

**COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES TEACHERS USE TO
BUILD SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS**

by

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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leslie Flemmer". The signature is written in black ink and is underlined.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of teachers and students in the classroom community and how those roles are defined through verbal and non-verbal interactions. Traditional methods of communication in which the teacher is central, is compared and contrasted to non-traditional learning communities which are generally student centered. Also explored are the effects of building learning communities that support the whole child and are vital to healthy student teacher relations. Finally, this paper investigates strategies that support teachers in creating successful, caring relationships with their students.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This paper focuses on specific communication strategies, both verbally and non-verbally, that teachers can use with students in the classroom in order to create an effective learning community and democratic classroom. Communication, for the purpose of this discussion is defined in terms of social constructivist theory. Social constructivists believe that the learner constructs meaning based upon his or her interactions with the environment. Lev Vygotsky, a prominent social constructivist viewed humans as differing from animals because humans have the ability to create meaning from the use of semiotic tools, or symbols. One of the most prominent semiotic tools or symbols that humans adopt is speech which allows them to make connections to his or her environment. For this reason it is important to examine the use of communication in the classroom as well as how teachers can create an effective learning community. According to educator, Barbara Rogoff, a community of learners is formed when teachers, along with students “...engage in integrated projects of intrinsic interest to class members, often working together” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 361). By forming a community of learners, interactions are able to be maintained, guided and monitored in a classroom setting in order to allow for the greatest potential in learning.

Rationale

On a personal note, communication has always been both challenging and fascinating to me. I would marvel at how certain people seemed gifted with an ability to say the *right* words or give the *right* look or gestures in order to elicit a particular response. In contrast, I was incredibly shy and always seemed to know the *wrong* thing to

say. Gaining a larger perspective through the years, I can see how being interactive with different social groups was one key to their success. By interacting in different contexts and social settings, they were learning multiple social norms as well as how to form relationships with their peers. Looking back, I see now how school could have been a major asset in helping shy students, like myself, form those critical relationships that are important for a child's self-concept. The field is exciting today because new models of teaching incorporate the child as a genuine participant in forming reciprocal, empowering relationships with their teachers. More knowledge on the development and nurturing of reciprocal relationships will serve as a model to advocate for future students.

This topic is relevant because there is much pressure today on teachers in public schools to produce quantifiable results concerning student success. With current legislature such as No Child Left Behind still in effect and the recent call by President Obama for higher student achievement, accountability is of utmost importance in public education. Parents and administrators want to see results and are calling for more educational reform.

The United States is the home of a diverse cultural population with diverse cultural needs. Communication is a part of culture and is developed through shared meaning. Therefore, different cultures have their own communication, language and values. Because of these disparities, it is now more important than ever for teachers to build community in order to find common ground with students that may come from different backgrounds. According to social learning theory, the teacher must serve as a model for students on how to communicate effectively in the classroom (Miller, 2002). The teacher must know and utilize these tools of communication as well as give them to

his or her students to use in their own daily interactions. Furthermore, teachers must know how to effectively engage in dialogue and questioning of their students in order to promote higher levels of thinking (Wells, 1999).

Controversies

One of the main arguments that this paper makes reference to is teacher led versus student led dialogue. The most common discourse pattern whereby teachers initiate and evaluate student responses will be re-evaluated in this paper. Recent research suggests that an engaging learning environment occurs only when both the teacher and student actively take on both roles. The ties between teacher led instruction, structured curriculum and teacher controlled dialogue will also be reviewed.

Variations on the term, culturally responsive teaching is also being used as a means to create a socially just and democratic learning environment. In theory, being more culturally responsive means providing opportunities for inclusion of a range of cultures in curriculum development and classroom community development. Because teachers may lack sufficient information about a particular culture, they may make unintentional assumptions that do not accurately portray the culture of study or the students that they teach. Are teachers sufficiently prepared to handle the deeper aspects of culture, which includes values and beliefs or do they relegate cultural significance to the realm of only holidays and clothing, for example? There is growing research which suggests that culture is a major component to how students process knowledge and should be considered with regard to academic content. For example, some Mexican Americans feel disconnected with schools because they are asked to care about school without being cared for (Valenzuela, 1999). Similarly, research concerning alienation and

schooling, brought to the forefront in the 1970's was based on Karl Marx's theory of alienation which asked if society (meaning capitalism) was creating alienation or if it was an inherent defect of the workers. In other words, is it the students fault for feeling disconnected from school or is it the fault of teachers and administrators (and the larger educational system)?

Definitions

As previously mentioned, this paper discusses communication from a social constructivist lens. In social constructivist theory, it is the learner who constructs meaning through activities which allow the learner to create a connection to what is termed prior knowledge. This prior knowledge can be in the form of previous academic studies or experiences. Making a connection means making new neurological connections within the brain. Doing so allows more diversity of thought because there are more pathways to choose in order to solve problems. Without making connections between new knowledge and old experiences, deeper meaning and value is lost to the learner (Zull, 2002). Part of a teacher's job is, therefore, to find a way to communicate which allows those connections to form.

The classroom environment has a large impact on the lives of students. According to Vygotsky, a person is not separate from his or her environment. Instead, he or she forms a reciprocal relationship with the outside world and acts upon that stimulus. When certain patterns, activities or forms of speech initiated from the outside environment are recreated without aid from the external world, the learner is said to have internalized the information. Internalization happens when learning from the outside environment comes to be initiated by the inner mind of the learner (Wertsch, 1985). Most notably, the aid

from the outside is formed through social interactions with a more capable peer (MCP). This peer already has a certain level of mastery regarding the given activity. Vygotsky argued that social interactions with more capable peers expedites the learning process and allows students to reach their zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD can be defined as the distance between one's actual level of development as an independent problem solver and that of their potential development when assisted by a MCP (Wertsch). Because the environment of the classroom has such a significant role in learning, its design and infusion of student culture and community are critical.

Ideally, these interactions will create a community of learners or a community of practice. A community of learners promotes the concept of learners coming together in order to share and promote common interests and goals. Theorists, Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), first coined the phrase "communities of practice" in 1991 to describe situated learning. In situated learning, learning takes place in a particular context or environment which may or may not include specific people, items and activities. It is the situation itself; learning placed in context which allows deeper meaning to take place.

Limitations

Limitations to this paper are twofold. First, the topic of specific communication strategies which create an effective classroom community are still developing. For example, many of the studies which discuss possible ways to create a classroom community do not specifically address these strategies in terms of communication. Similarly, many of the studies that directly target communication in the classroom, do not mention how this applies to creating a community. Consequently, there is limited research which ties directly to the topic at hand. Therefore, the scope of research has been

broadened to include not only communication per se, but also how teachers interact with their students. Secondly, because research is only beginning to develop in the area of democratic classroom communities, a large number of the articles discussed in this paper are qualitative, meaning there is usually a small sample size in which to glean in depth questioning and information. As a result, the information cannot be generalized to fit a larger population. As the concepts and theories of democratic classrooms and classroom communities are developed and evaluated, more data which specifically addresses communication in this context will hopefully become available in the future.

Summary

This paper examines some of the communication patterns and strategies that teachers need to become acquainted with in order to create a classroom learning community. According to social constructivist, Lev Vygotsky, communication is an essential semiotic tool which allows for the exchange of information to take place. Through social exchanges with MCP's, Vygotsky proposed that students could more expeditiously reach their ZPD. Therefore, it is vital for teachers to create situations which allow meaningful and, therefore, successful learning to take place. In Chapter 2, theorists past and present who have recognized the need for authentic communication and community oriented learning are discussed. In Chapter 3, research concerning communication in the classroom and forming classroom communities are reviewed and analyzed. Finally, conclusions and recommendations are made in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

The transformation of public schooling from a strictly teacher centered orientation in which information is solely transmitted to the child has been slowly changing to a more progressively student centered environment. In the latter situation, communication is viewed as participation whereby students and teachers form a learning community. The historical references that helped pave the way for a more democratic approach in public schooling today has its roots beginning in the mid nineteenth century. During this time, the rise of industrialization, immigration, changing philosophies in human nature and psychology as well as increased urbanization led to the “Child Study Movement” (Davidson & Benjamin, 1987). Credited with founding this movement in the United States, G. Stanley Hall developed studies which attempted to look inside children’s minds.

These studies, which illuminated many gaps in knowledge of school-age children, contributed to the growing wave of educators and parents who expressed a strong need for reform in education (Davidson & Benjamin, 1987). Two major factions in public education arose: progressivists who sought a more explorative, student centered environment in education; and traditionalists who were subject and facts oriented (Daugherty, 2003). Out of the Child Study Movement, new theorists such as John Dewey emerged to strike a balanced approach in education, one that would fuse both progressive and traditional methods of teaching.

This chapter will focus on four major concepts that helped formulate the desire for classroom communities. The first section looks at John Dewey and his conception of

a democratic community within the educational experience. Next, this chapter will examine Lev Vygotsky and his ideas concerning the importance of social interactions in order to reach a state of optimal learning. This leads into an explanation of Lave and Wenger's concept of communities of practice. Then, the concept of multiple domains and understanding how the teacher needs to address the whole child in order to form a relationship will be noted. Last, this chapter will look at Nel Noddling's views concerning the importance of caring and compassion in the classroom.

John Dewey and Democratic Communities

A philosophical leader in education during the early twentieth century, John Dewey was a proponent of experiential learning in education. He noted that the environment shapes us, because we act on it and learn by those actions, "...doing things to it and with it" (Ryan, 1995, p. 128). The classroom specifically with its pedagogical structure as established by the teacher, becomes an important part of a child's environment. Dewey saw the strife in public education during this time as symptomatic of a need for change in how students are asked to learn. It was agreed by both the progressivists and the traditionalists that many issues and concepts needed to be addressed in education, including how to be a good citizen. What was not agreed upon was how to teach these issues. Dewey proposed a pragmatic approach by which intellectual facts are connected to experience.

Dewey (1938) introduced a structural shift in the classroom to a community of learners, rather than teacher as an authoritative enforcer of rules. He wrote:

But I think it is fair to say that one reason the personal commands of the teacher so often played an undue role and a reason why the order which existed was so much a matter of sheer obedience to the will of an adult was because the situation almost forced it upon the teacher. The school was not a group or community held

together by participation in common activities. Consequently, the normal proper conditions of control were lacking. (Dewey, 1938, p. 55)

In other words, Dewey considered the classroom a shared experience that is controlled by the nature of the work being done. If all students see themselves as viable parts of a social community, they will further recognize their personal responsibility to sustain it. This communal responsibility led to his ideas of democratic citizenry in the classroom. Dewey argued that a prime objective in education should be the formation of responsible citizens who have developed self-control rather than needing to have their impulses controlled by others in authority. He ascertained that true freedom resided when one had the ability to “stop and think,” to self-correct based on lived experiences (Dewey). It is, therefore, a teacher’s job to aid their students’ freedom by setting up the conditions necessary to contribute to systems within society as a whole.

Lev Vygotsky and Social Interactions

Psychologist and theorist of the early twentieth century, Lev Vygotsky focused on how the environment acts upon the individual and, thus, sparks an interactive, reciprocal engagement. Through this interaction, knowledge can be internalized, thus creating a psychological shift and transformation of the learner. Vygotsky emphasized the art of dialogue as necessary to create a bridge between the individual and the environment (Wertsch, 1985). In other words, a dialogue allows for the possibility of collaborating individual and collective thoughts that generate and successively build upon each others ideas in order to gain new understanding. For this reason, Vygotsky viewed speech as a necessary tool for learning and interacting in the world.

When applying his theory to the classroom, Vygotsky specifically addresses teachers as crucial instruments which allow children to reach their zone of proximal

development (ZPD). The ZPD can be defined as the distance between one's actual level of development as an independent problem solver and that of their potential development when assisted by a more capable peer (MCP) (Wertsch, 1985). In the classroom, teachers and other peers act as experts or facilitators of information. To act as a facilitator of information means to channel expertise by acting as a model through explanation or both. By participating socially in a cultural community, children have the opportunity to learn faster and more effectively through observing and dialoguing with peers.

Another aid in the process of moving toward the ZPD is the use of scaffolding. Scaffolding supposes that through the creation of a supportive environment and information rich speech from a MCP, the participant will be able to gradually gain mastery of a particular concept. Prior knowledge and acquired skills form the basis of scaffolding which help students move incrementally on tasks that require interdependence in order to be accomplished. Vygotsky recommended that scaffolding take place in the form of collaborative dialogue. The six steps involved in the scaffolding process are as follows:

1. Recruiting interest in the task.
2. Simplifying the task.
3. Maintaining pursuit of the goal.
4. Marking critical features and discrepancies between what has been produced and the ideal solution.
5. Controlling frustration during problem solving
6. Demonstrating an idealized version of the act to be performed.

(Lantolf & Appel, 1994)

As noted in the steps above, the teacher and/or MCP first help stimulate interest in the task. When the student is ready to learn, the MCP presents information in bite sized

pieces, allowing motivation and confidence to continually accrue from small successes. Along the way, the MCP also provides feedback to correct any deviations along the path to eventual mastery in step six.

Vygotsky's work repeatedly stresses the importance of social interactions as an integral part of learning. Author, Gordon Wells expanded on Vygotskian themes of social interactions and collaboration into what he terms dialogic inquiry. Wells (1999) asserts that knowledge can be obtained from the environment whether through speech, reading print or other media but will be built upon through sharing and interacting with others. Through "progressive dialogue," knowledge is transformed by the interaction. He writes, "This is dialogue that is focused on the object of the activity and aimed at making an answer to a question or solution to a problem to which the activity has given rise" (Wells, 1999, p. 19). In other words, by asking questions, clarifying thoughts of others and relating to one's own experiences, students are co-constructing meaning and transforming their own and each other's thinking. Understanding therefore, occurs in a cyclical spiral with new experiences and information being continually brought to the table of collaboration with peers. The next section builds upon and specifies more articulately how social interactions should be created in a community of practice.

Lave and Wenger and Communities of Practice

Theorists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) first coined the phrase "communities of practice" in 1991 to describe their clarification of situated learning, meaning, that all learning takes place within the context of a particular activity. The learner and environment form a reciprocal relationship and act upon each other to form a new basis of knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Learning is not separate from the

situation, but integrated within it. Lave and Wenger describe this engagement of social practice as “legitimate peripheral participation” (Lave & Wenger, p. 35).

Legitimate peripheral participation is a complex concept because it relates the dynamic nature of community memberships. Because learning is situational, meaning and understanding are constantly being renegotiated based upon the context of participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As an example, Lave and Wenger propose that learning requires full social participation of the whole individual as mentioned in the following quote:

Activities, tasks, functions, and understandings do not exist in isolation; they are part of a broader system of relations in which they have meaning. These systems of relations arise out of and are reproduced and developed within social communities, which are in part systems of relations among persons. The person is defined as well as defines these relations. (p. 53)

Although Lave and Wenger did not intend for their theory to act as a pedagogical method for schooling per se, it does speak to the need for rich, diverse learning that can be applied to the classroom. As the individual evolves, and new identities are formed within various contexts, the interwoven systems of participation grow as well. Thus, the more connections one makes as an integral part of the social world, the more knowledge they add to the whole. These different contexts contain semiotic domains—symbols and tools of understanding that are specific to a particular situation and environment. In the classroom, a semiotic domain, teachers can make intentional changes in order to allow for the greatest learning potential. However, when looking at the child holistically, it is possible to see the many overlapping worlds and communities that converge in a person’s life. The next section reviews theories that discuss becoming aware of these competing worlds.

