<td>3.04 2.63 3.18 3.06 4.38 3.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I feel comfortable asking my teacher for help.</td>
<td>3.64 3.27 3.15 3.48 4.26 3.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I have a good relationship with this teacher.</td>
<td>3.74 3.00 2.96 3.19 4.26 3.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I know about my teacher’s interests/hobbies/life beyond the classroom.</td>
<td>2.78 2.05 2.06 2.60 3.80 2.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. My teacher manages the classroom well.</td>
<td>4.14 2.97 3.06 3.43 4.10 3.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. My teacher is a good teacher.</td>
<td>4.36 3.06 3.20 3.54 4.51 3.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. My teacher creates a good balance of work and fun in the class.</td>
<td>2.81 2.64 2.92 2.96 4.38 3.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. My teacher is reasonable with grading and the class workload.</td>
<td>3.03 3.05 3.51 3.16 4.28 3.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. My teacher conducts himself or herself professionally.</td>
<td>4.51 3.42 3.36 4.04 3.81 3.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. My teacher respects me.</td>
<td>4.25 3.44 3.31 3.56 4.43 3.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. My teacher is understanding of my busy schedule outside of this class.</td>
<td>2.68 2.23 2.49 2.64 4.14 2.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. My teacher allows a lot of freedom for students.</td>
<td>2.80 2.56 3.51 3.13 4.64 3.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Teacher Number and Mean Score</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSRS Total Score (out of 150)</td>
<td>111.11 88.90 89.57 99.21 129.28 103.23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSRS Mean Score (out of 5)</td>
<td>3.58 2.87 2.89 3.20 4.17 3.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Item 22 was not included in the mean calculations and is only included here as a reference. Item Response Scale: 1 = “Strongly Disagree,” 2 = “Disagree,” 3 = “Neutral,” 4 = “Agree,” 5 = “Strongly Agree”
Teachers receiving their individual data gained some insight into potential areas of relative strength and areas for growth. For the overall mean score and total score calculation, item 22: “I have a good relationship with this teacher” has not been included. Instead, this item serves as measure of criterion validity. Similarly, it was not included for the factor analysis or when calculating the overall Cronbach’s Alpha of the CSRS. Collectively, the mean of all items across all teachers is 3.33. The highest mean score on the instrument was 4.05 for item 5: “I respect my teacher,” while the lowest mean score was 2.59 for item 4: “My teacher knows about my hobbies and interests outside of class.” The second-lowest mean score (2.61), and the parameter that yielded the lowest individual mean score (1.87, teacher 3), was item 16: “My teacher would come to support me at a school extracurricular activity.” These items may have been negatively impacted by the specific magnet-type of structure of the school. Few extracurricular opportunities existed at the campus in which the participants interacted and many students instead participated at and through their home schools, the schools they were initially zoned for. In this setting, participating students and teachers had far fewer opportunities to interact in an extracurricular capacity. Overall, individual teacher mean scores ranged from 1.87 (item 16, teacher 3) to 4.68 (item 7, teacher 5) for an overall range of 2.81.

While the sample size of teachers was small, and the focus of this project was not benchmark comparison, the total combined mean score was 103.23 out of 150. With future administrations and more teachers, it may be possible to identify general desirable score ranges. For this study, with comparative data not provided, teachers were only able to focus on their own relative high scores on individual parameters to avoid potentially
unhelpful comparisons with immediate colleagues. Teachers using the instrument in other settings will inevitably be curious about benchmarking their own results and may use item means or the overall item mean of 3.33 or the total CSRS mean score of 103.23 until subsequent administrations contribute additional data.

Scores and Gender

As seen in table 11, the student ratings of the relational variables varied by gender. Overall, male students were likely to give higher ratings to teachers in most categories. However, on the variables “I respect my teacher,” “My teacher would support me an extracurricular activity,” “My teacher respects me,” “My teacher is understanding of my busy schedule,” and “My teacher allows a lot of freedom for students,” the mean score from female respondents was slightly higher. The average difference of the response means was only .14 and on most parameters, the difference was not statistically significant. The largest difference in mean scores was .38, “I feel comfortable asking my teacher for help.” Mean differences of greater than .3 also occurred on 4 other variables: “If I had a problem with something not related to class, I would feel comfortable going to this teacher” (.37), “I enjoy coming to this teacher’s classroom” (.34), “My teacher acknowledges effort through recognition and praise” (.34), and “My teacher cares about my academic and social well-being” (.31). The difference in these mean scores suggests that either male or female students were treated differently or that there is a difference in perception across genders of the relational environment. Since these variables seem to be thematically connected around caring and comfort, it may be that students in this survey interpret caring behaviors differently and that the caring gestures of these participating
teachers were less effective in helping female students to feel comfortable in the classroom. It is also worth noting that three out of five of the participating teachers were male and that this gender imbalance may have contributed to higher average scores from male students and lower levels of perceived comfort by female students. Beyond these mean differences, seven variables produced significant differences. Table 10 depicts the statistically significant variables.

Table 10

Statistically Significant Variables by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confidence Interval</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Cohen's d</th>
<th>Sig (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>Lower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. My teacher cares about my academic and social well-being.</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My teacher acknowledges effort through recognition and praise</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My teacher is a good communicator.</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. If I had a problem with something not related to the class, I would feel comfortable going to this teacher.</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I enjoy coming to my teacher’s classroom.</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I feel comfortable asking my teacher for help.</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. My teacher creates a good balance of work and fun in the class.</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the significance of these variables, the effect size of each is small, $d$ ranges from .29 to .37 (Cohen, 1988). These data suggest that there are likely differences in the ways that male and female students perceive and assess some relational variables.
Table 11

*Mean Scores by Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My teacher has a positive attitude on a daily basis.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher cares about my academic and social well-being.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher greets/acknowledges me in the hallway.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher knows about my hobbies/life/interests outside of the classroom.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I respect my teacher.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like my teacher.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher is fun/funny</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher tries to make class fun</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher acknowledges effort through recognition and praise</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher provides high and clear expectations for academic performance.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher takes the time to assist individual students who need help.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher is generally nice/friendly.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher is a good communicator.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher tries to be fair.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I trust my teacher/my teacher is honest.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher would come to support me at a school extracurricular activity.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher made an effort to get to know me.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher understands me.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I had a problem with something not related to the class, I would feel comfortable going to this teacher.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy coming to my teacher’s classroom.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable asking my teacher for help.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a good relationship with this teacher.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know about my teacher’s interests/hobbies/life beyond the classroom.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher manages the classroom well.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher is a good teacher.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher creates a good balance of work and fun in the class.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher is reasonable with grading and the class workload.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher conducts himself or herself professionally.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher respects me.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher is understanding of my busy schedule outside of this class.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher allows a lot of freedom for students.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scores by Ethnicity

Demographic data regarding student ethnicity were collected at the beginning of the survey. Students were asked to identify as any combination of the following ethnicities: White ($n=116$), Black ($n=168$), Latino or Hispanic American ($n=90$), East Asian or Asian-American ($n=16$), South Asian or Indian American ($n=8$), Arab American ($n=7$), Native American or Alaskan Native ($n=19$), and Other ($n=12$). The “other” respondents supplied written responses of Trinidadian, Australian, Italian-Indian and British Indian. Table 12 below illustrates the mean scores for each item for each group.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare means for significant differences across ethnic designations. The only variable with a significant difference was “I trust my teacher, my teacher is honest.” $F(7, 349) = 2.13$, $p = .04$. However, the effect size of ethnicity on teacher honesty ratings was small $\eta^2 = .042$.

Beyond statistical significance, the descriptive statistics in Table 12 reveal a pattern of higher scores from students identifying as White, Asian or Middle Eastern and lower ratings given by Black and Hispanic students. White students only rated teachers below the mean in four categories, whereas Black and Hispanic students provided ratings below the mean in 20 and 18 categories, respectively. At minimum, this suggests that students are having different relational experiences or different perceptions of the relational environment.
Table 12

Mean Scores by Student Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White n = 116</th>
<th>Black n = 168</th>
<th>Latin/Hispanic American n = 300</th>
<th>East Asian or Asian American n = 175</th>
<th>South Asian or Pacific Island American n = 30</th>
<th>Arab American n = 20</th>
<th>Native American or Alaskan n = 24</th>
<th>Other n = 12</th>
<th>Total N=389</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My teacher has a positive attitude on a daily basis.</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher cares about my academic and social well-being.</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher greets/acknowledges me in the hallway.</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher knows about my hobbies/interests outside of the classroom.</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I respect my teacher.</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like my teacher.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher is fun/funny</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher tries to make class fun</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher acknowledges effort through recognition and praise</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher provides high and clear expectations for academic performance.</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher takes the time to assist individual students who need help.</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher is generally nice/friendly.</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher is a good communicator.</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher tries to be fair.</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I trust my teacher/my teacher is honest.</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher would come to support me at a school extracurricular activity.</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher made an effort to get to know me.</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher understands me.</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I had a problem with something not related to the class, I would feel comfortable going to this teacher.</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy coming to my teacher’s classroom.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable asking my teacher for help.</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a good relationship with this teacher.</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know about my teacher’s interests/hobbies/life beyond the classroom.</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher manages the classroom well.</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher is a good teacher.</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher creates a good balance of work and fun in the class.</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher is reasonable with grading and the class workload.</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher conducts himself or herself professionally.</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher respects me.</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher is understanding of my busy schedule outside of this class.</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher allows a lot of freedom for students.</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall mean</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beyond the data from the 31 individual parameters measured by the CSRS, this project had, as a goal, an impetus to “better understand the nature of a positive teacher student relationship” (research question 1). In an attempt to better understand how these variables may be related and whether or not there are other underlying factors, I conducted an exploratory factor analysis.

Factor Analysis

In the quest to better understand the relational construct and seek out latent variables, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted on 30 items with a Varimax rotation using IBM SPSS 23. To confirm that the data were factorable, tests for factorability demonstrated that the factor analysis was appropriate. The Keyser-Meyer-Olkin statistic was 0.97, above the minimum criteria of 0.5 (Fields, 2013) and in the range of scores deemed “marvelous” (Kaiser, 1974, as cited in Hutcheson and Sofroniou, 2006, p. 225). Furthermore, the KMO of each individual variable was analyzed using the anti-image correlation matrix and with scores ranging from .943-.981, each variable also falls in the “marvelous” range. Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity yielded significant results ($x^2_{435} = 8011.41, \ p < .001$). Communalities ranged from .46 to .78 with an average of .65 and six variables had a communality below .60.

Factor One: Good Teaching and Positive Affect

Three factors emerged with an eigenvalue greater than one. Factor one had an eigenvalue of 16.35, accounted for 54.5% of the variance and contained 16 items: teacher has a positive attitude, teacher cares about my well-being, respect my teacher, like my teacher, teacher acknowledges effort, teacher provides high/clear expectations for
academic performance, teacher assists individual students who need help, teacher is generally nice/friendly, teacher is a good communicator, teacher tries to be fair, I trust my teacher, I feel comfortable asking for academic help, my teacher manages the classroom well, my teacher is a good teacher, my teacher conducts herself professionally, and my teacher respects me. This factor has been labeled: “good teaching and positive affect,” as it appears to include variables related to the task of instruction (expectations, helping individual students, academic help, classroom management, is a good teacher, and professional conduct) as well as parameters related to the feelings and dispositions by teacher and student: positive attitude, cares about my well-being, praise and recognition, like my teacher, respect my teacher, teacher respects me, teacher is fair, generally nice/friendly, trust my teacher and good communicator.

Factor Two: Connection Beyond the Class

Factor two had an eigenvalue of 2.04 and accounted for 6.8% of the variance and contained eight items: connection beyond the class, teacher acknowledges me in the hallway, teacher knows about my hobbies and interests outside of class, teacher would support me at an extracurricular activity, teacher made an effort to get to know me, teacher understands me, I would be comfortable coming to this teacher with an issue not related to the class, and I know about my teacher’s interests/hobbies/life beyond the classroom. Factor two has been labeled “connection beyond the class” as many of the parameters grouped in this factor deal with extra-instructional concerns and interactions.
Factor Three: Fun/Flexible

Factor three had an eigenvalue of 1.22 and accounted for 4.06% of the variance. Factor three contains seven items: teacher is fun/funny, teacher tries to make class fun, I enjoy coming to this classroom, teacher creates a good balance of work and fun in the class, teacher is reasonable with grading and workload, teacher is understanding of my busy schedule, and teacher allows a lot of freedom for students. The third factor is labeled “fun/flexibility,” with a mix of items pertaining to fun and the relative workload of the course.

A t-test to compare means on factor scores by gender yielded no significant differences, nor did an ANOVA conducted to compare factor means by ethnicity result in any significant differences. An ANOVA was also conducted to compare means by teacher on each factor and the findings revealed a significant difference on each factor, with large effect sizes. Comparing the means for factor 1, $F(4, 317) = 42.09$, $p= .000$, $\eta = .35$; factor 2, $F(4, 317) = 50.09$, $p= .000$, $\eta = .39$; and factor 3: $F(4, 317) = 58.4$, $p=000$, $\eta = .43$ each yielded comparable, significant results accounting for 35, 39 and 43% of the variance, respectively. Factor analysis data is presented in Table 13, below.
Table 13

*Eigenvalues, Variance Accounted for, and Factor Loadings for Emergent Factors from the Factor Analysis of the Crownover Student Relationship Survey (CSRS)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Number and Parameter</th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
<th>Eigenvalue</th>
<th>%Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Factor 1: Good teaching and Positive Affect</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.35</td>
<td>54.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Positive attitude</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cares about well-being</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Respect my teacher</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Like my teacher</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Teacher acknowledges effort</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. High/clear academic expectations</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Assists individual students</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Generally nice/friendly</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Good communicator</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Tries to be fair</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Trust my teacher</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Comfortable asking for academic help</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Manages classroom well</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Is a good teacher</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Conducts herself professionally</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Teacher respects me</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Factor 2: Connection beyond the class</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.04</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.80</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Acknowledges me in the hallway</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Knows about my outside hobbies/interests</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Would come support an extracurricular activity</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Made an effort to get to know me</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Teacher understands me</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Comfortable with non-class issue</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Know about teachers hobbies/interests</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Factor 3: Fun/Flexible</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.22</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.06</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My teacher is fun/funny</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Tries to make class fun</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Enjoy coming to this classroom</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Good balance of work and fun</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Reasonable with grading and workload</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Understanding of my busy schedule</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Allows a lot of freedom for students</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further Construct Validation

As an exploratory study, this project sought to gain data on the nature of a positive teacher-student relationship (Research Question One). The construct of positive teacher-student relationship was defined through the Phase One survey in which teachers and students were asked to respond openly to the question: “How would you describe the ideal type of teacher-student relationship?” From responses to this question, items were coded and the Crownover Student Relationship Survey was created. While there was strong reason to believe that each of the parameters on the CSRS was related in some way to positive relationships, item 22, “I have a positive relationship with this teacher” was included for the purpose of construct validation. As well as serving as an overall assessment from the student respondents, this item as it related to other parameters was also of particular interest.

