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Cultivating Educational Resilience: An Examination of Teacher-Student Interactions in the Elementary Classroom

Hazel S. Parker
University of New Orleans, hsparker@uno.edu

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Cultivating Educational Resilience: An Examination of Teacher-Student Interactions in the Elementary Classroom

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
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in
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by

Hazel Spaulding Parker

B.S., The College of New Jersey, 1990
M.Ed., The College of New Jersey, 1998

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To Alfred and Sophia, and many others close to me –

who gave me support, encouragement and inspiration to press forward and stretch my understanding about teaching and learning.

experiences will stay with me for a long time. And to all of the others who pushed me, listened to me, encouraged me and made me stronger, I am indebted to our collective efforts that helped me finish.

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ABSTRACT

In education, one of the vital goals is to improve student success through high-quality teaching. Teachers' pedagogy and knowledge of content coupled with the interactions between the teacher and student is one of the most critical components influencing the academic success of students. The purpose of this study was to examine supportive teacher-student relationships, a protective factor of educational resilience, by documenting teacher-student interactions in the classroom and asking teachers about their perspectives of the importance of these teacher-student relationships. Open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and observations were used to identify teachers' perspectives and classroom activities that develop supportive teacher-student relationships and cultivate resilient teachers. Four themes emerged from the data as major components that not only allow teachers to create positive interactions with their students daily but also cultivate resilient teachers. The themes are: 1) Teachers with knowledge about teaching and learning, along with pre-service experiences possess an interest in children and teaching and have gained adequate training through experiences with diverse children in varied school environments. 2) Teachers who demonstrate endurance are persistent with addressing bureaucratic issues, maintain a sense of humor in the classroom, keep striving, and defy the everyday pressures associated with being a classroom teacher. 3) Teachers in harmony with school staff and families seek supportive administration and staff, engage and connect to parents, and embrace and understand the cultures of their students. 4) Teachers who make positive connections and exchanges with students establish meaningful relationships with students, provide caring, discipline and structure, have high expectations, and teach student social skills. In addition, an emergent grounded theory developed: when there is a presence of the themes, teachers possess attributes of educational resilience and the possibility of teachers having meaningful teacher-student interactions increases. When teachers possess characteristics of educational resilience, they pass along these protective factors to students so they too may be resilient. This research will contribute to models relevant to effective teacher-student interactions that cultivate strong relationships in classrooms, and educationally resilient teachers.

Keywords: educational resilience, teacher-student interactions, teacher preparation

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child. –Carl Jung

I remember distinctly a handful of teachers who made a lasting impact on my educational career and life. As the quote above stated, I appreciated my brilliant teachers, but the teachers that genuinely cared about me and displayed warmth and caring meant the most to me. Teachers are among the many factors that influence the success of students in school. Within these areas of influences, some are beyond the control of classroom teachers. However, some are within the teacher's control, and increase the likelihood of student achievement in school. One of these factors is the relationship between the classroom teacher and the students. He or she has a major impact on the social, emotional, and academic success of students. An effective teacher has the capability and disposition to interact positively with students, help them overcome adversities, and persist with their school goals. My research sought to capture the thoughts and actions of teachers and ways they interact with their students. The findings add a new perspective to early childhood literature about the significance of teacher-student relationships.

Dispositions and teacher-student interactions are noteworthy; both during the preparation of becoming a teacher and after an individual becomes a teacher. Teacher preparation programs at accredited institutions of higher education follow standards outlined by national professional organizations, state departments of education, and colleges of education. These standards include professional dispositions of teacher candidates that examine classroom behaviors [of the teacher candidate] and create a caring and supportive learning environment.

The National Council of Teacher Accreditation (NCATE) requires teacher preparation providers to evaluate teacher candidates' knowledge, skills, and dispositions that support the learning process of all students (NCATE, 2008). The expertise of the classroom teacher has a lasting impression on students and their achievement (NCATE, 2008). Faculty members teach courses and create assignments and assessments that evaluate the dispositions of teacher candidates. A dispositions review examines contextual factors such as how well the teacher candidate knows the students. As teacher candidates prepare to become teachers, they are expected to develop their professional dispositions and have a strong understanding about the importance of social and emotional wellbeing. The National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2011) requires that candidates understand why it is important that children and adults have meaningful relationships. According to NAEYC (2011), their core values include the importance of "reciprocal relationships with families and practices and curricula that are respectful and responsive to the child's home" (p. 12). During the teacher preparation process, teacher candidates are expected to gather information about their students and use this knowledge to create lesson plans and implement instruction (NAEYC, 2011).

When teacher candidates become in-service teachers, their teaching performance and professional dispositions continue to be evaluated. In 2012, the Louisiana State Department of Education implemented a new educator support and evaluation system called Compass. It was designed to provide teachers with feedback on their teaching performance and to encourage all teachers to work toward continuous improvement (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.). Half of this evaluation is based on observations of the teacher by the school principal or trained

designees. Compass is the tool used to collect and record the actions of the teachers to show whether teaching objectives were met.

Dispositions are important for both pre-service and in-service teachers. Teacher preparation providers evaluate pre-service teachers and the Louisiana Department of Education continues to assess in-service teachers on their teaching performance. On local, state, and national levels, emphasis is placed on the dispositions and skills teachers possess to be an effective teacher. The classroom teacher must know each student in order to develop effective lesson plans that support young children and provide school success.

All of these standards and guidelines about teacher dispositions and skills, at a state and national level, provide evidence that teachers should possess a set of core values that are critical to teaching. Young children benefit from a teacher who is able to develop skills in all content areas using a curriculum that reflects the cultures of students in the classroom (NAEYC, 2011). According to NAEYC (2011), "research emphasizes the need for close relationships between children and adults and between teachers and children's families. Such relationships, and the secure base that they create, are investments in children's later social, emotional, and academic competence" (pp. 12-13).

In addition to state and national guidelines, researchers across disciplines have generated theories about relationships and its relevance to teaching and learning. The interactions between teachers and students are important to the overall development and success of students. Noddings, an education theorist who created the idea of "caring theory" acknowledges the importance of relationships and caring. Noddings's "ethics for care approach" (1995) has been described as relational ethics, because it prioritizes concern for relationships. She describes her

early educational experiences and close relationships as key in her development of the notion of caring, and ethical caring in particular (Nodding, 1995.) Noddings shares her concerns about education, and believes a strong focus on academics has left students uncared for, and without the social and emotional skills needed to succeed in life (Noddings, 1995).

I chose to study teacher-student relationships, or interactions using educational resilience as the foundational theory to address my questions about how teachers build relationships with students in the classroom. The construct is complex with various meanings from different theorists. Thus, I provide background information about resilience and educational resilience in chapter one and include more detailed studies about educational resilience and other contributing factors to teacher-student interactions in Chapter Two.

Resilience

Resilience research has probable implications for improving education. The construct of resilience has various definitions describing the concept. Luthar (2006) states, "in the field of psychopathology, resilience is a construct representing positive adaptation despite adversity" (p. 739). Another description by Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000a) refers to resilience as "a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (p. 543). Two key conditions of resilience are noted: "(1) exposure to significant threat or severe adversity; and (2) the achievement of positive adaptation despite major assaults on the developmental process" (Luthar, et. al., 2000, p. 543). Garmezy and Masten (1991) define resilience as "a process of, or capacity for, or the outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging and threatening circumstances" (p. 459).

The variations in how researchers define resilience are usually related to the context in which it is being examined (Waxman, Gray, & Padròn, 2003). For example, high-risk groups are defined by labels including poverty, family circumstance, or mistreatment (Waxman et al., 2003). In contrast to high-risk groups, definitions of resilience that "focus on the broader educational community are based on the positive experiences that may be associated with individual adaptation (e.g., significant relationships, school perceptions, and school environment)" (Waxman et al., 2003, p. 2). For my research study, the latter definition focusing on positive experiences will be used because the area of inquiry is about supportive teacher-student relationships in an educational setting.

According to Bryan (2005), resilience can be cultivated by providing protective factors in children's environments. She suggests protective factors minimize the damaging results that occur from circumstances in life that bring about stress and further asserts

> the main protective factors that families, schools, and communities can foster to increase resiliency in children are: caring and supportive adult relationships, opportunities for meaningful student participation in their schools and communities, and high parent and teacher expectations regarding student performance and future school success. (p.3)

This present study investigated the main protective factor of caring and supportive adult relationships because relationships are the crux of resilience and basic human development.

Luthar (2006) states that "resilience rests, fundamentally, on relationships. The desire to belong is a basic human need, and positive connections with others lie at the very core of psychological development; strong, supportive relationships are critical for achieving and sustaining resilient adaptation" (p. 780). In his work, he believes it is critical for children and

adults to establish caring relationships with individuals they consider to be close to them and emphasizes the importance of support and discipline in establishing good relationships (Luthar, 2006). Although psychologists document the importance of caring and strong relationships, additional studies need to be piloted about what these supportive relationships look like in the elementary classroom and how they may lead to school engagement and educational resilience.

Educational Resilience

Educational resilience is related to student success and can be cultivated through the classroom teacher. One way in which students may become more resilient is by strengthening protective factors associated with resilience. A protective factor that has positive benefits for students' academic success is access to supportive relationships with teachers (Luthar, 2006).

One of the most widely used definitions of educational resilience is "the heightened likelihood of success in school and other life accomplishments despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences" (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994, p. 46). According to Waxman et al. (2003), resilience provides a roadmap that combines resources from individuals and organizations to reduce the outcomes of personal and environmental risks. Furthermore, they see resilience as fluid, with an ongoing exchange between an individual and his surroundings (Waxman et al., 2003). When students are in school, the classroom teacher sets the tone for the classroom environment. The interaction between the teacher and student is critical to the engagement and academic success of the students. Waxman et al. (2003) state that:

a key premise is that protective mechanisms within the family, classroom, school, and community can foster educational resilience by buffering and reducing the adversities children face, and providing opportunities for learning and healthy development. Homes,

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classrooms, schools, and communities can be altered to provide features that protect

children against adversities, enhance learning, and develop their talents and competencies

(p. 3).

Within the classroom, one of these features that may strengthen learning and develop students'

capacities is supportive relationships, a main protective factor of educational resilience. The

classroom can be transformed by teachers' positive interactions so that students feel confident

and persist as they work toward academic success. Supportive teacher-student relationships in

the classroom are a protective mechanism to be further explored.

Findings from educational and psychological research throughout the past 50 years

examined the policies and practice that impact student learning (Wang, Haertal, & Walberg,

1994). Researchers identified "28 types of influences, and the most powerful were found in the

learner, the classroom, and the home" (Wang, Haertal, & Walberg, 1997, p. 2). Contexts such as

"the classroom, home and community, and school wide practices are a more powerful influence

on learning than state and district policy contexts" (Wang et al., 1997, p. 3). Since the classroom

context was among one of the most powerful influences on learning, it is fitting to look closely at

what takes place in the classroom. An investigation of teacher-student interactions and the

professional dispositions of teachers provide insight of how relationships work to cultivate

educational resilience.

Protective factors found in the school, home, and community can nurture educational

resilience by decreasing the number of adverse situations children face and providing

opportunities for learning (Wang et al., 1994). Reports are continually published about the

negative traits of those students at risk of school failure. However, the focus of this study is

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about what works and proves to be effective. Pinpointing identifiable attributes about protective

mechanisms that exist in the classroom provides teachers with supportive tools and solutions to

some of the difficulties of students' academic, social, and emotional success.

According to resilience research, educational resilience has the potential to help students

overcome adversities at home, in the community, and at school (Luthar, 2006). One feature that

repeatedly appears as a protective factor related to resilience is a supportive and caring

relationship with an adult. When teachers have meaningful relationships with students, students

are able to develop the skills and attitudes that lead to academic, social, and emotional

accomplishments.

The Role of the Classroom Teacher

Teachers and their professional dispositions are essential components in encouraging students to

become successful in school. Teachers provide guidance and support so that students are able to

develop the attitudes necessary to achieve when attempting something new, working on

classwork, having confidence, and being accountable for their own learning (Wang et al., 1997).

Teachers perform the role of mentors and assist in the learning process (Wang et al., 1997). They

minimize everyday pressures and care for those students experiencing adversities in life (Werner

& Smith, 1982). When teacher-student relationships occur during a period of time, students

improve their social and academic accomplishments (Lee, Bryk, & Smith, 1993).

The teacher has the potential to cultivate educational resilience within the classroom through

supportive and caring relationships with students. School settings are capable of defending

against adverse environments and strengthening students who face vulnerable situations (Nettles,

Mucherah, & Jones, 2000). Students spend a greater part of their school day with their classroom

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teacher, yet research studies about resilience gather information about students and their perspectives, omitting the voice of the classroom teacher. Teachers have the opportunity to provide caring and support to protect against adverse conditions. There is an opportunity for additional studies related to teachers' supportive relationships and their roles in student success, from the viewpoint of the teacher.

According to Luthar (2006) "many rigorous evaluated programs address structure and discipline in the classroom, but there are currently few programs built around the idea of strong relationships to teachers" (p. 768). These data are surprising since research findings state that the presence of a caring adult is important in resilience and teachers can encourage students in developing social skills (Luthar, 2006). Because of the limited research in this field that examines student-teacher interactions, the specific attributes of what these interactions look like are uncertain. If classroom teachers are establishing learning environments that build resilience in all learners through supportive and caring teacher-student relationships, it is important to document these interactions, and share them with other classroom teachers and administrators. Since the teacher has the potential to provide students with supportive and caring relationships that may lead to educational resilience, this area needs further exploring.

Elementary teachers spend most of the day isolated in their classrooms with their students and have limited time to observe one another and see these interactions. What do these relationships, or interactions look like in the classroom? How do teachers describe these interactions? How can the interactions between teachers and students help students become educationally resilient? How do teachers define educational resilience? These are some of the questions that emerged in my mind and I addressed in this study. Identifying and documenting

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these teacher-student interactions will shed insight about what these interactions look like and how they may be implemented in their classrooms.

Teachers are capable of influencing the academic, social, and emotional success of their students through strong relationships. Supportive relationships between teachers and students are one of the protective factors that promote educational resilience. It will be extremely beneficial to learn more about strong attachments between teachers and students.

Conceptual Framework

According to Denzen (1988), in a conceptual framework, "descriptive categories are placed within a broad structure of both explicit and assumed propositions" (p. 49). In my qualitative study, I chose resilience as my theory to lead the development of my research questions. As I began to collect my data, I used a case study approach to guide my theory building to answer questions of "how" and "why" related to teacher-student interactions. I applied aspects of the grounded theory approach to discover concepts through constant comparison analysis to identify contributing factors related to teacher-student interactions in the classrooms.

Teacher-student interactions were the center of my research study, so I created my conceptual framework to reflect this idea. I captured data relevant to teacher-student interactions and learned more about these interactions, from the teachers' perspective. Educational resilience was placed at the top in Figure A because my research is based on this theoretical framework and all of the other topics are linked to it.

Teacher-students interactions in the classroom play a role in the success of students in school. To include all aspects intertwined with this topic was impossible, so I narrowed my

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selection to cultural diversity, social learning, emotional learning, professional dispositions, and

professional development. I chose these areas because they were relevant to the research topic

and meaningful to me as an educator. In the next chapter, I discuss these topics and their

relationship to teacher-student interactions.

Figure A

Conceptual Framework of Cultivating Educational Resilience

```
                    Educational
                     resilience

  Professional                          Cultural
  development        Teacher-           diversity
                     Student
                     Interactions

  Professional                          Social
  dispositions                          learning

                     Emotional
                      learning
```

Purpose of the Research

To understand the complex intricacies of teaching and learning and the role of the

teacher, this study investigated relationships in the classroom between teachers and students. I

examined two areas: The first area was teacher-student interactions and what it looks like in an

elementary classroom setting. The second area was teachers' perspectives about teacher-student

interactions and how they contribute to educational resilience. The most important and immediate component of this study was to capture the teacher-student interactions that occur in the classroom and the teacher perspectives about how they build relationships with their students.

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher-student interactions in the classroom, and gain insight from teachers about how these interactions influence students' academic, social and emotional success in school. In order to gather such data, I interviewed teachers and asked them how they come to know their students and what educational resilience means to them. I observed and identified teacher-student interactions occurring in elementary classrooms and documented how these relationships were perceived by the teachers. Through this process, I understood teachers' thoughts about educational resilience and how they felt about interacting with their students in the classroom. The intent of this study was not to focus on specific types of instruction, but rather to learn about the relationships that exist in elementary classrooms, as they relate to educational resilience and identify those interactions and professional dispositions that teachers feel are most effective.

Research Questions

Educational resilience addresses non-cognitive influences on a child's acquisition of knowledge. One external protective factor of educational resilience related to student success is supportive and caring relationships between teachers and students. The following research questions served as guiding principles throughout this study:

1. How do classroom teachers build relationships with their students?

2. What professional dispositions do teachers possess that support teacher-student relationships?

The following sub questions were addressed:

1. What are the teachers' perspectives of how the teacher-student relationship impacts student engagement?

2. What are the teachers' perspectives of how the teacher-student relationship impacts student achievement?

3. How do teachers consider the social and cultural backgrounds of their students when they plan lessons?

To clarify my point of view, I included a list of the definition of key terms used in the discussion of my study. The sources consulted for the definition of the key terms are indicated after each description.

Definition of Terms

Culturally Relevant Teaching: "A pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes." (Ladson-Billings, 1994, pp. 17-18). The terms, culturally relevant teaching, cultural diversity, cultural competence, and cultural proficiency will be used interchangeably.

Resilience: "A dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar et al., 2000a, p. 543).

Educational Resilience: "The heightened likelihood of success in school and other life accomplishments despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences" (Wang et al., 1994, p. 46).

Interactions: "The exchanges in words and gestures that you have with others – in particular, the exchanges that you as a teacher have with young children" (Dombro, Jablon & Stetson, 2011, p. 1). The terms, interactions and relationships will be used interchangeably.

Professional Dispositions: Professional attitudes, values and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development. (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), (2008), pp. 89-90).

Protective Factors: "Markers that modify the effects of risk in a positive direction" (Luthar, 2006, p.743).

Vulnerability Factors: "Markers that exacerbate the negative effects of the risk condition" (Luthar, 2006, p. 743).

CHAPTER 2

Teachers must have a repertoire of instructional strategies and know when to use a given strategy to accommodate the different ways that individual children learn and the specific content they are learning. - Ann Epstein, 2007, p. 1

A Review of the Literature

Overview

Various factors support children and their quest for learning. Teachers are capable of creating both supports and constraints in the classroom. As Epstein (2007) states above, teachers must have expertise about a variety of instructional strategies and the different ways students learn. The scope of literature to include in this chapter was narrowed to focus on a few influential factors related to teachers and their interactions with students. The aspects selected are not obstacles and problems that exist in education. Rather, promising and supportive features of student success in school. Educational resilience is the foundation of my conceptual framework. This construct provides the rationale for conducting this study about teachers, students, and the relationships that exist between them in a way that supports student development.

This chapter is organized in several sections. Discussion in the beginning of this chapter focuses on the general construct of resilience, leading to the specifics of educational resilience. The next section explores cultural diversity and is followed by social and emotional learning. The subsequent section discusses professional dispositions of classroom teachers. The final section joins all of these areas of educational resilience, cultural diversity, social and emotional learning, and professional teacher dispositions and its relevance to teacher-student interactions. Professional development will be discussed in the final chapter as a means in which to share knowledge about teacher-student interactions with classroom teachers and what it may look like in their own classrooms.

I reflect upon the words of the quote stated at the beginning of this chapter about teachers accommodating the different ways students learn and possessing the knowledge about specific content. At times, this can be overwhelming for teachers, especially those who have just entered the teaching profession. It's important to acknowledge difficulties but not allow them to impede educational success. Educational resilience is about overcoming adverse events related to education and building meaningful relationships. Freire (1970) held the belief that individuals viewed themselves as "…possessors of a consciousness: an empty mind passively open to the reception of deposits of reality from the world outside" (p. 56). He believed one of the purposes of education was to empower students and give them a voice (Freire, 1970). Teachers are capable of uplifting students and strengthening their ability to express themselves freely. For this to occur, teachers must know about students' social, emotional, and cultural background. I support research that states the significance and role cultural diversity and social and emotional learning play in the success of students. A teaching philosophy built on the foundation of educational resilience and the importance of relationship-building uplifts teachers. Teachers' daily interactions with students that consider culture, social setting and emotional well-being educate and empower, rather than impede.

Resilience Research

Cicchetti and Cohen (2006) define "resilience as a construct representing positive adaptation despite adversity" (p. 760). Resilience is a fairly new construct. According to Luthar (2006), resilience has been in existence since the 1950s, and has been "increasingly recognized as one of considerable importance from a theoretical and an applied perspective" (p. 739). From

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an applied perspective, it is more effective to promote attributes of resilience as a prevention mechanism rather than heal illnesses once they have already formed (Luthar, 2006).

One of the pioneering researchers on resilience is Rutter. In 1987, Rutter published a scholarly paper describing key conceptual issues reported in Project Competence. This research project examined the aptitude of children who experienced difficulties in life (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegan, 1984). Rutter's (1987) seminal article initiated a conversation about the importance of detecting practices in resilience and outlining the ways in which risk can be minimized. According to Rutter (1987) risk can be mitigated by:

> alternating the experience of risk itself; by altering exposure to the risk; by averting negative chain reactions; by raising self-esteem (through secure relationships and tasks well done); and through turning points or opportunities (such as entry into army service). (p. 740)

Other researchers have examined resilient behavior in children and identified factors associated with resilience. Benard (1995) found that there are "five personal characteristics that resilient children typically display: Social competence, problem-solving skills, a critical consciousness, autonomy, and a sense of purpose" (p. 2). In 1994, McMillan and Reed (as cited in Waxman et. al, 2003) described additional factors related to resiliency: personal attributes such as motivation and goal orientation,

> positive use of time (e.g., on-task behavior, homework completion, participation in extracurricular experiences), family life (e.g., family support and expectations), and school and classroom learning environment (i.e., facilities, exposure to technology, leadership, and overall climate.) (Waxman et. al, 2003, p. 1)

Both Benard and McMillan and Reed acknowledge some factors beyond the control of the school and classroom. While educators are incapable of controlling family and community effects, they are capable of working to transform educational policies with the goal of meeting the needs of students who are in jeopardy of school failure (Comer, 1987). Educators can influence the likelihood of student opportunities in school and classroom learning environments that provide characteristics of resilient students.

Bernard and McMillan and Reed affirm factors outside the school setting, and include the importance of the connections between school, family, and community. Bronfenbrenner's (1986) theory of ecological development supports the premise for creating relationships among school, home, and community environments. Bronfenbrenner's (1986) model articulates that the health of a child is dependent on meaningful activities with at least one adult. As the exchanges between the child and adult deepen, the child progresses socially and intellectually (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). These relationships consist of dialogue about knowledge, adaptation, and trust (Waxman, et. al., 2003). If supportive interactions are missing from a child's home, school, or community environment, the child's development may be compromised.

Vulnerability and Protective Factors

The emphasis of the literature on resilience focuses on vulnerability and protective factors. According to Luthar (2006) "protective factors are those that modify the effects of risk in a positive direction", and "vulnerability factors or markers encompass those indices that exacerbate the negative effects of the risk condition" (p. 743).

Luthar (2006) explains that "male gender can be a vulnerability marker" for adolescents who live in a poor urban setting (p. 743). Youth involved in "chronic life adversities" and those

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with "low intelligence are more vulnerable to adjustment difficulties than are those with higher intelligence" (p. 743). Examples of protective factors includes "an internal locus of control" and maintaining a "positive relationship with at least one adult" (Luthar, 2006, p. 743.). Youth who possess both of these factors in their lives have a higher likelihood of doing better than those adolescents who do not have these markers present. (Luthar, 2006). A teacher can develop a meaningful relationship with students and increase the number of protective factors present in their lives.

