“Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.”

-Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*
EXAMINING CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDINGS IN THE BUILDING AND MAINTAINING OF STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS BY WAY OF PRODUCTIVE REFLECTION PRACTICES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

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ABSTRACT

Research on student-teacher relationships over the last several decades has focused on the impact that such relationships have for the student. From such research we know that the relationship between a teacher and the student does promote cognitive and social development as well as academic achievement. Research has also demonstrated that classroom teachers prefer certain personality and character traits. It is plausible that these preferences contribute to differential treatment of students. Acknowledging that differential behaviors do occur, this study intends to explore the question of why they occur and to investigate what influence, if any, productive reflection might have on those behaviors.

The purpose of this research was to examine changes in relationships between a teacher and the individual students in her class over the course of one school year. Both teacher and researcher systematically examined concepts of closeness between teacher and student through productive reflection techniques, including the creation of diagrams to physically represent the tacit closeness the teacher perceived. In addition, observations of classroom interactions, personal reflections written by the teacher, and interviews consisting of guided reflection were compared and contrasted to discover differences between the perceptions held by the teacher and what is displayed in the classroom. The
findings suggest that the teacher was influenced by the interactions with her students and that those interactions in turn may indicate significant implications for how, why and with whom she created and maintained relationships, as well as the type of relationships established. Results from this study expand on recent findings regarding the factors that influence a teacher’s choice for interaction with specific students by illuminating those social concepts and processes that persuade teachers as they make relationship choices. This study concludes that classroom relationships are much more fluid than previously thought and highlights the potential effectiveness of using productive reflection techniques to promote change.
The most naturally caring teacher the world has ever known.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Students’ perceptions that their teachers care about them have been related to many positive social and cognitive outcomes. Forming such positive, supportive relationships can be a challenge for teachers, given the wide-ranging needs, abilities, and personalities of students in a typical classroom. The purpose of this study was to explore how relationships between one teacher¹ and her students developed over the school year, with a special interest in understanding the teacher’s perceptions and perspectives about the challenge of maintaining relationships with students with whom she did not naturally connect.

Background of the Study

The interest surrounding relationships between students and teachers is not new. For more than 30 years, researchers have examined teacher-student interactions in the classroom and how they affect the learning that takes place (Brophy, 1974). Researchers have noted that teachers behave differently in the classroom toward various students, and these behaviors affect the relationships built therein (Babad, 1990; Brophy, 1974).

¹ The teacher participating in this study is a female second grade teacher. Thus all references to teachers will be in the feminine pronouns of she or her.
These relationships are guided by several factors including the individual student’s need for academic instruction (Pianta, 1999), the teacher’s attempt to ethically address all students (Goldstein, 1999; Noddings, 1995a), the teacher’s reactions to student personality (Davis, 2003; Newberry & Davis, 2008), the student’s behavior (Brophy, 1974), the social/ emotional needs of both teacher and student, and the teacher’s beliefs and view of her role as teacher (Woolfolk Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006), as well as other ideological beliefs in regards to teaching.

The many factors listed that guide the formation of relationships are social constructs of human need as well as logistical constructs of teaching as a profession. Interpersonal interaction, emotional needs, and communication styles are some of those social constructs that influence relationships. The logistical constructs of teaching and tasks like curriculum creation and evaluation also influence relationships, and these tasks are easily identified because they are addressed in teacher training programs. They are also observable in the classroom and therefore somewhat controllable. A teacher can tell by test scores and through working with students how much academic instruction a student needs. But the social factors, such as personal reactions to student personality, are social constructs that are not as obvious, even to the one who is experiencing the reaction. These social constructs are crucial in relationship formation in everyday life, and the classroom is no exception. Classrooms are Petri dishes of activity where personalities react to one another in a highly contained and unnatural environment. The variables in form of personality, background, ability, and so on are constantly changing from year to year. The only constant in the classroom is the teacher. Yet the teacher may
not be a constant after all—her differing reactions to the variety of students also factor into the overall end product and outcome when it comes to student success and classroom climate. In fact, the influence of the interchange between teacher and student is one of the greatest variables in the classroom; therefore the relationship formed between the teacher and the student is of great importance for the weight it carries in the creation of the overall learning environment, as well as the personal influence for any particular student and the teacher.

Statement of Subjectivity

I acknowledge that teaching is one of the most demanding professions, requiring abundant time, commitment and personal resources. The rewards for teaching are not always apparent or socially respected. Among those rewards are opportunities for working with students and creating relationships that are supportive, satisfying and mutually beneficial. Although the relationships formed in the classroom are foundational to the learning that occurs, we do not fully understand what goes into creating and maintaining good classroom relationships.

Some things that we do know about relationships are that good ones benefit the students and require effort on the part of the teacher. We also know from social psychology that relationships are unstable—the perception of personal acceptance or rejection influences interactions. In theory, rejection would make an individual tend to either conform to or avoid the one who rejects (Leary, 2003; Tharpe, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000).
In the classroom, rejection is not always labeled as such; teachers speak of needs—those students who need her and those students who do not (Newberry & Davis, 2008). In an *ethic of care*, ideal relationships are defined as a give and take between parties by which the one cared for accepts and responds to the one caring in interactions that edify both (Noddings, 1995a). The goal for the teacher is to avoid emotionally distancing herself from those for whom she should care as part of the professional role as a teacher. However, the possible tension between even benign rejection of a teacher by a student could possibly lead to emotional responses that may affect the teacher’s response to that student and therefore interactions in the classroom. One interest in conducting this study is to observe how a teacher balances even minor rejection cues with an ethic of care as she attends to the relationships in her classroom.

**Statement of the Issue**

A successful relationship is a reciprocally beneficial one in which both parties are giving and receiving (Goldstein, 1999). Imbalanced relationships are those in which one person has more power or information than the other. In some instances an imbalanced relationship is still a positive, nurturing one, such as a parent-child relationship. Other times this relationship is negative and oppressive, like a dictator-subject relationship. When there is an imbalance in the relationship, yet the goal is still for favorable outcomes for both involved, one party carries the burden of the care and maintenance of the relationship if it is to survive (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992).

The teacher-student relationship is an imbalanced relationship. The adult/teacher has more information than the child/student. But unlike the dictator-subject relationship,
the teacher uses that information to help rather than to hinder the student. In this way the role of the teacher in relation to the student is much more like the parent-child relationship (H. Davis, 2006). The relationship is a nurturing one in which the teacher guides the student in development and growth. However, the relationship between parent and child is sustained because the parent has an intrinsic motivation to maintain that relationship. The parent receives love, respect, and other positive experiences that come with parenthood. These experiences repeatedly promote the continued desire to maintain the relationship with the child. When a child rebels against a parent, the parent may struggle, but will persist because of the inherent bond between parent and child that propels the relationship.

Similarly, teachers receive varying amounts of love and respect from students. At times they may also experience indifference and rejection. Unlike a parent, a teacher may not have strong feelings of responsibility towards every student in the class. What happens when a teacher, who does not have that parental bond, is repeatedly rejected by a student, or has only frustrating interactions with a student, or simply does not get along with a particular student? How does a teacher handle such indifference from students while attempting to sustain a positive relationship?

There is research indicating that teachers respond differently to their students but are not necessarily aware of the differential behaviors that they display in the classroom (Babad, 1990; Brophy, 1974; Newberry & Davis, 2008). There is also a great deal of evidence that the teacher-student relationship has a significant effect on the achievement of the student, both in academics and in other domains (Pianta, 1999; Pianta & Stuhlman,
Much of that research presents evidence that teachers are widening the gap between high achieving and low achieving students by their preferential treatment and differing behaviors (Babad, 1992; Brophy, 1974). This leads to poor relationships with those who may actually benefit most from encouraging and high quality relationships (Woolfolk Hoy & Weinstein, 2006). Many reasons have been proposed for why this problem continues to persist, but in much of this research the teachers’ voices are silent. Johnson (as quoted in Brophy, 1974) suggests that the fast pace of teaching detracts from the ability of the teacher to do more than manage the class. High demands on the teacher’s time for the many tasks and responsibilities that come with teaching leave little time to do more than react to situations as they arise. Feldon (2007) refers to this as an issue of cognitive overload, which causes teachers to automate many aspects of teaching in order to attend to the areas in which they are less practiced. Relationships with certain students (for example, those whose personalities reflect negative characteristics of past students) may be less attended to, or become automated and rote.

Rationale for the Study

No one is immune to social influences or individual differences. The interactions that have combined to create the world we live in vary from person to person. When two people meet, they must reach common ground in order to communicate successfully. Social interactions influence decisions concerning how we identify ourselves, with whom we choose to identify, and why we choose to identify with them (Tharpe et al., 2000). When thrown into a large group of unknown others, we immediately seek commonalities
and then gravitate to people with whom those commonalities are most salient (Tharpe et al., 2000). Research on the social world of children shows that student self-involvement and concern for peer acceptance can lead to rejection of adults (Corsaro & Eder, 1990).

In the field of social psychology, there is research indicating that all people monitor interactions for rejection cues, and even low-level rejection cues affect us (Leary 2003).

If social influences are inescapable and the tendency to seek the company of those who are most like us guides our interactions, then teachers are susceptible to all kinds of rejection from students. Students, especially young elementary students, are not cognitively aware of social influences upon them or of social influences they create; they will seek to fulfill their own needs and disregard the needs of adults (Pollard, 1996). That is the nature of children: not selfishly or inconsiderately, but as a consequence of their cognitive development, children do not see others through the same social lens (Corsaro, 2003).

The interpretation of social cues may contribute to the difference in enacted behaviors toward different students. It can be difficult to be disliked or ignored as a teacher, regardless of the source of the rejection. In light of the research on the differential behaviors of teachers in the classroom, I wonder about the extent to which the clash between the social world of children and the social monitoring of a teacher affects classroom interactions. Emotional responses can be evoked by even low-level rejection cues (Leary, 2003). It’s possible that a teacher who feels rejected by a student may unknowingly reject a student in kind (Newberry, 2006). For a teacher dedicated to the moral responsibility to care for every child, the challenge would be to move past the
natural emotional response to a rejection cue in an effort to ethically care for each child. The purpose of this study was to examine the affective domain of the classroom. As I observed interactions in the classroom and compared them to perceptions of the teacher about her relationships with the students, I have begun to reach an understanding of how relationships function.

Significance of the Study

Awareness of an issue is vital in producing change (Bruner, 1996). This study was designed to increase one teacher’s awareness through multiple means, but largely through self-discovery. I believe that the teacher’s reflection on her own behaviors and relationships and the resulting insights, are keys to discovering her teaching self as it now stands, as well as directing action for improvement and growth. The most significant aspect of this study is that the awareness came from the teacher as she participated in the interviews and discussions. I, as researcher, assumed the role of photographer, allowing her to see the collection of pictures she herself created that I simply captured and showed to her. This research also was situated to be a form of action research in which the teacher is a co-researcher into her own practice. Many of the things we did together at first, the teacher is able to do on her own for continued reflection throughout her teaching career. This reflective exercise will allow for proactive rather than reactive approach in her teaching (Brophy, 1974).

Reflective teaching practices implemented in the beginning years are likely to help teachers improve their teaching (E. Davis, 2006). By reflecting on both teaching practices and interactions that develop relationships, a teacher is able to identify practices
that contribute to or detract from positive relationship building. Also a habit of reflecting can aid in foreseeing potentially difficult situations, thereby allowing a teacher to take the steps to avoid or at least diminish the potential impact of the difficulty. The learning achieved will benefit the teacher of the study and can lead to lifelong improvement and increased satisfaction in teaching. The protocol employed in this study could easily be modified for daily use in the classroom. Also the information and understanding achieved through this study will be important for pre-service teachers as they prepare to take on their first class full of students. The practice of reflective teaching can be emphasized in teacher training, and the tool utilized is offered as an option to aid in forming the habit of systematically reflecting on individual relationships.

Questions for Research

The teacher has the responsibility to make sure that the relationships with her students are as beneficial as possible for the students regardless of their reaction to her. Because positive treatment is potentially non-reciprocal, accomplishing such a task is hard work. In light of the research on differential behaviors by teachers, the overwhelming evidence that teachers have great influence in the progress of students, and the lack of information about what guides teachers’ decisions in forming and maintaining relationships, I became interested in examining how teachers experience relationships in their classrooms. For this study then I asked the following research questions:

1. How does this teacher construct relationships with her students?
   • To which students is she drawn and why?
• What does she do to create and maintain positive connections, especially with students she is not naturally drawn to or with students who differ from her in experiences or cultural backgrounds?

2. How do her perceptions of students affect the ways in which she interacts with them?
   • How does she describe her relationships?
   • Does she experience rejection, and how does she manage it?

3. What theories and beliefs guide her decision-making as she interacts with students?
   • How are her beliefs enacted in the classroom?
   • What effect do they have on her relationships with individual students?

4. How does this teacher describe caring and her efforts to care?
   • How do her interactions change over time?
   • How does she engage in natural caring for all children?

5. What is the value of productive reflection?
   • How does this teacher experience the interview protocol?
   • What effect does this kind of reflection make on the classroom interactions initiated by this teacher?

Limitations and Assumptions of the Study

This is a single case study of one elementary school teacher and the relationships with the students in her class; thus there may be conditions that restrict generalizibility. However, I chose to do a single case study specifically to focus closely on social
influences on a teacher, decision-making processes involved in the classroom, and ways the behaviors enacted are realized and justified on a micro-level. My previous research showed similarities between teacher behaviors inasmuch as participants were aware of their role as teacher (Newberry & Davis, 2008). In conducting a single case study, I could dedicate more time to the teacher/participant in exploring along with her the influences, decision-making processes, and other factors that were bringing about action.

Educational researcher Jere Brophy stated that “we are all much more alike than different” (personal communication 8/19/07), and with that assumption, I explored what influences affect this one teacher; I leave the applications up to individuals who come to identify with her story and circumstances.

In this study, I made three assumptions concerning human nature and teaching: (1) that all teachers aim to, and are genuinely interested in, helping all children; (2) that teaching is a difficult and demanding job that requires emotional and intellectual effort that can potentially tax a person’s physical and psychological strength; and (3) that there are social and psychological reasons behind all behaviors, whether recognized or not. These assumptions are the result of the research reviewed and my personal experiences as well as interactions I have had with teachers. My social lens is influenced by these assumptions, which are embedded in my research questions. Due to my past research and reading in the field, along with my limited experience as a teacher, I bring opinions of what teachers can and ought to do, which may be more difficult to implement in practice. I admit that I hold high standards for teachers, and at times I may even expect too much. I realized that I needed to come to this project with very few expectations of how this
particular teacher in my study was conducting her class and what I thought or believed should have been happening. I intended to do my best to withhold judgment and simply present information with as much impartiality as possible. I attempted to deal with this bias by letting the teacher take the lead in the discussions. My intent was to observe and discuss the interactions that I noted taking place and compare the manner in which she was describing her students to ways in which she interacted with them, focusing on her rationale for noted choices and explanations for specific behaviors.

I also recognize a limitation to this study in the recruitment of participants. In presenting the study on relationships and stating that I would be observing interactions in the classroom, the very behaviors that I intended to observe were possibly tainted. My presence may have affected the way the teacher interacted with her students when I was there. I hoped to address this issue by observing for a full school year and varying the times and days that I observed. I found that from the beginning the students paid little attention to me, and both students and teacher became comfortable enough with my presence that the usual classroom business was not interrupted.

My attempts to intrude as little as possible did limit data collection. Because I chose not to have any recording devices in the classroom, I was limited to the interactions I was able to capture in my field notes. Yet because this is a single case study, there was only one teacher to observe, and I focused only on her actions and those of her students. Further, the themes and concepts that are discussed in this study are of interest across several fields of study, including Philosophy, Psychology, Social Anthropology, Sociology to name just a few. However, in this study I use a social cognitive lens based
on Social Cognitive learning theories for the purpose of discussing these issues as they pertain to Education and with that sole purpose, including definitions and applications.

Outline of the Presentation

I begin this study with a review of the literature from the field of social psychology addressing the social needs of adults and children. I will then introduce theories in relationship study, focusing on teacher-student relationships from educational research. The literature that is reviewed addresses the inherent needs of humans to feel accepted and included. I begin with a discussion of the literature on factors that guide relationships in the classroom, such as emotional labor, behaviors, responsibility, and ethics. From there, due to the research that has documented the significant influence that relationships between teachers and students can have on both academic and social domains, it is essential to learn what influences the teacher and what decisions she makes in the classroom in forming and maintaining relationships. Therefore, information regarding the social and biological aspects of human nature is discussed as it pertains to relationship needs and to implications for teachers of today’s classrooms in a global society. That is followed by information on the nature and influence of relationships in the classroom and expectations for teachers.

The next section will describe the methodology and design of my study. This is a multi-level design in which I combine observation, structured interviews, written teacher reflection, and semi-structured interviews to explore the meanings and reasons behind what appears to be going on. I chose a qualitative, phenomenological approach to this study because I believe that there are some things that cannot be quantified. My hope
was that through the narratives that the teacher provided in her discussion, the rationale and insight into her classroom relations would become apparent. Chapter Three begins with a rationale for the qualitative methodology. I give an overview of qualitative study and the theory behind it. I discuss social constructivist perspectives and advocate for their appropriateness in relation to this topic and to my purpose in answering the research questions. I then go into detail about the research design, describing the protocol and measures. That is followed by my method for analysis, which is a combination of validity checks through peer review and member-checking, each having access to the coding of transcripts and comparison of codes in data. The multi-level design of data collection allowed me to corroborate data from one form of collection with data from another.

The Findings section follows in Chapter Four. The findings are presented through both data tables and narrative inquiry. The narrative inquiry allows the story to unfold through the use of vignettes and rich, fully detailed description. The teacher’s own words are used as evidence for assertions made. The variety of ways that data were gathered were useful in corroborating the assertions and adding to the validity of each claim. I present the picture of the classroom studied and the relationships therein through the words of the teacher and with vignettes depicting what I observed in the classroom setting. Narrative inquiry is a method of qualitative research that allows the case study to be presented as it appears in the real world. The addition of assertions that I have made in this inquiry allows for a kind of guided tour of what life is like in this classroom. I
believe that the lived experience of the teacher and the students becomes more apparent when studied and presented in the same context and viewed from within and without it.

The following section summarizes and discusses the findings, connecting them to the original research questions and relevant literature. A more detailed discussion is given of the modifications of past heuristics that I propose based on the results of this study. This is a brief discussion of what the results mean for the teacher of this study as well as for future teachers.

Chapter Six is an overview of contributions to the field of educational research and teacher education as well as acknowledged limitations. The profiles compiled through this research will contribute to continued research on teacher-student relationships, adding significantly to the knowledge of what student characteristics most attract teachers and which decisions are made regarding how to deal with personalities. I anticipate that this study may have many valuable contributions, as I have used this protocol—a tool used by teachers to create diagrams of relationships in combination with verbal expressions of perspectives—in previous research and found it to provide much rich data (Newberry & Davis, 2008). The results were the same in this study, in which I situated the use of the tool in the interview protocol to be a benefit for both practicing and pre-service teachers. Limitations have already been presented in a previous section.
In Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, the need for belonging and feeling love is third among the five most basic needs, after physical needs for survival and assurance of safety (1968). Humans are social creatures, and as such have needs for contact with other humans. But more than just the need to share space and resources with others, we have a need for belonging that is inherent in our nature (Leary & Downs, 1995). This need is found in all aspects of our lives, and the relationships that we form based on that need shape our social world. We influence each other as we learn, explore, and discover truths about ourselves as well as about the world around us. The more we interact with others, the more we learn through them and are influenced by them. Feeling as though we belong is foundational in the developmental process for both biological and socio-emotional reasons. In the classroom, this means that other students and teachers can have a great influence on student development and learning.

Social Constructs

A myriad of factors influence social interactions. In the classroom there are some constructs that are common to society at large, as well as some that are specific to the environment of the classroom. Below I discuss only a few of those most pertinent.
Concerning the need to belong, it does not necessarily matter to what or with whom we belong; we only have to be comfortable with the idea that we do belong in some way in order to satisfactorily meet that need (Gardner, Pickett, & Brewer, 2000). Belonging is an important factor in human growth and development of competence in many areas of life (Connell & Wellborn, 1991); it can be described as vital for human survival (Rogoff, 1990). Humans know no alternative because their very existence from birth sets them up for social interaction and reliance on others for survival, physically and psychologically (Rogoff, 1990) as well as emotionally and intellectually.

Biologically, humans are wired to interact with others. The foundation for this need for social relationships can be explained from a biological perspective based on the systems model (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000) beginning with conception. Humans are born into social relationships that guide development based on the organization of biological and behavioral systems, from the physical dependence of the newborn for physiological nurturance to social behaviors necessary for survival skills related to obtaining physical needs. Each relationship is contained within networks of social and physical environments that combine to characterize the specifics of the relationship (i.e., defined by the locality, group dynamics, availability of resources, etc.). The relationship is also rooted in larger societal and cultural environments, and these networks of environments are constantly changing and exerting influence on each other (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000). Hence we are born into a social system that is founded on interdependence as we gain success through optimizing relationships.
Social Belonging

Interacting with others can be distinguished from belonging with others. The first two needs outlined by Maslow (1968) are biological needs—the need for food and shelter to care for the physical body, and the need for safety to assure existence will continue by reducing the threat on life. These can both be accomplished through physical processes alone and do not necessarily have to go beyond individual action, although these needs are met by others in infancy and early childhood. The third need is for belonging, which is less of a biological need than a social/emotional need. The need to be included and to feel a part of the group is different from mere objective action. A person’s self-identity is based on seeing the self as able to fit in with the group and be successful in other such attempts at personal relations on a more psychological plane (Brewer & Gardner, 2000; Leary, 2003; Leary & Downs, 1995).

Social cognitive theories of relationships focus on the social and emotional development of the individual based on what can be called an “innate need to belong” (Leary & Downs, 1995, p. 128), which drives the development and maintenance of all relationships of that individual. Leary and Downs (1995) suggest that “a great deal of human behavior can be conceptualized as attempts to foster social ties and to minimize the possibility of falling into disfavor with others who are psychologically important” (p. 128). Even though this process is largely unconscious, it is suggested that we constantly internally monitor our behavior to avoid being disassociated from the group (Leary, 2003; Leary & Down, 1995). This need to belong is so strong that we have become sensitive to all forms of feedback from others in order to monitor acceptance or rejection,
being more fully attuned towards rejection, not matter how benign (Leary, 2003). Early
on we become adept at reading non-verbal cues to discern the reaction that others have
toward us (Babad, 1992; Brophy, 1974; Rogoff, 1990), and we make adjustments
accordingly.

Social Belonging and Learning

There is evidence that personal relationships have a great impact on human
development within many contexts (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000). Just as the
newborn infant relies on an adult for its physical well-being, all humans seek love and
acceptance from others for psychological needs such as high self-esteem (Prince &
Howard, 2002). It is important to remember that the nature of our social context defines
interaction as relational; therefore there are myriad kinds of relationships. Here I want to
emphasize the positive relationships, meaning those that are beneficial for both parties.
This is an important difference because it is not the quantity, but the quality of the
relationships that will foster growth (Aron et al, 1992).

Many of the processes innate in what we recognize as relationships are linked to
the closeness of the relationship (Reis et al., 2000). Our beliefs regarding the evaluations
that others make of us have an influence on which groups we join (Leary, 2003). Our
closeness in relationships is also tied to how accepted we feel by members of the group.
At times, the need to feel accepted will pull us towards groups that may have negative
effects on our growth (Symth & Hattam, 2002), but in which we feel the greatest
acceptance (Tharpe et al., 2000). Due to the need to identify with others, we will first
seek group acceptance, but individual relationships within and outside of the group also
play an important role. Both individual and group acceptance will be influenced by the context in which the interactions are embedded. We therefore must look at the context in which relationships are formed as well as with whom they are formed.

**Social Context of the Classroom**

We are all influenced by our environment. The setting in which an event takes place will determine the outcome of resultant learning, so the context of the classroom is paramount in understanding the student who participates in it (Graue & Walsh, 1998). Relationships are essential to the developing social world of children as they gain knowledge about society and develop in many other areas. For most children school is the most important social setting outside of the home, and as such it is an obvious arena for making and creating influential relationships. As students spend a large part of their childhood inside the walls of a school building, they will naturally seek to fulfill their relational needs through the community created there. The pool of eligibles from which the students may select and form friendships is somewhat arbitrary (Tharpe et al., 2000). Although school authorities may have a rationale for assigning students to classrooms, most often the personalities and social needs of the students are not taken into consideration. Because of this random grouping in which all of the students may be strangers to each other, the need to belong may become intensified as the student struggles to seek belonging among a variety of groups and will persist in searching for belonging until his or her social needs are met (Gardner et al., 2000; Leary & Downs, 1995). In addition, relationships between teachers and students set the tone for the social context of the classroom and thus set a foundation for the learning environment therein.
Classroom Relationships

As noted above, relationships are important in human life, students form relationships early, and the classroom is one of the first opportunities to form non-familial relationships. The study of how and why relationships are formed in the classroom will help in understanding why they are influential in the lives of students.

Relationship Patterns

All relationships are bi-directional, and healthy relationships are reciprocal in meeting the needs of those involved. Healthy teacher-student relationships are reciprocal, based on the interaction of caring between the parties. This would include teachers and students who enjoy a personal connection that is constantly nourished and maintained (Gomez, Allen, & Clinton, 2004). However, not all relationships in the classroom are equal. Studies reveal that teachers tend to have preferences for students who are like them (Morganett, 2001), meaning that there are similarities in background and experience. Teachers are drawn to students whose personalities are like their own and who are likely to facilitate ease in classroom management (Newberry & Davis, 2008) by demonstrating desired behaviors (Babad, 1993; H. Davis, 2006; Wentzel, 1993). Teachers are also inclined to prefer students who show a high probability for success (Babad, 1990; Davis, 2003) and who are unlikely to be involved in conflict with the teacher (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Teachers also tend to be more drawn to students who demonstrate honesty and respect for self and peers (H. Davis, 2006), as well as enthusiasm in their motivation to achieve (Urdan & Maehr, 1995; Wentzel, 1993). In a sense, teachers accept students who show that they accept the teacher--either her
authority as the teacher or her as a person—and convey approval and liking for the teacher. Such acceptance indicates reciprocity of the teacher’s efforts in caring, which the teacher desires (Newberry & Davis, 2008), and promotes willingness by the teacher to continue to nurture the relationship (Winograd, 2003). It also provides her with the social acceptance needed to focus on other educational tasks. However, there are additional challenges with which teachers must deal in order to maintain positive personal relationships with all children.

Peer group

In addition to child-adult relationships, the classroom is where most students have their first social experiences with non-relative children. These relationships can have lasting effects on their social development and self-concept. Children are very concerned with peer acceptance (Corsaro & Eder, 1990; Smyth & Hattam, 2002), and the early elementary years are occupied with many emotions that come with finding themselves in strange company. The feeling of belonging and the quality of relationships inside the classroom has an impact on the learning environment (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Symth & Hattam, 2000) and on the students’ participation and engagement in that environment (Turner et al., 1998; Wentzel, 1993).

Despite success in navigating teacher relationships, the need for being accepted into a peer group and making friends is of greater importance to the child. It is not uncommon for teachers to have to vie for students’ attention in classrooms, as students will seek approval from peers over adults. Children are astute when it comes to group identity and will first seek camaraderie with other children (Corsaro, 2003). This is
because peers in the classroom fill the social needs of children due to their common goals such as play and other imaginative activities (Rogoff, 1990). Availability and proximity also play a role in choosing other children over an adult (Tharpe et al., 2000).

Children gain a sense of identity through their common resistance to adult rules that may initially appear confining, and they bond with other children and strengthen group belonging by resisting adult authority (Corsaro, 2003). Structured learning offered in a classroom is not always the primary goal for children, who are more preoccupied with the social acceptance of their peers (Connell & Wellborn, 1991), so teachers often become a rival, sometimes leading to a classroom dichotomy of teacher vs. students (Smyth & Hattam, 2002). However, the students who get the most out of the classroom experience, academically as well as in other developmental areas, are those who are successful at navigating relationships with both peers and teachers (Pollard, 1996). Those students who have the best relationships with their teachers are also reported as getting the best quality teaching time from the teacher (Brophy, 1974; Newberry & Davis, 2008).

**Teacher-Student Relationships**

It has become widely recognized that teacher-student relationships have the potential for great impact on the developing student in various domains (Davis, 2003). Many school-related functions are improved through supportive teacher-student relationships (Murray & Malmgren, 2005). Academic and behavioral outcomes can be predicted by early teacher-child relationships for students up through junior high school (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Manzaticopoulos, 2005; Wentzel, 2002). For example, emotional competencies (Murray & Murray, 2005) are highly correlated to positive teacher-student
relationships, as are students’ motivation to succeed (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Ryan, Connell, & Deci, 1985; Wentzel, 2002). The more supportive teachers are in their relationships with students, the more comfortable and engaged students are in the classroom (Reeve, 2006). Conversely, a child’s adjustment to school and participation in class can be negatively affected when the relationship between child and teacher is distressed (Manzticopoulos, 2005).