Multiple Worlds and Identities

According to Cultural Compatibility theory, "...values, beliefs, expectations and normative ways of behaving are acquired first in the child's home environments" (Phelan, Davidson, & Yu, 1998, p. 9). Problems arise when schools create norms of behavior that are inconsistent with their home culture. The Student's Multiple Worlds Model recognizes the differing aspects such as sociocultural, gender and psychosocial boundaries that exist in children's lives. Boundaries are created as a result of non-acceptance and prejudice of particular aspects of students' lives. For instance, sociocultural boundaries are created when components in one world, (i.e., peers, school or home) are viewed as inferior to another. This may be as simple as speaking or writing in a language other than English. Another example of a boundary could be socioeconomic which creates differences in the amount of participation a student may have in extracurricular activities due to financial hardship in the home world (Phelan, et al.). What Phelan and her colleagues suggest is that teachers need to become more attuned to the whole child with regard to stresses that are created in constantly juggling these competing worlds, some of which need to be compartmentalized due to social acceptability.

Educator and researcher, Christine Igoa, in her book, *The Inner World of the Immigrant Child* sees three major components that create balance in a child's life. Igoa defined these aspects as psychological, academic, and cultural which form the basis of the whole child. She writes, "When the child feels in balance with these three aspects of herself or himself, the child in school is most fully alive" (Igoa, 1995, p. 119). Igoa, sees the importance of creating a home school connection as a means to validate and include

such aspects as cultural and language differences in the classroom. By doing so, the child is not merely seen as a resource that must perform academically. A relationship is formed whereby students and teachers feel comfortable and acknowledged enough to want to give their best academically. The next section expounds upon the idea of creating a connection with students, known as care theory.

Nel Noddings and Care in the Classroom

Renowned author and educator Nel Noddings has made many important contributions in the area of education, noting the need for more caring in the school environment. She points out that too often in a world with many deep social changes such as violence, poverty and crime, the classroom disregards these aspects of a student's life. Instead, teachers focus on their goals and their agendas while limiting student voices in daily classroom routines (Noddings, 1992). As a result, a disconnect between teachers and students occurs, one in which caring is replaced with conditional regard. Noddings argues on a grander scale, that this kind of relationship or the lack thereof is what is contributing to the absence of civic mindedness in society as a whole. Noddings sees the classroom as well as the home environment as important seeds in which to create a more humane and caring world.

All humans need to be cared for in some capacity, although Noddings cautions there is never one recipe for how this should look (Noddings, 1992). She views caring as a way of being in relation to another person. Furthermore, caring involves giving up one's self for the moment in order to become totally engrossed and attentive to someone else in a non-obsessive or infatuated way. When the carer opens up and becomes receptive to the cared for and the cared for recognizes this action, than the relationship

has come full circle (Noddings, 1984). In relation to becoming civic minded beings, Noddings notes the difference between caring about something and caring for something. When a person cares for something or someone it usually involves a face to face encounter whereas when a person cares about something, he or she is removed from the subject. She sees a natural evolution which moves from being cared for to caring about something abstract, as an ideal transition to more meaningful relationships and change. First, one must be cared for, then care for others in intimate relations and finally care about others in an indirect, ethically and justice driven sense.

Noddings theorizes that caring contains four key elements which include modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation. In modeling, the carer shows and demonstrates their caring by their behavior. In dialogue, the carer and cared for engage in conversation about caring, allowing time for feedback and an adjustment of perspectives to occur as a result. The practice stage permits the cared for to practice and reflect on their own caring. In the last stage, the carer confirms the cared for by noting only the best in that person. Noddings suggests that if this type of “natural caring” were promoted and instilled in the educational system, then ethical morality would follow (Noddings, 1984).

Summary

In summary, the need for authentic and collaborative human interaction has been noted by several theorists historically. Dewey observed the need for experiential education which alluded to the disintegration of teacher led classrooms, while Vygotsky advocated for more interaction between peers as the most effective and expedient path toward success. Lave and Wenger argued for the importance of shared meaning and construction of a learning community. Both, Phelan, et al. and Igoa understood the need

for addressing the whole child, realizing and addressing the competing worlds that exist in a child's life. Last, Nel Nodding's explained her concept of care, and how allowing and modeling care in the classroom can lead to more civically minded contributors in the larger world. While teachers today are grappling with how to educate a seemingly less content audience of students, researchers have looked to past theorists as a means to test out new measures of school reform. In the next chapter, this paper will examine research pertaining to how teacher-child relationships work in tandem with other aspects of the student's life as well as specific strategies which evoke positive and caring classroom communities.

CHAPTER 3: CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced the importance of communication and building relationships with students. According to Vygotsky, communication and more specifically patterns of speech and interactions are an important element of learning. The more interactions and communication one has with a more capable peer (MCP), the more they will expedite and facilitate new neuronal connections in their brain. In addition, because the United States is diverse with a range of cultures and backgrounds, it is prudent for teachers to develop new strategies and ways of communicating and relating to students who may have backgrounds that are dissimilar from their own. Chapter 2 examined the philosophers and concepts beginning with the Child Study Movement that paved the way for more emphasis on building relationships with students. It also reviewed models that view children holistically and take into account multiple worlds and domains of being. Chapter 3 will analyze research pertaining to different components of the child that are affected by how teachers facilitate relationships with their students. These include psychological and emotional well being, academic achievement and cultural backgrounds. Next, Chapter 3 will look at specific discourse patterns that occur between teachers and students and finally how these patterns influence power relations in the classroom.

Psychological Effects of Building Relationships with Students

How teachers build relationships with their students has a profound effect on their psychological and emotional well-being. The following studies look at how perceptions affect the nature of relationships and interactions; how student behavior impacts how a student is perceived and expected to act; and, how teachers model through their

interactions the way peers should relate to one another. Grouped together, these studies reveal how a teacher must become aware of their role in modeling and facilitating relationships which affect the psychological well-being of his or her students.

How Students and Teachers Perceive Their Relationship

Drawing from attachment theory and social control theory, Murray and Greenburg (2000) sought through quantitative analysis to gain more information on how children perceived their relationships with teachers and their bonds with school.

According to social control theorists, "...feeling a sense of belonging and connectedness within the context of school increases an individual's involvement with prosocial groups and provides opportunities for the acquisition of prosocial skills and behaviors" as well as diminishing the likelihood of deviant behaviors (Murray & Greenburg, p. 424).

In attachment theory, witnessing warm and supportive relationships has a significant impact on children's overall social and emotional health and creates the security necessary to move into novel experiences. As part of a larger longitudinal study, Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), 289 elementary students in an urban elementary school district located in the northwestern United States were analyzed. The sample of fifth and sixth grade participants contained approximately 57% males, 43% females, 39% students of color and 61% white students. All students were interviewed individually by staff that underwent extensive interview training. Measurements for children assessed how children represented relationships with parents, peers and teachers, social competence, depressive symptoms, self-assessment of delinquency, and general personality characteristics. Teachers in turn assessed children's behavior through the Child Behavior Checklist and measured children's in-school

problem behaviors and competence through the Teacher–Child Rating Scale (Murray & Greenburg, 2000).

Results from this study suggest a majority (66%) of students perceive their overall school environment and relationships with teachers positively. However, this also means that approximately one third of students are not experiencing school as a supportive environment. Murray & Greenburg (2000) created four patterns of relationships–Dysfunctional, Functional/Average, Positively Involved and School Anxious in which to categorize students. Twenty-five percent of students were classified as Dysfunctional and self-reported poor social and school competence, greater delinquency, conduct problems, anxiety and depression as compared with the Positively Involved group (38%). Nine percent of students were considered Social Anxious and reported less school competence and “...greater emotional problems compared to children in the Positively Involved group” (Murray & Greenburg, p. 440). Twenty-eight percent of students regarded their relationships with teachers and bonds with school as Functional/Average. Teachers’ assessments generally supported students’ self-reports.

In critiquing this study, extensive measures were used to warrant against observer bias. Data underwent a series of queries which included components analysis, correlational analysis, and cluster analysis in order to arrive at their results. Children’s self-reports were also compared and contrasted to teacher assessments further guarding against bias in self-assessment. There were some important chunks of data missing, however. Namely, classifying white students versus students of color created ambiguous data results concerning ethnicities. Approximately one third of students were classified as Dysfunctional or School Anxious. Curiously, approximately one third of students were

students of color. Although the study raises questions, we cannot make any correlations because of ambiguous data. This study warrants further investigation and perhaps qualitative analysis in order to discover who and why these students are unhappy with their educational experience. Another question that might be posed in further research is what effect having Dysfunctional and School Anxious students in the classroom makes on the learning environment.

In another study, Buyse, Verschueren, Doumen, Van Damme, and Maes, (2008) asked how the qualities of teacher–child relationships are affected by classroom composition. This study specifically defined composition in terms of “...classroom rates of behavior problems” (Buyse, et al., p. 371). Are children who show maladjustment behaviors at higher risk for forming positive relationships? Also, what characteristics of the classroom environment are possible predictors of the teacher–child relationship? Buyse, et al. evaluated, using qualitative analysis, the quality of teacher–child relationships using the Student Teacher Relationship scale while math and language ability were assessed by administering a language test and an arithmetic test. Children’s classroom behavior was rated by teachers using the Child Behavior Scale and teaching style was based on teachers’ self-assessment. The study took place in Flanders Belgium and consisted of 3798 kindergartners (50.5% boys) and their teachers (187) (Buyse, et al.).

Findings from this study indicated that the child’s rate of behavior in class, as rated by the teacher, contributes significantly to their relational closeness or conflict (Buyse, et al., 2008). Internalizing behavior from the student is the most important predictor of closeness to the teacher. Examples of internalizing behavior include anxiety,

fear and depression which are emotional. Externalizing behavior, on the other hand; is usually disruptive and includes aggression and hyperactivity. Externalizing behavior is the most substantive predictor for conflict with the teacher. Furthermore, teaching style does not contribute to the prediction of relationship quality in general. However, "...children's externalizing behavior was more strongly related to teacher-child conflict when teaching quality was low" (Buyse, et al., p. 381). The impact of the classroom composition on relationship quality tends to be larger when children have more externalizing behavior problems, compared to children not at risk.

As discussed by Buyse, et al. (2008) some discrepancies in the teaching style may be a result of self-assessment. Teachers, in this case may have been subject to social desirability bias, which can occur when respondents answer questions in order to be viewed in a favorable manner (Buyse, et al.). Also, the parameters of teaching style were broad in terms, referring to emotional support and management style. In addition, results may not be generalizable to the U.S. population with differing social and cultural factors contributing to externalizing behaviors to children. It would have been helpful to have more specific data on the population such as differentiating those children with special needs. Regardless, the study does suggest that students who express externalizing behavior such as hyperactivity and aggression are at risk of developing poor relationships with their teachers and possibly subsequent relationships.

How Teacher Expectation Affects Teacher-Student Relationships

Doumen, Verschueren, Buyse, Germeijs, Luyckx, and Soenens (2008) found that teacher-child conflict was positively correlated with a child's aggressive behavior. Doumen et al. found that this conflict escalated because teachers came to expect

externalizing behavior and, thus, conflict with these particular children. This short term longitudinal quantitative study used questionnaires to assess if there was a bidirectional relationship between teacher–child conflict and children’s externalizing behavior. Externalizing behavior for this study was broadly defined as aggression. Two hundred twelve children and their teachers from 33 kindergarten classes from 24 schools in Flanders, Belgium participated in this study. Gender of students was divided almost equally and teachers were all female and taught on average 18 years (Doumen et al.). Conflict in the teacher–child relationship was assessed through a subset of the Student Teacher Relationship Scale and the child’s aggressive behavior was measured by the Aggressive with Peers of the Child Behavior Scale. These questionnaires were filled out by teachers three times during the year. Children were asked through questions and photographs of their classmates to assess their peers’ conflictual relationships and aggressive behaviors (Doumen et al.).

Results from this study indicate that “...aggressive behavior at the onset of kindergarten led to increased levels of teacher–child conflict by the middle of the school year, which in turn led to increased levels of aggressive behaviors by the end of the year” (Doumen et al., 2008, p. 596). Doumen et al. interpreted this finding as proof that student behaviors and teacher expectations form a circular relationship that react to and influence one another. In this type of relationship, the child’s behavior may change teacher expectations and behavior which may in turn, influence the child’s behavior. As a result, equal value is placed on both the child’s and the teacher’s behavior. These researchers suggest that externalizing behaviors are the instigators of poor relationships because teachers perceive these behaviors as challenges to their control.

After critically analyzing this study, there are relative strengths and weaknesses that emerge. First, both the teacher and the children were questioned as a means to compare assessments. However, although students were only evaluating peers to ward against social desirability bias, teachers used self-assessment measures. The study may have been more effective against bias by comparing questionnaires to classroom observations. Students and teachers may also be subject to other variables such as fatigue or recent memory of their last interaction with the student or peer. These variables could have affected how teachers and students responded to these questions. In addition, Doumen et al. (2008) suggest that a child's externalizing behavior is the instigator of disharmonious teacher-child relationships. However, the study only found correlations not causations. How is it known with certainty that the child's behavior initiated the conflict and not the opposite? The study did not mention behavior management style and teacher personality as being possible instigators of aggression for students who are prone to this type of behavior. Despite these limitations, the study does suggest that children's behavior and teacher expectations form a reciprocal relationship that affect and react to one another throughout the school year (Doumen et al.).

In the next study, Jordan and Stanovich (2001) found that teachers' knowledge of students as "at-risk" or "exceptionally functioning" affected their interactions with them and consequently the student's self-concept. Researchers wanted to understand the following: 1) was there a relationship between teacher beliefs about their role when working with a special needs population and their instructional interactions with them?; 2) Do the self-concepts of students differ in classrooms where teachers believe in low

interaction versus high interaction?; 3) Are there differences in self-concept scores related to both student group designations? (Jordan & Stanovich, p. 3).

Nine elementary teachers, which included five female and four male, and their 48 students participated in the study. None of the teachers had special education training. Participants were third graders from six different schools located in a primarily white Anglo-Saxon, low to middle socioeconomic, small town in Ontario, Canada. Fifteen exceptional students and six Typically Achieving (TA) students were chosen at random. Both groups were divided approximately evenly according to gender. In order to rate the teachers beliefs about their responsibilities when serving at-risk students or exceptional students, researchers conducted 45-60 minute interviews with teachers according to the Pathognomonic-Interventionist (PATH/INT) Scale of Teachers' Beliefs (Jordan & Stanovich, 2001).

The test assessed whether teachers were pathognomonic (PATH) and viewed learning as "organically based" in which case learning difficulties are perceived as a permanent characteristic versus those that thought intervention (INT) was possible by adapting instruction (Jordan & Stanovich, 2001, p. 3). An 80 item test called The Piers Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was administered to students rating their attitudes on such topics as popularity, status and physical appearance. Interactions among students were classified as either comprehension monitoring (cursory and brief statements or questions designed to check student understanding), partial extension (comprehension is usually led by the teacher), or cognitive extension (teacher calibrates questions according to student's response) (Jordan & Stanovich).