Researchers in the field of resilience received disapproval for the way in which vulnerability and protective factors are represented in a list format (Luthar (2006) Producing lists appears to be inefficient since one program is unable to address all of the factors that appear on any one list (Luthar 2006). When considering interventions, domains should be the focus. This produces the best benefits (Luthar & Zelazo, 2003). Major themes in vulnerability and protective factors can be found in the areas of family, the community setting, and within youngsters (Luthar, 2006).

Through the research generated in the 1980s and 1990s, resilience was shown to appear in some areas but not in others (Luthar, 2006). That is, resilience is fluid and can vary in different domains. Children can display strengths in some areas but exhibit weaknesses in other parts of their lives (Luthar, Doernberger, & Zigler, 1993). For instance, children may be academically successful in school but have difficulty with an emotional skill such as controlling anger. As a result of this evidence, scientists chose to identify resilience according to the domain in which it appears (Wang & Gordon, 1994). The construct can be defined as educational resilience (Wang & Gordon, 1994) or emotional resilience (Denny, Clark, Fleming, & Wall,

2004). My focus of resilience is within education. The next section elaborates about resilience

within the domain of education, referred to as educational resilience.

<div align="center">*Educational Resilience*</div>

Classrooms that cultivate educational resilience see teaching as an art rather than a skill.

The strengths of the students are the focus instead of looking and dwelling on the failures.

Educational resilience can be defined through strengths that allow individuals to flourish and

persist and when confronting adversity (Osofsky & Thompson, 2000).

Two programs based within schools produced successful results (Luthar, 2006). The first

imitative was Cowen's (Cowen, Hightower, Pedro-Carroll, Work, Wyman, & Haffey, 1996)

Primary Mental Health Project that concentrated on mental health issues present in young

children. The second project was Noam & Hermann's (2002) Responsive Advocacy for Life and

Learning in Youth (RALLY) created for adolescents in vulnerable settings. Meaningful

relationships were the critical component of both interventions (Luthar, 2006). Cowen and

colleagues reported, "The existence of a warm, trusting associate-child relationship is the

foundation on which significant attitudinal and behavioral change in children rests" (Cowen et

al., 1996, p. 92). The fundamental principle of the RALLY project was "resilience cannot

develop without the personal, interpersonal, and emotional dimensions inherent in relationships"

(Noam & Hermann, 2002, p. 874).

In the resilience literature review that includes programs based in schools, Forman and

Kalafat (1998) highlight the following protective factors: caring adults who provide positive

comments and expect students to do well, a school environment that encourages relationship-

building between teachers and students, and cultivating relationships amongst the parents,

school, and community. When considering interventions that occur in a school setting, possible obstacles must be taken into consideration (Luthar, 2006). The most noteworthy barriers to consider are those that may interfere with the development of literacy proficiency (Luthar, 2006). Schools' main focus is to provide a quality education to students (Luthar, 2006). Adelman and Taylor (1999) share the following view about the role of schools, "Schools are not in the mental health business. Their mandate is to educate" (p. 138). To work collectively and include the views of researchers from a variety of fields, results related to the psychological development of children that impede literacy development must be shared across disciplines so that mental health services are available to children experiencing problems (Adelman & Taylor, 2003).

Luthar (2006) states "There are many rigorously evaluated programs addressing structure and discipline in the classroom, but there are currently few programs built around the notion of strong attachments to teachers" (p. 768). Research studies have shown repeatedly that teachers are an integral part of the development of children's social skills and cultivating a meaningful relationship is key in resilience (Luthar, 2006; Chang, 2003). In addition, Pianta (1999) notes the benefits are possible when relationships between a student and teacher are maintained over an extended period of time.

Teachers who foster educational resilience in their classrooms understand the importance of high student expectations and excellence. This type of teaching believes that students are capable of excellence and teachers take on the responsibility of ensuring that their students achieve excellence. Educators who demonstrate high expectations and a learner-centered curriculum in the classroom (Wang et al., 1998) are described as contributing to educational

resilience. This responsibility of cultivating resilience is shared with students, parents, and community members.

Educational Resilience and Cultural Groups

Encouraging student engagement and involvement and offering a learner-centered curriculum look different in classrooms, depending on the culture, gender, and class of the students. Poverty, culture, and ethnicity are significant factors to consider in the advancement of resilience. All three are considered risk factors and may effect school achievement in a harmful way. What is important for educators to know is the role of culture as students identify and manage adversity (Dudley-Grant, Comas-Diaz, Todd-Bazemore, & Hueston, 2004). When thinking about resilience and supportive teacher-student relationships, teachers need to appreciate the importance of knowledge about cultural and racial diversity.

Dudley-Grant et al. (2004) suggest connectivity plays a role in strengthening resilience for people of color. Connectivity refers to relationships within social circles, connections at places of worship, and association to a community (Dudley-Grant et al., 2004). Kitano and Lewis (2005) cite the research of Dudley-Grant et al. (2004) that states "positive relationships between resilience and valuing family needs among Mexican American youth, Afro-centric values and cultural identity among African Americans, and emphasis on traditional culture, positive Native identity and intergenerational relationships among Native Americans" (para. 23). Dudley-Grant et al. (2004) note that people of color view ways to cope with discrimination as a protective factor. Furthermore, spirituality and working to assist others in becoming healthy are viewed as protective factors of resilience (Kitano & Lewis, 2005).

Several disciplines (child development and psychiatry, counseling and Black psychology, early childhood, social work and youth development) indicate various ways racial and cultural socialization supports Black students' academic and social development (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Chavous et al., 2008; Nasir, 2011; Oyserman et al., 2001; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007; Wang & Huguley, 2012). King (2013) considers cultural diversity to be an asset in the field of education and with the education of teachers. She states "ways that young people are innovatively using their cultural expressions to transform music, sports, and other global popular culture industries could also transform curriculum and pedagogy" (King, 2013, p. 242).

Resilience has been analyzed by gender and culture. A study was conducted among females from a variety of cultural backgrounds who excelled academically (Kitano & Lewis, 2005). The research emphasized several approaches to resilience that was common across cultural groups (Kitano & Lewis, 2005). Other tactics appeared to be culturally related. With those African Americans participating in the study, their techniques for coping with racism encompassed a close watch of their surroundings, locating other paths, discounting discrimination, feeling good and supporting self, and having a strong cultural identity (Kitano & Lewis, 2005). Kitano and Lewis (2005) use the term, "biculturalism, having a positive ethnic identity" as a protective factor for "gifted students from African American, Native American, and Latino backgrounds" (para. 29).

Kitano and Lewis (2005) notes Plucker's (1998) research about cultural groups that found "there was little evidence of gender or grade level differences, but significant racial differences in gifted adolescents' coping strategies" (Kitano & Lewis, 2005, para. 26). Again, Plucker's research provides an argument for the significance of teachers learning about cultural and racial

diversity as it relates to educational resilience. Plucker's (1998) research found the following coping strategies among cultural groups: African American and Latino students relied on spiritual support; Asian Americans used school achievement, perseverance, hard work and flexibility; Latino students engaged in self-assessment and planning, taking action, using individual achievement as a way to contribute to family and community, and to challenge inequities; and White participants focused on pre-planning, being accountable, making good choices, persisting, and networking. Across all ethnic groups, gifted students used working hard as a type of coping mechanism (Plucker, 1998).

Children and adolescents across ethnic and racial groups who are resilient possess common features of resilience coping strategies. However all groups do not implement the same strategies; their familiarities and cultural beliefs influence the strategies they employ. The studies described in this section show that coping strategies are culturally related. Culture plays a role in how students cope with adversity and teachers can benefit from learning about diverse students and their needs when attempting to foster educational resilience.

Cultural Competence

Socioeconomic status, classroom size, resources, and teacher qualifications influence student learning. Discussion about the significance of race and culture of children in urban schools versus those that attend school in suburban schools is sometimes avoided by educators. However, in-service teachers must gain this information and knowledge from some source before they begin teaching. Some institutions of higher education work to address diversity and culturally relevant teaching in their teacher preparation courses while others do not.

According to Milner (2006), many courses in teacher preparation lack opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage in meaningful conversations about race, culture, and socioeconomic status, and how these issues are related to their teaching experience. However, when teacher candidates are taught about race and culture in teacher preparation courses, they are able to recognize the variety of cultural backgrounds that exist in the classroom and to acknowledge these cultures in a positive way. One of the ways to increase the academic performance of students living in diverse communities and attending schools with diverse populations racially, culturally, and economically is to equip teachers with the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions that are needed to teach in such school settings (Milner, 2006). If teacher candidates do not gain this knowledge as pre-service teachers, it is likely they may enter the teaching profession without learning about diversity and its significance with their interactions with students.

Au and Jordan's (1981) research is an example of connecting cultural practices from the community and engaging in authentic learning within the classroom. Educators used their knowledge about the culture of their students as a way to interact and engage them in a reading lesson. Research conducted by Au and Jordan document educators using cultural practices of Native Hawaiians in a reading comprehension lesson. Au and Jordan (1981) studied Native Hawaiian teachers who worked to strengthen reading skills in their students by emphasizing comprehension rather than phonics. The teachers used communication skills similar to those used in their home, known in native Hawaiian culture as "talk story." The language of the students was not seen as a hindrance or a deficit. Rather, these educators used the native culture to interact effectively with their students.

Hilliard (1995), Kunjufu (2002), Delpit (2006), Nieto (1999), Ladson-Billings (1994), Tatum (2007), and many other educators strongly support the notion that teachers should have a strong base of cultural knowledge and cultural consideration when teaching, especially teaching diverse learners. This is vital to the success of the teacher reaching and engaging all students. Ladson-Billings (1994) states

> it is respectful for teachers to acknowledge students' experiences outside of the classroom and use these experiences to promote relationships with students and their families. Effective teaching involves in-depth knowledge of both the students and the subject matter. (p. 125)

Relationship-building between a teacher and the students is more likely to occur when there is knowledge about the students' culture and family history.

Supporters of culturally relevant teaching and multiculturalism believe students are not empty vessels to be filled and then asked to regurgitate information. Rather, teachers in a school that supports multicultural education views knowledge as something reinterpreted, reinvented and discussed mutually by students and teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1994). According to Ladson-Billings (1994), students are encouraged to participate in knowledge-building and teachers should reflect about student diversity and individual differences when teaching.

For new teachers and other teachers who have followed the prepackaged, predetermined curriculum guides and textbooks, taking into account student diversity and individual differences, and creating lessons to motivate and engage students by integrating their knowledge of culture and personal experiences may be overwhelming. Although this intimidating task may seem impossible, it has been implemented in many schools. Scholars and educators have

documented successful culturally relevant and multicultural teaching. Several examples of culturally relevant lessons are presented by Ladson-Billings (1994) about effective teaching of African American children. Some teachers are afraid to infuse cultural influences in lessons because the specific content of the lesson may be changed. However, effective teaching that takes into consideration students' prior knowledge and cultural capacities without compromising content is possible.

Ladson-Billings shares a pedagogical view that" supports and encourages students to use their prior knowledge to make sense of the world and to work toward improving it" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 14). Ladson-Billings (1994) describes a teacher and her interactions with her students and families. First, the teacher has a repertoire of instructional strategies that allows her to get to know her students. Next, she connects to the parents to understand how they teach their children. Then the teacher has a discussion with her students about topics that hold their attention and areas at which they perceive themselves to be "experts" (Ladson-Billings, 1994). According to Ladson-Billings (1994), this teacher is acknowledging and respecting her students' experiences rather than assuming that the students have no prior knowledge. The teacher is developing a supportive and caring relationship with students. By listening and learning from the students, the teacher is able to rethink the curriculum so there is meaning for her students. Classmates are learning about one another and developing respect for all people. Concepts of self, students, students' parents, and community are positive. The teacher is learning about her students and using supportive relationships to foster academic success.

Delpit (2006) discusses some of the child-deficit assumptions related to students and culture. One of the prevalent phrases in the field of education is "all children can learn, but few

of us really believe it" (Delpit, 2006, p. 172). Acording to Delpit (2006), research related to teacher education usually "links failure and socioeconomic status, failure and cultural difference, and failure and single-parent households" (p. 172). When teachers read and hear about these negative viewpoints, it is difficult for them to believe that students who are in these situations can possibly be successful in school (Delpit (2006). Teachers have a mindset to search for deficits and disregard any strengths that may exist with the students (Delpit, 2006). Delpit believes (2006) "to counter this tendency, educators must have knowledge of children's lives outside of school so as to recognize their strengths" (p. 172).

If teachers do not communicate with their students and inquire about what happens outside of school, then the relationship between the students and teacher is limited. The teacher is unable to recognize the skills of the student outside of the classroom and is more likely to have difficulty engaging and motivating the students in classroom learning (Delpit, 2006). Teachers are less likely to see the strengths of the students who are "culturally different" and begin "teaching down" to them (Delpit, 2006, p. 173). When discussing culture, and deficit versus strengths, Delpit (2006) states, "the key here is not the kind of instruction but the attitude underlying it. When teachers do not understand the potential of the student they teach, they will underteach them no matter what the methodology" (p. 175). A change in attitude or disposition with teachers must occur. Delpit (2006) suggests that teachers acknowledge a child's color rather than be "color-blind," learn to communicate and understand parents, expose teacher candidates to "models of success" when discussing children of color, and avoid terms that are negative such as ("dis-advantaged," "at-risk," "learning disabled," "the underclass") (pp. 177-179). One of the means in which these changes about culture can occur is in teacher preparation programs and

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professional development training. Delpit (2006) feels strongly that teachers must take courses that educate them about multicultural students and appreciation of their cultures. These students should not be viewed as having deficits but seen as brilliant students with great potential (Delpit, 2006). Culture has to be regarded as an asset not a deficit when teachers are working with students.

Quality teachers build on the background knowledge and experiences of their students, when teaching a lesson and interacting with students. To understand students and their experiences, the teacher has to know something about the culture of the students. NAEYC (2012) feels strongly about implementing curricula that affirms the value of students' cultures. According to NAEYC (2012), one of the challenges of the early childhood education community is addressing the increase in the amount of diverse families (NAEYC, 2012).

Social and Emotional Learning

Learning is a social process and is critical to the healthy development of the whole student. Literacy processes are more than intellectual processes or a fixed set of skills. According to Botelho (2007) "literacies are social practices, connected to, and constructed by everyday lives and many contexts (e.g. home, school, work, community, and society" (p. 28). The social and emotional well-being of students is positively influenced by the interactions that occur with the teacher. The teacher is critical in developing the social, emotional and academic experiences of students.

In education, varying conditions provide a positive learning environment for children. When considering features such as social, cultural and psychological factors, some researchers select a philosophy and foundation in cognitive theories. Others feel strongly about social

context and culture or psychological factors contributing to school success. In addition, some researchers and educators support more than one theoretical model, leading them to focus on a combination of philosophies such as socio-cognitive and psychosocial models and/or socioeconomic frameworks.

Within the few theoretical models mentioned, numerous subsets can be examined related to student achievement and success in school. Multiple theories and influences on education and learning, along with the difficulty to select a sole model, make it challenging to adapt one theory. However, to grasp a deeper understanding of a theory, it is beneficial to choose one area and closely examine the research to improve learning and academic success with students. I present this section about social and emotional learning through the lens of a social constructivist's theory.

Experts in the field of education believe that teaching social and emotional skills is essential to improving schools in the United States (Langdon, 1996). In addition, educators support the idea of including social and emotional learning in the classroom (Langdon, 1996). The role of social resources such as teacher is also linked to resilient outcomes (Nettles et al., 2000).

The presence of positive stimuli is likely to increase the academic and social success of students in school. Research has indicated that effective classrooms may be a factor as a way to minimize the gap between those children who are successful and those who are at risk for school failure in elementary grades (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Hamre and Pianta (2005) examine the issues of instructional and emotional support for students at risk of school failure. They highlight two areas of research literature that looks at daily teacher-student classroom interactions that lead

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to more positive outcomes for students and school-based interventions that could possibly change paths for those students identified as having risk factors (Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

Observational studies involving teachers and their elementary classrooms have shown that instructional and emotional supports are two critical areas that support students' social and academic growth (Hamre and Pianta, 2005). Howes, Matheson, and Hamilton (2005) found that instructional support is a stronger predictor for academic achievement than emotional support. In addition, emotional support was a better predictor of social and metacognitive skills (Howes et al., 2005). Morrison and Connor (2002) support the idea that it is vital to conceptualize and assess the classroom in terms of social and instructional purposes considering how these components relate to the skills and capabilities of the student. As the literature indicates, the teacher is a significant component to consider when creating the instructional and social environment that supports student achievement.

Two areas of significance related to daily interactions between teachers and students are emotional and instructional support (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). According to NICHD ECCRN, 2002b) "emotional support encompasses the classroom warmth, negativity, child centeredness, and teacher's sensitivity and responsivity toward specific children" (p. 371). Several theories support the idea that strong and meaningful interactions with adults positively affect the healthy development of students' emotional and social wellbeing (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck, & Connell (1998) also support this viewpoint that self-regulation among students is stimulated by positive classroom environments and caring teachers.

The emotional support of teachers provides students with opportunities that cultivate engagement and motivation essential to academic development (Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

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Theories of motivation suggest that students are more likely to engage in learning when teachers are thoughtful, approachable, and sensitive (Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

Several studies support the importance of the classroom teacher and her influence on student motivation and learning. In elementary schools, Pianta, LaParo, Payne, Cox, and Bradley (2002) noted kindergarten students were focused on assignments and involved in learning when educators presented an environment centered on the child. For students at risk, Noam and Herman's (2002) school-based intervention program stresses the positive influence of having a mentor located at the school. The relationship between the student and the school-based mentor acts as a protective factor of resilience, negating adverse risk factors that may cause difficulty in family networks (Noam, Warner, & Van Dyken, 2001). In addition, researchers view the emotional support of teachers as a means in which to offer direct assistance to students by applying practices that cultivate engagement and foster motivation important to effective education (Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

Teacher Professional Dispositions – Teacher-Student Interactions

If gains in learning are occurring, then teacher instruction is usually a contributing factor. In the past, debates arose about child-centered instruction versus direct instruction in elementary classrooms (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Researchers suggest the instructional practices of teachers have the strongest impact for students' academic achievement when interactions are direct, purposeful, and planned (Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

Torgeson (2002) uses this method of teaching during reading instruction. According to Torgeson (2002) ongoing practice, adequate time for teaching, scaffolding, and providing comments to students about their work can improve reading skills. The importance of

meaningful interactions and comments to students about their work is not limited to reading

instruction and applies to other areas such as writing (Matsumura, Patthey-Chavez, Valdes, &

Garnier, 2002), intellectual processes, and critical thinking skills (Dolezal, Welsh, Pressley, &

Vincent, 2003). These strategies are also connected to an increase in meaningful interactions,

fewer confrontational interactions, and more time on task with instruction (NICHD ECCRN,

2002a; Pianta et al., 2002). Although research has been conducted about direct instruction, there

is pronounced variability with how often these strategies are employed and the frequency and

value of these practices in the elementary classrooms (Meyer, Wardrop, Hastings, & Linn, 1993;

NICHD ECCRN, 2002a). Further studies involving data gathering of elementary teachers may

help to minimize variability surrounding instructional procedures in those early elementary

classrooms.

Hamre & Pianta (2005) state "research on the nature and quality of early schooling

experiences provides emerging evidence that classroom environments and teacher behaviors are

associated in a "value-added" sense with student outcomes" (p. 952). In the past, researchers did

not see a link between teachers' interactions with students and shrinking the achievement gap

between successful and unsuccessful student (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Some evidence exits that

show meaning teacher-student interactions can remove some risks (Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

However, substantial evidence is not available to support the premise that the classroom

environment and teacher-student interactions associated with emotional or instructional support

are able to offset stresses that may lead to school failure (Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

Teachers attending to the instructional and emotional support of children are important

when working to close the achievement gap between those students who thrive in the classroom

and those who do not succeed (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Some research findings support the premise that social and emotional support from teachers may be equally important to academic development than specific instructional techniques (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Additional research studies regarding teacher-student interactions and school success will clarify any discrepancies about emotional and instructional support improving students' chances for academic success and ameliorating the chances of school failure.

According to Hamre & Pianta's (2005) research study involving first grade classrooms, "beyond academic achievement, children's ability to develop relationships with their classroom teachers, characterized by low levels of conflict is a key indicator of positive school adjustment both currently in the future" (p. 962). The work of Hamre and Pianta (2005) confirm the value in the role teachers play in decreasing the threats of academic and social issues I school. In a nurturing and caring classroom, children are able to develop strong relationships with their peers, and classroom teachers. Schools can be a place where the emphasis is not solely about students' academic outcomes but a supportive place for overall student development (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Educators can accomplish this critical goal by providing instructional and emotional support to students and allowing children to feel hopeful about their ability to learn.

Educational Resilience, Cultural Competence, Social and Emotional Learning, & Teacher

Professional Dispositions

Many of the attributes displayed by the teacher described in the multicultural perspective of literacy development are connected with resilience – increasing self-confidence (Luthar, 2006, p. 741); developing meaningful relationships with peers and educators (Masten & Coatsworth,

1998; Wyman, Cowen, Work, Hoyt-Meyers, Magnus, & Fagen, 1999); and cultivating a strong

relationship with an adult (Luthar, 2006).

Teachers have great power in determining what is taught within the classroom and how to

present the information. Those who have high expectations of students, visualize the potential of

students rather than their deficits (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Social relationships are structured in a manner that cultivates relationships with students

and parents. Teachers respect the students and their families and there is time designated to

communicate and connect with students and their families (Nieto, 2000). Curriculum is still

covered but there is a tailored approach so students understand the teacher acknowledges their

prior knowledge and cultural attributes. A social and emotional sense of learning is occurring.

The teacher creates literacy lessons by extracting the culture and real experiences of the students

and combining it with concrete materials to motivate and engage students. The teacher-student

relationship is fluid and demonstrates a connectedness with all students. Students have the

opportunity to sit in a classroom with a teacher who understands the relevance of

multiculturalism and infuses diversity in her lessons and texts (Nieto, 2000). Teachers use their

awareness and acknowledgement of diversity and weave it within their teaching pedagogy, to

provide all students with an equitable classroom and the opportunity to succeed in school.

Literacy develops as students engage in literacy tasks that are authentic, and connect to

real-life experiences (Cambourne, 1988). Children learn language skills by teachers providing

meaningful opportunities to read write, speak, and listen rather than worksheet activities

involving remote practice of skills out of context. Language acquisition is first and foremost a

social process (Cook-Gumperz, 1986; Wells, 1990). This process can be extended and

strengthened by the interactions modeled between the teacher and the students. Educational

resilience competencies foster authentic opportunities for learning by strengthening and

encouraging social skills. As Norton (1991) states, "A wide range of multicultural themes helps

students develop an understanding of social change" (p. 531). The process of reading and writing

about topics relevant to students' cultural and social experiences allows students to develop "an

appreciation and understanding of how the development and understanding of how persons from

various cultures and social settings live and work together" (Cooper, 1993, p. 98).

Although researchers have demonstrated the relationship between achievement and

psychological issues, school stakeholders have not implemented changes to reflect such data.

Children who have issues related to psychological development are vulnerable to academic

failure (Luthar, 2006). Teachers must be aware of such psychological problems and seek help

for students. When teachers form meaningful relationships with their students and tap into

children's prior knowledge and cultural experiences, the achievement gap between successful

students and those at risk for school failure can be closed. The resilience protective factor of

students establishing a meaningful relationship with an adult is critical in safeguarding that all

children have an equitable opportunity for school success.