Table 14 displays the Pearson’s correlation for each of the parameters with item 22. Each correlation is significant at $p < .001$ and the effect size of nearly every correlation is greater than .05, a “large” effect (Field, 2014). Only three of the correlations have a medium effect, “my teacher provides clear expectations for academic performance” (.491), “I know about my teachers hobbies/interests outside of the classroom” (.479), and “my teacher conducts himself or herself professionally” (.420). These data support the continued inclusion of each parameter on the instrument and provide some insight into relative effect sizes of each on the students’ rating of the relationships overall.
Table 14

Pearson Correlations for Item 22: “I Have a Good Relationship With this Teacher”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation (r)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  My teacher has a positive attitude on a daily basis.</td>
<td>.600**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  My teacher cares about my academic and social well-being.</td>
<td>.681**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  My teacher greets/acknowledges me in the hallway.</td>
<td>.577**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  My teacher knows about my hobbies/life/interests outside of the classroom.</td>
<td>.549**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  I respect my teacher.</td>
<td>.679**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  I like my teacher.</td>
<td>.700**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  My teacher is fun/funny.</td>
<td>.621**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  My teacher tries to make class fun</td>
<td>.577**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  My teacher acknowledges effort through recognition and praise</td>
<td>.552**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 My teacher provides high and clear expectations for academic performance.</td>
<td>.491**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 My teacher takes the time to assist individual students who need help.</td>
<td>.573**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 My teacher is generally nice/friendly.</td>
<td>.698**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 My teacher is a good communicator.</td>
<td>.635**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 My teacher tries to be fair.</td>
<td>.654**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 I trust my teacher/my teacher is honest.</td>
<td>.675**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 My teacher would come to support me at a school extracurricular activity.</td>
<td>.571**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 My teacher made an effort to get to know me.</td>
<td>.657**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 My teacher understands me.</td>
<td>.702**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 If I had a problem with something not related to the class, I would feel comfortable going to this teacher.</td>
<td>.581**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 I enjoy coming to my teacher’s classroom.</td>
<td>.668**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 I feel comfortable asking my teacher for help.</td>
<td>.708**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 I know about my teacher’s interests/hobbies/life beyond the classroom.</td>
<td>.479**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 My teacher manages the classroom well.</td>
<td>.653**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 My teacher is a good teacher.</td>
<td>.666**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 My teacher creates a good balance of work and fun in the class.</td>
<td>.622**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 My teacher is reasonable with grading and the class workload.</td>
<td>.568**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 My teacher conducts himself or herself professionally.</td>
<td>.420**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 My teacher respects me.</td>
<td>.727**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 My teacher is understanding of my busy schedule outside of this class.</td>
<td>.586**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 My teacher allows a lot of freedom for students.</td>
<td>.568**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).
As a further confirmatory measure, item 22 was significantly related to each of the three factors identified from the factor analysis: fun/flexible, $r = .740, p = .000$, connection beyond the class, $r = .735, p = .000$, and good teaching/positive affect, $r = .823, p = .000$. Beyond the confirmatory data resulting from the inclusion of this parameter, it also provides a simple, summative, indicator for participant teachers, a net measure of all other parameters.

Quantitative Summary

The quantitative data analysis in this study has further advanced my efforts to answer research question one: “what is the nature of a positive teacher-student relationship” by providing insight into the relationships via the parameters on the CSRS and by confirming the appropriateness of including each parameter. Research question two: “What is the relational climate between participating teachers and students?” was also informed from the student responses on the CSRS. These data, representing the students’ perspectives on the relational climate, provided a springboard into the Phase Three qualitative interviews with teachers. These interviews were conducted in an effort to understand: “What practices or behaviors have led to the establishment of these relationships?” (research question three).

Qualitative Data Analysis

The sequential, mixed-methods design of this study sought to use data from the quantitative second phase, which provided a wide angle view of the student perspectives of the relational climates with each participating teacher, to provide a point from which to have reflective conversations with teachers about their classroom practices and
experiences as they pertained to developing and maintaining relationships. Participant teachers answered questions in semi-structured interviews. The first half of the questions was scripted, though deviation was allowed as well as follow-up questions to further explore specific answers.

Participations

The teachers involved in the study were all working in some capacity with sophomores, were between 29 and 40 years old and had between 7 and 17 years of teaching experience. Teacher one was a Black female and 17-year veteran English teacher in her late 30s who had worked with most of the participating students for two consecutive years. It may be worth noting that, in the year of the study, teacher one was the recipient of District Teacher of Year, in a district of more than 10,000 teachers. Though originally from the Midwest, she had spent most of her life in and around the southern, metropolitan, area of the study. Teacher two was a White female in her early 30s working in the math department. She grew up in the community and this was her first year at the school, though she was an eight-year teaching veteran. Teacher three was a White male, mid-30’s who taught engineering. He was a career-changer, but had been teaching engineering for seven years and was a long-time area resident. Teacher four was a White male in his early 40’s who was not technically a full-time teacher of these students during the course of the study. Rather, he served in a quasi-administrative role and worked occasionally with students in a leadership seminar class, as well as in other administrative capacities. A former English teacher with 13 years of educational experience, he also served as an academic coach for teachers. Originally from the
Midwest, he was new to the city but had lived and worked in the South for a few years prior.

**Deductive Qualitative Analysis**

This sequential study utilized the factors developed from the Phase Two quantitative analysis as an analytical framework by which to examine the teacher interview responses. This method is an example of deductive qualitative analysis, which uses data from previous research as a starting point for the analysis of new data. Gilgan (2010) calls this pre-existing familiarity with the concepts at play “theoretical sensitivity.” She defines theoretical sensitivity as a preexisting “knowledge of theory, research, and personal experience that contribute to implicit or explicit sets of ideas that helps them to notice certain things about their data and not notice others” (p. 1). Within the theoretical framework outlined by Gilgan (2010), she also outlines “sensitizing concepts” which result from third level analysis and serve to “alert researchers to what might be important within a phenomena of interest” (p. 1). Here, the sensitizing concepts will be the three factors: good teaching and positive affect, connection outside of class and fun/flexible.

**Factor One: Good Teaching and Positive Affect**

The factor: “Good teaching and positive affect” is comprised of the parameters listed in table 15. Each of the teacher interviews was coded for each factor as well as each parameter within each factor. What follows is a sampling of teacher statements regarding their behaviors pertaining to each parameter within the factor.
Table 15

Parameters Comprising Factor One: Good Teaching and Positive Affect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Parameter from CSRS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teacher has a positive attitude on a daily basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher cares about my academic and social well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I respect my teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I like my teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Teacher acknowledges effort through recognition and praise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Teacher provides high/clear academic expectations for academic performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Teacher takes time to assists individual students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Teacher is generally nice/friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Teacher is a good communicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Teacher tries to be fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I trust my teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I feel comfortable asking for academic help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Teacher manages classroom well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Teacher is a good teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Teacher conducts himself/herself professionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Teacher respects me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding parameter one and positivity, the range of scores from participating teachers was 2.83 to 4.58 and indeed only teacher one explicitly discussed this aspect of her approach to teaching. Teacher one discussed her efforts to be kind and stress that the students be kind to one another and summarized this aspect of her teaching by stating that “What is most important to me is that, to keep a positive relationship, that I communicate with them positively.” She elaborated by saying that she tried to never raise her voice and to also be polite and respectful during interactions with students. This researcher, having shared a classroom with this teacher for the year, can also attest to a perennially upbeat demeanor, a person who was happy to be there, daily. Certainly this parameter is not mutually exclusive and some of the attributes that may have been characterized as positivity could also overlap with behaviors exhibiting parameter 12: “My teacher is
nice/friendly” or even parameter 13: “My teacher is a good communicator,” among others.

Student perception of care is important, Noddings (1992) discusses at length the different types of exhibited care. Beyond these caring behaviors that may be exhibited by adults, the more significant half of these caring interactions is that the recipients of care perceives that they are being cared about. Teachers one and four both articulated a desire for their students to know that they are cared for. Teacher one shared that she “likes to know what’s going on with (students)” and engages them in not only academic conversation but also conversations about life beyond the classroom. This teacher also attends extracurricular functions as an expression of that care. Teacher one’s care is also evident in the effort she puts into planning for instruction and exhaustive grading of student writing. Teacher four remarked: “I want kids to know that I care about them and that I want them to know like, I’m somebody they can count on.” Teacher two highlighted a common sentiment among teachers that she wants students to understand that the entire educational impetus of their classroom is designed for their benefit and teacher three added that he has goals for the students, certainly suggestive of a regard for academic well-being.

Among participating teachers, respect was usually discussed with regard to the mutual exchange between teachers and students, a combination of parameters five and twenty-nine. Teacher one commented that “There was a time when it was expected that teachers were respected and I know now… you have to earn their respect and I also treat them with respect.” She specified that kindness and positive communication and not
yelling at students were ways to demonstrate respect as well as interacting with them like adults. Teacher three describes respect for students in different forms of autonomy: “what they consider respect is not what I would typically call respect… allowing freedom to happen, they see that as respect, even though to me, it’s sort of bending the rules.” Here, he also suggests a disconnect between the way teachers and students perceive respect. This difference is, I think, at the core of many frictional classroom interactions in which either the teacher or the student feels disrespected by their respective definitions. Teacher three went on to describe an extension of the autonomy mentioned earlier, allowing students freedom in assignments and ultimately, the support of student leadership in the classroom. It shows a great deal of respect to stand aside and let students have authority. Teacher four described a mutual respect for one another’s opinion, commenting about student who once said that a disappointing look was worse than a failing grade: “We’ve established a relationship where what I think matters more than just the grade that I am putting on paper.” This type of personal regard goes beyond respect for the mere station of teacher.

Parameter six, “I like my teacher” was not directly addressed by any of the participants in the interviews at least, not with regards to being concerned specifically with likability, verbatim. Still, the factors which relate to likability, such as “my teacher is fun/funny,” (r=.730) “my teacher is generally nice/friendly,” (r=.739) “I trust my teacher,” (r=717) and “my teacher is a good teacher” (r=.737) are more directly addressed. Still, from the teacher responses and indeed the student data, it is difficult to pinpoint which dispositions or actions contribute most directly to likability. Teacher four
wondered aloud during his interview about the relationship between respect and likability, asking: “Were there other people for whom, “like” was higher but respect was lower? If respect was lower was professional lower?” This question can be answered with Table 16. For every teacher except teacher 5, the “respect” score is higher than the “like” score. The correlation between parameter five and six ($r=.764$) is stronger than for parameter five and twenty-eight ($r=.472$). Teacher 5 appears to have enjoyed strong scores for likability and respectability without being as professional as some of his colleagues. Still, the data do not support that being unprofessional is associated with likability or respectability.

Table 16

Mean Comparison of Parameters 5, 6, 22, 25, 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. I respect my teacher.</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I like my teacher.</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I have a good relationship with this teacher.</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. My teacher is a good teacher.</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. My teacher conducts himself or herself professionally.</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For now, discussions of the other related parameters may shed some insight into specific behaviors and practices that contribute to likability. The Pearson correlations suggest that being fun/funny, nice/friendly and being a “good teacher” are all significant contributors.

During the initial pilot testing of the CSRS, one of the areas for growth for me as a researcher was illustrated by my low score on parameter nine, “my teacher acknowledges effort through recognition and praise.” While some parameters are less
aligned with my philosophy of teaching, particularly parameter 28, regarding professionalism, ensuring that students feel supported and empowered is important to me and providing praise and recognition are germane to those goals. In this administration of the CSRS, my score rose from a mean of 2.96 from the pilot to a 3.71. Granted, the improved score occurred with a different group of students, but I believe that having identified that as an area for growth the previous year and making a conscious effort to provide praise in class, celebrate exemplary work and at times, affirm that students were doing the right things and that it was noticed and it appreciated, helped improve that score. For me, a coach and former athlete, my background was that you participated an entire season and perhaps hope to hear some nice summative words at the end of season banquet. With male athletes in the mid-to-late teens, ego maintenance is often a greater concern than building confidence. While I have always been a positive teacher, I rarely took the time to acknowledge students for just showing up and doing the right things. In sports, it is an absolute minimum expectation, and for many students, those are behaviors that need to be reinforced. Also, instead of a voluntary activity, like a sport, where students have years of experience and have a certain level of ability to be on the team, the classroom of a new teacher and a subject can be unfamiliar terrain and while all students have experience in classrooms, they may not have experienced many successes. Teacher three acknowledges student success by supporting student leadership and, in an engineering class, taking time to praise and examine exemplary work. Teacher four, a former academic coach, was trained to give feedback as “notices” and “wonders” to at least try to minimize the damage that may come from poorly-delivered criticism of
student work. Due to the structure of the teacher interviews, in which a set of general questions gave way to a consideration of each teacher’s top ten mean scores from the student responses, some items were not addressed. With parameter nine, “my teacher acknowledges effort through recognition and praise” no teacher results included this parameter in the top ten and in fact, praise was not a strength of the group, with a mean ranking of 23 out of 30.

