

PILOT STUDY: STUDENT BEHAVIOR IN INNER-CITY SCHOOLS: THE IMPACT  
OF TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

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**Abstract**

Pilot Study: Student Behavior in Inner-City Schools: The Impact of Teacher-Student Relationships

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Classroom disruptions have become an increasing problem for teachers. This is especially evident for novice teachers who are not skilled in classroom management strategies. While some are effective, others struggle each day with keeping the disruptions at a low level. In addition, classroom disruptions occur at a higher rate in inner-city schools. There are many factors that may impact the occurrences of classroom disruptions. This correlational study measured the variables of the type of relationship a teacher has with a student and the occurrences of classroom disruptions. This study was conducted in an inner-city high school. This study found that when there is a positive relationship between a teacher and a student there were fewer occurrences of classroom disruptions.

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## **CHAPTER 1: Purpose and Organization**

### **Introduction**

According to *Primary Sources: America's Teachers on the Teaching Profession*, behavior issues in the classroom have increased in recent years ("Primary Sources," 2014). The recent report released by the Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation showed "...that the increased level of behavior problems has been seen across grade levels: 68 percent of elementary teachers, 64 percent of middle school teachers, and 53 percent of high school teachers say the same" (p. 1). Approximately 12% to 25% of children display chronic behavior problems that affect their current behaviors and future academic performance in school (Sutherland, Conroy, Vo, Abrams, & Ogston, 2013). In terms of classroom disruptions, approximately 50% of instructional time is spent dealing with inappropriate classroom behaviors (Simpson & Allday, 2008). These behavioral issues affect the entire classroom; students are distracted from learning, and teachers are spending more time on discipline and less time on instruction. There is a need to change this ratio.

### **Background of the Study**

The goal of every educator is to aid his or her students in academic success. With the implementation of No Child Left Behind, teachers are feeling the pressure more than ever to ensure success (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2011). Teachers face the responsibility of bringing all students to the proficient level on state standardized tests. As novice teachers are entering the field, they feel the pressure to ensure students

are reaching the proficient level and in many cases, are not feeling successful and are leaving the profession.

In addition to novice teachers feeling the pressure to ensure there is student success, there is the added pressure of retaining his or her position as a teacher based on student performance (Kopkowski, 2008). Teachers are required to be “highly qualified” in their subject matter (Buckley, Schneider & Shang, 2004). This mandate emphasizes the need to hire the best possible teachers, but teacher attrition of both novice and experienced teachers is proving to be a challenge for schools. There is pressure placed on teachers to meet testing expectations (Kopkowski, 2008). This movement for accountability through No Child Left Behind is affecting teacher, especially novice teacher, retention rates.

In order for teachers to find academic success for their students, they must be able to maintain the classroom and focus on content and instruction. Too often novice teachers spend the majority of their class time managing classroom behaviors (Kopkowski, 2008). This constant struggle in the managing of classroom behavior and providing engaging lessons creates an atmosphere that is not conducive to successful academic learning (Schaps, 2005). One proposed action that teachers can take to create a positive classroom environment is to establish a positive relationship with their students. This relationship has the ability to satisfy students’ psychological needs for safety, belonging, autonomy, and competence. With these needs met, students are more likely to be engaged in the class lesson and behave in a fashion that meets teacher expectations. When teachers fail to meet these needs, students are less motivated, more isolated, and academically perform poorer.

The impact of the teacher-student relationship is important because of the potential effect it can have on student's academics performance. Research has been conducted that supports the belief that a positive teacher-student relationship will cause greater academic success, but has not examined the effect on classroom behavior. Because novice teachers may feel inadequate in their abilities to manage the classroom, determining the effect of building positive relationships with students can provide them with a strategy to aid their classroom management. The correlational study determined the effect a positive teacher-student relationship can have on classroom behavior.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many novice teachers in inner-city schools are leaving the profession because of the lack of classroom management training during their pre-service years. They are struggling to learn what strategies to employ in their classrooms. With the added struggles in an inner-city school setting, classroom management strategies are imperative. Research has determined the importance of a positive teacher-student relationship and a positive classroom environment; however, the effect on student behavior has not been effectively determined.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to determine whether the relationship between the student and the teacher impacted the occurrences of classroom disruptions. According to Rose and Gallup (2004), many in the general public view managing student behaviors as one of the most significant issues faced by novice teachers. Because classroom disruptions require teacher attention, which can take considerable time away from academic instruction, a need exists to identify specific strategies to combat these

disruptions (Cotton, 1990). The study provides information for teachers on the importance of the teacher-student relationship and the impact the relationship can have on student behavior in the classroom. The relationship provides an entry point for teachers and those working to improve the learning environments of schools and classrooms (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). The information gained from the study can be shared with pre-service teachers to aid them in creating a productive classroom in their first year of teaching. In addition, the information gained from the study can aid teachers who are struggling with classroom management or are those whom support and supervise teachers.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

Previous associational studies of teacher-student relationships demonstrated that positive teacher-student relationships are more effective, cause greater student achievement, and create better attitudes than other relationships (Brekelmans, Wubbels, & den Brok, 2002). This relationship provides the foundation of attachment theory. Attachment theory "...proposes that a child develops a hierarchy of caregivers and that it is the caregiver's role to perform the necessary tasks of becoming a haven of safety from which a child explores and has a base of security" (Stein, 2012, p. 1). In terms of the teacher-student relationship, it is believed, that a close, supportive relationship between the student and the teacher would assume that a teacher performing his role would allow a student to focus on the instructional lessons by the teacher (Stein, 2012). Aligned with attachment theory, when students experience a positive relationship with their teacher, they feel safe and secure in their learning, and the relationship provides scaffolding for important academic skills (Gallagher, 2013). The teacher who is able to accurately

interpret the student's underlying relationship processes can be proactive in influencing the dynamics of any classroom including the behavior of the classroom (Riley, 2011). When teachers create a positive relationship with their students, teachers will experience fewer behavioral distractions throughout the class meeting. Students who experience a positive relationship with their teachers are more likely to behave and want to please the teacher.

The study analyzed whether or not a positive relationship lowered the number of class disturbances as compared to a negative relationship between a teacher and a student.

### **Research Questions and Null Hypothesis**

Through the study, one may find that the relationship between the teacher and student impacts the occurrences of classroom disruptions. The null hypothesis is that the relationship between a student and a teacher has no effect on the occurrences of classroom disruptions. The hypothesis is that a positive relationship between a student and a teacher will result in fewer classroom disruptions during a class meeting.

Research Question 1: Is there a relationship between the teacher-student relationship and classroom disruptions in inner-city classrooms?

Null hypothesis: There is no relationship between the teacher-student relationship and classroom disruptions in inner-city classrooms.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are present in the study. In recording observed classroom disruptions, it is important to note that other factors impact a student's behavior. While this study analyzed the relationship between the student and the teacher, it is possible other outside factors impact the student's behavior. Such factors include that the student is hungry, is

affected by the relationships the student has with other students in the classroom, and/or is affected by the relationships the student has with other students and family members outside of the classroom. Students may react differently given how many days they have had out of school prior to the beginning of the study. Since the study is conducted in an inner-city school where school uniforms are required, it is possible that the opportunity for a dress down day may impact student behavior. In addition, since the study's time period comprised a five-day period, the relationship between the student and the teacher may change either in a positive or a negative direction. Because of the change in relationship, the observed classroom disruptions may change throughout the study. Observer bias provides another possible limitation.

### **Definitions of Terms**

*Novice* is a person who has just started learning or doing something (Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, n.d.)

*Classroom management* is all the things that a teacher does to organize students, space, time, and materials so that student learning can take place (Wong & Wong, 2001).

*Teacher-student relationship* is the connection between the teacher and the student (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). This relationship is classified as positive with mutual respect or negative with conflict and disconnection.

*Inner-city schools* are schools located in the impoverished areas of large cities and typically characterized by minimal educational opportunities, high unemployment and crime rates, and inadequate housing (Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, n.d.)

*Classroom disruptions* are defined as behavior that a reasonable person would view as substantially or repeatedly interfering with conduct of a class (Malone, 2015). Generally,

disruptive behavior interferes with the instructor's ability to conduct the class, or the ability of other students to profit from instruction. These disruptions include talking out of turn, being out of seat without permission, not following the teacher's first request, disrespectful talk to the teacher and/or other students, and/or engaging in aggressive behavior with the teacher and/or other students.

## **CHAPTER 2: Review of Related Material**

### **Introduction**

The first year of teaching is the most challenging year for most teachers. The multitude of unknowns as novice teachers begin their career impact their success and/or failure of their teaching profession. Some novice year teachers manage to thrive, while others merely survive, and many exhausted teachers walk away from the profession all together (Ingwolson & Thompson, 2007). Many factors play a role in impacting a teacher's first year of teaching and whether it is a successful or unsuccessful year. One of the biggest challenges a novice teacher faces is classroom management. Teachers of all backgrounds report that they struggle with student discipline (Simon & Johnson, 2013). Student behavior both influences and is influenced by teacher turnover. Recent research confirms that within the first five years of teaching, nearly half of all teachers will leave the profession (Joiner & Edwards, 2008). In addition, up to 30% will leave within the first three years. Teachers are leaving at twice the rate of nurses and five times the rate of lawyer's (Waddell, 2010). This number is extremely high and alarming.

Most teachers contribute job dissatisfaction with their reasoning behind why they leave the profession (Buckely, Schnieder, & Shang, 2004). This job dissatisfaction is primarily due to student discipline problems, as well as poor salary and lack of administrative support. Studies have shown that management of student behavior affects novice teachers' commitment much more than it does experienced teachers. Teachers

that choose to leave the profession or transfer schools do so because the lack of student discipline hinders their ability to teach (Simon & Johnson, 2013). This is especially true in high-poverty, inner-city schools and among Caucasian teachers.

Add to this the realities of teaching in an inner-city school, and the lack of retention is even greater (Feen, 1973). Novice teachers are leaving the profession at a high rate, especially in the urban setting (Kopkowski, 2008). The annual rate of teacher attrition in an inner-city school setting has remained at 50% or higher for the past five years (Waddell, 2010). The national average for novice teacher turnover is 17%. This number increases to 20% for the urban school setting. Novice teachers are lacking adequate classroom management training (Greenburg, Putman, & Walsh, 2014). They are entering the urban setting with adequate content knowledge and teaching strategies, but are not able to adequately execute their lessons because of weak classroom management. Teachers are developing interesting lessons, but have students that are disengaged and the quality of the lesson becomes irrelevant and misbehavior begins (Bondy & Ross, 2008). One classroom management strategy that has the ability to create success for the novice teacher is the creation of a positive teacher-student relationship (Greenburg, Putnam, & Walsh, 2014). A key aspect to finding success in the inner-city classroom and retaining novice teachers is the relationship developed between the teacher and the student.

### **The Impact of Teacher Attrition**

There are roughly 3.5 million public school teachers in the United States (Simon & Johnson, 2013). Approximately half a million of them leave their schools each year. Some teachers transfer schools, while around 40% leave the teaching profession all

together. This high rate of teacher turnover impacts numerous aspects of an educational setting (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2015). The lack of teacher retention drains resources, costs the school districts money, reduces teacher quality, and widens the achievement gap (Shields, 2009).

One impact is that the higher rates of teacher turnover create several costs on the school and the school district (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2015). The school and the school district must hire new teachers to replace those that have left. The hiring and training of a new teacher requires various costs. The school district has to absorb this cost for all new hires. Schools lose more than \$7 billion annually due to teacher attrition (Shields, 2009). In addition, schools are left with the responsibility of reconfiguring their teaching assignments each year in response to the staff changes that occur when teachers leave (Simon & Johnson, 2013).