The world is rapidly changing and so are the classrooms and its teachers. The number of diverse

learners will continue to increase. By 2035, children of color will be the majority population

(U.S. Statistical Abstract, 2001). Dei (1997) states that "race, class, gender, and other forms of

social differences effect how education is efficiently delivered" (i). When considering the

interests of students, a commitment to honor cultures unlike your own brings teachers and

students together, rather than apart. Home culture can be regarded as an asset or deficit. Traore &

Lukens (2006) strongly believes

> when culture is viewed as a deficit, the school sets up a relationship in conflict with
>
> students, their families, and their heritage. When viewed as an asset, the home culture can
>
> assist students in acquiring the necessary tools to succeed in school and life. (p. 117)

Ultimatums and a lack of empathy that provokes emotional or physical threat block the

development of caring relationships. In contrast, trust and respect are critical to the development

of strong relationships (Vitto, 2003).

My study explored the connections between teachers and students and their interactions

in the classroom, considering culture, social and emotional well-being, and teacher professional

dispositions. The literature indicates that teacher-student interactions in the classroom can lead to

student success and educational resilience. By documenting teacher-student interactions and

asking teachers how they build relationships with their students, my research seeks to increase

the knowledge available about teacher-student interactions in the elementary classroom. The

final chapter will discuss professional development models that include professional teacher

dispositions and ways in which to present this knowledge with elementary classroom teachers.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship. –James Comer

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher-student interactions and document teachers' perspectives about the importance of interactions. According to Bryan (2005)

the main protective factors that families, schools, and communities can foster to increase resiliency in children are caring and supportive adult relationships, opportunities for meaningful student participation in their schools and communities, and high parent and teacher expectations regarding student performance and future school success may be fostered at school. (para. 6).

The classroom teacher plays a significant role in cultivating these external protective factors that lead to educational resilience. Teachers' daily interactions provide opportunities that allow them to connect with their students and extend their learning. When students develop caring and supportive relationships with their teachers, it leads to educational resilience. The observations and voices of six teachers were captured and documented to understand how and why teacher-student interactions are important when considering factors that support school success.

Research Design

I used a grounded theory case study to examine teacher-student interactions in the elementary classroom and capture the experiences and perspectives of classroom teachers. Creswell (2007) describes case study as a methodology to explore issues within specific parameters. Stake (2005) on the other hand, does not see case study research as a methodology but simply as an approach. I agree with Stake and I do not see case study as a methodology but

rather an approach to set the boundaries for what I studied. I chose grounded theory as the method for analyzing data collected. The cases allowed me to generate a concept about how and why teacher-student interactions are important to school success and the role of resilience factors within it.

Case study research leads to more concrete knowledge compared to other kinds of research. It is rooted within the framework of the study and relevant to the researcher's knowledge, experience, and understanding as it is compared and contrasted to one's own life experiences (Creswell, 2007). The case study approach has been used across different fields including psychology (Freud), medicine, law, and political science (Creswell, 2007). The present case study with multiple participants focused on teacher-student interactions in the elementary classroom. Instead of one case, I chose several cases to compare and examine teacher-student interactions, all located within one site (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). I drew on multiple sources for data collection including an initial questionnaire, a semi-structured interview, and classroom observations. The case study approach allowed me to study more than one individual and develop an in-depth description and analysis of multiple cases using grounded theory. The observation of participants occurred in their natural school setting.

I examined the data using features of a grounded theory approach gathered from multiple cases. This way of analyzing the data allowed me to gain knowledge and understanding of elementary classroom teachers and directly link the research problem to the perspectives and experiences of the participants. The systematic approach of Strauss and Corbin (1998) allowed me to develop logically a concept to explain process, action, and interactions of supportive teacher-student relationships. In the grounded theory approach with data analysis, as a

researcher, I was able to "move beyond a description" and "generate an abstract analytical schema of a process" about elementary teachers and their supportive teacher-student relationships (Creswell, 2007). Thus, the key findings of this case study are "grounded" in data generated from those who participated in this study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The qualitative case study approach was selected because of the nature of the research questions and the necessity of a systematic procedural approach with data analysis. In addition, I used some of the tenets of analysis from the grounded theory paradigm to examine the data collected from participants. I chose educational resilience as my theoretical framework for my case study to structure a focus on teacher-student interactions and their impact on student success.

Various forms of data such as interview transcripts, observations, and open-ended questionnaires were gathered during the research process. Initially, participants completed an open-ended questionnaire that collected demographic information. Next, I conducted an interview with each person using a semi-structured format. A general outline of questions was followed. (refer to Appendix B.) However, all were not asked the same questions. Some of the participants' responses to the questions led to other questions not written on the interview outline, allowing me to clarify or extend my understanding of their initial responses. The final instrument used was formal observation. On two separate occasions, I conducted a classroom observation on each participant interacting with her students. During the classroom observations, a Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) observation sheet was used to identify the kinds of teacher-student interactions taking place. Both contradictory and coherent themes emerged when I triangulated the data. The contradictory themes did not lessen validation but

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confirmed the other themes that emerged. Triangulation of data provided me with evidence to explain those themes that converged as well as those that were contradictory. It forced me to further analyze my data and construct meaningful concepts about those themes that were similar and those that did not align with the others. After themes were identified, member checking occurred to assess the accuracy of the themes.

Interest in the Phenomenon

My interest in this research topic emerged after Hurricane Katrina occurred in August, 2005. When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, I was living in New Orleans and working at a university managing a national adult reading research project with two urban field sites - one in Philadelphia and the other in New Orleans. It was fascinating to see adults struggling to read, but resilient enough to come back and fill in the gaps after being unsuccessful in the K-12 school system. I also wondered about the barriers that prevented these learners from being successful in the classroom during their elementary and secondary years of school. More importantly, I was interested in what role the teacher played in their success or failure in their school settings.

Research has been conducted and published supporting evidence-based education models and best practices with intensive interventions, yet students are still not educationally resilient. Students attending schools in urban areas and students of color are particularly vulnerable and more likely to have school failure rather than school success. Too many students are still not persisting and are unsuccessful in school. I wanted to examine some of the non-academic factors that influence school success. The yearning question in my mind was about how some students, who appeared to have so many constraints rather than supports, were able to be resilient and

successful. While on the other hand, many students were not able to be resilient in school and were unsuccessful.

The variable that most intrigued me was the classroom teacher. I realized the importance of teachers possessing content knowledge and effective pedagogy. In addition, my desire was to learn more about the teacher and how his or her relationship or interactions with the students affected student success and overall engagement.

I chose to study elementary teachers for two reasons. First, my personal teaching experience occurred in the elementary grades. I was an elementary classroom teacher eight years, teaching first grade seven years and third grade one year. Those years of teaching experience allowed me to better understand what I was observing, hearing and seeing as I gathered data from participants who were also teaching elementary grades. In addition, my experience in a classroom setting as a college supervisor occurred in elementary classrooms. In the past year and a half prior to this study, I observed and supervised 15 student teachers and the majority were teaching pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, first, or second grades. These formal classroom observation experiences in three different civil parishes granted me practice in conducting observations, and served as a comparison while observing teachers during this research study.

The second reason I chose elementary grades is the work of Pianta, La Paro and Hamre (2006). They produced research about and professional development on teacher-student interactions for early childhood and elementary teachers. Pianta and colleagues also developed a classroom assessment scoring system (CLASS) that documents teacher-child interactions based on the premise that "interactions between students and adults are the primary means of student

development and learning" (Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2008, p. 1). I wanted to build on the work

of Pianta et al., adding a cultural component and capturing the perspectives of the teachers.

Participants

The goal of this research study was to gain a sense of the perspectives and experiences of

the teachers and their interactions with their students, and develop a concept from the data

collected conducting case study research. The criteria for the selection process of participants

included the following: (1) a *classroom* teacher teaching kindergarten, first, second, or third

grades in Southeastern Louisiana; (2) participants who had less than five years of teaching

experience and those who had more than five years; (3) participants representing a variation in

age and ethnicity (4) participants identified by the principal as demonstrating supportive teacher-

student interactions in the classroom (5) participants agreeing to participate in the study and

provide candid responses to a questionnaire and interview questions. So the purposeful and

strategic selection of participants was important (Charmaz, 2006; Patton, 2002). I chose to

implement purposive sampling because it was an appropriate fit for the constant comparative

method of data analysis I conducted (Patton, 2002).

Procedures

Following completion and approval of the University of New Orleans Institutional

Review Board (IRB) protocol (refer to Appendix A.) I worked diligently to gain access into the

schools. Since schools have so much accountability, testing, and new standards such as the

Common Core and Compass (louisianabelieves.com), principals and teachers did not have the

time or interest to participate in my research study, posing a substantial problem for me.

The most difficult part of the data collection process was locating a school and gaining access to teachers. I contacted seven schools before I made a successful connection with six elementary classroom teachers. In some instances, the principals did not want teachers to participate because of the current workload and responsibilities elementary teachers bear. At other times, principals said yes, but the teachers did not respond or responded and stated they did not have time to participate in the research study.

Finally, I gained access to a school in Southeastern Louisiana. The school houses approximately 600 students with grades pre-kindergarten through eighth. It serves a 99% African American population with 92% of its students receiving free or reduced lunch.

Recruitment

The family engagement specialist, who worked with other schools in the parish, connected me to the school principal. She was the liaison between the principal, the teachers and me. I communicated with the family engagement specialist initially through email, then the telephone and finally in person. I provided the Specialist with a letter asking the principal to identify six teachers in grades kindergarten through third that display supportive teacher-student relationships in their classrooms. She presented the letter to the principal to gain permission and identify the teachers. Subsequently, the principal identified teachers who exhibited supportive teacher-student interactions in the classroom. After the teachers were identified, the specialist went to the teachers' classrooms and talked to them about participating in the research project. Once the teachers agreed to participate, she sent an email to me and arranged a time for me to introduce myself to the teachers face-to-face.

I visited the teachers in their classrooms, and all were extremely welcoming. I briefly explained the study, reviewed their schedules, and asked about an appropriate time to conduct an interview and observe their classrooms. After exchanging emails, I sent each teacher an email with a tentative schedule. The schedules were either confirmed or adjusted. Then before the first observation or interview, each teacher signed a consent form. This form included required information such as the purpose of the study, what to expect, agreement to be recorded, and acknowledgement that participation in the research project was voluntary.

I informed participants about the qualitative research process involved various forms of data collection. (refer to Appendix B.) In order to build and develop theoretical constructs from the qualitative data, multiple streams of data had to be gathered. I conducted a follow up interview or conversation to ensure clarity about the research project and confirm interview material.

One teacher was concerned about confidentiality issues and was apprehensive about the interview being recorded and shared with other school personnel. I reassured the teacher the information collected would be used for research purposes only, and the recorded interview and any notes would not be shared with any of her school administrators or colleagues. In addition, I explained the data would be placed in thematic categories so it would be difficult for someone to link any specific responses back to a single participant. Once the participants agreed to participate in the study and the consent form was signed, data collection began. (refer to Appendix B.)

With this multi-case research study located in a single site, I was able to develop strong relationships with the participating teachers. The teachers felt comfortable to share information

with me both formally while I recorded interviews and informally through casual conversations in their classrooms. My relationship with each teacher was genuine, rather than systematic and superficial only to complete the data collection process. As a result, the data were richer and more concentrated than anticipated.

Data Collection Methods

Several qualitative data collection techniques were used to identify and describe the findings of this study: (a) an initial questionnaire, (b) semi-structured interviews, and (c) structured classroom observations using the CLASS (Pianta, R., LaParo, K. & Hamre, B. K. (2008), along with the addition of the cultural proficiency descriptors.

Initial Questionnaire

After obtaining a signed consent form, participants were asked to complete an initial questionnaire. (refer to Appendix C.) The questionnaire gathered demographic information about the participants, as well as information about their years of experience and teaching credentials. The questionnaire asked participants to self-report on the following: age, gender, race/ethnicity, grade currently teaching, grades previously taught, certifications, and degrees earned.

There were six classroom teachers who participated in the study. All teachers taught in the same school and varied with years of teaching experience, age, ethnicity, and teaching credentials.

Semi-Structured Interview

The second method of data collection was an in-depth semi-structured interview. Once the initial questionnaire was completed, I created a schedule for each participant and started conducting the interviews. A semi-structured interview was selected rather than an open-ended

interview. According to Maxwell (2005), an unstructured interview approach can yield large volumes of data that may be overwhelming and irrelevant to the research topic. A semi-structured approach provides reasonable control of the interview process and encourages conversation.

The semi-structured interview did not completely constrain the participants' responses and allowed me still to extract categories and themes while analyzing the data. Although the semi-structured interview provided more regulation, some participants revealed information that was not relevant to the question being asked but proved to be useful in relation to the teacher's broader knowledge about teaching strategies and perceptions about educational resilience. The semi-structured interview format allowed me to see what questions were already answered, when to ask participants to elaborate on key questions and when to gently move participants along to the next question when they intermittently were diverted. My past experiences in a national reading research project and interviewing people one-on-one proved to be beneficial when conducting the semi-structured interviews with teachers. I was familiar with the Institutional Review Board process and understood that participants could stop at any time.

I conducted one face-to-face interview with each participant lasting no longer than one hour. The scheduled interview occurred in the teacher's classroom or the teacher's lounge, during the planning period. I audio recorded each interview using a micro audio tape recorder and a digital recorder. I chose to use both audio recorders in the event one of the recorders failed or had a problem, and subsequently, my data would be lost.

During the interview, I asked the teachers about ways in which they build relationships with their students in the classroom, what educational resilience means to them, and their

attitudes and perceptions about supportive student-teacher interactions. The following interview questions and prompts yielded the most poignant responses: (refer to Appendix D to see the complete list of interview questions.)

1. Tell me about your teacher-student interactions when you were in elementary school, kindergarten – third grades.

2. Tell me about your first year teaching and your experiences related to student-teacher interactions.

3. How do you get to know your students?

4. What dispositions do you possess that help strengthen student-teacher relationships?

5. What instructional strategies do you use with students who are struggling to learn?

6. What is your philosophy about teacher-student interactions?

7. How would you describe educational resilience?

I transcribed my interviews and saved them to a personal USB drive in Microsoft Word rather than hiring or asking someone else to do the transcriptions. Doing my own transcriptions allowed me to hear and read each interview again and again. I extracted key words and phrases during this process. Transcribing my own audiotapes ensured confidentiality because I was the only person who listened and had access to the tapes. Listening to the voices of the teachers multiple times and typing the responses to the questions assisted me with the coding and analyses process. The audiotape captured their dispositions and attitudes in a cognitive, emotional and social sense. The taped interviews provided a vivid snap shot of their feelings. I was able to hear the intonations and feelings in their voices. Their expressions and laughter, at

times, provided depth and personalized the data. This component of the data would have been lost if I chose to have the tapes transcribed by someone else.

When completing the transcriptions, I divided each Word document into two columns; the first column was labeled 'Transcriptions' and the second column was labeled 'Interpretations and Analyses.' These columns were placed side by side, allowing me to see the words of the participant adjacent to my interpretations and extractions of meaningful words and phrases. Using this type of chart to record the transcriptions and interpretations permitted me to monitor any personal bias with my interpretations and the exact words of the participant. This chart also helped in the process of identifying themes and codes within and across participants. The chart made it easier to connect each of the themes to a specific participant, and include their words as part of the data analysis later outlined in chapter four when describing data collection and analysis.

Classroom Observations

The third method of data collection was structured classroom observations. Depending on the teacher's schedule, some interviews were completed before the classroom observations while others were performed afterwards. I conducted two formal classroom observations with each teacher using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) (Pianta, et al., 2008). I used the CLASS observation sheet as a measurement tool to document and organize the interactions observed in the classroom.

The CLASS was a key assessment tool used in this data collection process. Its existence supports the idea that teacher-student interactions play an important role in improving outcomes of student development and learning. Pianta and his colleagues in the field acknowledged the

importance of teacher-student interactions and created an instrument to capture such data. Because of these reasons, I chose to include detailed information about CLASS and its development.

The CLASS is an observation tool designed to evaluate the quality of classrooms from preschool to third-grades (Pianta et al., 2008). The CLASS instrument was created based on the premise that interactions between children and adults are the primary means of student development and learning (Pianta et al., 2008). It is not a tool that evaluates materials, the physical environment, or specific curriculum. The CLASS focuses on how teachers use materials when they interact with their students (Pianta et al., 2008). The domains used in the CLASS to define and assess classroom quality are the same for all students in the early childhood grades ranging from preschool through third. (Pianta et al., 2008).

The CLASS evaluates three major domains of classroom experience: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support (Pianta et al., 2008). Each domain is comprised of dimensions. The CLASS Observation Sheet (Pianta et al., 2008, p. 16) lists four dimensions that are part of emotional support: positive climate, negative climate, teacher sensitivity, and regard for student perspectives. Classroom organization encompasses behavior management, productivity, and instructional learning formats. And the third domain of instructional support includes: concept development, quality feedback, and language modeling.

Although the CLASS is comprised of three domains and several dimensions, there is an absence of a dimension that documents the quality of cultural proficiency in the classroom. According to Delpit (2006), "minority" students represent a majority in all but two of the twenty-five largest cites. Although the percentage of minority students is greater than fifty percent, the

majority of the teaching force is predominately white (Delpit, 2006). African Americans, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American teachers comprise ten percent of the teaching force, and that percentage is decreasing (Delpit, 2006). It is important that we examine the cultural proficiency of teachers because of the possible mismatch of cultural understanding that may occur because of the difference in cultures and ethnicities among teachers and students.

Understanding culture is important to consider when teaching students. As Delpit (2006) states, "not only should teachers and students who share group membership delight in their own cultural and linguistic history, but all teachers must revel in the diversity of their students and that of the world outside of the classroom community" (p. 127). Delpit (2006) supports celebration of cultural diversity and making it a part of the curriculum. Barnitz (1994) also expresses the importance of the "culturally unique knowledge and discourse" learners bring to the classroom. Barnitz (1994) states, "A teacher's positive attitude toward each student's diversity supports the student in further learning" (p. 64). An acceptance and understanding of diverse cultures is a way in which teachers can develop and strengthen interactions with their students.

In order to capture the presence of cultural interactions occurring in the classroom, I created cultural descriptors to be included in some of the dimensions that already existed with the CLASS. (refer to Appendix E). The following are some of the cultural descriptors I developed to align with the CLASS' dimensions and used during my classroom observations, in addition to the CLASS:

- Accepting of students who are not from one's own culture;
- Interacting, modeling and risk-taking behavior that support all cultures;

- •Willing to look at another's perspective through a diverse lens;

- •Students' interests are included in culturally-related topics;

- •Connections to cultures within the classroom in lessons/activities; and

- •Acknowledgement of varying cultures in the classroom.

I formulated an additional observation sheet mirroring CLASS' observation sheet. During each classroom observation, I documented any teacher interactions or resources relevant to the cultural descriptors above, placing them under each of the three existing domains.

Data Analysis

When the data collection techniques were completed, I applied Strauss and Corbin's (1998) systematic procedure approach for analysis. From that analysis, I developed thematic categories using a systematic classification, following the Strauss and Corbin (1998) model of concept coding, interrelationships, and concepts from transcripts. The outcomes of the interviews, classroom observations, and open-ended questionnaires revealed patterns. The findings were based on multiple data resources, with patterns and findings that were convergent, inconsistent and contradictory based on Mathison's (1988) concept of triangulation. However, the contradictory data did not negate the validity of my findings but improved the validity of my explanation to the findings of the study.

I wanted to be sure I was accurate in documenting what participants shared, so member checking was a part of the process. I asked participants to review the identified themes for accuracy. For another perspective besides my own, I asked a colleague who is a social demographer to review the data to ensure the integrity of the analyses. The demographer has known me over ten years so it also allowed me to address any personal biases she felt influenced

my analyses. In addition, I checked researcher bias by discussing my biases with my major professor. As with all qualitative research, my interpretations of the findings were shaped by my background and experiences.

Summary

By conducting this research using a grounded theory case study approach, I was able to identify and describe supportive teacher-student relationships of elementary teachers in kindergarten through third grades and understand how the teachers' perceive such relationships and their influence on teaching and learning. The investigation was not to propose a hypothesis of expected results prior to data collection but to allow the data to lead and form the results. Using data from open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations, I identified themes that emerged through open, axial, and selective coding of the data. The final chapter will state implications of the findings for teachers, education preparation providers preparing teachers, and school administrators responsible for ongoing, meaningful professional development.

CHAPTER 4

Research Findings

"In a completely rational society the best of us would aspire to be teachers and the rest of us would have to settle for something less, because passing civilization along from one generation to the next ought to be the highest honor and the highest responsibility anyone could have."
–Lee Iacocca

Overview

The purpose of this research study was to develop a concept relating to teacher-student interactions in the elementary classroom and teacher perspectives about educational resilience. A grounded theory case study approach was used to understand how teachers interact with their students, identify how they get to know their students, and their perceptions of educational resilience. This chapter describes the initial level of data analysis outlining what I observed and what the participants revealed about teacher-student interactions through the initial questionnaire, one-on-one interviews and classroom observations.

Open-Ended Questionnaire

The questionnaire served as one of three data sources used to confirm findings, increase accuracy, and strengthen the study. Triangulation of data is one way to reduce researcher bias and validate findings (Creswell, 2007). The questionnaire was a means in which to collect demographics of the participants without either party feeling uncomfortable about questions related to age, race or ethnicity.

After reading and comparing the questionnaires, I created a table to display data. This is where I began to see early patterns of similarities and differences. For example, teacher certification was one of the items on the questionnaire. When examining the chart, I saw five of the six participants had some kind of teacher certification. The same five participants also

participated in a traditional teacher preparation program through the College of Education at a college or university. When comparing data collected from the questionnaire with CLASS data and interview transcriptions, participants that possessed teacher certification and were prepared through a traditional teacher preparation program scored highest on the CLASS observation rating scale. (see Tables 1 and 2, *Data on Participants* and *CLASS Summary Sheet*) The results found of the questionnaire also allowed me to see the range in years of teaching experience. Three of the participants had more than twenty years of experience and three had fewer than ten years of experience. Again, when analyzing data from the CLASS summary sheet and the questionnaire, those participants with the most years of experience had the highest ratings on the CLASS summary sheet. (see Tables 1 and 2, *Data on Participants* and *CLASS Summary Sheet*.) The questionnaire allowed me to draw conclusions about participants by comparing data from the observations and interviews to see if patterns existed across participants. (see Table 1 for participants' complete background information.)

Table 1 - *Data on Participants*

Name	Age	Gender	Race	Grade Currently Teaching	# of Years Teaching	Certification(s)	Degree(s) Earned
Irene	54	F	Black	K	21 yrs.	LA	B.S. M.Ed.
Edna	59	F	AA	1st	35	LA (Type B)	B.S.
Lisa	47	F	AA	K	26	LA (Type B)	B.A.
Debbie	31	F	White	2nd	9	LA	Bachelor's in Education
Alida	24	F	Multi-Racial	1st	1	LA Elem., Level 1	B.S.
Haley	25	F	Black	K	1	In process of Early Childhood certification	B.A.

Key:

All names are pseudonyms, and age, race, and grades currently teaching have been changed to reserve anonymity.

F=female

AA=African American

Multi-racial = White, African American, Creole (*Note: This is what the participant reported as

multi-racial.)

Participant Interviews

A one-on-one interview was conducted with each participant. Each interview lasted not longer than sixty minutes and was recorded with a digital and micro audio tape recorder. I used a semi-structured interview format. (see appendix D for complete interview guide questions.) The interviews were conducted either in their classroom or the teacher's lounge during her planning period. The teachers shared their schedules with me and I arranged a time most convenient for them. They received the interview questions prior to the interview to reduce anxiety and allow teachers some time to think about their responses.

