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Urban Teacher-Student Relationship Quality, Teacher Burnout, and Cultural Competence

Ashley E. Poklar

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URBAN TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP QUALITY, TEACHER BURNOUT, AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE

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“Only those who attempt the absurd can achieve the impossible.”
— Albert Einstein

I will start this, and end this, with a quote. There is more appreciation than I have words to each of you who helped me attempt the absurd, not only in tackling at mixed-methods beast of a dissertation, but also in raising four small children while completing a doctoral program that required both full course loads and full-time clinical experiences.

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And now, onto the next absurd step—some sort of victory for humanity.

“Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity.”
— Horace Mann
ABSTRACT

Researchers across multiple disciplines suggest that teacher-student relationship quality (TSRQ) has a strong association with positive student outcomes across all domains of student functioning (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015) and serves as a moderating factor in outcome measures for students of color (Murray, Waas, & Murray, 2008) and for those considered economically disadvantaged (Olsson, 2009). Despite the clear benefits of positive TSRQ, the literature is scarce regarding teacher specific factors that may impact TSRQ. This study is the first to explore TSRQ in relation to implicit teacher factors utilizing a mixed-methods approach.

Through canonical correlation analysis, utilizing a sample of 135 urban K-12 educators, one significant root (Wilks’ $\lambda = .63$, $F(22, 244) = 2.85$, $p < .001$) and one trending root (Wilks’ $\lambda = .87$, $F(10, 123) = 1.73$, $p = .081$) were identified, suggesting a statistically significant amount of the variance in TSRQ could be traced to one or more burnout and culturally competent factors. Further analysis found cultural awareness, culturally responsive classroom management, and levels of personal accomplishment to be the most highly correlated with TSRQ.

Grounded theory qualitative inquiry was then used to provide context to the findings from Phase I. Seven participants were interviewed, and their responses helped to lay the groundwork for a framework of Teacher-Student relating that is multi-leveled, multi-dimensional, and cross-disciplinary. This framework, arising from both the interview data and the canonical correlation analysis highlights two primary dimensions at play in teacher-student relationships: the environment, which includes, but it not limited to, home, school, and political environments, and the teacher’s inner working
model, or way of viewing the world, the student, and the self within the world of education. Implications for research, theory, and practice in both the educational and psychological fields are discussed, as are the limitations of the current study.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

During the 2017-2018 academic year, over seven and a half million U.S. students were enrolled in 70 urban school districts (Council of the Great City Schools [CGCS], 2018). Each of these 70 urban school districts are housed in cities with populations of over 250,000 and student enrollment of over 35,000. The combined racial distribution of these urban school districts was 44% Hispanic, 27% African American, 18% Caucasian, 8% Pacific Islander, 2% Multi-Racial, and 1% Alaskan/American Indian in 2015 (CGCS, 2018). These figures are in stark contrast to national enrollment rates for 2017-2018, in which the racial breakdown of the slightly over 56 million U.S. students was 48% Caucasian, 28% Hispanic, 15% African American, 5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 3% Multi-Racial, and 1% Alaskan/American Indian (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). These urban and national enrollment numbers indicate urban students are disproportionately of minority status, particularly African-American and Hispanic.

Urban students are also disproportionately represented in free/reduced lunch programs, with 71% of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch, compared to the national average of 42% (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Free/Reduced lunch is a
benchmark often used in academic research to identify youth who live in poverty and these statistics suggest nearly two thirds of urban students are facing poverty. Poverty has been linked to poor or absent medical care, hunger, single parent homes, depression, witnessing violence, experiencing abuse, engaging in substance use, and a myriad of other factors placing urban youth ‘at-risk’ for further social, emotional, and academic difficulties (Yoshikawa, Aber, & Beardslee, 2012).