Teacher attrition has a profound impact on student achievement (Waddell, 2010). The difference between "...being taught by a highly capable and a less than capable teacher can translate into a full grade level of achievement in a single school year" (Borman & Dowling, 2008, p. 400). High levels of turnover disrupt efforts to maintain instructional continuity and in establishing a strong organizational culture in which teachers are able to share their own best practices and work together to support any struggling students (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2015). When there is high teacher turnover, students suffer. Students experience disruptions in their instructional continuity which results in less comprehensive educational programs that affects their learning (Simon & Johnson, 2013). Without the consistency of one teacher throughout the school year, students struggle with their academics because there is never the sense of

sameness. In one school study, a sophomore class had three different teachers before the end of the second month of school. With each new teacher, time was taken to set up class expectations and procedures and these classes were behind academically by the third teacher.

For the urban setting, teacher attrition has an even bigger impact (Simon & Johnson, 2013). High rates of teacher turnover have been proven to occur in high-poverty schools more so than low-poverty schools (Sawchuk, 2012). The high rates of turnover in the urban setting make it difficult for these schools to attract and develop effective teachers (Simon & Johnson, 2013). Student performance is impacted when students learn from experienced teachers (Shields, 2009). One study found that students who were taught in the same grade level and school did worse in years where turnover rates were higher, compared with years where turnover rates were lower (Sawchuk, 2012). Students become further disadvantaged when experienced teachers leave and are constantly replaced by inexperienced teachers. As a result, the least experienced and least effective teachers routinely teach these low-income and minority students (Simon & Johnson, 2013). These students need stability because of their high dependency on their teachers. Because of high turnover, these students are not receiving this stability and are most likely to be taught by inexperienced teachers who are less effective. Urban setting schools lose over half of their teachers every five years.

Furthermore, when teachers leave, especially in the urban setting, the continuity needed to build sustained, trustful relationships between teachers and students, and students' families is thwarted (Simon & Johnson, 2013). These relationships take time to develop and are critical in creating the sense of community. Sustained relationships

impact a school's ability to establish norms for instructional quality, professional conduct, student behavior, and parental involvement. The negative effect of teacher attrition on students is larger in schools with more low-achieving and African-American students (Sawchuk, 2012).

### **The Stages of the First Year Teacher**

The first year teacher experiences two distinct stages during his or her internship and first year of teaching. The first stage begins with coursework, field experiences, and student teaching internships during the teacher's college education (Fredrickson & Neil, 2004). It is during this brief stage that teachers have the most support in their teaching career. While there is evident support for the teacher in areas of content and instructional strategies, little support is evident in the area of classroom management (Kopkowski, 2008). A teacher's second stage is the professional experiences that commence upon completion of the student teaching internship and graduation from an education program and continues throughout a teacher's time in the profession (Fredrickson & Neil, 2004).

### **Realities of the Student Teaching Internship**

During the student teaching internship, student teachers do not feel that they are given many opportunities to be the teacher (Ryan, Applegate, Flora, Johnston, Lasley, Mager, & Newman, 1979). For most student teachers, much of this time is spent observing the mentor teacher. As student teachers are allowed to teach on their own, it is never without the assistance of the mentor teachers. The mentor teachers may simply be a presence in the classroom or be more hands-on by controlling certain aspects of the classroom.

The majority of what a mentor teacher influences and controls is the classroom behavior. Typically, the student teacher is not given the opportunity to create his or her classroom management style. In an interview of first year teachers, it was reported that their pre-service programs did little to prepare them for the realities of the classroom, including dealing with unruly students (Goodwine, 2012). Furthermore, the student teacher is not afforded the opportunity to figure out how to manage students when classroom disruptions occur. For the student teacher, this creates an unrealistic view of teaching “on their own”. Student teachers feel that there are certain aspects of the teaching reality within the teacher program education that cannot be duplicated (Ryan et al., 1979).

In addition, the hands-on experience with real children in real classrooms comes too late for most students (“Point of View”, 1980). Student teachers typically spend the first semester observing their assigned mentor teacher. During the second semester, they slowly begin teaching classes without their mentor teacher, although their mentor teacher is still present in the classroom. Because of this delay in participating in the hands-on experience early on in the student teaching year, student teachers are not able to explore their own feelings and make rational judgments about a teaching career until they are mostly finished with their teacher education program.

### **Challenges of the First Year**

Novice teachers bring various backgrounds, motivations, and experiences to their first year of teaching (Bartell, 2004). These factors impact a novice teacher’s perspective of the profession and their role in it. Novice teachers enter their first year with high expectations for themselves and for their students. As the first year progresses, many

novice teachers experience a decrease in the belief of their own efficacy and in the learning potential of their students. A teacher's efficacy is directly linked to student achievement. When teachers "...better understand, accept, and like themselves, they are better able to understand, accept, and like students (Sparks & Rye, 1990, p. 32). Student self-esteem is essential for academic achievement and is related to a teacher's self-esteem. The first three years are considered the riskiest years in terms of teacher retention (Bartell, 2004). Novice teachers begin with high expectations and when they feel that they are unable to meet those expectations or the experience does not meet those expectations they leave the profession all together.

Novice teachers are highly focused on delivering sufficiently engaging lessons while also orchestrating appropriate classroom behavior (Greenburg, Putman, & Walsh, 2014). They face a daily challenge of implementing instructional strategies that are suitable for increasing student motivation to participate, while also encouraging non-disruptive actions for their students (Zimmerman, 1995). This focus can be intense, overwhelming, and ultimately defeating (Greenburg, Putman, & Walsh, 2014). For many novice teachers, they are not adequately prepared to handle management of classroom behavior.

During the novice teacher's teacher preparation program, focused instruction and practice on classroom management is needed. In a poll conducted in 2012, over 40% of surveyed new teachers reported feeling either "not at all prepared" or "only somewhat prepared" to handle a range of classroom management or discipline situations (Greenburg, Putman, & Walsh, 2014). A survey of five hundred teachers found that teachers with three years on the job or fewer were more than twice as likely as teachers

with more experience to report that student behavior was a problem (Goodwine, 2012). In 2013, teachers identified classroom management as the top problem in their classrooms (Greenburg, Putman, & Walsh, 2014). Novice teachers have reported that very little time is spent on discipline during their pre-service training (Kopkowski, 2008). They do not feel adequately prepared to handle classroom discipline when they enter the teaching field. The greatest challenge that arises for the novice teachers is classroom management (Goodwine, 2012).

Novice teachers are constantly dealing with classroom disruptions that require their attention, which can take considerable time away from academic instruction (Simpson & Allday, 2008). Approximately 50% of instructional time is spent dealing with classroom disruptions. While experienced teachers are able to juggle delivering subject content and addressing classroom disruptions, novice teachers have not had the training to effectively do both. Student achievement tends to be significantly worse in the classrooms of first year teachers (Goodwine, 2012). A teacher's efficacy or belief of one's own efficacy impacts whether a teacher leaves the profession or remains (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, Marinell, 2015). Teachers who feel they are less effective leave at a higher rate than those that believe they are successful. They feel particularly overwhelmed by the most difficult students (Goodwine, 2012). With the stress of managing classroom behavior, many novice teachers fail to believe in their own effectiveness.

### **Challenges of the Inner-City School**

Inner-city schools provide a unique and challenging atmosphere (Parkay, 1974). Inner-city schools are described as "...conditions of overcrowding, high turnover of

faculty, limited resources, economic differences in salaries and supplies, and a greater number of students at risk for academic failure” (Gehrke, 2005, p. 17). There is a call for teachers to work in inner-city schools because of the constant teacher turnover in these higher poverty schools (Matsko & Hammerness, 2013). Inner-city schools demonstrate the need for well-qualified, highly competent teachers at a much higher level than the suburban settings do (Bartell, 2004). Additionally, there is a mismatch between the teacher and the students for who he or she is responsible (Gehrke, 2005). Teachers in inner-city schools are finding themselves guiding students who are very different than them (Oh, Kim, & Leyva, 2004). Because of demographic changes and an increase in the diversity of learners, there is an increasing gap between the backgrounds of the inner-city student and teachers.

Inner-city classrooms are characterized by frustration and despair (Matsko & Hammerness, 2013). Students demonstrate behavior that is chaotic, sluggish, non-compliant, and sometimes characterized by complete inattention. Many times the situation becomes a setting where the teacher cannot teach and the students cannot learn. The demands in an inner-city school are unlike demands faced in other school environments. There are similar problems in all schools, but for the inner-city school, tardiness, apathy, lack of preparation, and gang violence are more common (Ridley, 2015). These problems originate from a lack of economic resources and the majority of the student population living under economic hardships. Teachers experience heavy demands on their time because of the high number of at-risk students (Gehrke, 2005). For most of the population in an inner-city school, failure has been experienced (Day &

George, 1970). These students have not experienced success in great abundance, and this directly affects their perspective on their school experience.

The inner-city student is a unique student. Many inner-city students do not come to school with the same worries and stresses that their suburban school counterpart do. Many of these students have problems outside of the classroom that affect their learning (Lee, 1999). For these students, learning is not their primary concern. They are expected to focus on skills that will make them prosperous, but are distracted by the conditions of the school and their crime-infested neighborhood. They have a lack of motivation to learn and many times cut class in order to get high, drunk, hangout, or eat. Inner-city students have reported that they feel that teachers are impatient with them due to a lack of understanding and have low expectations for them. They report these reasons as to why they skip class. There is a higher dropout rate in an inner-city school due to absenteeism, perceptions of racism, and personal relationships with teachers; consequently, when these students dropout they face severely limited opportunities (Bondy & Ross, 2008). These limited opportunities include unemployment, poverty, poor health, and involvement in the criminal justice system. In addition, research has suggested that academic difficulty is linked to a variety of behavioral and social maladjustments for the student (Howard, 2002).

### **Types of Students in an Inner-City Classroom**

Within any classroom setting, there are a handful of different types of students (Parkay, 1974). For the inner-city classroom, the classroom comprises of a handful students who cause classroom disruptions. Such students include those that are non-conforming. These students are critical, sarcastic, and hostile toward the teacher and

their fellow classmates. Many times they complain the entire class period. Another typical type of student in an inner-city school is the disruptive student. This student is frustrated and deals with his or her frustration in a disruptive way. They are typically poor readers and have failed numerous classes. These students may try to turn the classroom into a circus and attempt to cause others to join him or her in the behavior. The withdrawn student is found in the inner-city classroom as well. This student is silent and withdrawn. Many times these students will not answer questions when asked. Much of the time this type of student is overlooked. The last type of student is the marginal student. This student "...shows most clearly the pathology of some who are trapped in the ghetto" (Parkay, 1974, p. 474). These students rarely come to class. They harbor a considerable amount of rage toward those in authoritative positions and their day is spent in constant confrontation. While these types of students may be evident in any classroom, studies have asserted that within the inner-city classroom these types of students are prevalent.

### **Novice Teachers and Inner-City Schools**

Many new teachers find themselves in schools that are the least prepared to support them (Kopkowski, 2008). Inner-city schools present many challenges for the novice teacher in the development of a productive learning space (Brown, 2004). Inner-city schools are typically characterized by low-income, low-performing facilities. Students attending inner-city schools live in poverty (Ridley, 2015). Many are from single-family homes, homeless families, foster families, and families where parents did not go to school or graduate high school. Many teachers do not feel prepared to teach

these students because of the inner-city students' various and diverse backgrounds (White, 2009).