Most of the teachers did not appear apprehensive during the interview. Some chose to share information before I started recording the interview. At times, I felt teachers intentionally chose to share information before I started recording. They wanted to share information with me, but not have it recorded. Other times, I felt as though teachers were just sharing things with me and getting 'warmed up' to talk before the "formal" interview began. During the interview process, one of the teachers was reluctant about responding to inquiries related to the school administration. I reassured each participant that I would not share any of the taped sessions or transcriptions with the administrative staff at the school.

I transcribed each tape recording personally to gain a deeper sense of each participants' thoughts and feelings, and improve my ability to accurately analyze and interpret the data. The data analysis of the semi-structured interviews followed the techniques used in grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The following section describes the coding and analyses process.

I transcribed each tape, making notes about interpretation and analyses. I typed the transcriptions in a column format with space for notes parallel to the transcription to allow

opportunities for scrutiny and explanation. In addition to the transcriptions, I recorded notes in a journal after each interview. I started initial coding for potential categories after rereading interview transcriptions and my journal notes.

Then, I started the open coding process by sifting through the text and extracting key words, phrases, sentences and short paragraphs. After identifying these key data, I reread the text and journal notes for similarities and differences, reflecting about my data and my research foci. I began creating conceptual labels and I placed the key sentences and phrases, or units of meaning beneath each label. I felt this process was intense, and I asked myself the following questions during the process: What are the teachers saying about teaching and learning? What are teachers expressing about their relationships with their students? How are teachers feeling about administration and staff? What are teachers viewing as supports? What are teachers viewing as constraints? I labeled each key phrase and sentence using numbers so I was aware of which statements belonged to each participant. In doing so, I was able to monitor frequency and pattern in data supplied by each participant. The information below highlights the thoughts and comments of the participants after transcribing and coding relevant comments.

Interview with Irene

One of the questions inquired about participants' personal experiences as a child in elementary school, and how they viewed their teachers. Irene shared, "My first grade teacher was very rigid, very structured, very strong. It was her way or the high way." Her first grade teacher did not motivate her. Irene learned how she did not want to be when she became an adult.

Irene's mom was a teacher and she "knew how to act" at school and completed her work. Irene's mom was that positive role model while she was growing up and in school. Then when

Irene started teaching, she had a mentor. She stated she had a wonderful first year. Irene had strong relationships with the people in the building because her son had attended the school. Irene's motto in her current classroom with her students is "I say what I mean and I mean what I say." She stresses all year how important it is that they learn everything they can. She describes herself as their "mother away from home" and "I want you to not be afraid of me." Irene does not hold things from one day to the next. "Whatever happened yesterday is gone and tomorrow starts a new slate."

Irene has a very good relationship with her students' parents. She gives every parent her phone number. She works hard to build a great relationship with her parents and they call and depend on Irene. Irene was once told by a supervisor, "teach all that you can to your children while they're at school, because they may not have anyone that can help at home."

Irene likes to "throw in fun things" during the school day. "I want them to know that there is another person other than this teacher. I let them know I'm real." She discusses parts of her family life with her students and she provides time for them to talk about their families.

Some of the administrative issues at school are difficult. When I asked Irene about resilience, she talked about herself having resilience. She described struggles with the district and supporting the principal and fighting back against systemic issues. She was part of a committee and wrote letters to the state about a particular issue, "So we [teachers] got together, and I was on the committee to write letters and let the state superintendent know that we're going to fight [this issue]. We worked really hard to get our students to have great scores so we could battle them [The State Department of Education] and let them know you all are fighting us, but we're fighting you back."

Irene believes professional development is important. Her school holds cluster meetings every week and she completed a professional growth plan. Irene chose academic feedback to improve her teaching. She chose academic feedback because although Irene had more than 20 years of experience she still felt she could improve her reflective teaching skills, "The reason I chose academic feedback was because if my children aren't doing well, sometimes you just go on to the next subject. I've learned that I need to go back right then – take the test time as a teachable moment, to make sure that they understand." Irene has implemented think-pair-share often during teaching to use peer tutoring in her classroom so students learn to help one another. The interview concluded with Irene's sharing her own personal struggle with a physical issue, but determined to still come to school every day and teach her students with enthusiasm. She gave an example about writing, "I told him [student] penmanship is important to me, because you're going to have to write for the rest of his life. We're going to go back and practice writing. I don't want anybody to say who let you get away with this handwriting. So we're going to take a few minutes every day and write." Irene stressed her desire to have a positive attitude every day when she comes to school despite issues that occur daily.

Interview with Edna

Edna's interview began with her childhood memories of elementary school. Edna really liked her kindergarten teacher, an elderly woman who spoke softly. She said, "I don't have any bad memories so I know that I enjoyed it." Edna's mother was also a teacher. Her mother was the biggest influence on Edna's becoming a teacher. She wanted to be a teacher because she likes children. She took her sister and cousins places and later her own children and their friends

places. Edna said, "If you know your children's friends, you have a good idea of what's going on with your own children."

Although Edna liked children, she never liked to babysit. Edna modeled herself after teachers who had good discipline, were pretty strict and really taught the kids. She said, "I think kids [children] need structure with a kind heart."

Edna's first year of teaching was difficult. The socio-economic level of the children was low. She was in a "rough" school: "It was a real experience, but I think I learned how to discipline kids [children]." She decided to involve her parents by having luncheons, raffles and a fair. She worked hard to have a good relationship with her parents and students. "I wanted my kids [children] to do things she saw other kids [children] doing at other schools. It was still hard because the kids [children] were so deprived."

The next school Edna taught was different than her first year of teaching. The school was wonderful - parents were involved, students were ready to work, and the attitudes of the children were different. Her current students are similar to the first group of students she taught when she first started. However, she really feels like this is where she needs to be. Edna believes she can use her experience to help the students. "I know we have a lot of new people who are not really in education, and I really do see the effect that it's having."

Edna gets to know her students by talking about her personal life and laughing and joking with them. "They know that what's important is to do work. But they still see that other side of me that's fun. And I like to do art, and so we do fun activities in the classroom *after* we've completed what needs to be done." Edna is willing to do different things and really likes kids [children]. She wants her students to learn how to get along with each other. "I try and teach

them [students] to be kind and share and think of one another when they're interacting. I try and teach them life skills."

Edna considers the culture of the students she teaches. Students at her school have been transient since Hurricane Katrina. "Large numbers of kids [children] are being raised by grandparents. Kids [children] talk about relatives being in jail." Edna believes all of this has an effect on the child and she really takes this information into consideration while teaching and interacting with her students.

Edna stated the teachers do have professional development opportunities and teachers work together. She has worked hard to organize her centers and include manipulatives for mathematics and English language arts. She made some adjustments in the way she delivers instruction as a result of in-service training, which were somewhat different when she initially started teaching. If was an adjustment, but she has worked hard to implement the new formats the principal has asked teachers to follow.

When I asked Edna about educational resilience she described it as "the ability to keep going, to have the energy to keep going." She talked about the resilience she needs as a teacher because of a lack of job stability now. She also expressed frustration with the current teachers being hired. "The theory right now is you can come in with a degree in any other field and you can start teaching after a crash course of a few weeks. And then you go to school and you learn as you teach." Edna feels some new teachers are not properly prepared: "I've had student teachers for years and I've taught them all that it entails to be a teacher - dealing with parents, working with other teachers, and they're throwing all of that away. They're saying, it's just so easy to teach. Come in and teach, and we'll teach you how to teach while you're working." Edna talked about a

lot of pressure for the children to reach goals, even if they really can't. She expressed concern about the current way schools are being run.

Edna's interview ended with sharing her thoughts about respect. "I tell my kids [children] it's all about respect. You respect me, I respect you, but also you respect each other. It's like a little community in the class, and we all interact with each other."

Interview with Lisa

Lisa enjoyed school as a child. "I absolutely loved school. I knew I wanted to teach since 6th grade. I always loved school." Even today, Lisa tells her students how much she loves school. "In fact I tell my students, I liked school so much that is why I still come every day."

Lisa's first year of teaching was not a good experience. The administration was oppressive, and she requested to be moved before the year was over. Her second year of school was much better, and Lisa remained at that school 11 years. A new principal was hired, and she did not get along with her, so Lisa moved to another school. Lisa stated, "None of my bad teaching experiences have been with the children."

Lisa gets to know her students by talking with them, asking questions, interacting, and spending one-on-one time with them. "I try to establish activities where I have one-on-one time with children, even if it's just a few minutes to talk to them about what they're doing, what do they think about different things, to get their opinion, and just to ask them their likes and dislikes." Lisa feels there is a connection between academic development and teacher-student interactions. She said, "If you can establish a good relationship with the child, they're more likely to want to produce. Little children try to please."

Socialization skills are an important part of teaching for Lisa. "My philosophy is that my first responsibility outside of educating the child is to socialize the child." Lisa talks to her students about life and treating everyone with respect: "So I think we have to prepare them – give them life skills more than educational skills because they might not get it at home."

Lisa views the administration as supportive: "They [administrators] encourage you to pursue outside professional development that isn't offered at this school. A teacher was taking an online course and needed to go away for class, and the principal gave her permission to go." The principal supported this teacher by allowing her release time as she worked to gain professional development training.

When I asked Lisa about educational resilience, she described it as "the ability to continue to do your job regardless of the situation or the events that occur in a day." She talked about being able to "endure." Lisa also talked about educational resilience as it relates to students.

She said educational resilience for students is "the ability to keep striving regardless of what's going on." She told a story about a little girl working hard to learn to read a word, and finally was successful. "I had one little girl, she was trying to read the word, ham. She was saying the sound, and saying the sound. And I said, keep saying it and you're going to get it. She kept at it until she got it." Another child was not as resilient, and wanted to give up. Lisa told the second student he had to keep trying like the first student until he was able to read it. She acknowledged that for some children it is more difficult to keep going than others, "My other child, when he gets frustrated, he falls out on the floor and cries and screams, I can't read it." She encouraged the second student by informing him how hard and long the first student worked, "I said, tell him how long you sat trying to read the word, 'ham.' You had to keep reading it and

keep reading it. You didn't get it the first or second time." So Lisa continues to work with her students, realizing it is more of a challenge to achieve academic success for some than others.

Interview with Debbie

Debbie did not have any strong memories of her younger years in school. She just remembered its being a pleasant experience. "My teachers were very nice." Then I asked about Debbie's first year teaching. Debbie felt it was not tough. "I think it was very easy for me because I come from a family full of teachers. I've always been around it. It really was pretty easy for me."

Debbie also liked the people she worked with, really liked the kids, and had a mentor. I asked Debbie about her mentor. "You know I had a great mentor. We met all of the time." She met with her mentor twice a week to complete specific assignments as a new teacher. The mentor assisted Debbie with the assignments and observed her teaching, "She [mentor] would come in and observe, she was very hands on. Actually she's the principal of the school now. She was really good."

I asked Debbie how she got to know her students. She said, "It's just a daily thing, just spending time with them, interacting with them" and it is embedded in her daily routine. I asked Debbie how she felt about testing and if she finds it more difficult to know her students. Debbie, said, "I think I still get to know them because I get to learn their frustrations. A lot of kids get frustrated easily with all the testing going on. But I don't think that it hinders me getting to know them."

Debbie uses a variety of teaching styles and resources in her classroom. "I am at the board, we use the interactive board, and I write stuff down for the visual ones. The ones that need hands-on things - you're constantly using manipulatives. And then we do a lot of groups in the classroom,

where I am pulling the children who need the extra help." Debbie sees her organizational skills as a strength and her willingness to treat her students like her own children. "I think that you should treat every child like they belong to you. If you think of it like - this is my child, you treat your child very kindly. You're nice to your child. I'm strict with my son, but I'm also very kind to him." She works hard to get to know her students, "I do develop great relationships with the kids. The kids come in and they feel at home."

When I asked Debbie about defining educational resilience, she described it as "trying to stay true to my philosophy [treating children like they're your own] while doing what's expected of me." When she talked about resilience, she mentioned the test prep and the test time. She felt as though teaching was more like high school and not elementary school because of all of the testing, "Trying to still teach these kids like they are second graders and still get through all the test prep and the test this and the test that, but still try to treat these children like they're *children*, and not like high schoolers taking a test to go to high school."

The final comments Debbie shared about teacher-student interactions was the importance of building a strong relationship with her students. "I think if the student comes to school and the student enjoys being in that classroom and that you have a good relationship –the teacher and the student have a good relationship, they enjoy learning and they are more willing to do it." She compared school and children to adults and a job: "It's just like an adult – if you enjoy your job, you're more likely to go and do what you're supposed to do." Debbie also talked about the treatment of students. She said, "You should never treat every child the same. I think all kids are different and once you get to learn the personality of that child, you'll be able to discipline and

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work with the child." Debbie felt it was easier to interact with a child once she was able to know the child's personality.

Interview with Alida

Alida always did well in school growing up. She described herself as the "go-to" student. "I was the one who got the pencils, who cleaned the erasers, who did everything. Some people called me the teacher's pet." Alida did well academically, receiving straight As. She liked all of her elementary teachers and still remembers their names. Alida always wanted to be a teacher. "When I was younger, in elementary school, I would help peers or I would always pretend to be the teacher. And I would do my homework, like really quickly and then I would go and help the little kids." Alida didn't spend much time playing but spent all of her time pretending to be a teacher. She said (laughing), "That's probably why I am not the best fit 'cause I didn't play outside. I'm not active - I read. I have a reader's body not a swimmer's body."

This is Alida's first year teaching. However, many of the other teachers in the building were surprised to find out that it was her first year. "It's a complement because so many people this year have told me, oh where'd you come from, where'd you teach last year?" Alida feels her first year is going well. She feels she has strong support and receives suggestions about ways to improve teaching. "I have the best team ever. The school is amazing and they are quick to - not so much tell you what you're doing wrong, but give you suggestions." Alida was the first participant to discuss the school culture. She believes it is important to learn the school's culture, "Learning this school's culture is a whole different set of learning."

Alida feels her teacher preparation program adequately prepared her for first year of teaching, "I went to Arden University [fictitious name] and it was a really good program." One

additional class she would have benefitted from was learning about the responsibilities of a teacher, "I could have used a class on the responsibilities of a teacher," Alida commented about alternate certification programs, "I don't think a lot of alternate certification routes offer enough time with students, prior to teaching." Alida went on to describe the various observation and teaching opportunities she had in her traditional teacher preparation program, "For a whole year before I student taught, I had to teach different subjects in different schools, at about 6 different schools. I taught first grade math [mathematics], 3rd grade reading. We'd go there [school] and we would observe for so many hours. Then she'd [mentor teacher] let us teach a lesson."

As a new teacher, it is noteworthy to mention the detail Alida shared about professional development and teacher support. Alida felt she receives support informally and formally. The master teacher provides informal support daily, "Ms. Larkin [fictitious name] is the master teacher. She has ____ [more than 25] years of teaching experience. She's been around, she's seen it, she's taught different grade levels, and she's very familiar with this school and the culture of students that we service at this school."

The teacher across the hall is also available and allows Alida to come into her classroom for assistance. The principal also visits her classroom and watches Alida teach and provides suggestions. Along with the informal support, Alida receives formal support through district professional development days and weekly cluster meetings: "We have our professional development days where we can focus on our data. We have time to group our students better, and talk and speak with our grade level groups."

Alida shared that first grade teachers have begun sharing with kindergarten teachers what is taught in the beginning of the year, "We're trying to bridge the gap between kindergarten and

first grade." Alida stated communication with the next grade's teacher helps to ensure students are able to meet the skills needed to move on to the next grade, according to Common Core. Alida feels there is a lot of professional development at her school: "So there's a lot of professional development -formal and informal. If I don't get something, it's usually brought up at another meeting."

When we started talking about how Alida gets to know her students, she said, "tons of interaction." She talks to her students frequently. Alida keeps her students on track, but one will take the time to stop and have discussions with her students when she's reading a book. "It's okay to divert, a little, and just let them share. I think a lot of teachers are so pressured – and at times, I also feel pressured to get this done and get this done and teach them how to read and teach them how to write. But they don't always have a lot of time to just talk, to share things." Alida tries to incorporate students' likes in her lessons as often as possible. "You can learn a lot in a two minute conversation. I learn dislikes and likes very easily in my class."

We continued the conversation about teacher-student interactions. Alida feels it is easy for her to create relationships and friendships with others. "It is very easy for me to create relationships or friendships with anybody. I feel like I always want to be approachable. I never want to be seen as someone you can't walk up to me and ask a question. You know, just talk to me." Alida also talked about helping student remember things through humor and entertainment. She gave an example about teaching the sound of the letter 'v' and allowing children to make the sound of a vacuum cleaner, "We had a vacuum to learn the letter 'v' and the sound it makes. So one student was vacuuming, making the vvv like vacuuming, and I had the vacuum but the vacuum wasn't 'on.' I had the hand-vac, pretending to vacuum, and the students were cracking up. (laughing)

I'm sure they will remember the name, the sound and the letter." Her students had a great time with that particular lesson.

Alida was talking with her principal about her progress as a new teacher. The principal responded by stating, "You wouldn't be getting the results that you've gotten with your students if you didn't have a good relationship with them." Alida believes children sense whether you genuinely care about them: "Students perform better and they're more willing to learn if they feel motivated, or if you care about them. They can sense that. They're really smart." Alida allows her students to be themselves. They have to follow the rules, but she does not expect all of her students to behave the same exact way: "I have rules, but they're not forced to be someone they're not. My students have 26 **different** personalities, and if I came to school one day and they were all just quiet and acted the same way, and walked the same way, it's not fun. I need a challenge here."

Alida mentioned ways she tries to be aware of the culture of her students. "I think one part of being culturally in tune to your students is to know what they're going to see. And try and explain what they see every day. Their parents take them to the parades to have fun and stuff. But do they know the significance of it [Mardi Gras]?" Alida showed videos and her students participated in a school parade to help her students understand the significance of Mardi Gras, "But this year, we watched videos, and we participated in the parade, and I brought beads for them to throw, and we talked about it a lot."

When we discussed ways in which Alida cultivates relationships with her students, she talked about her honesty with the students: "I don't sugar coat as much as other teachers do. And they [her students] know I want them to be straight to the point with me." She speaks to her students

directly and works to have them to develop a sense of independence. Alida has high expectations and wants them to stretch away from their comfort zone: "I try to push them, as far as they can until they're frustrated. I find where their level is, and then I assist them to get to the next. I am just excited." Alida talks about her attitude influencing her students, "I could be having a horrible day but my kids would never know it. And I think they deserve to have someone excited. Some days that can be really good, and some days they choose to be crazy. So, I get frustrated. They see that, but I never come to work that way. I am always happy – it's a new day. Everybody's ready to learn. We're going to have a great day."

Alida described educational resilience as "being able to see small achievements and able to recognize little things that are different every day." Alida said she works hard to recognize small achievements. She strives to focus on the small things every day so she can find one thing that is better every day. "I expect something miraculous to happen that makes my life a hundred times better, and I don't see it every day. It's like, nothing's getting better. But I don't realize and I look back and it is different. I was ignoring small achievements." Alida feels teachers have so much on their mind and so much to accomplish, small successes are often overlooked, "I think if teachers focus on the small things every day, and just find one thing that's better every day, then I think it would just make their job, make my job more enjoyable – a lot better."

Interview with Haley

Haley did not grow up in Louisiana. Where she grew up, students had a very keen sense of respect for elders. Her school was homogenous. "There was not a lot of diversity. We had a large Hispanic population, and a lot of white and some Asian, but very few African Americans."

Haley was a teacher's pet and graduated valedictorian in her class. Her elementary teachers were fairly strict and most were older women. Haley thought they were really good at what they did and thought it was natural. "My teachers were always fairly strict. A lot of them were older women, not like *old* women, but older women who had been teachers for a very long time. They were like *really* good at what they do." Once Haley started teaching, she realized teaching took lots of work and was calculated.

Haley is a first year teacher. According to Haley, she did not study education in college, "I didn't study school or education or anything in college. I came from a family of teachers that teach here in the city. That's what brought me here. My family has been slowly moving here since Hurricane Katrina." She is involved in an alternate certification program at a local university. "They [education preparation providers] want at least five years commitment to the city. So it's trying to keep the talent here. It starts with a five week intensive program."

Haley described her first year of teaching as "the hardest year of my life." Haley made a career change because she was bored in her previous profession. She stated she is definitely not bored anymore. "It's [first year teaching] been the hardest year of my life. I lost a lot of weight. I knew it was going to be hard. That's why I never ever wanted to do teaching. I actually did a career change. I wanted to do something I thought would be hard. This was definitely hard. And I am not bored."

Unlike the other participants, Haley does not feel that she has received adequate administrative support. According to Haley, administration has been the root cause of many of her struggles. "Pretty much no support here whatsoever; I've had the most disrespected students. I had a kid chase me with a crow bar on the playground that they found. And the school did nothing about it.

There's been no suspension. There's just no support. " Despite the problems she has

encountered, she feels like she has made progress because her students are succeeding.

Haley talked about her teacher preparation program. It was fairly short with five weeks of

training in the summer. The sessions were intense and candidates were in class 12 hours a day

the first couple of weeks. "So it was really, really taxing, plus we would have lots of homework

when we got home." Haley described the program as having a "narrow scope of study." There

were a few weeks of professional development before she started teaching. The professional

development she received before school started was not sufficient: "I was wildly unprepared –

for what I was faced with when I started school here." Haley still feels as though she does not

have the necessary support. She feels she is blamed for the students not doing well and she is

viewed as a person who does not know how to work on a team. "My class was stacked because I

was the new teacher and I had all of the low students and all the kids with bad behaviors in my

class."

Haley also feels there is conflict between herself and other teachers. Their philosophies about

teaching are different. She feels her thinking is a forward way of thinking and the other teachers

have a different perspective on teaching and learning, "They [other teachers] think the kids can't

succeed, the kids can't do stuff, so I'm constantly being held up along the way trying to do what

I think I'm supposed to do. What I think I'm trying to do is based on our program, and is much

forward thinking. It's the new paradigm of education, and there's a lot of old-school mentality

that's left here."

Despite Haley's challenges with administration and staff, she still works hard to get to know her

students. She talks to her students and works to "figure out what they like." Sometimes she has

lunch with a couple of different students during the week. "I would try and have lunch with a couple different students every week." If a student has been acting out, Haley will have lunch with the student and talk about what is happening at home. "I don't think anybody really listens to them a lot of time at home so they just want somebody to talk and to care what they have to say."

Haley is direct with her students and talks to them like they are "normal people." Haley said, "I just care. I keep showing up." She wants her students to succeed. She stated, "I know that they can [succeed], and so I am going to require that of them." She keeps up her pacing in class and provides opportunities for the students to "turn and talk" with one another after reading a story. "I give them a chance to talk, like turn and talk Nally." [A comprehension strategy to engage students in peer to peer conversation.] "I give them that opportunity that they need to talk because they want to talk consistently. And also plan different activities that use different parts of the brain - something that is visual, something that's written, something that is verbal, something that they touch." She believes all kids learn differently and need different kinds of ways of learning to stay engaged.

Setting the vibe in the classroom is "key" to Haley. "Whatever vibe you set in the classroom, like from the moment you walk in everyday, I'm setting the tone. If I'm tired, if I don't feel good, soon that whole mood fills the classroom." She believes it is important to set a calm environment but struggles to do so at times. "I struggle with this everyday so this is nothing I know how to do all the time, but I know how important it is to set that calm environment. Then they pick up on it, and they feel it's safe to learn."

Haley had some struggles with the curriculum and assessments administered. She feels her autonomy to teach is limited to what the veteran teacher tells her and the other teachers. "I'm trying to teach what I am trying to teach. But at the same time I have no freedom because I pretty much have to teach the skill that the veteran teacher tells us." Haley is unable to create long term plans for her alternate certification program because that does not happen in her school. Lesson plans are only written week by week and not long term.