Conversely, providing high and clear expectations for academic performance was a common theme for discussion in the teacher interviews. Teacher one returned to this theme in no fewer than six of her responses. She articulated that her expectations were “clear” and “high” and that they were “set forth on the syllabus (and) through daily interactions or reminders.” She also highlighted that, with this group of students, most of whom she was teaching for a second consecutive year, they came in with an awareness of those expectations and so she was able to spend more time focusing on other areas of her classroom. For teacher one, strong relationships with the students meant that “they care about your expectations and they try to meet them.” Teacher one also described using gentle reminders and proximity to reinforce behavioral expectations. Through observations, I can confirm that academic expectations, specifically with regards to the quality of writing in formal assignments, were high, consistent and clearly communicated through rubrics and extensive feedback on the written samples. Teacher two discussed reciprocity with expectations, noting that the most important attribute of a positive teacher-student relationship is “that each one knows what the expectation is for one another, that way, if you’re running outside those parameters, you can call each other out
on it. Not just from teacher to student, but student to teacher.” As a civics teacher, I am reminded of the Social Contract Theory, specifically Locke’s interpretation, that governing powers are beholden to the people and people are in turn obliged to exist within certain parameters in order for good society to exist. Furthermore, Locke advocated and many early influential Americans agreed, that people had a right to criticize and hold governing power accountable. This idea of accountability to students, as opposed to testing agencies, is a central one to building positive relationships. Teacher three noted that holding students to high standards was contributing to success in his classes. He said “I’m not going to let them get by with a bare minimum and not acknowledge that they’re doing the bare minimum; so, high expectations, making sure that, even if they can’t get there that’s where I want them to be on the next assignment.” This statement indicates a level of student ownership of their performance but also an emphasis on growth. The idea that it is okay for a student to not hit a certain target at a certain moment and a focus on process, are appropriate steps away from high stakes testing. Finally, teacher four placed a premium on high expectations, commenting that:

I want them (students) to understand that I care about you and I want you to do well but at the same point, I’m not lowering my expectations because I think you’re a good kid or a nice kid or anything like that, but I want you to feel comfortable in my room and with me as a teacher, but at the same time, I also want you to understand that like, my expectations are high and I expect you to get there. I’ll help you, but it’s still on you.
This strong statement represents a commitment to the content, foremost. The extent to which content transmission is the preeminent purpose of school has been addressed previously and will be a point of discussion in chapter five.

The too few moments when a teacher is able to interact with a student individually are unmatched opportunities for relationship building. Unfortunately, there are structural barriers to these interactions, particularly class sizes and few opportunities of mutual availability outside of class time. Good teachers can create opportunities within the class period. Teacher three noted that, within his subject, engineering, many of the days were student workdays. These days feature students working on “three or four different assignments” based on their individual progress. Each assignment has a built-in measure of student freedom with the design and construction of different items. In this setting, both teacher three as well as his student-leaders are able to move about the room and provide specific assistance and have individualized interactions. Teacher one would also hold writing workshop days that allowed for students to write, peer review, and in which she could move around and provide individual feedback on a work-in-progress. Asynchronous feedback in the form of notes on written submissions was another common form of individual help in her English class. Teacher two held after school math tutoring and met with students during her lunch for additional tutoring multiple times a week to be able to provide additional support when needed.

Parameter 12, “my teacher is generally nice/friendly” was the second highest mean score after “I respect my teacher” and so, this dispositional output was a strength of the group. Teacher one noted that mutual kindness was the key characterizing feature of
positive teacher-student relationships. In her classroom, she also tried to promote kindness in student-student interactions. She discussed providing “gentle reminders” about expectations and never using a raised voice in anger towards a student. This parameter correlated strongly with other positive indicators: my teacher is a good communicator ($r = .723$), my teacher tries to be fair ($r = .715$), my teacher is honest ($r = .754$), my teacher is a good teacher ($r = .707$), and my teacher respects me ($r = .718$).

Teacher two was surprised that this score was among her top ten, commenting: “I feel like I’m so strict, sometimes I forget that strict doesn’t mean unfriendly.” To further explore her assertion, Table 17 compares mean scores for parameter 12, “my teacher is nice/friendly” and parameter 31: “my teacher allows a lot of freedom for students.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. My teacher is generally nice/friendly.</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. My teacher allows a lot of freedom for students.</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The quantitative data support the claim that strictness does not translate to a lack of friendliness. Teacher one was perceived by students to be quite friendly, but also not allowing a great deal of student freedom. Students perceived the opposite from teacher three and teachers two and four also had higher scores for friendliness despite lower scores for freedom. The Pearson correlation between these two variables was a relatively weak $r = .464$. So then, if freedom and friendliness are not strongly correlated, what behaviors are perceived as friendly? Teacher four mentions being careful with tone and
greeting students cheerfully in the hallways, saying “please” and “thank you” and abiding by other basic tenets of mannered interactions. He also highlighted the importance of maintaining a positive disposition through complicated exchanges:

Some of our kids have been in trouble, but I’ve never treated them like trouble...I’m still real with them, I’m still friendly with them, I’m still polite and respectful to them and I think that makes a difference in how the kids view you, when you don’t view the kid as an annoyance.

This statement crosses all of the items most highly correlated to the nice/friendly parameter: fairness, honesty, communication and respect. In spite of this cursory analysis, this one may be boiled down to simply acting nicely toward students: making an effort to engage them in positive conversation and still exhibiting patience and respect in the interactions in which the content may not be entirely positive.

A teacher’s ability to communicate is an underlying component to many of these relational variables. A teacher may well possess positive or kind affectations towards students, but an inability to communicate may prevent a student from perceiving such dispositions and, care, or any other outgoing expression poorly communicated, will fall short of complete appreciation by the student. Participating teachers discussed a number of aspects regarding communication: frequency, nature of, volume during and tone.

Teacher two starts off each year gathering information...like, how much they trust you, how much they’re willing to let you in and also like, how they communicate. I think that’s the biggest thing
I focus on how they communicate with me the first week because from there, I feel like I can speak their language better. This sentiment appropriately illustrates the burden that falls on each teacher to spend time and energy trying to meet students where they stand. This time devoted to taking inventory and effort spent in the initial overtures yields dividends as the semester progresses. Teacher one emphasized the need for frequent and positive communication, she explained: “I talk with them regularly like they are regular people aside from the academic conversations that we have, I also interact with them socially and just have general life conversations that come up.” With relational pedagogy, the time spent “off-topic” can be more valuable than the time spent focused on the academic content of the day. The sidebar conversations and the ad-libbed, mutual sharing of personal details are the currency of positive relationships. A willingness to share and to listen and acknowledge is an approach toward Buber’s (2002) I-Thou relation. These exchanges are critical to the most genuine type of relational dialogue, absent the academic agenda for the space of a moment, two or more individuals connecting organically. It likely goes without saying that communication need not be exclusively verbal. Teacher three described giving “visual cues” to students committing an infraction. So many classroom exchanges that become toxic, public, episodes degenerate through poor communication. A matter best settled by a touch to the shoulder or a quiet word delivered in close proximity too often becomes a shouted command, a student is put on a stage, embarrassed and either forced to lose face, or pride mandates an equally public retaliation to save face. Every student communicates differently and this communication is
impacted by environmental and cultural forces that a teacher has to understand. Some need the carrot, while others need the stick and all of this is subject to the infinite number of variables of the specific moment. A teacher must be a master communicator. The participant teachers paint that communication as being conscious, clear, consistent, kind and casual.

For the student participants, a concept related closely ($r=.754$) to the quality of communication was the perception of fairness, parameter 14. Though each teacher counted this variable among their top ten, only teacher one addressed it explicitly in her interview, saying: “I try to be consistent and fair, I have heard that I am fair in, not only the way that I treat them but also in the way that I grade.” Fairness for students may lie in their equal treatment or in reasonable standards and expectations, equity and justness of the class environment. The absence of other teacher thoughts on establishing a fair classroom is likely a result of assumptions on behalf of the researcher and the participants. For myself as teacher, I think of my classroom as a unified, if not uniform, experience. I certainly never formulate a classroom of favored and avoided, supported and neglected categories of students. Inevitably, as the unique relationships develop some are weaker, some stronger, some more fun, some more focused and inevitably, different. In the holistic consideration given to the relational variables of the classroom in this study, I assumed that teacher behaviors, policies and practices applied to all students. From the phrasing of the responses to interview questions, not a single teacher mentioned fairness, but only teacher three and four articulated any moments of difference. Teacher three commented on teacher leaders and their role and teacher four
discussed the equal treatment of students who had been in trouble. Otherwise, the responses appear to have considered classes as a whole. This is problematic, as students, from their diverse responses, perceive the relational environment differently or in fact exist in a simultaneous, yet different, relational space. The goal is equity and not equality, it is ok for the student relationships to be infinitely variable, so long as the student perceptions of fairness are high and students’ needs are being met. From the data, these teachers performed relatively well at creating relational spaces that students felt were fair.

A recent longitudinal study by Yeager, Purdie-Vaughns, Hooper, & Cohen (2017) refers to a “trust gap” between White students and non-White students. The study follows a group of White and non-White students from the beginning of middle school to college, asking questions twice yearly about students’ perceptions of race and fair treatment. The study found that all student scores declined as they progressed through school but that Black and Hispanic students’ scores declined faster and further during middle school. The student perceptions were validated by comparing them to school discipline records, where the administration of discipline was in fact, uneven and students’ awareness of this inequality increased over time. Overall, the result was a decline in institutional trust among minority students. This phenomenon has been called the “trust gap” (Yeager et al., 2017). Trust is critical component to a successful relationship. Yeager et al. (2017) note, “When students have lost trust, they may be deprived of the benefits of engaging with an institution, such as positive relationships and access to resources and opportunities for advancement” (para. 3). Similarly, teacher two
stated: “the key thing for me is, that first week, like really making an impact and trying to
gain kids’ trust, because my content doesn’t exist without it.” Specifically, she was
talking about establishing a space where students felt comfortable enough to self-
advocate in math. Teacher three noted: “if they don’t feel comfortable, they are not
going to give you good results.” In spite of these sentiments, and that overall, parameter
22 was tied for the third-highest mean score for the group at 3.82, a breakdown of the
scores by ethnicity (Table 18) suggests that a trust gap exists.

Table 18

*Mean Scores for Parameter 15 “I trust my teacher” by Ethnicity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White (N=116)</th>
<th>African American (N=168)</th>
<th>Latino or Hispanic American (N=90)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. I trust my teacher/my teacher is honest.</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this study, four out of five participating teachers were White, two men and two
women. One of the participating teachers was a Black female. With the largest group of
student respondents identifying as “Black,” perhaps the trust rating for the lone Black
teacher (teacher one) would be higher?

Table 19

*Teacher Means for Parameter 15, “I trust my teacher”*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. I trust my teacher/my teacher is honest.</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While teacher one’s scores were higher and her mean substantially higher than teachers two, three and four, teacher five, a White male, had the highest mean. So, in spite of this small sample and a likely trend of white teachers either contributing to, or having trouble bridging, a trust gap, it appears to be possible. The study by Yeager et al. (2017) also featured an intervention. A small sample of students were given “wise feedback” that was positive and affirming. For instance, students in the test group were given feedback on an essay prefaced with: “I’m giving you these comments because I have very high expectations, and I know you can reach them” compared to the control group: “I’m giving you these comments so that you’ll have feedback on your paper.” The test group was more likely to revise the paper, and have fewer discipline issues the next year. Cohen, a co-author on the study, summarizes in stating: “there’s this kind of hidden construct of trust that teachers and schools are influencing all the time and maybe not knowing it” (Howard, 2017, para. 7). Hopefully this study is a step towards revealing the hidden nature of this construct or at least providing a means to measure student perceptions of trustworthiness.

Regarding trust, teacher two remarked that trust was the key that opened the door for student self-advocacy in her classroom. Parameter 21, “I feel comfortable asking this teacher for help” is an indicator that the relationship in the classroom is at least healthy enough for the traditional business of school to occur. The relationship is at least, not detrimental to the academic mission. Teacher one described this as a culmination of a process, achieved over time: “Eventually, we get to a place where it’s more comfortable that they know me and I know them and we have a professional but also a working
relationships that helps them feel comfortable in the classroom.” During this process, it is imperative that students feel like they are being heard. Teacher three helped to establish this in his classroom by focusing on the process and not the outcome. The focus on progress versus mastery helps to minimize the pressure on students and encourages students to seek help, when the stakes for content mastery are lower. The willingness to seek help had a strong correlation to the validating measure “I have a good relationship with this teacher” \( (r = .719) \), the only parameter with a higher value was item 29, “my teacher respects me” \( (r = .746) \). The teacher interviews revealed that getting to know students was the preferred avenue through which to promote self-advocacy. A willingness to seek help also appeared to be strongly related to “I like my teacher” \( (r = .626) \) and “I trust my teacher,” \( (r = .611) \) so, working to improve trust or likability may also impact this parameter. In general, creating a safe space where a student can fail without academic or social consequence is another important consideration.