For students to be comfortable in the classroom environment it appears that they want teachers who are interested in their personal lives as well as their academic lives (Morganett, 2001; Woolfolk Hoy & Weinstein, 2006). Students in today’s global society need teachers who care about them and show concern for them personally as well as concern for their learning (Wilke, 2005). Safe learning environments leading to mutual learning and achievement are most likely to happen when relationships between teachers and students can be classified as caring (Wilke, 2005), with both parties feeling affinity for one another (Goldstein, 1999). Emotional closeness and support create a mutual tendency for teacher and child to form relationships, as caring interchange is established and continually acted upon (Noddings, 1995b). In this way the student, as well as the teacher, is relieved of the burden of looking for acceptance, which frees time and attention for learning activities. Having teachers who are emotionally attentive and responsive to the needs of their students often has a greater impact on the developing child than the specific kind of instructional method chosen (Babad, 1993; Davis, 2003; Hamre & Pianta, 2001).
Teacher Responsibility

Although teaching can be fun and rewarding at times, it is also difficult work (Winograd, 2003). Like any other work that requires dealing with people, multiple factors influence interactions, such as age, culture, background, personality, ability, and gender--requiring the worker to figure out ways to achieve an “intersubjective understanding” in order to successfully navigate the situation (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Teachers have little control over which students will be in the class and no control over those factors that influence who the children are and how well equipped they are to participate in school. The wide variety of personalities and backgrounds that make up the class will vary from year to year, but the responsibility to create an environment conducive for learning which is appropriate for each student always falls on the shoulders of the teacher. With such a responsibility, in addition to regular teaching duties, sometimes the emotional demands required in all that entails often get overlooked (Isenbarger & Zemblyas, 2006).

To teach effectively, one must attend to the emotional well-being of students (Ryan, Connell, & Deci, 1985). The development of supportive relationships is an important factor in achieving a critical balance required by the academic press for achievement that is necessary to motivate students (Middleton & Midgley, 2002). Teachers can direct relationships, as their beliefs about whether relationships are important will influence the type of relationships established. A teacher’s belief in where her attention is most necessary or where she may have the most potential influence determine where she will be inclined to place more emphasis as she establishes
relationships (H. Davis, 2006). Teachers as well as students place high value on the quality of the student-teacher relationships in terms of satisfaction of classroom life (Whiteman, Young, & Fisher, 1985), and studies have shown that teachers do have a great influence on the creation of the classroom culture and learning environment (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Deiro, 2005). However, until their other basic needs are met, concerns such as relationships are not given attention by the student. In the classroom it is often necessary for the child to first receive assurance that he is in a safe learning environment before his attention can be directed to other activities. Creating that safe environment often includes evaluating the variables that can influence the establishment of relationships between teachers and their students while considering barriers that might also impede them.

Teacher Relationship Issues

The responsibility for development of positive relationships in the classroom between teachers and students often falls on the shoulders of the teacher. This is one of the sources of satisfaction for teachers, but it can also be one of the most difficult aspects of the job.

Expectations

A great many expectations are placed on teachers. Winograd (2003) outlines how teachers are expected to feel affection for all of their students, yet avoid public displays of affection, while simultaneously remaining immune to negative emotion and rejection. Teachers are also expected to be able to maintain a high level of enthusiasm for each different content area, thus thoroughly enjoying all aspects of teaching. Not least on
the list is the ability to overlook the faults of their students, yet willingly face up to their own mistakes quickly and correct them just as easily (Winograd, 2003). This demanding list of attributes is ascribed to teachers as a group, but like any other group, the personalities amongst teachers and the actual qualities they possess vary. Perhaps because the majority of teachers are female, the teaching role has been assigned qualities that are associated with women. Thus characteristics and qualities of patience, self-control, kindness, and a nurturing nature are assumed to be commonalities among all teachers, along with being somewhat passive and submissive (Winograd, 2003). Even if all these attributes were true of the teaching core, it is difficult to maintain positive attitudes when various complex situations call forth negative emotional responses. The ebb and flow of life brings with it situations that make it nearly impossible to be at one’s best every day of the year.

Due to the nature of the profession, “teaching is a place were one can be heard, attended to, adored even. But it is also a place where one feels and confronts intense dislike” (Kelly, 2004, p. 157). As rewarding as teaching can be, it can also be very stressful, and teachers are susceptible to many things that can cause dissatisfaction and uneasiness. Teachers are often subject to critique, embarrassment and awkward situations. Judgments of their performance and competence come from members of the community, colleagues, and students. There are also issues of disappointment and frustration over classroom disruptions or over children who do not perform as expected (Winograd, 2003). Any one of these can be amplified by potential fear of rejection from unresponsive students (Palmer, 1998), which could have a negative effect on learning.
Along with students’ preoccupation for peer acceptance, there also may be a lack of interest in educational tasks, as well as behavioral disorders and dysfunctional family lives that will detract from the students’ ability to attend to the goals of education. Teachers, as human beings, also have pressures in their personal lives that will affect their emotions and possibly affect their ability to focus (Whiteman et al., 1985). Sometimes the combination of factors can be overwhelming, and teachers find it difficult to maintain positive attitudes and outlooks when the real feelings that are being dealt with are less than optimistic (Winograd, 2003). This dissonance between what teachers think they should feel and display in the classroom and what they actually are feeling can be very stressful (Whiteman et al., 1985; Winograd, 2003). Because many teachers’ classroom practices are influenced more by their personally held beliefs of teaching, which are subject to their own social needs and experience (Nier, 1976), the problem of maintaining positive relationships can be exacerbated teachers are unable to differentiate between actions and behaviors motivated by attempts to control and get results from actions motivated by real caring attitudes centered in the best interest of the students (O’Quinn & Garrison, 2004).

When teachers are asked what makes a good teacher, the most commonly listed characteristics are among those relating to the interpersonal elements of teaching and not to the more academic or professional goals of schooling in general (Murphy, Delli, & Edwards, 2004). However, teachers are sometimes reluctant to claim responsibility for forming classroom relationships and at times are unsure as to whether it is in the best interest of the student to do so (H. Davis, 2006). To understand the growth of both
teacher and student, more attention should be given to aspects of caring classroom relationships that appear to be foundational for positive learning environments (Gomez et al., 2004). This would include understanding how to implement theories of care and caring relationships into educational situations, including the maintenance of a caring attitude even when tempted to act otherwise (Noddings, 1995a; Warner, 2001). Research demonstrating how influential teacher-student relationships can be would seem to indicate that more attention should be given to this aspect of classroom culture.

*Emotional Labor*

In professions that deal heavily with personal interactions some emotional work and emotional labor will be involved. *Emotional work* is defined as actions performed, such as taking the time to listen to students or performing other actions that show concern (England & Farkus, 1986 as quoted in Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). Emotional labor includes the imbalance between what one feels and what one believes ought to be felt and the effort exerted to align the two, along with any endeavors aimed at remaining emotionally distanced from situations (Isenbarger, & Zembylas, 2006). An attempt to display emotions that one does not actually feel is also a part of emotional labor, as is attempting to hide emotions that one does not wish to display (Winograd, 2003). Teaching is a profession with more than its share of emotional labor.

Emotional labor is performed in many areas of teaching, including working with administration, other faculty, and parents as well as with students (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). Emotional labor is not necessarily a negative concept. Teachers often portray feelings that they do not actually experience when they perceive that portraying
the actual emotions would work in opposition to their goals or have some negative effect on the students (Winograd, 2003). For example, a teacher might invoke emotional labor in hiding deep concern over a student’s lack of progress and instead cheerfully encouraging the performance. Another common example is remaining calm and avoiding confrontation in the face of demanding or belligerent behaviors. In some instances it may be better for the teacher not to express her true emotions, and at other times it may be more appropriate to allow them to be known. Determining which is most appropriate for any given situation is difficult and may lead to teachers becoming unwilling to extend themselves emotionally if emotionality is frowned upon. Because teachers are not effective when they are emotionally detached, it is necessary to acknowledge the emotional element of teaching.

When the teacher accepts the emotional aspects of teaching, then emotional labor can be said to be performed in “good faith” (Winograd, 2003), meaning that perhaps the surface emotions are unauthentic, but the teacher performs the work to induce the feelings in an attempt to align herself with her beliefs. When the teacher does not agree that the feelings should be part of the job but forces or fakes them due to outside pressure, emotional labor is said to be performed in “bad faith” (Winograd, 2003). The dissonance created by the difference in action and feeling can be either beneficial or detrimental, depending on what response it evokes in the teacher. It can be a benefit by alerting the teacher to things that need attention, such as causing reflection to reevaluate her interactions with a difficult student (Newberry & Davis, 2008). However, it can be negative by causing her to ignore the reasons for the difference between what is felt and
what is done and thus never addressing those reasons and resolving them. Another
detriment would be if for some reason the actions that would be appropriate for the
emotion felt are suppressed due to outside forces (Winograd, 2003). When the teacher
feels that she has to stifle her emotional reactions, the effort to self-monitor the
dissonance created only add stress to her job.

Feelings will not always be acted upon, be they pleasant or unpleasant. However,
if feelings and actions are continuously not aligned, then the amount of emotional labor
required to maintain outward appearances will cause stress (Whiteman et al., 1985). This
can have a significant influence on the teacher’s willingness and motivation to continue
the emotional work of teaching, as well as have negative effects on her level of job
satisfaction and her self-concept as a teacher (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). It can also
lead to emotional issues such as depression and anxiety, as well as possible physical
consequences likely to be manifested as increased susceptibility to illness (Winograd,
2003). The difference between the emotional work of attending to cognitive activities
and the emotional labor involved in social/emotional requests can create dissonance
between actions and feelings. While teachers are less differential in their response to
academic press (Babad, 1992) and are able to engage in and respond appropriately to
requests for academic attention from students, how they deal with students varies when it
comes to press for relationships (Newberry & Davis, 2008).

Teachers differ in their responses to the relational press they receive from students
(H. Davis, 2006). The press placed upon teachers by emotionally or behaviorally
demanding students presents a different challenge, one that requires more emotional labor
on the part of the teacher, than that of students who are easier to manage and with whom teachers willingly participate in emotional work (Newberry & Davis, 2008). The challenge of teaching is that emotional labor of any kind can be physically and psychologically exhausting. The way in which the teacher responds to the student defines whether it is solely emotional work believed acceptable as part of the job or whether it is additional emotional labor. The distinction is personally determined by the teacher and can lead to different interactions with diverse groups of students. Potentially, these differentiated behaviors could in turn affect the student, who then may likely react to the behavior and perceived motivation of the teacher, which would again affect the way the teacher perceives and interacts with the student, affecting the performance, achievement and social adjustment of the student, and so on. Because this can be an endless social cycle of reading and reacting to behaviors between parties based on perceptions of acceptance, the ability to regulate emotions and behaviors becomes important for teachers when considering classroom interactions.

*Differential Behavior*

Compared to other social professions, the social climate in teaching relies more on relationships because of the structure of the classroom and the continuity of the interactions. Students often become the reference group for teachers, meaning that teachers may rely on students for feedback to evaluate their effectiveness, may seek affirmation through student response to them personally and may otherwise look for validation of their choices (Winograd, 2003). Because students are the major source for teacher feedback, teachers make decisions about how and with which students to spend
their time based on that feedback. Therefore, judgments made about a student, such as likelihood for success, will predispose a teacher to spend time with that student (Muller, Katz, & Dance, 1999). Depending on how teachers see their role in the classroom, they will spend time with the students who reflect and support that role (Woolfolk Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006). They will also spend more time with the students from whom they feel the least rejection (Davis, 2003). These judgments are likely not made consciously, but are rather subconsciously invoked as the teacher protects her own need to belong (Leary, 2003). Teachers do not always have the ability to deal with negative affect from students (Reeve, 2006), and they may not be aware of the influence that their choice or reaction may have on the relationships with students.

A great many different personalities are represented by a variety of students in the classroom. Inevitably there will be an equally variable number of expectations for each student, regardless of how hard the teacher tries to avoid forming them (Brophy, 1974). This is not necessarily a bad thing—judgments of character and needs are required to determine what resources students will need to be successful because “the way we diagnose our students’ conditions will determine the kind of remedy we offer” (Palmer, 1998, p.41). Perceptions and beliefs teachers hold regarding students will determine teachers’ attitude toward them. However, sometimes those perceptions more accurately describe the feelings and understandings of the teacher (Brophy, 1974) than the reality of student characteristics and needs. Regardless of the source of the motivating emotions, these emotions tend to define the relationship between the teacher and the student, which in turn will affect the interactions the teacher and student engage in with each other. And
according to some research, once the initial expectation and pattern of interaction are formed, those patterns are difficult to change (Brophy, 1974; Palmer, 1998).

After any stringent expectations and opinions of a student are defined, the teacher will tend to subconsciously but continuously respond to a student in a specific manner. Regardless of the teacher’s attempt to display only positive emotions, true feelings regarding others and situations are communicated—both through what she does and what she does not do (Babad, 1990, 1993; Brophy, 1974). Differential behaviors in the classroom are often the result of an attempt to cover true feelings. Although typically unconscious, this kind of emotional labor is manifest as behaviors that show favoritism towards some students as well as disapproval or dislike for others. Teachers often believe that they are able to conceal these undesirable feelings from students, but studies have shown that children are quite aware of the teachers’ true sentiments (Babad, 1990, 1992; Brophy, 1974). Students, including young elementary school children, are quite capable of reading the non-verbal cues that are expressed in opposition to the emotions felt (Babad, 1992; Rogoff, 1990). Attempts to cover the inappropriate affect often will be manifest in observable behaviors. Although verbalizing approval through praise or actions of which teachers are cognizant, such as giving rewards, can be easily controlled, other actions, such as body language, that are not so easily controlled are likely to speak the real emotion that is being repressed (Babad, 1992, 1993). Such attempts to mask behavior lead to the use of communication styles that are inauthentic, which affect relationships and the climate created in the classroom (Babad, 1990; Turner et al., 1998).
The social context of the classroom, shaped by the interactions of those within it, is constantly in flux as both students and teachers read each other for cues of approval and acceptance (Hicks, 2002; Rogoff, 1990). As they interact, they determine future interactions by responding to the behaviors of the other; teachers read and respond to students’ behavior, good or bad, and students in turn respond to how the teacher reacts to them. The influence that they have over each other is not always recognized, but it will determine future interactions and potential for relationship quality (Brophy, 1974). The emotional labor that is performed by the teacher to deal with difficult students seldom hides the fact that the relationship is weak. In fact, teachers may spend more time with lower achieving students, but the quality of that instruction time is not as high as with students who do not require such emotional labor, nor is the affective quality of the time involved as high (Babad, 1992). Newberry and Davis (2008) developed a model that represent how the teachers in their study reported being influenced by their perceptions of students’ personality and the intellectual and social challenges they presented, as well as their perceptions of students’ press for a relationship (Figure 1). They report three main factors that appeared to be influential in how teachers interacted with students: personality, relational press from the child, and challenge. Negotiating personality was outlined pertaining to the traits and personal characteristics that a teacher perceived or attributed to the student. Dealing with challenge referenced the way the teachers handled different situations brought on by a student’s unique issues or difficulties, if there be any. A child’s press for relationship with the teacher encompassed the amount of attention the
student required or did not require of the teacher. These three factors were sometimes easy for the teachers to handle and sometimes more challenging. How they are perceived then influenced how the teacher reacted. The model also identifies five different interaction-approach orientations that indicated how the teachers in the study received different students and how she was inclined to deal with him/her. They are (1) feeling affinity, (2) being reflective, (3) implementing strategies, (4) treating causally and, (5) acting professional.

Categorizing the different ways the teachers tended to approach their students, *Feel Affinity* meant that the teacher was naturally inclined to want to associate with the student and therefore interactions are easy and free. *Be Reflective* indicated that the
teacher was thoughtful regarding how to best deal with the student, pausing to reflect on the needs of the individual. Implement Strategies was a manner of interaction in which the teacher used tactics from her repertoire of teaching techniques to keep the student on task or handle small behavior issues. Treat Casually denoted that the teacher had little significant interaction with the student, leaving the student to carry on by him/herself in most cases. Act Professional entailed attending to the student out of professional obligation and remaining distant and authoritative when dealing with the student. These five orientations were different manners of approaching students, whether consisting of a simple reading and reacting to students or a more methodical approach. The result is differential behaviors that are noticeable and correctable and/or the subconscious use of coping methods that tend to marginalize the students and alienate the teacher (Newberry & Davis, 2008; Whiteman et al., 1985). Some of these behaviors are not apparent to the teacher and therefore go uncorrected, which can have detrimental effects for both the students and the teacher.

Relationship Responsibility

It has been suggested that fear is the element that creates distance in relationships (Palmer, 1998). Rejection and the fear of it are part of the motivation to find others who are like oneself (Leary, 2003). In the classroom, teachers may feel discomfort with a student who does not respond to their attempts to show affection or a student who shuts down when corrected. Over time it is possible that these uneasy feelings can become unidentifiable and end up being a mechanical reflex to deal with behaviors expected of
students according to stereotypes, as opposed to concerted actions directed to the individual students who manifest the behaviors (Brophy, 1974; Feldon, 2007).

Elementary students cannot detect which teachers are considered master level teachers according to professional standards, yet they will freely describe what makes a good teacher (Murphy et al., 2004; Woolfolk Hoy & Weinstein, 2006). Although mastery level competencies are important, relatively few young students will list them as qualities they seek in a teacher. In the developing years, the relationship aspect of classroom relationships weigh more heavily on the minds of children. Improved relationships, those in which students feel a trusting and positive connection with teachers, are motivating for children in the academic areas (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Reeve, 2006). This leads to children who are more cooperative in the classroom (Morganett, 2001). Cooperative students are preferred by teachers and are the students who enjoy more supportive relationships. More supportive relationships lead to improved academic behavior and other positive school functioning (Murray & Malmgren, 2005; Wentzel, 1993). This cycle will build upon itself as both teacher and student continue to have their needs fulfilled in the reciprocal positive relationship. Working on relationships improves the behavior and academic achievement of students more effectively than attempts to improve academic achievement influence behavior (Wentzel, 1993). When questioned about what factors make good teachers, the one answer common to both students and teachers is the concept of a caring teacher (Murphy et al., 2004).

As stated earlier, the responsibility for creation of the culture in the classroom falls on the shoulders of the teacher. Jerome Bruner (1996) states, “No educational
reform can get off the ground without an adult actively and honestly participating—a teacher willing and prepared to give and share aid, to comfort and to scaffold” (p. 84)--, in essence, the teacher who is willing to build positive and nurturing relationships with students. Of the four types of relationships that have been conceptualized as existing in classrooms--expressive-emotional, confirmatory, instrumental, and influential--the influential relationship is considered ideal (see Deiro, 2005). While all of the other types are used to fulfill the need of one without regard of benefit to the other person involved, the relationship that is influential is one that is not only instructive but eventually has an effect on both parties.

Jonmarshall Reeve (2006) outlines four teacher characteristics that aid in creating healthy student-teacher relationships: (1) “attunement,” or sensitivity to the students’ state of being; (2) “relatedness,” which is defined as feeling close to another person; (3) “supportiveness,” or the teacher’s affirmation of a student’s capacity; and (4) “gentle discipline,” which is a strategy used to help explain and correct, as opposed to simply punishing student behavior (pp. 24-42). Another important theory of teaching relationships involves the ethic of caring. Care theorists recognize two kinds of caring, natural and ethical (Noddings, 1995a, 1995b). As the names indicate, natural caring is present without effort on the part of the teacher; it is born out of an innate attraction for the other person for one reason or another. On the other hand, ethical caring does not come naturally, but is performed out of duty. The teacher has a responsibility to care for students regardless of whether or not there is a natural inclination to do so. The teacher has the choice as a professional to attend to the student in a way that demonstrates care
(Goldstein, 2004). In this sense, ethical care can be seen as a kind of emotional labor, “an act of volition, a conscious choice stemming from a moral aspiration” (Goldstein, 2004, p. 40). The ethic of care would differ from pure emotional work because it does not advocate actions without pure motives. The ethic of care would insist that actions are motivated by love as the teacher reflects on experiences with others in which caring attitudes prevailed (Noddings, 1995a) and uses other cognitive strategies to put choices for action into perspective (Winograd, 2003).

Ethical Caring

Although this theory is based on the idea that caring is a moral obligation, it would also indicate that there must be some method for reflection on action. This is a necessary piece in teaching, as the actions of the one caring (the teacher) are not always received or even acknowledge by the one cared for (the student). The failure of others to recognize our gestures to initiate relationships with them can result in feelings of rejection (Leary, 2003). This potentially could lead to a devastating cycle of intersubjective misreading that leads to dysfunctional relationships in the classroom. If a teacher is not aware of the possibility of potential patterns in her classroom, she may perpetuate the problem. Care includes “the establishment of meaningful relationships, the ability to sustain connections, and the commitment to respond to others with sensitivity and flexibility” (Goldstein & Lake, 2000, p. 862). Maintaining a caring attitude in the face of rejection requires that a teacher be aware of her reactions and the influence they have. Changing perceptions is difficult and requires examination of personal motives and honest critique of behavior (Brophy, 1974). Many researchers
advocate a call for greater teacher awareness of differential behaviors that might occur in the classroom (see Babad, 1993; Brophy, 1974; Noddings, 1995; Winograd, 2003).

The benefit of reflection on teaching practices will yield improvements of relationships as teachers come to understand themselves better (Wilke, 2005) and as reflection leads to the desire to understand others (Noddings, 1995b). Reflection will also help to promote compassion that will bring about change in behavior towards others (Boler, 2000). It will allow teachers to explore the dimensions of their own emotions and to change things that are detrimental and strengthen those that are good (Brophy, 1974; Winograd, 2003). This reflection is also part of emotional labor, but a part that is necessary. As Brophy (1974) states, “The teacher must learn to monitor his behavior… if he is to shape the patterns of interactions proactively in his classroom and not merely react to differential student behavior which in effect conditions him” (p. 270).

If the classroom is going to be a place where children can feel safe enough to learn, the teacher must find a way to help the students meet their needs while successfully minimizing negative effects of stress that the job might evoke in the classroom. By becoming increasingly aware of their own social needs and any differential behaviors while considering the needs of the students, teachers will be more successful in creating an atmosphere conducive to learning. Parker Palmer states that teaching requires that “as we try to connect ourselves and our subjects with our students we make ourselves, as well as our subject, vulnerable to indifference, judgment, ridicule” (p. 17), but by doing so we can allow students to explore worlds that they may not otherwise. The challenge is to remain open to students in the face of such trials that may come, emotionally as well as
academically. One way to increase the likelihood of keeping those opportunities open and of creating more of them would be to increase the awareness and understanding of what influences the social climate of the classroom, and to determine how to regulate the emotions that surface therein. The first step in this process is to have teachers reflect on the relationships in the classroom and their part in the formation of them.

In summary, the social and emotional factors in the classroom environment contribute significantly to the relationships that are established, which in turn affect the learning that transpires. If teachers perceive unpleasant emotional cues from students and subconsciously respond through differential behaviors, a variety of negative relationship patterns may be established, hindering the positive learning environment and therefore the achievement of the students whom these patterns affect. One way to avoid such situations is by reflecting on the relationships as they are formed and afterwards. By doing so teachers are more likely to recognize any patterns that could potentially have a negative effect on relationships. To explore this I posed the following questions from Chapter 1:

1. How does this teacher construct relationships with her students?
   
   • To which students is she drawn and why?
   
   • What does she do to create and maintain positive connections, especially with those students she is not drawn to or with students who differ from her in experiences or cultural backgrounds?

2. How do the teacher’s perceptions of students affect the ways in which she interacts with them?
• How does she describe her relationships?
• Does she experience rejection and how does she manage it?

3. What theories and beliefs guide her decision-making as she interacts with students?
   • How are her beliefs enacted in the classroom?
   • What effect do they have on her relationships with individual students?

4. How does ethical caring become natural caring?
   • How do her interactions change over time?
   • How does she engage in natural caring for all children?

5. What is the value of productive reflection?
   • How does this teacher experience the interview protocol?
   • What effect does this kind of reflection make on the classroom interactions initiated by this teacher?
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY:
NARRATIVE CASE STUDY OF CLASSROOM LIFE

When theory is grounded in the social, historical, and cultural lives of those it intends to understand, resulting stories of the participants help to enhance understanding (Graue & Walsh, 1998). Narrative inquiry allows us inside the lived experience of the participants. These stories connect with us on a deeper level than the mere reporting of facts, because stories draw out our own recollection, and we can empathize with the actors. Empathy connotes an intellectual understanding and an emotional sharing of the feelings that are present in the story. We can then identify with the actor and learn lessons vicariously and apply them to our own lives. The story elicits recall of our own experience and encourages us to foresee how we may apply it to our personal future. Even if the particulars of the story are quite dissimilar, the human mind craves continuity and coherence and will seek connections to generate understanding and comprehension (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). This is all part of how we co-construct the social world.

Qualitative Inquiry

Due to the intimate nature of relationships and teaching, I believe that research that is personal and collaborative is called for to understand the interplay of the two.
Research methods that focus on “the question of how human experience is endowed with meaning and on the moral and ethical choices we face as human beings who live in an uncertain and changing world” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744) are important in coming to understand the nature of the phenomena and the experience of those involved. Nel Noddings (1995b) states, “The rightness of a research method must be judged by both the purposes of the participants and its effects” (p.186). While much of quantitative research is concerned with quantitas, or number of things, qualitative research is more concerned with qualitas, or kinds of things (Peter Demerath, personal communication, spring 2007). I am interested in kinds of relationships, kinds of behaviors that influence those relationships and kinds of decisions that directly impact interactions. For this reason I have chosen to conduct qualitative research that allows for collaboration between researcher and participant, with the intended goal being increased learning and understanding that will benefit both.

*Theoretical Rationale*

Qualitative research examines phenomena in the natural state (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) to answer questions about how and why they occur. Jerome Bruner (1996) stated,

> It is practically impossible to understand a thought, an act, a move of any sort from the situation in which it occurs. Biology and culture both operate locally; however grand the sweep of their principles, they find a final common path in the here and now: in the immediate “definition of the situation,” in the immediate discourse setting, in the immanent state of the nervous system, local and situated. (p. 167)

This statement reflects an interpretivist worldview in that the constants of biology and the status quo of society are still subject to the personal interpretation of the individual. A qualitative researcher guided by an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm believes that
what is happening is not as important as why it is happening, and even less important
than with whom it is happening and why it is happening here and now.

Much of qualitative research is concerned with the lived experience of the
participants, which is seen as the blending of cultural influence and personal beliefs and
their combined force on individual choice and action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). More
specifically, an interpretivist paradigm focuses on the understandings derived when
participants incorporate those factors in social situations (Erickson, 1986). Actors in any
event make sense of their situation in order to respond to it; therefore meaning is
contextually situated. Sense making occurs as actors continually respond to others,
thereby co-constructing reality with those around them.

Not only do we represent the world in our own minds (replete with meanings), but
we respond with preternatural sensitivity to the way the world is represented in
the minds of others. And by virtue of that sensitivity we form a representation of
the world as much from what we learn about it through others as from responding
to events in the world directly. (Bruner, 1996, p.165)

Personal interpretations are influenced by lived experience and subject to current
circumstances. Meaning is made as the actors respond to the environment and to others to
make sense out of the world around them. These understandings are subject to past
experience, cultural standards, and social interaction, combining to represent reality for
the one to whom they correspond. Hence, there are multiple perceptions of reality.

The interpretivist/constructivist qualitative researcher strives to understand the
realities of others by focusing on meaning-making activities (Erickson, 1986; Lincoln &
Guba, 2000). Lived experience is very important to understanding the why behind
choices that people make. To understand the experience of others, there has to be some discourse between the one living the situation and the one who strives to understand it.

*Phenomenology*

In a phenomenological study it is presumed that this discourse will take place through dialogue between researcher and participant. As the researcher attempts to enter the world of the participant, she seeks to see from the point of view of the participant, and assumes that by interview, discussion, and reflection “the quintessential meaning of the experience will be revealed” (Rossman & Rollis, 2003, p. 97), along with the evidence of the decision making process and what influenced it along the way. Interpretive research methods become important when working in personal and social fields to understand social phenomena. They allow focus on meaning over method, motivation over action, and purpose over procedure. Rather than reporting how many times a particular action occurred, they help us to gain understanding as to why it occurred, whether it will occur again, and how to either prevent or promote its occurrence.