When I asked Haley about educational resilience, she said, "despite all of the situations with the kids – it's a rough culture, it's a poor culture, most of their [students'] parents, a lot of them have a reading level of a 3rd or 4th grader and the mental capacity of maybe a 15 year old - despite all those things, I do see kids who see the value of education, and who want to learn and who are trying." Haley's goal with her students is to show them the value in education. Haley is invested in the kids, and the kids are a reminder of why she is here and why they need her, "I am invested in the kids, and the kids are a reminder of why I'm here and why they need me - A person who is educated because I have seen people who have been in this room who didn't even know how to spell and they were trying to teach them."

Participant Observations using CLASS

In addition to one-on-one interviews, I conducted two classroom observations with each participant. Each teacher was observed teaching on two different occasions for a period of time ranging from thirty-five to sixty-five minutes. The *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (CLASS) was used to capture the subject being taught, the type of teaching format, and the classroom quality in terms of emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support (Pianta et al., 2008). In addition to the CLASS, I used a cultural proficiency scoring

system created to document cultural competence in the classroom. I also took notes about what was displayed in the classroom on the walls and bulletin boards, and the general organization of the classroom environment.

Computing the CLASS scores

After completing each observation and CLASS Observation Sheet (Pianta et al., 2008, p.16), I rated the individual dimensions. The CLASS is comprised of three domains and ten dimensions, with each dimension receiving a rating. The rating category ranges from 1 to 7 using the following 7-point range: 1, 2 = low; 3, 4, 5 = middle; and 6, 7 = high ((Pianta et al., 2008, p. 17). I followed CLASS' instructional manual when acquiring the ratings. The CLASS manual requires that the examiner use the CLASS Scoring Summary Sheet (Pianta et al., 2008, p. 18) and assign ratings to each dimension by averaging the cycle ratings, according to the number of cycles that were completed during all observations. (Pianta et al., 2008). Ratings within each dimension were averaged. Once the average dimension ratings were obtained, then the composite domain ratings were calculated by taking the average dimension rating and dividing by the number of dimensions within that domain. The cultural proficiency rating was calculated by taking the cultural proficiency rating obtained in the dimension during each observation and averaging the ratings so there was an overall cultural proficiency rating (Pianta et al., 2008).

The teachers' ratings in each domain varied from low-middle to high-high range with 3.3 in the Emotional Support domain being the lowest individual averaged rating and 7.0 in Instructional Support the highest averaged rating. When the domain ratings for all teachers were averaged, Emotional Support had an average of 5.7, Classroom Organization had an average of

5.9, Cultural Proficiency had an average of 6.1, and Instructional Support had the highest

average of 6.3.

The CLASS Rating Summary Sheet (Pianta et al., 2008, p. 18) was used to aggregate

data from the observations. The table below displays the average observation ratings each

participant received in the following domains of the CLASS: emotional support, classroom

organization and instructional support. Exhibited in Table 2 are cultural proficiency ratings

across all domains and an overall average of the teachers' CLASS ratings.

Table 2 - *CLASS Summary Sheet*
Rating Category: 1(low) to 7 (high)

Teacher (total observation time)	Emotional Support (PC, NC, TS, RSP)	Classroom Organization (BM, PD, ILF)	Instructional Support (CD, QF, LM)	Cultural Proficiency (All domains)
Teacher 1 (120 minutes)	6.6	6.7	6.8	6.6
Teacher 2 (90 minutes)	6.1	6.3	7	6.8
Teacher 3 (105 minutes)	6.6	6.7	7	6.8
Teacher 4 (100 minutes)	6.5	6.5	6.3	6.5
Teacher 5 (110 minutes)	5.1	5.3	6	5.4
Teacher 6 (110 minutes)	3.3	3.7	4.7	4.2
Overall Average	**5.7**	**5.9**	**6.3**	**6.1**

Key: CLASS Scoring Summary Sheet (Pianta et al., 2008, p.18)
Emotional Support
PC = Positive Climate
NC = Negative Climate
TS = Teacher Sensitivity
RSP = Regard for Student Perspective

Classroom Organization
BM = Behavior Management
PD = Productivity
ILF = Instructional Learning Formats

<u>Instructional Support</u>
CD = Concept Development
QF = Quality of Feedback
LM = Language Modeling

Below is a summary of the observations. The CLASS scoring summary sheet was used as a guide to organize what was observed during the classroom visits. In addition, I included data collected about cultural proficiency based on an additional summary sheet that allowed me to notate cultural interactions between the teacher and the students.

Classroom Observations of Irene

General Classroom Description

Irene's classroom was organized. The desks were placed in clusters of six but not more than eight, and her desk was over in the corner. A Promethean board was in the center of the room in ready for use and several words and sentences were written on a dry erase board. For example, she had the daily objectives, spelling words and review words written on the board. There were several modes of learning going on: pencil/paper activities, drawing, working in workbooks, journal writing, and reading basal readers. The Promethean board, projector, dry erase board, dry erase easel, books, charts, and computers with head phones were used by the teacher or students during my observations. Students' work was displayed throughout the classroom and materials were organized for easy access by students. While I was present in the classroom, there were no major disruptions from students and the overall climate was quiet with soft talking occasionally.

Emotional Support

During the two classroom observations, Irene provided general positive communication feedback often, "good, thank you, I am so proud of you, very good" as well as specific positive feedback, "I like your pretty bows; okay, we're almost finished." Expectations were stated

clearly, "orange group, you are too loud, work quietly; blow your nose and when you finish throw away the tissue and use Germ X." She encouraged a struggling student, "you are doing so well and have really come a long way." Irene addressed problems immediately and is straightforward with her students. Irene wants students to help one another but still wants students to think, "You can tell him what to do, but don't tell him the answers. Most of her comments were positive, but a few were negative according to CLASS' dimension of Negative Climate, "If you are talking, you will not be walking in the parade tomorrow."

Classroom Organization

Irene pulls sticks to choose a student to read aloud. Students' names are written on popsicle sticks and all are placed in a cup. The teacher chooses one stick without looking at the name on the stick. Then the stick remains out of the cup so others will have a chance to participate. Teachers use this method so each student has the same probability of being chosen and everyone has an opportunity to be involved in the discussion/activity.

Irene has clear behavior expectations and provides simple, direct instructions to her students such as, "quit talking so much, go sit down, I am watching you, and you need to have a seat." She has routines established and minimal time is lost moving from one activity to another. It is evident she has taught her students what to do and what to expect. There is even a procedure and passes in place for girls and boys using the bathroom. Groups are named by color for easy transition and grouping. Irene is prepared to teach spelling with the words already written on the board. Assignments are also written on the board. While teaching a lesson about the long 'o' spelling rule, Irene explicitly states the learning objectives. Sometimes Irene teaches in small groups while other times she provides whole group instruction. She uses a variety of modalities

of learning strategies. For example, students are asked to read, write, and act out one of the spelling words.

Instructional Support

During the observation, Irene was helping her students understand the importance and purpose of fluency. Irene stated, "We reread for fluency and to show expression. A comma is like a yellow light, you pause. A period is like a red light, you stop reading completely." She connected a concrete concept to an abstract idea to help her students grasp the concept of fluency. While the students were reading in small groups, Irene asked questions that were open-ended and prompted critical and reflective thinking. She asked, "How are fox and stork different? Do you think fox is feeling bad? What happens to fox? What did fox do?" Irene continues to strengthen comprehension skills by asking the students to take a picture walk. A picture walk is a strategy used to stimulate the natural curiosity in children. The teacher shows children the cover of the book and slowly flips through each page. The pages are not read and the teacher asks students questions about what they see, making inferences based on the images.

Irene asks, "Where do you like to have a picnic?" By asking this question, she attempted to connect the story to her students' real world.

When reviewing the spelling words, Irene continued to make connections with the students. She asked the students to use the word "road" in a sentence. The student said, "I ride my bike on the road." During the observations, Irene worked to engage her students by asking questions and providing strategies such as the picture walk to help her students understand concepts and stimulate their interests in learning.

Cultural Proficiency

When Irene was teaching a spelling lesson, she misread the word 'giggle' for 'middle.' She took this opportunity to acknowledge her error rather than pretend she did not make a mistake and continue with the lesson. Irene stated, "I am human like everyone else." She talked to her students about the importance of acknowledging mistakes and learning from mistakes. Teachers are like children in the respect that both make mistakes.

While working on comprehension skills, I mentioned in the previous section Irene asked the students, "Where do you like to have a picnic?" She also asked the question, "What are some things you eat at a picnic?" During responses to the question, students were able to see that everyone does not always bring and eat the same food to a picnic. Irene gained knowledge about what kinds of food her students bring to a picnic, where they go to have a picnic, and whether students have gone on picnics. She does not make the assumption that everyone has attended a picnic and the food is always the same.

Classroom Observations of Edna

General Classroom Description

Edna's classroom was extremely organized. Before the observation began, Edna explained with detail how she organized her reading and math centers using the Promethean board, manipulatives, books, computers and the 'wheel' to guide students where to go. She had a color-coded reading and math 'wheel' that showed students exactly where and when they would travel to the various centers. She had a morning message written on the dry erase board, student work displayed on another board, pocket charts with sentence strips, a numbers chart 1 – 100, and additional math posters displaying patterns, money, time, and counting. For each spelling word

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written on the board, she personally drew a picture next to the word to help them decode and understand the meaning of the word. Edna had a text talk area, a word wall, a chart with higher order and lower order thinking skills, and the daily schedule. She had a print-rich environment with a variety of learning materials: a Promethean board, six computers with headphones, math and language manipulatives, Legos, a science area, a writing area, a listening station, books, and workbooks.

Emotional Support

Edna had positive communication with her students during my classroom observations. Edna told her students they made great progress. For those that struggled to complete tasks, Edna said in a supportive, calm voice, "Let's try it again." She encouraged leadership by appointing a student to be a class helper because of his academic progress. Edna asked the question, "Do you go to bed early? Why or why not?" Before the students answered, Edna stated there was no wrong or right answer, she just wants to know *why*. She continued to allow for student expression by asking students, "Do you like rainy days?" while reading a story about a rainy day.

There were few negative comments Edna made to her students. However, there were some instances where she did make a comment where it was evident she was unhappy with a student's response. After stating explicit instructions, a student started his sentence with the word, "because." Edna said in an irritated manner, "Didn't I say we were not starting with because?"

Classroom Organization

Edna had clear expectations established with her students. She asked a direct question to one of her students, "Did you do that - yes or no?" The student began to cry. Calmly, Edna told

the student there was no need to cry. She had talked to the class as a whole about working seriously that morning. This particular student was not following instructions so Edna addressed the student's behavior.

She asked another student who was off-task, "Where is your pencil? Start using it." One student continued to fumble around inside the pockets of his pants. Edna said to him, "Come and show me what is in your pockets." She wanted *all,* not some of her students to be on-task and learning. Edna used a variety of instructional resources and modalities to help her students learn.

Instructional Support

For every spelling word, she drew a picture by hand to assist with word identification. Edna clearly explained the long 'o' vowel sound to her students. She provided examples of words with the long 'o' vowel sound.

In the story the students were reading, one of the characters tricks another character. Edna asks her students, "Do you like to be tricked?" She has a brief discussion about how it might be fun to trick someone but usually it is not fun to be tricked. Edna weaves analysis, reasoning, and connection to the real world into her lessons. In addition, she provides adequate information to students to complete the task and prompt critical thinking processes. Edna told her students during one of the observations, "I am telling you ahead of time so you can begin thinking about what to write." Most of Edna's conversations with her students include open-ended questions that generate critical and higher order thinking: "Let's think, what does complain mean? Do you think he tricked him? Look at the bird. How do you think the bird is feeling? How do you think you say that last name? What is he going to do? Why can't she drink it? What will the soup taste like?"

Cultural proficiency

Edna chose writing prompts that were relevant to students' everyday lives. She wrote on the board, "On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday we will get out of school early. I will…" This writing assignment allowed Edna to learn about some things her students do outside of school. The assignment also helped students become aware of the upcoming early dismissal days.

During both observations, Edna worked to build a part of the lesson about her life or her students' lives. She told a story about how she found a baby owl in her backyard. Edna talked to her students about her grandson.

She had books in the library center written by African American authors and pictures of African American children. It was evident Edna intentionally worked to build connections between she and her students by including multi-cultural books in her classroom and

Classroom Observations of Lisa

General Classroom Description

Lisa's classroom was welcoming to the kindergarteners. Her classroom had a Lego table, a library center, puzzle center, dramatic play center, math center, and block center. In addition, Lisa had a word wall, months of the year, numbers 1 – 100, a calendar, and the alphabet displayed around her classroom walls. The students were studying the letter 'y' and a card with 'Yy' and a picture of a yo-yo was posted on the bulletin board. There was a carpet area for reading, rectangular tables for seat work, two computers, and a Promethean board. Materials and resources were organized. Lisa brought the students into the classroom orderly and quietly.

Emotional Support

Lisa repeatedly spoke to her students kindly, asking all students to please walk from the tables to the carpet. As a kindergarten teacher, Lisa consistently stated the students' names when she addressed them: "Thank you for raising your hand, _____. Very good, _____. Very nice, _____. Thank you , _____. _____ and _____ answered the question correctly."

Those students who have difficulty answering questions were treated with respect. Lisa said, "Think about it, and I will come back to you." Lisa interacted with students modeling positive communication skills: "I can only listen to one person at a time. I am only calling on those who are raising their hand." In addition to Lisa's positive comments, there were some sarcastic, negative comments: "You don't want your own book, but you want to read his book. Can _____ talk? I asked _____ to answer." Despite the few negative comments, Lisa created an environment where her students felt comfortable and eager to answer questions and participate in classroom discussions.

While I was present, Lisa was teaching a lesson on the letter 'y.' Students were singing and clapping and able to move freely. Part of the lesson was facilitated with the students sitting at their tables. Then they had the opportunity to get up and move again and sit on the carpet for the second part of the lesson. Students returned to their tables to complete a writing assignment. They were able to move around again and sit on the rug and read when they completed their assignment.

Lisa provided opportunities for autonomy and leadership. Students had an assignment to write and draw during one activity. Lisa wrote on the board, "The _____ is big. The _____ is little." Students had to copy the sight words on the board (big and little) and then think about

something big and little and write that word in the blank. In addition to writing something big and little, students had to draw something big and little. Lisa provided a lot of support to her students as they worked on this task, encouraging them to think of something they know to be big and little.

Classroom Organization

The behavior expectations in Lisa's classroom are very clear and students had consequences if they choose not to follow the rules. Students were reminded to sit quietly, work hard, and talk softly.

Lisa attempted to give a fair chance to all students and she drew sticks to call on students. She transitioned students from one activity or area to another by asking all of the students wearing grey shoes to get up and walk back and sit at your table. Then she called another color and more students walked orderly and sat at their table. Lisa maximized her time by asking students questions while the video was loading in the computer.

The students enjoyed the 'y' lesson. Using the Promethean board, Lisa effectively facilitated the lesson engaging students' interest by showing an educational Sesame Street video about the letter 'y.' Students were able to move to the music. They watched Elmo singing and playing the piano. Students seemed to enjoy their time to move around freely.

Lisa was clear about learning objectives and instructions. She explained what students needed to do; she wrote directions on the board and asked students to repeat her instructions. Lisa modeled exactly what the students should be writing and doing. Although there were some students who were off-task at times, the majority of her students were engaged and seemed to be enjoying the lesson.

Instructional Support

Lisa's use of the Sesame Street video fully engaged the students by connecting them to something that was familiar and part of their world outside of school. When the students received instructions about how to write the letter 'y' Lisa provided specific instructions with detail: "Below the line, slant right, left all the way down for the 'y.'" She prompted students' thinking and guided their letter formation by stating, "Look at this one. Where is the 'y' supposed to start?" Then Lisa tied the writing of the letter 'y' to the Sesame Street video about 'y.' She asked, "What were some of the words you heard and saw in the video?" The students responded correctly with several words: "yogurt, yak, yarn, yes, yellow, yard, yo-yo."

Students read sentences chorally as a review and were asked to read sentences silently. Lisa asked the students questions and used vocabulary words key to the learning objectives. Throughout the observation, she expanded advanced language by asking her students questions: "What is a message? Who remembers what a burrow is? How do we spell little?" Then she said, "A message is something you want to tell someone. A burrow is a hole underground where an animal sleeps. She posed questions that allow students to think: "Can that word be water if begins with an 's'?

Cultural proficiency

Lisa was especially tentative to a special needs student in her classroom. She was sensitive to her needs and included her as much as possible in classroom activities. None of the other students teased the student during my observations.

Lisa was upset during one of the classroom observations because of the treatment of her special needs student during lunch. She went to pick up her class from the cafeteria and she

realized her student did not eat. No one had opened her plastic bag with utensils so she was unable to eat. Lisa brought the student's tray to the classroom and allowed her time to sit and eat her lunch.

Lisa worked to include topics relevant to the interests of the student. When talking about the reading story about the message in the bottle, Lisa helped children understand the concept by explaining that now we don't put messages in a bottle because we have cell phones, and text messages can be sent using a cell phone. Lisa could have chosen numerous lessons about 'y' but she chose a Sesame Street video her students could understand and relate to easily. The children enjoyed the multi-cultural people and music presented in the video.

Classroom Observations of Debbie

General Classroom Description

As I entered Debbie's classroom, I noticed she was taking attendance and collecting behavior charts. Her classroom was organized without a lot of clutter. The students' desks were arranged in clusters. There were five computers available to students near the back of the room. Debbie also had the higher order, lower order thinking skills chart (create, evaluate, analyze, apply, understand, remember) displayed on one of the walls. Her daily objective was displayed in a pocket chart in the front of the classroom. The day's agenda was written on the dry erase board and several posters were displayed around the room: an alphabet chart, a 1-20 numbers chart, spelling words, a building character poster, vocabulary words, ten steps to success poster, and text talk.

Emotional Support

One of Debbie's students forgot to return his behavior chart. The student talked to Debbie about why he forgot his behavior chart, again. In a genuine, concerned manner, Debbie told the student she was going to call his dad and follow up with him about the chart. She did not yell at him, punish him or take away any privileges. Debbie calmly told the student to go back to his desk and start working.

Debbie worked hard to create a positive learning environment in her classroom. She praised students individually: "I like the way _____ is sitting. Good job, _____. _____ did an excellent job walking over and sitting quietly. Thank you, _____. I love the way _____ came in and took out his homework. Give _____ a point." Although most of the time Debbie worked to have a positive learning environment, there were times when punitive control was exhibited. For example, she said, "Tomorrow you will have a writing assignment because you were talking. I am taking a point away from you. _____ will have a point taken away because you have not stopped talking."

Debbie worked hard to monitor behavior that could possibly escalate into disruptions and worked to continue to engage students in learning. "Tiptoe to your seat, get your book, and meet me in the library." Debbie addressed problems immediately and worked to help students understand autonomy. Students were able to go to various centers. Their choices were: computers with headphones, Study Island with the Promethean board, seat work, and small reading groups with Debbie. Students have the most flexibility at Study Island where different students lead the activity and discussion.

Classroom Organization

Debbie had clear behavior expectations, and her students worked quietly with some whispering at their centers. Debbie reminded students to focus: "Eyes on me; Hands down. Put your listening ears on. I need you to have a seat please."

Some students were working at the computer and talking too loudly. Debbie asked the students to lower their voices and put their headphones on and begin working. Most students moved from one center to another easily, remembering to bring their supplies. During one visit, the laptop was not working. Debbie kept her composure and within a few minutes after waiting to see if the computer would work, she continued her lesson with an alternative plan.

Instructional Support

During one of the observations, Debbie used the Promethean board and a laptop computer to allow students to work on a school-wide reading program. Students read aloud in small groups, answered questions, and completed activities using the Promethean's writing pen. Students took turns leading the discussion and writing on the board. This activity allowed the students to feel in control about their own learning and work with peers to be analytical thinkers.

While a small group of students were working with the Promethean board, Debbie had another group in the back of the room leading a reading group. They were reading a story about children having fun in a pool. Debbie asked students 'why' questions to develop reasoning skills and to think about how they feel when they play in a pool. She asked her students questions to prompt thinking and predict why something happened: "Why do you think _____ and Tip took a walk through the woods? Why doesn't the chipmunk climb the tree? What are the children doing? What does 'the rain made them new' mean?" Debbie listened carefully to her students'

responses and provided encouragement and praise after responses: "Very good, _____! What do you think _____?"

Debbie modeled frequent language skills through conversations and open-ended questions. She asked her students, "What does realistic fiction mean? Why do you think she is making tea now? Why is mom asking is that thunder or lightning?" Then Debbie makes a connection to the real world: "Should you be playing outside if there is thunder and lightning?" Debbie continued with language modeling by asking her students to reread the passage and see if they can read it fluently. At the end of the story, the author included tongue twisters. She and her students read them together. They all laughed while trying to read the tongue twisters without making errors.

Cultural proficiency

Debbie respected students' responses and strived to be nonjudgmental. She asked several students the same open-ended question, "What do you think?" She responded to each student in a neutral manner without judging his or her comments or being condescending to any students' thoughts." Debbie also chose to play classical music while children worked independently, exposing them to instrumental music which may be different than what is played at home.

Classroom Observations of Alida

General Classroom Description

Alida's classroom was colorful with several posters on the wall. She had shapes, numbers (1-10 and ordinal numbers), months of the year, and colors posters. Her class schedule was up front along with the daily calendar and teaching objectives. The letters of the alphabet (upper and lower case) were wrapped around the front and side of the classroom. A listening center was set

up in the back of the room and a large reading area with a rug and an easel was placed in the front of the classroom. Some student work was displayed on bulletin boards.

Emotional Support

Alida began her lesson by cheerfully asking her students, "I am ready, are you?" Then she paused and looked around to see students who were ready. Alida said, "I love the way _____ is sitting. _____ is ready, good job." Then Alida saw a few students not on task and said, "That upsets me. I will address that later. We will talk about that later."

Later during the observation, several students were off task. Alida made sarcastic comments and punitive measures were taken: "Most of you know your sounds but you are too lazy to blend them. I will have to remove your recess if you are constantly disturbing others. _____, should I hear your mouth? _____, you are not paying attention." Some students were asked to return to their seats because they do not have enough self-control to sit still on the carpet.

While Alida was teaching her lesson, she asked the students to think of a word that began with the letter 'u.' She tried to implement technology in the lesson but it was not working properly. Alida continued with the lesson and made adjustments using the dry erase easel. Students had an opportunity to move on the carpet, as long as they were not touching their classmates.

Classroom Organization

Alida's students were full of energy and as a result, she implemented several techniques to maximize learning time and redirect misbehavior. When students were sitting on the carpet, Alida counted 1, 2, 3 and said to the students, "criss cross apple sauce, hands in the bowl." Then

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she began her lesson. When students were off-task, she said, "One, two, three, eyes on me." Another time Alida wanted her students' attention and she said in a humorous way, "peanut butter, peanut butter," and the students replied, "Jelly, jelly."

Alida facilitated a lesson about rhyming words. She wrote the words on the board and said the words to help students understand the concept of rhyming words. During part of the lesson, the students were reading a story called, A Little Bit of Winter. Alida encouraged the students to look at the pictures to figure out what was happening. Then students stretched and transitioned from the rug to their desks to complete an activity sheet. Students were instructed to write the letters reviewed and draw a picture. Alida reminded students to trace and match both sides before they began to color. Alida used humor and sang a song about the word, "to" to engage the students and help them remember the word.