Results showed that teachers in the PATH group had a higher rate of interaction with both the exceptional and typically achieving students in non-academic related topics as compared to academic topics, although the results were relatively insignificant (Jordan & Stanovich, 2001, p. 41). Insignificant in this case, means that a correlation was found less than 95% of the time. Significant findings include the fact that all three PATH teachers typically interacted with both groups less than INT teachers and used primarily comprehension monitoring and partial extension with few instances of full cognitive extension (Jordan & Stanovich). This would support the philosophy that student learning is intrinsic since the ability to fully comprehend the material may have been shifted to the learner. Also significant is that teachers in the PATH group used almost exclusively comprehension monitoring with at-risk and exceptional students while using partial and full comprehension with TA students (Jordan & Stanovich).

It can be inferred that because of a belief that exceptional students have a permanent condition, they lack the ability to fully comprehend and contribute meaning unless directly guided by a teacher. In comparison, the INT group interacted twice as much with the at-risk and exceptional students and dialogued in order to gain full comprehension with both groups of students. In regards to self-concept, typically achieving students gave themselves a higher score overall in self-concept than at-risk and exceptional students. However, at-risk and exceptional students of INT teachers rated themselves higher in self-concept than students of PATH teachers (Jordan & Stanovich, 2001). It can be inferred that when exceptional students are able to demonstrate understanding and learning by interacting with their teachers, their self-esteem is positively affected.

This study suggests that teachers' philosophical beliefs have a profound effect on how they interact with students. The PATH teachers think their role to be "tangential" or only slightly effective with at-risk and exceptional students (Jordan & Stanovich, 2001, p. 35) and this belief showed in their patterns of interactions. The study did leave out some pertinent details including ethnicities and personal backgrounds of teachers and students. The self-concept scale appeared to be somewhat questionable especially for at-risk and exceptional students who may have a range of symptoms preventing them from answering 80 questions to the best of their ability. It is also important to note that none of the teachers had special education training. This is a substantial variable to consider because feelings of incompetence or uncertainty may have hindered the PATH teachers ability to communicate with exceptional and at-risk students. With this in mind, the study does suggest a relationship between how assumptions and beliefs affect dialogue and interaction with students. In this case, it illustrated the potentially damaging effects to self-esteem.

Teachers as a Model of Peer Relationships

Researchers have noted a relationship between teacher acceptance of students and peer acceptance (Chang, Liu, Fung, Wang, Wen, & Li, 2007). The next study illustrates how teachers need to become aware of their moderating role in the classroom by facilitating healthy communication among peers. In their study, Aram and Shlak (2008) cited communication as the most necessary tool to prevent poor social relations and increase status. They write, "The use of accepted communication skills in early childhood has been linked to attaining intimate relations, a healthy lifestyle, and stability throughout life" (Aram & Shlak, p. 866). This study which quantitatively analyzed 92 kindergartners

in four classrooms in central Israel, sought to test an intervention strategy based on Imago principles. According to the Imago methodology, trust in relationships is built upon creating a feeling of safety (Aram & Shlak). In Imago, persons are taught to deal with fearful responses to conflict and create positive solutions. For this study, the adult version of Imago was adapted for children. Researchers made comparisons of students' ability to resolve conflict after the intervention and compared these results to a control group of the same age. Teachers in this study were trained in a 12 hour workshop and taught these strategies in their classrooms as part of the overall curriculum from December to May. Sessions for children lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. During this time, students participated in two to three minutes of guided imagery in order to arrive in a "safe place." The purpose of this was so students would be in a relaxed and trusting state of mind in which to answer questions uncensored.

As soon as students reached this "safe place," they were presented with theoretical issues such as "...how does it feel to be contained, when a friend who hurt you hears your frustration, reflects your words, and tries to understand you? How does it feel when you try to contain a friend's frustration? How can one make space for others in one's surroundings, to see and hear them?" (Aram & Shlak, 2008, p. 868). Next, students systematically practice "intentional dialogue" where one student becomes the sender and the other is the receiver who must actively listen to and summarize the sender's message. Finally, during closure, students stand in a circle to share feelings or thoughts about the session. Parents also participated in a two hour workshop one month after the beginning of the intervention.

As measurements for the study, Aram and Shlak (2008) evaluated role play in order to assess communication, conducted interviews with the children and gave a sociometric test in order to assess social skills. Results indicated that compared to the control group, students who took part in the intervention, engaged in longer dialogues between themselves, were more emotionally and cognitively expressive and able to better describe feelings associated with being hurt. Both groups showed progress in their abilities to find effective solutions in order to resolve conflict. However, Aram and Shlak noted that "...the intervention group progressed significantly more than those in the comparison group in their number of conscious references to the story characters' inner worlds...and the number of solutions that the children generated for the conflictual social situations" (p. 875). The intervention group also maintained a higher "...synchronicity in choice of friends" (p. 877).

In light of the findings, it is important to note some of the weaknesses of the study. First, the study was designed, implemented and tested by the researchers themselves. Observational biases could account for more favorable ratings for the intervention group. Also, the students in the control group had an unfair advantage when being asked to participate in exercises which were obviously culturally specific to the intervention group. Students who knew "the rules" of the Imago principles would naturally outwit their counterparts as they were already primed to succeed. In addition, the students were a socioeconomically homogeneous population of middle to upper class status. What this study does offer is one promising method for modeling communication among peers as a protective factor in peer relations. Its effectiveness however would benefit from further study in general and specifically with children in the U.S.

Effects of Building Relationships on Academic Achievement

Research that correlates academic achievement with student–teacher relationships is growing, especially in the wake of school reform and teacher accountability. Robert Pianta, researcher and University of Virginia education professor has conducted extensive research on students in preschool through 5th grade in an attempt to correlate specific teacher qualities with student success. He argues “...only about 25 percent of first through fifth graders are exposed to classrooms offering high levels of instructional and emotional support, even though the vast majority of those teachers fulfills the NCLB (No Child Left Behind) definition of ‘highly qualified’: having full state certification, a bachelor’s degree and competence in subject knowledge and teaching” (Bromley, 2005). The following studies examine the importance of building relationships with students as a critical, though often unmeasured factor correlating with student academic success. The studies are grouped according to general studies of effects of teachers’ emotional interactions with students and specific strategies that have been implemented in schools.

Teacher Emotional Interactions as a Predictor of Student Achievement

The following study by Pianta, Belsky, Vandergrift, Houts and Morrison (2008), examines how students perform better in a child centered environment, where children were observed to be more often on task and engaged in learning. The researchers argue, “It is also clear that the emotional aspects of teacher–child interactions such as teachers’ sensitivity and emotional warmth are associated with achievement gains in first-graders...” (Pianta, et al., p. 368). In one longitudinal study of 791 child participants in ten locations across the United States, researchers observed first, third and fifth grade classrooms. The goal was to record data concerning observed emotional and instructional

support by the teacher and correlate this information with student achievement. Student achievement was measured only in regards to math and reading. Observations occurred during the spring of the child's first, third and fifth grade year and lasted from three to six hours. Observers noted specific activities, teacher behavior and child engagement on tasks. They also rated teacher interactions according to designated classroom dimensions including overcontrol, chaos, positive emotional climate, negative emotional climate, detachment of the teacher, teacher sensitivity, productive use of instructional time, and richness of instructional methods (Pianta, et al.).

Results of the study indicate that typical readers benefited, as evidenced by their reading scores, from higher emotional quality interactions with their teachers. Pianta, et al. (2008) concluded that more time spent on reading instruction was less effective when the emotional quality of the classroom was low. For math achievement, only one significant correlation pertaining to teacher effect could be found for 5th graders. As emotional quality increased, the child's math score increased by approximately two points. Also, as the quantity of math instruction increased for 3rd and 5th graders, scores increased by approximately .2 to .3 points (Pianta, et al.).

When analyzing the study, some positive aspects and potential disadvantages need to be considered. First, the study has a relatively large sample size of 791 diverse students in terms of ethnicity and socioeconomic status across 10 cities in the United States. Twenty four percent of students were children of color and 14% of mothers were single. Also, the average family income was approximately four times the poverty threshold (Pianta, et al., 2008). It is tempting to generalize from these statistics; however, it must be noted that respondents were not chosen totally at random. For example, some

of the criterion of the mother of participants is that she spoke English and resided in a non-violent area within an hour of the research site (Pianta, et al.). This discrimination could have potentially eliminated representation from certain socioeconomic classes and cultures. Another potential drawback to the study is that observations were only conducted once per year for three to six hours. This snapshot of children, although observed in a relatively unbiased fashion limits the conclusions that can be made due to unstudied variables. These include most notably individual developmental levels, temperaments and relational differences with different teachers (as the students were assessed on three different occasions with three different teachers).

Researchers as well, admitted that differences in math achievement for example, could be due to the fact that more instructional time is devoted to math instruction in the 3rd and 5th grade (Pianta, et al., 2008). Lastly, the type of instruction may have influenced how observers rated a teacher's emotional affect. For instance, if students were exposed to particular types of lessons that simply required them to memorize and repeat information; this may have been interpreted as less emotionally responsive. It is interesting that results for reading improvement only occurred for typical and fast readers. Were students who were below average exposed to different methods of instruction that was perceived as uncaring? Despite these questions, the study does note a connection between teacher affect and academic achievement.

Intervention Strategies that Create Emotional Connection

The following studies are specific intervention strategies that have been examined in order to understand how building a classroom community can affect student achievement. One such intervention strategy is the Responsive Classroom (RC) approach

which is "...a set of teaching practices that integrate social and academic learning to children's perceptions of their classroom, and children's academic and social performance over time" (Brock, Nishida, Chiong, Grimm, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008, p. 129). In a 3 year longitudinal project, teachers reported on their use of RC, on participating student's social competence using the Social Skills Rating Scales and academic achievement using the Mock Report Card. Children's perceptions of the classroom were measured through the child-report School Related Attitudes questionnaire. Students consisted of 520 children in six schools in a district in the northeast. Gender was divided approximately in half, 41% of students had reported risk factors which included limited English proficiency and low socioeconomic status. The study examined three cohorts of third graders over a three year time period (Brock, et al.)

Overall, RC teacher practices, (such as emphasizing social and academic curriculum equally; focusing on the way children learn as opposed to what they learn; an awareness of children's cultural background; and stressing cooperative, assertive social skills) were correlated with positive outcomes for students (Brock, et al., 2008). Specifically, teachers who used more RC practices had children with better academic and social behavior and more favorable perceptions in school. However, children's perceptions of the school environment were generally not correlated with academic or social outcomes over time. The researchers state, "...so although one set of teaching practices may have lasting effects on a child's perception of school, these may be overshadowed by the current effects of a new set of teaching practices to which a child is exposed" (Brock, et al., p. 146). This finding is in alignment with previous research which "...indicates that the teacher quality a child encounters in one year has little

relation with teacher quality the following year, even within the same school” (Brock, et al., p. 146). Therefore, it is important for teachers to recognize the value of caring in their teaching so that student’s may realize the consistency of positive results.

There are some important points to consider when looking at this study. First, although the sample was large and diverse in terms of risk factors, it did lack diversity in terms of ethnicity. Sixty eight percent of the population was Caucasian. It also took place in one school district located in the northeast. These statistics and results could be the result of cultural differences due to location and therefore cannot be generalized to fit the entire United States population. Furthermore, the population within the study could have been broken down more effectively in terms of risk factors to note what determinants make RC most effective.

In regards to the study design, teachers self-reported their use of RC practices and could be subject to social desirability bias by possibly answering questions in a more flattering way. Finally, researchers have noted that the child’s current teacher and his or her teaching practices have the most influence on students’ perceptions of school. This is important in regards to noting change over time, from 3rd through 5th grade. It cannot be inferred that RC causes students to gain academically because different contextual aspects in a given year may be the overwhelming factor to student success as opposed to an accumulation of RC practices. Nevertheless, the study does show a relationship between using caring teaching practices and academic achievement with the given population.

Another intervention strategy called Responsive Teaching was examined through qualitatively analyzing teachers on the STAR (Strive to Attain Respect) team at

Washington Middle School. Strahan and Layell (2006) studied over the course of one year, two 7th grade teachers by conducting interviews, observing lessons, and analyzing student work. Researchers noted that students on the STAR team made more progress in reading and math than did the rest of the students at the school. STAR students made 3.3% more gains in reading on the state assessment than did the entire school. STAR students also made about 2% higher gains in math than did the school as a whole.

Observations and interviews with these students' teachers revealed four principals that the STAR team used in order to "beat the odds". 1) Teachers first created a classroom community which included shared responsibility and team building; 2) The environment was student centered which focused on building warm, supportive relationships; 3) In the classroom, strengths were attended to as well as areas for improvement; 4) Teachers created a knowledge-centered environment based on connecting knowledge with real-world experiences (Stahan & Layell, p. 149). Researchers argued that by using these strategies which focus on building authentic relationships, students demonstrated patterns of growth academically that exceeded expectations of average growth for the entire school.

When analyzing this study, there are some important factors to consider. First, as a qualitative study, the researchers did have prolonged engagement by working closely with students as part of the STAR team during the academic year. It would have been even more informative to work with the STAR team over the course of a few years. This would have answered whether results were specific to these 36 students. Also, the researchers, although reviewing student work did not conduct extensive interviews with the students. They focused instead on the teachers and their specific strategies. It would

have offered a more balanced perspective to have received more personal background information on both the students and the teachers. Researchers did state that 80% of students were on free and reduced lunch and that less than half of students in the school were proficient in reading and math but did little to explicate why these factors existed in this area. It can be inferred that poverty created such stresses that any intervention regardless of its supportive structure would have been beneficial. Furthermore, it is difficult to say whether it was only one or a combination of strategies that led to an effect on student achievement. Further analysis and research that weeds out different variables would be beneficial.

Including Culture as a Part of Building Relationships

As previously discussed, diversity in the United States is growing in terms of ethnicities and cultures. Knowing that students may respond and interact differently due to a plethora of competing contexts and experiences allows teachers to build trusting relationships. In addition, by allowing students to bring their culture in the classroom, teachers are able to more fully connect to a student's prior knowledge and background in which to connect new learning. The following studies examine how teachers define culture and consequently interact with students as well as specific strategies used to become a culturally responsive teacher.

How Do Teachers Understand Culture

In a qualitative survey, Joshi, Eberly and Konzal (2005) wanted to find out "...how teachers currently understand their students' family cultures, how they come to these understandings, and how this understanding influences how they reach out to parents" (Joshi, et al., p. 11). Forty participants in central New Jersey, which included

practicing teachers, specialists, and administrators of public and private schools serving children from preschool to fifth grade, were included in the final sample. Ninety-two percent of the respondents were female and 82% were preschool to third grade teachers. Thirty were European American, 11% were African American, 3% (1 each) were Hispanic/Latino and Middle Eastern (Joshi, et al.). The questionnaire contained both open ended questions and rating scale questions and contained two main parts – one asking about parental involvement and the other asked about the teacher’s knowledge of their students’ culture.

Results from the questionnaire indicated an understanding of the importance of parental involvement and knowledge of students’ culture but it was unclear if they actually implemented these strategies with students (Joshi, et al., 2005). For instance, respondents said that written communication and parent conferences were the most commonly used methods to involve parents. However, as the authors of the study point out, it is unclear if the relationship is one of transmitting information or more bidirectional in nature. Also, there appeared to be a discrepancy between what teachers knew about cultural significance and what they actually chose to implement in their curriculum. For example, most teachers described how outward displays of culture such as food and holidays lack significance in learning, yet these outward displays were what they most incorporated and asked information about from parents (Joshi, et al.).