During the initial qualitative phase of research that contributed to the production of the CSRS, I was most surprised to see responses including classroom management as a component part of positive relationships. This research has helped to validate this variable among the others. Parameter 24 had a high factor loading (.72) and an inter item correlation mean (.54) that was higher than 13 other parameters. So, a consideration of classroom management appears to be appropriate in this relational discussion. Teacher one, with the highest mean score (.414) talked about “being a stickler” for “attendance, starting on time, being ready, having materials, dress code, hats, cell phones.” Her classroom was always very structured and organized. However, she describes that, with
this group, many of whom she had taught for two consecutive years, she had gradually
relaxed and noted that she felt like the mother of a little family. Student responses on this
measure inspire more questions. How do students define a well-managed classroom?
Some teachers may link a well-managed classroom to a classroom with a great deal of
teacher control, or perhaps one with minimal student freedoms. Would students similarly
view a well-managed class as one in which students had few freedoms? Intuition
suggests that student freedom may be a part of the student vision of this classroom.
Based on the quantitative data, there is moderate correlation between classroom
management and student freedom $r = .41, p < .001$. Otherwise, the definition of a well-
managed classroom for students is beyond the scope of this study. As this variable is
firmly connected to other relational variables, the well-managed classroom, formerly of
little interest, is now an area for future potential study. Conversations regarding
classroom management have always seemed to stem from an administrative interest in
control. Now that it is perhaps also on students’ radars and connected to the relational
climate, I should like to know more about this student vision of good management.
Perhaps even more nebulous than the concept of “good management” from a
student perspective is that of “good teacher.” Parameter 25 elicited student responses to
this end. As such, the teacher interviews could only be coded from what I, as a teacher,
understand to be “good teaching.” Strategies that involve cooperative learning, transfer
control of the class to students, allow for voice and choice in topics to consider or
mediums for, or modes of, presentation. Creative and relevant projects, supportive
practices, and assignments that allow for student expression were all categorized under
“good teaching.” To some extent, it may be possible to connect student ratings for each teacher, to the practices described by that teacher and begin to gain some understanding of student preferences but ultimately, there is no guarantee that the discussed practices of the teacher in the interviews were the practices that led to the impression that inspired the student ratings. This again is another topic for future study. Teacher five, who had the highest mean (4.51), employed a number of simulations, lessons that allowed for independent or group exploration of topics using iPads or ChromeBooks, and minimal lecture. The class included a number of projects that allowed for student self-expression, like a budget project in which students envision and calculate their future lives. The civics class also connected to a number of current events and heavily involved student consideration of their own opinions vis-à-vis those events. Teacher five made a conscious effort to include multimedia, particularly for the purpose of bringing humor into the class. Clips from late night talk shows, Saturday Night Live, political memes from social media; all were regular features in the class. Otherwise the classroom featured a high level of student freedom with regards to student selection of seats and group composition, or options to work individually. Most assignments allowed for flexibility of assignment type, allowing either a digital or analog submission, allowing students to work in preferred media of either Prezi, PowerPoint, iMovie, etc. Many assignments allowed for student topic selection, a human rights project in which students select the right or category of rights to explore, a Presidential resume/presentation “Presume” in which students selected the president, the budget assignment in which students select hypothetical future jobs, careers, homes and crunch the numbers. Lastly,
the class dealt with political matters in a way that was described by one former student as “raw and barely filtered.” While still trying to consider all sides of any issue discussed, the class involved a real examination of issues and sincerely shared viewpoints by the instructor as well as students. Particularly in an election year, it was not possible to teach politics without getting one’s hands dirty by digging in to real attitudes and beliefs about real issues. Students appeared to respond positively to the acknowledged bias and the honesty involved in exploring class topics. Parameter 25 correlated most highly with the parameters “I respect my teacher” ($r = .711$) “I like my teacher” ($r = .737$), “my teacher is generally nice/friendly” ($r = .707$) “I trust my teacher/my teacher is honest” ($r = .701$). It may be that student feelings towards a teacher were the overriding criteria in evaluating whether or not a teacher was “good” rather than a strong scrutiny of pedagogical approaches. Teacher one was district teacher of the year for a massive school district and students similarly recognized her quality with a 4.36 mean score. Her classroom was the epitome of professional teaching. Well-prepared lessons that involved quality literary analysis and extensive development of student writing abilities were hallmarks of her instruction. All of these occurred in a positive, structured environment with a level of mutual respect that was palpable. Even students who did not love the subject, or were not strong writers, and perhaps did not earn a high grade in the course had to begrudgingly admit how much they liked teacher one and could recognize great teaching even when it was a challenging academic experience for many of them. This class involved meaningful exploration of texts and expressive writing in which students were able to explore topics and themselves through the topics. She discussed her evolution as a
teacher away from relying on the textbook to a “collaborative, free-range teaching approach” where she could “choose texts and themes to help identify the interests of (her) students.” An earlier theme for teacher one was the importance of high academic expectations, consistent and communicated through rubrics, verbal and written feedback.

Teacher two and three had classrooms that incorporated self-paced student work using technology, in which the teacher was able to float and act individually or in small groups with students as opposed to lecturing. Teacher four was a strong advocate for project-based learning and had previously been an academic coach for an organization that championed project-based learning and worked to introduced and support teacher at implementing project-based learning in schools. His classroom featured creative projects with well-communicated expectations. He used a number of protocols so that the class ran smoothly along familiar, structured paths during discussions, reflection, reading, feedback and just about any other area of instruction. The class was characterized by high expectations and high levels of organization. Whether or not the student assessment of good teaching aligns with the best proscribed pedagogy from content experts or is a merely a reflection of the student feelings about the teacher as an individual or the holistic experience in the teacher’s classroom, student perception matters and an inquiry into how students define good teaching would be valuable, particularly as this parameter relates strongly to other relational variables.

The next parameter, “my teacher conducts himself or herself professionally,” was included with no small amount of disdain. Had the CSRS been a product entirely reflective of my personal vision of positive relationships, it most assuredly would have
been omitted. During my student teaching, I was presented with a dichotomy, later proven false, that being “personal” with students was somehow in conflict with “professionalism” in the teaching profession. Given a choice between the two and my own philosophic orientation, I certainly chose the former and have balked at any mention of professionalism in the decade since. When teacher respondents from the Phase One qualitative interviews listed professionalism as part and parcel to successful relationships, I included the measure to be true to the methodology but also with a hope of banishing professionalism forever from considerations of relation. My perhaps misconception of professionalism in teaching as promoting a rigid, cold, and safely distant position with regard to genuine, meaning interaction with students has led to this concept being anathema to me. This research has illustrated that student perceptions of professionalism do correlate with other relational variables. However, this parameter has the lowest average interitem correlation by far ($r = .389$). This value is still high enough to be considered a “moderate” correlation, yet it seems to be an outlier. Furthermore, that it is the variable with the absolute lowest correlation to validating parameter 22 “I have a good relationship with this teacher” ($r = .440$), seems a justification for my continued prioritization of other areas of focus in my approach to building relationships. Still, the data support the continued inclusion of the parameter. Teacher four, whose highest score from students was on this variable (4.04), shared the following insight into that score:

My first thought was: ‘It’s because I wear ties multiple times a week… let’s be honest, the principal doesn’t even wear ties! But the fact that I wear ties and
slacks multiple times a week, I think, probably impacts the idea that I handle myself professionally because I’m often dressed professionally.’

Teacher two also felt that her rating for professionalism tied to her physical presentation. In addition to “using proper language” she jokingly supposed: “I guess I dress normally? I don’t come in trash clothes.” Like these teachers, I would also guess that professionalism ratings from students had much to do with superficial presentation but the conversation with teacher four provided perhaps more substantial insight into the possible significance of these scores. Teacher four acted in a quasi-administrative role and was responsible for organizing our seminar courses and other initiatives so, students often saw him performing in administrative and leadership capacities and spent less time with him as a classroom instructor. He felt that the nature of his role might also have contributed to his rating, as he had less time to be informal with students. Beyond professional dress, this aspect of his professionalism, preparedness, was often visible to students. He felt that “having things prepared, knowing what’s happening, being able to answer questions and explain in a clear way: ‘here is why we are doing what we are doing’ or, ‘here’s the goal for this’” all contributed to student perceptions of professionalism. In making a connection to relation as I perceive it, perhaps professionalism and competency are related, being competent helps acquire and maintain a certain type of student trust and the significance of the connection between trust and positive relationships is one that I might more easily acquiesce to than that between professionalism and good relationships.
The final variable of the first factor is arguably the most significant. Parameter 29, “my teacher respects me” had the highest single correlation ($r = .746$) to item 22 “I have a good relationship with this teacher.” Strongly linked to its reciprocal measure “I respect my teacher” ($r = .709$), that students feel respect is paramount to establishing a positive relationship. Teacher one’s sentiment that she does not “yell at them or raise my voice, I try to be kind when speaking to them and encourage that as well” aligns with quantitative link between parameter 29 and parameter 12, “my teacher is generally nice/friendly” ($r = .718$). Beyond not being mean or humiliating kids through public berating, teacher one described treating them like “regular people.” Teacher five tried to respect students by providing autonomy and freedom to make behavioral and academic decisions. A frequent observation among the staff was that former teachers of middle school who had since transitioned to high school were seemingly more reliant on concrete structures for classroom management, provided fewer student liberties with either food or restroom privileges, had tighter enforcement on policies like cell phone use or dress code and fell very obviously into the camp of: “these are children and should be treated as such” rather than “these are young adults, they deserve some space to practice making good decisions.” Teacher three noted “what they consider respect is not what I would typically call respect and so allowing freedom to happen… they see that as respect, even though to me, it’s sort of bending the rules.” So, student freedom, kindness and honesty are all ways of conveying respect for students.

This first factor, good teaching and positive affect, explained 54.5% of the total variance. It included a number of variables regarding the academic side of teaching as
well as variables detailing the mutual regard and treatment of students and teachers in the relation. Teacher interviews provided overlapping responses which may be considered sub-themes about the role that having a positive disposition and effectively communicating with students honestly can contribute to the development of positive relationships.

Factor Two: Connection Beyond the Class

The second factor: “connection beyond the class” is comprised of the parameters listed in Table 20. This factor was used as a theme for coding and each of the teacher interviews was coded using the factor and then for each parameter within each factor. What follows is a sampling of teacher statements regarding their behaviors pertaining to each parameter within the factor.

Table 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Parameter from CSRS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Acknowledges me in the hallway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Knows about my outside hobbies/interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Would come support an extracurricular activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Made an effort to get to know me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Teacher understands me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Comfortable with non-class issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Know about teachers hobbies/interests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As simple as factor three, “my teacher acknowledges me in the hallway” may seem, it was a parameter that did not feature in the top ten or so scores for any teacher participant and so did not come up as a point of conversation in the interviews. The overall mean for participating teachers was a .352, placing it 16th, or in the bottom half of the mean scores.
The building in which this study took place was a building comprised of modular units that been bricked in and so, there was only a single, cramped, hallway. Sheer logistics may have necessitated that most interactions happen elsewhere. Still, the importance of this factor as a means of having agenda-less and frequent, positive interactions with students should not be dismissed. Often, the greeting may evolve into a conversation about other topics, particularly if the teacher can connect to topics of personal relevance or student interest: “Hey! How was the chorus concert?” or “Good morning! Did you see Game of Thrones last week?” These exchanges are just opportunities to connect and, short of this, students are impacted by a simple “hello” or a nod and smile or wave.

Buber’s (2002) metaphor about relation featuring a “turning to” and “acknowledgement” of the other as a complete human being begins with a much less existential acknowledgement of their existence in passing. The value of these kinds of actions may not be immediately apparent and the actions may not even be acknowledged, much less reciprocated! Teacher four describes: “I greet a lot of kids in the morning at the door and a lot of them look really grumpy and irritated as they come through the door but, I’m still ‘good morning, how are you?’ or in the afternoons as they are leaving, ‘have a good night,’ ‘have a good weekend!’” Many schools have bus duty or hallway duty or encourage teachers to “be at their doors” during class changes and so these opportunities to interact in passing should arise naturally and the optics of not doing so may even be harmful. The teacher who does not say hello or make eye contact or only interacts with other teachers, ignoring the students or responding with an irritated tone when teacher talk gets interrupted can undermine attempts to build relationships. A new colleague
recently told me “I love bus duty, you get to be outside and check on how the kids’ days went and they’re excited to be done with the day and I’m excited and it’s just a good way to check on them.” Without knowing much else about my new colleague, I would imagine he has little trouble building relationships if he facilitates and enjoys this kind of student interaction. On another occasion, a group of colleagues and some students reached a conversational consensus after school one day that both students and teachers were always better in hindsight, that the best kind of students and teachers were former students and teachers. Once the class work was over the academic part of the relationship with its strains and pressures had vanished, all parties could interact without ulterior motive as human beings. It is much easier and more enjoyable to discuss with a student about topics other than academic shortcomings in your class. Even in a low-stakes environment, with a masterful communicator, there is always the structure of grades and performance and accountability and the agenda of the teacher playing with or against the agenda of the student and each having in mind certain desired outcomes that put pressure on that relationship to be… something. Academically productive? Demonstrably successful? These structures can certainly be de-emphasized but likely not eradicated in the current climate. As much as student may like a teacher, and as good as the teacher may be, it is hard not to like her a little bit less when she is assigning work, placing demands on your time, evaluating your ability in the content and when the course grade is consequential. It is much easier to avoid these topics in the hallway.

Our students in grades 9-12 are generally full time students. However, not all of the individuals in our classrooms identify strongly with the label of student. Particularly
if they have not been successful in traditional academic coursework, they may have few scholarly aspirations and have an aversion to all things involved with formal education. Even for the students who get by with coursework, it may not be their *joie de vivre*. With many students, the student identity may only be part of who they are and perhaps not even the main part. To acknowledge the full personhood of the student, a teacher should know about the other parts as well. Parameter four, “my teacher knows about my hobbies and interests outside of class,” is a good starting point of consideration for a teacher concerned with seeing humans are merely students, or forming a whole picture with the other component parts included. During the course of this research, I was a faculty member of the school being studied. The school was essentially a magnet-type school in which students from around the district interested in engineering could apply for a random lottery and attend the school. The campus was located on a college campus, a model becoming more common in the state in which the study occurred. These “early colleges” offer unique opportunities to students, usually in accelerated programs. Only 200 students attended the school in the high school building with others taking college courses elsewhere on the campus. So, the school was small. The student population, the building and the faculty were small. Additionally, the transportation system that brought students from all over the vast expanse of the county was critical to many students’ attendance. Many students had more than an hour-long bus ride and the school had relatively few car riders. All of these things worked against the school being able to offer many successful extracurricular activities. There was no gym or fields for sports, no stage for performance, no faculty spots to teach any of those things. Club offerings were
minimal with such small numbers of potential faculty sponsors and student participants and the transportation barrier. Some students participated in opportunities at their assigned “home school” in the district but transportation and time were significant barriers to such. Combined, this represents the greatest motivation for my accepting another job in the year following the study. The early college was extremely well-suited to stimulate and foster an interest in engineering. Blessed with great funding and technology and many unique opportunities with the university and local businesses, as well as flexibility offered by being so small, the school participated in massive, cross-curricular Project-Based Learning (PBL) projects, attended conferences and expositions related to engineering, took more field trips in two years than I have witnessed in my other seven years combined, worked to place students in internships and many other things that absolutely enriched the academic experience for those students. However, the school was essentially only an academic experience. Of course, students had social lives at the school and made friends and enemies and all of the things that people in close proximity may do, but the school had few opportunities for the students to be anything other than students. I have since returned to a gigantic comprehensive high school, with abundant extracurricular options for students and a strong connection with the local community, both of these things helping to foster a school sense of community. The early college was almost like a job for the students, without all the vibrancy offered in the activities beyond class. So, for the participating teachers in this study, more barriers existed to their ability to know students in capacities other than “student.” As such, item 4 had the lowest overall mean at 2.59. Since this score did not feature in any of the top
scores that guided teacher interviews, no teachers were explicitly asked about how they approaching learning about students beyond the classroom, but some of this information came up naturally in responses to other questions. Teacher one discussed using literature to stimulate discussion and through that, trying to identify student interests. She also incorporated a writing assignment at the beginning of the year where they introduce themselves and share hobbies and interests through that work. She was also able to attend student events at their home schools, a feat that, at a comprehensive school might mean staying a little late, grading papers and walking past the gym or the field or auditorium but for teacher one in this setting, meant traveling to distant parts of the county. Teacher four discussed structures that, at a previous school, helped to facilitate this understanding of the whole student. He mentioned meeting with small groups of students in a mostly-nonacademic advisory setting and conducting home visits with the students from that advisory group, so that every student had the makings of an adult advocate, absent the academic pressures. Teacher four also related the priorities of the administration at that school stating that:

The first two weeks of school, you don’t necessarily get into your academics… content is on the backburner and relationship building is primary, and you’re getting to know kids and you’re knowing them by name and you know things about their personality and life outside of class.