Phenomenological studies can include observation, interviews and narrative inquiries such as storytelling. These strategies allow the researcher to look with depth into a phenomenon through detailed description of one specific example, made possible by prolonged engagement with the participants in the context of the event (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In such a manner the researcher enters the world of the participant through her own interpretation of observations, recognizing the bias she brings to the field, but attempting to “reconstruct the self-understanding of actors engaged in particular action” (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 193). Through data gathering and critical observations, the
researcher re-creates the events to give others the opportunity to learn vicariously from the events and situations that have been observed and described (Stake, 2000).

*Case Study Research*

Case study research may be conducted in an attempt to obtain “insights into the human condition” (Stake, 2000, p. 443). Case studies allow a closer look into specific phenomena through the examination of a particular instance (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Stake (1995, 2000) outlines three kinds of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. Instrumental case study is conducted when the purpose is to examine a specific case with the intent to gain understanding of the issue central to the case. The case is only a vehicle to help the researcher understand the issue under question (Stake, 2000).

The researcher is concerned with gaining a general understanding of the phenomena, while the participant of the study may be more concerned with making specific applications for his/her own practice. Jerome Bruner (1996) has stated, “Mindlessness is one of the greatest impediments to change” (p. 79). I would add that it also impedes learning. All of the data gathered provide us with greater comprehension of the lived experience of the participant of the case study, helping us to achieve a sort of “need for general understanding” (Stake, 1995, p.157) that surrounds the more specific issues involved. The particulars of the case study do not overshadow the general issues of concern. In presenting the information obtained through the study, the researcher is merely reflecting what she has learned. But her presentation, with its position and perspective, allows others, including the participant, to learn what the researcher
discovered as well as some things she may not have realized (Stake, 2000). In this way a case study can also become a sort of action research—allowing the participant to learn and adjust his/her own practice according to the findings revealed by the researcher (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

**Educational Research Application**

Teaching has been transformed into a somewhat dichotomous profession. The confusion over whether it is merely a learning field or more of a social field has created a separation in the ways that teachers teach. Teacher educators and legislatures are not sure how to equip teachers for their practice—whether they need more technical training or more coping skills. Teachers are not required to reflect on their teaching, but rather to focus on pedagogical skill, while content mastery fills the majority of teacher education (Erickson, 1986). Although excellent pedagogy and strong content knowledge are both needed for a competent teaching force, because teaching is both a learning field and a social field, good teaching requires some personal ethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000)—in other words, some good reflection on practice to assure that teachers are addressing both aspects of the profession.

Because the demands of teaching already fill the day, it is difficult for many teachers to find the time to include deliberate reflection on their teaching (Erickson, 1986). However, it can be argued that “any time that the success of your work depends on developing some degree of intercultural understanding, then you have to use the social skills we associate with ethnographic empathy” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Some of the issues in education have been the dichotomies promoted by the inability to locate itself in
a field—the separation of “head from heart,” “facts from feelings,” and “theory from practice” (Palmer, 1998, p. 66). The issues surrounding relationships between teachers and students have been observed for over 30 years (Brophy, 1974) and yet still receive relatively little attention (Isenbarger & Zemblyas, 2006). According to Erickson (1986), interpretive research methodology can be a benefit to education by deciphering needs concerning

a) The nature of classrooms as socially and culturally organized environments for learning; b) the nature of teaching as one, but only one, aspect of the reflexive learning environment, and; c) the nature (and content) of the meaning-making perspective of teacher and learner as intrinsic to the education process. (p. 120)

Paradigmatic Assumptions

Attempts to cognitively decipher meaning are fundamentally a social activity (Rogoff, 1990). Reality is co-constructed through social interaction that builds on previous experience and can only be understood through the lens of the social, cultural, and historical setting in which it takes place (Bruner, 1996). Learning can happen vicariously or explicitly, but it always happens socially. There are multiple realities, and therefore multiple levels of analysis are required to fully grasp the contextual meaning. Because of the complexities of each, human understanding is limited because one individual’s point of view will always bias his or her understanding of another’s experience. The qualitative researcher requests participation through dialogue to allow the participant to voice his own experienced truth, which varies from all others.

Phenomenological Approaches and Tasks

The narrative inquiry allows voices to be heard that may not otherwise have a chance to speak. Assumptions are the enemy of the common person because the more
ordinary his work, the more overlooked he becomes. Much of life is ordinary, yet it is the culmination of the ordinary that builds up to the significant outcomes that we each experience. “The province of qualitative research. . . is the world of lived experience, for this is where individual belief and action intersect with culture” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.3). And it is this lived experience that continues to color our choices and actions and to promulgate culture and social worlds.

**Researcher’s Role**

First and foremost, I am an outsider. Having never taught in public schools, I do not have a clear understanding of all that is required of a teacher. It is a great misconception by those of us who have been students to assume that because we have sat through classes with many teachers, we know what it takes to be a teacher. The primary role that I took in this study was that of observer. As I observed, I attempted to capture as much of the picture before me as possible and then presented it again to the teacher. This process allowed the participant to distance herself from the daily work of teaching, with all it entails, before seeing and commenting on the information presented. Providing opportunities for the teacher to see herself and the classroom through a different lens is a purpose that researchers can fill (Erickson, 1986). This distance can help to clarify vision for the participant teacher in accomplishing her goals. Sometimes the closer we are to something, the more out of focus it is for us. As I allowed the teacher to have an outlet in which to reflect on her own teaching, she and I became co-researchers.

Second, I interpreted the data I collected for the purpose of understanding relationships in the classroom beyond the particular case study I conducted. Adding to
my previous work, I wanted to understand the functions and decisions that go into creating and maintaining relationships. As researcher, I have employed methods to reach a greater understanding, such as interviews and discussions with the teachers, which have become important elements in understanding in qualitative research (Casey, 1995). I have also devised an interview protocol that includes a visual element to elicit a broader understanding (See Newberry & Davis, 2008, Appendix, Illustration 1). Rossman and Rallis (2003) suggest, “Material culture can offer data that contradict words and sight” (p. 199). The tool I have developed may be conceived as a type of material data created by participants as they use it to create tangible displays of the relevant relationships. In my previous work, this tool successfully helped teachers to focus and define relationships with students (see Newberry & Davis, 2008).

Third and finally, my role as researcher involved analysis and synthesis of data from multiple sources. It has been my task to thoughtfully analyze my observations, along with transcripts and all other collected data for public consumption (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). This is an ongoing role essential to qualitative research (Stake, 1995), one that gives the researcher the precarious position of being supremely conscientious in her reporting. Misrepresentation of data or of the participant is unethical and should be scrupulously avoided—for the researcher there is a responsibility to the participant to be honest, clear, and accurate.

Methodological Rationale

The goal of research, as defined by Rossman and Rallis (2003), should be, in a sense, to leave things better than one finds them—to enable improvement either for the
participants specifically or for society in general. The selection of a phenomenological case study design was purposeful on two levels: to allow the participant to explain motive and to give opportunity for learning for both researcher and participant equally. I did not want to simply project my views and understandings onto the situation. My observations of what I viewed happening are skewed by my experience. The participant has motives and reasons, both conscious and subconscious, for her actions. I wanted to give the participant an opportunity to provide that rationale. In this way, as researcher I learned what steps and procedures a teacher goes through to make decisions, and she realized these steps as well, as she was requested to justify them. Being faced with evidence of one’s actions prompts justification, with the resulting reinforcement to continue as before or dissonance that will prompt change. These interactions then lead to learning for both parties. “As the inquiry process grows from curiosity or wonder to understanding and knowledge building, the researcher is often transformed. In many cases the participants are also changed” (Rossman, & Rallis, 2003, p. 4 In this study, narrative inquiry allowed the participant to tell her story, observation allowed the researcher to gather it from a different perspective, and the discussion element through the unstructured interviews allowed the two to merge. In a broader sense, reflection can promote critical thinking, which also encourages seeking broader meanings and collaboration for improvement. When this activity is influenced by an ethic of care, actions can be guided by understanding of our situation and in relation to our feelings for the condition of others (Noddings, 1995). It may also help us to question our assumptions.
I find that qualitative work is liberating, as the stories that I encounter speak to me in ways that may not give me absolute truth, but open me to absolute understanding. When dealing with people, I am inclined to choose understanding over truth. Understanding helps me to love them, whereas truth at times alienates me from them. Ellis and Bochner (2000) argue that we need to question “metarules” of research institutions of social science, including that of education. Those rules which privilege “arguments over feelings, theories over stories, abstractions over concrete events, sophisticated jargon over prose” stifle the connections that humankind can make through research that is humanistic and passionate. I ask along with them, “Why should we be ashamed if our work has therapeutic or personal value?” (p. 746).

Recruitment

Given that instrumental case study allows us to gain insight into an issue by delving deeper into a specific case (Stake, 1995), the commonalities that arose from my prior research urged me to focus more attention on the how and why of forming relationships. To delve deeper, I decided to conduct a single case study of an elementary school teacher. The teacher is the focus of the study: how she interacted with the students, reacted to student behaviors, responded to their demands, managed them as a group and individually. The teacher/participant played an active role in data generation and collection.

Recruitment happened through convenience sampling methods. Access to local teachers was available on campus through university classes; I sought permission and approached classes that consisted of these individuals and also received referrals from
instructors who worked with in-service teachers. Because the nature of this study involved more than passive participation, the solicitation included handing out information regarding the extent of the participation. I then waited for interested parties to contact me.

I had imagined the ideal participant would be someone currently teaching in an elementary first through third grade classroom, with two to five years of experience. The participant would be willing to reflect critically on his/her own teaching and hold teaching beliefs that include the value of relationships with students; he/she should have a defined understanding of the role of the teacher, as well as clear motives for teaching. What those understandings, motives and beliefs might be wasn’t as important as the fact that the teacher/participant had already developed them in his/her own mind. Part of the process was to see how those beliefs would evolve over the course of the study, as the nature of qualitative research is to explore the lived experience of the participant, taking into account how “individual belief and action intersect with culture” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3), which in turn co-produces the realities that we share with others.

To assure that the participant understood the time commitment and was willing to fully participate in all aspects of the study, all potential participants to underwent a selection process consisting of an interview designed to determine availability, willingness and compatibility. Upon selection, permission from the principal of the school was obtained in accordance with Institutional Review Board standards. Following IRB regulations, the participant was informed of her rights and asked to sign a consent form stating that the participation was voluntary and that all sensitive and identifying
information would remain anonymous (see Appendix B). A copy was also given to the principal. The participant agreed the conditions and was a willing and helpful throughout.

Participant

Interested parties contacted me, and through the interview process one teacher was selected: Sandy, a young, married, White female from the mid-western United States. She had recently obtained her Master of Education degree, and at the beginning of this study she was starting her fifth year of teaching, the third year at this school. At the time of this study she was teaching second grade in an elementary school located outside a large Mid-western city, where 60% of the school population received free or reduced price lunch.

Methods

This case study includes four dimensions: observations, structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and personal reflection. Each dimension adds value to the others by contributing to the overall understanding of the situation/issue involved by revealing additional insight and perspective. This will be explained as each dimension is described. The study encompassed the whole of a school year from August 2007 to June 2008.

Classroom observations are foundational in understanding the social environment of the classroom. My personal observations of daily activities helped me get a feel for the range of relationships that were present in the class and for the overall manner of the teacher in her role. It also served the purpose of allowing an objective observation of the

2 The names of the teacher/ participant and her students have all been changed for anonymity. The name of the school has also been changed.
reaction of the students to teacher behaviors as she interacted with each student and with
the class in general. Classroom observations were done with the goal of being as
unobtrusive as possible so as not to disrupt the flow of normal interactions. For this
reason I decided that observation data would consist only of what I recorded in field
notes. Prior to the school year, the teacher and I chose a location from which I could
observe the activity of the class but bring little attention to my presence. I did not attempt
to interact with the students throughout the day, and for the most part they did not address
me. My hands-off approach was an attempt to remain neutral: By not interacting
personally with the students, I hoped that I would be less inclined to bias that might be
cased by my own relationships that interacting with students would create.

The second dimension was structured interview. The interview consisted
primarily of a protocol tool specifically designed to stimulate recall and reflection
(Appendix A, Illustration 1). This protocol, referred to as the Adapted IOS, was designed
in my previous research with teachers to encourage personalized, productive reflection on
the concept of “connectedness” in individual relationships in the classroom (Newberry &
Davis, 2008). This protocol tool is combined with stream of consciousness speech,
allowing the teacher to openly describe the relationship with each student. The structured
interviews provided a basis for comparison with the observations that I made in the
classroom, adding an insider perspective to the previous outsider perspective. Additional
benefits of the interview will be discussed in the description of the tool.

Teacher reflection was the third dimension in this case study. I asked the teacher
to write an email to me reflecting on insight she gained by participating using the
protocol tool. Subsequent discussion sessions included information from her reflections. As the teacher wrote her thoughts, she explored her own understanding of the situation. This opportunity was given to the teacher to allow her to process all that had transpired in the interviews after having had some time to reflect on it.

The last dimension employed was unstructured or semi-structured interviews. I felt that it is important to allow a teacher an opportunity to talk out her relationships. Beyond merely describing them, as she did in the structured interviews, in the semi-structured interviews the teacher had the opportunity to delve deeper into her rationale for her decision-making. The hope is that expression might arouse metacognition. As the day-to-day activities unfold, relationships ebb and flow. These interviews allowed the teacher to openly speak about contact, confrontation, communication, frustration and achievements—all elements that can affect the relationships formed. These discussions took place after school hours and were audio taped and later transcribed for analysis.

Procedures

The following is a description of the four dimensions and the procedures used to conduct this study. As mentioned, the major components are observations made in the field, structured interviews conducted using a tool created to visualize reflection, written reflections, and semi-structured interviews to allow the verbalization of rationale to promote deeper cognition on interaction and reactions.

Observations

The observations took place on various days and times throughout both semesters in order to a have range of situations to observe. To get a bigger picture of working
relationships, observations were conducted every other week over the entire nine month school year, on varying days and times and lasted at least an hour each time. Varying the times in which I observed served the purpose of allowing me to gather data from variety of situations, observing the teaching of differing forms of class instruction and activities as well as non-instructional interactions. Observations focused on the activities and behaviors and interactions of the teacher, and were recorded in written field notes.

Structured Interviews

The structured interviews were conducted using the adapted IOS protocol (Newberry & Davis, 2008), which consists of four phases using a tool to create two representational displays of relationships: one use of the tool includes making diagrams for each member of the class, and the other use is more specific—intended for a select group of students. Each use of the tool is followed by a reflection upon viewing the diagrams collectively. The protocol has been shortened for this study to include only two phases— use of the tool to create representational diagrams for each student, and reflection upon viewing results. The tool includes a continuum and two circles: one to represent the teacher and one labeled with the name of a student. The two phases of the interviews are as follows:

Phase 1: Creating diagrams. The placement is intended to reflect the influence and closeness of each relationship, depending on how close, overlapping or distant the circles are. The teacher was asked to place the circles on the line to reflect how close she feels to that particular student. I adjusted the continuum to have incremental markers to increase consistency in making decisions regarding placement. In the first administration
of the tool, I also included different colored circles to represent the gender of the student. (On subsequent interviews I made the decision to go back to only two colors, one for the students and one for the teacher. I made this decision based on the discussion following the first interview, in which gender appeared to be an issue. I wasn’t sure of the reason why at this point, and not wanting to sway the interviews by separating the students by gender, I opted to assign them all the same color circle.) The participant was instructed to place the circles on the line, one of her own and one with a student’s name, to represent the closeness in that particular relationship dyad. She completed a diagram for each student in the class. After each diagram was completed, it was collected and stacked out of view of the participant before going on to the next one. This process ensured that every diagram was an independent judgment of each individual relationship.

**Phase 2: Reflecting on diagrams.** Once the participant completed a diagram for every student in her class, all of the completed diagrams were spread out in front of her. The diagrams were grouped in order of circle distance—overlapping/touching, separate and distant (Appendix A, Illustrations 2-5). After the participant viewed the completed diagram representing her class as a whole, she was given the opportunity to make any adjustments that she would like to the representations she had constructed. The participant was then asked to comment on any patterns that she saw or groupings that she observed, or to make general commentary on the relationships that she now noted, as she reviewed the relationships visually. This protocol was administered at four time points: after the first two weeks of the beginning of school, at the winter break, at spring break, and at the end of the school year. Each interview was audio taped and later transcribed.
for analysis. In subsequent interviews the teacher/participant was asked to describe each student using four adjectives and then to continue to place the circles as before while she commented on the relationship and level of connectedness.

Reflections

Initially these were designed to be free-writing exercises concerning anything of significance in regards to the teacher’s relationship with students or her feelings about the use of the protocol tool. However, the teacher in this study requested prompts to help her focus. The reflections then were responses to posed questions regarding her experience with the process, insight she gained, her reactions, as well as other unsolicited thoughts she may have wished to express. The questions were as follows, with additional questions added depending on the result of the previous interview:

1. Reflect on the last few weeks. Are there any interesting occurrences in regards to relationships that you would like to share?
2. What impressions do you have about the class and the relationships—how they have formed/changed to this point?
3. What was your experience using the interview tool? Has it affected the way that you interact with your students? If so, how?
4. Please share your thoughts/feelings about decisions you have made recently which have affected the way that you interact with any students in the classroom.

Reflections were completed approximately a week after the administration of the interview protocol, totaling four times throughout the year. In addition to the above questions, the teacher was encouraged to write out any confusion, concerns, or thought processes in her attempts to overcome any dissonance created by the process. She was also encouraged to address the positive things that she had recognized in her practice.
The teacher was given the option to send email reflections at any other time she felt it appropriate, but she did not take advantage of that option.

*Unstructured Interviews*

Unstructured interviews were held to follow up the structured interviews and reflections, allowing the teacher to discuss nuances of relationships that might not be evident to third party observation. It was also an opportunity for the teacher to converse openly about relationships in general, along with her role, expectations, beliefs about teaching, etc. As researcher, I acted as a sounding board for the teacher as she verbalized her thoughts and feelings about what she has experienced and walked through her decisions and reactions throughout the past week. This dimension allowed for the teacher to tell her story, expounding where she saw fit. Interviews lasted approximately one hour each and were audio taped. There were officially only three of these unstructured interviews as designed. The fourth was actually tacked onto the end of the structured interview, due to the fact that the teacher was leaving town at the end of the school year and it was conducted in her home. The initial unstructured interview took place at a local coffee shop, with the idea that being away from school she might not worry about confidentiality and might more feel comfortable expressing opinions, frustrations, hopes, etc. After the initial time, she elected to have the next two in her classroom because she felt comfortable there and did not have concerns over confidentiality. These conversations were also transcribed for comparison between actions and words; they were used to guide observations, clarify comments from previous interviews and reflections, and talk about current events of the classroom.
The goal of combining these four dimensions was to “make the all too familiar strange again” (Bruner, 1996, p. 99) by attacking the issue from different angles and perspectives—contrasting the visual to the verbal, the reflective to the superficial, the deliberate to the subconscious. In this way the teacher and researcher collaborated to tell the teacher’s story as it unfolded through the process.

Each audio taped session was transcribed and provided to the participant for review and clarification (although she did not take advantage of this opportunity beyond the first interview). The diagrams that were created through the protocol were photographed for comparison over the course of the study to document any shift or progression, and the original diagrams were retained. I noted the closeness scale in my log and made selections for observations based on the combined verbal and visual descriptions of the relationship, focusing on interactions between the teacher and the specified student for insight on the relationship in question. All data gathered were subject to member checks for clarification and verification. Selections of transcriptions from each kind of data were given to peer reviewers to validate coding systems.

Data Analysis

Analysis began with the first observation. Field notes were typed up the same day, and each interview was transcribed within 24 hours of taping. The transcripts and emails containing reflections were reviewed to guide the next step in the cycle (e.g. structured interviews were previewed before the next observation to key in on specific situations and relationships; the last set of field notes taken was reviewed to key in on the next discussion, etc). Systematic analysis of the data was accomplished by making passes
through the text guided by the five main research questions, looking for thematic use of phrases, which were captured in a codebook. As this was done, themes and ideas emerged that indicated that the first two research questions aligned, such that the codes were identical. Thus for further analysis the five research questions were condensed into four major codes: relationships, behaviors, ethic of care, and reflection. Four separate passes were made through each transcript, email and set of field notes—one for each of the four major codes. Not all codes were manifest in each kind of data. Specifically, there was little observable evidence of reflection as defined in the codebook found in the field notes. However, because all of the data were used for within-case analysis, field notes were also analyzed for support and verification of the other data. Because the themes are all related topics, much of the data were coded for more than one theme. Once the final passes for the four main codes were made, a second analysis took place. This second analysis consisted of passes made through each set of field notes noting the number of times each student’s name came up due to an interaction with the teacher and who had initiated the interaction. The information on interactions was put into tables listing in order from highest to lowest how many interactions were captured with that student, how many of them were initiated by the student, and how many were initiated by the teacher (Table 1). These three tables (presented here as one table) allowed both the teacher and me to see at a glance where and with whom most of the interaction occurred. These tables were presented to the teacher at the last interview and became part of that last discussion, which allowed her to address many of the particulars that were not evident before. The second wave of analysis also consisted of deconstructing the data
through the coding process, which were broken down into a table in which student characteristics were compared to created diagrams from each time point. This turned into student profiles (Appendix A, Table 2), which then were cross referenced with the teacher-created diagrams from each time point.

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Table 1: Student and teacher interactions based on initiation.
The results of the diagram groupings from the first time point fell in line with the model of the approach orientation that teachers take when interacting with students (See Newberry & Davis, 2008). This heuristic then became part of the method for analysis used in examining further time points, the results of which were added to the table showing the groupings of students as sorted by the teacher (Figure 2). The data were then reconstructed as representative quotes, and supporting statements were found which told the story, demonstrated the assertion, or expounded on the motive.

Much of the data were presented to the teacher for her review for member-checking purposes. The teacher was given the opportunity to review the transcripts from all interviews but only did so after the first structured interview. Of course, as a matter of design she had immediate feedback from the structured interviews by way of the diagrams and the discussion that ensued upon viewing them all laid out at once. The data regarding the initiation of interaction as well as that of the grouping of students from across the school year and the assumed teacher approach orientation that were compiled into tables were shared with the teacher at the end of the study. Her impressions and reactions to those data were recorded in the final interview. In addition to member-checks, a sample of each type of data was sent to outside reviewers who were unfamiliar with the data and who were not involved in data collection. They were given a copy of the codebook along with the samples of data for validation of the coding. Each reviewed the materials separately and independently and found them to be proper and coherent.
### Figure 2: Category of relationship closeness as per student diagrams with the identified teacher orientation toward students of each group.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Category</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Distant</th>
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</table>
| **First Time Point: Second Week of School**

| Students | Alex, Marcus, Jacob, Mitch, Sariah, Desiree | Aiden, Adam, Juan, Ivette, *Carly | Kaitlin, Terra, Lourdes, Vicente | Oscar, Derek, Selena, Efrain | Meng, Kaleb, Alice, Shawa, Candace, Keisha |
| Approach Orientation | Feel Affinity | Be Reflective | Treat Casually | Implement Strategies | Act Professional |

| **Second Time Point: Winter Break**

| Students | Jacob, Mitch | Alex, Derek | Kaitlin, Terra, Lourdes, Juan, Sariah, Oscar, *Marcus | Kaleb, Aiden, Ivette, Efrain, Keisha | Selena, Vicente, Shawa, Adam, Candace, Desiree | Carly, Alice | Meng |
| Approach Orientation | Feel Affinity | Be Reflective, *Feel Affinity | Implement Strategies | Treat Casually | Act Professional |

| **Third Time Point: Spring Break**

| Students | Jacob, Mitch, Alex, Derek, Desiree, Ivette | Marcus, Juan, *Efrain, *Oscar | Keisha, Sariah, Vicente, Kaitlin, Adam, *Candace, *Aiden | Kaleb, Selena, Shawa, Carly | Meng, Timmy* (*Only one day in class) | Moved: Terra, Lourdes, Alice |
| Approach Orientation | Feel Affinity | Treat Casually, *Be Reflective | Implement Strategies | Act Professional |

| **Fourth Time Point: End of School Year**

| Students | +Jacob | +Derek, Aiden, Juan, Mitch, *Desiree, *Oscar | Marcus, Sariah, Kaitlin | Keisha, Adam, Ivette, *Shawa, *Carly | Aiden, Efrain, Candace, Selena (IS only) | Kaleb, Meng | *Tina, Carrie, Adriana |
| Moved: Vicente, Timmy |
| Approach Orientation | Feel Affinity, *Be Reflective (+ Both) | Treat Casually | Treat Casually, *Be reflective | Be Reflective & Implement Strategies | Be Reflective |

| Teacher’s Perception/Interpretation of Orientation |

| Categories change daily: students in multiple categories | Feel Affinity: Jacob, Mitch, Alex, Marcus, Desiree, Derek | Be Reflective: Carly, Jacob Efrain, Oscar | Treat Casually: Aiden, Adam, Ivette, Juan, Kaitlin, Terra, Vicente, Lourdes | Implement Strategies: Oscar, Efrain, Jacob, Derek, Selena | Act Professional: Kaleb, Meng, Alice, Shawa, Candace, Keisha |

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*Note: The table represents the students' relationship closeness and the teacher's orientation towards each student group during different time points of the school year.*
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

I have organized the findings of this study into three sections: factors that influence interactions in relationships, factors that influence change in relationships, and the influence guided reflection has on behaviors over time. First, I discuss the theories and beliefs that the teacher subscribes to, including where they came from and how they are enacted from the beginning. Next I will present the results from the interview protocol and discuss the dimensions identified. The data from the interviews were broken down into two different data sets. The first focuses on the movement of the relationship across time, tracking how close the teacher felt to each student at different time points throughout the year. The second data set deals with the amount of interaction between teacher and student, with the secondary feature of who initiated the interaction. Both sets of data are presented in tables for reference purposes. Next I will introduce the findings that appear to influence shifts in the relationships across the year. Additionally, dimensions of classroom relationships as evident in this particular classroom are identified. These dimensions initially aligned with the heuristic set forth by the model by Newberry and Davis (2008). Further analysis led to additional emergent themes that elaborate on factors that influence teachers’ interaction-approach orientation.
The next section revolves around how reflection, in particular the productive reflection promoted through this study, affected the behavior of the teacher towards her students. To demonstrate this effect I have selected four students who represent different kinds of relationships with the teacher. I present these mini-case studies as a narrative tool to answer the research questions posed in chapter two. As I describe critical events taken from four different points in time across the life of the relationship between the student and teacher, I will (1) Show how this teacher constructs relationships with this student, (2) Uncover how her perceptions of the student affect the way in which she interacts with him/her, (3) Identify the theories and beliefs guiding her decisions as she interacts, (4) Demonstrate how she sees and enacts efforts to care, and (5) Establish the value of productive reflection as it relates to her relationship with the student.

Factors that Influence Interaction in Relationships

*Beliefs and Theoretical Perspectives*

To understand the relationships that take place in any given context, we must first understand the people involved and the beliefs they hold. The teacher in this study, referred to as Sandy, was confident in her teaching ability and very open to letting others observe her. She often received praise from the administration; in fact, she reported that she had been identified as a teacher who is able to handle “problem children” better than others. Although much of her ability to work with such students she attributed to experience, she was not able to identify specifically how she handled situations differently and she was eager to participate in this study in hopes that this would be revealed. Her personal philosophy revolved around showing respect for the individual

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and requiring respect in return. She identified other important elements that set the stage for teaching to be the learning environment, student-teacher relationships, and building a classroom community.

Learning environments. In Sandy’s initial interview, she stated that she felt the most influential elements of a conducive learning environment were having the students know that they are safe and achieving a level of comfort in the classroom. A productive learning environment for her would include being aware of the variety of learning styles present in the class among the students, getting to know each student’s reactions, and having an organized environment that would provide the students with opportunities for autonomy. Her role, as she saw it, was to organize the learning environment by getting to know each student—what he or she needs, how each learns—and by involving the families in helping the students become learners. She acknowledged that things outside of the classroom influence learning, and therefore she saw it as her duty to go beyond the classroom as well, stating,

[I’m] thinking about the child as a whole entity, not just a student. I think there’s [sic] a lot of times we forget there’s such a whole other life to who they are. It really hits home when something happens and you realize what they’re doing at school, though you find it the most important thing for them, may not be on their mind ever because of what’s happening at home. (1: 222 – 235)

From this we see that Sandy placed a high value on the big picture of the students’ lives. She recognized that life outside the class influences the life within it and placed emphasis on thoroughly knowing all aspects of the students’ lives in order to understand what might be influencing their participation and achievement. Creating an environment where children can feel safe to learn and share was top on her list of important teaching
responsibilities. The classroom itself should be a refuge for students. Part of making sure that students feel comfortable and welcome depended on her setting that tone.