**Poverty and Academic Underachievement**

Research has found that neighborhood deprivation has strong and independent effects on academic achievement, even when both family and school effects are controlled for, suggesting a strong influence resulting not only from poverty but also from those risk-factors correlated with poverty (Berliner, 2006). The impact of both minority status and poverty on academic achievement has been termed the ‘achievement gap’ in the current educational literature. Berliner (2006) indicates it is nearly impossible to separate minority status from poverty, a notion that is further echoed by the literature surrounding structural inequalities found within urban environments (Sosa & Gomez, 2012, Talbert-Johnson, 2004; Wilson, 2009). The effects of the achievement gap have been seen in all areas of student performance, from IQ scores to standardized test scores, high school graduation rates to earning potential as adults, and cannot be explained by genetics nor poverty alone (Talbert-Johnson, 2004; Turkheimer, Haley, Waldron, D’Onofrio, & Gottesman, 2003).

Sosa and Gomez (2012) argue that despite the literature suggesting a multitude of factors at play in maintaining the achievement gap experienced by urban students, the majority of discourse surrounding minority and urban students continues to posit to a lack
of motivation, low aspirations, and family under involvement as the reasons for the underperformance and low standardized test scores seen in urban schools. This discourse arises from a theory of meritocracy, in which student success is the sole responsibility of the student (Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Meritocratic discourse disregards structural inequalities, draws attention from failing school policies, and views youth who struggle as failures unable to ‘make it’ (Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Student qualities and factors that are easily defined and measured, such as their race, age, SES, past achievement, and externalizing behaviors are the most researched and discussed influencers of students’ current levels of achievement (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015).

Within the merit-based discourse of education, teachers, and their value to students, are also viewed through a narrow lens. At the narrowest end of this lens is that effective educators engage in proactive behavior and classroom management, provide clear explanations and routines, post and teach the classroom rules, move about the classroom, are conscious about the physical design of the classroom and of how they use classroom time, and employ pre-correction strategies to create a positive classroom environment and provide quality instruction (Sutherland, Lewis-Palmer, Stichter, & Morgan, 2008). Though these strategies likely aid in students obtaining academic achievement, literature falling within a more critical realm suggests such strategies are not enough, particularly when trying to close the achievement gap. The implicit reality underlying current research on urban students’ academic achievement, is that despite explicitly stated and measurable student and teacher characteristics, there is a large amount of variance in student achievement that is accounted for by nothing other than
teacher individuality (Baker, Kupersmidt, Tichovolsky, Voegler-Lee, & Arnold, 2015; Speybroeck et al., 2012).

This study sought to explore urban education through a broad lens of teacher factors integral to urban settings, teacher burnout out and cultural awareness and beliefs, as they relate to teacher-student relationship quality (TSRQ). This allowed for a strengths based, as opposed to deficits-based, approach to be employed in understanding teacher characteristics that are outside of those often studied within the realm of the ‘achievement gap.’ Additionally, this study utilized a mixed methods approach, in which teachers’ voices regarding factors outside of, or impacting, classroom management were elicited and explored.

**Teacher-Student Relationship Quality**

Researchers across multiple disciplines suggest teacher-student relationship quality (TSRQ) has a strong and often unassessed impact on not only student academic achievement, but on positive student outcomes across domains (Hattie, 2009; Lindo et al., 2014; McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015; Murray & Pianta, 2007; Noddings, 2015; Rogers, 1957; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). The current literature suggests TSRQ, as rated by the teacher, may be a stronger predictor of student achievement than any other teacher quality, including years teaching, gender, age, or race (Baker et al., 2015; Speybroeck et al., 2012).

One increasingly studied aspect of TSRQ that is also tied to student academic achievement is the teacher’s ability to engage in culturally responsive teaching. Initial studies called for teacher-student ethnic matches; however, in a field where the majority of teachers are Caucasian females, the likelihood of ethnic matching occurring across
urban classrooms is not a possibility (Gay, 2002). A review of literature completed by McGrath and Bergen (2015) suggests cultural competence may be more influential to both TSRQ and academic achievement than an actual ethnic match (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015). At this time, no empirical studies have looked at TSRQ through the lens of teachers’ cultural awareness and competency, particularly within an urban environment.