These teachers face more difficult working conditions than teachers in suburban areas and result in the higher percentage of teacher turnover (Waddell, 2010). Working in these settings can be very discouraging and frustrating for various reasons (Feen, 1973). The problems are many and serious. These include: "...excessive absenteeism, truancy, apathy toward learning and consequent failure, fighting, vandalism, disrespect toward teachers, physical threats, and occasionally physical assaults upon teachers, and a refusal or an inability to accept reasonable authority" (Feen, 1973, p. 20). These teachers find themselves lacking administrative support and colleague relationships (Kopkowski, 2008). Both of which could provide the novice teacher with adequate support.

In addition, these schools often have classrooms that are crammed with students and no administrative support in terms of discipline (Kopkowski, 2008). Many of these administrators instruct novice teachers to figure out how to handle a disciplinary situation believing they will learn best by doing it on their own. Unfortunately for many novice teachers, they are not adequately prepared to determine the best practice for handling classroom behavior. This lack of knowledge combined with the lack of support results in many frustrations and apathy towards teaching.

Additionally, there is little parent support in these educational settings (Kopkowski, 2008). Many times, phone calls to the student's home result in indifference or blatant animosity. Novice teachers are leaving because they eventually lack the desire to invest time and energy into lesson plans when they feel that they are spending more time on managing the classroom. The drop out rate for novice teachers is highest among

teachers in hard-to-staff, urban schools (Bartell, 2004). In addition to retaining teachers, these schools have difficulty attracting qualified teachers.

Unless changes are made to the educational setting of inner-city schools, these students, who are considered educationally disadvantaged, are going to fail in school (Day & George, 1970). With novice teachers not properly prepared to handle classroom management, these needed changes become more and more challenging. Much of what affects the inner-city classroom is the teacher's classroom behavior and style, the curriculum, and decision-making input about curriculum. Lacking strong preparation in classroom management, novice teachers are unable to create their own classroom behavior and style that proves successful.

### **Impact of Disruptive Behavior**

Disruptive behavior in the classroom has a profound effect on student achievement (Zimmerman, 1995). Disruptive behavior is most commonly identified as any actions taken by students that interfere with the teacher's instruction. These actions may include talking out, making unnecessary noises, being out of their seat without permission, fighting, swearing, and/or talking back to the teachers. Other disruptive behavior can be seen when a student refuses to follow specific directions given by the teacher and fails to respond quickly to the teacher's first requests. In addition, classroom disruption is defined as behavior that any reasonable person would view as substantially interfering with the conduct of the classroom (Malone, 2015). This behavior interferes with a teacher's ability to conduct the class or impedes other students from profiting from the class instruction.

One of the most important jobs of the teacher is managing the classroom effectively (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). If the classroom is not managed effectively, students miss out on important educational opportunities. Professional educators agree that when teachers implement poor classroom management techniques there is a negative effect on students and teachers (Zimmerman, 1995). Classrooms where there is a substantial amount of disruptive behavior frequently gets less academic engaged time and the students stand in the low category on achievement tests (Ghazi, Shahzada, Tariq, & Khan, 2013). When teachers attempt to correct the disruptive behavior, they find that they are spending time at the expense of the academic instruction of the entire class. In some cases discipline problems are the leading cause of referrals by teachers for special education assessments (Zimmerman, 1995). Also, the learning environment for those not involved in the disruptive behavior becomes a negative one (Malone, 2015).

Additionally, disruptive behavior is a problem that negatively impacts teachers (Malone, 2015). This behavior plays a critical role in the success or failure of novice teachers. Discipline-related problems have been identified as the prime stress-producing factor for novice and experienced teachers (Zimmerman, 1995). Novice teachers report job dissatisfaction due to poor salary, poor administrative support, and student discipline problems (Buckley, Schneider, & Yang, 2004). Evidence supports that management of student behavior affects novice teachers' commitment much more than it does experienced teachers. Furthermore, novice teachers may become disillusioned and even begin to dread teaching because of the stress of disruptive behavior (Malone, 2015). Teachers that experience high levels of disruptive behavior report high levels of disappointment and stress and find that they are ineffective in their classrooms (Ghazi,

Shahzada, Tariq, & Khan, 2013). Disruptive behavior is a concern because "...it interferes with the learning process for other students, retards the ability of teachers to teach most effectively, diverts the energy and resources of teachers and school away from their objectives and educational mission, and may designate a significant height of personal problems or anguish on the part of the disrupter" (Ghazi, Shahzada, Tariq, & Khan, 2013, p. 351).

### **Causes of Disruptive Behavior**

Disruptive behavior is not simply "naughty" behavior (Ghazi, Shahzada, Tariq, & Khan, 2013). Disruptive behavior is behavior that goes beyond the normal disturbances in a classroom; it becomes a disruption that keeps the student from learning and keeps those around the disruptive student from learning. Students demonstrate disruptive behavior or become difficult students for various reasons (Malone, 2015). For many students, the increasing cultural, social class, ethnic, lifestyle, and age diversity in the classroom impacts their behavior. Many fail to recognize what is appropriate classroom behavior. In addition, many students come to class ill prepared, under motivated, and with expectations that are not in sync with what is required by the teacher. Also, if classes are larger, students tend to misbehave at a greater rate. Because of the bigger class size, they become less attentive and more combative.

### **Impact of Teacher Perspective**

There is a need to analyze the impact of teacher perspective on the classroom environment. One theoretical framework that has emerged concerns the perception a teacher may have toward students with various ethnic backgrounds and academic abilities (Natriello & Dornbusch, 1983). In terms of student attitude, students that teachers

perceived as having a similar attitude as the teacher towards school were treated differently than those that did not share the same attitude. In order for a teacher to perceive a student adequately, he or she must understand that student behavior is motivated by factors in the student's family life, background, or relationships at school (Lipton, 1971). As a teacher, one must be aware that a student's behavior is in direct correlation with the conditions under which the behavior occurs. In addition, Lipton found that each student brings his or her own life style and learning style to the classroom and a teacher's perspective will affect how the student behaves in the classroom.

Additionally, a teacher's perspective on his or her own efficacy impacts the classroom and the teacher-student relationship (Davis, 2006). Based on motivation theory, a central component of effective instruction and classroom management is how a teacher feels about himself or herself. In addition, a teacher's confidence in their own ability to teach, manage classroom behavior, and engage student participation may have an impact on student motivation, learning, and behavior.

An additional teacher perspective to consider is how they see themselves through their students' eyes (Liu, 2014). When teachers are able to understand how their students see them, they are able to develop better and more positive relationships with their students. Teachers who are aware of how they and their students perceive and react to their interactions are more prepared to create an effective environment conducive to academic development.

### **Impact of Student Perspective**

Another perspective that may account for classroom behavior is the student's. In the symbolic interaction theory, a student's perspective is based on how a student makes

sense of the classroom and how a student assigns meaning to the chosen behavior (Allen, 1986). It is assumed that a student's perspective can be revealed through their "classroom agenda". This agenda refers to the goals students have in the classroom, whether this is to socialize or learn, and the strategies that allow them to achieve their goals. These goals are just passing the course goals or just passing the class and socializing. Past studies have focused on the student's perspective on the teacher's agenda. In Allen's study, he assumed that the structure of the classroom interacts with a student's agenda and creates various student perspectives on the teacher's management of the classroom. Students determined their perspective of the classroom based on their interaction between their attempts to achieve their goals and the classroom structure. Once the teacher sets his or hers initial classroom management structure, or lack of classroom management structure, students will utilize their strategies that will aid them in achieving their social or academic goals in the classroom. The student's perspective on the teacher's classroom management style impacted the student's behavior in the classroom.

In addition to a student's perspective on the teacher's classroom management, the student's perception of the teacher impacts the academic effort a student will demonstrate (Hirschy & Wilson, 2002). A student who perceives that a teacher cares about the student, as an individual is more likely to be engaged which will create fewer opportunities for classroom disruptions (Rimm-Kaufman, La Paro, Downer, & Pianta, 2005). The perception of a teacher being friendly and liking a student is paramount to relationship development (Pomeroy, 1999). It has been found that "...the perception of the teachers as caring about their students has a direct relations to the students' perceived

ability to engage in work and learn” (Pomeroy, 1999, p. 472). Students are more likely to seek out assistance from a teacher if they perceive them as supportive and available (Liu, 2014). In a study on student perception, students who felt that teachers demonstrated a high level of concern for the students and interacted with the students reported that class was the most beneficial (Hirschy & Wilson, 2002). Teacher attitudes have a significant effect on a student’s perception of his or her school experience (Howard, 2002). The teacher’s level of involvement with the students influenced the quality of students’ behavioral and emotional engagement in the classroom (Davis, 2003). The teacher’s management of relationships with students, whether it is negative or positive, directly affects a student’s perception of the teacher’s ability to teach (Pomeroy, 1999). This perception will directly affect student behavior in the classroom.

In contrast, students who feel that teachers are interacting with them negatively influence students’ classroom behavior. In a study done by Pomeroy (1999), teacher behavior patterns that included shouting, telling students to shut up, being sarcastic, putting students down, and name-calling were perceived as negative. The communicated message from these behaviors made students feel that they were not valued as students or individuals. Students experiencing this type of relationship are less motivated and have a higher chance of misbehaving in the classroom. A student that perceives his or her teacher relationship as close and positive will promote a sense of belonging to the school, which in turn, will motivate a student to work hard in the classroom and meet behavioral expectations (Wu, Hughes, & Kwok, 2010). The idea of belonging is especially important in the school setting because students fail when they feel detached, alienated, and isolated from their teachers and their peers (Beck & Malley, 2003). There is strong scientific

evidence that when students have a sense of belonging they are less likely to be absent from school, engage in fighting or bullying, or misbehave in the classroom (Blum, 2005). In order for students to succeed and thrive, they need to feel that they belong.

According to Alfred Adler, failure in school can be attributed to feeling unconnected to the teacher, other students, or the school community (Blum, 2005). Adler's theory of belongingness asserts that when students feel that they belong they will have an enhanced sense of worth and increased self-confidence. This enhanced self of worth and increased self-confidence can impact a student's academic achievement. One of the strongest areas to begin creating a sense of belongingness is through the relationship between the teacher and the student. This bond creates the foundation for further relationships and the sense of belonging. When students feel that their teachers are supportive they are able to accept guidance towards positive and productive behaviors. This relationship will further allow students to develop a stake in their own academic achievement.

Lastly, a student's perspective on his or her own motivation affects classroom behavior (Davis, 2006). A student's academic motivation and ability to regulate his or her own behavior in the classroom impacts the teacher-student relationship. This in turn impacts classroom behavior. Students who like the subject matter, are expected to do well, and have the social skills necessary to self-regulate have reported experiencing a more supportive and positive relationship with their teacher.

### **Characteristics of a Positive Teacher-Student Relationship**

A positive teacher-student relationship is characterized by empathy and warmth (Roorda, Kooman, Spilt, & Oort, 2001). It is the teacher's ability to connect to the

student as well as possessing the ability to cultivate relationships with students (Knoell, 2012). In an interview of secondary school students, it was found that they want a unique relationship with their teacher where their non-child status is recognized, but at the same time their pastoral needs are met (Pomeroy, 1999). A common theme that emerged was that students wanted to feel cared for, but not parented. Interviewees mentioned repeatedly that they felt they had a positive relationship with teachers "...who knew them, who would talk to and explain things to them, and who would listen" (Pomeroy, 1999, p. 477).

The relationship begins with the teacher who establishes a caring relationship that convinces the students that he or she believes in them (Bondy & Ross, 2008). Who the teacher is and what students believe about the teacher's intentions matters the most. The teacher ensures that students know he or she cares by giving each student a smile, a hand on the shoulder, the use of the student's name, or a question that shows that he or she remembers something the student has shared. These small gestures build the positive relationship.