This study was a preliminary study designed to glean more information in order to narrow the parameters of focus for subsequent research. It therefore lacked obvious details as to why respondents answered the way they did. Also, the study consisted of volunteers who were predominantly white. It would have been interesting to compare

perceptions of cultural understandings from a more diverse population. Researchers also appeared somewhat presumptuous in making conclusions; stating that teachers "...lack the ability to interpret [their] knowledge into practices" (Joshi, et al., 2005, p. 15). Based on the limitations of the study which included broad and subjective questions, it seemed a rather strong statement to make without further investigation. The authors of this study agreed that more research was called for which prompted phase two which will be presented next.

In 2007, Eberly, Joshi and Konzal developed an interview protocol which consisted of 10 lead questions that resulted from the previous survey discussed above. The questions concerned four main themes which included: "...ways in which family values and beliefs impact learning; ways of communicating with and involving parents from diverse cultures, specific questions participants would like to ask parents about their cultural practices; and specific needs for professional development" (Eberly, et al., 2007, p. 12). Researchers created two main focus groups whose discussions were tape recorded, then transcribed and cut and pasted into a reader's theater script. One focus group consisting of 10 members was predominantly white with one Asian American. The other was more diverse and included seven European Americans, two African American, one Hispanic Latino and one West Indian. All participants were female and contained a mix of teachers, administrators and specialists in public and private education.

Researchers noticed some major themes as a result of the discussions. First, defining culture is a "...complex construction that is contextually based in time, place, and experience" (Eberly, et al., 2007, p. 15). Secondly, even in the face of superficial understandings about culture, some participants still tried to make generalizations, while

others looked for similarities and some exposed biases. Next, researchers noticed how some participants had trouble distinguishing between culture and class and made generalizations accordingly. For instance, "...participants tended to interpret...parents' actions as evidence of 'not caring' and judged them as such, rather than trying to understand them from the parents' perspectives" (Eberly, et al., p. 22). Also, interestingly, researchers found that while the more diverse focus group appeared to gain a deeper level of understanding, the more homogeneous group "...seemed to think in terms of 'fixing' parents and families from different cultural groups so that they more readily reflected middle-class" (p. 23). However, the more diverse group was also more apt to misinterpret each other's meaning. Finally, both focus groups discussed how to reach out to parents from different cultures. They described being authentic and sincere, asking for information instead of telling, researching students' backgrounds, calling home with good news as well as bad, being flexible when scheduling appointments and offering parent education.

This study suggests that although it is important for teachers to learn theory about diversity, it is not the lone solution. Teachers from a predominantly European American background may lack sufficient exposure to and dialogue with colleagues and parents from different backgrounds. This in turn can create misunderstandings and challenges to communication. One strength of the study is the use of a reader's theater script which allows an audience to interpret the data. This type of research may serve as a protective factor against bias when interpreting qualitative data. Researchers were also open in acknowledging their own lenses as members of a privileged group when interpreting the data (Eberly, et al., 2005). Although these results are provocative, the sample size was

small, with little details about the participants other than their ethnicities. Seeing that one of the main misconceptions was equating socioeconomic status with culture, it would be interesting to uncover more of the participants' personal backgrounds including socioeconomic status and exposure to diverse cultures outside of the classroom. Despite these limitations, the study does propose that teachers who receive training in diversity may still hold major misconceptions as the following study further reports.

At Florida State University, Pappamihel (2004) gathered data about how multiculturally sensitive undergraduate students in an Early Childhood program were. Of the 28 participants, only one considered herself multicultural "...having been born in another country but moving to the United States as a young child" (Pappamihel, 2004, p. 542). Similarly, no students assessed themselves as fluent in any other language but English. Pappamihel used a short questionnaire administered through email which asked for differences in how they would show caring toward a future student versus an English as a Second Language (ESL) student.

Interestingly, Pappamihel's study was based upon researcher Dr. Milton Bennett who created the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett & Hammer, 1998). In this model, there are six stages of development which rate a person's reactions to a person of another culture. The first three stages are considered ethnocentric and include denial, defensiveness and minimization of cultural differences. The last three stages are termed ethnorelative, "...meaning that one's own culture is experienced in the context of other cultures" (Bennett & Hammer). At this point, a person is either in the acceptance stage, adaptive to other cultures or thought to be integrated and able to move easily between different world views. According to the present study, most participants

were in the minimization stage (Pappamihiel, 2004). Other results suggested that most students expressed no difference in how they would demonstrate caring to ESL students versus non-ESL students. Those that did express a distinction could only name superficial accommodations. Furthermore, some students noted how they would give physical affection to all students despite their cultural background (Pappamihiel).

This study does support the notion that some preservice teachers may lack adequate preparation for working in diverse schools. The study had many limitations with a small homogenous sample and lack of pertinent data concerning student's backgrounds. The study was also based on rather broad questions that lacked sufficient detail concerning context and background information of these hypothetical students. For these reasons, it is difficult to draw any strong conclusions from this study. What is suggested, similar to Eberly, et al. (2007) is the need for interaction and discussions with diverse populations in order to uncover biases that create ethnocentric attitudes. In the meantime, some intervention strategies that help teachers become more culturally responsive to their students have already been studied by researchers.

Strategies Used to Establish a Culturally Responsive Classroom

In 2007, Bondy, Ross, Galligane, and Hambacher asked what strategies novice teachers could use in order to establish Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM) during the first day of school. CRCM involves the following guidance for teachers: 1) understanding the systems of social and political privilege that exist; 2) know that classroom behavior is culturally defined; 3) developing a knowledge base of students' cultural backgrounds; 4) managing behavior in a culturally appropriate manner; and 5) creating a caring classroom community (Bondy, et al., 2007, p. 327). Qualitative

data was collected from three female novice teachers (less than five years teaching experience) in three classrooms. The authors of this study picked these teachers specifically because they wanted to observe classrooms characterized by "...respectful interactions, a calm tone, and a clear focus on academic work" (Bondy, et al., p. 332). The study took place at two elementary schools, located in a small city. Over 90% of the students receive free or reduced lunch and 90% are African American. The ethnicities of the teachers included one European American, one African American, and one Asian American. Researchers videotaped the first two hours of the first day of school and later conducted interviews with the three teachers.

Researchers noticed similar patterns in all three classrooms. First, the teachers communicated to students the importance of building relationships and creating a classroom community. They talked to students with genuineness; sharing about themselves and having them get to know one another (Bondy, et al., 2007). Teachers established expectations of behaviors using clear, concrete language and explained a rationale behind the rules. Furthermore, teachers expressed a "you can do it" positive attitude toward their students (Bondy, et al.). Teachers were for the most part calm but also insistent on having students do what was asked by calmly reminding them of the consequences of not adhering to the established expectations (Bondy, et al.).

Communicating in a humorous way, using familiar words and expressions and referencing popular culture were also important ways for teachers to bond with their students. The discourse pattern used called for choral responses while teachers gave straightforward directives (Bondy, et al., 2007). For example, one of the teachers pointed to a sign on the wall explaining that "...whenever you feel down during the school

day...I want you to look up here on the wall...Let's read them" (Bondy, et al., p. 340). Students would then read what was on the sign together.

The study seems to support the notion of establishing a caring classroom community. In this case there was a predominance of African American students which denoted the need for a particular teaching style. Delpit's study (as cited in Bondy, et al., 2007) found that "...students of color respond to authoritative classroom management because they expect a teacher to act with authority. If a teacher does not, the students, failing to recognize authority as being solely associated with the teacher's position, become confused and do not conform to rules and expectations" (p. 328). This begs the questions of how to be culturally responsive in a more diverse classroom. Overall, the quality of the study was high, using peer-debriefing during the collaborative data analysis and choosing teachers of diverse backgrounds. The obvious drawback is the narrowness of the research question which only leads to more questions. Namely, the lack of prolonged engagement questions how students and teachers will interact after they have grown more comfortable in the relationship. The idea remains clear however, that teachers must be aware of differing cultural needs.

Teacher Discourse Strategies

Teachers, as an authority in the classroom have the important task of influencing the discourse of the classroom and have the power of deciding what knowledge is presented. The following studies explore language and communication patterns that teachers and students exhibit in the classroom. First discussed is the most common type of dialogue pattern between students and teachers. Next, dialogue that occurs when teachers allow students to facilitate their own discussions; how teachers can encourage

more peer to peer interactions; and strategies teachers have used to create more discussion and interaction in the classroom. The section ends with studies examining cultural differences in communication and non-verbal strategies teachers use in the classroom.

Common Methods to Facilitate Dialogue in the Classroom

One of the most commonly used types of discourse in the classroom is called Initiation-Reply-Evaluation (IRE) (Moguel, 2003). In this type of interaction, the teacher facilitates discussion by initiating the conversation, usually in the form of a question. Students in turn, respond to the question, and wait for the teacher to evaluate. An example of a basic IRE sequence is as follows:

- I Teacher: Um why do you think that would be better than each child carrying his own?
- R Student: Cause that's ah, that's a job for them
- E Teacher: Yes, it would be a job. (Hogelucht, 2004, p. 5)

This phrasing can and often is extended by the teacher as shown in the following:

- I Teacher: See the...
- R Student 1: Tractors.
- E Teacher: the, yes, tractors, it says mmm...
- R Student 1: Tractors.
- E Teacher: It, it, but it is a tractor, but the word I wrote here, I didn't write tractor. But I wrote a word that, another name for tractor that starts with "mm".
- R Student 2: Mmmmmm.
- E Teacher: It starts with "mm" Patricia yes.
- I Teacher: I called the tractor a "mmm..."
- R Student 3: Machine.

E Teacher: Machine, Rafael good. I called it a machine.
(p. 7)

In the IRE model, when the student is not giving the proper response, the teacher relies on several methods to elicit it. These include repeating, simplifying the question or prompting as in the above example (Moguel, 2003).

In a small qualitative study Hogelucht (1994) analyzed dialogue from one elementary classroom in California according to the IRE pattern. The dialogue, which was fifty minutes in length, included twelve children plus the teacher during story time. One of the main tasks of Hugelucht's study was to examine the role of teacher as facilitator. This role was defined as "keeping students on track" in regards to the discussion; seeing how the talk itself orients the task; and how the word "okay" was used to get back on task (Hogelucht, 1994, p. 11). Hogelucht found that the actual classroom dialogue was more complex than the simple or extended IRE sequence and warranted further study. For instance, in the study, the researcher noticed a series of two to three initiations followed by a response and evaluation by the teacher. Students were often kept on track and oriented to the task by use of voice. The teacher used an animated voice to orient students to the context of the song. She also used "okay" as a means of garnering attention back to the task after answering a student's "off topic" question.

This study's limitations included lack of prolonged engagement showing changes over time, detailed information about the participants and a larger sample size. Its contributions are the questions posed at the end. For instance, she notes that adherence to the IRE sequence may be attributable to the age and grade of the student. Do older students tend to get off track more than younger students? These types of parameters to

the conversation; however, are exactly why some researchers are critiquing the IRE sequence.

Facilitating “Off Track” Student Dialogue

The notion of “getting off track” has been studied by researcher Anne Dyson (1987) who found that students may actually be engaging in intellectually demanding tasks. Specifically, Dyson observed and qualitatively analyzed peer to peer conversation of kindergartners through second graders “...in an urban magnet school on the West Coast” (Dyson, p. 399). The school had a wide range of ethnic diversity and included students who were White, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, and mixed ethnicities. Dyson, observed one teacher, Margaret’s kindergarten and first/second grade classroom during language/arts instruction on average two times a week for approximately five months and the following year for four months. Although all students were observed, eight were chosen as case students based on their normalcy both academically and emotionally.

Dyson based her study on a Vygotskian principle which states that verbalized interactions within a social context follow a general pattern of development. Vygotsky states (as cited in Dyson, 1987) that “...consciousness and control appear only at a late stage in the development of a function, after it has been used and practiced unconsciously and spontaneously” (p. 398). Therefore, Dyson infers that students’ potential can be best developed through spontaneous interactions. Margaret’s classroom periods revolved around journal writing where children were encouraged to draw and write stories. Dyson noted Margaret’s tolerance of talk and only told students who were loud or bothering other students to “get to work” (p. 400).

Dyson (1987) categorized several patterns of interactions that she noticed amongst students. First, students unprovoked by the teacher often collaborated with one another and commented on each others stories. Dyson called this "...stretching the boundaries of another's world" (Dyson, 1987, p. 403). She also noted how the social relationships she witnessed helped to provide emotion, motives and feelings to imaginary characters.

As she completes a journal entry about a girl who lived under a rainbow, Mitzi talks with her peer Sonia about her upcoming birthday/slumber party.

Sonia: Where am I going to sleep?

Mitzi: Me and Bessie are gonna sleep up on the top [of Mitzi's bunk].

Sonia: Oh. Who's gonna sleep on the bottom? Your brother? Where am I gonna sleep Mitz?

Mitzi immediately begins writing a new journal entry; this entry includes the names of all the children invited to her party...

Sonia: Mitzi, you love me. [very pleased]

Mitzi: I said like, not I love. [firmly]

And Mitzi begins to draw a picture of her friends, each bearing a present. (Dyson, p. 405)

Students in this class often critiqued each others work based on consistencies in logic and became audience members to peers. Dyson also noticed changes as children progressed from kindergarten to second grade. Whereas in kindergarten, reality and imagination overlapped, by second grade students naturally became more conscious of themselves as narrators of a story.

What this study illustrated most profoundly was that children's peer to peer interactions can be meaningful and inherently purposeful. As the author noted however, this was one group of peers who seemed to get along well with one another. One of the

reasons for this, which is not discussed, may be looping. Looping occurs when students are taught by the same teacher for two or more grade levels. At the end of this period, the teacher returns to the lowest grade level with a new group of students. This type of history with one another could serve as an important variable. Dyson exercised prolonged engagement and triangulation of data by using field notes as well as audio taping class proceedings. In her second four month long observation, Dyson was joined by two other colleagues, which may have prevented observer bias. This study does show one type of teacher facilitation that is minimally invasive and allows students to guide one another's thinking.

Facilitating Peer to Peer Dialogue

May Postholm (2005) asked what teachers actually did in order to facilitate peer to peer dialogue as well as interacting with texts and other relevant material. In her qualitative study, she used observations, conducted interviews and tape recorded classroom interactions as evidence for analysis. Postholm looked at one classroom of twenty-nine 9th graders in a rural community in Norway. The total fieldwork session lasted five weeks with six hours of observation per week. The six hours were comprised of two 3 hour project sessions (Postholm).

Postholm found that teachers did several key things to facilitate dialogue in the classroom. One, the teacher relayed to her students that their opinions mattered by allowing them to choose their own topics of interest and form their own study groups. Furthermore, she facilitated the skill of shared management that was one of their goals in group work as well as utilizing research, social, academic and aesthetic skills. The teacher used a holistic model which captured the varying strengths of her students. The

researcher witnessed that language was used extensively as a tool for collaboration in the classroom. Students monitored themselves and each other in order to coordinate their tasks (Postholm, 2005).