Instructional Support

During another lesson I observed, Alida was talking about the word of the week, 'one.' First Alida modeled how to write the word 'one' on the dry erase board and used a pointer to show students the letters. Then she actively engaged in conversation with her students by calling on a student to come up to the board and write the numeral one next to the word one. Alida took this opportunity to encourage and affirm students for paying attention and writing the correct numeral. She continued with the numbers through four. Then when she came to the numeral four, Alida asked the students what sound they hear at the end of four, tying together math and a previous lesson about phonics.

Cultural proficiency

While teaching students about the letter 'u' Alida asked her students to think about their families. She said, "Most of you have an aunt and an uncle. Uncle begins with the letter 'u'." Alida worked hard to engage her students. She effectively used humor and changed the volume of her voice to gain the attention of her students. Sometimes Alida was more empathetic than others. One of her students was sleepy. She asked the student, "What's wrong, are you sleepy? There's no napping in first grade so start practicing now to stay awake all day." On another occasion, she reminded the students that some students need a little more help than others and that's okay. It is evident Alida cares about her students. Her teaching style is to be direct and to the point, and does not believe in babying students.

Classroom Observations of Haley

General Classroom Description

Haley's classroom was simple with some charts displayed on the walls along with the alphabet. Her students were seated in clusters with no more than 6 students at a table. She had a variety of books in her classroom library that included: *Whistle for Willie*, *Caps for Sale*, *The Cat in the Hat*, and *Skippy Jon Jones*. Her objectives were posted in the front of the classroom. There was a table in the back of the classroom, used during small group reading instruction. If students had difficulty staying on task at his or her table with other students, sometimes they were moved to this back table.

Emotional Support

There were positive communication occurring between Haley and her students. She acknowledged students for behaving appropriately, "Thank you _____ table, you guys are

doing a great job. The circle table is getting a point. I like the way _____ is working; everyone

is in their chairs. I like the way _____ has a nice quiet hand. Let's give her 3 quick snaps; very

good."

Haley also displayed a significant amount of negative and punitive comments to the

students. She had a point system she used during the full duration of both observations. She kept

track of points using her phone. She documented the number of points students were receiving or

losing, and this chart with student names was displayed on a screen in the front of the classroom.

While teaching a lesson, Haley stopped to tell students they just received a negative point for

misbehavior or being off-task. Along with the point system, there were punitive comments:

"Next time I have to talk to you guys, it's 5 minutes off your recess. Not one person at the

_____ table is doing it right. It is going to be sad when I have to call so many parents tonight

and tell them you cannot come on the field trip and I will have to give them their money back.

_____, you and your mom won't be coming. Okay, _____ I am just going to call your

mom." After the last statement, Haley got out her phone and called the student's mother. The

student started crying and stomping her feet. Haley hung up the phone and said, "If you cannot

behave, I am not taking you with us to the field trip tomorrow."

Multiple times Haley said, "Hands in the bowl, voices off. In addition, she repeatedly

said, "That's a negative point." The point system did not appear to be impacting those students

who were struggling to pay attention and stay on task. Their off-task behavior continued. Haley

did not ignore the problems in her classroom. She continued to try and circulate around the room

to keep students focused on their work and the lesson. However, more time was spent addressing

behavior rather than spent on instruction.

Despite the disruptions and multiple issues with behavior, the students managed to sing a song and express themselves and engage in movement. Another student helped a classmate complete an assignment that required them to identify the beginning, middle and end of a story.

Classroom Organization

A large percentage of time was spent addressing behavior issues. Two students were kicking one another; a student was up dancing instead of sitting in the chair working. Some other students at a table were throwing crayons and pencils at one another. One student was crying because someone took her dollar and it was missing. A classmate took the dollar and kicked it under another student's desk to make it look as though he took the dollar. Then the student yelled out, "there's the dollar over here."

Beyond the behavior issues, Haley was prepared to teach her lesson and had materials prepared. At one point, she talked about patterns, and the students clapped and repeated her pattern. During a writing activity, Haley provided detailed instructions and some students listened and were doing their work. However, a large amount of time and energy was spent redirecting behavior. Some of the techniques used were not proactive and did not redirect the inappropriate behavior. Haley appeared visibly frustrated at times because of students' misbehavior. The use of the point system was distracting. The names of all the students and their point status remained visible on the Promethean board screen displayed in the front of the classroom during my visit in the classroom. Each time Haley gave students either a positive point or a negative point, a sound occurred. Some students' attention was diverted to this sound (and their behavior status) rather than the lesson.

Instructional Support

Haley struggled with behavior issues and classroom management but she presented clear learning objectives and engaged students in thinking and reasoning. During one observation, she was reading *Chicken Little*. Haley asked her students a question that required analysis, reasoning, and connections to their world: "What is the author saying? What would you do if the sky was falling? What kind of book could this be?" Haley continued with a discussion about realistic fiction and regular fiction. She asked her students what kind of book *Chicken Little* was and they were able to say it was fiction because chickens cannot talk. Then Haley tied the title of the book to one of their sight words. She told them 'little' was one of their sight words and they needed to listen for the word 'little' when she reread the story. Instruction was interrupted often with comments made to students about behavior, sometimes causing a loss of focus with students.

Haley read the book with expression and the majority of the students were focused. Haley asked open-ended questions and introduced advanced language. She asked her students what 'witless' meant. During another observation, Haley was reading *Corduroy*. Again she introduced advanced vocabulary. She explained to students that 'dampness' meant a little wet.

Then she asked the students a question that required analysis and reasoning, "Why are the clothes wet?" Haley continued the discussion about fiction books, stating *Corduroy* was also fiction because bears can't walk or talk. She asked the students questions to receive feedback and connect to their world: "What's going on now? What might you have in your pocket?" Haley insisted on students answering in a complete sentence stating, "Say it in a complete sentence" at least three times. Haley had some difficulties with emotional support and classroom organization

and worked hard to deliver instructional support in the midst of addressing frequent behavior issues.

Cultural proficiency

Haley had empathy for the student who could not find her dollar. She went over to comfort her and help look for the lost dollar. When the class was reading the book about Chicken Little, she asked, "Does anyone think anything differently?" She seemed to be genuinely interested in her students' thoughts about the story. Although she was able to have regard for the student's perspective that lost a dollar, she had difficulty with another student. A student was trying to articulate his thoughts and Haley did not understand him. She seemed frustrated with him and said, "I don't know what that means. I can't quite understand you."

Summary

In summary, I chose multiple types of data sources as part of my research design. Participants were given a short questionnaire inquiring about demographics and some basic information about their teaching experience and credentials. I conducted a one-on-one semi-structured interview that allowed participants to share their thoughts and ideas about teacher-student interactions and educational resilience. Two classroom observations were completed, using the CLASS to organize the types of classroom support students were receiving from their teacher. In addition, I added cultural dimensions to the CLASS tool to document how and if teachers recognized the variety of cultures that existed in the classroom, and if they did so in a positive manner.

This chapter outlined initial findings of the data and the results of what I gathered. The next chapter I delve deeper into a meta-analysis of the data. I outline my interpretations of the

data, the relationship amongst the identified overarching categories and subcategories, and the

four central themes that emerged as grounded theory.

CHAPTER 5

Results: Meta-Analysis

In this chapter, I present a deeper analyses of data gained through careful examination of the initial questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations, and reflective notes. As a researcher, I used the case study approach and some of the tenets of grounded theory to conduct the meta-analysis where overarching categories and subcategories emerged and four main themes were created. I demonstrated triangulation of data as a validation strategy to minimize researcher bias and diminish invalid conclusions (Silverman, 2004). In addition, I used the various sources to increase accuracy, reduce research bias, add credibility, and strengthen the study (Patton, 2002).

Conceptual Categories

After examining all data, concepts emerged. Teachers were not only sharing information about their teacher-student interactions, but also how they were educationally resilient in their day-to-day experiences as a classroom teacher. The questionnaire, interview notes, and observations generated concepts not only how teachers build relationships with their students but their teacher preparation experiences *before* teaching and their internal and external supports *after* becoming a classroom teacher.

Once I determined my conceptual labels and placed the majority of key sentences and phrases beneath each, a handful of sentences and phrases did not align with any of the labels, or categories. As a result, I re-examined my categories and interpretations of the units of meaning. I modified some of the existing categories and added an additional one to capture those important sentences and phrases that were not yet included. A few of the categories overlapped and were

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collapsed with one another. After the process was complete, thirteen conceptual categories

emerged from the interview transcriptions. Some of the categories used to label the units of

meaning were in-vivo codes, taken directly from participants' words and phrases. Through open

coding, the following conceptual categories emerged. I include descriptive statements from the

participants to support each conceptual label.

1. *An interest in both children and teaching*

When I interviewed the participants, they shared feelings about gaining

enjoyment from teaching because they genuinely liked children and enjoyed teaching.

Debbie said, "I really loved my kids. I loved the curriculum." Alida talked about the

importance of being around teachers, and not just studying to become a teacher, "You can

read all the books you want, but if you have time around children [before becoming a

teacher] it gives insight if you really want to be with children. If you don't want to be

with children, you don't want to be a teacher." Lisa shared her fond memories of school

as a child and how they continued as an adult and led to her decision to become a teacher,

"I enjoyed school. I absolutely loved school. In fact, I tell my students I like school so

much that is why I still come every day. I knew I wanted to teach once I hit 6th grade. I

always loved school. I'm a social person, so I guess it gave me an opportunity to interact

with other children my own age." Alida's enjoyment for children and teaching started

when she was young. She enjoyed the role of helping the teacher when she was in

elementary school, "When I was in elementary school, I was the go-to student. I was the

one who got the pencils, who cleaned the erasers, who did everything. Some people

called me the teacher's pet. I would wear dresses with pencils [on them.] I got straight

'A's. I was the one the substitute basically asked what we were doing, what is this for. I would pass it [worksheet] out and explain it to the class." Edna also developed a love of children at an early age, "So I always wanted to be a teacher because I like kids. I had cousins, and I always took them places. So I guess it's just in me. And even with my own kids, I've always taken my kids and their friends places. And we've done things together."

2. *Background knowledge and training in education*

Alida felt she was adequately trained through her teacher education program. "_____ did a wonderful job. Every day I think of something I did at _____ or in one of my block classes." She thought she received adequate field experiences and pedagogical and content knowledge that helped her do fairly well during her first year of teaching. Edna stressed a concern about the current manner in which teachers are being prepared. She felt they [new teachers] do not have enough preparation, "If you go to a doctor, you want someone who has had years of studying to be a doctor. But the theory right now is you can come in with a degree in any other field and you can start teaching after a crash course of a few weeks. And then you go to school [work] and you learn as you teach." Edna is concerned about the effect a lack of knowledge and proper training is having on the students, "They're [alternate teacher preparation programs] saying it's just so easy to teach. Come in and teach, and we'll teach you how to teach while you're working. The people who are coming in are so inexperienced that they really can't do a good job. And they stay for a year or two. I really feel that they're experimenting on the children. Kids need stability. They need teachers who know how to teach. I just think it's

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so unfair to bring in people who are not in education because it's just as important as every other field." Lisa also commented about adequate training and time spent with students before becoming a teacher, "I don't think a lot of programs or alternate certification routes offer enough time with students, prior to teaching." In addition, Haley talked her experiences after receiving training from an alternate certification program, "I was wildly unprepared for actually what I was faced with when I started school here. And I think that shows in that half the people were fired or quit who were in my program [alternate program] and who started here at the beginning of the year."

3. Experiences teaching diverse children in diverse school environments

Teaching in different grades and children different from the participants' backgrounds was challenging, but helped them become a better teacher. Edna said, "I was hired to go into a first grade class. And that was really nice, because I knew the kids. But the following year, I was moved to 4th grade, in a very rough school. And, it was a real experience. But think I learned how to discipline kids. And I did a lot of things."

Debbie worked diligently getting to know her students and accepting their different personalities. She encouraged her students to do the same with one another. "I do develop great relationships with the kids. So days I know a child is having a bad day; I don't necessarily come down hard on that child. You know what I mean. I think because I feel like the kids come in and they feel at home. They kind of know each other. And I teach my kids to accept the different personalities."

Haley had difficulty making adjustments with her students because her teaching experience was limited and her own years in school were spent in a homogenous setting,

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"I don't know if it's the culture here in Louisiana or if it's just kids are different nowadays. So I don't know if it's [children's behavior] particular to this city or not because I haven't dealt with so many kids except in this city."

4. Persistence with bureaucratic issues– willing to "fight back"

As a classroom teacher, the participants faced several bureaucratic issues daily. Some were concerned about keeping their jobs. Edna said, "It's very hard. It's getting harder and harder. Not so much because of the children, it's because of what's going on in our school system right now. There's no more job stability." Others worried about the well-being of the children because of the State and administration's strong focus on testing. Debbie said it is a challenge "trying to still teach kids like they are second graders and still get through all the test prep and the test this and the test that, but still treating children like they're **children** – and not like high schoolers taking a test to go to high school." Irene described the bureaucratic issues between her school and the State [Department of Education] as fighting a battle, "They've [State Department of Education] made it very difficult for us, as far as what we are allowed to do, especially this year. But I think we've [teachers] overcome all of that because we were fighters, we were strong, we stuck by the principal." Irene passionately shared how she and other teachers worked to help their students succeed, "We worked really hard to get our students to have great scores so we could battle them. We let them [State Department of Education] know that yeah, you all are fighting us, but we [teachers] are fighting you back. We got together, and I was on the committee to write letters and let the state superintendent know that we're going to fight you and we're here to stay." The participants' teaching was

influenced by administration and other bureaucratic groups governing education. Lisa felt

strongly about having supportive administration. She left two schools because she had

oppressive administration and did not feel the principal was competent. "Sometimes

you'll have challenging administration which I've had. In fact, one of the worst was my

first year." At one teaching position, Lisa asked to be moved mid-year because

administration performed poorly. Once she was placed in a school with administration

that supported staff, she felt more confident and comfortable with teaching. Some of the

difficulties Haley experienced in the present school year were related to administration,

"I had no support whatsoever. I'm trying to teach what I am trying to teach. But at the

same time I have no freedom because I pretty much have to teach the skill that the

veteran teacher tells us." At times, Haley struggled to have the tenacity to cope with

administrative issues that impeded her teaching.

5. Possession of a sense of humor

At some point during the interviews with all of the participants, they laughed and

were able to share instances about how they like to have fun and feel it's important their

students see they are capable of laughing and having fun. Irene used fun to break the

monotony in her classroom. "Well, I don't consider myself as having a witty personality,

but I do throw in fun things. I love music. Sometimes I forget to turn my phone off and

my ringtone right now is, "This Girl is On Fire" and my kids love it. So just to break the

monotony, they'll say, can we hear your ring tones? I want them to know that there is

another person other than this teacher. I'm real. I'm not straight-laced with them all the

time." Sharing appropriate parts of their personal life helped the participants connect with

their students and enjoy teaching. Edna stated how she shared stories about her family and children with her students. "One thing that that I do with my students is I talk about my personal life. They know that I have children. I talk about animals. And so they know that I'm a real person because I tell them things I do, to let them know that I do all the things that they do. I laugh and joke with them. They know what's important is to do work. But they still see that other side of me that's fun. And I like to do art. So we do fun activities in the classroom *after* we've completed what needs to be done." Edna organized a fair each year so her students were able to have fun with one another and have exposure to entertaining activities. "I've always brought in my snowball machine to school, and made snowballs early in the year. And then towards the end of the year, when it's really hot, I've done a fair a bunch of years. And so I like to do those kinds of things too, because I think school should be well-rounded. We should not only teach the ABC's, but we need to teach other kinds of things too." Alida learned about humor and incorporating it into the classroom during a professional development meeting. "At the last professional development, we talked about teaching so students remember. And I found out through humor, through entertainment they learn so much better. And it's okay to laugh sometimes."

6. *Ability to withstand daily pressures at school and keep striving*

When I asked about educational resilience, the participants discussed the many pressures of being a teacher. They talked about the pressures their students face as well and its effect on learning. Haley shared her feelings about her personal challenges being a classroom teacher, "It's been the hardest year of my life - lost a lot of weight. I knew it

was going to be hard. So I wanted to do something I thought would be hard. This was definitely hard, and I am not bored." She also acknowledged the stress her students encounter, "I am seeing these kids, despite the fact that I'm their third teacher and this was their first experience in school for a lot of them, they're still succeeding. Some of them are reading. I have kids who don't know their letter and numbers still at this point - some of them, but I have other kids who are reading. I have kids who are succeeding and I guess that's the successful part." Lisa described how one of her students persisted and finally succeeded in reading a word. "I had one little girl, she was trying to read the word, ham. She was saying the sound, and saying the sound. And I said, keep saying it and you're going to get it. She kept at it until she got it." Alida talked about working hard as a teacher every day and still not feeling as though her students were where they should be. Then she realized her students had made progress. They were not large gains, but small steps had been achieved. "With my students, I'm like, okay, they're not reading, none of them are reading. I'm not realizing this group of students can now blend consonant words. And this student now recognizes two of our many sight words. Coming to work every day and being able to see small achievements - being able to recognize little things that are different every day" is important to Alida. As an experienced teacher, Edna felt pressure to ensure her students are doing well academically, "But now it's a lot of pressure to perform. It's a lot of pressure for the children to reach goals even if they [students] really can't." And Lisa talked about continuing with the school day, despite the many interruptions. "It's [educational resilience] the ability to continue to do your job

regardless of the situation, the events that occur in a day, like you have a fire drill and you have to stand outside for an hour."

7. Supportive administration and staff

I asked the participants about ongoing professional development and whether they felt they had the support and resources needed to teach. As a first year teacher, Alida felt she had support from other teachers. "I have the best team ever. The school is amazing and they [administration and other teachers] are quick to not so much tell you what you're doing wrong, but just give you suggestions." Debbie stated she felt comfortable working with other teachers and they got along. "I like the people I worked with. We worked well together. You know I had a great mentor."

The participants talked about meetings and trainings they received from administration and staff. Alida said, "We have our weekly cluster meetings, where the instructional coaches, principal, reading interventionists, and the two first grades and three kindergartens at our meeting all talk about everything. Recently, after Christmas it's gotten to be really useful because first grade teachers have begun sharing what they do in first grade at the beginning of the year. We're trying to bridge the gap between kindergarten and first grade so it's not such of a shock." She believes the meetings have helped her and the students as she becomes aware of what is expected in the next grade and she works to prepare her students to be ready to move on after the school year is over. Debbie stated that professional development occurs as her school and it has helped her with teaching. "We meet every Wednesday, and we have the district development.

They're always in our classrooms. I feel like I have a lot of help here. And we do a lot of

professional development things."

As a first year teacher, Alida really appreciated the professional development offered and

the support of the other teachers. "There's the informal development I get every day.

That's from the master teacher. She has many years of teaching experience. She's been

around, she's seen it, she's taught different grade levels, and she's very familiar with this

school and the culture of students that we service at this school. So, there's a lot of

professional development – formal and informal. If I don't get something, it's usually

brought up at another meeting. If I don't know how to include higher level questioning

into a read aloud, the next meeting we'll have print outs that the [reading] coaches have

found, research on it, stuff like that. I'm definitely not alone at this school."

Just as participants described instances with administration providing the necessary

support and training, others shared how it affected their profession. During her many

years of teaching, Lisa encountered administration that was inadequate. "The school

where I taught was absolutely – it wasn't the children, it was the administration - very

oppressive. So, I left there after one year. In fact, the school was so bad we had six

teachers request to leave before October." Haley also expressed issues with

administration and other teachers. "There's just like no support. So that's been

challenging. When I was in the previous grade, I had no support whatsoever. And I think

that's partly why they switched me because they realized the other teacher would not

work with me." Participants described how administration and other staff improved their

abilities to teach and instances where administration and other teachers were impediments.

8. Connections with parents and family

Edna worked hard to connect with her parents at previous schools and at her present school. Over the years, she observed the impact parents and family life play with student school success. "I think in this school in particular, the kids [children] have been real transient because of Katrina. I've had large numbers of children being raised by grandparents. Not whose parents are with them, living with them – but who are solely living with their grandparents. And I think that plays a part in what happens in school." Because Edna believes parents play a significant role in students' education, she makes an effort to engage her parents. She held fairs and luncheons in the past to get to know her parents. "I was in 4th grade for two years and it was a disadvantaged school and so I tried to do things to bring in the parents. I had a luncheon with the parents and the children." At her present school, Edna continues to build relationships with her parents. "I tried to have a good relationship with my parents and my kids [children]."

Alida was willing to communicate and work with parents who reach out to her. "If you're [parents] willing to help your child at home, then I will send you whatever you need – because there are so many who aren't. I have some [parents] that are like phantoms, they don't exist. I haven't met them, I haven't talked to them. Then won't answer my calls or they don't have a working number. But I have a group of really good parents and they look out for the other students too."

Lisa also worked to build relationships with her parents. "I have a very good relationship with their parents. I give every parent my phone number. I don't try to hide my number. They just really know that they can reach out to me for whatever reason." Irene gives her parents her phone number and encourages them to call and ask questions or talk. "I try and build a great relationship with my parents so they know they can call and depend on me and not be intimidated by any question they may have to ask."

9. Acknowledgement of cultural diversity

Edna considered the culture and different backgrounds during her daily interactions with students. "It [culture] plays a big part in the children – some kids [children] come with a large background – they've been places, they've done things. And then some kids [children] really don't have that." She noticed the impact family and backgrounds play on students especially after Katrina. "The kids have been real transient because of Katrina. We've never had people going back and forth to Texas. We have lots of kids [children] who talk about relatives being in jail. That also to me has an effect on the child. I really do take it into consideration - the economic level and just the dynamics of their family, and what's going on in their lives when they go home. If they're in a happy family and the parents are stable, it makes a difference because the child has their feet on the ground and they're more stable."

Irene talked about the various cultural differences she's encountered over the years teaching. In one school, she acknowledged the low reading levels of her students and understood parents played a role. "Unfortunately I have to say, we were 98% African American, and they just didn't have the prior knowledge of going to Head Start or child

care centers. They came from home with no books, a parent that wasn't reading to them, a parent who couldn't read." Irene strives to give her students an opportunity to talk about home life in school. "I say you can talk about your family, you can talk about what you like to do, and you can talk about your DS [Nintendo handheld video game]." She also believes all children can learn and works hard to bring academic success to all of her students no matter what their cultural background or home environment. "We're going to show you all that our kids – even though they're low economically –they can still work. They work hard, and we work with them to make sure." Alida also worked activities into her lesson to celebrate what her students do outside of school. "And I think one part of being culturally in tune to your students is to know what they're going to see. I try and incorporate New Orleans' things. This year, we watched videos, and we participated in the parade, and I brought beads for them to throw, and we talked about it a lot. I know they're parents take them to the parades to have fun and stuff."

Debbie taught her students to be accepting of one another in her classroom. "And I teach my kids to accept the different personalities. I think that really helps."

Lisa realized the behavior exhibited by one of her students may be caused by what is happening at home. "I think the tantrum works at his house, because he is the 5th of six children. So probably mom's tired, and if he falls out, they just give him what he wants. She works two jobs and dad's not in the house." Lisa continued to work with the student, providing structure and encouraging him to work hard."

I asked the participants how they get to know their students. Irene told me she wanted her students to feel comfortable with her and she does not hold grudges from one day to another. "The first thing I tell them is I'm going to be your teacher for 180 days. I want you to be able to come to me because some teachers build a wall. In first grade they have to be comfortable to come to you with anything that's bothering them or it's going to block the learning. So my kids know that no matter how firm I am, the next day is a new day. I don't hold things from one day to the next. We erase the slate clean and we start over the next day clean."