### **Impact of the Teacher-Student Relationship**

Through the analysis of the teacher's perspective and the student's perspective, one can conclude that the relationship developed between the two is really what effects the classroom environment. One of the most powerful weapons that a classroom teacher, who wants to foster a favorable learning environment, has is developing a positive relationship with students (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). Much has been published supporting the development of a positive teacher-student relationship in lower grades and demonstrates that in the presence of a positive relationship there is low conflict in the

classroom and a high degree of closeness and support between the teacher and the student (Rimm-Kaufman, 2011). According to Hamre and Pianta (2011) “...the quality of teacher-child relationships is a stronger predictor of behavioral than of academic outcomes” (p. 634). Relationships characterized by high levels of support and low levels of conflict obtain high scores on measures of academics and of behavioral adjustment (Wu, Hughes, & Kwok, 2010). This relationship can function as a protective barrier for students that buffer them from known risk factors like aggressive behavior in the classroom (Meenan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003). Teachers reported that experiencing a close relationship with students resulted in students that were more likely to attend school regularly, were more self-directed, more cooperative, and more engaged in the daily lessons. The quality of relationship between the teacher and a student can result in a greater degree of learning in the classroom (Gablinske, 2014). Thus, the classroom environment is one with little classroom disruptions. Effective teacher-student relationships foster greater confidence for the students and classroom engagement (Knoell, 2012).

A strong teacher-student relationship may be one of the most important factors in developing a positive environment and a positive experience for a student’s educational path (Gablinske, 2014). Findings suggest that adolescents benefit socially and academically when they experience a supportive and positive relationship with their teachers (Davis, 2006). Another study found that for students to be motivated to learn there needed to be a close and warm relationship between the teacher and the student (Natriello & Dornbusch, 1983). Students have reported that when they perceived a supportive and positive relationship with their teachers they felt more motivated in their

classes and received higher grades (Davis, 2006). In addition, they felt that their schoolwork was engaging and pertained to their own individual lives. Students who share a positive relationship with their teacher make learning a priority and work harder (Knoell, 2012). They feel a sense of belonging, which produces lower levels of misbehavior, improved peer relationships, and higher achievement in the classroom (Wu, Hughes, & Kwok, 2010).

A teacher's interaction and relationship with a student is based on his or her perceptions of the student in terms of the student's background, intelligence, achievement, motivation, and level of cooperation with the teacher and other students (Lipton, 1971). A student will then react to the teacher in terms of the teacher's perspective of the student. The teacher's perspective, as well as the student's, aids in establishing the type of relationship shared between the teacher and student. Students who perceive a negative relationship with their teachers have higher occurrences of conflict with their teacher, lower academic success, and more behavioral problems in the classroom (Rimm-Kaufman, 2011).

In addition, continuous negative encounters between teachers and students will impact the effectiveness of classroom management (Rimm-Kaufman, 2011). These continuous negative encounters will create negative interactions between students and teachers and will continue to lead to a teacher's ineffective classroom management. This will, in turn, create negative learning and teaching experiences (Allen, 1986). Studies have found that a positive teacher-student relationship encourages student motivation and learning engagement (Rimm-Kaufman, 2011).

The development of a positive teacher-student relationship is easier in preschool or primary classrooms (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). As students get older, teachers have fewer close contact opportunities with them (Wang & Haertel, n.d.). While this is true, it is imperative that teachers develop the relationship in secondary classrooms as well (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). In secondary schools, both teachers and students believe that in order to be an effective teacher, one must develop a trusting, close relationship with the students. There is a struggle to develop this relationship because secondary teachers do not spend as much time with their students as a primary teacher does. In addition, much of a teachers focus is on content and instructional strategies and not the development of a relationship. Secondary teachers have to be intentional in developing and focusing on the relationship with their students. Anecdotal stories support the importance of the relationship and the profound effects of the relationship on students.

### **Impact of the Negative Teacher-Student Relationship**

When students experience a negative relationship with their teachers, there is a great impact on their academics and classroom behavior (Davis, 2006). Conflict in the teacher-student relationship often results in student misbehavior, disrespect towards the teacher, and students giving up on assignments that are perceived as too challenging. The negative relationship has a larger impact on students' school adjustment than a positive relationship (Roorda, Kooman, Spilt, & Oort, 2011). A negative relationship can result in reduced cooperative participation and an increase in misconduct and attention problems (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

## **Impact of the Classroom Environment**

The teacher's perspective, the student's perspective, and the teacher-student relationship all impact the classroom environment, which in turn, impacts classroom behavior. One can ask to what extent does the classroom environment impact classroom behavior? According to the American Sociological Association (2011), the classroom environment can affect a child's mental health. The classroom environment should be one in which students feel wanted, cared for, and listened to (Zimmerman, 1995). In addition, teachers have a real impact on a child. One study asserts teachers are able to influence the classroom climate through focusing on the type of learning environment (Hirschy & Wilson, 2002). This learning environment may value achievement, love of learning, competition, collaboration, or caring.

As students advance through their educational career, they find that entering into their middle school classrooms is very different than their elementary school classrooms. Starting in middle school, classroom environments are increasingly more impersonal in structure and atmosphere and there is an increase in the student-teacher ratio (Davis, 2006). This shift in atmosphere can have a great impact on how the development of the teacher-student relationship. In addition, in a study where students were asked their feelings on their middle school teachers, students reported that they felt greater anonymity with their teachers than they did with their elementary school teachers and felt their middle school teachers were less friendly, less supportive, and less caring (Davis, 2006).

The teacher-student relationship affects the classroom environment. Hirschy & Wilson (2002) found that students who had cheated in class reported that the class felt

less personalized, less task oriented, and less satisfying. Furthermore, these students felt that their classes lacked involvement, lacked cohesiveness, and lacked individualization. Therefore, the teacher-student relationship can affect the classroom environment.

### **The Importance of the Teacher-Student Relationship in Inner-City Schools**

A good education is a major key to a successful and prosperous life (White, 2009). Those that are educated have the ability to be productive in society and make the majority of decisions that affect the ever-changing country. It is important to provide all students, even inner-city students, with the opportunity to receive a good education.

There are many factors that affect the academic success of students in inner-city schools.

One factor that has a major impact on a student's academic and social development is the teacher-student relationship (White, 1973). According to Marzano, effective teachers develop positive teacher-student relationships (Gablinske, 2014). Teachers who develop a positive relationship with their students have students who respond favorably to the structure of the classroom and school (White, 2009). Students will resist rules and procedures, as well as disciplinary consequences, if the foundation of a positive relationship has not been established (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). A positive teacher-student relationship can influence a student's motivation in school (Shafer, 2015). When a student is motivated in the classroom, he or she has increased participation and achievement.

Students from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds do not have the opportunities to make connections with adults outside of school (Ridley, 2015). Due to their family backgrounds, a positive relationship may be most important to school adjustment for at-risk, inner-city students (Wu, Hughes, & Kwok, 2010). Many of them

report feeling alienated and disenfranchised from the culture of the school, as well as, having academic problems and experiencing failure (Baker, 1999). These students have low motivation and lack parental support; therefore, the relationship developed between the teacher and student is imperative in aiding the student in academic success (Ridley, 2015). There is a magnitude of literature that supports that strong and supportive relationships between teachers and students are fundamental to the healthy development, socially and academically, of students in schools (Hamre & Pianta, 2003). Studies have shown that a positive teacher-student relationship can aid in keeping children from experiencing aggressive behavior (Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003). This is of import because aggressive behavior as a young child in school can lead itself to maladjustment, academic failure, substance abuse, and delinquency. These patterns of aggressive behavior have been identified in African American students who experience negative behavioral and academic outcomes. A positive teacher-student relationship greatly influences an inner-city student's achievement throughout his or her entire school career (White, 2009).

Inner-city students are in need of experiences with adults who have positive attitudes and relationships with them (Parkay, 1974). Inner-city students may have a greater need for this than suburban students because of feelings of alienation, struggles with identity issues, and the lack of nurture, attention, supervision, understanding, and caring at home (Brown, 2004). Learning by the students can be facilitated by the relationship between teacher and student (Parkay, 1974). The teacher is able to influence student achievement through his or her expectations, attitudes, and strategies. Teachers, who are considered effective for the at-risk student, are described as “warm demanders”

(White, 2009). These teachers create a relationship where students know they are cared for, but also understand that there are certain expectations placed on them and that nothing but the best will be accepted from them. These teachers view their students as individuals and not as “poor” or “minority” students. This positive relationship can be formed because these teachers do not allow a student’s background or home life to interfere with their belief in the student’s academic capabilities.

There is the misconception that novice teachers hold that students should simply do good work, behave well, and then be rewarded for their work and behavior (Feen, 1973). Many times these students experience compensatory instruction that is coupled with negative affect and negative interpersonal interaction with their teachers (Baker, 1999). Inner-city students often feel that their teachers dislike them and perceive hostility from the teacher during their interactions. In order for students to experience a more positive interaction, teachers of inner-city students must be aware of their own judgments and attitudes they bring to the classroom. For the inner-city student, teachers need to give special consideration and care for the student before the student has done anything to deserve the care (Feen, 1973). The novice, inner-city teacher must possess the desire to work with these types of students and relate with them.

### **Developing the Teacher-Student Relationship in an Inner-City School**

Novice teachers of inner-city schools face unique challenges. The inner-city classroom can be one that is frustrating and stressful. Inner-city students bring with them a unique background to the classroom. Teachers have the greatest power to manipulate the classroom environment (Parkay, 1974). Many teachers in an inner-city school struggle to develop a positive classroom environment (Bondy & Ross, 2008). Teachers’

attitudes toward students are important factors in determining the type of relationship developed between the teacher and the student (Parkay, 1974). Teachers that want to build a positive relationship with their students will help students live and learn even when they may not want to (Shafer, 2015). These teachers take the necessary time to ensure student success, regardless of the burden that may be placed on the teacher. The relationship developed between the teacher and the student can greatly impact the success of the student (Parkay, 1974). While many novice teachers are not adequately prepared in the area of classroom management, there are strategies that can be employed to aid in classroom management. The biggest impact on classroom behavior can be the relationship developed between the teacher and the student. The teacher's actions in the classroom can have twice the effect on student achievement (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). This relationship can be developed through a teacher's use of physical space, expectations about students' academic success, allocation of attention, and attempts to create a supportive climate in the classroom (Davis, 2003). When students feel that their teachers value and care for them as individuals, they are more willing to comply with teacher expectations (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). This relationship has to begin developing on day one of the school year (Shafer, 2015). It is important that students believe that teachers are trying to build this relationship from day one. The next step is to continue to build and live the relationship through listening, integrity, joy, and caring between the teacher and the student.

One strategy that aids a teacher in developing the relationship with his or her students in an inner-city school is demonstrating sensitivity and appreciation of the student's culture (White, 1973). Gaining the inner-city students cooperation requires a

classroom atmosphere where teachers are aware of and address students' cultural and ethnic needs (Brown, 2004). It is imperative that the teacher understands and respects the value of the student's culture and the student's mode of interaction with adults in his or her own environment (White, 1973). Everyone wants to feel cared for and valued by the significant people in their world and students are no different (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). Instruction does not begin at the academic level, but where the student's interests lie (Zimmerman, 1995). In order for this to occur, the teacher must understand who the student is in terms of his or her culture. Teachers need to observe students closely to learn about their culture and learning styles paying special attention to their idiosyncrasies, interests, experiences, and talents (Bondy & Ross, 2008). Gaining this knowledge will aid teachers in monitoring their reactions to student behavior that they may perceive as "bad," but are considered normal or valued in the student's home culture. Additionally, teachers who share their own experiences, their own difficulty in learning, their own family, and their own culture are able to develop a more positive relationship with their students (Davis, 2006).