**Student-teacher relationships.** Sandy reported having brought with her many ideas of teaching from the Montessori school where she had previously taught, such as letting the children learn independently rather than the teacher always being the one to direct the learning. In fact, Sandy was motivated as a teacher not only when she saw students get excited about learning, but when she was able to help them see the value in it and come to understand the reasons behind what they do in the classroom. She identified herself as having been a curious student; for her, learning was intrinsically motivating. She admitted to gravitating toward those students who portrayed similar characteristics, and she hoped to cultivate that kind of desire for learning in all of her students. She consistently gave opportunities for students to take the initiative to learn independently.

The desire Sandy had to see the students achieve and the desire she had to help them learn were part of the responsibility she felt to know the child. She possessed a somewhat whole-child view of education, believing that there is more to teaching than having a classroom of students who listen to a lesson. She stated that she was concerned with

the whole teaching aspect of getting to know the kids—you know, how do they learn best? How do they take in information and retain information and transfer information? And so the basic teaching relationship but then also that relationship with them, with them out of school—being able to know the family. I email some of the parents every week, which is just being able to feel comfortable with family needs. You know, they’re [school and family] supporting each other. (1:235-240)
Although Sandy valued family involvement in the learning of the student, she also thought that a balance needed to be struck there as well, when it comes to connecting with the student:

Whereas close to me may mean, like for me, close to me means getting to know the student as a whole student and a whole person, you know, knowing what their likes and dislikes are outside of school, not just with school. Whereas another teacher might feel close means “I know their parents, I know their siblings, I know everything about the family.” Because some teachers seem to know about the families…what’s the word I’m looking for? They seem to invest themselves more with getting to know the family more than the student sometimes. (UI 1:183-189)

By this statement it is evident that Sandy acknowledged the value of family involvement but also was wary of the trap of familiarity where general knowledge of siblings or the family as a whole might be substituted for first-hand, personal knowledge of student. Her interest in attending the school’s ice cream social before the first day of school evidenced Sandy’s desire to become acquainted with many of the students and their parents.

Coming into this school year Sandy had been primed for this particular class. The school had a practice of filling out information cards on each child with information that might be helpful for the next teacher. The cards consisted of information such as the level of reading and math ability; any special needs that the child might have like Title 1 reading or speech, ESL, etc.; and also a yes and no indicator for whether the child was an independent worker, demonstrated behavioral concerns, was taking medications, had ever been retained, or had parents who tended to be involved in the classroom. The card also has a line that read “Should not be in the same class as ______”, as well as space for other “helpful info.” Flipping through the cards, I read one in which the previous teacher had written that the child was “lazy” and encouraged the new teacher to “make him show
how intelligent he is and then hold him to it.” Comments like this one and other such information supplied were the basis for getting to know her students. Sandy reported that before the first day of school she had been made aware of three students who have been identified as behavioral problems and one who was reported to be completely without English language skills, which she said would be interesting because he was “right off the boat” and there was no one in the school, child or teacher, who spoke Mandarin Chinese. There was also a child whose mother was deaf, with whom she had already spoken through an interpreter. At the end of this study, Sandy commented that in the coming year she had no intentions of reading the information cards for the new class. She stated that she wanted to begin her class with everyone having a “clean slate.” From her comment, it is evident that she identified some bias that reading the information cards caused toward certain students.

*Classroom Community*

In addition to theories of student-teacher relationships and her role for creating a learning environment, the school in which she currently worked influenced Sandy. There were school “virtues” that all classrooms subscribed to and were to reinforce with the students, such as honesty and hard work. There was also a system for punishment that was prescribed by and consistently enforced throughout the school involving a series of warning cards. Consistency, structure, and order were part of school life building wide. Sandy’s classroom had routines and rules that aligned with those of the school, and Sandy was known for her consistency with students. She was known for being very structured and routine in her classroom practice. In fact, she stated that it was precisely
because of her habits and structure that one of the children, who had been identified as having “major” behavioral issues, had been assigned to her class. The consistency of the rules throughout the school and in Sandy’s classroom aligned with her theory that students need structure and stability, thus a safe place where they know what will happen and how things are run.

The school where Sandy teaches practices a staggered start at the beginning of the year. This means that on the first three days of school a different group of students attend. The students are assigned to each day according to an alphabetic division. The classes are broken up approximately into thirds for those first days, allowing the teachers to administer district-required placement tests. The practice also allows Sandy to have a more intimate first meeting with the majority of the class members. With more time per student, she had more opportunity to get to know the details of each student on which to build a relationship.

Theory/Belief Enactment

Several of the theories and beliefs that Sandy held about teaching were evident in her conduct in establishing routines and meeting the students on the first three days of school. These included (1) creating a safe, welcoming classroom environment, (2) providing structure through consistent routines to promote a feeling of security and comfort, (3) involving families to elicit support for the students as learners, (4) allowing the students to have some autonomy to help them to take responsibility for classroom community and to encourage decision-making skills, and (5) getting to know the students personally. Looking at the first three days of school gives us a foundation from which to
base this analysis. Below I describe the activities that Sandy conducted which demonstrate her attempts to enact her beliefs and ideas about creating a positive learning environment.

On each of the first three days Sandy went through the same agenda, although because of differences in students and context it did not play out in the same way. The first days involved groups of 6, 5, and 12 students respectively. Each day she stood by the door and greeted each student by name, having either learned it at the ice cream social or by the process of elimination—she was correct each time. This demonstrates Sandy’s belief in creating a comfortable classroom environment. By greeting students by name on first arrival Sandy demonstrated to the students that she cared about them.

Because of the smaller class sizes she was able to speak to any parent who came in, and she took that opportunity, which emphasized her desire for family involvement in her classroom. With the smaller numbers she was also able to instruct the students individually about choosing a locker and give them a nametag. She intermittently instructed the students as a whole, telling them to explore the classroom, but most of the students remained at the desk they had chosen. Once everyone had arrived, she instructed them on daily activities: saying the Pledge of Allegiance, standing in lunch line, listening to morning announcements over the intercom, etc. This explicit instruction was part of her attempt to provide structure, contributing to the safe classroom environment and orienting the students to their environment.

She also allowed the students to choose their own desk, arranged in clusters of three groups of six, and one group of seven. She grouped the desks as such to encourage
the classroom community that she hoped to create. Allowing the students to choose their own place was one way she began to establish a pattern of autonomy support. Throughout the morning of setting up routines and explaining rules, Sandy continually asked the children if they knew the reason for some of the rules outlined. By doing so she again attempted to encourage a classroom community by helping them understand the rationale behind the rules for their own safety and helping them to “buy in” to them. Another way that she helped them to feel safe and secure in their new surroundings was by leading them on a short tour of the building, from the office to the classroom and back to the group area.

Once back at the group area, Sandy read a book to the students entitled *First Day Jitters*, which was a tale of a teacher who was nervous on her first day of school. Reading this specific book may have been her attempt to inform the students of her emotional vulnerability as well as help them to relate to her through the shared apprehension over the new situation of which they were all part. After reading the story, the entire class, including Sandy, sat in a circle and played a game to get to know each other. Sandy began by holding a toy kangaroo and stating her favorite color then she passed it to the next person. They did this for several rounds, with Sandy telling funny stories about her pet, her sibling, food, favorite school subject, or whatever the topic was that round, often eliciting giggles from the children. This was Sandy’s way of beginning the process of coming to know the students. Through the game she was able to find out things that she might have in common with the students as well as other topics for future non-academic conversations. This was also a way for her to let the students know more about her as
well. By sitting in the circle with them and telling about her own life, she attempted to open herself to them and help them feel comfortable doing the same.

On the first two days, response from the students was low. On Day One, a boy named Mitch, who was the first to arrive that day, dominated the conversation by answering all of the questions. This student was also the only child to initiate a conversation with Sandy the entire day, and he took the opportunity to engage her in conversation as much as possible, even answering her rhetorical questions. The second day was similar in that the majority of the students stood around silently waiting for instruction from the teacher. On this day a boy named Juan dominated the conversation, but unlike Mitch, he didn’t answer questions but posed his own.

On the third day, due to the fact that there were twice as many students as the days before, many times a few students arrived at once. Sandy was still able to identify and greet each one personally. However, with the increase of class size Sandy had to adjust her manner of interaction. She gave more specific details about how to line up, now calling up the students according to the color of their chair. Reading time was also different, as this group was more interactive and Sandy seemed to feed off of this. She took more time to discuss the pictures in the book and answer their questions as well as ask more questions of the students. She also added two rounds to the game until she noticed that some of the children were becoming bored with it. No one student dominated the conversation within this larger group, although Sandy did take more time to attempt to communicate with Meng, the student who had recently arrived in the United States from China and did not speak any English; in fact Meng did not speak a word of any
language that first day. The fact that Sandy spent more time discussing the book and playing the game appeared to be directly related to how willing the students were to participate. Because this group willingly interacted by asking questions as she read the story and made comments on answers during the game, Sandy reacted by extending the time for them to interact. The students made the situation more comfortable for her by contributing to the conversation thus prompting her continue the interaction.

As we can see from the first days of school, Sandy enacted theories and beliefs she has about teaching. She used the established routines of her classroom to help the students begin to become comfortable in their new environment, leading to a foundation for an environment conducive to learning. She made a point to personally greet each of the students, and then participated with them in activities that encouraged sharing of personal information in an effort to forge new relationships. She also designed her desk arrangement to promote a feel of community and explicitly outlined the rules and procedures that would make the community run smoothly. And finally, she gave the students a bit of autonomy in allowing them to choose their own desks and locker and encouraging them to explore the classroom. This shows support of the students in learning to take initiative and develop decision-making skills.

*Relationship Development*

Conscious of the fact that outside lives have an influence on the learning that takes place in the classroom, Sandy attempted to incorporate what she knew about students into the way she conducted her classroom. Because the first interview took place after only two weeks of school, most of the details of the students that Sandy supplied
came from outside sources. In subsequent interviews it was evident that as she got to know the students better, her own interpretations of student motives became a stronger influence on her impressions of them and therefore on her choice for interaction. However, in several cases it was outside information in combination with her own perception that had the strongest influence not only on how she viewed any particular student, but also on how she chose to interact with that student and consequently how close she felt her relationship was to him/her.

As one might expect, as the relationships progressed throughout the year, this progress was reflected in the length of the interviews. At the beginning of the study Sandy simply supplied information that she had gathered based largely on cumulative reports or interactions with family members and less on personal experience. In later interviews Sandy described the students in detail, discussing personality traits, reports on performance, and details of personal communication and other dealings with each student. These later interviews were also distinguished by her personal commentary regarding individual incidents that had taken place as well as her impression of the motives behind student actions.

The results of the visual aspect of the interview protocol are compiled in Figure 2, which shows the different groupings that emerged each time the diagrams were created. Notice that the number of groupings changed from five distinct groups to eight, to five again, and then finally to seven. (See also Appendix A for photos of diagrams from each interview). Also interesting to note are the changes in the number and make up of each category. These shifts are related to the time of year in which each interview was
administered and to the context of what was happening in the class at that point, and to the interactions with students thus far, which had an influence on the relationship.

First impressions. Studies show that after the first two weeks of school, teachers have completed “grooving” and have established a pattern for interaction having taken survey of the class and identified basic issues that will influence the learning environment (Doyle, 1986). The way the teacher initially grouped the students was based on only two weeks of interaction, so most of the process was supported either by information gathered from family members or by first impressions. However, Sandy already had a lot to say about each student and didn’t hesitate in creating the diagrams. When this exercise was completed, none of the diagrams had circles that touched each other. Decisions made for grouping them and determining what constituted a close relationship were relative to the other diagrams created. In the initial time point, the extreme categories (the groups considered very close and most distant respectively) were the largest.

Preliminary results of the interview protocol showed that the groupings of students aligned with the personality traits of the students as perceived by the teacher and by her approach in interacting with them. A more in depth analysis of the results showed that the student personality traits she identified and the manner in which she interacted with the students aligned closely with this model of the factors that influence teacher interaction and approach orientation (see Figure 2; See also Newberry & Davis, 2008). For example, the students Sandy assigned to the closest relationship category were all identified as having personality traits that Sandy seemed to enjoy; therefore upon first meeting them she immediately felt a kind of affinity for these students and acted toward
them in a manner that demonstrated her fondness. The students who fell in the category that was approached with an Implement Strategies orientation, she described as being off task and distracted; therefore after these first few weeks she had devised specific strategies to keep them focused on their schoolwork. As the table shows, the approach orientations at this time are distinctly related to the determination of relationship closeness. There appears to be a one-to-one correlation between how close the teacher felt to a student, demonstrated by the category of relationship closeness, and the manner in which she interacted with this student and others who fell into that category (See Figure 2). (At all other time points the approach orientations are mixed for the groupings: She may have felt just as close to one child in a group as she did another, yet she still approached them differently based on her perception of need/ personality/ response.)

In the initial interview Sandy was unable to identify any patterns or rationale for the groupings that she made. In this first interview her attempt to systematically analyze the groups was by demographics only: race, gender and academics. She articulated that 5 of the 6 in the closet category were white and one was black. The opposite end of the spectrum also had 6 children, 4 of whom were white, 1 black, and 1 Asian. She then tried to determine if there was a difference between achievement levels of the students. Of the 6 in the closest category, she identified 3 as the best students in the class, whereas among the 6 in the most distant category, 2 were classified as having special needs. Then she discussed gender: 4 of the 6 in the closest group were boys, in contrast to 4 in the most distant group being girls. Although she articulated these disparities, she did not verbally
identify them as significant differences and stated in regards to race that “it’s really split up” (SI 1:206). Regarding academics, she stated,

Three of my brightest students are actually a little closer to [me]—and then… my two special needs girls that are out of the room 60% of the day are towards the lower end, and at the same time the rest of them are pretty middle of the road. I wouldn’t say [it was] one way or the other. (SI 1:212-215)

Concerning gender, Sandy thought that it seemed “pretty split”-- meaning that she thought that gender was evenly represented among all of the groups.

At this time, perhaps because she had not had much experience with these students, Sandy was unable to identify why she felt closer to some students than she did to others. The commonalities of those in the closest category which were not identified by the teacher but emerged through my analysis are that they are pleasant personalities--students who seem as if they will be easy to deal with (Babad, 1993; H. Davis, 2006; Wentzel, 1993), with one exception. The one exception was the student of whom Sandy has been forewarned due to his emotional outbursts. His inclusion in this group at this time may demonstrate Sandy’s desire to care for him.

*Sorting needs.* By the second time point (at winter break in December, after the first reporting period) the categories had spread out, and the two larger categories were clustered next to the groups to which Sandy felt the closest and the ones to which she felt the most distant, separated by two other small groups in between. The reason for the thinning out of the categories can be explained by Sandy’s comment regarding her focus at the beginning of the year:

I mean I think about the beginning of the year, that first nine weeks it’s really figuring out, “ok, who needs what?” And unfortunately we—um-- the personal aspect of teaching gets left behind because you’re so worried about core
academics and behavior. Those really, when it comes to it, that first nine weeks you’re looking for “who’s my behavior problems that I need to make sure I have strategies for?” “Who are my—who will struggle academically?” And that first nine weeks that’s all you pay attention to…because it’s so easy to fall into the rut of “ok, who needs my academic help? Who needs my behavior help? That’s who I’m focusing on.” It’s very easy to do. (SI 4:1065-1071)

Where initially Sandy hadn’t known the students very well and had to rely on either first impressions or reports from others, at this second time point it appears that she had done a bit of sorting of the students related to what she perceived they needed from her. This combination of what she knew about the students and the interactions she had had to this point, along with the academic, behavioral and social needs she perceived, made it possible for Sandy to separate the students by needs: who needed her academically or behaviorally, and who didn’t. Interestingly though, Sandy was surprised by some of the groupings—some of the shifts of particular students were things she had not anticipated.

At the second interview, Sandy felt that she had gotten to know her students fairly well and was able to describe their personalities and talk about each of them fairly in depth. Of course, she elaborated on some students more than on others, depending on recent events and interactions in the classroom. The approach orientation taken with students was still related to the closeness category in which they fell according to the diagrams she created. The manner of approaching students remained within the same five orientations identified, although at this time point Sandy appeared to approach more than one category of students with the same orientation. Sandy recognized at this point that she knew the boys in the classroom much better than she did the girls. Of the first three closest groups, 9 of the 11 were boys, in contrast to only 3 of the 9 in the three most distant groups. This is consistent with the literature regarding gender bias in classrooms,
which suggests that teachers interact more with boys due to behavioral control issues or because boys tend to be naturally more assertive. Sandy’s reasons for why she knew the boys better were not clear, but recall that on the first two days of class, the students who initiated conversations with the teacher and dominated all the rest were both boys. Sandy’s comment regarding why she thought the boys were closer to her is interesting. She explained,

I know growing up I always related to boys better. All—I mean I had a lot of guy friends, and then even through high school, college, I had a hard time getting close to girls, and so I’ve always felt I just—I’ve always just been closer to guys. I don’t know, I mean even now I have friends that are girls, but I can’t say that I have any really close girlfriends that I just tell everything to. (2:390-394)

And in contrast she stated that with the girls

I don’t know what to talk to them about, and every once in a while something will come up and they’ll be like, “Oh, ok.” Like with Keisha, we were talking about music, and so she and I were able to, you know, kind of connect on that, but um—and with Desiree too—but then there are other things that, um, I like, I kind of feel at a loss—like I don’t know what to say. (2:450-454)

At this second interview, all 4 students in the closest categories were boys. Where before Sandy had thought there was no gender difference to her groupings, after the second time point she recognized the difference and made the connection noted. Sandy took responsibility for this, as shown in the quoted statements. However, she didn’t consider the possibility that her relationships might also be influenced by students’ actions and her interactions with them; instead she attributed the difference to her personal history outside of teaching. Of note is the fact that of the 9 students ever to be included in the first category (representing the closest relationships), 6 were more likely to initiate interaction rather than wait for her to come to them (see Table 1). Also interesting is that
of those 9 students ever to be included in the closest category, the teacher took the initiative when interacting with the girls, but the boys were more likely to instigate interaction with Sandy.

*Making the best use of time.* As would be expected, Sandy felt even more comfortable with discussing her students at the third time point. She gave many more examples and details about interactions—things she had noticed about the students and their relationships with her as well as with peers. The groupings collapsed back into five categories, with the shift towards the closer end of the spectrum. There was no longer a separate distinction of approach orientation for each category. Half of the students in the class fell into either the second or third category, both of which were identified as being approached with two differing orientations. What this means is that although those two closeness categories contained students who were rated about the same as far as level of closeness felt in the relationship as reflected in the diagrams, for some reason she still interacted with the students within those groups differently.

The third time point was spring break—the time of year in which the preparation for standardized testing begins. At this time the groupings condensed, with a larger number distributed at the closer end. Sandy identified the shift of students to the closer categories, but she also noted that the diagrams reflected a section of students with whom she felt uncertain in her relationship. She stated, “I feel like I have a gray area in the middle. Kinda like these kids that, I feel like I know a lot about them, but at the same time I don’t necessarily feel like I’m very close to them” (SI 3:497-499). Sandy explained the division of students as based on the preparations they needed for those standardized
tests. She stated that there were those with whom she could have more casual conversations and those with whom the focus remained purely academic. This explains the shift to less differentiated groupings, with all students closer because needs, whether based on time spent for academic help or relationship quality, were all intensified. She increased the time spent with those she felt needed preparation for testing, and with those who didn’t need the help, the time was used to get to know more about the student. Sandy explained that with the students who did not need as much academic attention, she was able to have much more fun conversations—not related to school. However, with the students who were struggling more to be prepared, she felt that she could not waste time on things other than getting them ready for testing:

Where with some of the kids that are struggling more in academics, I try to keep their focus, you know, more of our conversation, “what can we learn from this?” type thing versus kind of a frivolous conversation. That’s probably not the best thing ‘cause they need to be able to have that too, but I just feel this pull to make sure that they’re performing on grade level before they leave me that I worry. (SI 3:466-471)

This was the most intense time of the year for Sandy, which was manifest in the clustering of the students back to five categories. Working diligently with those who needed help created a sense of closeness in the relationship as she spent more time with each student. She also spent more time reflecting on what she could do to help those who were not where she believed they should be. Yet she also has more fun conversations with students who were not under the pressure, which increased the number of students with whom she felt close. Although she knew this was not necessarily fair, she could not escape the pressure to treat the students differently based what she saw as academic need.
Finding rhythm. In the final interview, conducted at the close of the school year, the categories were again spread out, changing from five to seven. The result from the use of the interview protocol at this final time point showed a clear distinction in relationship closeness. The closest category included a single student; the most distant category was made up of 3 students who had just recently moved into the district. The remainder of the class was divided among five different categories of closeness. The approach orientations not only overlapped, but were mixed this time, meaning that there were some within-group differences in the manner of approach, but also at this time point the teacher used a combination of approaches with some of the students.

If there had been no new students, the number of categories may have been the same as during the first interview, perhaps demonstrating an ebb and flow of classroom life from the first day of new interactions to the end of school and stabilized relationships. Clandinin (1989) discusses how teachers develop a rhythm in teaching in which class work, routines, and relationships eventually settle into a rhythm for teaching, which would include how the teacher interacts with the variety of students. In the case of Sandy, it seemed that the settling of categories by the end of the year had to do with how she felt personally toward individual students. Although Sandy identified the categories at the last interview as grouped according to their initiated conversations with her, the groupings also had to do with the context of those conversations and the ability of the students to engage conversationally. She stated,

Because they’re more willing to yeah, to make that connection, they’re more willing to open up about something when I share something, going kind of that back and forth of that sharing and accepting and expressing kind of views and
stuff, that I think has allowed, like, the relationship to develop more because of that. (SI 4:898-901)

Sandy’s statement indicates that the relationships with her students depended in part on the students’ ability to carry on conversations by a reciprocal sharing and receiving of personal information. It appears that to the extent that a student was able to engage in this kind of communication with her, the student’s personality contributed to relationship quality. After the big academic push was over, Sandy felt that with the stress lifted she was free to be more at ease with all of her students. However, at the end of the year, she had a few students with whom she definitely had a much closer relationship. These students were ones who spent the most time with the teacher, enjoyed the less academically focused conversations, and had more personal time with her.

When reflecting on this last administration of the interview protocol, Sandy noted that her special needs students, who typically were located in the most distant categories, had migrated to the middle. She was not surprised by the make up of the two extreme categories. She also observed that although the closeness of the diagrams of the 2 students in category six out of seven showed that she was less close to them, she felt that the distance between the circles on the diagrams reflected a change in the relationship. She stated that overall she felt like she had grown closer to all of her students regardless of the outcome of the diagram. Trying to determine why the categories were grouped as they were and looking for commonalities, Sandy vocalized that she didn’t approach teaching the students differently, so the groupings were not based on ability; however she acknowledged that her non-academic conversation differed. In the end she reflected that groupings fell along the lines of how students interacted with her; those who initiated the
most tended to fall in the closer categories, and those who took little or no initiative to interact were among the most distant ones. As Sandy noted, at the final interview the circles were placed closer together in the majority of the diagrams, regardless of the category in which the students fell. This represents a shift, not only in the diagrams as created but also in her perception and understanding of close relationships with her students. Whatever efforts Sandy made to reach out to those students with whom she did not have a lot of interaction, it appears that the amount to which she felt they accepted her gestures and reciprocated attempts to interact influenced the outcome of the relationship.

Factors That Influence Shifts in Relationships

In analyzing the shifts in relationships across the year, I was able to identify some additional factors that influenced the direction and quality of the relationships between the teacher and the various students. Attempts to interact with the teacher as well as requests for her attention seemed to have an influence on Sandy’s perspective on different students. It appeared that she was influenced by the frequency and purpose behind a student’s attempt to interact with her.

*Initiation of Interaction*

As the information from each method of data collection was analyzed, it became evident to me that student initiation was important to the development of the relationships. As Sandy realized in the last interview, the students who took the initiative to interact were often in the closer categories. Realizing this, I searched the field notes and noted all observed interactions and who had initiated the contact (see Table 1). The evidence showed that the teacher interacted more with the boys in the classroom. (Of the
10 highest rates of interaction, 9 were held by boys). When it came to who initiated the interaction, again it was the boys who dominated. All 10 of those ranked highest in student-initiated conversations were boys. Also among those ranked highest according to teacher-initiated conversations, 8 of the 10 highest were boys. Comparing this data with the categories of close relationships, 7 of the 9 who had at any time been included in the closest categories were boys, and of those, 6 were more likely to initiate the conversation with the teacher.

Other interesting things to note are the reasons for initiating conversations. Of the 10 highest ranked in overall interactions, there was one girl: Keisha, found in the middle in her likelihood to initiate interaction but second on the list of most interactions initiated by the teacher. When the teacher engaged either Derek or Keisha (ranked first and second respectively), the conversation revolved around behavior. They were frequently called out for disturbing other students, not participating in class, or engaging in some other unwanted behavior. However, the third student on that list, Juan, was often requested by the teacher to help in dealing with other students, and times he would be singled out when a group of boys were gathered together in non-academic endeavors. Students listed fourth and fifth, Jacob and Oscar, were found at the top of the two other lists. They were the two with the biggest behavioral issues in the class and required a good bit of the teacher’s time. When those two boys initiated conversations or interaction, the purpose was rarely academic. The same was true of the rest of the boys at the top of that list. With the exception of Marcus, who was concerned with his performance, the other boys were most likely to engage in non-academic conversations--
telling a joke, showing the teacher some article of interest to them, or merely talking about what they liked to do outside of class.

As far as who initiated with whom, there was rarely total reciprocation. There was one student, Ivette, with whom the initiation was split 50/50, and Aiden was close at 53/47 (teacher to student). Ivette and Aiden both began the year in the second of the closest categories, shifted to the center, then shifted back to closer (Ivette being actually among the very closest category), and ended up back in the middle. In my observations, both were independent children, who were more concerned with peers than with the teacher relationship. Ivette approached Sandy for academic purposes; Sandy approached Ivette for behavioral issues, such as talking to her neighbor, and academic reasons, such as answering questions or explaining ideas. Conversely, Aiden approached Sandy for personal reasons—to share a joke or tell a story, while Sandy approached Aiden for academic and behavioral reasons—at times helping him with a problem or calling on him for an answer and at others for playing around with the other boys during class time.

**Dimensions of Choice for Relationship Building**

In the model proposed by Newberry and Davis (2008), the factors that influence a teacher’s approach orientation are personality, relational press, and challenge. As evident in the model, these three factors directly affect how the teacher interacts with students. If the student’s personality is fairly easy to negotiate, then the teacher leans toward more positive interactions, ones that show feelings of affinity or where she is being reflective; if the personality is difficult to negotiate, then interactions are typically more disconnected or professional. The same goes for having positive or negative feelings for
dealing with the student’s challenges or for feeling pressed by the student for a relationship. If personality features are acceptable, then approaches are reflective and full of affinity. If unacceptable, then approaches are likely to be rote, casual and merely professional.

Upon closer scrutiny of the data other factors relating to the teacher’s reaction to the factors of personality, press, and challenge emerged. I’ve identified these factors as relation, reflection and reward. These additional factors emerged as more of a filtering system for which the original factors of personality, press and challenge were judged. It appeared that once the teacher identified the original factors of a student’s personality traits, relationship needs and personal challenges, that she then had to make decisions regarding how these might relate to her and what they meant for the classroom in general. I therefore describe these emergent factors as part of a separate dimension of which the initial factors pass through (Figure 3). Through the this presumptive process of filtering through the dimension of Relation, Reflection, and Reward the teacher makes evaluations about perceived factors before action occurs. The addition of this filtering dimension extends the understanding of what it means to deal with challenges, negotiate personality and respond to press for a relationship.

The dimension of relation includes shared interests or other commonalities that naturally incline people to associate. In addition to or in absence of commonalities, it also includes an element of reciprocity in the acceptance, enjoyment, and effort to get to know the other. Reflection as a dimension refers to judgments made regarding needs,
requirements to meet those needs, responsibility, a determination of control over the situation, ability to meet the needs, cost analysis of effort, and willingness to relate.

Figure 3: Extended model for teachers’ concept of factors that influence the interaction-approach orientation enacted toward students.

The third dimension, of reward, refers to outcomes for the parties involving success academically, socially or personally. The outcomes can be focused on the self, other, or both. These three dimensions work in conjunction in influencing decisions for interaction with a student. The dimensions outlined incorporate sorting information and processing feelings that collectively guide teachers’ decisions. Rather than labeling this an unconscious process, I refer to it in terms of the “nonconscious” (Stern, 2004). Stern distinguishes between unconscious and nonconscious, as unconscious has an aspect of
repression to it. On the other hand, things that are nonconscious are not repressed, but merely not made explicit. They are things that are perceived which are yet to be brought to consciousness: a kind of “implicit knowing” (Stern, 2004, p. 116). I describe the teacher’s evaluation and appraisal of the explicit factors she sees is an implicit and unrecognized decision-making process about what she perceives. Presumably, this decision-making process is brought to the conscious level through productive reflection.