When comparing the research by Postholm (2007) to the research of Dyson (1987), it can be seen how student's collaboration may be useful for all age groups. Postholm's study was particularly strong in revealing personal bias. She noted at the beginning that she had a social constructivist lens but nevertheless came to this study with an "open" mind. She also used member checks, triangulation of data and visited the classroom prior to data collection so that students would be familiar with her presence. One factor that may have influenced results is cultural. In Norway, students are encouraged to facilitate project work for about 20% of each week (Postholm). Students may have already been conditioned to the rules of engagement and dialogue. This past history may be an important factor in noting what the teacher actually needed to do in order to create this atmosphere. Where students have been less exposed to this type of independence, teachers may have needed to provide more scaffolding. While Postholm's study looked at peer to peer interactions, the next study examines how teachers can create more interactions with their students.

Facilitating Quality Interactions with Students

In another study, Smith and Higgins (2006) qualitatively examined the types of patterns they noticed with teachers who created more interactions with their students. As part of a larger quantitative study investigating interaction patterns of teachers with their students when using interactive whiteboards versus without during literacy and numeracy lessons in the United Kingdom primary classrooms, this study qualitatively analyzed ten

out of the original 213 that were taped. These lessons were chosen because the distribution of talk was more even, in-depth, exploratory and speculative (Smith & Higgins).

Some definite patterns arose in those classrooms where students illustrated more open rather than closed responses. For the purposes of this study, researchers described open questions to be open "...only if the teacher accepts more than one answer" (Smith & Higgins, 2006, p. 490). First teachers encouraged peer to peer feedback by asking students to review their peer's work. This distributed the exchanges more evenly so that student's opinions were seen as valuable. Teacher's also asked for agreement and disagreement from other students as can be seen by this example from the study. The teacher has just turned to the class to ask the students to give feedback to their classmates.

1. Pupil 1: We kind of saw it all put together, and the good thing was, was that they turned, you were just telling them something and they took their ideas and they got [unclear] to be the swords, some whiteboards to a, a, wall, the people to be trees.
2. Teacher: OK so they thought around the problems of how am I going to show the moon, cos' in the film his eyes go 'ooh' like that don't they [gestures]. What else did they do well?
3. Pupil 2: It's the thing, ehm, because the mum and the dad were pulling them back you could see them trying to grab hold of each other.
4. Teacher: So what – go on. (Smith & Higgins, p. 496)

In this instance, we can see how the teacher paraphrases and encourages students to elaborate on their own responses. In this way, teachers validate students by rephrasing their answers (Smith & Higgins).

There was also reciprocal engagement with teachers responding to students in a more conversational manner. This was demonstrated by commenting on how the

student's remark was personally relevant to them. In one example, the student explains to the teacher about "laser" guitar strings which are useful when learning to play because they do not snap. The teacher responds by relating this to her sister who plays the guitar and becomes extremely upset when her guitar strings break (Smith & Higgins, 2006).

Lastly, the study found that teachers allowed themselves to be guided by the pupil's ideas. Teachers were flexible with student dialogue. Sometimes they turned student responses into questions and validated students by suggesting their idea be used as in this example.

1. Pupil 1: You could rotate it and then that would fit.
2. Teacher: Ooh rotate it then.
(Smith & Higgins, 2006, p. 499)

It was noted by the researchers that these reactions demonstrated how the teacher acted as a co-participant rather than an expert. Some caution is again noted because this study takes place in the United Kingdom where differences in culture could account for differences in interactions. Also, its main purpose was to test classroom interaction with the use of interactive whiteboards. Could this fact serve as another variable in the study? For instance, it was not mentioned if the teachers in this qualitative study were using interactive whiteboards or not. One interesting finding however, was that in general, "...the more interactive the lesson, (in a social-constructivist sense), the less the interactive whiteboard was used" (Smith & Higgins, p. 489). Despite these limitations, it is still possible to infer that the ways in which teachers respond to and converse with their students can either close off students to further interactions or open up dialogue.

In another qualitative study conducted by Hanh Nguyen (2007), Nguyen found that rapport with students was a mutual exchange and therefore most successful "...when

there are active reciprocal actions to initiate and maintain it” (Nguyen, p. 296). Nguyen used conversation analysis to uncover the interactional resources teachers used to achieve both instructional tasks and rapport with students. Furthermore, he asked what effect rapport building had on performance tasks. One 55 minute English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) class was videotaped and transcribed for analysis. Participants consisted of sixteen international students from an advanced ESOL grammar class designed to prepare students for college in the United States. The students responded positively to the teacher’s interactional strategies by smiling, laughing, self-correcting and paying attention.

The teacher’s strategies used “...a wide range of verbal and non-verbal contextualization cues, including lexical items, special grammatical structures, formulaic expressions, speech tempo, speech volume, emphasis, intonation, facial expressions, body language and vocal effects” (Nguyen, 2007, p. 298). The teacher employed many of these strategies when student’s face, or dignity was at risk such as when calling students to attention. By using humor as well as his rapport building strategies throughout the lesson, it softened potentially difficult times. Because the observation took place over only one class period and lacked prolonged engagement, however, it did leave the possibility that other factors, such as being watched by a camera affected their interactions. This was also an ESOL classroom and the strategies used may not be generalizable to all students. For instance many ESOL classes purposely use more facial expressions and physical movement as a means of communicating on multiple levels. Nguyen does point out the many variations in teacher presence and performance that affect teacher–student relationships.

Using Affinity Seeking Strategies as a Means to Build Relationships

McCrosky (1985) examined to what extent are affinity seeking strategies used in the elementary and secondary classroom and how frequently are each of these strategies used. The basis for his research rested on Bell and Daly's 1984 study which created a 25 strategy typology chart. Some examples in this chart included physical attractiveness, presenting an interesting self and confirming the self concept of the student. The common thread for all of these strategies is "...the teacher in attempting to get a student to like him/her presents self as..." (McCroskey, p. 11). In the present qualitative study, McCrosky asked 311 elementary and secondary teachers enrolled in communication instruction classes to fill out a questionnaire which asked whether they observed other teachers using these affinity seeking strategies in their classrooms. Some of the affinity seeking behaviors included altruism, expressing leadership, being dynamic and enthusiastic, presenting self as an equal with students, being comfortable in the classroom, giving up control to students in some situations and following conversational rules in accordance to culture. (McCroskey). Subjects were asked to reference other teachers rather than themselves so as to reduce bias.

Results from the survey indicated that using affinity seeking strategies in the classroom may not differ from use in other contexts. There may be a general hierarchy of communication used across a variety of contexts (McCroskey, 1985). This study suggests that "...status in a relationship may have an extremely strong impact on interactants' choices of affinity seeking- strategies. Some may be effective for superiors (or subordinates) in one context but not in another" (McCroskey, p. 7). The strategies most commonly employed in schools were physical attractiveness, sensitivity, eliciting other's

disclosures, trustworthiness, non-verbal immediacy, conversational rule-keeping, dynamism and listening. In the lower grades, dynamism [the teacher presents themselves as a dynamic, active and enthusiastic person.], sensitivity [“...the teacher acts in a warm, empathic manner toward the student to communicate caring and concern. They also show sympathy to the students’ problems and anxieties, spend time working at understanding how the student sees their life, and accepts what the student says as an honest response.”] (p. 11), and non-verbal immediacy [teacher signals interest in a student through non-verbal cues.], were shown to have the highest rate of occurrence.

This study clearly has some weaknesses, in that the information on participants was lacking. That is, no mention of differences in ethnicity or socioeconomic status was included. Also, McCrosky discusses the possible correlation between status and the type of affinity seeking behavior used but doesn’t elaborate on his definition of status. The reliability of a questionnaire is also subject to attack, being that it is dependent on the subject’s memory of past events. The study seems to support the notion that for elementary students at least, empathy, sensitivity and using body language to denote interest are commonly used. This study though, may lack cultural sensitivity when engaging students, as these may not be universal constructs of appropriate interaction.

Facilitating Dialogue in a Diverse Classroom

In a 2006 qualitative study, Lynne Wiltse asked what effect the social structure of the classroom community has on subduing or encouraging participation in discussion, how the discourse patterns affected opportunities for language appropriation and what role the teacher had in limiting the marginalization of students. Ethnographic data was collected from a ninth grade language arts classroom located in an inner-city public

elementary/junior high school in western Canada. The ethnicity of the school population consisted of 45% Cambodian heritage, 30% Vietnamese and Chinese and 15% First Nations. A large number of these students were considered ESL. The classroom under investigation consisted of 22 registered students, of which only a smaller core attended. The majority were male and of Cambodian descent. Over the course of a year, Wiltse visited the classroom twice a week, becoming a participant observer of classroom interactions while writing contextual fieldnotes, conducting audio-taped interviews and observing students in various other contexts and instructive work (Wiltse).

Class proceedings however, necessitated a change from the original research questions. Wiltse, expecting to document rich dialogue, only noted the lack thereof. Their teacher Emily, although organizing classroom activities in a variety of ways, classroom periods typically consisted of giving out instructional directions at the beginning of class before students went to work in their usual configurations which were gender and ethnically segregated (Wiltse, 2006). Emily cited the need to respect cultural differences and noted how Asian students are typically silent out of respect for authority. Even when placed into small groups to work on tasks, students were reluctant to speak.

In response, Wiltse researched some possible solutions to the dilemma this situation created. On the one hand, students' cultures were being respected but on the other, they were not being adequately prepared for mainstreaming practices that require language acquisition skills which correlate with academic achievement. Wiltse concluded that the creation of a "third space" may be what is missing in the classroom. This third space would serve as a neutral ground where teachers and students could meet. Wiltse surmised that this third space "...would necessitate students taking small steps out of

their comfort zones, at the same time providing a safe place in which to do so” (Wiltse, 2006, p. 216). Although Wiltse used thick description in her analysis and conducted interviews in order to gain multiple perspectives, a situation in which a high population of Cambodian students are in one classroom may be atypical, especially here in the United States. Her conclusions, however, may still be relevant in a classroom containing diversity, prejudice and segregation in the classroom.

The idea of meeting in the middle was what researcher Nancy Ainsworth (2001) suggested as well in regards to serving Native American students. Ainsworth re-analyzed information from a previous study which examined classroom discourse in 60 mainstream classrooms across Georgia, Alabama, and Florida, to the Native American child. In Johnson’s 1979 study (as cited in Ainsworth, 2001), although classrooms observed ranged from first through 10th grade, he noticed all teachers and students interacted in a similar way regardless of ethnicity. He called this particular speech pattern Classroom Discussion Cycle (CDC), which is similar to the IRE pattern previously discussed.

Johnson termed his CDC as Solicitation, Response and Reaction by the teacher. Johnson however, analyzed the solicitation portion further by noting two actions – the question posed making the choice of who will respond. The choice of who will respond can also be broken down into three categories – by teacher invitation, student volunteer, or student self-selection. Johnson notes also how these actions can be made non-verbally, through short utterances or pauses. This shows how every act in speech is rule governed and able to be interpreted by the audience (Ainsworth, 2001, p. 134).

After re-examining Johnson's study, Ainsworth applied his conclusions in order to develop her own. She writes that just as there are different language structures and rules of grammar, speech moves and interactions will vary from culture to culture (Ainsworth, 2001). Synthesizing Johnson's study with another researcher, Phillips (1972), who carried out extensive research on Native American patterns of speech, Ainsworth noted how the CDC pattern may be less successful with this population. Phillips observed that many Native American students were reluctant to speak when teachers engage students in question response participant structures. Students were much more apt to participate fully during collaborative group work. Ainsworth notes that the CDC may be an alien structure to the Indian child as their culture bases learning on silent observation, cooperatively carrying out tasks with other relatives and finally once a skill is mastered; performed in front of an audience.

In contrast, CDC calls for students to be in the spotlight and control is utilized by the teacher. Ainsworth describes the need to find a center where group work becomes a central focus while also exposing students to CDC so they would be able to learn in mainstream schools. It can be inferred from both of these studies, the importance of knowing and becoming sensitive to student's differing cultural needs. Not all types of discourse patterns will work with all types of students. The next study examines how teachers may need to modify their engagement patterns when working with students at different academic levels.

Sean Kelly (2007) examined the effects of dialogic instruction on student engagement in the classroom and included specifically how teachers engaged with diverse students. Dialogic instruction involves creating a discussion that allows for a free

exchange of information among its participants. Using quantitative measurements which included observational data, teacher questionnaires, student achievement tests and background checks, Kelly asked if the effects of dialogic instruction were different for lower achieving versus higher achieving students and if the teacher's attitudes towards diverse students affected the teacher's behavior during question and answer sessions. Furthermore, he wanted to know if there was a difference between the effects of dialogic instruction on student engagement based on the type of instruction. Participants consisted of 2051 seventh and eighth grade students in 117 classrooms in Wisconsin and New York State (Kelly).

Results suggest that classroom motivational climates may be more complex than previously thought. Individualized instruction and high task autonomy was negatively correlated with dialogic instruction (Kelly, 2007). Kelly reasoned that this may be due to the fact that teachers who use whole group instruction may be less skilled at dialogic instruction. Experienced teachers are only slightly more likely to score high on attitude measurements but attitudes did not make a substantial difference in the nature of discourse between teacher and student. Analysis suggests that students may learn best in environments that offer a variety of evaluative practices. The study reported a general phenomenon – that the ways in which teachers call on students tends to reduce the inequality of participation in class. For example, by using a mix of embedded question cycles where groups of questions elicit "...more and more detail or elaboration on a single topic" and conjunctive questions which "encourage several pupils to provide 'horizontal' responses to the same questions", teachers can increase the diversity of participation in the classroom (Kelly, p. 345). Also, diverse students do benefit from

dialogic instruction although they may not be vocal in participation. There were inequalities in classroom participation due to skills differentials. When teachers were more directive in instruction and tasks, levels among high and low achieving students was more evenly distributed.

This study has several implications. First, dialogic instruction is important because it lowers anxiety caused by social comparative evaluations where the student is at risk of receiving negative feedback. It is also important to look at the types of questions being asked. Are they higher order or lower order questions and how much pause time is being given for students? The teacher has the potential to create an atmosphere that equalizes participation in the classroom. One of the main weaknesses of the study is its lack of statistical significance. The correlations discussed were considered weak; the majority being less than .10 with no correlation greater than .30 (Kelly, 2007, p. 343). This means that relationships did not exist 95% of the time as with significant patterns. One problem may have been that there were too many variables to consider. Nevertheless, the study does pose some interesting suggestions on how to instruct heterogeneous classrooms. In addition to speech patterns, there are also non-verbal cues which the next study focused on exclusively.

Non-Verbal Communication Demonstrated by Teachers

In a 2004 study, Kristin Adalsteindottir wanted to find out what non-verbal behaviors teachers exhibited in small and large schools in Iceland in order to see how these behaviors affected practices in the classroom. One teacher per school was chosen from ten small schools and ten large schools in northeast Iceland. The average class size in small schools was 9.6 as opposed to 17.8 in large schools. Seven classes in the small

school were multi-grade and 1 was multi-grade in the large school. Teachers were observed in two 40 minute sessions and quantitatively measured on a 1 – 5 scale on such communication techniques as availability and body posture. Field notes were also analyzed and semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to obtain qualitative data. The focus for the qualitative portion sought to gain information about teachers' understanding of pupils' needs, teachers' understanding of their own verbal and non-verbal behavior, teachers' beliefs about their classroom interactions, relationships with parents and colleagues and what teachers thought about their own teaching (Adalsteindottir).