Debbie worked to ensure students enjoy being at school so they will be engaged. "If the student comes to school and the student enjoys being in that classroom and you have a good relationship –the teacher and the student have a good relationship, they enjoy learning and they are more willing to do it. If they're coming to school and they don't really get along with the teachers, like sometimes personalities clash, I think they don't really think it's a good experience and so they're not as willing to learn and do their work. Then the behavior problem starts. So it depends on the relationship with the teacher - in a lot of cases, it really affects their learning. It's just like an adult – if you enjoy your job, you're more likely to go and do what you're supposed to do, and take that extra step. It's the same with kids." Debbie also acknowledged the uniqueness of each student and does not treat each one the same. "You should never treat every child the same. I think all kids are different, and once you get to learn the personality of that child, you'll be able to

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discipline and work with the child. It's easier to interact with the child once you know the child's personality. I think a lot of it is really getting to know the child."

Alida enjoyed interacting with students, even other students in the school building. She believed talking to students helps her build relationships with students. "I have tons of interaction [with students]. First of all I talk to my students probably more than what I have noticed and what I have observed in different parishes, different schools and also at this school. I just talk to them a lot. I keep them on track, but during the read aloud, if I'm reading a book about Boston, and maybe they heard their aunt or someone is from there or went there, it's okay to kind of divert a little, and just let them share. So I just talk to them all the time – at the buses, on bus duty in the morning, when they get off the buses."

Edna felt strongly that respect plays a big role in building relationships with her students. "I tell my kids it's all about respect. You respect me I respect you, but also you respect each other. Lisa also works to build a strong relationship with her students so they will be interested in school. "Children, especially little children try to please. They want to please the people they like. So if you can establish a good relationship with the child, then they're more likely to want to produce."

11. *Classroom environments that promote caring, discipline, and structure*

The participants shared their struggles and obstacles with teaching, but all felt it was important to provide a sense of structure and caring to their students. Debbie said, "I think you should treat every child like they belong to you, because if you think of it like, this is my child, you treat your child very kind. You're nice to your child. I'm strict with my son, but I'm also very kind to him." Edna believed nurturing students was important.

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"I'm a nurturing person, so I nurture them through the first few weeks of school because I know – even though they've been in pre-K and kindergarten, first grade is a big step." She also finds a balance between structure and kindness. "I wanted them [children] to be happy, and do the right things. I always looked at my teachers who had good discipline, and were pretty strict and who really taught the kids, and that's sort of who I mimicked myself after. I think kids need structure with a kind heart." Irene believes it is important to be firm with the students but give each student a new start. "So my kids know that no matter how firm I am, the next day is a new day."

Alida was straightforward with her students and treats them with respect. "I think I'm really direct and I think that maybe they [kids] can sense that. I'm not going to beat around the bush. I try to be real with them. Just like I am with adults, and not talk down to them like they're kids. Just talk to them like they're normal people, or not act like what they have to say is less important than what somebody else says." Haley's goal is to create a classroom environment that emits a positive mood for her students. "Whatever vibe you set in the classroom, from the moment you walk in everyday, I'm setting the tone. If I'm tired, if I don't feel good, I feel like soon that whole mood fills the classroom. The whole classroom is fidgety and has a hard time sitting. But if I am calm, and you set that calm environment, then the kids kind of pick up on that."

12. *High expectations of students - "Expect a lot"*

No matter what the circumstances at home or the ability levels of the students, the participants believed in pushing their students to do their very best. Aida said,

"I try to push them, as far as they can until they're frustrated. I find where their level is, and then I assist them to get to the next [level]." Debbie also expects a lot from her students. "I explain to him why I'm strict with him because I expect a lot from him, because I think that's a good thing. I expect a lot from them [students], but I'm very gentle with them at the same time. I'm stern but gentle." Haley had moments when she was frustrated, but her intentions were to help her students succeed. "Sometimes I get mad at them, but want them to know that despite that, I am only getting mad because I do care about them. I want them to succeed and I know that they can, and so I am going to require that of them."

Alida wanted her students to leave her classroom and be prepared for the next year. "I may go to other schools and first grade is just a little transition, they're still holding their hand. At this school, it's go get your pencil, go throw that away. They expect them to be very independent by the time they get to first grade. I try and give them, you know, a sense of independence." Irene also wanted her students to learn in her classroom so they will be prepared for the future. "My motto is, 'I say what I mean and I mean what I say,' and they respect that because I want them to learn. I don't want them to go to second grade unable to function as a second grader. So I stress all year how important it is that they learn everything that they can, and it's going to be with them for the rest of their lives."

Edna believed in having high standards and students becoming responsible. "The biggest thing too is, people will say, "oh, you're so hard on them, they're just little kids." They [students] are little kids, but I don't ask them to do anything that I don't think they

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can do. And if you give in, and baby them you're really not helping them. Because it's a tough world, and they need to learn to be responsible and do what they need to do, and they are happy with themselves when they do it. They are little kids, but if we treat them like little babies, we're not helping them."

13. *Social skills - "Socialize the child"*

Lisa said she works hard to develop social skills with her students. "My philosophy is that my first responsibility outside of educating the child is to socialize the child because the child has to learn to get along with the children in their class. I always talk to them about life. So I think we have to prepare them." Irene shared some of the same thoughts as Lisa about having student get along with one another. "Children have to learn to get along with others in their class." Edna thinks cooperation is important, "Basically, I want them to respect each other and cooperate." She talked to her students about cleaning up before starting something new. "And pick up after each other. We do have custodians but we can clean up our mess before we go on." Edna described her classroom as a community. "It's like a little community in the class. And we all interact with each other. I don't like them being mean to each other. I don't like them to bully each other. Everybody has their own space, their own materials and you don't need to feel like you need to give something to somebody because they're saying, "I want your crayons." I want everybody to come prepared to work."

In summary, thirteen conceptual categories were created using data collected from the participants. Then I conducted a reanalysis of the data, looking for patterns and comparing

transcriptions, observation notes and reflective notes across participants. I identified similarities between some of the categories and collapsed these data into four overarching categories.

Overarching Categories

After analyzing data from the questionnaire, interview transcriptions, classroom observations, and reflective notes, I developed four overarching categories. The four main categories are knowledge about teaching and learning, including pre-service experiences, endurance with challenging situations, harmony with school staff and families, and positive connections and exchanges with students. The chart below displays the overarching categories and subcategories, extracted from the actions and words of the participating teachers. The remaining chapter elaborates on each of the categories using examples from data, and concluding with four themes. The four themes reflect the participants' experiences as a teacher, leading to the gradual emergence of a candidate for a grounded theory.

Table 4 – *Overarching Categories and Supporting Conceptual Categories*
(Creating Resilient Classroom Teachers)

Overarching Categories	Supporting Conceptual Categories
I. Knowledge about Teaching and Learning & Pre-service Experiences	1. An interest in both children and teaching 2. Background knowledge and training in education 3. Experience teaching diverse children in diverse school environments
II. Endurance with Challenging Situations	1. Persistence with bureaucratic issues – willing to "fight back" 2. Possession of a sense of humor 3. Ability to withstand daily pressures at school and keep striving
III. Harmony with School Staff & Families	1. Supportive administration and staff 2. Connections with parents and family 3. Acknowledgement of cultural diversity
IV. Positive Connections & Exchanges with Students	1. Meaningful relationships with students 2. Classroom environments that promote caring, and discipline, and structure 3. High expectations of students - "expect a lot" 4. Social skills – "socialize the child"

Overarching Category #1: Knowledge about Teaching and Learning & Pre-Service Experiences

The first overarching category is knowledge in teaching and learning including pre-service experiences. Participants talked about the importance of knowing how to teach, how to effectively manage and engage all of the children in the classroom, and having pre-teaching experience before having their own classroom. It was evident from the interview comments, but especially through the classroom observations that experience was an important factor.

One of the participants talked about how she struggled daily because she was still learning so many things related to teaching and learning because her undergraduate degree was in a completely different field. She felt her alternate certification route did not offer enough time with students prior to teaching and was "wildly unprepared" for what she faced when she started at this school. Other candidates who participated in the alternate certification program were also inadequately prepared because half of the others in her class were either fired or quit within the school year.

Those participants who went to college and graduated from the traditional teacher education program voiced difficulties but seemed more equipped to problem-solve and find support from other teachers. The participants who attended traditional teacher preparation programs seemed to be better able to cope with issues during their first year of teaching. The classroom observations confirmed those teachers who had more years of experience teaching managed their classrooms better, with less behavior problems and more time spent teaching rather than addressing behavior issues.

A few of the participants shared negative feelings about the alternate certification programs. She described the program as a "crash course" in education and thought it to be unfair

to the students being taught and those teachers who studied for years to become a teacher. The participant did not support the new "theory" in teaching where people come into the profession with a degree in another field, take a few weeks of preparation, and then "go to school [work as a teacher] and learn as you teach." While I was at the school, I noticed the tension between teachers who went the traditional route and those who chose the alternate route of educator preparation. Comments were made by both groups about how they felt teachers prepared in a traditional teacher education program were not "forward thinkers" about the new trends in education and those in the alternate certification program were not fully prepared to teach nor committed to the profession for any long period of time. According to resilience research, schools that can foster meaningful student participation in schools are a protective factor that helps develop resilience. (Benard, 1995; Wang et al., 1997). Teachers who do not have proper teacher preparation and pre-service experiences are limited with their ability to provide opportunities for meaningful student participation.

Overarching Category #2: Endurance with Challenging Situations

The second overarching category is endurance with challenging situations. All of the participants shared issues with the curriculum, the administration and other barriers they face as teachers. Despite all of these constraints, each one still maintained a sense of humor with me during the interview and sometimes while I was visiting their classroom during the observation. One participant stated explicitly that having a sense of humor helps her cope as a teacher. Another participant "throws in fun things" while teaching. The participants do fun activities with the students *after* completing what needs to be done. They laugh and joke with students and let them see there is a fun side to their personality.

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Another participant said she feels like quitting at the end of every day, but she does not quit because she cares too much about the kids. She said, "It's been the hardest year of my life." Even though the participant is having a very difficult year, she continues to come to work every day because her students are succeeding. She continues to persevere because her students are doing the same.

The pressure to have students perform or run the risk of having your job in jeopardy causes great stress and anxiety for teachers now. Their jobs are not guaranteed and even though they are working hard, there is the chance they could lose their job. The participants talked about being able to stay strong and not give up and continue to fight for their rights as a teacher and not give in to all of the pressures they face with students and administration. Resilience is defined by Garmezy and Masten (1991) as "a process of, or capacity for, or the outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging and threatening circumstances" (p. 459). Teachers capable of overcoming daily challenges in their classrooms are more likely to be resilient and adapt when encountering adverse situations.

Overarching Category #3: Harmony with School Staff & Families

The third overarching category is harmony with school staff and families. One participant purchased a cell phone for the sole purpose of communication with her students' parents. At the beginning of the school year, she gives every parent a phone number and lets them know they can call her and she is willing to communicate with them about their child's progress at school. Another participant shared a story of how a parent called her on the phone to get help with a homework assignment because she did not understand what to do.

While I was observing in classrooms, I saw parents come into the classroom and interact with some of the participants. It was evident by the exchanges between the parent and the participant there was respect for one another and the parent felt comfortable and welcomed in the classroom. During the interview, another participant shared her views about parents. She said she has some parents that care and others who do not. She takes the time to talk to any parent that makes the effort to call or come to school to find out about their child because she can tell the difference in those students with a parent who cares.

Some of the participants are the same race as their students but their culture is different. One participant talked about the importance of understanding and acknowledging some of the challenges at home (parent in jail or living in an unsafe neighborhood) and making connections when appropriate to those positive activities and events students may participate in their community. For example, many of the students tell stories about attending parades with their families. One of the participants talked about a Mardi Gras parade planned at the school for the students, making the connection between school, community, and culture. During one of the lessons I observed, the teacher had a writing assignment. The writing prompt was, "Many people go to parades. My favorite part of the parade is…." The participant provided an opportunity for her students to write about something familiar and something they experienced, tapping into background knowledge and their world outside of school.

Resilience researchers highlight the importance of strengthening protective factors as a way to help others become more resilient (Luthar, 2006). One of the protective factors is access to supportive relationships (2006). As teachers build strong relationships with school staff and families, they are cultivating resilience with themselves. In addition, teachers have the capability

of fostering resilience with their students when there is positive communication amongst teachers, school staff, and home. The number of adverse situations children face can be minimized by relationships cultivated within the family, community and school (Wang, Haertal, & Walberg, 1997).

Having administrative support was also critical to many of the participants. One participant shared how she left two teaching positions because administration was unfair and unethical. Another participant talked about the wonderful administrative support she currently receives and how it's made such a difference for her, especially as a first year teacher with so much to learn and grasp. This same participant also talked about the support of other teachers and how this support has improved her lesson planning and provided her with a sense of belonging. Another participant expressed her dissatisfaction with administration and was hesitant to share information because of the power of administration. She expressed how her transition was more difficult because of a lack of support from administration. The participants who felt supported by administration and had values aligned with school administration appeared happier and more confident in their ability as a teacher.

Overarching Category #4: Positive Connections and Exchanges with Students

The fourth overarching category is positive connections and exchanges with students. This category was one of the most important categories for me because it was directly related to teacher-student interactions. It was also significant because some of the responses of the participants aligned with the research I read about educational resilience, cultural competence, and social and emotional learning. Waxman et al. (2003) suggests resilience is fluid and is

dependent on the recursive interactions between people and their surroundings (Waxman et al., 2003).

One participant shared thoughts about how she was able to get to know students. She thought it was important not only to build relationships with her own students but also with other students in the school. She talks to students at the bus stop and in the hallway. Another participant has special lunches with her students. She finds out about their families and what they do outside of school. Then she uses this information to better understand the student and use this knowledge in lesson planning when possible. If a student is having a difficult day and is misbehaving, one participant carves out some one-on-one time to talk to the student casually and find out what is happening at home or what may be bothering the student. Another participant has a fair for her students and their families every year. Although most of the students may not be able to afford to attend a fair, she creates that experience for her students and their families so they know she genuinely cares about them and wants them to learn and to have fun. These types of activities engage the student, teacher and community, strengthening protective mechanisms of resilience. The relationship between the teacher and student is critical to the engagement and academic success of the students. Waxman et al. (2003) stated:

> a key premise is that protective mechanisms within the family, classroom, school, and community can foster educational resilience by buffering and reducing the adversities children face, and providing opportunities for learning and healthy development. Homes, classrooms, schools, and communities can be altered to provide features that protect children against adversities, enhance learning, and develop their talents and competencies (p. 3).

Edna was able to provide opportunities for learning in a safe and healthy manner to her students and their families. Wang et al., (1997) suggests that contexts such as the classroom, home, community, and school are "more powerful on learning than state and district policy contexts" (p. 3). Participants provide example after example of ways in which they created a context within their classroom that cultivates meaningful exchanges between their students.

All of the participants shared their thoughts about the importance of high expectations. One participant said, "I expect a lot from my kids." Although students were behind or struggled to learn, all of the participants pushed their students. The assignments were not made easy for them. The participants expected their students to try, stay focused, and to do their best. They did not dwell on the deficits of the students, but as Delpit (2006) states, the teachers worked to identify the strengths of the students.

Classrooms were organized with centers and different learning resources. The daily objectives were displayed on the board or in a pocket chart. Students were sitting at their desks and not working was unacceptable. The teachers were firm but supportive and expected their students to be on-task engaged in learning. Behavior issues were addresses and there were consequences for those who were off-task or exhibiting behavior problems. The less experienced participants spent more time with behavioral issues than the participants with more years of teaching experience, and used a point system to manage behavior. Despite the behavior issues, the participants still expected their students to work hard, and structure and discipline was part of the classroom culture.

One of the participants who taught kindergarten talked about one of her biggest jobs as a teacher is to "socialize the child;" every day she teaches her students to show to respect one

another and get along. She believes it is her responsibility to prepare children not only with academic skills but with life skills because it may not happen at home. Another participant considers her classroom to be a little community where everybody comes prepared to work and students work hard to be "kind not mean to each other."

Participants created a classroom environment that reduced the number of adverse situations students face and provide opportunities for learning (Wang et al., 1994). When teachers had meaningful relationships with students, they were able to develop the ideals and attitudes that lead to academic, social, and emotional accomplishments (Luthar, 2006). In addition, Werner and Smith (1982) found teachers were able to reduce their own levels of stress when they assisted children who were struggling with challenging life conditions. Thus, my interpretations of data are teachers are strengthening their own resilience by cultivating positive connections and exchanges with their students.

Emergent Themes - Becoming a Resilient Teacher

After developing the four overarching categories, I returned to my theoretical framework about educational resilience before developing my themes. I compared my overarching categories and subcategories with the research literature about educational resilience. My data suggest some of the themes that emerged from the interviews, observations, and notes align with criteria related to educational resilience.

The first category related to knowledge about teaching and learning and pre-service experiences influences how much information and expertise teacher have when they enter the classroom. The more knowledge and experience they possess, the higher the likelihood of teachers being capable of successfully transferring that knowledge to students. According to

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resilience researchers, teachers act as mentors and transmit knowledge and facilitate learning (Wang et al., 1997). Therefore, teachers need knowledge, training, and experience in teaching and learning for transmission of knowledge to occur between the teacher and the student.

The second main category was about endurance with challenging situations. Teachers shared protective mechanisms that helped them overcome daily stresses. They employed persistence, humor and resistance to pressure. Wang et al. (1997) stated resilience can be cultivated in children by implementing protective factors in their surroundings. So is true with teachers. All of the teachers identified protective factors in their school environment that help them cope with adversity.

The third main category describes support teachers sought from administration and school staff, connecting with parents, and embracing the cultural differences of students in the classroom. Luthar (2006) emphasizes the "desire to belong is a basic human need, and positive connections with others lie at the very core of psychological development; strong, supportive relationships are critical for achieving and sustaining resilient adaptation" (p. 780). Teachers as well as students seek meaningful relationships with those they interact with daily. For both children and adults, meaningful relationships with those who are closest are the key to maintaining resilience (Luthar, 2006). Strong relationships that exist among those closest to an individual are critical to the protective processes of both children and adults. (Luthar, 2006). Teachers have an opportunity to cultivate their own resilience by developing close relationships with administration, colleagues and parents. By doing so, teachers better understand cultural differences not only with their students and their families, but also with school staff.

The fourth main category states the importance of teachers making positive connections with their students. One feature that repeatedly appears as a protective factor related to resilience is a supportive and caring relationship with an adult. This caring relationship minimizes stress and provides a safety net for children confronting challenging situations (Werner & Smith, 1982). Teachers are with students all day long. In teacher preparation programs and in resilience literature, teacher dispositions are significant. The exchanges between teachers and students have the potential to protect and safeguard students placed at risk. Lee, Bryk, & Smith (1993) found that students who engage in relationships with teachers over time, display social and academic gains. When these close relationships among teachers and students are sustained over time, the students' academic and social endeavors benefit (Lee et al., 1993). In the past two chapters, I presented examples of how teachers established relationships with students. According to the resilience researchers, these relationships act as a protective factor for students, helping them become resilient.

Through the participants' perspectives, the data show how *teachers* are resilient in the classroom. The first category outlines how teachers become resilient *before* they enter the classroom. The following three categories describe how teachers cultivate resilience with themselves and their students. Teachers are able to foster educational resilience within themselves during the daily interactions with students along with other school staff, personnel, and families.

The themes identified below stem from the categories and subcategories carefully identified through participant data. I interpreted the main themes as major components that not only allow teachers to be resilient but also build strong relationships and create positive

interactions with their students daily. When the main themes are not present, then teachers struggle to be resilient and to build teacher-student interactions in their classrooms. Haley did not have adequate pre-service training and experience so she struggled to be as resilient as the other participants. The lack of support she felt she received from administration and school staff also negatively affected Haley's ability to be educationally resilient in the classroom.

When the main themes are present data show teachers to be more educationally resilient and capable of building meaningful relationships with their students. Irene, Edna, Lisa, Debbie, and Alida shared experiences about their teacher preparation training and experiences and felt confident in their classrooms. Irene and Lisa in particular, persevered challenging administrative issues but had the ability to fight back and keep striving. In contrast to Haley, Alida as a first year teacher felt she received administrative support and professional development. Alida appeared more resilient during the interview and observations. All of the participants felt strongly about the potential of their students and providing structure, discipline and caring.

Forman and Kalafat (1998) suggest the following elements cultivate strong relationships: believing students have potential, providing meaningful comments, and creating school environments that strengthen relationships between students and teachers and school and community. From the data collected and the resilience researchers, it is my interpretation the four identified themes below are germane to creating teachers who are resilient and effective in the classroom, and capable of creating meaningful teacher-student interactions.

Themes - Educational Resilience for Teachers

1. Teachers with knowledge about teaching and learning, along with pre-service experiences possess an interest in children and teaching, and have gained adequate training through experiences teaching different children in varied school environments.

2. Teachers who demonstrate endurance are persistent with addressing bureaucratic issues, maintain a sense of humor in the classroom, keep striving, and defy the everyday pressures associated with being a classroom teacher.

3. Teachers in harmony with school staff and families seek supportive administration and staff, engage and connect to parents/families, and embrace and understand the cultural differences of their students.

4. Teachers who make positive connections and exchanges with students establish meaningful relationships with students, provide discipline and structure, have high expectations, and teach student social skills.

The Emerging Theory

Teachers play a critical role in the success of students. Their daily interactions with students have the potential to engage and motivate students to learn and do well in school academically, socially, and emotionally, leading to educational resilience. So that teachers can perform their best, they have to enter the classroom prepared. According to the teachers who participated in this study, a teacher has to possess knowledge about the teaching and learning process. Teachers also need pre-service experience in varied cultural environments. These experiences help teachers become resilient themselves after they enter the teaching profession.

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Participants expressed a need for a source of inner strength to help them become resilient as they encounter all of the difficulties in today's school systems. Humor and perseverance allowed participants to build relationships not only with their students but also with school staff and parents. The participants also outlined the importance of working collaboratively with administration and other staff, and taking an initiative to engage parents and understand and embrace the cultural differences that may exist.

When the first three themes mentioned above are present, teachers are better able to develop positive connections and exchanges with their students, fostering educational resilience with their students and themselves. The last theme includes specific examples shared by participants about how they build relationships with students, fostering educational resilience. The data suggest a strong connection among themes one, two, and three and the final theme. When the first three themes are present – knowledge about teaching and pre-service experience, endurance, and harmony with school personnel and parents, then teachers are better able to build positive connections and exchanges with their students, promoting educational resilience. When the first three themes are not present, teachers are still capable of building relationships with their students but it is more difficult to cultivate meaningful interactions, and educational resilience. Some of the participants had minimal pre-service experience, yet were still able to demonstrate teacher-student interactions. Others had difficulty with administration, but continued to work hard in their classroom teaching their students. However, teachers conveyed more difficulty creating positive teacher-student interactions when only a few of the themes are present.

My grounded theory is based on the premise of the four themes that became known through the participants' actions and words collected during this study. These themes are

synonymous with resilience literature about protective factors. Protective factors allow people to be successful despite adverse conditions. The four themes I developed are protective factors that allow the participants to be resilient in their classrooms. The themes outlined in this chapter are protective factors that have been identified by the participants as ways in which they are educationally resilient as they cope with the everyday challenges of being a classroom teacher. My study suggests a new grounded theory that states if teachers possess the characteristics outlined in the four themes, then they are educationally resilient, and able to cultivate that same resilience to their students.

Conclusions

In conclusion, my data show when there is a presence of the four themes, the possibility of teachers having strong teacher-student interactions increases. When the four themes are present, teachers possess attributes of educational resilience. When teachers possess characteristics of educational resilience, they are able to pass along these protective factors to students so they too may be resilient. Data collected from the questionnaire, classroom observations, and interview responses support the premise that positive teacher-student interactions are strongest when all themes are present. My interpretations of the data suggest a grounded theory related to educational resilience of the teacher. Being a resilient teacher requires components mentioned in my four developed themes. Teachers who are educationally resilient have a stronger sense of cultivating resilience protective factors, such as meaningful teacher-student interactions when the teacher employs the criteria outlined in the four themes.