Another strategy is to be tolerant and flexible of the inner-city student (Feen, 1973). One of the most important aspects of dealing with behavior is the way in which a teacher responds. This is especially evident with students who defy teachers, who question authority and knowledge, and who attack teachers verbally and physically. While one should not allow a student to participate in abuse, tolerance and flexibility will aid in cultivating a positive teacher-student relationship. The teacher who has the ability to forget previous misbehavior and to recognize and accept partial improvement on the

student's part will further develop a positive relationship as opposed to one who does not do these things.

Additionally, the teacher's attitude directly affects the mood or emotional climate of the classroom (Parkay, 1974). This will then affect the type of relationship developed between the teacher and the student. The teacher's attitude determines the amount of energy the students expend in battling the teacher. The more the teacher is able to minimize the emotional aspects of the teacher-student battle, the more energy will be focused on what needs to be learned. Many times the teacher and student will find themselves in a standoff based on lack of respect. It is the teacher's responsibility to give the first clear indication of respect while making it clear that respect is expected in return. Approaching students with unconditional positive regard, knowing them and their culture well, and insisting that they perform to a high standard aids in developing the positive relationship (Bondy & Ross, 2008). Thus, a positive relationship reflects relationships that support motivation and learning in the classroom (Davis, 2003). The teacher needs to develop a stance that communicates both warmth and a nonnegotiable demand for student effort and mutual respect (Bondy & Ross, 2008). In addition, classroom teachers possess a great deal of power over students simply based on the amount of time spent with students each day (Boynton & Boynton, 2015). Because of the amount of time spent with students, it is imperative that teachers possess a positive attitude.

Lastly, there are a few strategies that can be implemented in the classroom from the beginning of the school year. Creating an environment that is orderly and with clear expectations has the ability to provide students with motivation and achievement (Davis, 2006). Clear expectations need to be set from the beginning (Marzano & Marzano,

2003). These expectations can be established in two ways: 1. Establishing clear rules and procedures and 2. Providing consequences for student behavior. Students have reported that classroom where norms were established for how, when, and where teachers and students may talk with each other in the classroom created more motivating relationships with their teachers (Davis, 2006). It is important to establish high expectations when working with students in poverty (Knoell, 2012). In addition, learning goals need to be clearly established. The teacher needs to provide clarity about the subject content and the expectations of the lessons. Another strategy that will aid in a positive teacher-student relationship is exhibiting assertive behavior. Assertive behavior can be exhibited in both body language and tone of voice. When a classroom disturbance occurs, use body language that is erect in posture, facing the offending student, but allowing enough distance so that the student does not perceive there to be a threat. In terms of tone of voice, it is imperative that the teacher refrain from allowing any emotion to be in his or her voice when addressing the offending student.

Shafer (2015) provided a table suggesting ways to develop a positive relationship with students.

Table 2.1

*Research-based Relationship Building Strategies*

<b>Relationship Building Strategy</b>	<b>Supportive Research</b>
Begin the year with a focus on relationships	Eason, 2008; Mainhard, Brekelmans, den Brok & Wubbels, 2011
Greet students as they enter the room	Wong & Wong, 1991; Erwin, 2003; Daniels, 2011; Goodwin & Hubbell, 2013
Call on all students in class (students want to be heard)	Cook-Sather, 2009; Lemov, 2010; Dallimore, Hertenstein, and Platt, 2013
Make time for personal interactions	Frymier & Houser, 2000; Marsh, 2012; Goodwin & Hubbell, 2013

Nonverbal Communication (smile, wink, high five)	Worthy & Patterson, 2001; Erwin, 2003; Marzano, 2003; Marsh, 2012; Goodwin & Hubbell, 2013; Garza, Alejandro, Blythe, & Fite, 2014
Learn students' names	Erwin, 2003; Goodwin & Hubbell, 2013
Get to know your students: Create opportunities for students to share their interests and talents	Marzano, 2003; Easton, 2008; Hopkins, 2008; Goodwin & Hubbell, 2013; Garza, Alejandro, Blythe, & Fite, 2014
Listen	Cook-Sather, 2009; Goodwin & Hubbell, 2013; Garza, Alejandro, Blythe, & Fite, 2014; Porath, 2014; Benton, 2015
Reveal some of yourself to students	Wong & Wong, 1991; Erwin, 2003; Marsh, 2012; Goodwin & Hubbell, 2013
Don't be overly serious (humor)	Erwin, 2003; Streat, 2011
Model enthusiasm for learning (be passionate)	Palmer, 1998; Easton, 2008; Marsh, 2012; Smith & Schmidt, 2012

*Note.* Reprinted from "Preservice Teacher Understanding and Implementation of Caring Teaching-Learning Student Relationships," by D. Shafer, 2015, *Theses, Student Research, and Creative Activity: Department of Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education*. (58). 2015

### Summary

As in any profession, the first year of teaching presents itself with many challenges. Many novice teachers feel that they survive their first year, as opposed to feeling as if they are very successful during their first year (Ingwalson & Thompson, 2007). In numerous cases, novice teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Joiner & Edwards, 2008). Teacher turnover is an issue that is a cause of concern for all those involved in education.

Teacher turnover has an impact on various aspects of an educational setting (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2015). One area of impact is in the cost to the school and school districts. Another area of impact is to student achievement (Waddell, 2010). High teacher turnover disrupt instructional continuity and students suffer (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Mariness, 2015). In analyzing teacher attrition in the urban

setting, there is an even bigger impact (Simon & Johnson, 2013). Typically, these students need stability and because of turnover are not receiving the stability that they need. In addition, the relationships needed to be built between the teacher and the inner-city students do not have a chance to develop.

Novice teachers report various reasons for leaving the profession. One of the main areas reported is job dissatisfaction (Buckely, Schnieder, & Shang, 2004). Job dissatisfaction is primarily reported due to student discipline. Novice teachers have not been given the opportunity to develop their classroom management styles during their internship year (Ryan, et al., 1979). The mentor teacher is constantly present in the classroom with the student teacher. Therefore, the student teacher is not given the opportunity to figure out his or her classroom management style or implement any classroom management techniques until he or she is in his or her first year of teaching. Add to this the other challenges of the first year of teaching and one can understand why there is a high turnover rate for novice teachers. Novice teachers begin the year with high expectations for themselves and for their students (Bartell, 2004). Due to various reasons, one of them being classroom management, novice teachers begin feeling that they cannot meet those expectations. They are focused on delivering engaging lessons while also meeting the demands of classroom management (Greenburg, Putnam, & Walsh, 2014). This balance can leave many novice teachers feeling drained and defeated. Many novice teachers are not adequately prepared to handle classroom management and feel that it is the top problem in their classrooms. In addition to not feeling prepared to handle classroom discipline, novice teachers feel that too much time is spent on

classroom management and they are not able to spend adequate time on instruction (Simpson & Allday, 2008).

While teacher turnover for novice teachers is high, adding the urban setting for a novice teacher presents itself with unique challenges and higher rates of teacher turnover (Waddell, 2010). The urban setting is a unique setting with many frustrations and in some cases despair (Matsko & Hammerness, 2013). There is a need for highly qualified teachers to teach in inner-city schools because of the constant turnover, but many novice teachers leave the inner-city school because of its unique challenges. While some problems are similar to that of the suburban setting, the urban setting presents itself with more tardiness, apathy, lack of preparation, and gang violence (Ridley, 2015). Most inner-city students have experienced failure in either their home life or their academic career. Novice teachers and experienced teachers experience a lack of support from administration and parents in terms of discipline (Kopkowski, 2008). These challenges cause many novice teachers to leave the urban setting and/or the education profession all together.

The lack of classroom management does not only affect the teacher, but also other students (Zimmerman, 1995). Disruptive behavior can have a profound effect on student achievement. It is most commonly identified as actions taken by students that include talking out, making unnecessary noises, being out of seat without teacher permission, fighting, swearing, and talking back to the teachers. Disruptive behavior can also include refusing to follow specific directions by a student and failing to respond to teacher requests. This behavior interferes with a teacher's ability to teach class and impedes other students from gaining from the class instruction (Malone, 2015). For the novice

teacher, classroom disruptions can play a critical role in the success or failure of their profession (Malone, 2015). Discipline-related problems have been identified as a prime stress producer for novice teachers (Zimmerman, 1995). Classroom management affects novice teachers much more than experienced teachers and for some novice teachers leaves them dreading teaching (Malone, 2015).

In order to combat high teacher turnover due to classroom management, there is a need to stress the importance of the teacher-student relationship. When there is a positive relationship between the teacher and the student, there is low conflict in the classroom (Rimm-Kaufman, 2011). A positive relationship typically results in students that attend school regularly, are more self-directed, are more cooperative, and are more engaged in class. With a positive teacher-student relationship, teachers will find there are fewer classroom management issues that need to be addressed.

In an inner-city school, the importance of the teacher-student relationship is even greater. Students from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds do not have the opportunities to develop relationships with adults outside of school (Ridley, 2015). Therefore, the relationship they develop with their teachers is an important one. A positive teacher-student relationship influences an inner-city student's achievement throughout his or her entire school career (White, 2009). Inner-city students need experiences with adults who have positive attitudes and can develop positive relationships with each other (Parkay, 1974). The positive relationship can facilitate learning by the students. Through the positive relationship, the teacher is able to influence student achievement through his or her expectations, attitudes, and strategies.

In order for the development of a positive relationship, teachers have to view their inner-city students as individuals and not as “poor” or “minority” students (White, 2009). The relationship is developed because these teachers do not allow a student’s background or home life to influence their belief in the student’s academic capabilities. Additionally, teachers need to understand and respect the values of the student’s culture and student’s mode of interaction with adults in his or her own environment (White, 1973). Instruction does not begin with where students are academically, but where their interests are (Zimmerman, 1995). Furthermore, teachers need to be tolerant and flexible of the inner-city student (Feen, 1973). While a teacher should not allow a student to continuously misbehave in class, tolerance and flexibility will aid in cultivating a positive teacher-student relationship. The teacher who is able to forget misbehavior will further develop a positive relationship with his or her students. Lastly, the teacher’s attitude directly affects the mood and climate of the classroom (Parkay, 1974). This attitude will affect the type of relationship developed between the teacher and the student. The more the teacher is able to minimize the emotional responses to the battles between the teacher and the student; the increased likelihood the student will devote more energy to what needs to be learned. In addition, this will allow the teacher-student relationship to further develop.

The teacher-student relationship can have a large impact on classroom behavior. Since there are unique challenges in an inner-city school, developing strong classroom management strategies, such as positive teacher-student relationships, is imperative to success in the classroom. Novice teachers are leaving the profession at a high rate due to lack of support and unpreparedness. There is a need to analyze the impact of the teacher-

student relationship on classroom behavior and providing strategies to novice teachers for development of the teacher-student relationship.

## **CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology**

### **Introduction**

A correlational study was utilized to determine the effect a positive teacher-student relationship can have on classroom disruptions. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System was employed to determine the type of relationship, whether negative or positive, between a teacher and a student. The teacher and students were then observed to determine the number of classroom disruptions. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect a positive teacher-student relationship can have on classroom disruptions. Because it is important to establish observational reliability, inter-rater reliability was established prior to the study. The researcher and another observer observed classroom behavior and noted each time it was felt there was a class disruption based on student behavior. The observations were independently rated for the same behaviors and then correlated. There was a 93% agreement among the raters.