Results from Adalsteindottir's study indicated few significant differences in teacher behavior as determined by the type of school, size of the classroom, teacher's experience or gender (Adalsteindottir, 2004, p. 104). After analyzing the field notes, however, differences in teacher behavior were found that correlated to teaching experience and gender. Researchers categorized these differences as empathic [teachers who showed encouraging behavior and demonstrated attention to diverse needs in the classroom], non-empathic [established order in the classroom and used whole group instruction before working with individual students], and un-committed [provided the same task to all pupils at the same time regardless of students' individual needs] (Adalsteindottir).

Of the 20 teachers in this study, 11 were considered empathic, 2 were non-empathic and 7 were deemed non-committed. There were more non-committed and non-empathic teachers in smaller classes. Also male teachers and longer tenured teachers were considered non-committed and non-empathic. Teachers who were assessed

empathic displayed positive qualities by communicating a relaxed state, were attentive, listened to students' needs and used a low voice. Teachers were much more likely to display these traits when they demonstrated a clear understanding of how their behavior has an impact on their students.

From this study, it can be observed how important self-awareness in teaching. Teachers who didn't have this understanding seemed to lack, according to the researchers; empathy for their students. There were some drawbacks however, to the study. One of the main arguments in the study is that older teachers and male teachers show more non-committed and non-empathic behaviors, which were qualified largely by how they met differing needs in the classroom. However, in Iceland differentiation is not the norm. The study called this type of instruction "rare" in all 20 schools (Adalsteindottir, 2004). Therefore, these types of behaviors may be culturally relative to the environment. Also, the disparity of the quantitative and qualitative results indicates the need for further study. What this study did support however, was that teachers who are aware of their effect on students created the most empathic, non-verbal communication with their students.

Teachers Facilitating Power Relations in the Classroom

In every community, a hierarchy exists based on institutional and social status (Candela, 1999, p. 142). Institutional status constitutes qualities such as "...sex, age, nationality, race, family relations, occupation, institutional position, economics, marital status, education, and other factors that are more or less fixed" (Candela, p. 142). From these social variables, ranks are established that are challenged when people take such actions as bidding for the floor, negotiating rules, interrupting each other, and

overlapping another's voice in a conversation (Candela). Diamond (as cited in Candela) suggests that although hierarchies are created by societal norms, microanalysis has revealed that "...individuals do contest power and compete for leadership roles in every verbal interaction" (p. 143).

Prior research has found that the IRE response is used a majority of time in the classroom, proving that teachers do most of the talking because they speak two thirds of the time during the initiation and evaluation stage (Moguel, 2003). It has been suggested from these findings that teachers therefore control classroom talk by asking questions, orienting student responses and evaluating answers (Candela, 1999, p. 140). Teacher control has been correlated with inhibiting student responses and training students to answer with the "correct" response (Candela).

The following studies look at power relations in the classroom and what specific communication patterns emerge between students and their teachers. The section begins with studies that examine how specific discourse elements like turn taking and framing questions contribute to the power dynamic of the classroom. This section will also inspect who really holds power in the classroom and then with specific regard to the IRE discourse pattern. Finally, this section ends with studies asking how teachers can legitimate their role of authority in the classroom, the differences curriculum can make in who controls classroom discourse, differences between teacher led and student led discourse and a study that looks at students' perspectives of power relations.

How Teachers and Students Take Turns in Conversation

Contrary to research stating that teachers do most of the talking, Maroni, Gnisci and Pontecorvo's (2008) qualitative study on turn taking in the classroom, found that

students actually talked over half the time and that participation was largely influenced by age. Twelve classrooms "...spread all over Italy, consisting of second, third and fourth graders participated in the study (Maroni, et al., p. 62). Classrooms were videotaped during a two week period and the study overall analyzed 15 hours of tape. Teachers were asked to interrupt student's reading in the same places and to ask children to suggest possible "...prosecutions, soliciting a general discussion" (p. 64). The fourth grade class had the highest number of turn taking in the study but these classrooms were also recorded for the longest period of time. In general, children have more turns at speaking than the teacher (a little over fifty percent in most cases). Latching, which is perfect synchronization between turns is the most common turn-transition followed by paused with interruptions. Participation as a whole increased from the second to fourth grade.

This study suggests that turn taking in the classroom is learned and students become more adept at it with time. It also infers that turn taking is an important skill to use in the classroom in order to lower the incidence of interruptions and encourage others to pay attention when someone is speaking. Because this study was conducted in Italy however with an uneven amount of time spent in each classroom, some precaution should be exercised in terms of generalizing to students from the United States. Another consideration is that different personalities of students may interact differently with the teacher. A longitudinal study examining the same cohort of children for two or more years would have been helpful. This would add more data which considers personalities as well as developmental levels. The study does suggest however, that communication is a skill that needs to be modeled for students before they can take over in the discussion.

One of the skills that teachers model is questioning. The next study examines how teachers frame their questions for students.

How Teachers Frame Their Questions

Piera Margutti (2006), in a qualitative study, asked how the relationship between the construction of shared knowledge and social order of the classroom was affected by how the teacher framed their questions. Using conversation analysis, Margutti sought to examine the relationship between teacher's questions and student's responses. This study took place in a major industrial city in northern Italy and consisted of ten lessons from two 3rd year groups and their four teachers. All the teachers in this study used a teacher led form of instruction and classroom management style. After decoding approximately 80 hours of videotape from the two classrooms, Margutti found that knowing an answer was dependent on how teachers framed the questions.

The first strategy used was called the Eliciting Completion Device (ECD), which is a form of questioning that uses the teacher's intonation and sound stretching voice techniques to format the content of the item that will be missing (Margutti, 2006). Another technique used is the alternative interrogative type of questioning which asks students to choose from two options. For example, "Does the temperature rise or fall?" (Margutti, p. 328). The teacher clues students into the correct answer by the prosodic devices and the syntactical structure of the question. Teachers further limited student choices down when asking yes/no questions. In this case, teachers may use quantifiers which denote a certain amount such as "none, always, all." These act as intensifiers to express what the correct answer is.

The main conclusion from this study was that teachers' assumptions about how answerable a question is, largely impacted the way they posed the questions (Margutti, 2006). In other words, teachers used various strategies –like pausing at the beginning of a question, thereby creating a suspended intonation which lets students know the answer is not an immediate one, for example in order to gain the proper response. In light of this research, it would seem that teacher's expectations play an important role in questioning. This study however, only contained a week's worth of dialogue and may be missing the broader context and application of these questions. Also, the study took place in Italy and differences in the language may account for variations in prosodic devices as well as syntax structures from English. This study does however suggest that teachers' perceptions of student abilities changed the dynamic of their questioning. When they perceived students to lack understanding in a particular area for example, the scope of questioning narrowed to choosing between two answers.

It can also be inferred that teachers were making changes to their questions in order to arrive at a particular answer. Questioning is a powerful tool most often used by the teacher to open up dialogues. Because the teacher is the initiator, does it mean that he or she holds the dominant position in classroom talk? The following study asks whether teachers really hold most of the power in the classroom.

Teacher and Student Power Relationships in the Classroom

In *Classroom Power Relations: Understanding Student –Teacher Interaction*, Mary Manke (1997) found that the dynamics of power in the classroom between students and teachers was largely influenced by the teacher's own perceptions of how much power teachers thought they should possess. From her research, she detected that teachers have

an agenda to control their students; while students seek to maintain their freedom "...to act without the constraints of adult responsibility" (Manke, p. 9). Manke stated, "Thus, teachers' contributions to the building of power relationships were usually actions intended to control students. Most of the time, they preferred to collude with the students on the public agenda of cooperation in order to smooth their path toward control of student actions" (p. 10).

In order to gather ethnographic data, Manke observed and analyzed three elementary classrooms – a first grade class and two fifth grade classrooms comprised mainly of White students in a small city. The first classroom of 5th graders, were also the lowest achieving students in the school and had a disproportionate number of low socioeconomic status (SES) students. Their teacher Aileen was observed to have a tight hand of control in the classroom, offering few choices for her students and giving several direct commands. Many students in her classroom were observed to be off task and uninterested (Manke, 1997). The next classroom made up of first graders was heterogeneously mixed in terms of SES. Sunny, their teacher believed in a loosely structured classroom offering a variety of choices to her students. The third classroom was another heterogeneous SES group of 5th graders. Sue made efforts to give some control to her students while her classroom structure remained mostly traditional.

Manke observed these classrooms for an extended period of time – one semester in Aileen's classroom, one semester with Sunny and one hour a week during the course of a year with Sue. In all three classrooms, Manke observed that students often directly constructed their own space of power within the classroom "...in which the teacher had to act according to their wishes" (Manke, 1997, p.124). Manke furthermore suggested

that whether or not teachers realize that power is co-constructed, teachers will be more comfortable if they accept rather than resist this fact.

One of the ways power was negotiated in all three classrooms was through politeness formulas and indirect discourse. Politeness formulas are often expressed as questions in place of commands, mentioning in place of commands, statements of preference in place of commands and requests that use "...please, thank you and excuse me" (Manke, 1997, p. 78). Indirect discourse involves making speech acts with surface meanings incongruent with their actual intentions. Some examples of indirect speech acts initiated by the teacher are as follows:

Ms. Kaminski: I have two children who need to work on their listening. [meaning, you two be quiet].

Ms. Corvo: I need your help. [meaning be quiet].

Ms. Anderson: I wonder if you can hear Patel – he's got some good ideas. [meaning be quiet]. (Manke, 1997, p. 79)

Prior research has suggested that teachers ask indirect questions instead of directly commanding students toward an action in order to save face, or personal dignity (Manke). Manke found in her own research that all three teachers used indirect strategies. She states, "Although students were offered, or appeared to be offered, choices, the teacher was fully in control of the range of choices available" (p. 89). Children however, did sometimes refuse these techniques and forced the teacher to become more direct and dissolve the ruse "...that what was going on was cooperation and mutual politeness" (p. 89).

Although this study only examined three classrooms with a relatively homogeneous population in terms of ethnicity, it did offer thick description in the form of storytelling and the use of triangulation of data. One troubling aspect that can be a

weakness in all qualitative studies is observer bias. Manke seemed to obviously gravitate toward the whole language teacher, Sunny and used more positive description when discussing this teacher's classroom. This study would have benefited from member checks in order to confirm the subjects' views on the data. Her findings however, that even when students are not talking, their positions as a powerful contributor to the conversation are further supported in subsequent research. The next study looks at power relations again specifically in terms of the IRE pattern.

How Power Relations are Built According to the IRE Pattern

In a shanty town around Mexico City, Antonia Candela (1999) chose to analyze the IRE pattern to see how power relations are built up and become a relevant part of teacher-student discourse. Through the use of ethnographic notes and video and audio recordings, Candela observed several 5th grade science classes comprised of about 35-40 students, approximately half boys and half girls. Most students were from a low socioeconomic class and most of the teachers in the study were relatively young and new to teaching.

Similar to Manke (1997), Candela found that students created ways to circumnavigate teacher's expectations of the correct response and thus gain control in the classroom. Students in this investigation used the "...inherent ambiguity of discourse" (Candela, 1999, p. 144) to their advantage. In the following example, it can be seen how one student takes away power from the teacher by questioning her assertion, thereby taking over the evaluative role.

The students have weighed in a balance the same volume of different materials to analyze the concept of density. After the activity, the teacher asks every child to make a list of ten materials in descending order of density...the teacher's question, 'which one do you think is the heaviest?'...

B26: Lead.

Teacher: Is lead heavier? Why?

B: Oh no. (the tone suggests a retraction)

B26: Because it has more matter?

Teacher: Really?

B29: No. Lead almost doesn't weigh.

Teacher: Lead doesn't weigh much.

B: Ha ha ha ha (looking to B26)

B4: NEITHER DOES STEEL. (Candela, 1999, p. 144)

According to Candela , the students are actually responding in a sophisticated way by adhering to the IRE structure and yet manipulating it to their needs. Students, therefore, in contrast to the common IRE pattern whereby teachers evaluate responses; took on the evaluative role and questioned the majority opinion in the classroom. Other methods used to gain control were refusing to participate or defending alternative versions of particular topics. The students made use of their power to decide whether they would follow the teacher's guidance toward a "correct" response. Candela concluded that students were not resistant to learning in and of itself. They were resistant to accepting "...versions that they do not share or those orientations that are not convincing for them" (Candela, p. 158). Therefore, as Manke suggested in her conclusions, teachers who do not accept students' power in the classroom may set themselves up for frustration.

As a critique of Candela's study, the absence of detailed participant data and detailed methods of data analysis is striking. It is also unclear as to how long his observations were. All the same, the largest variable is the teachers' lack of experience.

The problems of the malfunctioning IRE sequence could have been the result of classroom management or pedagogical philosophy. It is also never mentioned what kind of classroom orientation the teachers usually employ – whole group instruction or collaborative group work. If students did participate in more group work for example, it is possible they were more used to taking on all of the roles in the IRE sequence during peer to peer interaction. As such, they may assume the teacher's role out of habit even when interacting with the teacher. This study does show how students can successfully manipulate the IRE sequence to their advantage and “take over” teacher roles. Other researchers suggest that this struggle for dominance may not be necessary as long as teachers legitimize their own authority.

How Teachers Legitimize Their Authority in the Classroom

Researcher, Ralph Larkin (1975) based his quantitative study upon “social exchange” theory which asserts that teachers need to mobilize students to compliance by convincing them that he or she is serving their best interests. Larkin's research question revolved around how teachers legitimize or make acceptable their authority – through satisfying student needs or exerting control measures? From 75 classrooms in 13 schools in Southern California, 1750 racially and ethnically diverse students were chosen for the final sample of participants. Teacher's leadership was assessed by their students in a 14 point questionnaire designed to glean information in regards to teachers' task orientation (ability to get the job done), expressive orientation (warmth of relationship with students) and power orientation (amount of decision making the teacher does versus investing in his or her students). Classroom climate was assessed by considering three variables which included classroom morale, peer influence and peer group centrality (i.e., a class

room with high centrality has one group of high status individuals with many choices directed to them) (Larkin).

In his conclusion, Larkin (1975) found that while the expressive and task dimensions influenced classroom morale, the teachers' orientation of power did not. There was a slight tendency, however, "...for the morale to be lower among the middle and high power teachers" (Larkin, p. 408). Although power orientation did not generally influence morale, it did successfully diffuse peer group structures. The four classrooms in the study that reported low morale also indicated low teacher expressiveness. Larkin concludes that the teacher needs to involve him or herself in the formal task at hand as well as relating to the student in order to create the proper social exchange which legitimizes their authority. He writes, "When exchange is limited or non-existent, legitimization becomes a problem" (p. 409).

It is important however, to note the strengths and weaknesses of the study. Its major credibility lies in the diversity and number of participants. At the same time, the study relied on student assessments which could be dependent on variables of which the reader is unaware, such as the history of individual students and their relationships to this and prior teachers. It would have added reliability to the study, had teachers self-assessed as well as had independent observers. This study does denote the need to acknowledge students' needs as Manke (1997) previously stated. Larkin mentions that a democratic classroom ideally has high morale, a strong peer influence as well as diffusion of peer stratification. From this study, it can be inferred that in order for teachers to gain authority, they need to become sensitive and inclusive toward students in decision

making. The next study illustrates how another variable, curriculum choice, can influence power dynamics.