Chapter 6

"Your credentials cannot educate a child. It's your heart and your love for that child to get an education. And once we realize that teachers are the main vehicles to help children as a whole, that's when we're going to honestly see a change, when we have equitable funding for all teachers and all school systems, because all children deserve a valuable education, and all children deserve teachers who care about them." - Janol Vinson, classroom teacher and Ella Baker Trainer in the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools program

Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I present how themes from my research are integrated into the existing literature. I will discuss the implications of teacher preparation and in-service teacher support, and its relationship to educational resilience. I will also highlight the importance of interactions between teachers and students, and meaningful relationships among teachers and school staff and administration, taking into consideration social, emotional, and cultural aspects. The most poignant discussion will be about the critical role teachers play in their own success.

Integration of the Findings into Existing Literature

As part of the teacher preparation process, teacher candidates learn about professional dispositions and its importance in the teaching and learning process. According to the National Council for Accreditation in Teacher Education (NCATE) (2008), their glossary defines dispositions as "professional attitudes, values and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development" (pp. 89-90). Teacher education programs vary on the types of dispositions of highly effective teachers, but all consider dispositions when assessing high-quality teacher skills and traits. Dispositional growth is critical in the preparation of teacher candidates. If teachers do not have adequate professional dispositions it will be difficult to have positive teacher-student interactions in the classroom, and

cultivate educational resilience. Thus, dispositions influence the quality of teacher-student interactions and should be considered when preparing teacher candidates.

McAllister and Irvine (2002) conducted a study with practicing teachers and examined empathic dispositions. According to McAllister and Irvine (2002), empathetic teachers "take on the perspective of another culture," and empathy involves "cognitive, affective, and behavioral components" (p. 433). They found that teachers were able to relate to their students and their situations, but not lower expectations for their students (McAllister & Irvine, 2002). Teachers did not view their students' culture as a detriment but used the culture as an opportunity to connect with their students. McAlister and Irvine's study show the importance of pre-service teachers having the capability to empathize and make meaningful connection with their students. Resilience researchers support teachers having a disposition that would be empathetic to students and capable of building relationships. When teacher-student relationships occur over a period of time, students improve their social and academic accomplishments (Lee et al., 1993).

A "qualified" teacher is able to effectively interact with students, parents and administration and has an internal drive to continue to persist and be resilient as he or she encounters the many obstacles that are now present in the profession of teaching. Teachers have to be educationally resilient if they are to cultivate resilient students. The interactions teachers have with students are critical to school success. If stakeholders involved in education are looking for ways to make improvements in students and teachers, the quality of the teachers' interactions should be carefully examined.

Teacher quality is a global issue. Stakeholders from countries all over the world are searching for better ways to prepare teachers and share best practices. In the spring of 2011, the

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first international summit convened in New York City to discuss improving teacher quality around the world (Asia Society, 2011). During the summit, the following question was posed: "How do education systems recruit, develop, and keep enough teachers who are caring, passionate about their subject, and good at getting them [students] to do their best?" (Asia Society, 2011, p. 4). This challenge brought education leaders, teachers, and education experts from 16 high-performing countries together to examine teacher quality (Asia Society, 2011). Teacher quality was mentioned as the "biggest in-school contributor to student achievement" (Asia Society, 2011, p. 5). One of the leaders present discussed the need to" rethink how teachers are recruited, reexamine teacher preparation and induction, support teachers in meeting new challenges, and look at how teacher careers and compensation are structured" (Asia Society, 2011, p. 5). My research examined teacher quality in terms of teacher-student interactions and identified how teachers build relationships with their students and what attributes teachers feel they possess that support teacher-student interactions. In addition, I outlined teachers' perspectives of how teacher-student interactions impacts student engagement, student achievement, and whether teachers consider social and cultural backgrounds of their students when planning lessons. One of the recurring themes articulated by the participants was the importance of developing social skills child and learning about what happens with students outside of school. Teachers used knowledge about students' social and cultural worlds to build relationships with their students. When decision makers reflect on current teacher preparation programs, they may want to consider field experiences that allows teacher candidates to engage in school settings where there is diversity in the social and cultural backgrounds of the students.

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The Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1896-1934) first discussed the essential connection between interactions and learning. Vygotsky explained that social interactions among young children are essential in the development of learning and communication. The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2004) affirmed Vygotsky's theory: "Young children experience their world as an environment of relationships, and these relationships affect virtually all aspects of their development – intellectual, social, emotional, physical, behavioral, and moral" (p. 5). It is essential that teachers have the training and ability to enter the classroom with professional dispositions that will allow him or her to build meaningful social interactions among students. Pianta et al. (2002) support the importance of the teacher's role in students' engagement and learning. The teachers' dispositions have the potential to motivate students leading to academic success (Pianta et al., 2002). Pre-service training and in-service professional development of teachers is one way to strengthen teacher dispositions and improve teacher quality. The training and professional development must include a cultural component that celebrates culture and views the culture of students as an asset and not a deficit to the learning process.

To support the development of the whole child, Souto-Manning (2013) stresses the importance of multicultural education for a just society and equity in schools. Curriculum and pedagogies can be transformed to better reflect the students in the classroom setting. Teachers have the opportunity to dispel stereotypes and prejudices among children by teaching in a way that is inclusive and holistic. Ladson-Billings (1994) believes strongly in culturally relevant teaching that "fosters the kinds of social interactions in the classroom that support the individual in the group context" (p.76) so that students have a sense of ownership of their knowledge.

Teachers who acknowledge and celebrate students' cultures are viewing students with assets and not deficits, assisting students to generate their own knowledge about the world (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Paris (2012) offers a new term other than "culturally relevant" or "culturally responsive" teaching that he feels values and sustains the present "multiethnic and multilingual society" (p. 93). According to Paris (2012) the term "culturally sustaining pedagogy" supports the "value of our multiethnic and multilingual present and future" and embraces "cultural pluralism and cultural equality" (p. 93). His newest term negates the previous eras in the 1960s and 1970s where languages and cultural practices of students of color were viewed as deficiencies (Paris, 2012). Ladson-Billings (1994) was an influential researcher who worked tirelessly to end the deficit views of culture. Her seminal work published in the 1990s of successful teachers teaching African American students moved educators away from the idea of the deficit approach and toward an acceptance of the dominant languages and cultures of people and communities of color (Paris, 2012).

Now Paris (2012) is moving another step forward by choosing the term *culturally sustaining pedagogy* to support "linguistic and cultural dexterity" in the classroom. Paris' (2012) goal with his new term is to ensure that the cultures, languages, and heritages of all students and communities of color are valued and sustained. His term seeks to offer pre-service and in-service teachers a way of explicitly articulating the importance of valuing and maintaining cultural practices of students of color in the classroom (Paris, 2012). Paris does not want to return to the deficit perspectives that were present in the 1960s and 1970s. Teachers must be aware of other cultures beyond the monoculture and monolingual white middle-class norms of languages (Paris,

2012). Without any resistance to views that support a monoculture, communities of color and those who speak other languages will be overlooked (Paris, 2012). The struggle against the deficit model is difficult, but necessary so all cultures can be acknowledged and sustained in the classroom (Paris, 2012).

The research that supports the benefits of multi-cultural education and culturally sustaining teaching in the development of students' self-worth and self-efficacy is the reason I chose to add a cultural proficiency observation sheet to the CLASS observations conducted. Acknowledgement and integration of students' cultures in the classroom is another way to strengthen relationships with students and develop a strong sense of self-respect. One of the themes that emerged from this study addresses harmony with school staff and families. Participants expressed the importance of getting to know parents and embracing and understanding cultural differences with their students, leading to engagement and motivation with learning.

Knowledge is a social construction. Teachers should be capable of infusing students' cultures in daily lessons and interactions to engage and motivate students. Culture should not be questioned or ridiculed but become an integral part of the approach to teaching and learning. Students have brainpower but need to know there are opportunities to participate in knowledge-building (Ladson-Billings, 1994). According to Milner (2006), teacher preparation programs should strongly consider designing courses and field experiences that help teacher candidates develop the skills, knowledge and dispositions needed to teach in diverse settings (Milner, 2006).

The second issue related to this research study is adequate support from other experienced staff and administration once teachers begin teaching. Educators face so many

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obstacles and sometimes lack the inner strength to fight back and keep moving forward despite the pressure. In addition, most teachers work alone without the support of colleagues (Ingersoll, 2012). The participants shared the benefits of having supportive school administrators and other teachers to help them plan lessons.

Teachers who had strong support from administration and other teachers, showed attributes of educational resilience. They were able to cope with the daily struggles and had the endurance to keep striving when challenges occurred. Two of the participants in the study stated they had a mentor during their first year of teaching. The mentor met regularly with the participants and provided the guidance and support needed to have a manageable school year. One participant still remains in contact with her mentor. Another participant did not have a mentor her first year teaching and shared her continuous thoughts about quitting because she felt so isolated and overwhelmed.

One of the trends in the teaching force in the past 10 years is a decline in the percentage of veteran teachers and an increase in beginner teachers (Ingersoll, 2012). As a result, school systems are now providing support and training to assist novice teachers (Ingersoll, 2012). Ingersoll (2012) states induction may be able to address this issue and may assist with the retention of teachers and program improvement. The concept of induction programs can be beneficial not only to beginning teachers but also veteran teachers as the field of education continues to change.

If programs and trainings are established to cultivate educational resilience and teacher-student interactions, it would be most beneficial if social and emotional well-being is considered, along with culturally sustaining pedagogy. Teachers and students both benefit when students are

taught to embrace their own and other cultures and accept social and emotional differences

present in the classroom. Students have a greater chance of sitting in a classroom with a teacher

capable of providing teaching and learning experiences that include excellence, equity, and

inclusiveness.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

When conducting this study, I purposefully selected participants teaching grades

kindergarten through third. I chose to delimit the grades of the teachers I interviewed and

observed because I was most familiar with teaching and observing the early and elementary

grades. In addition, the CLASS observation tool was appropriate to use with grades kindergarten

through third.

The study is delimited based on the classroom observations provided for analysis. I used

two classroom observations midway through the school year, so a portion of the findings are

constrained to observations collected in a given period of time. This time frame may not be a

representation of the way in which teachers would interact with their students during the

beginning or end of the school year.

All participants were classroom teachers selected by the principal as a result of displaying

supportive teacher-student relationships with their students. My knowledge of the teachers'

interactions with the students was limited. I felt the principal had a more accurate sense of the

performance of the teachers so I allowed the principal to identify the teachers. The delimitation is

that I asked the principal to choose the participants, assuming she knew her teachers best. I had

to delimit the selection process of participants because of the small pool of teachers available.

One of the limitations of the study was the level of information teachers shared. Newer teachers were concerned about information being shared with administrators while tenured teachers did not present concerns about information being divulged. As a result, some teachers may have withheld information about administration or other colleagues.

In research practice, theorizing means being eclectic and drawing on what appears to work (Wuest, 2000). Insights emerged and interpretative thoughts occurred while analyzing the data. As a researcher, one of the limitations in qualitative research is subjectivity when analyzing the data. I expressed some of my possible biases and subjectivity with a colleague who is a demographer and a community action researcher. She shared with me strategies to acknowledge and address biases that included asking other colleagues to review themes and codes. She also reinforced the importance of member checking. My thoughts of what was observed and learned were interpreted from the vantage point of my own personal thoughts and experiences. As a result, interpretation of the data was a meticulous process and I became a part of the constructed conceptions about teacher-student interactions. Careful and reflective thought was practiced when examining the rich data. I was conscious of my subjectivity and aware of my biases and experiences as I interpreted the data. Short breaks were taken between analyses to allow for reflection. Then I revisited thoughts repeatedly about coding. Triangulation of data, peer examination of data, and a dense description of research methods occurred to lessen subjectivity and present the research based on the comments and observations of the participants.

Future Directions

This study has implications for the future educator preparation process of teacher candidates, ongoing professional development of in-service teachers, and cultivating

educationally resilient teachers. The findings from this study share the perspectives of teachers and their ideas about teacher-student interactions in the classroom and educational resilience, and the supports and constraints that exist in the teaching field today. My intention is other teachers interested in improving student and teacher success will read the findings of this study and think about their role as a teacher and their critical influence on each and every student in the classroom. For those teachers who may be struggling to be an effective teacher and want to cultivate stronger relationships with their students and protective factors that assist them in becoming resilient, the themes presented in this study will be a starting point to address issues that accompany almost all teachers. Teachers are resilient if they possess protective factors that allow them to have knowledge about teaching and learning, have endurance, are in harmony with school staff and parents, and have positive connections with their students. When teachers are resilient they are able to model these same protective factors in the classroom which cultivate educational resilience with their students.

Other school staff and administration may benefit from this study by working toward the creation of a school culture that provides ongoing teacher support and training, engages parents, and welcomes collaboration amongst staff. Once some of these fundamentals are implemented, perhaps teachers will be better equipped to have strong and unyielding connections and exchanges with their students, cultivating educational resilience for students and teachers.

The findings from this research study propose the need for additional research. Further phenomenological research conducted on teachers' lived experiences in developing their educational resilience and that of their students could lead to added insight about the importance of teacher-student interactions and educational resilience. I focused on a small group of

elementary classroom teachers teaching in an urban setting. Additional studies in both urban and

suburban school settings examining the interactions of teacher and students might reveal

similarities and differences of teacher-student interactions in different school settings.

The teachers in this study were interviewed and observed about half-way through the

school year. In future studies, investigators may want to explore teacher-student interactions in

the beginning of the school year with more observation cycles and interviews over a longer

period of time, noting whether interactions and resilience strategies change over a school year.

Final Conclusions

The final theme of positive connections and exchanges with students was particularly

powerful for me. The participants passionately shared their stories about how they build

relationships with their students through instructional strategies, daily conversations and

interactions with their students. If teachers can passionately share their stories about how they

build relationships with their students through instructional strategies, daily conversations, and

interactions with colleagues, administrators and parents, then their personal resilience can

translate into cultivating their students' resilience. If teachers do not have the attributes outlined

in the four themes presented in this study, then they are debilitated when fostering their own

students' resilience.

The results of the questionnaire, observations and interviews detailed in the previous two

chapters captured the meaningful kinds of exchanges that occur between teachers and students, a

protective factor of resilience. All of the teachers I interviewed and observed held high

expectations of their students and maintained discipline and structure in their classrooms. In

addition to discipline and structure the participants also felt it was necessary to be caring. Some

participants had better control than others, but it was clear the participants spent most of their time exhibiting behavior that created a positive and accepting learning environment, as evidenced by the narratives written about the classroom observations.

So what does all this mean? What impact does this research study have on teachers, students and learning? Standardized tests and accountability have taken precedence over the importance of teacher dispositions and their ability to build relationships with students. Luthar (2006) states "relationships are the crux of human development. The desire to belong is a basic human need, and positive connections with others lie at the very core of psychological development" (p. 780). Education needs a new paradigm shift that moves away from standardized testing to teacher preparation that allows teachers to enter the classroom as an educationally resilient person ready to defy the stresses of teaching and capable of developing positive and meaningful exchanges with their students.

A debate exists amongst stakeholders that teachers are entering the classroom unprepared. The field of education faces the issue that a certified teacher does not ensure you have a "qualified" teacher. According to Kunjufu (2002), "the inadequate training of teachers is the single most debilitating force at work in American schools" (p. 2). The data from participants support the negative effects of an inadequately trained teacher. One of the participants struggled every day to come to work because she was not properly trained and prepared to teach. My interpretations of the data show a resilient teacher is adequately trained and has the experience and knowledge to teach students successfully. A resilient teacher cultivates resilience in his or her students, leading to school success for students and teachers.

Education preparation providers can no longer continue with the same preparation process that does not provide pre-service teachers with adequate field experiences, courses about cultural competence, social and emotional learning, and professional teacher dispositions that cultivate teacher-student interactions, and educational resilience. To improve student success and avoid a future teacher shortage, it is imperative teachers enter the classroom prepared to cope with all of the myriad issues involved with teaching in the 21st century. Teachers must be educationally resilient if students are to be educationally resilient.

Education, like resilience is fluid. It changes and fluctuates and does not remain constant. As a result, all teachers need adequate teacher preparation *before* entering the field and ongoing professional development and support after becoming a classroom teacher. Teachers have to possess the fours themes outlined in this study to become a resilient teacher and to cultivate resilience in their students. Without these components, not only will children continue to be left behind, but teachers will be left behind as well.

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APPENDIX A

University Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

University of New Orleans

_____

Campus Correspondence

Principal Investigator: Richard Speaker

Co-Investigator: Hazel Spaulding Parker

Date: April 27, 2012

Protocol Title: "Relationship-Driven Teaching that Cultivates Caring, Cultural Acceptance and School Engagement"

IRB#: 05Apr12

The IRB has deemed that the research and procedures described in this protocol application are exempt from federal regulations under 45 CFR 46.101category 2, due to the fact that any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Exempt protocols do not have an expiration date; however, if there are any changes made to this protocol that may cause it to be no longer exempt from CFR 46, the IRB requires another standard application from the investigator(s) which should provide the same information that is in this application with changes that may have changed the exempt status.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best wishes on your project.
Sincerely,

Robert D. Laird, Ph.D., Chair
UNO Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

APPENDIX B

Hazel S. Parker

<div align="center">Informed Consent Agreement
Teacher-Student Interactions Research Project</div>

<u>What it's about (purpose)</u>
I am studying classroom teacher-student interactions in elementary schools and teacher perceptions about educational resilience.

<u>What to expect</u>
As part of this research project, I will ask you some questions about teacher-student interactions and educational resilience. Please respond to the questions freely and truthfully. The interviews will be audio recorded. I will use the recordings to gather data about teacher-student interactions in the classroom for this project only. This information will not be shared with your principal or others without your consent.

Would it be ok for me to record you for this purpose?
<u>Agreement</u>

_____ I know my participation in this project is voluntary. I know that I can stop at any time I want to stop. I know that I would not be penalized in any way if I decided not to participate or continue.

_____ I give permission to be audio recorded as long as the following guidelines are followed: (1) the recordings will be used only for the purpose of this project; (2) my name or other identifying information will NOT be attached to the recordings; (3) copies of the recordings will not be available to anyone outside of the project; (4) the recordings will be destroyed when the information is no longer needed for the project.

<u>Do you have any questions?</u>

_____ I have asked all the questions I have now and they have been answered. When I have more, I know I can ask them.

By signing my name, I agree that the statements have been read to me, and I understand them.

Name (Printed)_____ Date_____

Signature _____ Date _____

Project Representative _____ Date _____

For further information:
Hazel S. Parker, UNO Doctoral Student
hsparker@uno.edu
504.280.XXXX

APPENDIX C
<div align="right">Hazel S. Parker</div>

Initial Questionnaire

Please complete the following short questionnaire and respond to the questions truthfully. I will use this information to gather data about teacher-student interactions in the classroom and teacher perceptions for this research project only. This information will not be shared with your principal or others without your consent.

1. Name:

2. Age:

3. Gender:

4. Race/Ethnicity:

5. Grade you are currently teaching:

6. Number of years teaching:

7. Grades previously taught:

8. Certification(s) [Please state the type and the state]:

9. Degrees earned:

Thank you!

For further information:
Hazel S. Parker, UNO Doctoral Student
hsparker@uno.edu
504.280.XXXX

APPENDIX D

Hazel S. Parker

Interview Questions

Interview Guide

1. Thank subject for agreeing to participate in the interview.
2. Introduce myself briefly, sharing professional and personal information.
3. Explain the purpose of the interview and my goals for the research. Discuss my interest in teacher-student interactions in elementary grades. Talk about how I am interested in gathering information about teacher-student interactions in the classroom and **teacher perceptions** about teacher-student interactions and dispositions.
4. Present Human Subject Consent Form and obtain required signatures.
5. Ask the subject to share a little information about her life/career. (What grade you teach, how long you have been teaching, number of own children, if any, etc.)
6. Explore the following questions:
    a. Background/demographics: Age, number of years teaching, credentials, how long have you lived in New Orleans
    b. Tell me about your teacher-student interactions when you were in elementary school, kindergarten – third grades.
    c. Tell me about any teacher preparation classes in college that addressed teacher-student interactions.
    d. Tell me about your first year teaching and your experiences related to student-teacher interactions.
        i. Have your attitudes/feelings about teacher-student interactions changed over time?
        ii. If so, why do you think your attitude has changed?
    e. How do you get to know your students?
    f. What dispositions do you possess that help strengthen student-teacher relationships?
    g. What instructional strategies do you use with students who are struggling to learn?
    h. What is your philosophy about teacher-student interactions?
        i. What is the connection between teacher-student interactions and student achievement?
        ii. What is the connection between teacher-student interactions and students' emotional development?
        iii. What is the connection between teacher-student interactions and students' social development?
        iv. How do you think about students' cultures when you are creating lesson plans?
    i. I am trying to better understand how teachers describe educational resilience. How would you describe educational resilience?
    j. Is there anything else you would like to share about teacher-student interactions?
7. Conclude the interview by thanking the subject for his/her responses.

APPENDIX E
OBSERVATION SHEET
Cultural Proficiency

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Teacher:Observer:
Start time:End time:
Number of adults:Number of children:

_____

CONTENT (circle all; check majority):FORMAT (circle all; check majority):

Lit/Lang Arts Math   ScienceRoutine   Whole group   Individual time
Social Studies   ArtMeals/snacks Small group
Other: _____Free choice/centers

_____

[Domain: Emotional Support]Circle appropriate score.
Positive Climate: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- Accepting of students who are not from one's own culture;
- Advocacy for students from all cultural groups;

Notes

_____

Negative Climate: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- Inappropriate responses to cultural groups;
- Stereotypes of cultural groups;

Notes

_____

Teacher Sensitivity: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- Interacting, modeling and risk-taking behaviors that support all cultures;

Notes

_____

Regard for Student Perspectives: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- Willing to look at another's perspective through a diverse lens;

Notes

_____

[Domain: Classroom Organization]Circle appropriate score.
Instructional Learning Formats: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

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•Students' interests are included in culturally-related topics;

•Differentiated instruction to accommodate the needs of all learners, including those with a background/culture unlike one's own;

Notes

_____

[Domain: Instructional Support]

Concept Development:1   2   3   4   5   6   7

•Connections to cultures within the classroom in lessons/activities;

•Acknowledgement of varying cultures in the classroom;

Notes

VITA

Hazel Spaulding Parker grew up in southern New Jersey. In 1990, she earned her Bachelor's degree in early childhood education from Trenton State College, now The College of New Jersey. While teaching first grade in Princeton Junction, Hazel enrolled in The College of New Jersey again and completed a Master's degree in Developmental Reading in 1998. Hazel relocated to New Orleans and taught one year in a public school. During the next six years, Hazel worked at Xavier, Tulane, and Loyola Universities training college students who tutored children and adults, managing national research projects, and providing technical support and training to adult literacy providers. Hazel and her family relocated to Charlotte after Hurricane Katrina where she began her doctoral pursuit at the University of North Carolina – Charlotte. Her commitment to rebuilding New Orleans brought her back to the city and she joined the University of New Orleans' College of Education and Human Development doctoral program.

While pursuing her doctoral degree, Hazel started her own consulting business, writing curricula and providing technical support and training to universities and non-profit organizations. In addition, she worked part-time in the College of Education and Human Development at the University of New Orleans (UNO) as a graduate assistant, supervisor of student teachers, and an adjunct professor.

Hazel was awarded a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with a minor in urban studies in 2013. After graduation, she continued working at UNO as the Assessment Coordinator in the College of Education and Human Development.