### **Population and Sample**

In choosing participants it was key to choose a sample that would represent the entire population (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014). The target population for this particular study was American adolescents in grades 9 through 12 and teachers in the inner-city urban district public school system in Tennessee. Because it was impossible to study every American boy and girl within this age range and every teacher in America, an accessible population was needed to be determined. The accessible population for this

research was students and teachers in the inner-city schools in the urban school district in which the researcher resides. One inner-city school was chosen from the school district. Because of the scope of this research, a representative sample of teachers with assigned students was selected. The study consisted of a small sample of 20 students within the one school. Four teachers, who taught yearlong classes, were randomly selected. From those four teachers, five students were selected based on the criteria that they had received at least one referral during the school year. Each teacher was observed five times in a row. This resulted in a total of 90 observations. The small sample size may limit the generalizability of study results to a broader population. Since the best-known probability sampling procedure is the simple random sampling, this was the procedure used to determine the participants for the study. The accessible population involved the teachers of inner-city schools in the researcher's urban school district. Therefore, a list, provided by the district, of inner-city schools for students in grades 9 through 12 was procured. Each inner-city school was approached for the study. The school was chosen using an online random number generator. From the chosen school, the researcher obtained, from the principal, a list of teachers. After assigning each teacher a number, the researcher utilized an online random number generator to create the participant list. This protocol generated four randomly selected teachers. Once this process was completed for the teachers, the same process was conducted for the students in the selected teachers' classrooms. The researcher obtained a class roster from the selected teacher. Each student on the roster received a number. An online random number generator was utilized to select five students for each selected teacher's class roster. This

protocol generated five randomly selected students from each selected teacher's class roster.

### **Description of Instruments**

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System was utilized measuring the relationship between the teacher and the student. This instrument, developed by Robert C. Pinanta, assesses teacher-student interactions in PK-12 classrooms. This class tool was researched for over 10 years as part of the NCEDL Multistate and Sweep Studies and The NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (Classroom Assessment Scoring System™). Combined, these studies conducted observations in more than 3,000 pre-K to third grade classrooms Student Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS), a part of the system, is a teacher-report instrument designed for teachers to complete that measures a teacher's perception of conflict, closeness, and dependency with a specific child. The questionnaire asks teachers to rate their relationship with a student on a five-point Likert scale, with one indicating definitely does not apply to five indicating definitely applies. There are fifteen statements, and these statements address issues of relationships with the student. The questionnaire has been included as Appendix A. Teachers completed these questionnaires about the selected students in their classes. The researcher provided the selected teachers with the questionnaire at the beginning of the study. The selected teachers were chosen at random. The researcher obtained a teacher roster from the principal of the school. The researcher assigned each teacher a number. The researcher used an online random number generator to determine which four teachers would be included in the study.

### **Research Procedures and Time Period of the Study**

Prior to seeking approval from the school district, the study was presented to Carson Newman's Intuitional Review Board to ensure that all risks and benefits of participation have been weighed and that the rights and welfare of the research participants were protected. Approval to conduct the study at an inner-city school was received from the principal of the school prior to beginning the study. In addition, any students under the age of 18 obtained permission from their parents before being a part of the study. This letter has been included as Appendix B. A letter, developed by the researcher, was emailed to each selected teacher of the school. This letter informed participants of whom the researcher is and the intent of the study. This letter has been included as Appendix C.

Each teacher completed The Student Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) about the selected students in their class. The researcher provided the selected teachers with the questionnaire at the beginning of the study. For the observational piece, during each observation time period, the researcher recorded each time the selected student's behavior caused classroom disruptions. This tally sheet has been included as Appendix D.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were collected in two parts: the relationship between the student and the teacher and occurrences of classroom disruptions by the student's behavior. The relationship data were averaged to show whether there is a positive relationship or a negative relationship. On the teacher questionnaire items one, three, five, six, seven, nine, and fifteen indicate a positive relationship. When averaged, if there was a score of three or higher, the relationship was considered positive. Items two, four, eight, ten,

eleven, twelve, thirteen, and fourteen indicate a negative relationship. When averaged, if there was a score of three or higher, the relationship was considered negative. If both the positive and negative averaged a three or higher, the relationship type with the higher score determined the type of relationship. This was the same for the possibility of both positive and negative scoring below three. Each student's behavior was recorded for classroom disruptions. The classroom disruptions were averaged for each student.

The data analyzed the relationship between the student and teacher, as well as, the occurrences of classroom disruptions. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was utilized to analyze the data. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient indicated both the direction and the magnitude of the relationship. Since this is a correlational study, the researcher analyzed the relationship between these two variables (Ary et al., 2014). The goal of analyzing the data were to find a correlation coefficient. The researcher examined both the sign and its size. If the coefficient had a positive sign, then it was concluded that as one variable increases (the positive relationship between the teacher and the student), the other also increases (classroom disruptions). If the coefficient was negative, then it was concluded that as the positive relationship increases, then the amount of classroom disruptions decreases. When it came to the size of the relationship, the researcher analyzed whether there was a perfect positive relationship or a perfect negative relationship (Ary et al., 2014).

The relationship between the student and teacher was placed on an ordinal scale. This scale was used to rank objects and individuals according to how much of an attribute is possessed. In this case, the ranking was based on how positive or negative the relationship was between the student and the teacher. The teacher-student relationship

was placed on the scale according to the characterization of a positive to negative relationship. In addition, the occurrences of classroom disruption were placed on an ordinal scale. These two rankings were then compared. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to indicate both the direction and the magnitude of the relationship between two variables. In order for the hypothesis that the teacher-student relationship impacts the occurrences of classroom disruptions, the data showed that a positive teacher-student relationship resulted in fewer occurrences and a negative teacher-student relationship resulted in higher occurrences of classroom disruptions. Rejection of the null hypothesis required the data to show that based on the teacher-student relationship there was a correlation to the occurrences of classroom disruptions.

## **CHAPTER 4: Results of the Data Analysis**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of the study was to determine whether the relationship between the teacher and the student impacted the occurrences of classroom disruptions. According to Rose and Gallup (2004), managing student behavior is one of the most significant issues faced by novice teachers. The study provides information for teachers on the importance of the teacher-student relationship and the impact the relationship can have on student behavior in the classroom.

Research Question 1: Is there a relationship between the teacher-student relationship and classroom disruptions in inner-city classrooms?

Null hypothesis: There is no relationship between the teacher-student relationship and classroom disruptions in inner-city classrooms.

### **Population and Sample**

The study consisted of a small sample of 18 students within one inner-city school. It was proposed that the study would include 20 students, but one student was removed from the class on day two and did not return and the other student was absent on day one and then kicked out of school pending a disciplinary hearing. There were four teachers observed. The teachers were all female, Caucasian, within their first six years of teaching. Three were yearlong freshmen English teachers and one was a yearlong freshmen Math teacher. The sample of students included eight African American males, one Caucasian male, seven African American females, and one Caucasian female. Each

teacher was observed for five consecutive days. This allowed for 90 observations to be analyzed.

### **Test and Data Collection Methods**

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System was utilized measuring the relationship between the teacher and the student. The questionnaire was provided to teachers prior to observation. The questionnaire asked teachers to rate their relationship with a student on a five-point Likert scale. Based on their answers, the type of relationship was determined. The researcher observed each teacher for five consecutive days. During these observations the researcher recorded each time the selected students created a classroom disruption. The classroom disruptions were averaged for each student.

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was utilized to analyze the data. The data analyzed the relationship between the teacher and the student, as well as the occurrences of classroom disruptions. This method was chosen because the researcher was analyzing the relationship between the variable of the teacher-student relationship and the variable of the occurrences of classroom disruptions.

### **Results and Findings**

Relationship type was determined based on answers from the questionnaire presented to the selected teachers prior to the beginning of the study. Student classroom disruptions were averaged for the five-day observation. These averages were compared. The positive relationship average was compared with the average number of classroom disruptions. The same was done for the negative relationship average. Lastly, the positive relationship average and the negative relationship average were calculated to

determine the number span between the two. It is evident that while a teacher may have a higher score on one type of relationship over the other type, that both types of relationship can play a role in classroom disruptions.

Teacher 1 is a freshmen yearlong Math teacher. There were four positive relationships and one negative relationship with the five selected students. All relationships are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

*Teacher 1 Relationship Results*

Student	Relationship Type
A	Positive
B	Positive
C	Positive
D	Negative
E	Positive

The relationship type was determined based on answers from The Classroom Assessment Scoring System. The positive and negative statements were averaged separately. The higher score determined the relationship type.

In terms of the student disruption scores and the positive relationship score there was a range for classroom disruptions from 17.2 to 31.8. All scores, including the positive relationship score, are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

*Teacher 1 Positive Relationship Results*

Student	Average Classroom Disruptions	Positive Relationship Score
A	25.4	3.86
B	21.8	4.71
C	21.4	4
D	31.8	3.86
E	17.2	4

In analyzing Table 4.2, as the positive relationship increased, the classroom disruptions decreased.

In terms of the student disruption scores and the negative relationship score there was a range for classroom disruptions from 17.2 to 31.8. All scores, including the negative relationship score, are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

*Teacher 1 Negative Relationship Results*

Student	Average Classroom Disruptions	Negative Relationship Score
A	25.4	1.63
B	21.8	2.75
C	21.4	3.38
D	31.8	4
E	17.2	1.6

In analyzing Table 4.3, as the negative relationship increased, the classroom disruptions increased. The higher the negative relationship score, the stronger the relationship is.

There is an exception with Student A and Student C. Student A had a low negative relationship score, but had the second highest average classroom disruptions. Student C

had a high negative relationship score and lower average classroom disruptions. Both students had a positive relationship with the teacher.

In terms of the student disruption scores and the difference between the positive relationship and the negative relationship score, with the negative relationship score being subtracted from the positive relationship score, there was a range for classroom disruptions from 17.2 to 31.8. All scores, including the difference between the positive relationship and the negative relationship score, are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

*Teacher 1 Relationship Difference Results*

Student	Average Classroom Disruptions	Relationship Difference Score
A	25.4	2.23
B	21.8	1.96
C	21.4	0.62
D	31.8	-0.14
E	17.2	2.4

In analyzing Table 4.4, as the difference between the positive and negative relationship totals decreases, the classroom disruptions increased.

The raw data for Teacher 1 supported the hypothesis that when the relationship is positive, the student will cause fewer classroom disruptions. One can see that the teacher possessed a negative relationship with Student D, and the classroom disruptions were higher than the classroom disruptions for Student A, B, C, and E. The teacher possessed a positive relationship with these students.

In calculating the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient for the positive relationship and the classroom disruptions, the Pearson  $r$  is -0.3399. This is a negative correlation. In terms of the negative relationship and the classroom disruptions, the

Pearson  $r$  is 0.611. This is a moderate positive correlation. When calculating the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient for the difference in the positive relationship and the negative relationship, the Pearson  $r$  is -0.6494. This is a moderate negative correlation. The null hypothesis was: There is no relationship between the teacher-student relationship and classroom disruptions in inner-city classrooms. The null hypothesis was rejected. The hypothesis stated that a positive relationship between a student and a teacher would result in fewer classroom disruptions. Because there is a negative correlation, this hypothesis is accepted for Teacher 1.

Teacher 2 is a freshmen yearlong English teacher. There were four negative relationships and one positive relationship with the five selected students. All relationships are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

*Teacher 2 Relationship Results*

Student	Relationship Type
A	Negative
B	Negative
C	Positive
D	Negative
E	Negative

The relationship type was determined based on answers from The Classroom Assessment Scoring System. The positive and negative statements were averaged separately. The higher score determined the relationship type.

In terms of the student disruption scores and the positive relationship score there was a range for classroom disruptions from 14.8 to 52.8. All scores, including the positive relationship score, are shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

*Teacher 2 Positive Relationship Results*

Student	Average Classroom Disruptions	Positive Relationship Score
A	26.3	1.7
B	34.6	2.71
C	14.8	4
D	52.8	2.3
E	26.3	2.2

In analyzing Table 4.6, as the positive relationship increased, the classroom disruptions decreased.