Each dimension can be positively or negatively charged. By positively charged, I mean that the focus and goal within that particular dimension are outwardly centered, looking for benefits rather than deficits, optimistic rather than pessimistic. Negatively charged denotes the opposite: the focus and goal within the dimension are inwardly centered and preoccupied with loss and shortfalls. When all three dimensions are positively charged, the result is constructive and hopeful in dealing with a student. When one of the dimensions is negatively charged, the methods and decisions made for dealing with a student are skewed negatively and are not helpful. For example, a teacher might identify with a student’s personality trait of being inquisitive; therefore she is inclined to want to associate with the student. She may also determine that he has potential academic ability and working with him would produce increased achievement. However, she may also reflect on his behavior and determine that it demands her to constantly call him back to task, put in extra time to re-explain instructions, and help him quiet down and focus on the lesson. All of this time and effort, if seen as tapping into limited resources to deal with habits that he can control but chooses not to because of his preference for play over work, could negatively influence the filtering process. Although the first two filtering
processes were positively charged, the third was negatively charged because of the teacher’s perception of the lack of resources on her part and the lack of will on his.

Influence of Productive Reflection on Individual Relationships

Because many of the processes described above were done on a nonconscious level, a catalyst is often required to bring about a change in patterns of behavior. An analysis of the changes in relationships between Sandy and some of her students indicated that there always had to be some form of reflection for real change to happen. Although a catalyst like outside information may have caused some shifts, if time was not taken to reflect and reframe there was little effect on the relationship. Things that remained on the nonconscious level were never quite addressed until they were identified through reflection.

Some of the most interesting components of this study were the individual shifts of students from one category to another. As the relationships unfolded, it was fascinating to watch the interactions, listen to the teacher discuss the personal relationships, and become aware of her rationale for choices on how and why she approached students. Below I have selected a few students whose patterns of movement made them interesting case studies. I selected critical incidents that occurred with each student that demonstrate the context of the relationship. I then discuss what this incident represents and how the teacher understood it, link that to what is represented in the charts, and apply the process of filtering through the dimensions of relation, reflection and reward to aid in the interpretation of the relationship and the changes that occurred across time points.
The first student I have selected is Desiree, who is interesting because of the great shift from the first time point to the last. She began in the closest category, but the relationship became difficult and only because of outside information did it bounce back ending where it began. The next student selected, Oscar, moved from category to category, starting in one of the most distant ones and working his way to one of the closest. Both Oscar and Sandy put a great deal of effort into this relationship, which is a great example of the evolution of care from ethical caring to natural caring. The third student I selected was Kaitlin, who was chosen because she remained in the middle for the entire year. She may best represent that “forgotten middle” described in the literature.

The final student selected was Jacob, who was identified as having severe behavioral issues. Jacob was selected for many reasons: because he was the only student to remain in the closest category, because of the amount of effort Sandy was required to put into this relationship due to his behavior, and because he ended the year as the one student to whom she felt she shared the closest relationship.

Desiree: Little Effort, Big Reward.

Information Sandy gathered from other adults appear to have influenced her first impressions of Desiree. Sandy had been made aware of Desiree’s family situation and the comparison sometimes made between this intelligent little girl and her older brother, who had died two years prior. Desiree resembled her brother, which intensified the comparison. Sandy observed in meeting the mother that the deceased brother still occupied many of the mother’s thoughts. In the description collected from interviews and observations, it is evident that Sandy had already made a decision to help this girl.
Sandy speaks hopefully about the only student she has participating in the latchkey program, a program designed to provide students with a place to go and constructive things to do until their parents can retrieve them. Desiree is a quiet girl, with searching eyes and a solemn expression. When interacting with adults she doesn’t speak until spoken to. Sandy feels that Desiree doesn’t get much of that individual time with adults and is looking forward to the chance to talk to Desiree one-on-one. To accomplish this, Sandy plans to have Desiree help around the classroom a bit after the rest of the class has left and before Desiree is dismissed to the latchkey program. (From UI 10/11)

The perception of Desiree being overlooked by a grieving mother seemed to create a pseudo-relationship before the year even began based solely on sympathy for her situation. Sandy expected to develop the relationship through enacting her plans to have Desiree stay after school and help when the two of them could have more personal interaction. As she considered how to best help Desiree, she devised a way to relate to her, and because of the time reflecting and planning on her issues, at the initial interview Desiree ended up being among the 6 students with whom the teacher perceived having the closest relationship. Only 2 girls were included in this group.

In addition to expressing sympathy, Sandy’s language indicated a positive personal response to Desiree as a “baby doll,” and as a girl who was very smart but not very outspoken. These qualities align with past research on student attributes that lead to positive teacher-student relationships (H. Davis, 2006; Wentzel, 1993). Sandy stated that she had intentions in the coming year to help Desiree “build up her self-esteem and [to know]… when she is here she’s important” (1:119-120). Field notes between this time point and the next interview revealed Desiree participating in class by raising her hand to answer questions and eliciting help from Sandy to make an art project. The relationship between Sandy and Desiree, however, did not go as a Sandy had foreseen.
From the beginning of the year to the second interview Desiree found friends with three other girls in the class, and the four of them became exclusionary, in fact, Sandy referred to them as a clique. They were often the center of controversy, as they had a hard time with what Sandy referred to as the “politics of friendship.” The following is an example of the behavior that Sandy had to deal with involving these girls. The change in behavior frustrated Sandy particularly because she had initially identified them as “sweet” girls.

*Sandy is at the closet retrieving coins for a boy in the class who collects them. As she digs around for the coins, a female student, Alice, approaches her. Alice is crying and is followed by Desiree and Keisha. Alice informs Sandy that the two other girls told her that she peed her pants. Keisha protests, stating that they only said that it “looked like” she peed her pants, not that she actually did. Desiree stands silent and expressionless. Alice’s mother arrives as Sandy tells the two girls that they have hurt Alice’s feelings and turns abruptly from them to be a lookout for Alice because she refuses to leave with her mother until a certain boy from another class has left. Keisha and Desiree stand there for a moment before turning from the door and walking to the other side of the room (FN 11/26).*

Sandy perceived Desiree as part of the clique, but not as the leader. Her participation in activities with the other girls that were less than kind toward others disappointed Sandy. The group of girls was so exclusionary that perhaps Sandy even felt some rejection from them, which was possibly why she chose not to deal with them in this scenario. Note she barely even addressed them, focusing on Alice’s need instead. Her indifference could be interpreted as a kind of rejection of Desiree (Leary, 2003). At this second interview Desiree was described as sensitive, helpful--somewhat of a “pleaser.” But her participation in the clique indicates that the pleasing she was concerned with involved valuing friends over the teacher. Sandy commented that it appeared to her that Desiree was more interested in her friends than anything else. Desiree’s diagram reflected
a distant relationship at this time point, which placed her in the sixth of eight categories, a much more distant placement than previously determined in the prior interview.

Once the diagrams for the entire class were displayed, Sandy was surprised by Desiree’s placement. Because Desiree was a student who stayed after class for an after school program, which meant they spent more time together, Sandy had assumed that she would be one of the students to whom she felt closer. She stated,

I wouldn’t have thought that Desiree would’ve been here either. I would’ve thought that [she and another female student] would’ve been a little bit more this way (closer to the first category) . . . because they both stay after school and so I–and then they’ll talk to me and tell me things. I guess I expected them to be more, a little more closer [sic] I guess. (2:442-447)

Because she spent a little more time with Desiree, Sandy assumed that increased interaction would increase her sense of closeness to Desiree but that actually did not happen. The fact that Sandy spent time with Desiree after school didn’t overshadow Desiree’s involvement in the clique and the disappointment that she had in Desiree’s due to her participation in it. This resulted in Sandy being surprised that the relationship was more distant than she had expected.

This realization of the unnoticed change in the relationship between Desiree and Sandy apparently affected Sandy. She made efforts to deal more appropriately with Desiree, including addressing the issue of the clique. Below is an example of her efforts to include Desiree and the result from the months of effort on the relationship.

A handful of students are left in the room. A boy makes a comment about how women know nothing about “men things.” Sandy takes a seat at the reading table where the boys are gathered and counters his statement by enumerating things she knows about men. Desiree adds to her argument, and Sandy and Desiree expound to one another all that they know for a brief moment before Desiree leaves the area. Sandy then continues to talk to the boys, who tell her she knows
nothing about video games. Desiree returns to the table accompanied by Alice and Terra, just as Sandy tells the boys that video games are a waste of time. Derek counters with the argument that they improve hand-eye coordination, to which Sandy insists that sports will do the same. Desiree tells Sandy that she is going to start playing soccer this year. Just then the bell rings and the students all turn to leave. Desiree comes back and hugs Sandy before heading out the door.

(FN 2/04/08)

Here Sandy included Desiree in the conversation that was initially only between her and the boys. The conversation showed what they have in common as females, as opposed to the males in the room. Desiree showed acceptance of Sandy through physical affection, which was the reward for the effort that Sandy put into the relationship. At the third interview Desiree had once again joined the group of students to whom Sandy felt the closest. Again there were only 2 girls in that category. Sandy explained that Desiree had improved her work ethic in the class and had been working really hard to prove that she was ready to go on to third grade. Observations confirmed that Desiree was a very willing participant academically, as she often raised her hand to answer questions and volunteered to do work at the board. Sandy commented that the more she got to know Desiree, the more she realized that Desiree was really a sad child. She recounted a conversation with Desiree’s mother in which her mother confessed to not being a caring mother, to providing physically the best she could but not offering much in the way of emotional support. Sandy attributed that to be the reason for the sadness she occasionally saw from Desiree, the fact that “she just feels like she’s not getting enough, just loving,” demonstrated by the hugs that Desiree sometimes gave Sandy before leaving class.

Sandy also commented that she had recently had to have a conversation with all of the girls in her class about their behavior toward each other. She remarked,
I sat the girls down and said, “Look, school is hard enough as it is. And boys make school hard, and girls make school harder because girls can be mean. You guys know it, I went through it…Bottom line is you gotta help each other; you gotta be there for each other. You can’t be those girls that are mean to each other, because it will make school even harder than it is.” From then on it’s been pretty good. (IS 1: 415-420)

Desiree, along with two other girls who were identified as being part of the clique, was reported to have improved her behavior since then, by being more accepting of other students than previously. Desiree not only took to heart that she needed to be prepared for third grade and improved her academic efforts, she also listened and took to heart the advice given by Sandy about how to treat others.

Throughout the interviews, Sandy made reference to her relationship preference for males over females and reaffirmed that part of it was due to the experience she had had in her personal life. She may have ignored dealing with the clique issue when it first began because it brought back the difficulties of her school days and she deemed it too emotionally taxing to deal with head on. However, when it got to a point that she had to address it the results were favorable, especially in her relationship with Desiree. Where before Desiree had found comfort with the girls in the clique, she eventually also sought comfort from Sandy. Sandy’s belief that children need a safe, loving environment that often is only found at school, along with the change she witnessed in her Desiree may have persuaded Sandy to easily forgive any wrongdoing in Desiree’s behavior, resulting in a renewed close relationship.

The many ways that Sandy showed Desiree that she cared about her, from including her in conversations to taking the time to deal with her problems, endeared Sandy to Desiree beyond what Sandy had anticipated. With the knowledge Sandy
received regarding the lack of mothering in Desiree’s life, Sandy increased her efforts to play that part. In the following vignette, the depth of Desiree’s connection to Sandy is made apparent. For such a quiet, emotionless girl, the amount of feeling demonstrated in this scene is evidence of the safety the student felt in the relationship, as well as the amount of care she felt for the teacher.

It’s the last day of school and all of the teachers are preparing to participate in their annual chair race down the empty hallway. A first grade teacher approaches Sandy and tells her that she is wanted down in the cafeteria, where the latchkey program is held. She jokes around with the other teachers on her way down the hall only to find Desiree full of tears. Desiree cries as she tells Sandy that she doesn’t want it to be summer yet, that she wants to stay here with her. Sandy gives her a hug and tries to console her by informing her that she will always be welcome to visit and encouraging Desiree to stop by any time. (SI 6/)

Sandy demonstrated the importance of the relationship by immediately attending to Desiree’s need and offering the idea of lengthening the relationship beyond this school year. Learning the extent to which Desiree felt love towards Sandy only endeared her more. Sandy explained that it was hard to see Desiree visibly upset the last day of school. Sandy expounded on her hope and interpretation of their relationship when she determined that Desiree “just really wants to know someone cares about her, the way she cares about them and I think—I’m hoping, me, like spending extra time with her, you know, after school, with giving her that—she cares as much as I care…” (SI 4:105-107).

By the end of the year Desiree had solidified her place as one of the students to whom Sandy felt the closest, and it is likely this episode had played a major role in cementing the relationship. (Recall, Desiree was the only girl to be included in the two closest categories). Initially Sandy felt drawn to Desiree’s personality, as she was a bright, polite, helpful little girl who did what she was told and worked hard. It didn’t take
long before Desiree, a girl with self-doubt and the desire to please others, became involved and more concerned with a group of girls who sought her company to the exclusion of others. As the year progressed, Sandy observed the behavior of girls in the clique. Because these behaviors were in stark contrast to the way she thought Desiree would behave, it appears that Sandy became somewhat disenchanted with Desiree. However, once outside information regarding Desiree’s family life came to light, Sandy apparently refocused her view of Desiree. Arguably, it was the combination of Sandy reframing her understanding of Desiree’s life and Desiree’s behavioral and academic changes that brought Desiree back into Sandy’s good graces.

*Contrast with Keisha.* It is interesting to contrast Sandy’s response toward Desiree with her response to Keisha, one of the other girls in the clique. Keisha’s family life was perhaps even more difficult than Desiree’s situation. Keisha once came to school with ‘kick me’ written on her forehead in permanent marker by her older sister. On another occasion her mother sent a note asking Sandy to make sure that she didn’t look “ugly” in her school picture like she usually does. Keisha began the year being categorized as one of the most distant relationships, and as the year progressed she moved to the middle, then remained there all year. She was described as a good kid, but somewhat of an instigator; bright but not wanting to apply herself; and introverted, having a bit of an edge to her. She was a student who walked home after school, spending extra time outside of academics in the presence of the teacher. The differences determining why Sandy felt closer to Desiree than to Keisha may lie in the students’ differing personalities, in Sandy’s differential perception of their needs, and in the differing responses from the
students. Although Sandy did deal with Keisha in a helpful manner, taking the time to remove the marker from her forehead and encouraging her that her pictures turned out lovely, Keisha had what Sandy described as a “wall” around her that deterred Sandy from getting too close.

Filter through dimensions of relations, reflection and reward. Examining these factors through the lens of relation, reflection, and reward, helps us to make sense of Sandy’s response. First, Keisha and Sandy appeared to have no shared interests or other commonalities. Also Keisha did not put as much effort into a personal relationship with Sandy as Desiree did. Sandy stated that the more Keisha knew about her the better off they were, yet Keisha did not take the initiative to ask questions in non-academic conversations with Sandy and was continually surprised to find out that Sandy watched American Idol or did other normal daily activities. The amount of parental participation also differed. Sandy spoke with Desiree’s mother many times—Desiree’s mother came to the ice cream social at the start of the year and to parent/teacher conferences as well. Keisha’s family did not participate; Sandy met them once. The only other source of information about the family was reports from Keisha, which Sandy expressed were somewhat doubtful, thus Sandy knew very little about Keisha’s home life. Perhaps Sandy’s implicit interpretation was that Keisha did not want to be known and therefore kept a wall around herself. Weighing the resources in time, emotion and effort, Sandy may have decided not to act, in part because she did not know how the family really functioned. The reward for the academic efforts did not yield benefits either. All three dimensions were negatively charged: Sandy did not see any commonalities nor attempts
at reciprocation to found a relationship, she did not see reward for any effort made or anticipated, and she did not have sufficient information to determine Keisha’s needs or her part to meet them. Not having received a positive response from Keisha, it appeared that Sandy felt that it was not the time to intervene. Reflection on what to do about Keisha resulted in less action because there was less information.

Oscar: Demanding of Time and Effort

Another student who, like Desiree, moved from extremes across the school year was a boy named Oscar. Oscar moved in the opposite direction, having started the year as one of the most distant relationships yet ending the year as one of the closest. At the start of the year he was identified as a sweet boy who didn’t give Sandy much trouble. However, Sandy misread Oscar’s needs. She attended to him academically, but he wanted more of her time socially, which was apparent by the amount of time he spent trying to get her attention and following her around. When Oscar did not get the kind of attention he wanted from her, he began to act out. At first Sandy did not know how to handle this behavior and was quite frustrated with him. However, as she became aware of outside factors in his life, she began to reframe his behavior, and doing this changed the way in which she engaged with him.

Sandy places a sample of student handwriting on the overhead projector. She asks the students to rate the handwriting on a scale from one to four by placing the corresponding number of fingers under their chins. Most of the children quietly comply. As she surveys the room, Oscar shouts out that he wants to give the piece of work a ‘ten.’ Sandy replies to him that giving a ten is not an option. She continues to survey the room calling out some of the ratings the other students have given it. She notices that Oscar is not using the rating scale given, nor is he putting his fingers under his chin. Instead he is holding his hands in the air showing all ten fingers. Sandy announces to the class that if you do not use the system outlined then your vote will not count. (FN 9/21)
As the year began, Oscar begged for additional attention by calling out in class. It appears that Sandy read his behavior not as a need for her attention, but as a need for him to learn proper behavior, and she implemented strategies to keep him on task. As her response to his action in this scenario shows, he was not a student whose personality or behavior she was inclined to favor. Although Sandy most likely framed her remark to avoid a direct reprimand of Oscar, however he was singled out, being the only one not following her instruction. Her non-confrontational approach to discipline was may have been an attempt to help him feel comfortable in the classroom, but Oscar appears to have read as rejection and indifference as evidenced in his increased efforts to get her attention.

Sandy was aware that Oscar was part of a major custody battle and currently lived with his grandparents, who do not speak any English. At the first interview Oscar was rated as a somewhat distant relationship, which placed him in the fourth of five categories, indicating that he was not quite one of the most distant relationships, but was clearly more distant than the majority of the students in the class. In the informal interview, as a follow up to creating the diagram, Sandy explained that Oscar had emerged in the first two months of school as one of those students who had begun to “test the waters to see what he could get away with” and then tried to get out of trouble by denying what he had done once he had been caught. These are not personality traits are not most teachers are find attractive.

Oscar was also described at the beginning of the year as a “super, super sweet child who could just sit and talk to [her] all day and be perfectly content” but possibly
because his personality was not one that she was naturally drawn to, those kind of conversations did not take place between the two. Oscar began to find ways to get her attention in any way he could, which usually led to negative attention. Again in the following scenario, Oscar attempted to get Sandy’s attention, seemingly not yet obtained what he wanted from the relationship. However, it appears that Sandy continued to read his behavior as a lack of training and tried to find ways to help him behaviorally.

_The class is seated on the floor at the large group area. One student stands in front of the group leading them in identifying the day of the week and month. The conversation changes to the weather, and Sandy explains to them that it is now the time of the year that they need to start wearing their heavy coats, hats, gloves and scarves. Oscar shouts out from the middle of the group that he doesn’t have a scarf. Sandy doesn’t respond to his comment and continues her dialog about everyone needing to zip up their coats when outside. Oscar again shouts out that his coat doesn’t have a zipper. She acknowledges his comment by stating to the group that if your coat doesn’t have a zipper then you must make sure to button it or whatever else your coat does to stay shut. She then turns her attention back to the student leading the group._ (FN 11/26)

Again Sandy’s approach to Oscar was one of non-confrontation. She never directly addressed why his behavior was inappropriate, but simply ignored it, making a generic response about the issues he raised. Evidently she believed that if she did not give him attention when he acted contrary to the class rules, he would eventually get the hint and fall in line. She attempted to be consistent with how she responded to misbehavior, but Oscar seems to read her behavior as an attempt to ignore him and again amplified his effort to get her attention.

By the second interview, in Sandy’s rating of closeness to students, Oscar had moved from the fourth of five categories to the third of eight. Sandy described him as a mischievous child who embellished a lot, and who appeared to have a fear of something
that she couldn’t figure out. She had begun to have more communication with the
grandparents, who were willing and eager to help out in any way, but with whom she had
to communicate through an interpreter. She expressed that she believed Oscar to be
intentionally trying to be sent home for reasons she could not identify. She indicated that
her intuition told her that the problems related to the family issues that surrounded him,
but she had no proof to verify this feeling. Classroom observations showed that it was
Oscar’s usual practice to call out to Sandy often for various reasons throughout the day--
many times while seated across the room and when she was engaged with other students.
He also followed her around the room and interrupted her often. Although Oscar was still
not a personality match for Sandy, she began to reflect on the reasons for his behavior.

Sandy’s perception that Oscar was afraid and the clues she began to piece
together regarding his family life evidently led her to have more patience with him. His
efforts and her attempts at understanding him seem to have resulted in a closer
relationship. Interesting to note is that at this point Sandy believed that she was initiating
more of the interaction between herself and Oscar, although my field notes indicated
otherwise. She did report that he was giving her hugs at the end of the day, “even if it had
been pretty rough” for them in regards to his behavior in the classroom. This comment
indicates that Sandy had become aware of the amount of emotional labor required to
sustain this relationship.

Between the second and third interviews there had been increased communication
with Oscar’s grandparents resulting in many revelations about his family life that caused
Sandy to reflect on how and why Oscar behaved as he did. In the following scenario
Sandy showed Oscar some of that personal attention that he had been craving. Here Oscar made big gestures to invite her into his life.

Recess was indoors today and is now coming to a close. Oscar comes over to Sandy as she waits for all of the games to be returned. He asks her if she knows his real mom and dad, and then he shows her a picture. Sandy stops to look at the picture and she tells him that he looks a lot like his father. Oscar agrees. Another child comes to him and looks at the picture. They move away from Sandy as more children bring games to be put away. All of the children return to their seats as Sandy announces that it is math time. As the students are working on their assignment, Sandy stops momentarily at her desk where I am seated and points out a single white rose in a vase with its accompanying note which reads:

Dear Mrs. Swanton’s
1-22-08
Thank you for testing me Than That I Din know and Being Prod of me.
   Love, Oscar  (FN 1/22).

Here Sandy took the time to engage with Oscar, making a personal commentary on his photo. The mood of this interaction was much more solemn than others between them before, and that appears to be due to the approach that she took with him. By this point it is evident that she had reframed his behaviors and attempts to get her attention. Now instead of sending him to his seat, she allowed him to stand by her side until he had satisfied his need for her attention. Oscar showed his desire for her to know him by introducing her to his parents in the picture, and his note was his way of letting her know he appreciated her time.

Sandy had reflected on her relationship with Oscar by the third interview. Some of the facts she had recently learned about Oscar’s family life were that his grandfather had been admitted to the hospital with cancer, the situation with the custody battle had increased in intensity, and reasons for the removal from his parents were revealed. Sandy
explained, “I know he wants attention, he’s craving it. But he does not know how to get positive attention,” and so she began to work on that with him by having more one-on-one discussions. She hoped to have him speak with a counselor as well.

Sandy described Oscar at this point as a smart boy who could also be quite manipulative, but who didn’t fully understand how to deal with his emotions. According to Sandy, he would become rather destructive and throw fits when he got angry. She reported having talked to him a lot about how she cared for him and how she got angry too. She sought advice from other teachers and administrators on how to handle the situation, but the only suggestion anyone had was for him to see a counselor, which was not something the family could afford with the grandfather in the hospital. She reflected on the futility she felt with his situation by stating, “It’s one of those things that I go home and just think, ‘oh this poor child.’ Because he’s had it rough and it’s going to stay rough for him and I don’t know how to help” (SI 3:293-295).

Through this reflection concerning his situation, Oscar moved to an even closer category, in the second of the five at time point three, and Sandy recognized this shift although she stated that his move was “probably for the wrong reasons.” She continued to explain by stating,

I guess I’m understanding him a little better now, which helps me in how I deal with him. So when he does start kicking things, it’s not me coming in anger, it’s me coming and saying “I need you to calm down. I care about you. I’m angry right now; let’s solve this without getting angry.” And so I find myself approaching situations with him differently than I would have at the beginning of the year, you know, where I would want to yell, or I would yell “stop it!” kind of thing. So I find myself thinking about that more. (SI 3:144-150)
Sandy began to evoke an ethic of care for Oscar. She attempted to empathize with him, having learned about the terrible situations he had had to deal with in his young life. She recognized his needs emotionally and socially, but she also recognized where he was developmentally in trying to fulfill those needs—which she hadn’t before.

Sandy felt a little powerless, knowing that she couldn’t change Oscar’s situation and not completely sure of how she could change things in the classroom. However, she determined to help him learn how to manage his feelings and began to focus her conversations around what he was feeling when he acted out and on helping him to redirect and process his feelings and choices. The effort she made resulted in a closer relationship than previously felt, even though she reported that he had gone from positive behaviors—giving her hugs at the end of the day, putting forth effort to be a good student, and changing behavior in response to reprimands—to not responding to her efforts, not participating or even trying, and not caring about reprimands. In fact, his poor behavior had escalated to violent acting out. However, Sandy increased her efforts to deal with him in a loving manner, often expressing to him her concern for him. She wondered if the change had to do with watching how a larger behavioral issue in the classroom seemed to get special treatment.

In the following scenario, Oscar was the one showing indifference. The roles had changed: Sandy was attempting to engage, and Oscar was responding indifferently.

Some students, including Oscar, are retrieving graded assignments from their mailboxes. Oscar begins tossing his in the air, watching it fall to the ground and then tossing it again, on the way to his desk. Sandy calls out to him asking if he is making good decisions in regards to his current activity. He responds that he is not and ceases to throw his papers until her back is turned again. Sandy begins to call out the names of students who will remain in study hall due to not
having finished assignments while the rest go play games across the hall. Oscar whispers in unison as she reads his name.

When the other students have left, Oscar crosses the room to discuss his potential for eventually joining in on the games. Sandy tells him that due to the few rough days he will have to miss out on the fun this week and gives him the option to read silently as his desk. He goes to his desk and pulls out a coloring book and crayons. After a few minutes she approaches his desk with a stack of books and asks him to take them to another teacher. He takes the books and leaves the room. When he returns he goes directly to his desk and resumes coloring.

Sandy approaches him and asks if he spoke to his younger brother. He replies that he did. She asks about the conversation, and Oscar gives her a vague answer without looking at her. She returns to the reading table and then calls out to him asking if he is willing to help her out again. He agrees, and she has him run a few more errands. At the end of the hour the other students return and prepare to leave for the day. Oscar begins putting chairs away, even extra chairs, without being asked to do so. As the students leave Sandy is out in the hall watching them and talking with former students who stop in the hall to chat. Oscar, as the last bus rider left in the classroom, walks up and pushes his way between Sandy and the other students, gives her a hug and leaves. (FN 5/23/08)

Although Oscar did give her a hug before leaving and was helpful by running errands and putting away chairs, it also appears that he initially determined to undermine her attempts to engage him personally. Sandy responded kindly to the slight cold shoulder and continued to find ways to keep a connection with him. She showed interest in his personal life in an attempt to show that she still cared, although he was currently being disciplined. When he didn’t respond, she found things for him to do.