Connecting the student that shows up in class to their world outside of class is an important piece. To this end, home contact can provide insights into the history, support structure, challenges or aspirations of the student. Knowledge is power and having some
understanding of the “home” variable can help with understanding a lot of the presenting behaviors and dispositions of the student. Learning about student interests beyond the class and then being able to pull those in to instruction is a method that might help make the class content, or even the teacher and his own conversation, relevant.

Related to the idea of knowing about the student’s life and self outside of the classroom is parameter 16: “My teacher would come to support me at an extracurricular activity.” This parameter is perhaps not as relevant to the research site as it may be in other settings. The Phase One qualitative surveys that led to the creation of the CSRS were conducted at a large comprehensive high school, where extracurricular activities were a key part of the school community life. Per the previous discussion, this was simply not so at the research site and many barriers existed to this kind of interaction between teachers and students. Teacher one attended student football, volleyball and basketball games- especially when the event featured competition between the home schools of multiple students or at a site nearer to the school or the teacher’s home. She also attended a church performance by another student. Other faculty who did not participate in the research also attended student concerts and games. Teacher five participated in regular parent versus student soccer games against a team with a few of the students and went to watch other students’ club soccer games. Still, this parameter only had a marginally higher mean score than parameter four (2.59). The mean score of 2.61 placed teacher scores on this variable at 29 out of 30 and at a traditional school, this might warrant more discussion. At this specific research site, with all the barriers to
teacher attendance and an extremely low student participation rate in extracurricular activities, these data regarding a somewhat far-fetched hypothetical seems less relevant.

The next parameters for consideration, 17 and 18 are “my teacher made an effort to know me” and “my teacher understands me,” respectively. With means of 2.97 for my teacher made an effort to know and 2.92 for my teacher understands me, these scores were among the bottom 25% of teacher scores. They are worth consideration in conjunction for the logical link between the two, but also because these scores shared the highest correlation between items at \( r = .844 \). This value is high enough to cause some concern over item redundancy but the finely-split hair of these concepts results in two extremely related but appreciably different, variables. One, parameter 17, represents an attempt and parameter 18, success in the attempt. Item 17 is of particular interest because it represents a beginning and the teacher responses that illuminated this process may have provided some concrete steps to try to initiate the relational process. Beyond identifying teachers who have prioritized building relationships, the next immediate concern is how? How do you build relationships with students? Certainly it is a process with its genesis in the first set of interactions, the first day procedures, but also it has to continue beyond icebreakers to be successful. Relationships of any type take time and sustained effort. How is that effort manifested for teachers? Teacher two rightly highlights the importance of this beginning stating: “The key thing for me is that first week, really making an impact.” For specifics, teacher one has students complete an introductory writing piece. Teacher four used a similar assignment called “who am I?” in which students answer questions like: “what are the different aspects of you as an individual?” and “how does
that make you special?” and “what other things would you want me to know about who you are?” Teacher five uses an intake form (Appendix 6) to obtain some of that important introductory information. Otherwise, there are myriad websites with suggestions for icebreakers and I do not believe the type of icebreaker activity use matters as long as it authentic and fits with the teacher’s personality. Certainly if it can be fun for students, that is a plus. In the past, I have used a simple icebreaker where I distributed assorted candy, I let students select but, the specific types of candy correspond to questions that they then must answer. Things like “What are you best at?”, “What is your favorite/movie/book/tv show/sport or sports team?” “Which social media post of yours got the most likes?” “If you could travel anyplace, where would it be?” I typically do this in the first moment, I circulate, have individual introductions, make eye contact, start to learn names, smile and distribute candy. I also do a wink murder game, I have done partner interviews, people bingo, have students decorate nametags that have their first name and a profession or animal or something that starts with the first letter to help me remember names through the associations. We also do the intake forms on the first day and I read them immediately and try to follow up with students about specific things they write. “Oh so, you work at McDonald’s – what’s your favorite item on the menu? Do you ever get tired of the food?” “How long have you been playing piano?” “What position do you play for the field hockey team?” The intake forms give useful information and also fodder for later conversation. Whatever the specific order of operations for the beginning of a new year or semester, the important thing is that a teacher specifically sets aside time for these tasks. Not only do I do this, but I explain to
students why we will not be moving into the material for the first couple of days, because the human side of teaching is what I enjoy and to me, it is the most important, so we start with that. After the initial introductory phase of the course, the effort to know students continues through observation and conversation. Designing classroom experiences where students can explore topics and express themselves provides other insights about the student. Teacher one used regular journals to practice writing in a less formal manner than the class essays. Students wrote about opinion-based topics, sometimes connected to course content, sometimes involving current events or more abstract topics. Teacher four described a similar poetry assignment through students expressed a great deal of personal information about anxiety, romantic relationships, future goals and other student concerns. Teacher five has used a “History of Me” scrapbook project in history courses, the budget project and business creation project for economics courses, a “create your own government” and “personal political positionality” web survey activity to learn about students in government class, a community mapping activity that involves student depiction of the important places in their community in world geography. The highest two mean scores on this parameter, teacher one (3.31) and teacher five (4.13), both came from teachers in the humanities, English and civics, respectively. I recently gave a presentation at the state social studies conference positing that the course content of the humanities is uniquely suited for creating these types of student experiences. The goal of the talk was to discover other assignments used by social studies teachers that allowed for a teacher to get to know more about their students while still working in connection with course content. Audience members provided examples of current event journals and
assignments in which students compared themselves to literary or historical characters and discussed the similarities and differences between themselves and the characters. Another assignment required students to film news stories about events in their life or around the school. The humanities content is rich with opportunities for personal connections. I still wonder, if the relational task is more difficult outside of the humanities? I asked teacher two if teaching math and getting to know the students seemed to occur on two separate planes for her? She responded:

I think it does. Part of the pressure of math is that they only know it in an academic sense so, (getting to know the students) definitely feels completely separate from what we’re doing in class, it’s very hard to intertwine anything that’s like … there are days that are fun but it’s like two different … I don’t know, I see them very differently in the sense that it takes effort to make the other things happen, whereas the math just happens because they’re here.

In an effort to try to clarify I asked if there were many projects or assignments through which students could express themselves and she replied:

Right now they’re building board games and like some you can tell some kids are focused on strategy and this, that, and the other so they’re cerebral and other kids are focused on fun and like what it looks like and stuff like that but it doesn’t happen as often I wish it did but its probably once a quarter when something like that comes around and I can really see them like individualize something like that.

The sample size of participating teachers is far too small to try to generalize about the STEM teachers having lower scores but I would be interested to know if there was a
trend. I am clearly biased toward the humanities but in my ignorance of STEM content, math, in particular, does not appear to have as many natural opportunities for student expression related to the content and for these teachers, they may have to consciously create those moments in spite of the content. A final point of curiosity regarding these parameters is over what students consider as criteria for being understood. The data do not provide much insight into this question but learning what specifically students consider when answer this question might help teachers become more successful at getting to know and understand their students. A larger sample of size of teachers would also provide useful data about success or failure in this task as it relates to age, gender and ethnic differences. Do students feel like they are understood better by persons of their own gender, race, personality type or even socioeconomic status? Short of being able to define what it takes to understand students, the key feature of the responses to this survey is that students perceive that teachers made an effort, and that they, the students, are understood, that they are known.

For those on the quest to know more a student than his or her attitude in a particular skill or subject, there is an embedded desire to be of some greater purpose to the student than a mere peddler of trivia, a farcical toll collector on their life’s journey. I would imagine every teacher having moments, few or many, in which they were called upon to be of grander service. For parameter 19, “If I had a problem with something not related to the class, I would feel comfortable going to this teacher,” this is exactly the guiding sentiment. Overall, participant teachers received a mean score of 2.74, placing it among the bottom five. It is likely no coincidence that the other lowest scores all pertain
to the “outside of the class” factor, given the obstacles present at the research site. Much has already been said about low score across this factor. At a school highly focused on academic concerns with few opportunities for interaction otherwise, the reluctance of the students to share outside details with disconnected adults is unsurprising. Furthermore, the school did not have a common gathering area so, the moment students arrived, students were in classrooms with teachers often in the hall and an abundance of people around, always. There was never a teacher sitting in an unoccupied room during planning, ready for a conversation as the rooms were shared. The schedule of students, without any extracurricular activity to linger around campus for, was also prohibitive of these types of interactions.

The final parameter, “I know about my teachers hobbies and interests outside of class,” was a matter of some disagreement among teachers who participated in the Phase One qualitative surveys. A number of teachers expressed that teachers’ lives should remain private, that it was unprofessional to do otherwise. Interestingly, this variable did have a particularly weak correlation to the professionalism parameter ($r=.254$), perhaps they were right. Other teachers felt that, while there is certainly a level of sharing that is not appropriate or productive, allowing students some access into the life of a teacher facilitates the mutuality of the relationship. As discussed in chapter two, the nature of the teacher-student relationships in inherently unbalanced with regard to the age, level of expertise and authority possessed. The goal of the relationship is not complete balance. However, sharing information with students helps students gain perspective and empathize with their teacher. In the same way that the student should become more than
a performance measure and the process towards that involves learning about the student’s life, then the reverse is also true and a teacher may become more than a warden or temporary custodian. Moreover, the sharing of information allows for the possibility of finding common interests beyond academic success. This was the third-lowest mean score of all variables at 2.68. However, teacher five scored a 3.80. As a part of his beginning of the year routine, teacher five uses a PowerPoint to introduce himself. The PowerPoint has old pictures of embarrassing life phases and haircuts, as well as pictures of favorite things (Lionel Messi, strawberry shortcake, Mellow Mushroom pizza) and least favorite things (cottage cheese, the color red, Nazis). As the civics course progresses, teacher five also acknowledges and attempts to bracket his views on the issues discussed. Philosophically, he believes that teacher neutrality is a myth and so instead tries to represent all sides and then let students understand which position he occupies. All of this is prefaced with a discussion of bias in any source, teachers included and that, regarding political views, what is “right” is “relative” to one’s own beliefs and values and financial situation. This approach allows for students to progressively learn more about their teacher through the content and with a willingness to discuss important political matters, teacher five is also comfortable with sharing illustrative life stories.

Factor two featured a number of variables on which the participant teachers were given some of the lowest mean scores. Many of these variables were connected to interactions outside of class, outside of content and even outside of school. At this particular site, there were a number of barriers for teachers to engage in many of these
interactions and the data resulting from this factor would likely be more appropriate at a comprehensive high school. However, the data bear out that these parameters and this factor belong in a discussion of building positive relationships in school.

Factor Three: Fun/Flexible

The factor: “fun/flexible” is comprised of the parameters listed in Table 21. Each of the teacher interviews was coded for each factor as well as each parameter within each factor. The following discussion includes excerpts of teacher dispositions and behaviors as they pertain to the parameters and factors.

Table 21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Parameter from CSRS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>My teacher is fun/ funny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tries to make class fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Enjoy coming to this classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Good balance of work and fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Reasonable with grading and workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Understanding of my busy schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Allows a lot of freedom for students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every parameter in factor three was drawn exclusively from the student responses of the Phase One qualitative interviews. In other factors, parameters pertaining to communication, respect, expectations, friendliness and others were ideas represented in the student and teacher responses of the initial survey. However, each of these parameters represents student concerns. Students overwhelmingly listed criteria involving “fun” on the Phase One surveys. To try to capture the diverse sentiments, the CSRS includes several parameters to try to assess the level and locations of fun (Table
These parameters will be discussed collectively in part because there were few teacher comments that directly indicated the significance of fun in their classrooms or they ways in which they tried to create an enjoyable classroom experience. For parameter seven, “my teacher is fun/funny” and parameter eight “my teacher tries to make class fun,” there is an unsurprisingly strong correlation ($r = .705$). Indeed many of the teacher ratings are comparable for all of the “fun” variables.

Table 22

*Teacher Means for the “Fun” Parameter*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. My teacher is fun/funny</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My teacher tries to make class fun</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I enjoy coming to my teacher’s classroom.</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. My teacher creates a good balance of work and fun in the class.</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the exception of teacher one, there are relatively minor differences between these variables. It would appear that, if parameter seven responses were given regarding some type of interpersonal humor, then parameter eight may be whether or not that interpersonal humor is a part of the class or set aside. It could also be a matter of a humorous individual having a dry subject. Yet again, these vague variables present cause for further exploration into students’ sense of humor and what they consider to be a fun class. Within these variables, the student ratings on parameter seven and eight yielded some of the widest ranges of teacher mean scores at 1.89 and 1.78, respectively.

Compared to the smallest range of scores, 0.76 for “my teacher takes the time to help
individual students,” this suggests a gulf in the approaches of using humor in the classroom. Parameter 26 allows for students to pass judgment on the volume of work assigned in a class and parameter 20 serves as a net measure of the efforts to create a fun environment. Teachers one and four, the highest scorers on parameter 29: “my teacher conducts himself or herself professionally” also had the largest difference in student ratings of interpersonal humor and classroom fun. Teacher one commented on this in her interview stating:

I have promised them that when we get beyond this sophomore year, I’ll try to make class more fun. (laughs) We’ve had such a high concentration of essay writing, it’s just been awful, ugh. So, beyond that I hope to make it more fun so that it’s more enjoyable and they experience more freedom.

From her own recognition and perhaps student feedback outside of this process, teacher one has decided that high volumes of essay writing are not enjoyable for students, or the instructor. Observational data from the school year supports this determination.

However, tasked with trying to have students “college ready” by the end of their sophomore year meant intensive work on writing abilities. Teacher one also indicated a supposed link between freedom and fun. That all of these parameters are loading on to the same factor would support the notion of a relationship and furthermore, the Pearson values between parameter 30 “my teacher allows a lot of freedom for students” and “my teacher is fun (r=.581) and “my teacher tries to make class fun” (r=.540) represent strong correlations. Teacher two also acknowledged the importance of fun relating that:
we have jokes, we have laughs, we have our good times when were in class. It’s not like work, work, work, work, but I feel like taking those breaks and just kind of laughing and having a good time allows for them to see the other side of me.