In terms of the student disruption scores and the negative relationship score there was a range for classroom disruptions from 14.8 to 52.8. All scores, including the negative relationship score, are shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

*Teacher 2 Negative Relationship Results*

Student	Average Classroom Disruptions	Negative Relationship Score
A	26.3	3
B	34.6	3.63
C	14.8	2.13
D	52.8	3.5
E	26.3	2.5

In analyzing Table 4.7, as the negative relationship increased, the classroom disruptions increased.

In terms of the student disruption scores and the difference between the positive relationship and the negative relationship score, with the negative relationship score being subtracted from the positive relationship score, there was a range for classroom

disruptions from 14.8 to 52.8. All scores, including the difference between the positive relationship and the negative relationship score, are shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8

*Teacher 2 Relationship Difference Results*

Student	Average Classroom Disruptions	Relationship Difference Score
A	26.3	-1.3
B	34.6	-0.92
C	14.8	1.87
D	52.8	-1.2
E	26.3	-0.3

In analyzing Table 4.8, as the difference between the positive and negative relationship totals increased, the classroom disruptions increased. The span between the two relationship scores that create a negative resulted in a much higher number of classroom disruptions.

The raw data for Teacher 2 supported the hypothesis. The teacher possessed a positive relationship with Student C. Student C had low classroom disruptions when compared with Student A, B, D, and E, whom the teacher had a negative relationship.

In calculating the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient for the positive relationship and the classroom disruptions, the Pearson  $r$  is -0.4629. This is a negative correlation. In terms of the negative relationship and classroom disruptions, the Pearson  $r$  is 0.6714. This is a strong positive correlation. When calculating for the difference in the positive relationship and the negative relationship, the Pearson  $r$  is -0.2512. This is a negative correlation. The null hypothesis was: There is no relationship between the teacher-student relationship and classroom disruptions in inner-city classrooms. The null hypothesis was rejected. Because there is a negative correlation between the positive

teacher-student relationship and the occurrences of classroom disruptions, the hypothesis in terms of Teacher 2 is accepted.

Teacher 3 is a freshmen yearlong English teacher. There were three negative relationships and one positive relationship with the four selected students. There were four students because one of the chosen students was removed from the classroom for the duration of the observation piece of the study. All relationships are shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

*Teacher 3 Relationship Results*

Student	Relationship Type
A	Negative
B	Positive
C	Negative
D	Negative

The relationship type was determined based on answers from The Classroom Assessment Scoring System. The positive and negative statements were averaged separately. The higher score determined the relationship type.

In terms of the student disruption scores and the positive relationship score there was a range for classroom disruptions from 30.4 to 46.2. All scores, including the positive relationship score, are shown in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

*Teacher 3 Positive Relationship Results*

Student	Average Classroom Disruptions	Positive Relationship Score
A	46.2	3
B	37.8	3.28
C	32	2.42
D	30.4	2.28

In analyzing Table 4.10, as the positive relationship increased, the classroom disruptions increased.

In terms of the student disruption scores and the negative relationship score there was a range for classroom disruptions from 30.4 to 46.2. All scores, including the negative relationship score, are shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11

*Teacher 3 Negative Relationship Results*

Student	Average Classroom Disruptions	Negative Relationship Score
A	46.2	3.12
B	37.8	1.6
C	32	2.5
D	30.4	2.37

In analyzing Table 4.11, as the negative relationship increased, the classroom disruptions increased.

In terms of the student disruption scores and the difference between the positive relationship and the negative relationship score, with the negative relationship score being subtracted from the positive relationship score, there was a range for classroom disruptions from 30.4 to 46.2. All scores, including the difference between the positive relationship and the negative relationship score, are shown in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12

*Teacher 3 Relationship Difference Results*

Student	Average Classroom Disruptions	Relationship Difference Score
A	26.3	-0.12
B	34.6	1.68
C	14.8	-0.08
D	52.8	-0.09

In analyzing Table 4.12, as the difference between the positive and negative relationship totals decreased, the classroom disruptions did not decrease. The highest numerical value between the positive and negative relationship had one of the higher number of classroom disruptions.

The raw data for Teacher 3 did not support the hypothesis. The one positive relationship the teacher had with the selected students resulted in one of the higher occurrences of classroom disruptions. In analyzing the negative relationships, the number of classroom disruptions is high.

In calculating the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient for the positive relationship and the occurrences of classroom disruptions, the Pearson  $r$  is 0.9696. This indicated a strong positive correlation. The null hypothesis was: There is no relationship between the teacher-student relationship and classroom disruptions in inner-city classrooms. The null hypothesis was rejected. The negative relationship and the occurrences of classroom disruptions produce a 0.9027 for the Pearson  $r$ . This is a strong positive correlation. When calculating for the difference between the positive and negative relationship, the Pearson  $r$  is 0.3358. This is a positive correlation. For Teacher 3 the hypothesis is rejected. The one positive relationship resulted in a high number of classroom disruptions. In addition, the negative relationships resulted in a high number of classroom disruptions, especially for Student A.

Teacher 4 is a freshmen yearlong English teacher. There were four positive relationships and one negative relationship with the four selected students. There were

four students because one of the chosen students was removed from the classroom for the duration of the observation piece of the study. All relationships are shown in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13

*Teacher 4 Relationship Results*

Student	Relationship Type
A	Negative
B	Positive
C	Positive
D	Positive

The relationship type was determined based on answers from The Classroom Assessment Scoring System. The positive and negative statements were averaged separately. The higher score determined the relationship type.

In terms of the student disruption scores and the positive relationship score there was a range for classroom disruptions from 6.2 to 23.25. All scores, including the positive relationship score, are shown in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14

*Teacher 4 Positive Relationship Results*

Student	Average Classroom Disruptions	Positive Relationship Score
A	23.25	3.71
B	13.2	4.57
C	6.2	3.86
D	11.8	3.71

In analyzing Table 4.14, as the positive relationship increases, the classroom disruptions do not only increase or decrease. The second lowest positive relationship score produced the highest number of classroom disruptions, whereas the highest positive relationship score produces the second highest number of classroom disruptions.

In terms of the student disruption scores and the negative relationship score there was a range for classroom disruptions from 6.2 to 23.25. All scores, including the negative relationship score, are shown in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15

*Teacher 4 Negative Relationship Results*

Student	Average Classroom Disruptions	Negative Relationship Score
A	23.25	4.13
B	13.2	1.25
C	6.2	3
D	11.8	2.75

In analyzing Table 4.15, as the negative relationship increased, the classroom disruptions decreased. Student A is the exception. Student A had the highest negative relationship score and had the highest average classroom disruptions.

In terms of the student disruption scores and the difference between the positive relationship and the negative relationship score, with the negative relationship score being subtracted from the positive relationship score, there was a range for classroom disruptions from 6.2 to 23.25. All scores, including the difference between the positive relationship and the negative relationship score, are shown in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16

*Teacher 4 Relationship Difference Results*

Student	Average Classroom Disruptions	Relationship Difference Score
A	23.25	-0.42
B	13.2	3.32
C	6.2	0.86
D	11.8	0.96

In analyzing Table 4.16, as the difference between the positive and negative relationship totals increased, the classroom disruptions increased. As in other areas, Student A is the exception. Student A has the widest span between the positive and negative relationship score and has the highest number of classroom disruptions.

The raw data for Teacher 4 supports the hypothesis. The teacher only had one negative relationship with Student A. Student A had the most occurrences of classroom disruptions. The other students had a positive relationship and had low occurrences of classroom disruptions.

When calculating the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient for the positive relationship a 0.6663 results for the Pearson  $r$ . This is a positive correlation. In terms of the negative relationship a 0.7589 is calculated for the Pearson  $r$ . This is a strong positive correlation. Finally, in calculating the Pearson  $r$  for the difference between the positive and negative relationship, a 0.2169 resulted. This is a positive correlation. The null hypothesis was: There is no relationship between the teacher-student relationship and classroom disruptions in inner-city classrooms. The null hypothesis was rejected. Based on the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient the hypothesis is rejected for Teacher 4.

Table 4.17 revealed the study as a whole with all the teachers and students observed in terms of the positive relationship. The range of classroom disruptions is 6.2 to 52.8. In terms of the relationship score, the range is 1.7 to 4.71.

Table 4.17

*All Teachers Positive Relationship Results*

Student	Average Classroom Disruptions	Positive Relationship Score
1	25.4	3.86
2	21.8	4.71
3	21.4	4
4	31.8	3.86
5	17.2	4
6	26.3	1.7
7	34.6	2.71
8	14.8	4
9	52.8	2.3
10	26.3	2.2
11	46.2	3
12	37.8	3.28
13	32	2.42
14	30.4	2.28
15	23.25	3.71
16	13.2	4.57
17	6.2	3.86
18	11.8	3.71

In analyzing the relationship between the positive relationship score and the average number of classroom disruptions for the entire population of the study, the data revealed that when the positive relationship score is high (at least a four) the average number of classroom disruptions decreases. In terms of analyzing the difference between the highest average classroom disruptions and the lowest average classroom disruptions with a positive relationship score of four, there is a 39.6 difference.

In calculating the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient for the entire population in terms of the positive teacher-student relationship and the occurrences of classroom disruptions, the Pearson  $r$  is  $-0.5744$ . The null hypothesis was: There was no relationship between the teacher-student relationship and classroom disruptions in inner-

city classrooms. The null hypothesis was rejected. There was a moderate negative correlation. The hypothesis was accepted.

### **Summary**

The goal of the study was to answer the question of whether the teacher-student relationship impacts the occurrences of classroom disruptions. Beginning with an analysis of each individual teacher, one can conclude that there is a relationship. For Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 4 when they shared a positive relationship with their students those students created fewer classroom disruptions. When the same teachers shared a negative teacher-student relationship, the number of classroom disruptions became higher. The data for Teacher 3 differed. When the degree of the positive relationship increased, the occurrences of classroom disruptions increased. When analyzing the data as a whole, four teachers and 18 students, the answer is yes. There is a relationship between the teacher-student relationship and the occurrences of classroom disruptions. Students who share a higher degree of positive relationship create fewer classroom disruptions than those who possess a lower degree of positive relationship or a negative relationship with their teachers. The small sample size may limit the generalizability of study results to a broader population.

## **CHAPTER 5: Conclusions, Implications, & Recommendations**

### **Introduction**

The goal of the study was to determine the effect the teacher-student relationship can have on a student's classroom behavior. The study draws on the theory of attachment. The foundation of attachment theory is that "...a child develops a hierarchy of caregivers and that it is the caregiver's role to perform the necessary tasks of becoming a haven of safety from which a child explores and has a base of security" (Stein, 2012, p. 1). Aligned with this theory, when students experience a positive relationship with their teachers, they feel safe and secure in their learning, and the relationship provides scaffolding for important academic and behavioral skills (Gallagher, 2013). Drawing from previous studies and published literature, the relationship a teacher shares with his or her students is vital in creating a favorable learning environment (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). This is especially true for the inner-city student. Many inner-city students lack motivation and parental support when it comes to their academics (Ridley, 2015). Because of this background, a positive teacher-student relationship may be the single most important factor that can aid in academic and behavioral adjustment for these students (Wu, Hughes, Kwok, 2010). Based on the relationship a teacher and student share there can be a greater degree of learning (Gablinske, 2014). The hypothesis projected for the study stated that in the event that there is a positive teacher-student relationship there would be fewer classroom disruptions in the classroom.