Oscar maintained a position in the ratings of close relationships, falling in the second of seven categories in the last interview. Sandy stated that she had not yet been able to figure him out. His behavior had increasingly worsened over the school year, requiring at times that he be sent to the office. Toward the end of the year he began to talk of wanting to return to live with his parents, and Sandy interpreted that behavior and communication as a cry for help. She stated,
My understanding of his behavior and what he was talking about by going back to his real, biological parents was the fact that I don’t think that he was ready to be done with school. At least I’m hoping he felt like it was safe place for him where he could come every day—he knew what to expect—that kind of thing. Because I’m not sure what the summer brings for him and his brother once they go home…which worries me. But that might be part of why he’s acting out and why he’s so upset, why he’s been throwing a temper tantrum. I mean he’s also been—he’s yelled at me a couple of times: “You’re not my mother, I don’t have to listen to you.” So not—I was trying to figure out where is this coming from, why is this now, within two weeks before school ends that he is pulling the “you’re not my mom” card, “I don’t have to listen”? (SI 4:73-82)

She identified him as a student who needed to learn emotional control. Interestingly, as his behaviors began to escalate, she paid more attention to him. She pointed out that her relationship with him had improved, mainly due to the fact that his behavior had declined, stating “Had his behavior not taken a turn for the worse, I don’t know if [the relationship] would’ve been the same” (SI 4: 872-873). Although Oscar ended the year in a close relationship category, the relationship was not easily won. Both Oscar and Sandy put a lot into the relationship. From the very beginning, it looked as though Oscar was doing all in his power to get attention from Sandy, but Sandy seemed to have interpreted his bids for attention as misbehavior, which resulted in negative attention through discipline rather than positive attention through other means. Because dealing with Oscar became emotionally laborious, Sandy assumed that she had put more time into the relationship than Oscar had. She felt that she sought him out, attended to his needs and engaged him. However, at the end of the year when we examined who most often initiated interactions between the two, it was shown that Oscar actually initiated the interaction between them 75% of the time, which revelation came as a surprise to Sandy.
Regardless of whether Sandy realized who initiated the interactions or how often, she focused on improving the quality of the interactions, she expended much emotional work to keep her own emotions in check and help Oscar learn to do the same. By the final interview she was not sure that her efforts were received as the loving gestures she meant them to be or if he was “playing her,” but she had decided that it was in his best interest to give him the benefit of the doubt and invest the extra time to help him. In her own words she describes the change in her attitude and approach towards him:

I feel for him; he’s one of those kids that kinda--his story outside of school really affects my perspective on why things happen in the room with him...knowing his background made me feel like there’s more that I need to be doing for this child than just teaching him. At the beginning of the year, you know he was just this quiet, sweet kid who you know, didn’t really give me much trouble. But as I started to learn more about him, and as his behaviors started escalating more through the year, it made me really almost—I felt like I needed...to use a term, take him under my wing. I mean I really felt like he needed me to be more than just a teacher. He needed me to be more than just someone he saw that gave him, you know, that taught him new material. I felt like I needed to show him, “I care about you, no matter what you do, even if you make me angry.” I guess I felt like I needed to let him know that because of what he’s been through. And so, for me, I think that’s why it’s kinda gotten closer to him although he’s gotten worse in behavior. Maybe he’s got—I don’t know, maybe he’s gotten worse behavior because I’ve invested more and he feels safe--that I’m not going to give up on him, I don’t know. But, or likewise, he doesn’t like that attention, I can’t answer that and I don’t even know he can answer that. But I just feel like because of what I know about him, that’s why I’ve purposely tried to get closer to him just so he knows he’s cared about, I mean, in the long run (SI 4:781-799).

In the end, the need that Sandy identified in Oscar for a trusting, stable relationship in this time of upheaval in his life motivated her to go the extra mile. She often had to reframe her own mindset before approaching him. When she had to reprimand him for bad behavior, she always took the time to process with him, which would take a full 10 minutes at times. Many times she would first reflect on what had happened, whether the
consequences were fair, and determine her own feelings about the situation before approaching him and discussing the situation. In this way, Sandy was truly able to speak to him in a caring manner because she had already processed her emotions and determined what it was that Oscar needed from her, and then she willingly and patiently gave it, regardless of how he received it.

**Contrast with Kaleb.** The experience Sandy had with Oscar is very different than her experience with Kaleb, a student whose behavior also declined. Instead of calling attention to himself by acting out, as did Oscar, Kaleb simply stopped participating. Although at the beginning of the year Sandy described Kaleb as a student who was on top of things, she actually rated him as having one of the most distant relationship with her. He moved to the middle at time points two and three, but by the end of the year he had returned to the most distant category. Sandy reported that he “just quit trying and clammed up.” Kaleb’s mother is deaf, and so Sandy used a daily communication folder to inform his mother of his progress and behavior. Sandy reported that Kaleb performed better when his mother’s boyfriend was in town, but when he was not, Kaleb accomplished nothing. She reported that Kaleb’s motivation for performing and behaving was to avoid punishment; she noted that he once asked how she thought his behavior had been that day, and when she gave him a good report he responded with relief, saying that he wouldn’t get a “whooping” when he got home that day (SI 3: 148). She indicated that he was an able child, but he was so distracted that he didn’t produce anything. When Sandy was at his side giving encouragement, he was able to do the work, but it was her impression that if he didn’t want to do it, he simply didn’t. Although she had tried several
different methods for keeping him on task to help him accomplish his work, she commented that she was unable to determine what truly motivated him to do anything.

*Filtering through dimension of relation, reflection and reward.* The most noticeable difference between the situation with Oscar and that with Kaleb was the students’ response. Examining the factors for a decision on how to approach Kaleb, Sandy’s comments indicate the difference as locus of control. Both students were frequently off task; in the case of Oscar, Sandy attributed the behavior to his unstable home life; with Kaleb, she attributed it to irresponsibility and his lack of personal desire. The dimensions of *relation, reflection* and *reward* with Oscar were originally negative: She focused on what they did not have in common, she judged his needs as not within her realm, and she saw little reward in working with him. However, outside information caused her to reframe his situation, determining that his need was so great she needed to engage in spite of any reward. This led her to rethink what he might need from her. When she reframed his situation it changed her perception of what he needed, what he had control over, and what she could do.

From that point on Sandy made an effort to find commonalities, reflected constantly on Oscar’s needs and her ability to meet them, and focused solely on seeing him progress. With Kaleb that change never happened. Sandy reported that working with Kaleb was like “pulling teeth.” His indifference to her efforts caused her to cease trying to “figure him out.” She saw him achieve when she was by his side, she communicated with his mother daily, but Sandy never came to find a way to connect with him and eventually took a hands off approach to him. Whereas with Oscar, she reframed his bids
for her attention, which positively affected her perception of him and what she could do.

With Kaleb the initial positive evaluation of his personality and ability declined when he stopped putting forth effort. It is evident through her comments that as she filtered his personality through the dimension of reflection she assessed that that Kaleb had more control over his situation and chose not to participate, which negatively skewed the relationship.

There were also students who remained in the same category throughout the year. On the extreme ends, Sandy was able to easily identify the reason for their placement. The one student who remained consistently in the closest category was the student who took up most of the teacher’s time. The student who consistently remained in the most distant category was one who spoke no English, which limited their communication. But then there were some who remained in the middle, the group that Sandy referred to as the “gray area.”

*Kaitlin: Flying Under the Radar*

One of those students in the middle was Kaitlin. Kaitlin was a quiet girl, and her case is interesting because Sandy believed that she knew a great deal about Kaitlin. Kaitlin’s mother expressed great concern over Kaitlin’s social and learning issues and over the move from a private to a public school. Kaitlin was in the very center of the group at the beginning of the school year, a child who was treated casually until her mother called attention to her needs, but who shortly flew again under the radar and remained there for the rest of the year, even being forgotten at the last interview.

*Kaitlin is new this year to the school district. She had previously attended a private school, but her mother was concerned that her ADHD and her low social*
skills would be more noticeable at a private school and made the decision to place her in a public school. She’s a very quiet, very sweet little girl who likes to talk about shopping (SI 1:74-78).

No interactions were observed between Sandy and Kaitlin at the first of the year beyond Sandy calling on Kaitlin to answer a question when she raised her hand. At the first interview Sandy knew very little about Kaitlin, as she had had little contact with the family prior to the start of school. Presumably because she was new, at this first interview Sandy reserved judgment and created a diagram that reflected an ambiguous relationship, which ultimately placed Kaitlin in the very middle—the third of five categories. She was identified in the follow-up interview as one of the quiet kids in the classroom—the type of children Sandy wanted to work with to encourage their participation and recognize their good work. Sandy stated that Kaitlin was quiet unless engaged in conversations about topics that she liked, such as Hannah Montana, in which case she would become quite talkative, but this was a rare event. At the beginning of the year, before she had made friends, Kaitlin lingered around Sandy at recess, but not much conversation took place, due either to Kaitlin’s shyness or Sandy not knowing what to say to her. The following is an example of the two simply not connecting.

It’s the end of the day, at the close of the Halloween party. The majority of the students have left and the room is now cleaned up. Kaitlin and Alex are the only two left in the room. Kaitlin has special instructions today to wait for her mother to pick her up. Sandy tells her what she is to do but Kaitlin just stands there, not sure where she is to go. Sandy suggests that Kaitlin help her carry things and she will show her where she needs to be. Alex and Kaitlin both stand with arms full of boxes when a former student enters the room and engages Sandy in conversation. Kaitlin and Alex look at each other and wait silently. Finally, both leave the room unnoticed and without Sandy. (FN 10/31/07)
Sandy didn’t engage Kaitlin in conversation at this opportunity when there was only one other student in the room beyond asking her if she knew where she needed to be. Kaitlin remained silent. Shyness and reticence are personality traits opposite to those of Sandy; but recognizing that Kaitlin was still new, or perhaps thinking she could engage Kaitlin in conversation down the hall, Sandy offered to go with her. When the other student entered and engaged Sandy in a fun conversation, Kaitlin may have felt overlooked which resulted in her leaving the room without saying anything to Sandy.

At the second time point, Kaitlin was still in the middle, although much more on the close side than the distant one, in the third of eight categories. Although Kaitlin was placed in the closer category, Sandy distinguished her from the others in that the other students in the first three categories were much more likely to engage her in conversation about any topic. Kaitlin was described at this time point as very disorganized, quite anxious and emotional, and very aware of her limitations. Sandy reported having begun working with her: giving her organizing tips and trying to help her to use resources when she became frustrated. However, Sandy reported that Kaitlin was somewhat overwhelmed and had difficulty using the tips Sandy gave her and at times discarded them for tactics that take less immediate time but only add to the problem later. In one instance Sandy told of returning an assignment to Kaitlin with explicit instructions to place it in her mailbox. Instead, Kaitlin shoved it in her desk. Later in the day Kaitlin was unable to find something, and she and Sandy had to literally dump her entire desk, throwing half of the papers away, before they found what she needed.
Sandy had had a good deal of communication with Kaitlin’s mother due to her concern over Kaitlin fitting in with the change in schools. The two women had also discussed Kaitlin’s ability to make friends and had worked out a plan to help her academically. I believe it was the relationship with the mother that created this false sense of closeness with Kaitlin, for there are very few recorded interactions between the two of them. Sandy’s sense that she knew the child because of the mother was the misconception that Sandy warned against at the beginning of the study. Sandy did know things about Kaitlin but most of that information came from discussing concerns with her mother and not from personal conversations with Kaitlin, which created the false sense of closeness with Kaitlin identified earlier. Having realized that she actually knew about Kaitlin, but did not know her, Sandy began attempts to acknowledge Kaitlin more frequently. The following is an example of Sandy’s attempts to increase awareness of Kaitlin, and the response it invokes from Kaitlin.

A group of students is seated at the table reading silently. Kaitlin, who is seated next to the teacher, puts down her book. The teacher leans over and asks if she is finished reading, to which Kaitlin responds with a quiet nod. The teacher comments that she is a quick reader. When the rest of the group is finished reading, the teacher asks them a series of questions about what happened in the story. Kaitlin participates by raising her hand or responding when called on. After that group is dismissed and another group is called up, Kaitlin stays behind and expresses to the teacher how much she likes the book. They talk about other books in the series and how good they are until the next group takes their seats. The conversation ends when Sandy turns her attention to the students approaching. Kaitlin turns and goes quietly to her seat. (FN 3/6/08)

Here it is evident that Kaitlin is willing to continue any conversation offered by Sandy although still quite reserved, she shows reciprocal interest in continuing the opportunity to converse. Previously Kaitlin had lingered, perhaps waiting for Sandy to
start a conversation, but with Sandy’s attention throughout the reading group, Kaitlin felt secure enough to start the conversation. Kaitlin began slowly coming out of her shell by mid-year, as evident in her attempts to initiate with Sandy rather than waiting in silence. This interaction is reflected in the charts showing that Kaitlin’s relationship with Sandy is still ambivalent presumably due to Sandy being preoccupied with other tasks or students.

Kaitlin was described as having some characteristics common to students preferred by teachers--being very intelligent and very funny. Yet she also was identified as having some qualities that are not among the preferences, like being very anxious and very disorganized. At the third interview she was again placed in the group in dead center: in the third of five categories. Sandy identified this group as being in that “gray area” referred to earlier. As Sandy discussed the seven students in that “gray area,” she identified different motives for placing each in that group. She reported that two of the students were very independent and did not need her academically or socially; one of the students was out of the room for a majority of the day, but sought her out as much as possible; and the other four she focused on helping academically, so she didn’t have time to engage in the more personal conversations that might develop a closer relationship. Kaitlin was part of this latter group. Sandy noted that a student in the next group closer would have also been categorized as one with the academic focus, but one thing made him an exception:

I think he is more willing to share with me partly because in his case—well, he’s more willing to share than any of those four, so I think that’s probably why I feel a little closer to him; although I’m pushing him academically he’s willing to give back some stuff, personal stuff; whereas Keisha, Kaitlin, Vicente and Aiden won’t. (SI 3: 539-541)
Kaitlin’s reluctance to engage in conversation with Sandy is what apparently kept her in middle ground. Academically she was doing well enough, but she was not an overachieving student. Behaviorally she was not a problem, never had any issues with not listening or with being disobedient. Socially, she was pleasant, but not a personality that the teacher was naturally drawn to and not one with whom Sandy felt she had much in common.

Contrary to Sandy’s earlier comment about Kaitlin being silent unless addressing a topic that interested her, in the scenario above it was Kaitlin who found a topic with which she could engage the teacher. In the following scenario it was again Kaitlin who attempted to bridge that gap.

*The students are quietly working and the teacher sits at the reading table, alone, grading papers. Kaitlin approaches the table and briefly talks to the teacher about her report. She remains as the teacher calls other students up to the table to retrieve their reports. Candace, Adam, Desiree and Kaleb all come up and get their papers and promptly go back to their seats. The teacher continues to work and Kaitlin remains, quietly standing in the same spot. Jacob approaches and speaks directly to the teacher. Both he and the teacher laugh at his comment and he returns to his seat. As he leaves Kaitlin steps closer to the teacher but says nothing. Tina then approaches the teacher to show her something from the book she is using. The teacher acknowledges her with a head nod and an “uh hmm” and she returns to her seat. Kaitlin then asks a question of the teacher and they begin to chat, referencing her last report on bees. After a few minutes of talking, Kaitlin goes to her seat. (FN 5/5/08)*

Sandy had either become so used to Kaitlin lingering without saying anything or was so absorbed in what she was doing that she didn’t notice her waiting there. Kaitlin finally mustered the courage to speak after watching other more aggressive, outgoing students engage Sandy in conversation. Sandy was happy to converse with her, but the conversation lost steam quickly. Although Sandy realized her knowledge of Kaitlin
initially was based on conversations with the mother, she still could not find things in which to engage Kaitlin in conversation. Kaitlin’s bids for attention were quite benign and easily overlooked.

In the final interview, this student who had been part of the middle “gray area” group from the beginning was forgotten. It was not until we began to look at the movement of students across time and pointed out that Kaitlin had not moved that we discovered that she had not been discussed during this interview. Sandy immediately began to outline what she had come to learn about Kaitlin in the last few months. She reported the Kaitlin was bitter towards her mother, resentful of her younger sisters, and still quite anxious about her own abilities. She related a tale in which Kaitlin blamed her sisters for many things, from not having her homework to being too tired in the mornings. Kaitlin had found friends in the classroom who all readily listened to Kaitlin’s complaints, which according to Sandy got blown out of proportion. These traits are not ones that Sandy was naturally drawn toward. However, Sandy did acknowledge that Kaitlin was very bright although she struggled with expressing herself on paper. Sandy didn’t worry about Kaitlin’s progress because she was aware that Kaitlin’s mother planned to hire a tutor over the summer and Kaitlin had begun to put forth a lot of effort academically. Sandy eventually placed Kaitlin in the third category out of seven although she referred to her as one of the students who “flies under the radar.” Sandy later described those students with whom she has an ambiguous relationship.

Kaitlin to an extent flies under the radar, she’s pretty quiet, doesn’t ask for help but because of Mom I was able to get to know the family better because I was in so much contact with her. But those kids are definitely those kids that don’t ever ruffle feathers, and they do what they’re supposed to do, and their grades aren’t
great but their grades aren’t horrible, you know they’re just unfortunately in the middle. And that’s sad, but that can happen so easily. (SI 4: 1053-1058)

It’s important to note that Kaitlin’s diagram was created after we had already surveyed the whole class and discussed patterns, rationales and dynamics of the groupings. It is very likely that had her diagram been created before the whole class was displayed she would not have been placed in such a close relationship category. However, the approach orientation of the category she was placed in was still one in which approach orientation was identified as treating the students casually. It is also interesting to note that while discussing Kaitlin and comparing her with another student, Sandy called her by the wrong name.

Contrast with Candace. Another student who was in that “gray area” group—who began in a distant relationship, moved to the gray area, and then drifted out to a more distant group again—was Candace. Candace and Kaitlin were compared many times throughout the year for being shy and quiet. Candace was identified as one of the quiet girls whom Sandy wanted to get to know better, and she put great effort in cultivating that relationship. Sandy had to work hard to get a response from Candace, at times being denied and at others times rewarded. At Christmas time Candace brought Sandy a gift but didn’t stick around to watch her open it as most of the students do, which Sandy thought atypical. Sandy called her up after she opened the gift to thank her, and Candace beamed with delight, and what Sandy thought was relief, because she liked the gift. On another occasion when the class was having cartoon lunch in the classroom, Sandy invited Candace to come sit by her, which is considered a coveted seat by the other students. However, Candace declined the invitation, preferring to sit with her friends. Although
Candace ended the year in the fifth category of seven, Sandy felt as if she had seen significant change in their relationship. Although she did not feel as close to Candace as compared to many others in the class, she still felt like she got to know her more than she would have had she not put forth the effort. Candace was described as a student who Sandy felt didn’t need her academically or socially. Sandy even stated,

I felt rejected by some of my quiet girls, such as Candace and Selena. The reason I felt this way was because I would try to engage them in conversation, but I would get very little response from them. It was almost like they didn't want to talk or to get to know [me], and in that sense I felt a bit rejected by them. (RE 6/08)

After Sandy identified Candace as a student she knew very little about, she put forth great effort to know her better. Sandy’s efforts worked because Candace’s mother reported that Candace really liked the class and that Sandy had been one of her favorite teachers. On the other hand, Sandy felt she knew Kaitlin from the many conversations with her mother and therefore didn’t put as much effort into that relationship.

In terms of personality, Candace had more in common with Sandy than did Kaitlin. The press for relationship was almost non-existent with Candace, but Sandy had discovered that she was that way with all of her teachers so she did not take it personally. On the other hand, Kaitlin did want a relationship with Sandy, but the press she exerted was passive, which was often overlooked. Candace was not a challenge in any way because she was a good student and an independent person. The only challenge was in helping her be less shy. Kaitlin had several challenges: her disorganization was irritating to Sandy, and her complaints about her sisters were seen as overly dramatic. These challenges were the very things that drew Kaitlin to Sandy’s attention.
Filtering through dimension of relation, reflection and reward. The dimensions of relation, reflection and reward for Candace were all positive, whereas for Kaitlin all three were negative: There was no common ground, Sandy’s efforts to help her become organized did not seem to help, and reflecting on her situation led Sandy to the conclusion that she didn’t have anything else to give that Kaitlin really needed. Kaitlin had friends socially, and her mother and the tutor to would attend to her academically. What Kaitlin also had was a felling of being overlooked. In fact, Sandy told of Kaitlin complaining that her mother stayed at home all day with her younger sisters but left when Kaitlin got home from school. Although Kaitlin’s perceived neglect by her mother is a necessity due to her second shift schedule, Kaitlin seemed to regard it as rejection and perhaps has come to expect it or at least has become accustomed to flying under the radar with adults. This information apparently remained as nonconscious knowledge about Kaitlin and evidently did not affect the way that Sandy perceived the mismatch in personality, press and challenge.

Jacob: From Confrontational to Congenial

Considering consistency in outcomes, there was only one name that never shifted from the original category of placement. Jacob was originally placed in the closest of all categories, and as the year progressed he remained at in that category. By the end he alone occupied the closest category. There were many reports and eyewitness accounts regarding Jacob before he even arrived at the classroom door. The principal discussed his placement into Sandy’s class with her, highlighting her abilities as a teacher to handle
such cases. The expectations that Sandy had for herself and that others had for her perhaps framed the relationship from the start.

There is a substitute teacher in for Sandy on this day. Efrain complains to her that he has been poked in the eye with a pencil. Jacob is the student identified as the perpetrator. When confronted, Jacob states that it was an accident and the substitute teacher demands that he apologize. Jacob complies. The substitute then demands that he do it again, this time with sincerity. Jacob refuses to comply because he already apologized once and meant it. Tempers flare to the point that Jacob has to be restrained and carried from the room. The next day, Sandy approaches Jacob and asks if she can talk to him about yesterday’s incident. Jacob agrees, and she tells him that she will be back in a few minutes to discuss it. When she returns she asks for his version of the events, and he relates how it was an accident and he apologized but the teacher didn’t believe him. Sandy informs him that because his behavior got out of control he will need to have a consequence, and she asks him to suggest what is appropriate. Jacob tells her that he usually leaves that up to the teachers. Sandy explains to him that she wasn’t present so it wouldn’t be fair for her to prescribe a punishment, and besides, he needs to start to take responsibility for his action, so she suggests that they come up with an appropriate consequence together. Jacob makes the suggestion of missing recess and Sandy agrees. When it is time for recess, Sandy reminds him that he is to sit it out, and Jacob complies without complaint.

Sandy only knew about Jacob from the reports that she had received from others, so it seems that at this time she withheld judgment. She displayed her belief in giving children autonomy by allowing Jacob to create his own consequences for his actions. This gesture also set the stage for trust between teacher and student because she asked for his version instead of relying on that of the substitute teacher. Sandy recognized Jacob’s intellect and demonstrated confidence in him by treating him with respect and talking out the situation.

Identified as one of the brightest students in the class, Jacob was one of the students allowed to do independent study in addition to the regular class work. Sandy was hesitant to label Jacob as a behavioral problem but instead referred to him as having
emotional outbursts. Sandy reflected on how to best deal with Jacob’s issues, and her theory in dealing with him is best explained in her own words:

I approach him more as—I wouldn’t say I approach him like an adult, but I speak with him like he’s a—I try not to patronize him when I speak with him. He’s very bright. And so, I kind of lay it on the line for him and say “this is how it is, this is how I’m feeling, tell me how you’re feeling, now we can deal with it together.”

(SI 1:168-172)

She also reported that he had not had any major problems in her presence, and she believed that to be due to her experience with other students with similar issues. I believe it can also be attributed to the approach she described above: with the autonomy she gave him and the respect that she showed him. In addition, she also reflected on his needs and in the meantime allowed “a lot of stuff to slide with him and it seem[ed] to be working.” She identified triggers for his emotional outbursts and was able to avoid them as well as deal appropriately when situations arose.

In the early part of the year Sandy was still not quite sure what to do with Jacob and referred to his behavior as “throwing fits.” She said that she tried not to dwell on it too much. Sandy described his behavior and her reaction to it as follows:

It was a temper tantrum, and I don’t personally feel he should be getting that attention when he throws a temper tantrum. Plain and simple, he’s not two. He’s doing it to get attention, and I don’t want to give him that and even subconsciously I’m doing it because I feel like he doesn’t deserve that negative attention, you know. That’s what he wants, and you know he will power play me to get there. And so, I didn’t I guess, it’s been happening so much that I try, after it’s done and the situation’s over and we’ve dealt with it and worked through it, and he and I have processed, I push it out. I do not want to think about it or dwell on it any more because I will drive myself nuts and my husband nuts and it would just compound with him. Because if I let—my thought is if I let every single thing he does expound upon itself and get bigger and bigger, I’m going to snap at him one day and I don’t want that to happen. So it’s really my way of making sure that I stay on a level playing field with him, that I don’t let my emotion play into what
he wants me to play into and that letting me get riled up, and I don’t want him to let—I don’t want to let him do that to me. (UI 1:221-235)

Although she reported that Jacob was difficult to handle and she intimated that he was passive aggressive with her, she placed him among the 6 in the closest category at this first time point. The amount of time and effort that went into dealing with him this first nine weeks was extensive, although as I gathered from her comments she was trying to regulate her own emotions to make sure that she was responding to his needs rather than reacting to his behavior. At this point in time it appeared that Jacob had been placed as a close relationship purely for the amount of time she spent working with him.

There was a great deal of emotional work involved with Jacob in the classroom. Sandy remained consistent in her requirements with all of the students, but Jacob’s behavior required that she behave differently with him because of his defiance. She remained stalwart in following through with her promises, although Jacob was stubborn in his determination to test her.

*The teacher dismisses the students from the group area to their chairs. Jacob remains seated on the floor hugging his legs. The teacher approaches him and whispers in his ear. He does not move. The class reviews some examples on the overhead projector, and then the teacher directs them back to the group area. She walks over to Jacob, who has not moved from his original position, and kneels down and again whispers in his ear. He responds by kicking the chair nearest him. She heads toward her seat at the front, and the students begin to suggest a book for her to read. The teacher pauses to tell Jacob that she may call the office and then does so, informing the principal that she may be sending Jacob down. Jacob remains motionless. A student request that she read Thundercake, but the teacher declines, stating that Jacob wanted that read but his uncooperative behavior doesn’t warrant it. To this Jacob reacts by violently kicking the chairs, and the teacher asks him to go to the office. He remains standing still. She begins to walk towards him, and he pulls his shirt awkwardly over his shoulder like a shield and runs out of the room. She follows him calmly out of the room and down the hall, without saying a word. She returns after a few moments having left him in the care of the principal. (FN 9/21/07)*
Sandy remained calm and consistent with Jacob here. Her subtle attempts to get him to cooperate having failed, she first informed him what she would do and then did it. Although her comment about not reading the story that Jacob wanted read can appear as a benign persuasion tactic to get him to comply with her request, Jacob seemed to have read it as a threat to control him. There was a sense of power play here between the two, and neither Sandy nor Jacob was willing to give in. Sandy had already been lenient by not forcing him to his desk so she let him know that she was serious about him participating by turning things over to the principal.

From the first interview to the second interview, Jacob had two emotional outbursts, one of which led to a three-day suspension. However, after that he began to visit with a psychologist, and Sandy and the principal devised a multi-level response plan to implement when he began to get out of control. This plan involved having a “cool-down corner,” where he could choose to go when he felt himself getting upset. Sandy expounded on the difference in him when he was not trying to control the situation. She stated that he was smart, entertaining, funny, and really conscious of others. She said that he was really a lot of fun to be around, told great stories, and could carry on great conversations. He also looked for ways to contribute to the class, like picking out books that had some of the class values and suggesting them as reading material. He had begun to self-regulate with the aids and rewards system they outlined for him. Sandy reported the change:

It’s been really cool to see the transformation in him because he’s gone from not wanting to be around me and power-struggling me the entire time to now he can, he wants to, like, hang out with me as I’m walking down to the lunchroom; and
he’ll talk to me about something, tell me about his grandparents’ house which is something I’m learning more and more about which is pretty cool. So that’s been nice. (SI 2: 312-317)

Jacob remained one of the two students in the closest category at this second interview. Sandy had already seen rewards for her effort to work with him even though he had some violent episodes. When he was not having emotional outbursts he displayed all of the qualities and traits that teachers prefer in students and his personality was one that Sandy is drawn to; she very much enjoyed his company when he engaged her in conversation. All of the positive traits of his personality became influential in the relationship with Sandy as they became more evident.

Realizing that Jacob was bright enough to multi-task, it would appear that Sandy came to an unspoken agreement with him and their relationship changed. The pleasantness of which she spoke before was much more visible as time passed and Jacob freely interacted with her. The following scene demonstrates how they have come to a silent agreement in which both got what they wanted.

*Jacob has been sitting by the computers reading while the rest of the class participates in the math lesson. Occasionally he gets up and goes to Sandy and whispers to her. She nods in agreement and he goes back to the computers. This happens several times; sometimes he shows her a paper, sometimes he merely whispers to her. When the math lesson is over she directs the students over to the group area. As they make the transition, she asks Jacob if he wants to learn a new game with them. He declines and then asks permission to use the restroom. She allows it and he returns shortly and stands watching the group for a few seconds before returning to his book. Sandy later explains to me that when Jacob comes up to her during the lesson, he is coming to give her the answer. She says that the last time he came up to her he explained the rules of the game to her “in case he ever needs to play.” She says that if he feels what they are doing is challenging then he will join in. Otherwise, he’ll just do his separate thing but he always keeps an eye and ear in on the lesson and checks in with her so she knows that he is paying attention. She states that she has learned to live with that.* (FN 1/22/08)
Although Jacob was not doing what the rest of the class was doing, he was still participating in a way that satisfied Sandy that he was learning. In return for the autonomy she gave him, he showed her respect by occasionally checking in with her and doing the work in addition to what he wanted to do.

Again at the third interview, Jacob was among the students in the closest category. He had become helpful in the classroom, especially in dealing with other students who acted out. Academically he was still very productive but had begun to opt out of some work, an option no other student was given, and chose to read instead. Sandy started to reflect as to whether he was opting out because the work was too easy or too difficult, because she found that at times if the work challenged him to a point that he got some of it wrong he became upset. When this happened she was not sure if he was opting out to avoid a challenge or to avoid the emotion that came with not succeeding. Overall she felt that he had improved his behavior greatly, and personally she stated that their relationship had also become more positive—to the point that “now we’re not constantly butting heads. You know I can tell him ‘Jacob, I need you to put that away please,’ and he will follow directions and listen which is a hundred times better than the beginning of the year” (3:352-354).