This statement touches on the discussion from factor two regarding letting students know their teachers. In addition to knowing about hobbies and interests from parameter 23, allowing students to see personality also helps to humanize the teacher and build empathy. I have heard on more than a handful of occasions that “we are not there to entertain students.” These individuals are missing out on a tremendous opportunity to better connect with students. If some part of teaching requires students paying attention, what better way than for the materials or the presenter to be interesting and amusing? What content is consumed as voraciously as entertainment media? The content from CBS News may not be inherently appealing to students but when Jimmy Fallon or Saturday Night Live satirize the material, students are much more interested to understand the situation so as to understand the humor. Humorous material and humorous people are also perceived as less threatening and any steps that can be taken to overcome student barriers to risk-tasking or reduce anxiety are measures worth investing in. I once had students create memes during a particularly eventful political week and this summarizing activity involved an understanding of the content, a bit of creativity and the presentations were enjoyable. I have a couple of assignments that I include a rubric component for silliness. I model silliness daily. Beyond the inclusion of humorous media, finding the fun in the content is a worthy challenge for a teacher. In the humanities, at least, we have such rich content – a world that is enormous and terrific and
bizarre. Humor beyond the content is a valuable addition to the classroom climate; humor within the content is way to turn students on to whatever it is you are selling that day. On top of discovered humor and content humor, a teacher needs to be able to engage in occasional self-deprecation. The flawless, commanding authority figure, the venerable, infallible, wisdom of an elder statesperson—these caricatures are obsolete in today’s classroom with today’s students. Adult figures in education who take themselves too seriously end up becoming the joke themselves for this generation of students.

Students will typically be willing to have fun with an instructor, but if that instructor is humorless, then the humor will come at his expense, and it is better to be the comedian than the clown. Use humor, it is a powerful tool. Teaching is not a job many select for the salary, ideally, individuals choose to teach for the joy of working with young people. If that is the case, then let the joy be visible, it is infectious and school should be fun.

While it is clear that teachers can use content and instruction to facilitate the construction and maintenance of relationships, it may also be possible that elements of a course can damage that process. In particular, if the class becomes a point of undue stress or commands an unreasonable amount of time and attention, it may lead to resentment of the course, the subject, the teacher, or all of the above. In the CSRS, a number of parameters relate to this concept of the students’ judgment of the reasonableness of attributes of the course. Parameters 26, 27, and 30 are displayed in Table 23 for consideration, along with parameter 25 “my teacher is a good teacher.”
Table 23

*Compared Means for Reasonableness of Work (25, 26, 27, 30)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25. My teacher is a good teacher.</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. My teacher creates a good balance of work and fun in the class.</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. My teacher is reasonable with grading and the class workload.</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. My teacher is understanding of my busy schedule outside of this class.</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, the comparatively low scores for parameter 30 “my teacher is understanding of my busy schedule outside of class” make sense in the context of the low scores from factor two parameters, which have already demonstrated an area for improvement regarding connections beyond the classroom for participant teachers. The second point worth making is that a lack of balance for parameter 26 or reasonableness of work for parameter 27 seem to have little impact on the overall assessment of the teacher in parameter 25. Teacher one is a prime example as students recognize the quality of the teacher while expressing their opinion that the workload was too much, too hard, or not very fun. If this pattern held true in other administrations, it may bring some solace to teachers to know that they can still be successful in winning hearts and minds while occasionally having to drudge through unspectacular content in workmanlike fashion. Teacher three seems to be a case of, while he may not have known much about student schedules outside of the class (2.49), the work was coincidentally still reasonable (3.59). Teacher two commented that the class was not “work, work, work, work” but the students felt it was the most imbalanced among the surveyed courses. Teacher one commented that she
had student feedback that she was fair in the way that she graded. In that case, having the lowest score, 3.03, for reasonability of grading and workload, may have been awarded by students due to the volume of work and not the grading policy and perhaps the two should be separate parameters. The consequence of low scores in these areas is that a teacher can seem unaware or unconcerned of the impact of their coursework on the rest of a student’s life. Anecdotally, I can remember teachers who seemed to think that their course was the lone priority in my life. This type of behavior is contradictory to a teacher hoping to demonstrate care for student well-being. While there is certainly work that needs to be done and tests put pressure on teachers to burn through inordinate amounts of content, sometimes with much at stake, individual teachers should make decisions not to subvert the relational project to these priorities imposed by external forces. Teachers with ridiculous demands on student time undermine their own credibility as rational actors and create stress on the student and tension in the class, which students begin to resist and reject. Teacher five, who fared slightly better than other participants regarding these scores, employs a great deal of flexibility with work and grading. Essentially every assignment, with the exception of a few major projects, is accepted on a rolling deadline without penalty. Assessment scores are never final, a student unhappy with a test result has an opportunity to complete enrichment/reinforcement work, or complete test corrections, or take a re-test. The “policy” allows room for students to earn whatever grade they are willing to work for. This approach inevitably means more work for the teacher but it allows more students time and opportunity to learn and work at the pace that fits their life schedule at a given moment. At the onset of the year, he requests that
students inform him if the planets have aligned unfavorably and they find themselves with multiple projects due or tests scheduled for the same day so that he can make alternate arrangements in their favor. All of these measures are employed to try to reduce the pressure created by subjective, high-stakes grades and arbitrary deadlines so that the focus can just be on effort and learning.

The final parameter to be considered, parameter 31 “my teacher allows a lot of freedom for students,” yielded the absolute greatest range in teacher means (2.08) and was a common topic in the teacher interviews. Table 24 shows teacher mean scores for this variable.

Table 24

*Teacher Means Scores for Parameter 31: “My teacher allows a lot of freedom for students”*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31. My teacher allows a lot of freedom for students.</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of note here, is the score for teacher three. This mean score was his second-highest and student freedom was a defining characteristic of his classroom. From comments shared earlier, the classroom had a great deal of self-paced student work, student leaders helping with diverse creative design projects and an environment where students could move around more freely than a traditional class. In his follow-up interview, he discussed:

I definitely have freedom built into my curriculum, long projects but, even on top of that, I’m going to give them the freedom to choose their own groups, I’m going
to give them the freedom of… I give them a start line and finish line, how they get to the finish line is up to them and I think that does give a sense of ownership to the student. Even when they don’t get the material, they know that he path to figuring that out is just as important to me as the final result.

This characterization of student-led and process-oriented education in an engineering class of flexible projects and no tests was a sight to behold. Indeed the school was built for this type of education and business leaders and our university partner were all excited about the promise of this type of environment for learning. Another important insight from teacher three was his response to the question of how his teacher had changed over the years. A career-changer from engineering to teaching, he recalled:

I’ve definitely changed my teaching style completely from the first few years… man, ah, it was almost just nervousness where you get up there and you want to have control of the room and I’ve learned that no, it’s better to give them freedom, let them feel ownership of the class and the content and then they are more willing to proceed forward with you.

Teacher three’s evolution as a teacher has led him to a place where he can establish a classroom where students have room to create and explore and in which students are not buried under content. Once students have the freedom and space to be themselves, it becomes easier to see them and all of their unique qualities and to begin to try to know them.
Summary

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative data highlight a wide range of students’ perceptions of relationships and teacher capacities to perform on each of the different parameters of the CSRS. Rather than look for emergent themes from the teacher interviews, this study featured deductive themes to try to reconcile the two sets of data. Still, with the teacher interviews concentrating only on high scores for teachers and with the group having some similar strengths and weakness, some aspects of the factors were underrepresented. Furthermore, it may have been worth considering the interviews separate from the quantitative data. From the teacher responses, communication was a key theme, along with mutual respect and freedom. Every responding teacher also mentioned being friendly/kind/polite or nice, or positive affect. Figure 3 contains a summarizing word cloud from the teacher responses with common articles, numbers and function terms suppressed. This figure may help represent some of the ideas from the interviews absent the framework of the quantitative factors. In the figure, word size is indicative of word frequency but the interviews.
With such a diversity in student perception across teachers, and for each teacher, this research illustrates opportunities for growth and collaboration at continuing to develop and enact a relational pedagogy. Chapter five will include recommendations to this end.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Chapter five will consist of three sections. First, a summary of the purpose of and guiding framework of the study will be provided. Second, a summary of the quantitative and qualitative findings will be discussed in conjunction with future recommendations for creating teachers capable of enacting relational pedagogy. Finally, a discussion of the limitations of this study are presented with suggestions for future research.

Summary of Study

This research was born out of a frustration for this researcher at the trending obsession with reductionist education policy and initiatives. Specifically, students are often reduced to numbers in the form of a graduation rate or a growth score and the success of the educative mission hinges on some arbitrary target level of achievement. Teachers are, in an increasing number of places, given raises or reprimands according to which percentage of their students have achieved which percentage of growth based on a starting position that is problematically assessed and a finishing position that is measured in an equally unsatisfactory way. While there are issues with the development of these critical assessments: from the influence of testing companies, to the powerful incentives to cheat, to the complicated task of creating a quality assessment, to a disconnect between the standards, what content is actually on the test versus what is taught, and what is actually important to enable the student to live productive and happy lives; the issue is not actually the tests themselves. Rather, it is the climate created by these assessments
and the fixation on quantifiable data to know if school is “working” that is the issue. Such tests create a pressure-filled, critical atmosphere where teachers, students, and administrators all need to use one another to continue along their mandated paths. Administrators place pressure on teachers so that building level scores pass muster, that pressure is transferred into classes where content is frantically covered and in which teachers’ stress becomes student stress. For this researcher, the content performance outcomes are not the sole, or even most important, measure of success in education.

There is no guarantee that a student with a growth score of 31% will live a happy and fulfilled life or become a productive member of society. In fact, the messages sent to the student by this disregard for anything but the demonstrable quantitative outcome of how “smart” they are within the narrow realm of traditional, standardized, education may lead to the opposite. Furthermore, when a teacher is reduced to a technician who must use any means necessary to incrementally train the students for one moment’s performance, the profession of teaching is reduced to something far less noble than it truly is. I, through this research, hoped to articulate and begin to advocate for a different set of priorities and a different kind of accountability to gauge the success of education. Rather than focusing so fervently on academic outcomes, some attention should be given to the quality of the school environment. While school climate surveys are a welcome data piece in this recalibrative effort, this project has sought to focus exclusively on the relational climate between teachers and students. I believe, from the research and my own experience, that positive teacher-student relationships are the medium through which the most significant part of teaching can take place and that, through caring relationships,
students can develop holistically. This development includes their academic capacities but with a focus on their overall well-being. An empowered student, who feels safe in the classroom and who enjoys being present and interacting with the teacher, is a student positioned to learn in an ideal climate. Only through the relationship can the students be recognized and understood as individuals, only then can their specific interests be identified, their passions encouraged, and their unique challenges be overcome.

This research was a starting point to try to first understand more about the nature of the teacher-student relationship with a hope that this knowledge would lead to an understanding of how to foster such relationships. The first step was to try to define what a positive teacher-student relationship was (research question one). The Phase One qualitative surveys sought input from teachers and students and from those results, the Crownover Student Relationship Survey (CSRS) was created. Then, the CSRS was used to explore student perceptions of the relational environment between participating students and teachers. Finally, with some sense of how students were interpreting that environment, research question three sought to uncover: “what practices of behaviors have led to the establishment of these relationships.” The Phase Three qualitative interviews with participating teachers provided some insight into teacher practices which may have contributed to the student scores. This study was meant only to be a cursory exploration into the topic and not meant to be conclusive in any way. Hopefully it creates an avenue to begin to focus on and develop positive relationships.
Recommendations

There are a handful of different avenues through which the relational environment may be improved. First, preparing pre-service teachers for the human side of teaching; second, encouraging active teachers to refine or reorient their practice to prioritize developing relationships; and finally, there are steps that administrators and schools might take to further foster relational pedagogy.

Teacher Preparation

One of the reasons that teachers may fail to develop positive relations with students is because they do not know how. They may not even know that they need to devote time and energy to this endeavor. Too often, teacher education programs do not adequately prepare teachers for the relational side of teaching. Beyond an educational psychology class focused on cognitive development and perhaps a course on classroom management, pre-service teachers acquire little formal training on how to interact with young people. Teachers need to be masters of perception, interpersonal communication, and relationship development, and for teacher education program to assume that most teacher candidates will magically be even proficient in these capacities are dangerous assumptions. In my own experience, the relational guidance I received amounted to: “don’t hit a kid and don’t sleep with one, either.” Certainly, relationship development is far more nuanced and complicated and teacher education programs can and should do better prepare teachers in these areas. State legislatures responsible for teacher licensing criteria and processes could facilitate such a reorientation.
Licensure. For any recommendations that might be made or enacted at the level of a specific college of education, there is only one way to ensure that all teachers are prepared for the relational side of teaching: to change the licensure requirements. With school counselors, many state requirements for licensure have specific provisions guaranteeing that all licensed counselors have had prerequisite field experiences or certain types of coursework. For instance, according to a resource published by the American School Counselor Association, (State Certification Requirements, 2017), here is a sampling of state requirements:

- Alabama requires: A practicum that includes a minimum of 30 clock hours of supervised, direct service work in individual and group counseling with early childhood/elementary and secondary school students. A supervised P-12 school-based internship of at least 300 clock hours, begun subsequent to the completion of the practicum which shall require the prospective counselor to perform all the activities that a school counselor is expected to perform.

- In Alaska, one must acquire “three semester hours in multicultural education or cross-cultural communication.”

- Colorado requires a master’s degree and to “Have completed a minimum of 100-clock hours of a practicum, scheduled throughout the program and (2) a 600-clock hour internship, supervised by a licensed school counselor,” 700 hours of various pre-service experience as well as passing a state developed exam.

- Connecticut has a number of specific course requirements, including: Principles and philosophy of developmental guidance and counseling, psychological and
sociological theory as related to children, Career development theory and practice, Individual and group counseling procedures, Pupil appraisal and evaluation techniques, and School based consultation theory and practice.

- Delaware requires a Master’s degree along with a minimum of 39 credits of graduate course work in the areas of: Introduction to School Counseling & Theories (3 credits); Human Behavior and Child Development (3 credits); Ethical Issues in School Counseling (3 credits); College & Career Readiness K-12 (3 credits); Testing, Measurements, and Research in School Counseling (3 credits); The Counselor as Consultant (3 credits); Special Education Law & the School Counselor’s Role (3 credits); Group Counseling (3 credits); Individual Counseling Skills & Strategies (6 credits); Family Counseling (3 credits); Principles and Practices of a School Counseling Program (6 Credits). All of this, as well as a clinical experience of 700 hours in an elementary or secondary setting.