Curriculum Choice as a Factor in Teacher–Student Power Relationships

Researcher Bette Bergeron (1993) asked how the balance of conversational power shifted between teachers and students during a whole language instruction versus a traditional basal literacy instruction. The two second grade classes under study were located in a rural Midwestern elementary school. As part of a 19 month in-service project designed to test an alternative form of literacy curriculum, Sandra was a proponent of basal instruction and did not believe in “reinventing the wheel” (Bergeron, p. 2) while Marge taught whole language which emphasized thematic instruction. Basal instructors are often thought of as technicians who monitor students to make sure they are on task with commercially prepared curriculum. Whole language advocates, on the other hand, think that control on the curriculum should be shared with students. Bergeron made weekly visits to each classroom during rug time, made 2 formal observations and held informal interviews with each teacher. For taped observations, a coder was responsible for quantitatively analyzing and categorizing interactional patterns. Field notes were also analyzed qualitatively and compared to quantitative results.

In general, Bergeron (1993) noted more opportunities for children to engage in conversational power during Marge’s rug time. Similar to the research by Manke (1997) and Candela (1999), although an IRE conversational pattern was utilized, differences arose due to how teachers responded to student answers. For example, Marge offered more conversational power to students by eliciting more extensions to the IRE sequence. Also, Sandra engaged in direct instruction 14% of rug time, while Marge used less than

1% of this time instructing students. Common to both classrooms was a high use of affirmations like “OK”, and a high frequency of clarification to ensure they heard a student’s response correctly. Sandra chose not to respond to students she deemed to be individually imposing while Marge’s discussions were reciprocal and generated by student interests.

On a critical note, the study had some positive and negative points to consider. First, Bergeron noted that at first she was clearly a “participant observer” but during her tenure during the study, she became increasingly immersed in the school’s culture as the “...collaborative nature of the inservice ensued” (Bergeron, 1993, p. 2). This could account for observer bias, leaning more towards whole language instruction. However, Bergeron enlisted an independent coder who used quantitative analysis that supported Bergeron’s assertions. But these quantitative measures become increasingly less significant when measuring only two subjects. Just as Bergeron notes in her discussion, it is asked whether differences were due totally to curriculum differences or to individual teaching philosophies. It is inferred that both may overlap and cause changes in how teachers respond to their students. The next study investigates how power relations differ in student led discourse versus teacher led discourse.

Differences Between Student Led Versus Teacher Led Discourse

Danielewicz, Rogers and Noblit (1996) investigated children’s language and interaction patterns during teacher led sharing time versus child led sharing time. Researchers looked at one first grade classroom taught by Mrs. Schriver in order to “...understand what happens to language and the interaction patterns when these students participate in a repeated speech event over time” (Danielewicz, et al., p. 317). Mrs.

Schriver's sharing time which lasted approximately 20-30 minutes was observed over the course of eighteen months and taped weekly. This produced 25 episodes for qualitative analysis.

Researchers noticed a significant difference in speech patterns of children when they were teacher led versus child led. During teacher led sharing time, power relations were obvious as student's responses appeared to be narrowly focused by the teacher's questions.

Teacher: Can you just come right up here Nicholas? All right, what do you have to share today?

Nicholas: My daddy got me two new shirts.

Teacher: Ah-is this one of your new shirts?

Nicholas: Yeah. (Danielewicz, et al., 1996, p. 311)

In contrast, during child led sharing time, researchers noted the emergence of peer culture, the development of new rules for interaction and experimentation with new roles of power and status. Researchers also noticed the increase in humor and development of language rituals which were altered and expanded. For instance one linguistic routine developed called, "pick a card" where students asked other students to pick a card. This gradually altered and changed 63 times to include subtle changes in meaning and innuendos (Danielewicz, et al.). Status amongst children was also noted, as students came into positions of power as the sharer and then needed to choose their successor. In one scenario, a child judged to have low status was chosen and when he became sharer, he instigated new underlying rules which shifted power towards the audience. In general, researchers noticed much more creativity and social development when peers were led by each other.

The study had several strengths and some weaknesses, however. First, the study lacked many pertinent details which included location and information about the participants. It also had relatively little data on teacher led instruction focusing more instead on child led interactions. Researchers did have prolonged engagement as well as providing member checks. They also studied the subjects randomly throughout the week and over the course of eighteen months in order to gain a sense of developmental progress. This study does suggest that allowing students to lead their own conversations allows for more creativity and opportunity to develop their own rules and mores. The next study examines student perspectives on power relationships in the classroom.

Students' Perspectives on Power Relationships in the Classroom

Cornelius and Herrenkohl (2004) sought to gain the student's perspective on how they viewed power relationships and in what ways this compared to their actual engagement within the context of the classroom. For this study, students were videotaped during classroom instruction and two students were interviewed following the ending a science unit called, "Sinking and Floating" (Cornelius & Herrenkohl). Qualitative analysis was part of a larger study called *Promoting Argumentation in the Teaching of History and Science*.

This study looked at data from one 6th grade classroom. The school itself was part of a diverse, urban school district. The teacher, Mrs. Garrett had been teaching for 4 years and had a teaching style that promoted inquiry and exploration while scaffolding students' needs. The two students interviewed were the most outspoken of the group – friends who often argued with each other. Alicia was of Euro-American descent and had

resided in the district for over 10 years while Alex was of Korean heritage and immigrated to the United States just three years prior (Cornelius & Herrenkohl, 2004).

By analyzing these students interactions with their teacher, Cornelius and Herrenkohl (2004) found that the teacher influenced how the students defined their power dynamics. First, Mrs. Garrett encouraged students to question and challenge intellectual contributions. She also gave them the authority to conduct their own investigations while holding them accountable for their learning. Students were asked to present their findings to the class and stressed ownership by using personal pronouns such as “we” (Cornelius & Herrenkohl). Partisanship was also an important factor as Alicia and Alex took different sides in the debate and attempted to get their classmates to join them. In addition to partisanship, Alicia and Alex also used persuasion to convince other students that their idea was right. The following example illustrates the flexibility of the classroom which allowed both the students and the teacher to monitor and construct ideas.

Alex: Mrs. Garrett. What if we have more than one theory? Like what if you were saying that all the stuff does matter?

Researcher: Could your theory have multiple parts?

Alex: Yeah. Like you were saying that...the thing that you just wrote. And the weight and the...like everything matters. Except there's like an order. What if it's like that? How can you test that?

Teacher: Alicia.

Alicia: Um, okay, let me help you with that section you described. Okay, um, if, let's, okay, let's say then if you used, uh, same sized object, same shape...

Teacher: Come and grab [the objects]. There's stuff up here that's the same size, the same shape. (Cornelius & Herrenkohl, p. 481)

Although the study showed an interdependent dialogue between teacher and student, some of the results may be questionable. Namely, the two students chosen were

picked because they had an ability to articulate themselves and were considered outspoken. It would have been helpful to see different students in the classroom interacting with her as a means of comparison. Many times, teachers form a certain chemistry with some students especially students who are willing to take on the “teacher” role. It would have been interesting to see her elicit that role in perhaps more reticent students. Also, the study lacks information as to how many class sessions were recorded and the number of times students were interviewed. This suggests lack of prolonged engagement and widening the scope of the study to see how these two students responded in variety of situations. This study does however; promote the importance of egalitarianism in the classroom.

Summary

Chapter 3 reviewed studies that examined how the quality of relationships and interactions with teachers affects students as well as the specific discourse patterns and power relationships that develop as a result of teacher and student dialogue. In the Psychological section, it was found that how teachers and students perceive their relationship creates a pattern of interaction – whether negative or positive that lasts throughout the year. In the review of Student Achievement, the literature suggested that caring and emotionally involved teachers correlated with higher test scores. The section on Culture posed the realization that preservice teachers as well as seasoned teachers may be unaware of the needs to relate and include children’s deep cultural values in their instruction. Teacher and Student Discourse noted some of the strategies that can be used such as building rapport, giving specific feedback and allowing students to lead their own discussions and decide their own projects. The last section on Power Relationships

looked at how dialogue influences power relationships in the classroom. A teacher as an authority in the classroom has the power to mold the conversation by controlling it tightly as in the IRE pattern or they can allow students to explore new roles by facilitating their own discussions and learning. Chapter 4 will summarize the findings of these studies as well as consider implications and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced the guiding question of this paper concerning what strategies teachers can use to communicate with their students in order to build a classroom community. Communication and social interactions according to Vygotsky are necessary in order to build new knowledge in the learner and reach the zone of proximal development. By placing these social interactions in a meaningful context and building a caring classroom community, the teacher is able to bridge the gap between him or herself and the student. The ways in which to bridge this gap has led to two major forms of instruction and discourse patterns – teacher led versus student led.

In Chapter 2, this paper examined the past historical influences that noted both the need for building communities as well as creating meaningful social interactions when collaborating with a more capable peer. Also addressed was the need to look at the whole child, which includes overlapping identities and cultures. In so doing, teachers are modeling caring which allows the student to care for and about things that contribute to a just world.

Chapter 3 reviewed literature that concerned the importance of and how teachers interact with their students in order to form a classroom community. The sections were divided as follows: Psychological Effects of Building Relationships with Students, Effects of Building Relationships on Academic Achievement, Including Culture as Part of Building Relationships, Teacher Discourse Strategies and Teachers Facilitating Power Relations in the Classroom. The studies were analyzed and results reported according the

researchers. Review of the research was examined in order to determine a need for building a classroom community that involves student led discourse.

Chapter 4, the Conclusion revisits the guiding question, summarizes the findings from the reported studies and discusses what implications they may have on classroom practices. Last, suggestions will be made for future research.

Summary of Findings

What communication strategies can teachers use to build successful relationships with their students? This question iterates the importance of teachers creating a meaningful classroom community that includes the whole child. When teachers take the multiple aspects of their students into account, it demonstrates caring and respect. It also creates the foundation for a relationship and dialogue to occur. The literature supported the supposition that students need to become engaged in their own learning by leading their own dialogue which builds and collaborates with the ideas of others. It further stated that how teachers structure their classrooms – whether through curriculum choices, pedagogical beliefs or behavior management protocols; influences the type of dialogue that occurs in the classroom.

The Psychological Effects of Building Successful Relationships with Students began with Murray and Greenburg's (2000) study which asked how children perceive their relationships with teachers and their bonds with school. It was determined that the majority of students (66%), viewed their school experience and relationships with teachers as positive. The researchers also reported that 25% of students were classified as Dysfunctional while 9% were considered school anxious. When critiquing the study, it was evident that data considering the ethnicities and backgrounds of the children was

ambiguous or not included. This left out the possibility of noticing a correlation between ethnicity and a positive relationship with school.

The next three studies involved how teacher expectations and beliefs combined with student behavior led to particular relationship dynamics. Buyse, et al. (2008) asked how the qualities of teacher–child relationship are affected by classroom composition or more specifically behavior problems. Results indicated that the child’s rate of behavior problems in the classroom contributes significantly to the relational closeness or conflict with the teacher. Externalizing behavior predicted conflict with the teacher while internalizing behavior predicted closeness. Because the teachers self-reported however, there was the possibility of social desirability bias and the study may not be as relevant to the U.S. population which is culturally distinctive from Belgium where this study took place.

The following study by Doumen et al. (2008) asked if teacher–child conflict was correlated with a child’s aggressive behavior. It was found that aggressive behaviors exhibited at the beginning of the year in kindergarten led to increased levels of conflict with the teacher in the middle of the year and consequently more displays of aggression by the end of the year. After analysis, the study did not take into account teacher personalities or teaching practices as a variable which may be a contributor to the cause of aggression. Doumen et al. suggest that it is the student’s behavior that initiates a cycle whereby the teacher expects certain behaviors and conflicts from particular students.

The next study by Jordan and Stanovich (2001) asked if knowledge about a student as “at-risk” or “exceptionally functioning” affected the way teachers interacted with these students. Results showed that teachers who held a pathognomonic (or the view

that the potential for learning is fixed) belief interacted less with all students than those teachers who viewed themselves as interventionists. Pathogomonic teachers also omitted questions to the at-risk and exceptional students which would have extended their thinking and allowed for full comprehension of the concept. Student self-concepts were reported higher with the interventionist teachers. One critique is that the at-risk or exceptional students may not have been able to answer their self-concept scale to the best of their ability. Furthermore, the teachers had no training working with a special needs population which could have accounted for some hesitance in communicating with at-risk and exceptional students.

The last study in the Psychological Effects of Building Relationships with Students section concerned how teachers can model healthy communication techniques which allow for more successful peer to peer relations. Aram and Shlak (2008) tested an intervention strategy called Imago in order to find whether students who participated were able to increase their status and improve the quality of their social relationships. Results showed that students who took part in the intervention, engaged in longer dialogues, were more emotionally and cognitively expressive and better able to describe feelings associated with being hurt. The study's main drawback was the possibility of observational bias and the fact that the context of the study and questions posed may have favored the intervention group and its recent training.

In the Effects of Building Relationships on Academic Achievement section, three studies were examined. The first by Pianta, et al. (2008), quantitatively analyzed how teachers emotional interactions correlated to student achievement in reading and math. Researchers found that higher reading scores were related to higher emotional quality of

the classroom. In math achievement for 5th graders, as emotional quality increased, the child's math score raised by approximately two points. The main concern with this study was the possibility of growing developmental abilities and higher levels of exposure, especially in regards to math as to the reason for higher test scores.

The next study by Brock, et al. (2008) examined how using the Responsive Classroom approach influenced academic achievement. In general, teachers who used Responsive Classroom practices had children with better academic and social behavior and more favorable perceptions of schools. Some concerns about the study included the fact that the teachers self-reported and could have been subject to social desirability bias. Also, the study may be culturally specific to the small geographic area where research participants lived.

The last study in this section, Stahan and Layell (2006) qualitatively analyzed an intervention strategy conducted by the STAR team at Washington Middle School. Researchers found that teachers on this team created a warm, student centered community that focused on connecting knowledge with real world experiences. One drawback to the study was the lack of information concerning the students' or teachers' backgrounds. It limited the reader from inferring any other variables that may have accounted for academic success.

The next section, Including Culture as a Part of Building Relationships contained four studies which examined how teachers conceptualize and integrate culture into their classroom. Joshi, et al. (2005) asked in a qualitative survey, how teachers currently understand their student's family cultures and how they use this understanding to reach out to parents. Results indicated that teachers had an understanding that parental

involvement and incorporating student culture was important but they could produce little evidence that this was actually being done in their classroom. Some points that needed to be considered was the fact that the sample was not random and consisted of a predominantly white population of teachers.

The next study by Eberly, et al. (2007) built upon the Joshi, et al. (2005) findings by asking some of the participants of the questionnaire to expand upon their answers. Researchers created discussion groups that conversed most notably about ways in which family values and beliefs affected learning and how teachers communicated with parents from diverse cultures. After analyzing the data, researchers found that although culture is regarded as highly complex and multifaceted, teachers were still prone to making generalizations and assumptions about particular parents, often grouping class and culture together. The study was well organized into a reader's theater script which allowed for audience interpretation; however the small numbers of participants still cautioned the need for further research.