The quantitative study was conducted by requesting four inner-city teachers to complete a survey that assessed their relationships with five randomly selected students in their class. The criteria for the randomly selected students were that they each had one office referral within the school year. Of the identified students, an online random number generator selected the five students for each of the four teachers. Each teacher was observed for five consecutive days. During each observation, the researcher recorded each time the selected students created a classroom disruption. Based on the survey, the researcher determined the type of relationship each teacher shared with each student (positive or negative) and compared that with the average number of times each student created a classroom disruption. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was utilized to analyze the data. The relationship between the student and the teacher was placed on an ordinal scale. The teacher-student relationship was placed on the scale according to the characterization of a positive to a negative relationship. In addition, the occurrences of classroom disruptions were placed on an ordinal scale. These two rankings were then compared. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to indicate both the direction and the magnitude of the relationship between the two variables.

### **Research Question**

Research Question 1: Is there a relationship between the teacher-student relationship and classroom disruptions in inner-city classrooms?

Based on the data, a relationship does exist between the teacher-student relationship and classroom disruptions in inner-city classrooms. The data shows that when there is a positive relationship between the teacher and the student, the student

creates less classroom disruptions. Whereas, when the relationship is determined to be negative, the student creates more classroom disruptions.

Drawing on previous studies and literature, the study supports the importance of developing a positive teacher-student relationship. A positive teacher-student relationship creates a classroom environment where students respond favorably to the teacher (White, 2009). In the event that a positive teacher-student relationship has not been created, students will resist rules and procedures, as well as disciplinary consequences (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). Thus, the development of the teacher-student relationship is an extremely important factor in managing classroom behavior and creating an effective academic environment.

This relationship is even more important in the inner-city setting. Inner-city students report feeling alienated from school (Baker, 1999). They lack the feeling of belonging. Because of this they feel less motivated to succeed in school (Ridley, 2015). A positive teacher-student relationship influences an inner-city student's behavioral and academic success throughout his or her entire school career (White, 2009).

This is especially important when discussing the many reasons why novice teachers leave the teaching field in the first three years. Reportedly, novice teachers struggle with classroom management and ultimately one of the reasons they leave the profession is because they never gain the confidence or strategies they need to feel successful (Goodwine, 2012). Lacking strong preparation in classroom management, novice teachers are unable to create their own classroom management style that proves successful. Many of the teacher preparation programs focus on content and teaching strategies and fail to address a focused instruction on classroom management. With the

knowledge drawn from the study, those working with novice teachers can stress the importance of developing a positive relationship with students as a classroom management strategy.

### **Implications**

What does this mean for teachers in inner-city schools, as well as, teacher preparation programs? Because over half of instructional time is spent managing classroom behavior there is a real need to develop strategies to negate the time spent managing classroom behavior. As the data has shown, developing a positive relationship with a student aids in negating the time spent disciplining the student. Inner-city teachers need to focus on developing their relationship with their students at the beginning of the school year. By taking the time to develop a positive relationship with their students, they will find that they are spending less time throughout the school year on classroom management. This will in turn allow them to spend more time on academics and allow their students to be successful.

In terms of teacher preparation programs, pre-service teachers need more instruction in classroom management strategies. Because many novice teachers leave the teaching profession because of their frustration with classroom management, more time is needed in instructing them on how to develop classroom management skills. One strategy that needs to be taught is how to develop a positive relationship with students. The data supports that through the development of the positive teacher-student relationship, a teacher is able to spend less time on classroom management and more time on content instruction.

For the teacher who is looking for strategies to implement in his or her classroom that will aid in relationship building and in turn will aid in classroom behavior, Dr. Spencer Kagan offers many, easy to implement, strategies. Kagan Structures are utilized to increase academic achievement, improve ethnic relations, enhance self-esteem, create a more harmonious classroom climate, reduce discipline problems, and develop students' social skills and character virtues (Kramar, 2014). For Sage Elementary in Rock Springs, WY, when Kagan Structures were consistently implemented school-wide for four years, discipline referrals were down 33%. Kagan Structures taught students the appropriate social skills that are built into each structure and a focus was placed on class builders and team builders. This has allowed for more respect among students and from student to teacher. Kagan Structures aid in building positive relationships between the teacher and the student.

### **Recommendations for Further Studies**

Studies concerning the importance of the teacher-student relationship typically focus on relationships in the primary grades. Little focus has been given to the importance of the teacher-student relationship in secondary grades. Research supports that students beginning in kindergarten need to experience a close relationship with their teachers in order to feel confident and secure in their academic career (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Further research concerning various facets of the teacher-student relationship and classroom behavior should be conducted to fully understand the impact of the teacher-student relationship on classroom behavior.

To begin, a longer time period study of the correlation between the teacher-student relationship and student classroom disruptions should be conducted. It would be

beneficial to observe teachers and students for a full semester. Included in this longer study would be more teachers and more students to study. Since this is a pilot study, it is the hope that this study will serve as a rationale for a larger study with multiple researchers.

Secondly, a study of the student's perception of the relationship with the teacher should be conducted. If a student perceives that he or she has a positive relationship with the teacher does it impact the occurrences of classroom disruptions? Do the teacher's perceptions and the student's perceptions match and what impact does that have on classroom disruptions?

Thirdly, in terms of classroom management training in pre-service classes, is there a correlation between more training and fewer classroom disruptions?

Fourthly, a study concerning the amount of time spent at the beginning of the school year developing relationships with students and the impact on classroom disruptions should be conducted. Do teachers who set aside time at the beginning of the school year to develop relationships experience more positive relationships and fewer classroom disruptions?

Lastly, a study conducted analyzing a number of novice teachers who have had intensive, focused training in classroom management should be done. What impact does it have on attrition and classroom behavior, if novice teachers receive training on relationship building before they begin their teaching career?

### **Summary**

A Pearson product-moment coefficient correlation was utilized to show the relationship between the teacher-student relationship and the occurrences of classroom

disruptions. Based on the data the research question of whether or not there is a relationship between the teacher-student relationship and occurrences of classroom disruptions was found to be true; there is a relationship between these two variables.

The study provides further evidence of the importance of the development of a positive relationship between a teacher and a student. Much research has been done on the impact of a positive relationship between a teacher and a student in the lower grades, but there has not been adequate focus in the higher grades. Research in lower grades supports that in the event that a strong, positive teacher-student relationship has been developed there will be lower levels of conflict and higher classroom engagement (Rimm-Kaufman, 2011). Unfortunately, there has not been adequate research done to analyze the importance of this same relationship in higher grades. Further, research has not been done specifically in the inner-city school setting where students tend to struggle academically more so than their counterparts in the suburban setting. The study supports the need for a positive teacher-student relationship in the inner-city school setting.

In addition, the study supports the need for novice teachers to receive more instruction in classroom management strategies. Ideally, it would be beneficial for these strategies to be taught in pre-service classes. In the event that the strategies are not taught in pre-service classes, this information is beneficial for those working with novice teachers. During the first year of teaching, a focus can be placed on building positive relationships with students.

Novice teachers struggle with classroom management. They enter their first year of teaching with content knowledge and instructional strategy knowledge, but not strong classroom management knowledge. Because novice teachers are leaving the profession

at a high rate and the negative impact this has on students, there is a real need to provide novice teachers with support in classroom management. This is even more important in terms of the inner-city classroom. These students need support and direction from their teachers. The study conducted provides one strategy that can greatly impact behavior in the classroom. Presenting novice teachers with the knowledge that spending time developing their relationship with their students will provide a strategy that can be implemented in the first days of school and can have a substantial impact on classroom behavior.

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## **Appendices**

**Appendix A**  
**Student-Teacher Relationship Scale**



# STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP SCALE

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**Robert C. Pianta**

Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please reflect on the degree to which each of the following statements currently applies to your relationship with this child. Using the scale below, circle the appropriate number for each item.*

Definitely does not apply 1	Not really 2	Neutral, not sure 3	Applies somewhat 4	Definitely applies 5
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1. I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child.	1	2	3	4
2. This child and I always seem to be struggling with each other.	1	2	3	4
3. If upset, this child will seek comfort from me.	1	2	3	4
4. This child is uncomfortable with physical affection or touch from me.	1	2	3	4
5. This child values his/her relationship with me.	1	2	3	4
6. When I praise this child, he/she beams with pride.	1	2	3	4
7. This child spontaneously shares information about himself/herself.	1	2	3	4
8. This child easily becomes angry with me.	1	2	3	4
9. It is easy to be in tune with what this child is feeling.	1	2	3	4
10. This child remains angry or is resistant after being disciplined.	1	2	3	4
11. Dealing with this child drains my energy	1	2	3	4
12. When this child is in a bad mood, I know we're in for a long and difficult day.	1	2	3	4
13. This child's feelings toward me can be unpredictable or can change suddenly.	1	2	3	4
14. This child is sneaky or manipulative with me.	1	2	3	4
15. This child openly shares his/her feelings and experiences with me.	1	2	3	4

**Appendix B**  
**Letter to Parents**

## Behavior in Inner-City Schools: The Impact of Student-Teacher Relationships

Dear Participant,

I invite you to allow your child to participate in a research study entitled Behavior in Inner-City Schools: The Impact of Student-Teacher Relationships. I am currently enrolled in the Education Doctoral program at Carson Newman in Jefferson City, TN and am in the process of writing my dissertation. The purpose of the research is to determine the impact a positive teacher-student relationship may have on classroom disturbances.

Your child's participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You may decline altogether by returning this letter to your child's teacher with a signature signifying that you would not like your child to participate in the research.

There are no known risks to participation beyond those encountered in everyday life. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. Data from this research will be kept under lock and key and reported only as a collective combined total. No one other than the researchers will know your individual answers to this questionnaire.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this project, there is nothing further you need to do.

If you have any questions about this project, feel free to contact Noelle Money, doctoral student, at [j.noellekelly@yahoo.com](mailto:j.noellekelly@yahoo.com). Information on the rights of human subjects in research is available through Carson Newman's Institutional Review Board

Thank you for your assistance in this important endeavor.

Sincerely yours,

Noelle Money

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*If you do not want your child to participate in the research project, please return the form below to your child's teacher.*

I, (parent name) \_\_\_\_\_, do not wish for my child, (child's name) \_\_\_\_\_ to be a part of the research project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
parent signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

**Appendix C**  
**Letter to Teachers**

## Behavior in Inner-City Schools: The Impact of Student-Teacher Relationships

Dear Participant,

I invite you to participate in a research study entitled Behavior in Inner-City Schools: The Impact of Student-Teacher Relationships. I am currently enrolled in the Education Doctoral program at Carson Newman in Jefferson City, TN and am in the process of writing my dissertation. The purpose of the research is to determine the impact a positive teacher-student relationship may have on classroom disturbances.

The enclosed questionnaire has been designed to collect information on the relationship between yourself and the chosen students for the study. Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You may decline altogether, or leave blank any questions you don't wish to answer. There are no known risks to participation beyond those encountered in everyday life. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. Data from this research will be kept under lock and key and reported only as a collective combined total. No one other than the researchers will know your individual answers to this questionnaire.

If you agree to participate in this project, please answer the questions on the questionnaire as best you can. It should take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete. Please return the questionnaire as soon as possible as an attachment to [j.noellekelly@yahoo.com](mailto:j.noellekelly@yahoo.com).

If you have any questions about this project, feel free to contact Noelle Money, doctoral student at [j.noellekelly@yahoo.com](mailto:j.noellekelly@yahoo.com). Information on the rights of human subjects in research is available through Carson Newman's Institutional Review Board

Thank you for your assistance in this important endeavor.

Sincerely yours,

Noelle Money

**Appendix D**

**Classroom Disruptions Tally Sheet**

Each time a student disrupts the classroom, mark a tally in the box.

<b>Student A</b>	
<b>Student B</b>	
<b>Student C</b>	
<b>Student D</b>	
<b>Student E</b>	