These are just a few examples of the level of specificity in both the field experiences and coursework of pre-service counselors. Comparatively, most states require only that teachers have a bachelor’s degree and have graduated from an accredited teacher education program (“Teacher Certification Requirements by State”, 2017). However, there is a great deal of variability in teacher education programs and even with the types of accreditation of those programs. The requirements may be even more flexible for career-changers or teachers in high-needs areas. State licensing boards should implement similarly specific and stringent criteria for teachers as exists for school counselors.
Coursework. Licensure is not the only area in which teacher education would benefit from borrowing from counseling. Counseling coursework, among other fields, often offers courses and materials better-suited to preparing pre-service professionals for the human side of their proposed field. For instance, the University of Tennessee offers a course, COUN 480: Skills for Counseling (Counselor Education, 2017). According to the posted syllabus for this course, there is a week devoted to each of the following topics: empathy, structuring relationships, cultural considerations, managing crisis, and genuineness. Each of these represents an area in which teachers would benefit from having formal instruction. The course also requires a skills inventory and reflection on strengths and weaknesses. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill offers an undergraduate course in Social Psychology, PSYC 260, which devotes a week each to topics such as: relationships, emotion, attitudes, social attribution, social cognition, persuasion, groups, moral psychology, the social self, and social influence (Courses and Example Syllabi, 2017). This too seems a valuable course for a would-be teacher. The University of Georgia offers a course, ECHD 4020: Interpersonal Relationships, in which “Interpersonal skills are taught and demonstrated by the instructor. Students practice the skills in role-playing situations. Skills included are physical attending, psychological attending, listening, perceiving surface and underlying feelings, basic responding skills, personalizing skills, and initiating skills.” (Degree Requirements, 2017). Beyond counseling and helping professions, Mercer University offers a course, MGT 423 Organizational Behavior, described as:
The focus of this course is on acquiring in-depth knowledge and developing interpersonal skills through the study and application of theories and concepts related to individual, group, and organizational dynamics. Specific topics also include job design, climate, culture, power and politics. (Course Catalog, 2016-2017)

These represent only a small sampling of courses offered in local programs and are common offerings. The full range of schools and relevant courses would be much longer. Short of a legislative mandate to include these types of classes, teacher education programs might work to include them in degree programs, or develop a course specific to relational pedagogy.

Pre-service experiences: Student Teaching. Beyond coursework, pre-service teachers need valuable experiences to prepare them for the relational task ahead. These experiences need to include numerous diverse experiences working with young people. Too often, pre-service teachers have a student teaching experience similar to that described by teacher two:

As far as student teaching goes, my teacher pretty much just left me in the room and walked out and I think it was kind of like trial by fire and so I think you learn to be like “oh crap I have to survive here” and you like start to understand what it means to kind of teach and have those relationships and all of a sudden you’re forced to build relationships with strangers, which is weird.

Unfortunately, this type of student-teaching experience, without proper preparation or proper mentoring, occurs. Not only is the teacher in this scenario at a disservice, but also
the students are shortchanged in their classroom experience by having an unsupervised neophyte and the risk of negative outcomes for either is needlessly high. Teacher two continued: “I think that it’d be beneficial if there was somebody teaching us how to do these things but we kind of navigate it based on our life experiences.” Teachers are often left to just “figure it out” and many never do. The inability to establish a steady and enjoyable rhythm with students in the classroom is a contributing factor to many teachers vacating the profession after only a couple of years. If these teachers can be instructed in relational pedagogy, then the days should be easier, filled with more positive and meaningful interactions, and ultimately, a more fulfilling career as the teacher becomes more to the students than a mere purveyor of content.

Pre-service experiences: Diverse experiences. Student teaching need not be the only type of experience that pre-service teachers acquire. Generally speaking, any type of positive interaction with getting to know young people is valuable. In truth, building relationships outside of the context of the classroom may even be easier, especially when working with people of diverse backgrounds. Darling-Hammond (2006) surveyed a number of successful teacher education programs across the country. One of the most valuable experiences she identified was having a well-trained mentor. She highlights, in particular, a practice of assigning cross-cultural mentors who help teacher candidates facilitate and navigate diverse experiences outside of their own cultural context. Teacher candidates would likely benefit from participation in programs such as the Big Brother and Big Sister, volunteer work through the YMCA or the Boys and Girls Club, or any local organization that would allow for teacher candidates to gain experience interacting
with young people. In addition to the training and emphasis on creating new relationships, having pre-service teachers revisit and reflect upon their own significant relationships will help to contextualize the mission and highlight the power of positive relationships in their own lives.

Relational Experiences. While difficult to manufacture powerful relational experiences for pre-service teachers, chances are they did not decide to become a teacher without having had their own significant connection to a former teacher. For me, I would not have thought one moment about becoming an educator without Ms. Boyd, who was the first teacher that I ever felt like had a positive regard for me independent of my classroom performance. I had had teachers who liked me because I was a good student, but Ms. Boyd cared about me as a person and I loved her for it. She also showed me what it meant for a teacher to be a “good” teacher and it had very little to do with our novel analyses or our poetry diagramming, though I did joyfully learn a great deal of academic content from her classes. The learning came as a consequence of my wanting to be there, feeling acknowledged and empowered. Even if pre-service teachers lack an example from their own student experiences to draw from, they may be able to look elsewhere in their lives to identify positive relationships and to analyze the nature and impact. I had a recent colleague inform me that all of his teachers were subpar and that he became an educator in spite of them, to show the world how it ought to be done. For this colleague and anyone with a comparable educational background, they may be able to relate to teacher four’s life experiences of relationships outside of the classroom which have shaped his approach to teaching and building relationships. He shared,
I took a route to teaching that was a little bit different than some. I was in the military and I spent time in the Marines and there was that, I don’t know, that kind of brotherhood that I think, to some extent, kind of changes the way you interact with people so I know that after the Marines I thought differently just about social constructs in general and often times in the military, you work even harder for the person next to you because you know that they’re working hard for you and I think to some extent that influences, in my room, how a kid, I’m working for you, I’m working alongside you often, I’m trying to help you improve and make what you’re doing better and like because of that I want you to work for me and I’m gonna work for you.

Drawing upon powerful past relational experiences can help teachers contextualize their relational approach in teaching and highlight the significance of relationships in their own lives and serve as justification prioritizing relationships.

For Active Teachers

For those teachers already in the profession, it is never too late for a relational turn. The first step is to understand the significance of developing relationships. Either through powerful literature demonstrating the positive potential of building relationships, or through reflective exercise to tap into some memory of a significant relationship in a teacher’s own life, the first step is appreciating the potential for harm or good that accompanies the relational task. Second, is a conscious prioritization of a relational pedagogy, to decide to do things that facilitate the process of building relationships. One of the things a teacher may do is to take an inventory, using the CSRS or other measure,
of the relational climate in his or her classroom. This provides data and a starting point for understanding the climate and areas in which it may be improved. Once teachers decide to focus on this aspect of teaching, they can implement practices in their classroom to support the relational mission.

Assignments that Allow for Student Expression/Personalized Interactions

The focus on relationships does not entail an abandonment of other pedagogical considerations. In fact, as highlighted in chapter four, some instructional techniques and assignments are part and parcel to a relational pedagogy. Furthermore, the data from the CSRS suggest a link between instructional capacity and relational variables. Regarding the link between instruction and building relationships, teacher three suggests that:

Cooperative learning is good for the kids from an academic perspective because they can work with one another and learn from one another but then it’s also good experience for them socially because they have to interact with one another but then maybe the sort of ‘secret’ benefit of it is that it allows the teacher to move around and interact on a more intimate level than whole class instruction and you can have these sort of personalized or small group interactions.

Cooperative learning is not a relational panacea, but this statement from teacher three outlines a key point: that certain instructional strategies have advantages with regards to getting to know students and building relationships. Having students work in small groups or individually has social and cognitive benefits and logistically, allows a teacher to have personalized interactions around the classroom that are not possible in an environment characterized by expository instruction, or lecture. Specific instructional
strategies and well-designed assignments are an important component to relational pedagogy. Teaching in a way that lets students express themselves is a way to simultaneously move toward academic and relational objectives. Teacher one described having students journal as an assignment that provided writing practice in addition to insight into the students though that writing. She describes: “at the beginning of every year I ask them to asses who they are and that’s something that they share with me and they tell me about their hobbies and interests and that’s a writing piece that helps me get to learn more about them.” Teacher two noted similarly:

> There’s always, like in projects, there’s always a piece of it that’s like their own, so like, right now they’re building board games and like, some you can tell - some kids are focused on strategy and this, that, and the other so they’re cerebral and other kids are focused on fun and like, what it looks like, I can really see them individualize something like that.

Teacher two also describes using technology so students work independently on self-paced assignments, allowing her to float and interact and help individuals. Teacher four shared: “my kids have written poems and it’s really just to practice metaphor, personification, etc., but almost all of them have written these personal poems like, some have talked about “the boyfriend obsession” or, they’re seniors so several have written about senioritis.” Classroom practices can help or hinder the relational project. Teachers interested in a relational pedagogy can make conscious decisions in their classroom instruction to positively impact relational progress.
School structures that Support Relation Building.

At the building level, administrators can also support the relational project.

Teacher four discussed a school in which he previously worked and where the administration were strong advocates for building relationships. He described a number of actions taken by the principal to make it possible for teachers to develop relationships. Teacher four relates:

we had some things that we did, we met with a smaller group of students on a regular basis, it was outside academics, we weren’t really checking on grades or anything like that, we just met and we talked and we um, about things that were going on in their lives, there were sometimes themes to the week that we would look at but it was much less formal, there wasn’t check-in on their grades necessarily, there would be times occasionally if a kid was in trouble academically and there was going to be a meeting about that, I might attend that meeting, simply as an adult advocate for that child, um, and so, we built those relationships and so another practice that was in place there.

Establishing advisory groups creates an environment conducive to building a relationship with students by meeting regularly in small groups, over time, with no real agenda. He continues:

We visited, we did home visits. So, for every kid that in that group that I met with, I actually went to their house at some point unless parents absolutely refused to have us to the house in which case, we met in some neutral, not the school.
So, that aspect is kind of, a little bit different, when a kid has seen you make that effort in the evening and come out.

A number of parameters and indeed factor two from the CSRS pertain to teacher connections to student lives beyond the content and the classroom, the practice of home visits is an exceptional show of effort on behalf of the teacher and an excellent opportunity to learn about the students’ lives. Lastly, he described the philosophy of the founding principal that the first week or so school was not for serious academic work and that teachers should use that time to begin to get to know their students. This signal from administration is important in a climate where every second of instructional time could lead to higher scores. That the administration would encourage another use for “instructional time” than perpetual test prep, allows for teachers to engage students personally without threat of consequence for doing so. The shift away from an obsession with testing and results is necessarily a part of establishing a humanist focus to teaching.

Teacher three credited much of his relational success on this fact that engineering is: “not a testable class, I don’t have to worry so much about the final results and getting the scores that I want so I can actually get to know the students and find out what their interests are.”

Prioritize Relationships for Relationships’ Sake. Teacher four’s description of his former school which focused so heavily on relationship-building ended with this sentiment: “I think they spent the first couple of years so focused on building quality relationships with kids but they never bothered to leverage those relationships to any kind of real result or real kind of outcome.” Here is one of the final barriers to relational
pedagogy - that it only exists to serve some other end. While developing positive relationships has been shown to positively correlate with other desirable outcomes, it is an end in and of itself and should not be subverted to performance goals.

Limitations

This exploratory study suffered from the constraints that affect most research. As a graduate student and novice researcher, this project was limited by the capabilities of the researcher. A better-designed study may have allowed for better data triangulation and researcher capacity likely limited the depth of the quantitative and qualitative analysis. Time available for the research certainly limited the possibilities of this project and restricted the study to a single administration of the CSRS, which prevented retesting of the instrument and also prohibited any type of study that may have included an intervention to impact scores on a second administration. The level of access required to complete this research limited the possible sites to conduct research to a convenience sample at the researcher’s small school. A larger sample size of teachers would have been preferable. The measures taken to ensure that teacher subjects were not exposed to an uncomfortable process kept the researcher from fully exploring the full range of teacher scores instead focusing only on the relative highest score per teacher. Furthermore, this research held every teacher participant’s input as equal but the reality of the CSRS scores is that not all teachers’ thoughts about constructing relationships are as valuable, as a great range exists in student perceptions of the teachers. Still, the method chosen to encourage participation and protect participants allowed for the survey and interview experience to positive and reflective.
Potential Future Research

With a new instrument, the opportunity for continued testing is important to establish viability and usefulness of the measure. Subsequent administrations of the CSRS may help demonstrate its reliability. A longitudinal study to examine changes in student perceptions of a relationship over time would also be valuable. The ability to follow up with students to help clarify vagaries in the language of the CSRS such as: how do students interpret a “good teacher?” or “respect?” would help provide clearer data to teachers about how specifically to be a good teacher or show respect in the manner desired by the students. The ability to interview more high scoring teachers about their practices may also help find specific practices that work for specific indicators. Such a small teacher sample size meant that some parameters were not among the relative strengths of the teachers and so few ideas about strong practices connected to those parameters were uncovered. Having teacher participants self-score prior to student administrations and comparing the scores would be an interesting way to gauge how accurately teachers are able to assess the relational climate of their classrooms. Once successful practices have been identified, designing interventions to try to improve teacher scores on certain parameters and using the CSRS for professional development would be a realization of the researcher’s original intent.