Jacob appeared to enjoy the autonomy and respect he felt in this relationship. Sandy never forced him to take a time out, although she at times suggested it and he would either take her suggestion or stay put until he was no longer upset. Most presumably they came to read each other well by this time of the year, a feat that required great effort, reflection, and careful attention, as well as planning. It can be inferred that
this emotional work began as emotional labor because dealing with Jacob was taxing, but eventually her efforts were rewarded and reading him was almost second nature, which ultimately strengthened the relationship. Because of her efforts Sandy now enjoyed the respect that he started to give her as well as the opportunities they had to enjoy conversations that are not centered on his behavior. Jacob also showed signs of enjoying the relationship as he began to seek out Sandy’s attention in positive ways and shared with her anything that he found interesting.

However, Jacob still had a stubborn streak, and the struggle for power in the classroom continued, although at a much less intense level. In the following scene, Jacob rebelled against her instruction, and Sandy had to teach a math lesson while keeping one eye on Jacob the whole time.

The students are instructed to get out their slates and markers for the math lesson. She begins by projecting an image of base ten blocks on the wall; the students write the corresponding number on their boards and hold them up for her to see. She praises the class and puts up a new image. Jacob is not participating, and the teacher addresses him specifically, requesting that he retrieve his slate and marker from his desk. He doesn’t move; she quietly waits. They stare at each other and after 30 seconds of silence, Jacob slowly slinks out of his chair until he is eye level with his desk, retrieves his board and gets back in his chair. The teacher continues with the lesson. Jacob gets up to get a marker and then goes back to his seat and opens a book. The teacher wanders around the room looking at answers; as she approaches Jacob he quickly writes down the answer. She continues around the room and he goes back to reading his book. She calls out Jacob’s name along with the new problem and then goes over and stands by his desk. He lays his head on the desk and writes the answer. After a few more problems the lesson is over and she instructs the class to put away the boards. Everyone except Jacob complies. (FN 4/17/08)

Here Sandy remained consistent, as she did the whole year. She had learned how far to push Jacob to comply, and she balanced that with continuing the lesson with the rest of the class. She was careful to avoid calling him out to the point that he felt as if he
was on trial, but did so enough to let him know that she was aware of his unwillingness to cooperate. As she stated, there were things that she let slide, and here she let full participation slide, but not attention to what was going on and not disrespect for her job to teach the whole class.

Although Jacob and Sandy continued to have some struggles, they also had many more pleasant exchanges. From mid-year to the end, Jacob sought opportunities to talk to Sandy about both academic and non-academic topics, he continued to be helpful in the classroom, and he remained one of the best students in the class. At the final interview he alone occupied the closest category. Although Sandy reported him to be “one of the brightest kids I’ve ever had but then again, one of the most controlling, manipulative kids I’ve ever taught” (4: 284-285), he still managed to be the one student with whom she shared the closest relationship. Shortly after the third interview, in which she reflected on being tempted to point out the difference in his behavior to him, Jacob made the connection on his own. She reported the incident as follows:

Last week Oscar pitched another fit and we were walking . . . Jacob was walking with us, and I said, “Jacob, does this look familiar?” And he was like, “yeah, I used to act like that.” And I was like, “I know, you did.” I go, “Oscar, do you see Jacob acting like that any more?” And Oscar said no. And Jacob goes, “Well, I go see someone now. I talk to her about my feelings.” And I go, “Maybe you need to talk to someone about your feelings, Oscar, that might be good. It’s helped Jacob.” (UI 4/1/08)

The fact that Jacob was able to identify his own past behaviors seemingly validated Sandy in the way that she had dealt with him. She stated from the beginning that she treated him somewhat like an equal, and Jacob responded by treating her that same way. Jacob was a little more advanced developmentally than the other students: he
was able to self-identify with little prompting, he could multi-task in his assignments, and he thrived with increased autonomy. Sandy identified part of his issues emotionally as not knowing how to deal with all the emotions that he was experiencing. She separated him from his behavior: “He is not generally a mean kid. He is a nice kid who cannot control his anger.” His personality may have had a sense of familiarity, as she related in the last interview that her own father was the type to “fly off the handle” and get upset over minor things. Perhaps because of the similarities between her father and Jacob, Sandy was able to see his behavior as a character flaw but not one that defined him.

Sandy had her concerns about Jacob for the coming year so she invested time in preparing him for the change by personally choosing a teacher she thought would best deal with his personality and by sending him down to volunteer in that classroom. At the end of the year she distinguished her relationship with Jacob from the relationships with all of the other students. Sandy agreed that she did approach him much of the time feeling affinity for his personality, but she also pointed out that she reflected often on how to deal with him and what he really needed from her. Although Jacob was the only student not to give her a hug on the last day of school, Sandy felt confident that they had a good relationship. When she questioned Jacob why he wouldn’t hug her, he just gave her a smirk and left. Sandy was fine with his response because she had come to understand and accept that Jacob did things on his own terms and in his own time.

Contralland with Juan. Other students in the closest categories had opposite temperaments. Interestingly enough, Juan, a student who seemed to have a much more laid back personality, was not identified by the teacher as having the same close quality
as the other relationships in the closest group. The diagram created for him each time reflected a close relationship—placing him in the second of five categories at the first interview, third of eight at the next, second of five at the third, and finally the second of seven at the last interview. However, in the end Sandy stated that she thought that she treated him much more casually than the others. This is interesting because Juan exemplified many of the same characteristics as did those in the “feel affinity” (the closest) category. He was described as being one of the funnier students she had taught—with his great one-liners; he was bright, really talented, respectful of her and other students, fun, and adult-like. Sandy reported, that unlike most of the students, Juan knew when to shift gears and when to pull back. He was also a good student whom she often relied on to help her with other students. Juan was often found in the center of any gathering of boys, and at times Sandy would have to quiet them. Juan approached Sandy slightly more often than she approached him, although his purpose was frequently to request clarification of her directions.

Filtering through dimensions of relation, reflection and reward. Juan was a bright student who always performed well on tasks. His requests for clarification were always based on semantics, which at times Sandy may have seen as a challenge either to her ability as a teacher to be clear, or to her intellect when he doubted her explanation. Although he was always in categories that represented relatively close relationships throughout the study, Sandy treated him casually. While she liked his personality, he pressed her only minimally for a relationship, and the challenge he brought was that of causing her to doubt her teaching self. Through the filter of the dimensions of relation,
reflection and reward, there are implications that as Sandy reflected, she may have felt that Juan had no need for her to fulfill. Although the dimensions of relation and reward were positives, reflection identified nothing she could improve upon. The result was a feeling of a relatively close relationship, but at the same time a bit of concern over whether he reciprocated that feeling. With Jacob, Sandy knew where she stood, even when he refused to hug her. Putting in a considerable amount of emotional labor, seeing Jacob from different aspects, constantly reflecting and preparing, and witnessing the change left her feeling that she had been successful in helping him progress. In addition, he sought her out and she enjoyed his personality and conversation.

Identifying the Teacher’s Approach Orientation

In the final interview Sandy discussed her approach orientation towards several of the students and groups of students. Based on the definitions from Newberry and Davis (2008) she agreed with the identified orientations to each group with only a few changes. She felt that she was often reflective as she implemented strategies, and she felt that some of the students whom I had initially labeled as being approached with a feel affinity orientation, she actually thought she approached with more of a treat casually orientation. She added the caveat that specific relationships change from day to day and week to week, but she definitely identified those approaches. These she perceived as differences in personal rather than in teaching approaches. She stated,

So when it comes to teaching them, I wouldn’t think I handle things, or do things any differently. I may approach talking to the groups differently… it was kind of a different conversation I’d have with the kids I’ve had all year because I know more about them. Whereas with my new ones it was “I need to find out about them.” And so that was the—that kind of communication was approached differently. (4: 620- 622; 628-631)
Sandy prepared lessons based on the different learning styles that she had determined present in the classroom, so she prepared a lesson using one method one day and then on the next she taught from a different method. However, she did not appear to see a connection between the relationship she had with a student and the approach she took toward the student personally.

When Sandy regrouped the students according to approach orientation, using the five approaches outlined from the work of Newberry and Davis (2008), she listed 5 students under the feel affinity category who had personalities she was inclined toward because of ease of management and personality match with her own (Morganett, 2001). Under be reflective she listed 5 students: 2 had behavioral issues, 1 was a student who she had worked with the district all year to qualify as special needs, and 2 were children for whom she couldn’t determine exactly what they wanted or needed from her: a child who was very social with her but she assumed the sociality was to make up for his struggles academically, and a child who moved back and forth trying to divide his time between being with peers and trying to elicit praise from her. The treat casually group was the largest group, with 8 students in it. Many of these students were part of the “gray area” group that she identified, but 2 were students who she had placed in close relationship categories. What these 2 students had in common was that they were both independent, good students. They were also students more preoccupied with their friends than with the teacher: they did not exclude the teacher, but they were not always seeking her out either. The implement strategies group was made up mostly of students she had also placed in the be reflective group, as she was mindful of how those strategies worked and which
ones would be best for the students. The act professional group was comprised of the one ELL student, her special needs students, and 2 students she felt rejected her.

The groupings she made were a reflective assumption of how she was at the beginning of the year, looking back now that the year was over. As she stated, the approach she took varied daily with the changes in classroom life. Even within the same day she might have approached the same student differently in the morning than she did in the afternoon depending on what had happened throughout the day. I agree that these approach orientations were not fixed and stagnant. However, some were more likely to remain fixed than others, as demonstrated in her approach to Kaitlin. Reviewing the way she interacted with the students at each time point, it would seem that by simply reflecting on the way she interacted with the students helped keep her from stagnating in many of her relationships with students regardless of the initial approach orientation.

Reflecting on the visual display of the relationships as she completed the interviews also allowed Sandy to identify some relationships she felt she would like to improve. Specifically, she reflected that after going through the process of making and examining the diagrams representing her relationships with her students, she reviewed her interaction:

After using the interview protocol, the next day I looked at how I spoke with students and the frequency I spoke with students. I have always been very observant in regards to the number of times I call on students, whether they are a boy or girl, has a hand up or down, what table they sit at, the frequency I call on someone. I have however, started to become more aware of how I speak with the kids who I feel "less" close to. (RE 9/24/07)

By the end of the school year Sandy felt that this experience had helped her improve her relationships with the whole class. She was pleased for the most part with how the year
had gone and how the relationships had progressed. She had had a positive experience not only in her classroom, but also in examining her relationships by taking the time to meet and discuss what she had experienced with her students. She stated,

I am glad that you were in my classroom this year. It was a great way for me to reflect on my year and previous years. It allowed me to see some things in myself about how I work with and approach children in the classroom. Granted, it was more “after-school” hours than I expected, but I realize that it allowed me to get to know my class better this year than I did with last year’s bunch. I am very thankful for that because I was very fortunate to get to know these children. (RE 6/7/08)

Through the many opportunities to reflect, discuss, and dissect her relationships, Sandy felt more prepared to develop relationships from the very beginning of each new school year. She looked forward to the coming year for which she had ideas to include more team building activities at the beginning to help students get to know her as well as each other so as to help them realize positive and safe relationships. She felt that a good teacher is one who can anticipate a student’s academic, social and emotional needs and she felt that it is possible to love every student. I believe that her approach to teaching and the theoretical framework she subscribes to are best summarized in her own words:

I believe that getting to know the whole child allows you to see things in a student that you would not normally see. Every human being has something in them that allows them to be loved. Finding that thing is difficult. Cultivating a relationship that allows you to find “that thing” is time consuming, draining, but well worth it. In the end, all people want to know is that someone cares about them . . . and ultimately, sometimes only a teacher can provide that care for some children because school may be the only safe place. (RE 6/7/08)

Sandy initially attempted to construct relationships with each student in the same manner: she greeted each one by name, attempted to get to know the family situation and tried to include the student in conversations. Despite these initial efforts, each student
mentioned in this chapter participated in a different kind of relationship with Sandy. The
different ways in which the students responded caused Sandy to use different tactics to
negotiate their personality, deal with their challenges and respond to the press for a
relationship. The findings suggest that Sandy felt varying degrees of need from the
students and responded based on what she perceived were the greatest need. Sometimes
that meant she had to take extra time to process with a student, sometimes that meant she
had to step back and collect her own thoughts and regulate her own emotions. At other
times, Sandy had to really stop and take a second look at who was not getting "face time"
from her. Once she took these mental steps, she proceeded with physical actions of
starting a conversation, selecting students for special assignments in an effort to include
them, and showing them that she cared by asking about their personal lives and giving
them hugs or verbal praise. When mental processes did not make the transition into
solidified ideas, relationships were still formed. However, relationships that were not
processed and reflected on were not attended to and therefore were not as beneficial for
the student or the teacher.
I began this study with two overarching questions: (1) Why do differential behaviors occur in classrooms? and (2) How can productive reflection affect the relationship between teacher and student? I also stated my hopes for this project—to understand what it means to have ethical care in the classroom and to discover how that can be transformed into natural care. In this chapter I discuss how the findings presented in Chapter Four answer those questions as well as the more specific questions that guided this inquiry directed with this particular teacher. I begin with a discussion of the extended model of teachers’ concepts of factors that influence the interaction-approach orientation enacted toward students. By discussing this model, I suggest broad answers regarding differential behaviors and the effects of productive reflection. I then narrow the discussion by addressing the more specific questions about the teacher in my study. The discussion of those more specific questions as they relate to this teacher and her classroom provide insight into the two overarching questions. This discussion also illustrates the process of the evolution of care from an ethical function of the job to a natural desire of the heart.
Factors Leading to Differential Teaching Behaviors

Long-term personal relationships are important in only a few of the professions that deal directly with the public such as social work, medicine or psychology. In those professions, practitioners are trained in communication skills that help them to build trust, resolve conflict, show support, and manage crises, as well as in other skills for building and maintaining positive relationships. Many teachers are not given such specific instruction. Teachers are taught about group dynamics and aspects of classroom management that revolve around keeping the group of students on task and keeping disruptions by any one student to a minimum. They are not instructed as explicitly regarding interpersonal relationships or equipped as well with the tools to build relationships one on one. In addition, teachers are expected to be able to naturally like all of their students, but the students are not required to like the teacher. This inequality of expectation and lack of preparation can leave the teacher at a disadvantage. Teachers are often expected to learn on their own how to deal with different personalities, demands, and challenges of the students. While the teacher deals with her own social needs within the classroom, navigating all of those influential factors requires a good deal of emotional effort. Before any issue can be corrected, it must first be identified. Once identified the factors can be broken down to the root of the issue and resolved properly.

Perceived Factors

Newberry and Davis (2008) outlined three factors that teachers perceive as influencing the stance they take when dealing with students. Those factors are negotiating personality, responding to the student’s press for a relationship, and dealing with
challenge. These concepts are straightforward and identifiable by a teacher. What is not identifiable for teachers is the process of determining what the nuances of these factors mean for her in terms of the impact they might have on her personal resources, such as time, energy, and emotional reserves. As far as we know, teachers initially define each of these factors narrowly in terms of the individual student, identifying the personal traits, challenges and demands of the student. Presumably, once identified, each factor is evaluated in regards to the teacher’s interpretation of how it might affect her. Before any action is taken it would seem as if she considers compatibility and ease when negotiating around a student’s personality, the effort required and stress produced to properly respond to a student’s press for a relationship, and the time necessary and knowledge requisite to manage a specific challenge presented. The process of evaluating appears to be implicit and for the most part, unrecognized because it is not done through conscious, systematic steps. Instead, it may be inferred that these concepts are instantly analyzed through an evaluation process that is nonconscious (Stern, 2004). This process includes breaking down elements that make up those three concepts and answering questions that lead to action or inaction. I define this as a filtering process that takes place in a realm that lies between the recognition of qualities, requests, and demands and the different behavior enacted toward a student as a result. The filter is made of three distinct dimensions, relation, reflection and reward, and each element passes through these dimensions as it is processed (see Figure 3). To illustrate this presumptive process, below I describe what it might look like to filter each factor from the Newberry & Davis model through the dimensions that emerged in the data from this study.
Negotiating personality. The first factor that may influence a teacher’s choice for interaction is the personality match between the teacher and the student. Given the literature in educational research that documents teachers’ preferences for particular student traits (see H. Davis, 2006; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Morganett, 2001), in addition to the sociological research about the desire to find like-minded people (Tharpe et al., 2000), it is no wonder that the element of personality emerges in classrooms. On an intimate scale, the individual teacher has to consider how to work with a student who does not possess qualities and characteristics which are compatible with her own personality. She can do this by going through a series of questions that happen instantly and imperceptibly. (Although I will systemically present these questions that a teacher may consider, they do not necessarily come up in any certain order, nor may they all be addressed with every student. However, they are all filtered through the three different dimensions of relation, reflection and reward.)

First, the teacher considers those traits that are explicit and readily identifiable in the student. She processes this through the filter of relation by asking specific questions: Are there common interests, values, background, or experience from which to draw when attempting to interact with this student? Am I being accepting of the student? Am I putting forth sufficient effort to know this student? Are we putting forth the same amount of effort to build a relationship? Do I enjoy these interactions? Does the student? Often the teacher will read the amount of effort the student returns on her attempts in order assess how much compatibility there is for a relationship. Personalities that willingly and readily respond positively to the teacher, that are easily connected to by the teacher, or
that put forth equal effort to relate to the teacher are positively charged coming through this filter. Personalities that make it uncomfortable to reciprocate affection, those that culturally have different expectations for adult-child relations, or that use methods of relating to others that differ from those of the teacher, come through the filter with a negative charge. The teacher must then decide how to respond to the personality. When there is a positive charge, there is no problem and the reflection process is one of simply responding to what comes naturally to her. When the charge is negative, the teacher must consider how to respond. For example, Sandy had natural affection for Desiree, a sweet, bright little girl who just needed love. Desiree was receptive to the affection and effort of Sandy; therefore it was easy for Sandy to continue to relate to Desiree. On the other hand, Keisha made it difficult. She did not always respond to Sandy’s efforts with reciprocal affection or appreciation. Thus, because of the way they responded to her and related to others in general, it was easier for Sandy to relate to Desiree than to Keisha.

Another way that the personality is processed is through the filter of reflection. The teacher begins with a series of judgments regarding the needs of the student. This is a form of emotional labor as she first must identify what the student really needs from her—academic, social, emotional, or behavioral attention—and which is the most pressing need. Then she considers the requirements involved to meet that need: resources in time, materials, expert knowledge, and emotional reserves depending on the need. She also determines control, both control she might have or that the student might have, over the situation that has created or contributed to the need in question. Once she has determined the amount of control, she must make a determination whether it is her
responsibility to meet that need. In making that decision she simultaneously evaluates her ability and that of the student to meet that need. A favorable determination that she has the resources and ability to affect change on the situation is a positive charge that is regarded as emotional work that is part of her job. An unfavorable determination of her ability or a realization that the situation is out of her control or realm of responsibility passes through the filter negatively charged and is perceived as extra emotional labor in addition to or even beyond, her job responsibilities.

Finally the teacher considers the effort required in dealing with the student’s personality and the type of effort (emotional, mental or physical, personal or professional) and decides whether that challenge is worth the effort. This leads to the last filter--reward. The teacher is involved in a process of cost analysis for her actions. She must consider the possible outcomes of her action or inaction and who, if anyone, will benefit from it. At times she may see the amount of effort as heavily outweighing the possible reward and determine that the action is not feasible with her limited resources. At other times she sees the reward measurably outweighing the effort and is willing to engage in activities leading to change. And there may even be times when the amount of effort is perceived as equal to the reward, regardless how difficult or time consuming, thus leading her to action. She must also consider who will benefit from her efforts: only herself, only the child, or perhaps the entire class? A focus that is entirely self-centered will negatively impact this outcome, as often so will one that demands that the reward be for both the teacher and the student. A focus that remains primarily on the benefit for the child is one that will leave this factor and outcome positively charged.
Responding to press for relationship. A student’s press for a relationship, or lack of press for a relationship, also affects the manner in which the teacher approaches the student. If a student presses too much, so that the teacher is constantly bombarded with demands to attend to the student, or conversely, if a student never presses for any time or attention, that lack of press can greatly impact the approach a teacher makes toward that student. Looking at press for relationships through the dimension of relation, a teacher must determine her comfort level for press with that student. Much of that will depend on the manner in which the student approaches the teacher. Is the student too demanding? Does the student not demand enough? Does the student reciprocate efforts to establish a relationship? Are the efforts and manner used to express intent appropriate? The teacher then considers if there is balance between the amount of effort put forth by her to know the student and the effort the student puts forth to reciprocate. How are her efforts received as opposed to how she attempts to receive the student? Does this student return efforts to know her? Does the student reject the teacher’s attempts to get to know him/her? Will she need to try harder to know this student? Is the student feeling overwhelmed by her attention, or simply rejecting her? Many of these answers are intertwined and are made simultaneously with the question of personality: Is the amount of press compatible with the personality of the student, and is that more or less than the teacher can handle? Balance here is a positive charge, whereas imbalance is negative.

Recall the situation with Candace: Candace was a student who did not press the teacher for a relationship at all. At the beginning Sandy’s identification that she felt slightly rejected by Candace is likely what led to a distant relationship. Sandy then began
to press Candace for a relationship and put a lot of effort into the relationship. At times her attempts seemed to be futile. Later, when Sandy realized that the Candace’s shy personality led her to act in similar ways with other teachers, Sandy apparently no longer felt rejected and accepted the low amount of press. By the end of the year she had found the level of comfort in the relationship for both herself and the student.

Again, the determination of equal or unequal effort leads to judgments about need, responsibility and ability. Is the child requiring too much of the teacher emotionally, physically, or intellectually in this relationship? Does the teacher have the resources to meet the demands of this student, and is she required to do so? What sacrifices must she make to meet the demands of this relationship? Alternatively, she must reflect on reasons why a student may not press for a relationship. Filtering these thoughts through the dimension of reflection, she must determine the needs of the student and decide if she should press the student for a relationship and in what arena her focus should be--academic or emotional. Determining that the requirements are just a part of the emotional work of her job leaves this dimension with a positive charge. Determining that the efforts required of her are emotionally taxing, categorizing them as emotional labor, gives this element a negative charge. Her identification of locus of responsibility and ability along with need lead her to consider the ramifications of action and inaction.

Considering the ramifications of her actions or inaction is in the realm of reward. Who will benefit from these efforts to create a relationship? How will the relationship influence the student, the class, her as teacher? In regards to relational press and the interpretations and perceptions of the teacher for too much or not enough press, the
benefits can be considered for both time range and social aspects. In the short term, who
benefits? Does the teacher get pleasure from this relationship? Will the student learn
social adjustment skills that will last throughout his/her lifetime? How will it affect
his/her learning in the class now and in future settings? Positive current and long-term
effects will lead to positive charge, whereas seeing any change as temporary and short
lived will negatively charge the dimension.

_Dealing with challenge._ When it comes to determining what challenges a student
brings with him or her, the process is much the same. The only difference is that the
teacher must first determine why this student presents this challenge, and that often leads
her to consider locus of control. First, she considers if this challenge is an innate part of
the student or if the student is a victim of circumstance that results in this challenge? The
determination that this is a challenge due to circumstance rather than a fixed and inherent
part of the child will positively charge the dimension, where the opposite determination
leaves the dimension negatively charged.

Second, the teacher reflects on the overall problem posed by the challenge: How
big, how serious, how threatening is the challenge? Is she up to the task? Does she have
sufficient resources and support to meet this challenge? Will it go away on its own or
must she address it? Is the student bringing this upon him/herself, or is it out of his/her
control? Again, a feeling of confidence in being able to meet the challenge is seen as a
positive charge, whereas the fear of not being able to deal with it or not having the
support negatively charges it. Also the perception that the student has control over the
situation and is choosing not do deal with it negatively charges the dimension.
A good example of this is the contrast between Oscar and Kaleb. It appeared at first that Sandy believed Oscar’s challenge—that of his behavior—to be within his control. With that assumption, her responsibility was to simply teach him to follow the rules of the classroom. This challenge was evidently somewhat of a nuisance, but not a big problem. Later it seemed that she saw his challenge as the result of situations that were out of his control and apparently reflected on her responsibility to help him learn to deal with his emotions. One might conclude that she came to see his behaviors as a small part of a much larger problem that was not going to go away easily. She did indeed take on greater responsibility to help him deal with his emotions as well as to help him know that he is cared for. With Kaleb, she expressed her perception of his challenge as a lack of effort, which she apparently saw as completely within his control. After several unsuccessful attempts to motivate him, and almost no reciprocation on his part, Sandy evidently determined that she wasn’t responsible for this issue and placed it back on him. Kaleb’s challenge was perceived as connected to his personality—connoting of indifference towards his work and the teacher.

The process of filtering perceptions through these three dimensions of relation, reflection and reward is one that can take place only once or many times. Initially this process is begun upon meeting the student and can be done rather quickly and not revisited. A second possibility is that the process can be started and only revisited when occasion introduces new information, causing the teacher to reframe what she knows about the student. A third possibility would be that the teacher begins the process upon meeting the student but suspends the final result for several days or weeks until sufficient
interactions take place to make a final judgment. Then this process is revisited several times during the course of the relationship. This third scenario would seem the ideal way to monitor changes in a relationship for optimum progress and the promotion of healthy, positive relationships. This is a part of the emotional labor of teaching; a teacher may process and reprocess depending on whether there is a equilibrium reached in what she perceives as the needs of any one student and the sense of having met all demands and requirements asked of her per that child.

The filtering of the three dimensions, each having either a positive or negative charge to it, then leads to the choice for interaction. Having a stronger total of negative charges among the three leads to an interaction-approach orientation that is less personal; one that leads to tendencies of approaching a student in a manner that may marginalize him/her (see Newberry & Davis, 2008). Having the stronger total of positive charges would ideally lead to more interactions that are favorable for relationships and which privilege students. It can be inferred that revisiting this process often would change the manner and approach for interaction. With new information or different decisions made in these three dimensions, a teacher can change the patterns of interaction and the behaviors invoked when approaching students.

Productive Reflection

Reflection can serve to either solidify previous decisions made or reverse them, and that can lead to a positive or negative outcome. Much of reflection depends on the goal the teacher has for the student in question and her perception of how best to facilitate the realization of that goal. It also sometimes depends on who is seen as responsible for
reaching the goals. However, this is a nonconscious process, and as such it takes a great deal of effort to engage in metacognitive processes all of the time over every relationship. At different times and for different reasons the teacher will review and revisit students and their situations. Most generally that happens when situations demand it, either through outside information introduced that forces the teacher to reconsider her perceptions or due to other changes in the situation caused by the student himself. A third way a teacher will revisit and reconsider is by participating in some form of productive reflection. Productive reflection can be powerful in influencing relationships, as it can bring the nonconscious to the level of the conscious. This is a process of reframing the needs and responses of the student. This reframing often requires gathering more information about the particular student in regards to academic ability, social needs, familial situations, medical limitations, and/or personal preference. Gathering the information and reframing through a different lens often require a good deal of emotional work including, effort, commitment, resilience, and persistence. These efforts are representative of the endeavor to develop an ethic of care.

Teacher Behavior Reflecting an Ethic of Care

Throughout this study, the teacher, Sandy, showed a range of abilities, instincts, and desires to connect with her students. I believe she is typical in her desire to understand all of her students and do her best to help them achieve in all areas in which she may have any influence for good. Sandy openly discussed with her students how she felt about them as a whole, once even telling them that she considered them to be her family while she was at school. However, she was also susceptible to fears of rejection.
and the desire to have her own social needs met. Sandy had to perform a great deal of emotional labor to navigate the formation and maintenance of relationships. Her own needs and personal communication style were imbedded in her perception of students and their personalities. Below I address how Sandy employed and ethic of care as she built relationships with her students based on her comments in interviews and personal reflections as well as things I observe her do in the classroom.

*How Does She Construct Relationships with Students?*

Each year, even before the first day of school Sandy begins to gather information about her students and attempts to meet them and their families. She also discusses students with their former teachers. When classes begin, Sandy makes a concerted effort to greet every student by name. This contributes to her attempts to create an environment that is safe for the students, by helping them feel that she wants to know them. She starts the year by prompting the students to share things about themselves as she shares in return. She uses this information to identify how different students communicate and respond to instruction as well as to enable her to engage the students in non-academic conversations. This information helps Sandy to set up the classroom, organize group work, and otherwise construct a learning environment that makes the classroom more personal and comfortable.