The next study in this section by Pappamihel (2004), asked participants to answer how they would show caring toward future students versus English as a Second Language students. This study revealed that most of the respondents saw no difference in how they would treat students regardless of their background. Pappamihel noted that this showed a lack of intercultural sensitivity; however the survey question itself was vague and lacked details of the hypothetical students in order to draw reliable conclusions.

The last study in this section, Bondy, et al. (2007) asked what specific strategies novice teachers could use in order to establish a culturally responsive classroom. Researchers found that teachers established a caring, respectful, engaging classroom

community, communicated clearly their expectations and positively encouraged their students to achieve. The population of students was predominantly African American however, and cultural differences could influence which strategies worked most effectively.

The next section, Teacher Discourse Strategies noted specific communication patterns and ways teachers are interacting with students and what overall effect this is having on students. The first study by Hogelucht (1994) examined how teachers were facilitating discussions in the classroom as it related to the IRE pattern of communication. Hogelucht found that actual dialogue was more complex than a simple or extended IRE structure and often used voice inflection to keep students on task. The study had a small sample size and lacked prolonged engagement to notice changes over time and differences that may have resulted due to subject matter.

The next two studies examined how teachers facilitated peer to peer dialogue and collaboration in their classroom. Dyson (1987) analyzed peer to peer conversation in a kindergarten through 2nd grade classroom. Dyson found that students often collaborated with one another without initiation from the teacher and that students often extended each others thinking, creating warm social bonds that supported their developing imagination. Dyson exercised prolonged engagement and triangulation of data, however the relationships formed through looping students could account for how comfortable students were with each other to engage in collaborative talk.

Postholm's (2005) study asked what teachers actually did to encourage more peer to peer interactions. She found that teachers allowed students to choose their own topics for project work and facilitated skills that would allow for shared management. One of

the major considerations is that results may be due to cultural differences where Norway students devote 20% of their week to project work.

The next three studies in the Teacher Discourse Strategies section looked at specific methods teachers used to interact with their students. Smith and Higgins (2006), examined the types of patterns they noticed with teachers who created more interactions with their students. Researchers noticed that teachers asked open questions to students, paraphrased student responses and acted as a co-participant rather than an expert in the classroom. One main concern of the study is that it was part of a larger study concerning the use of interactive white boards. This may have acted as a variable to how students engaged with the teacher.

The following study by Nguyen (2007) focused on strategies teachers can use to build rapport with their students. He observed the teacher to use a variety of verbal and non-verbal cues including speech tempo, volume, intonation, facial expressions, intonation and humor to build rapport. The results are cautioned because this investigation lacked prolonged engagement, observing only one class session in a culturally diverse ESOL classroom. Results may not be generalized to a larger population.

McCroskey (1985) questioned teachers as to what affinity seeking behaviors they observed other teachers using in the classroom. McCroskey found that status may prevent the use of affinity seeking behaviors in multiple contexts; however classrooms most often employed physical attractiveness, sensitivity, eliciting other's disclosures, trustworthiness and non-verbal immediacy. The study is weakened by its lack of randomness and detailed information regarding participants.

The next three studies included in the Teacher Discourse Strategies section, note how teachers interact with diverse groups of students. Wiltse (2006) asked how discourse patterns affected opportunities for language appropriation and what role the teacher had in limiting its effects. Results showed a lack of dialogue in a richly diverse, yet ethnically segregated classroom. Wiltse offered the need to create a third space which would allow teachers and students to meet on neutral ground. One critique is that the classroom composition containing a high population of Cambodian students may be atypical.

The next study by Ainsworth (2001) examined how teachers can cross cultural boundaries in discourse. Ainsworth found that the IRE pattern, commonly used in the classroom may not fit or compliment some cultures, particularly Native Americans. She opted for teachers and students to meet in the middle by first generating culturally comfortable communication and then gradually moving students beyond these borders in order to interact in different domains.

Kelly (2007) asked how dialogic instruction affected student engagement and how teachers interacted with diverse students. Kelly found that engagement in autonomous tasks was negatively correlated with dialogic instruction and that diverse students do not benefit from dialogic instruction. When teachers were more directive however, levels among high and low achieving students was more evenly distributed. A major consideration for this study was that fact that no relationship was found to be statistically significant suggesting the need for further research.

The last study in the Teacher Discourse strategies section looked at how non-verbal behaviors teachers exhibited, affected classroom practices. Adalsteindottir (2004) found that teachers who were aware of how their behavior impacted students, were much

more likely to show empathy and caring for students' differing needs and abilities. The study's results may be culturally biased however, as differentiated instruction is highly rare in Iceland.

The next section, *Teachers Facilitating Power Relations in the Classroom* began with two studies which examined how students and teachers take turns in conversation and how the amount of talk time may be influenced by questioning prompts from the teacher. Maroni, et al. (2008) observed how students and teachers took turns during a classroom discussion. Researchers found that students actually talked over half the time and that participation was largely influenced by age. Also they noted that students learned through modeling from the teacher, rules concerning turn taking and became more adept over time. Because this study took place in Italy however, caution should be exercised in not generalizing to the United States population.

Margutti (2006) asked how the relationship between construction of shared knowledge and social order of the classroom was affected by how the teacher framed their questions. Margutti found after analysis that teachers assumed how answerable a question was and posed their questions accordingly. This study however, only contained a week's worth of data in Italy, where cultural differences need to be taken into account.

The next two studies in *Teachers Facilitating Power Relations in the Classroom* looked at how teachers and students balanced power relations in the classroom. Manke (1997) found that the dynamics of power in the classroom was largely influenced by the teacher's own perceptions of how much power teachers thought they should possess. Furthermore, instructional practices like asking indirect versus direct questions allowed students to save face and make the choice to cooperate. Manke, although offering thick

description and triangulation of data seemed biased toward one teacher who offered student's more power in the teacher–student relationship.

The next study by Candela (1999) asked how power relations are built relative to the IRE pattern of communication. Candela found that students created ways to circumnavigate the teacher's role in the IRE structure, sometimes taking on the evaluating role for themselves. The research lacked detailed participant data as well as background information concerning the teacher's pedagogical beliefs.

Larkin (1975) asked how teachers can legitimize their authority in the classroom using social exchange theory. Larkin found that low morale correlated with low teacher expressiveness. He further concluded that teachers need to be present in the task at hand and relate to students in order to legitimize their role of authority in the classroom. One caution in regards to the study concerns the lack of information regarding prior history and relationships to the teacher in question.

The following two studies in the Teachers Facilitating Power Relations in the Classroom concerned how teacher led versus student led conversations denoted a shifting of power in the teacher–student relationship. Bergeron (1993) asked what difference curriculum choice made on the power dynamic of the classroom. Bergeron found that during whole language instruction, power shifted to the students since they were allowed to lead the conversation. In contrast, the basal literacy instruction shifted powers toward the teacher. Although the study was qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed, the sample size remained too small to create a generalized conclusion.

Danielwicz, et al. (1996) investigated differences in children's language and interaction patterns during teacher led versus child led sharing time. Researchers found

that student responses were narrowly focused by the teacher's questioning during teacher led instruction. In contrast, student led instruction elicited an emergence of peer culture, the development of new rules for interaction and experimentation with new roles of power. The study was weakened however, by its lack of information regarding its participants and overemphasis on student led interactions.

In the last study, Cornelius and Herrenkohl (2004) examined students' perspectives regarding how they viewed power relationships and in what ways this compared to their actual engagement within the classroom. Results indicated that the teacher influenced how students defined their power dynamics. This was done by encouraging students to question and challenge each others thinking as well as holding them accountable for their learning. However because the two students under investigation were described as outspoken, it is difficult to generalize these strategies to different personalities which may need alternative strategies of facilitation in order to garner participation and equalize power relations.

Classroom Implications

After making an investigation into how teachers can successfully communicate and interact with students in order to build a classroom community, the complexities of the task can be seen. Communication is multilayered and multifunctional and includes both verbal and non-verbal messages. Because of this fact, there is a potential for either great misunderstanding or the advancement of social networks that model true caring and respect. This paper examined how teachers could veer toward the latter by acknowledging their role as facilitators of a classroom community. In that role, teachers first need to address students as holistic beings with multiple identities containing a

variety of cultural and emotional domains of participation. Next, teachers need to look critically at their patterns of engagement which can either hinder or promote students' self-concept and achievement.

In terms of viewing the student holistically, the research showed how psychological, cultural considerations and academic achievement impact one another. As Igoa (1995) argued, teachers must become aware of and acknowledge all aspects of a student's life. This can be done through the inclusion of parents in the classroom as well as relevant cultural topics. When students are encouraged to share from their experiences, more neuronal pathways are generated not only in the speaker, but the listener as well. Furthermore, bonding with other students in addition to the teacher promotes higher self-esteem. Emotional support and clear expectations as modeled by the teacher are therefore essential in creating a safe learning environment where children can grow academically.

As Dewey, Vygotsky and Lave and Wenger alluded to, learning is a developmental process that must be experienced authentically with the support of peers in a community. Authenticity includes giving students the chance to talk and grow linguistically in order to collaboratively problem solve as they would in "real life". In addition, teachers need to become aware of language and dialogue as an important skill that should be addressed in education. If teachers do most of the talking and don't respond to students in ways that cause them to gain deeper understanding, then dialogue is not being used to its maximum potential.

Aside from the benefits of constructing a classroom community, this research has also demonstrated how teachers need to become more self-reflective and aware of their biases. The fact that many teachers may be of a different ethnicity from students and

carry different cultural assumptions and stereotypes can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies. Students fall victim to the Pygmalion effect which states that a person will only achieve what is expected of them. This in turn creates relationships with students that are static and unproductive. Teachers therefore need to take responsibility by offering different forms of student dialogue such as the Socratic Method, whereby students build upon other students' responses; differentiating instructional tasks when necessary; and offering warmth and caring as deemed appropriate by that student's particular culture.

When looking at studies which note specific patterns and strategies teachers use in the classroom, the idea of student led instruction became prevalent. This paper has given evidence that teachers do need to legitimize their place of authority by giving power to their students. The myth of chaos in student led group work collaboration is now being vindicated with research that shows how seemingly "off- task conversation" can actually be rich, deeply complex and engaging for students. The fact that students are able to cognitively build and create new concepts through their interactions with one another has been observed. Teachers, however, need to model how they want students to respond to one another by their own interactions. When teachers paraphrase, acknowledge a student's contribution, ask both open and clarifying questions that denote interest and engagement; they are informing students how to converse with one another. Conversations that are not one sided, as in teacher led instruction; require total presence and engagement with the task at hand. Total engagement is the basis for what Noddings terms caring and the foundation for any relationship to bloom.

Besides giving total presence to the conversation, teachers need to become aware of the power of questioning. It has been noted how the ways in which teachers ask

questions have the potential of limiting the scope of conversation. A balance is therefore required which facilitates growth and yet keeps the end goal and focus of the conversation in sight. This balancing act would of course be contingent on time constraints as well as students' cognitive and emotional needs. Teachers again need to be self-aware and observe if and when they are too controlling of the conversation and when it has become necessary for the sake of learning.

This paper has noted the need to give students more control and power over their own learning. Manke (1997) stated that power relations were largely influenced by how much power teachers felt they needed in order to remain in control. One of the reasons teachers need to control may be correlated with stress. Although this paper did not touch on teacher's personal philosophies in any great depth, it is worth noting as a bi-product of how teachers relate to students. Manke implied in her study that teachers may be responding to the growing responsibilities awarded to them by NCLB accountability measures. When under these kind of pressures, some teachers respond with micro-managing control tactics which show up in lackluster recitations such as IRE. This calls forward the need to build community even more as a means to shift some of this responsibility to students and their families.

Suggestions for Further Research

One question that is necessary for future research concerns culture. Many of the studies presented were qualitative and studied small populations implementing specific strategies in regards to specific populations. African American students for example seem to prefer authoritative teaching. Native Americans feel more comfortable in group work interactions. Cambodian students prefer little dialogue or questioning from their teachers.

How does a teacher address these differing needs? As Wiltse (2006) asked, how do you become culturally responsive while at the same time offering ways of interaction in a more multicultural interface? In order to qualify studies as being relevant to meet other populations, they often generalize strategies, suggesting for example differentiating instruction to meet individual student needs.

Watering down strategies and generalizing often created a sense of incompleteness to the data. It is these specifics which are necessary because they allow the reader to come to their own conclusions and analyze the facts for themselves. Bondy, et al. (2007) was a perfect example of a study giving sweeping recommendations and yet little relevant background information which allowed the reader to see what other variables that could account for student success. In contrast, Eberly et al. (2007) offered excerpts from a reader's theater script created from their study's findings. This script allowed the reader to read notes and infer meaning on their own. While the script was helpful, the study also lacked personal information regarding its participants.

In researching cultural differences and meeting student needs, qualitative studies seem to offer the best solution. This is despite the fact that populations are usually small and cannot be generalized. Since it is impossible or at least inadvisable to generalize culture, qualitative studies rich in description, generating multiple interviews which denote multiple perspectives would be best. In order to prevent observer bias, triangulation should be employed as well as prolonged engagement of the subjects. Because students are part of multiple worlds, interviews need to address these worlds and allow the reader to infer meaning. The suggestion is not to create a recipe for how to treat specific cultures; it is simply to become more explicit in providing more details and facts

concerning student's lives. In so doing, teachers and other researchers will be better able to generate more questions and find correlations for further study.

Another suggestion concerns the question of caring. Caring is a subjective term that is vulnerable to the filters and lenses of personal experiences and biases. How does one quantify caring? The research by Pianta, et al. (2008) concerning how emotionally responsive teachers were, was weakened by this point. Although caring can be perhaps broken down into physical affection or how many times a teacher interacts with a student, do these actions capture the essence? Quantitative data seems out of place for the concept of caring for this reason. A suggestion would be to use only qualitative research in concepts as divergent as caring. This creates its own problems of observer bias however. One usually cares for others as it was modeled to them. How someone cares is culturally and experientially bound. For this reason, it would be prudent to simply ask and interview how participants view caring, how they know they are caring and how they demonstrate it.

Similar to the last suggestion, a qualitative researcher studying caring relations in the classroom need not observe it, but simply interview subjects in regards to the question. It would have been helpful if Pianta, et al. (2008), had asked children what they thought as well as the teacher. Too many studies leave out children's opinion because they either think they lack the developmental capabilities to respond or that it is colored by imagination. A suggestion is to interview all subjects regardless of their age and provide more relevant background information about these students and their teachers. Values and beliefs were often left out of analysis but they have everything to do with how

teachers respond to students. Only Jordan and Stanovich (2001) touched on the question of how philosophical beliefs influenced their behaviors with children.

Conclusion

Chapter 1 introduced the research question which asks what communication strategies teachers can use in order to build a successful and viable classroom community. Communication was defined as the co-construction of knowledge by the used of dialogue in both verbal and non-verbal interactions. Chapter 2 guided the reader through a web of philosophers and concepts that have historically influenced the topic at hand. These philosophers agree that building a caring community with activities that are situated in a meaningful context and which address the whole child are important and necessary in the classroom. Chapter 3 reviewed literature that demonstrated how the psychological, cultural and academic worlds influence one another and should be acknowledged by the teacher. It also examined specific strategies that teachers use which build community, lend power and validate their students. Chapter 4 summarized the findings and using this information, noted implications and suggestions for further research. By building a classroom community which invites all voices to participate, teachers are being authentic and open minded leaders who model the very philosophies they teach.

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