Final Thoughts

I underestimated how much I would enjoy teaching high school. As a twenty-two year old, it was meant to be a temporary occupation while I pursued subsequent degrees and ultimately, a college teaching position. As a socially capable introvert, I was drawn
to teaching for love of content and I assumed I would tolerate students just fine. In my first years teaching, I realized quickly that the depths of high school curriculum were quickly explored. There were few new intellectual thresholds within the proscribed content knowledge and the intellectual stimulation and fulfillment from that avenue was minimal. Still, three years into teaching, I really loved my job. Teaching was and is enjoyable and fulfilling for me. However, it was more to do with the people than the content. Every day is made up of hundreds of student interactions, usually positive, often fun. Between teaching and coaching, I valued being a part of the school community, much as I had enjoyed this aspect of school as a student. It is a great privilege to get to know so many young people and their families in such a meaningful way and at an exciting time in their lives. My students have their entire lives and infinite possibilities in front of them and it is a unique opportunity to be able to help them get started on their journeys. I left the secondary classroom for a year and worked with graduate students in a teacher education program and I realized that I missed the classroom in my time away but also thoroughly enjoyed working with pre-service teachers and interns for the new ideas and optimism they brought into their classrooms. Working in that position was cause for reflection about my own approach to teaching and how I could help other teachers have the same positive experience that I have enjoyed. This process ultimately led to my focus on relationships and this project, an attempt to better understand relationships in the classroom and how to build them. Admittedly, this project has served to radicalize my position and solidify my resistance to high-stakes testing and some of the prevailing schemes in educational policy today. It has also helped me to formalize this
relational approach to teaching and ground it in a philosophical framework so that I can better articulate and advocate for such an approach. Furthermore, the attempt to create an instrument by which teachers can obtain quantifiable data about the state of relationships in their classroom is the earliest part of an effort to demonstrate to stakeholders that developing “positive relationships” is a tangible pursuit that should not be left to chance, but consciously adopted by teachers, schools, and teacher educators. I hope that by obtaining data regarding relationships, those parties fixed on data and accountability may still be satisfied. While this project explicitly sought to divorce relational data from performance data, that connection may subsequently be made in order to further justify a focus on relationships. Even for those only interested in practices that improve performance and growth scores, I believe the relational project will prove worth pursuing and for everyone else, I hope this project joins other reviewed literature in the argument for humanistic education, relational pedagogy, a person-centered focus to education that allows teachers to achieve their highest possible calling: creating a generation of young people happy, healthy, and empowered to make the world better through their quality.
REFERENCES


Aspelin, J. (2010). What really matters is ‘between’–Understanding the focal point of education from an inter-human perspective. *Education Inquiry, 1*(2). 127-136


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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE
TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

On a scale of 1-10 With 10 being “very important” – how important is it for you to have a good relationship with your teacher(s)?
________________

How would you describe the ideal type of teacher-student relationship?

With former teachers that you have been close to, what did those teachers do/how did those teachers act to be able to develop that kind of positive relationship? Please do not use any teacher names.

Please complete the following statement with a general description. Please do not use any teacher names.

*The best teachers are those who always...*
APPENDIX B

DEPARTMENTAL TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE
DEPARTMENTAL TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Please discuss the following questions within your department meeting and submit a single, summarizing response.

1. Which department or departments are you in?

2. What attributes characterize a positive teacher-student relationship?

3. How do you and the members of your department approach the task of building and maintaining positive teacher-student relationships?
APPENDIX C

CROWNOVER STUDENT RELATIONSHIP SURVEY
CROWNOVER STUDENT RELATIONSHIP SURVEY

Student Survey ID Number: ______________________
Teacher ID Number ________________________

Demographic Information

1. Gender:  Male ______  Female ______  Other ________

2. Age: What month and year were you born in?  Month__________ Year __________

3. Which of the following best represents your racial or ethnic heritage?
   Choose all that apply.
   _______ Non-Hispanic White or Euro-American
   _______ Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American
   _______ Latino or Hispanic American
   _______ East Asian or Asian American
   _______ South Asian or Indian American
   _______ Middle Eastern or Arab American
   _______ Native American or Alaskan Native
   _______ Other* 
   *If other, please describe: ____________________________________________

4. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being “love it” how much do you enjoy this teacher’s subject? _________

5. Name of the subject of the course being rated from line 4:
   ________________________________________________________________

6. What grade do you anticipate earning in this course? (A,B,C,D,F)
   __________
# Crownover Student Relationship Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My teacher has a positive attitude on a daily basis.</td>
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<td>2. My teacher cares about my academic and social well-being.</td>
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<td>3. My teacher greets/acknowledges me in the</td>
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<td>4. My teacher knows about my hobbies/life/interests outside of the classroom.</td>
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<td>5. I respect my teacher.</td>
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<td>6. I like my teacher.</td>
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<td>7. My teacher is fun/funny</td>
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<td>8. My teacher tries to make class fun</td>
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<td>9. My teacher acknowledges effort through recognition and praise</td>
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<td>10. My teacher provides high and clear expectations for academic performance.</td>
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<td>11. My teacher takes the time to assist individual students who need help.</td>
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<td>12. My teacher is generally nice/friendly</td>
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<td>13. My teacher is a good communicator</td>
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<td>14. My teacher tries to be fair</td>
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<td>15. I trust my teacher/my teacher is honest</td>
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<td>16. My teacher would come to support me at a school extracurricular activity.</td>
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<td>17. My teacher made an effort to get to know me.</td>
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<td>18. My teacher understands me</td>
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<td>19. If I had a problem with something not related to the class, I would feel comfortable going to this</td>
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<td>20. I enjoy coming to my teacher’s classroom.</td>
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<td>22. I have a good relationship with this teacher.</td>
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<td>23. I know about my teacher’s interests/hobbies/life beyond the classroom.</td>
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<td>24. My teacher manages the classroom well.</td>
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<td>25. My teacher is a good teacher.</td>
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<td>26. My teacher creates a good balance of work and fun in the class.</td>
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<td>27. My teacher is reasonable with grading and the class workload.</td>
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<td>28. My teacher conducts himself or herself professionally.</td>
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<td>29. My teacher respects me.</td>
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<td>30. My teacher is understanding of my busy schedule outside of this class.</td>
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<td>31. My teacher allows a lot of freedom for students.</td>
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APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Which department or departments are you in?

2. How long have you been teaching?

3. What role does the development of classroom relationships play in your approach to teaching?

4. What attributes characterize the ideal positive teacher-student relationship?

5. What life experiences, in your teaching or life outside of teaching, have helped you prepare for the human side of teaching, the building of relationships?

6. How do you approach the task of constructing and maintaining positive teacher-student relationships?

7. How do you use your content or instruction to support the development of relationships?

8. Has your approach to teaching changed over time? If so, how?

9. After 1-8, questions pertaining to the ~10 highest scores from the student responses were asked. Question such as: “What practices have you implement which may have contributed to your high score on item ______?"
APPENDIX E

EMAIL PERMISSION FROM KATRIN NIGLAS
Dear Adam,

I am glad that you find the figure useful and I agree with reproduction of it in your thesis if you refer to the chapter in the Sage Handbook of MM where the schema was officially published in 2010. I attach the copy of the chapter and hope you can get access to the Handbook.

PS! Note that in the text there is a reference to the web-page, where you can find the latest version of the original figure (even though the one you attached seems to be the latest version as well)!

Best regards and good luck with your work!
Katrin
Katrin Niglas
Vice-rector for research
Tallinn University
Estonia

On 18.May.17 01:51, Adam Crownover wrote:
Dear Dr. Niglas,
Hello!

My name is Adam Crownover and I am a Ph.D. student at Mercer University (USA). Please forgive this unsolicited email, I was writing with a hope that you might grant me permission to include your paradigms and methodologies continuum figure in my dissertation. My dissertation is a mixed-methods study focused on developing positive teacher-student relationships.

More specifically, I would like to include the figure located at: https://www.tlu.ee/opmat/ka/opiobjekt/Kasvatusfilosofilised_paradigmad/katrin_niglas_uurimismetodoloogiast_ja_paradigmadest.html  (I have also copied the figure
below). I would like to include the figure in my discussion of my own theoretical framework and use it to justify the appropriateness of a mixed-methods study for my project.

I found the figure extremely helpful in conceptualizing the relationships between various philosophical approaches to research and methodological approaches and shared the article with my classmates and professor, who also found it to be valuable! (I also found your lecture: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8TzpC9CQds to be beneficial!)

If you like, I can send you the section in which I use and discuss the figure for review. Thank you so very much for your time and consideration of this request. Have a great rest of the week!

Sincerely,
Adam Crownover
adam.r.crownover@live.mercer.edu
APPENDIX F

EMAIL PERMISSION FROM JEAN WATSON
EMAIL PERMISSION FROM JEAN WATSON

Jean Watson <jeanwatson@comcast.net>
Dear Adam, kind thanks for such a lovely informative note.
I am happy to give permission to cite the table of the Caritas Processes. I would like to
know citation source however, so I make sure you have a correction from one of my
books.
Of course this work is relevant to education and all health human services personnel
because it relates to humanity, not system per se…and is so important for our survival in
this age of violence and distrust.
I wish you all good success.
In loving kindness, Jean

Jean Watson, PhD, RN, AHN-BC, FAAN
Founder/Director
Watson Caring Science Institute www.watsoncaringscience.org
Boulder, Colorado 80304 USA
Distinguished Professor and Dean Emerita University of Colorado Denver,
www.watsoncaringscience.org
jeanwatson@comcast.net
jean@watsoncaringscience.org

Dear Dr. Watson,
Hello! My name is Adam Crownover and I am a high school social studies teacher and a
Ph.D. Student in Curriculum in Instruction at Mercer University.
Please forgive this unsolicited email but I was writing the hope of gaining your
permission to cite some of your work in my own study. In short, my research advocates
for a relational approach to education and I highlight the work that you've accomplished
in Nursing to formalize an approach to Nursing as "Caring Science," arguing that we in
education would do well to take similar steps!
If you would allow it, I would like to feature a table including your Carative Factors and
a second including the Caritas Processes. Essentially I would like to include them and
highlight how relevant many of the specific tenets are to education and how necessary it
is for education to adopt some of the processes, or to establish a similar person-oriented
philosophical belief set for our field, specifically! This discussion takes place in my
literature review, in a section which looks at other fields (nursing, counseling, business
management) that have done a better job than education at formalizing a human-centered
approach. My research ultimately results in the creation of an instrument to try to assess
how students are experiencing the relational side of education, not unlike some of the
measures featured in the Assessing and Measuring Caring in Nursing and the Health Sciences, 2nd ed.

Thank you so very much for your time and consideration of this request, my grandmother and sister are nurses and my own research has given me cause to engage with both of them about caring in their own practice. I hope to shift the needle in education away from the obsession with outcomes related to content acquisition and focus instead on the quality of the human experience of students in our care. Thank you for all of your important research to this end in the field of nursing, to say that it has been influential on my own research would be an understatement! Have a wonderful Friday and weekend!

Sincerely,
Adam Crownover
adam.r.crownover@live.mercer.edu
IRB APPROVAL FORM

Thursday, January 19, 2017

Mr. Adam Crownover
TOM College of Education

RE: Identifying, constructing, and maintaining positive teacher-student relationships in a secondary setting (H1701010)

Dear Mr. Crownover:

On behalf of Mercer University’s Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, your application submitted on 03-Jan-2017 for the above referenced protocol was reviewed in accordance with Federal Regulations 21 CFR 56.110(a) and 45 CFR 46.110(b) (for expedited review) and was approved under category(e)(6), 7 per 45 CFR 46.116a.

Your application was approved for one year of study on 19-Jan-2017. The protocol expires on 18-Jan-2018. If the study continues beyond one year, it must be re-evaluated by the IRB Committee.

Item(s) Approved:

the purpose of this study is to explore what makes a positive teacher-student relationship according to teachers and students.

NOTE: Please report to the committee when the protocol is initiated. Report to the Committee immediately any changes in the protocol or consent form and all accidents, injuries, and serious or unexpected adverse events that occur to your subjects as a result of this study.

We at the IRB and the Office of Research Compliance are dedicated to providing the best service to our research community. As one of our investigators, we value your feedback and ask that you please take a moment to complete our Satisfaction Survey, and help us to improve the quality of our service.

It has been a pleasure working with you and we wish you much success with your project! If you need any further assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

Ava Chambers-Richardson, M.Ed., CIP, CCM
Associate Director of Human Research Protection Programs (HRPP)
Member
Institutional Review Board

"Mercer University has adopted and agrees to conduct its clinical research studies in accordance with the International Conference on Harmonisation’s (ICH) Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice."

Mercer University IRB & Office of Research Compliance
Phone: 478-301-4491 | Email: ORC_Mercer@Mercer.edu | Fax: 478-301-2329
1501 Mercer University Drive, Macon, Georgia 31207-0001
APPENDIX H

EMAIL PERMISSION FROM JAN LARSSON
Adam Crownover <adamcrownover@gmail.com>

Dear Dr. Larsson,
Please forgive this unsolicited email, my name is Adam Crownover and I am a doctoral student at Mercer University in the U.S. My dissertation was a mixed-methods phenomenography focused on creating positive teacher-student relationships in secondary classrooms.
I was writing with the hope of obtaining your permission to include your interview analysis sequence from the 2007 publication: Phenomenographic or phenomenological analysis: Does it matter? Examples from a study on anaesthesiologists’ work. International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being, 2(1), 55-64. The sequence involves 8 steps and I was hoping to include that information in a table in the section in which I describe my own methodology.
If you wish, I can gladly provide that section of the dissertation for your review. In short, I followed your sequence but used categories established during an earlier phase of my sequential mixed-methods study rather than inductively obtaining categories via the sequence.
Thank you very much for your time and consideration of this request. Have a wonderful Friday and weekend!
Adam Crownover

Jan Larsson

Dear Adam,
You are most welcome to cite our work in you dissertation.
Kindest regards
Jan

Skickat: den 12 oktober 2017 21:28
Till: Jan Larsson; jan@trolin.net
APPENDIX I

EMAIL PERMISSION FROM GRAHAM GIBBS
Dear Dr. Gibbs,

Hello and I hope this email finds you well. Please forgive this unsolicited communication, my name is Adam Crownover and I am a doctoral student at Mercer University in the U.S. I am writing in hopes of obtaining your permission to cite your research in my own work. My dissertation has been a sequential, mixed-methods phenomenography, concerned with developing quality teacher-student relationships in secondary classrooms.

More specifically, I was hoping to include an adapted table similar to the one that you have included in:


I have adapted the table by removing the "examples" column and I merely list the behaviors which one may code. I use the table to guide my discussion about which behaviors from the list I sought to code for in interviews which were a part of my study.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this request, and I will happily provide you with the relevant section of the research for your review should you wish to see it. The published article helped me, who had mostly taken quantitative research courses, develop a concrete approach to coding the qualitative part of my study.

Have a wonderful Friday and weekend!

Adam Crownover

adam.r.crownover@live.mercer.edu

GRAHAM GIBBS

Dear Adam,

You are welcome to use the table, adapted as described, in your dissertation. Best of luck in your endeavor.

Regards,

G. Gibbs