Sandy is naturally inclined to interact with students who are like she was as a child, as well as with students who show similar interests and aptitudes to those she has now as an adult. Students who take the initiative to engage her in conversation at appropriate times and in appropriate ways as well as those who can sustain a conversation
by sharing personal information (stories, feelings, opinions) are those whose company she prefers. For students with whom she is not naturally inclined to engage, she seeks opportunities to speak with them privately or include them in conversations. This is accomplished either by asking them direct questions or by sharing unknown information about herself that she feels the students might find interesting, amusing, or even shocking, in hopes of promoting discussion. Many times this will lead to some undiscovered common interest on which to build a relationship. When no such common ground is discovered, Sandy tries to learn more about the student in order to identify needs. She does this by gathering information about the student through speaking with a parent or a former teacher. Sandy makes concerted efforts to include students in activities, allow each of them special time as a helper in the class, and show them affection by personally greeting and dismissing them each day.

How Do Perceptions Affect the Ways She Interacts?

The way in which Sandy interacts largely depends on how she perceives the needs of the students and interprets the way they respond to her. She responds more professionally with a student she perceives as struggling academically and only approaching her for academic help, focusing the relationship on improving the student’s ability to complete tasks successfully and preparing him/her for further achievements. If she perceives a student as emotionally distant due to things out of his or her control, she invests emotionally to demonstrate love and patience for that student by finding ways to have that student be more involved and by making efforts to interact with him/her one on one in non-academic settings. When a student seems to have little need for her attention
either academically or personally, she feels a bit rejected and allows that student to carry on alone until an issue arises where she can help. When a student demonstrates qualities that are not favorable, which could cause disruption, Sandy relies on strategies she has used in the past to deal with the student and the behavior. In short, she responds individually to the way a student reacts to her and to the need that distinguishes the student.

In her attempt to get to know every child, she experiences varying degrees of acceptance. Students who make their acceptance obvious are the easiest for her to deal with, as she feels that the interest is reciprocal. Those who do not initially show her outward acceptance are more difficult for her to understand, which requires effort to overcome. In order for her to overcome the absence of acceptance, Sandy reflects again on what she perceives to be the needs of that child, compares these needs to what she already knows about the student, and oftentimes gathers more information with which to conclude her efforts. She makes herself available to those students who she feels are not openly accepting, yet she often is reluctant to initiate conversations, not knowing how she will be received. In extreme cases, when the lack of connection has been brought to her attention, she redoubles her efforts to be the one to act to improve the relationship by engaging the student as often as possible until she feels the relationship has reached the student’s comfort level.

*What Theories and Beliefs Guide Her Decision-Making Process?*

Sandy firmly believes that it is possible to love every student; the teacher simply must find the one thing that makes that child loveable. She believes that every student
wants to feel loved and that teachers are often the only ones who can provide a sense of love and acceptance. She believes that to really teach a child the teacher must know her/him as a student as well as an individual outside of class. The relationship between the teacher and the student is an important part of getting to know students and helping them feel loved. Sandy knows that the teacher can set the tone for the relationship, and so she tries to remain very open with all of her students. Collectively as well as individually she tells them that she cares for them. She shows it by taking personal interest in what they do and following up with known activities outside of class.

When difficult situations arise, Sandy attempts to see the issue from the student’s point of view. She practices patience and consistency in reprimands and takes the time to process with students. She includes the students in many of the classroom decisions and rule making activities and gives them autonomy that she feels is appropriate to the situation and the maturity of the student involved. Therefore, Sandy distinguishes how to relate and how to interact based on the individual—treating each fairly, which means that students are not always treated exactly the same because Sandy takes into consideration the development of the individual child. Her relationships may vary depending on what she is able to do with particular individuals and what she has come to expect from different students.

How Does She Describe Caring and Her Efforts to Care?

As mentioned earlier, Sandy believes that it is possible to love all students, even if it is necessary to search to find something to love about them. That search to find something takes a great deal time, but she believes that it is well worth the investment of
time and effort. Many ways that Sandy describes her efforts to care have to do with reflection. When she is faced with a student or a situation that she finds difficult, she talks about “figuring out” what the issue might be and how best to address it. Eventually this leads to gathering more information about the student. Not all of her efforts to gather information are fruitful; sometimes the student is uncooperative, and sometimes the parents are not responsive. In such cases she uses her best judgment based on prior experience with similar circumstances. Sometimes she backs off from the situation and tries to give the student space, and sometimes she puts forth added effort to interact. Either way, she attempts to meet the needs of the student, as she perceives them.

In an effort to be mindful of all students and to create a comfortable and safe learning environment, Sandy relies on some of her natural inclinations. She states that it is part of her nature to give others the benefit of the doubt. She begins the relationship with all students by showing them trust and allowing them to make choices on their own. She values respect and treats students with respect by allowing them to take responsibility for their own issues. Many times I witnessed Sandy handle a problem that dealt with an unidentified student being blamed for a controversy. On those occasions Sandy announced to the class her confidence that the responsible person(s) would come forth. She often allows students come up with their own punishment. She claims that they have often come up with consequences that were harsher than she would have chosen.

In other ways Sandy shows her desire to care for different students by taking a personal interest. Occasionally that has required that she be more than just a teacher to some of the students. Sometimes she is a surrogate mother; sometimes she is a firm
disciplinarian; and at other times she is a focused tutor and makes extra time to deal one-on-one with a student. Over time, Sandy has become more conscious of how she speaks to her students, often reflecting on what she has said to make sure she has been fair and willing to consider alternate interpretations to situations. More often than not, the process has entailed that she put the needs of the student above her own fears, comfort, or agenda. As might be expected, Sandy is not superhuman and is not always perfect in attending to the needs of every student in every moment. But she has learned over the year to stop and reflect on where changes could be made and then has begun anew. She has learned to separate the student from the behavior, and she has come to appreciate the struggles that her students face. She ends the day with reassuring the students of her concern for them and then comes to school the next day having let go of past frustrations.

What Is The Value of Productive Reflection?

As with all humans, Sandy is limited in her capacity to be all things to all students at all times. There were occasions, especially toward the beginning of the study, in which Sandy behaved in a manner inconsistent with her stated beliefs. There were times that the discussions of relationships before the diagrams were made and after they were reviewed were in stark contrast. In the beginning Sandy overlooked or at least did not overly comment on these differences, but at each subsequent stage she made a concerted effort when inconsistencies were found to increase her awareness and pay special attention to the relationships that seemed potentially most affected by her behavior.

Working with a protocol that included an element of productive reflection opened Sandy to the reality of the world of the unstated. There were things that she knew that she
didn’t know that she knew. The creation of diagrams and the discussion that followed allowed her to identify patterns and vocalize observations, thereby making them more real. Actively participating in a process of productive reflection not only turned the implicit knowledge of her relationships into tangible facts but connected her actions and thinking to the actual facts of children’s lives. She then took her understanding of that information and had to accept, approve, justify or defend the outcome. Sometimes this was an easy process; sometimes it was not. All in all, the process that Sandy went through as she participated in this study increased her awareness of her own behavior, causing her to rededicate herself to the principles and theories of good teaching that she claimed. As she made concerted efforts to change her patterns of interaction and focus her attention, the students often followed and responded positively to those efforts.

Conclusion

As I witnessed the evolution of the relationships between Sandy and her students, I came to understand how emotionally demanding classroom life is for a teacher. I also began to understand that differential behaviors are a result of the teacher’s natural inclination as well as her judgment regarding the need of the student. These behaviors also often appeared to be a consequence of the need of the teacher (Brophy, 1974). A teacher too has social needs to affiliate and be accepted, as well as to feel successful at her job. At times the needs of the teacher and the needs of the students are at odds with each other. The emotional labor required for a teacher to overcome her own needs in order to focus on the needs of the student is pretty demanding, but it in the end, quite rewarding. No two relationships are the same. The way that she approached students,
and the way they approached her were intimately connected to the perceptions she had of
the individual child. In her desire to help them achieve she was subject to rejection,
doubt, and frustration that at times may have hindered the relationship. However, given
the opportunity to reflect and with the awareness that comes through that process, her
desire was usually transformed into action.

The difference between how she interacted at the beginning of the study and how
she interacted after only a few weeks into it was a matter of recognizing social and
psychological reasons behind the actions, both her own and those of the student. Even
when this was only an implicit recognition, one that was in the realm of the known but
not completely identified, it became a motivator that increased the likelihood of
performing the necessary emotional labor to change situations. Emotional labor,
performed in a new light of an ethic of care, whether naturally born or deliberately
forged, became less laborious, diminishing into a matter of emotional work as part of the
job. Sandy went through this process with many of her students. And although this
process did not happen individually with all of students, in the end Sandy felt that she
enjoyed improved relationships with the class as a whole.

The extended model of teachers’ concepts of factors influencing choice for
interaction-approach orientations extends our understanding of how choices for
relationships are formed. It appears that this process of comparing what we know to what
we perceive of the other and of making judgments regarding how it may affect us, and
what the outcome may be is part of the phenomenon of relationship building. Although
Sandy stated that all she needed from the students was respect, it also appeared that to
develop the closest relationships she required some level of reciprocity in wanting to form a relationship, some common aptitudes and interests, and the ability to demonstrate that interest. When any of those elements was not present, a good deal of emotional labor was required to overcome feelings of rejection and propel her to action. This did not always happen as Sandy acted in ways that still, even slightly, protected her need to belong. This is evidenced in the closest relationships being with students who sought her attention and showed the most acceptance of her.

This experience with Sandy provided much insight into the teacher-student relationship and the process of building and maintaining positive relationships with students. The process of comparing the needs of another to one’s own encompasses several procedures. One must evaluate personal resources, determine the value of the action to be taken, and possess the ability to regulate emotions, in order to act for the benefit of the other. The behaviors enacted are based on the results of such evaluations. Sandy intuitively did much of that evaluating and even before this study, took precautions to eliminate bias. She also cultivated relationships by communicating with the individual students as well as speaking to family and attending school activities. However, the addition of participating in productive reflection allowed her to identify when she did not naturally connect to students, when she did not completely understand a situation, and to reframe her thinking if perhaps she misinterpreted a student. The act of productive reflection gave her the opportunity to step back and find ways she could connect with many different students, even with those with whom she did not naturally connect. She did so by increasing her awareness of their needs, reflecting on her responsibility and
ability to attend to those needs, and then taking the opportunity to act. Through simple means, such as productive reflection, a teacher can change the course of her relationship with a student, and hence, she can change a life.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION:
CONTRIBUTIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The information obtained through this study contributes to several different areas of research and interest, including in-service teaching, pre-service training, teacher education programs, and social psychology. The information, although obtained on the micro-level, not only has important implications for the practicing teacher but also contains foundational elements of humanity that can be applied globally. In this final chapter I will present the merits of this study as it pertains to several fields of research and study. Included in this chapter will be a commentary of the limitations to the study, including scope and researcher error. I will end this discussion with a section dedicated to the direction of future research that might be included in this line of inquiry.

Contributions Across Disciplines

Although the heuristic developed in this study involves guiding principles that cross disciplines for all fields in which human contact is of importance, I will limit this discussion to in-service training, teacher education, and teacher related research fields.
In-service Training

The techniques used throughout this study are situated to help those in the teaching profession interested in improving their classroom environment. As awareness must come before improvement, a teacher must find a way to become aware of her classroom practice. A habit of productive reflection can aid any teacher in any situation where the desire to change is present.

Change for Sandy. Although Sandy had been told that she was an effective teacher and that she worked well with difficult students, she was not aware of particular behaviors or specific details of her classroom that really distinguished her practice from that of other teachers. This study helped her to identify her own natural abilities as well as identify and develop areas that she valued that did not naturally exist in her teaching repertoire. The change in Sandy from simply wanting to identify her techniques to actively engaging in identifying areas where she did and did not excel helped her become a researcher of her own practice. As the silent observer, I never verbalized to Sandy any suggestions for areas of focus or improvement. Any and all changes came from Sandy’s acknowledgment of her own practice through the productive reflection process. As she engaged in acts of patience, productive reflection, and reframing, she heightened her awareness of her own abilities, listing her strengths as a teacher as being flexible and understanding, yet consistent. Reflecting on her classroom relationships also increased the sense of satisfaction in her job because she was able to get to know more of the students on a deeper and more personal level than in previous years. This depth of
knowledge increased Sandy’s sense of closeness with individual students, and in turn increased her sense of connection with the class as a whole.

The personal element, which is often noted as one of the rewards of teaching, was fully realized this year for Sandy. As she noted, in teaching there are many things that wear an individual down. Demands on teachers come from all areas: administration, state and federal government, parents, etc., and the weight of those demands can leave a teacher wondering if teaching is worthwhile. But then there are days when a teacher really connects with a student and sees the light bulb go on. Having more “good days than bad, more light bulbs than grunts” is what gets the teacher through the year, according to Sandy. Healthy, productive, rewarding relationships with students produce more good days than bad and allow for more light bulbs and fewer grunts. Personally Sandy felt that she invested more with her students this year than in the past. I believe that she will continue to find ways to productively reflect on her classroom relationships for the benefit of the children in the room, and consequently her efforts to connect with them will also bring her much satisfaction.

*Change for all teachers.* The basic means used in this study are easily replicated. The protocol tool is simply constructed and can be implemented at any point in time. Although Sandy had a third party observing her interactions, because that information was used for analysis after the fact, it is feasible that a teacher could do the same process without help. Third party observations, however, are easy to arrange or can even be done through videotaping the classroom in action for later review. Triangulation for a teacher without third party assistance would consist of making the diagrams, reflecting through
journaling, and reviewing tapes of her own practice or discussing relationships with a colleague. In any case, consistently participating in the act of productive reflection will bring to light things that the teacher once performed on the nonconscious level or left to automatic reflexes (Feldon, 2007; Stern, 2004). Once a teacher knows what is going on in her classroom, she is more prepared to deal with it properly. This is a step in the direction of action research that can advance the union of theory and practice for teachers.

Teacher Education Programs

Like most teachers, Sandy was not prepared or trained in techniques for building relationships or skills for developing connections with individual students. In conjunction with the literature showing how influential the teacher-student relationship can be in many different arenas of a child’s life, this study is poised to add support and information for development of teacher training programs that promote education and training in the social aspects of teaching. Just as Sandy was able to pinpoint some predispositions she held in regards to student preferences, pre-service teachers could use similar guided reflection techniques to help them recognize any predispositions or biases they show while in teacher training as part of the field experience. Productive reflection, especially with the added visual element, brings to light things that prospective teachers may not at first consider, especially having not been in the teacher role previously.

Research shows that the new teacher is overly concerned with the procedures and practices of management and with content to the point that other elements of classroom life fall by the wayside (Feldon, 2007). The exercise used in this study would serve as a bridge between theory with practice. By learning the theory of child-centered learning
and the ethic of care, while attempting to apply those components in practice, teacher candidates would have ample opportunity to reflect on their ability to make that transition from the theoretical and abstract to the practical world of everyday life. This preparation in relationship building and maintenance would give them a jump-start for their own classroom practice by bringing the “implicit knowings” (Stern, 2004) to a level of revealed understandings. By having such training and preparation, prospective teachers can prepare for eventually making positive efforts to connect.

Research Fields

Results from this study are poised to make significant contributions to several areas of research. The understanding gained from this research regarding teacher choice for behavior, including factors that influence choices, has implications for research into the social aspects of learning such as student-teacher relationships and classroom environments. This research also has implications in areas of productive reflection, teacher development, and social psychology.

Social aspects of learning. For researchers interested in the development of teacher education programs, as well as those who study classroom environments, this study yields valuable information. It is widely accepted that teaching is a difficult job. There is much research on how teachers behave and what they believe. However, there is little research on why they behave as they do when it is in contrast to what they believe. This study opens up a line of research for coming to understand why teachers may behave differently with different students. It also shows evidence that it is within the control of the teacher to change these patterns of behavior. No one does anything simply
for the sake of doing it; there is always a reason and rationale. Previous research has identified factors that contribute to the different ways teachers approach students (see Newberry & Davis, 2008). In this study I have expanded that understanding by delving into the realm of the non-conscious, providing one theory for differential behaviors. Coming to understand the interaction between perceptions and actions allows teachers to have a greater influence on the social environment of the classroom as they gain greater control over their own emotions, thoughts and actions.

**Student-teacher relationships.** Studies show that after the first two weeks of school, teachers have completed “grooving” and have established a pattern for interaction (Doyle, 1986). Through this process routines are set up, but even more significant, in those first weeks and months of school teachers make decisions about what students need, who they are, and how they behave. Previous research suggests that once these decisions are made and patterns for interaction are set, relationships are fixed and relatively unchangeable (Brophy, 1974). However, in this study I have discovered that student-teacher relationships actually are much more fluid than previously thought. The ways that this teacher considered each of her relationships and the amount of change that occurred across the year, even from one interview to the next, demonstrates that relationships can be easily altered. Productive reflection is one way to modify and change the direction of a relationship.

Another contribution that this study adds to the literature of student-teacher relationships is the realization of what goes into forming a relationship and what is required to maintain it. Identification of processes that are more involved than identifying
and reacting to personality traits helps both researchers and practitioners in implementing change and directing the course of the relationship. Previously it was thought that personally traits that are similar to those of the teacher or easy to handle in the classroom were sufficient grounds for building close connections between student and teacher. However, this study shows that the social need for reciprocation of affection and acceptance that Tharpe and colleagues (2000) describe in school settings is also felt by the teacher. Sandy stated that she is just as nervous to meet the students, as they are to meet her. That is one of the pitfalls of teaching: finding new associates each year and navigating acceptance and rejection from students.

Productive reflection. This study also contributes to the research on productive reflection and its benefits. As shown above, productive reflection is an effective way to change the direction of a relationship. It is also helpful in revealing to teachers information about their own practice that they have not recognized before. There are elements of productive reflection as described by E. Davis (2004) that I have not addressed in this study previously; one of the most important is acting on the revelations received. Through this interview protocol involving productive techniques, Sandy was able to identify patterns and make plans for improvement. Through this practice she was able to improve individual relationships, connect more with the class as a whole, and make plans for future practice. Through the productive reflection techniques in this study Sandy and I were not only able to “sophisticate the beholding” (Stake, 1995) of her classroom, but also to position her to change it. This process also allowed us to understand the process for coming to feel natural care for any one student, verifying
Sandy’s comment that it is possible to love every child if one is able to put forth that conscious effort. The reflective process aided her in this effort throughout the year.

*Teacher development.* Aspects of this study contribute to many areas of teacher development, including teacher knowledge, teacher beliefs, and the teaching self. The examination of the realm of the nonconscious informs each of these areas of study. For example, how much of teacher knowledge is implicit, and how and when does it change from implicit to explicit knowledge? What “implicit knowing” persuades a teacher’s beliefs? How does what a teacher knows about her teaching self compare with what is observed in her teaching style? (See Woolfolk Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006 for discussion on teacher beliefs and thinking.) Further investigation of what teachers know or believe in those areas as compared to what they implicitly know and the perceptions that persuade them will help in the creation of teacher education programs.

*Social psychology.* Finally, this research also has bearing on the field of social psychology. The work of Mark Leary (2003) on social acceptance and the avoidance of rejection informed my research. In return, the findings here can further elaborate his work. The feelings and emotional work that Sandy faced are common to many social arenas. The information presented here about a filtering process for making decisions about interaction on a nonconscious level can lead to research on how to bring that process to light in non-academic settings.

**Limitations and Future Research**

The small sample size limits generalization of these findings. Not all teachers will deal with the same struggles as Sandy faced, and teachers will vary in their ability and
willingness to respond to issues that arise through personal productive reflection. Sandy was willing and eager to discover her teaching practices, which made this study a form of action research on her part. Not all teachers are willing to engage in such efforts or sacrifice the amount of time that Sandy did.

Other limitations are concerned with my decision to limit the use of technology in collecting data. Perhaps if video equipment had been used, much more would have been revealed through more detailed pictures of interactions caught on tape. Analysis of body language, voice inflection, and other such nuances that I may have missed in my field notes would add depth to the interpretation of interactions.

Future research might involve the students’ perspective on the relationships. I would like to have had the opportunity to speak to the students who were selected as examples and discuss with them their perspective on their relationships with the teacher. Beyond their perception of whether or not they thought the teacher liked or disliked them, it would be interesting to have them explain their reasons for believing as they did, thereby giving more information about how students read and receive teacher behavior. This might also be an interesting study to do with middle and high school students. It would also be interesting to involve students at that age who are at risk for dropping out of school. (See Smyth & Hattam, 2002, for discussion on classroom culture and drop outs.) Another interesting way to examine rejection and caring in classrooms might be through studying gender differences in male and female teachers working with different age groups, as well as teachers working in classrooms in which they are in the racial
minority. This line of research could offer interesting insight to current research on cross-cultural teaching, exploring why some teachers are successful where others are not.

Teaching is an intimately personal profession; thus it is only proper that occasionally we stop to look at an individual teacher. Although this study consisted of only one teacher and her classroom interactions, the implications for the field of teaching in general are grand in scope. Recalling Jere Brophy’s remark that we are all more alike than we are different, I see Sandy as a good representation of the ranks of well-intentioned teachers across the nation. The study of what it took for her to further develop an ethic of care toward more of her students sheds light on what that process might entail and therefore how to influence it. I concur with Sandy’s thoughts about the needs of humans, especially students, to be cared for, and the likelihood that a teacher may be the only person to be able to fill that need. I also agree that taking the time to cultivate caring relationships is often a very difficult process. The findings that emerged through this study suggest that this process is hindered by susceptibility to perception of others and natural reactions to those perceptions. Often a catalyst is required to recognize the need of another and elevate it, or at least to put it into perspective, or that need remains unknown. To accomplish the goal of having more beneficial relationships between teachers and students--relationships that have positive impacts on the well being of students in all arenas--ways to encourage and support teachers in the emotional work of teaching need to be addressed. Teachers such as Sandy need training and tools to be able to juggle the emotional demands of the classroom placed upon her by the students while accomplishing the academic goals put upon from many different sources them as well.
APPENDIX A

ILLUSTRATIONS AND TABLES
Illustration 1: Illustration of modified IOS tool.

Illustration 2: Photo of diagrams, first interview. (Yellow circles represent the teacher; blue is for male students, pink is for female students.)
Illustration 3: Photo of diagrams, second interview. (Yellow circles represent the teacher, orange circles represent the student.)

Illustrations 4: Photo of diagrams, third interview. (Yellow circles represent the teacher, orange circles represent the student.)
Illustration 5: Photo of diagrams, fourth interview. (Pink circles represent the teacher; purple circles represent the student.)
Table 2: Student profiles and the closeness category that they were assigned by the teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Traits 1st time</th>
<th>Category (1-5)</th>
<th>Traits 2nd time</th>
<th>Category (1-8)</th>
<th>Traits 3rd time</th>
<th>Category (1-5)</th>
<th>Traits 4th time</th>
<th>Category (1-7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Bright</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Smart, outgoing, quick (to finish), a little sneaky</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Very bright, very hard worker, pretty quiet lately, self-reliant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bright, hard-working, great kid</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Very quiet, attitude, defensive</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Quiet, special needs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Story-teller, embellisher quiet, sneaky</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiden</td>
<td>Talkative, fun smiley</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sweet, very active, outgoing, energetic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Very sweet, really funny, down to earth becoming anxious and nervous</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jokester, good kid</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Great child, very funny, fun-loving, real athletic, anxious, good kid</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Very good sense of humor, very sweet, helpful, intuitive, great, nice, good student, hard worker, very bright, fun</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Good, sweet kid, helpful, fun</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candace</td>
<td>Super quiet, very serious</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Quiet, sweet, very bright, helpful</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Very hard working, self-reliant, follow rule diligently, quiet</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hard-working, sweet, quiet, smart</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Adjective 1</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Adjective 2</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kaleb</td>
<td>Interesting, very quiet, very on top of things</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Really quiet, really distracted, slow-moving, needs encouragement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sneaky</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sweet kid, doesn't want to try</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaitlin</td>
<td>ADHD, low social skills, very sweet</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Very emotional, anxious, self-aware, disorganized</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Very anxious, overwhelmed, very intelligent, very disorganized, very funny</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bitter, anxious, quiet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keisha</td>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kind, an instigator, very sweet, appreciative, introverted</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bright, doesn't apply herself</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Good kid, has an edge,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lourdes</td>
<td>Very quiet</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Very sweet, quiet introverted/extra-quieted</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markus</td>
<td>Super sweet, happy, happy-go-lucky</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Funny, very sweet, excited, curious, inquisitive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sweet, funny, inquisitive,</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sweetest kid, happy, happy-go-lucky, fun, great kid, easy going, good kid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitch</td>
<td>Adult like, bright</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Smart, funny, caring, very sweet, intuitive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sweet, hard working, very intelligent, very crowd-pleasing, keeps the peace, anxious at times</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Helpful, great kid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meng</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Quiet, quick</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tries hard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oscar</td>
<td>Super sweet</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mischievous,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>embellisher,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very sweet,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>afraid of something,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>capable, very smart</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selena</td>
<td>Very quiet</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quiet, caring,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>loving, intuitive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sariah</td>
<td>Empathetic, sweet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intuitive, sweet,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>talkative, very</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>friendly</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawna</td>
<td>Special needs, space</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cadet</td>
<td></td>
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APPENDIX B

FORMS
# Application for Exemption

## Title Page - Application for Exemption

**The Ohio State University, Columbus OH 43210**

### Principal Investigator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Anita Woolfolk Hoy</th>
<th>Phone: 292-3774</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Title</td>
<td></td>
<td>Department or College: Education and Human Ecology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x Professor</td>
<td></td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:hoy.17@osu.edu">hoy.17@osu.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Campus Address (room, building, street address): 159A RAMSEYER</td>
<td>29 W WOODRUFF AVE COLUMBUS, OH 43210</td>
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<tr>
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### Co-Investigator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Melissa Newberry</th>
<th>Phone: 688-3967</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Status</td>
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<td>Campus Address (room, building, street address) or Mailing Address: 250K Younkin Success Center 1640 Neil Ave Columbus, Oh 43201</td>
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<tr>
<td>x Faculty</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:newberry.6@osu.edu">newberry.6@osu.edu</a></td>
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### Co-Investigator

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### Protocol Title

Examining Conceptual Understandings of Student-Teacher Relationships in Light of Reflective Teaching Practices.

### Source of Funding

Personal funds

---

### For Office Use Only

- **Approved.** Research has been determined to be exempt under these categories: I, C.
  - Research may begin as of the date of determination listed below.
- **Disapproved.** The proposed research does not fall within the categories of exemption. Submit an application to the appropriate Institutional Review Board for review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of determination: 1/16/07</th>
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*Office of Responsible Research Practices*
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN
SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH

Protocol Title: Examining Conceptual Understandings of Student Teacher Relationships in Light of
Reflective Teaching Practices

Protocol Number: 2007E045

Principal Investigator: Dr. Anita Woolfolk Hoy

The purpose of this study is to ascertain inservice teachers’ own understandings of relationships in the
classroom and to compare the level of “connectedness” in relationships between teacher and student to
the behaviors that take place. The researchers hope that this interview process will also serve as a
relexive teaching exercise to help teachers identify their level of interaction with students and the extent
that those relationships may play in time and quality of teaching practices.

I consent to my participation in research being conducted by Dr. Woolfolk Hoy and Melissa Newberry of
The Ohio State University and give my permission for entry to my classroom for observation of my
teaching. I understand that observations will consist of visits from the researcher to observe teacher
instruction and my classroom conduct and will not involve researcher interaction with students.

I understand that in this study I will be expected to discuss my perspectives and experiences regarding:
- My relationships with the students in my classroom
- My philosophy of teaching and approach to relating to students
- The impact that relationships may play in teaching
- My experience in using a new method of describing relationships

The investigators have explained the purpose of the study, the procedures that will be followed, and the
amount of time it will take. I understand the possible benefits and risks if any, of my participation.

Benefits:
- Learning a new reflexive teaching method
- Identifying and understanding individual relationships in the classroom

Risks:
- It may be uncomfortable to discuss relationships where there was conflict
- The nature of relationships may be personal and hard to explain

I know that I can choose not to participate without penalty to me. If I agree to participate, I can withdraw
from the study at any time, and there will be no penalty. I also know that I can omit all or part of the
content of the interview from the data without penalty. All data is confidential unless disclosure is required
by law. I consent to the use of audiotapes. I understand how the tapes will be used for this study.

I have had a chance to ask questions and to obtain answers to my questions. I understand this research
is being supervised by Dr. Anita Woolfolk Hoy, Educational Psychology and Philosophy. I can contact the
investigators at (614) 688-0500 (EDUC P&P) or (614) 292-3774 (Dr. Hoy). If I have questions about my
rights as a research participant, I can call the Office of Research Risk Protection at (614) 688-4792.
I have read this form or I have had it read to me. I sign it freely & voluntarily. A copy has been given to
me.

Print the name of the participant:

Date: ___________________________ Signed: ___________________________ (Participant)

Signed: ___________________________ Signed: ___________________________ (Principal Investigator)

Signed: ___________________________ Signed: ___________________________ (Co-Investigator)
REFERENCES