The urban environment is important not only in understanding the context within which students are situated, but also in understanding that context within which urban teachers are working. Students in urban settings may be especially in need of positive student-teacher relationships; while also, paradoxically are the most likely to provide teachers the emotionally charged type of experiences that tend to lead to burnout (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015). Burnout can be defined as a chronic state of exhaustion caused by long-term stresses within human service professions and is particularly salient in professions, such as teaching, that require repeated exposures to emotionally charged situations (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008). Burnout leads to withdrawing emotionally and distancing oneself from students and colleagues (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008).

The teacher-student relationship appears to have a bidirectional relationship with teacher burnout. Teachers endorse lower levels of burnout symptoms when experiencing close relationships with students; however, students have been found to display lower academic achievement and more behavioral difficulties when teachers endorse experiencing high levels of burnout (Mashburn, Hamre, Downer, & Pianta, 2006; McLean and Connor, 2015). Further, teachers’ cultural awareness and beliefs also appear to have a bidirectional relationship with teacher burnout. Teachers experiencing burnout
appear to struggle with engaging in culturally competent practices, while viewing student behavior through a culturally competent lens appears to protect against burnout (Milatz, Luftenegger, & Schober, 2015).

**Statement of the Problem**

The literature suggests urban youth are, paradoxically, most in need of positive TSRQ and, also most likely to experience poor TSRQ. The current literature is sparse regarding specific teacher factors that lead to student achievement; however, TSRQ has been found to be strongly correlated with positive student outcomes across domains. However, the literature has revealed TSRQ cannot easily be explained by explicit and, often, demographic factors, such as racial matching or teachers’ number of years teaching. This mixed methods approach of this study sought to identify and explore specific teacher factors, within the implicit realms of burnout levels and cultural competence, and the influence they have on TSRQ for those youth who are likely most in need of positive TSRQ.

**Theoretical Underpinnings**

While no teacher lives in a vacuum, each teacher is bound to their reality through their personal belief system, which influences their understanding of the world, their expectations of themselves and their students, and the extent to which they believe they have control over their own and their students’ outcomes. Pieces of the knowledge base teachers carry with them, often subconsciously, that directly affect their thoughts of, emotional response to, and interaction with students, are the inner working models they create around teaching, learning, and students in general, as well as around students as individuals. Inner working models, also called mental representations, are a key
component of attachment theory and serve to guide social information processing (Bowlby, 1969). These inner working models, developed through repeated positive or negative relational experiences, serve as a lens through which all relational interactions are experienced (Bowlby, 1973). Teachers maintain several different inner working models that act concurrently to shape teacher interactions with individual students: a global model based on the teacher’s view of self and relationships in general, a domain-specific model based on the teacher’s view of self and relational role as teacher, and relationship-specific models based on the teachers image of the child, sense of the teachers interactions with the child, and internalized feelings that arise when thinking of and/or interacting with this specific child (Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003). Therefore, teachers’ inner working models theoretically affect all aspects of their teaching. The possible relationship between inner working models and teacher burnout, cultural awareness, and daily interactions with students are discussed below.

**Inner Working Models and Teacher Burnout.** The majority of teachers are white, female, and middle class and, presumably, had positive experiences in K-12 education as students (Eslinger, 2014). For most of these teachers, their original inner working model of education is that which is held by the majority: education is a teacher imparting wisdom and students taking it in (Eslinger, 2014). Per current legislature, such as No Child Left Behind, students are considered successful when they can regurgitate memorized information and teachers are considered successful when their students meet pre-set benchmarks and pass standardized tests. Urban educational environments, however, do not often function in the same ways as the suburban majority does. For
teachers who hold the inner working model typical of the majority, this is culture shock and can lead to increased stress and experiences of burnout.

Urban teachers often face large class sizes, limited resources, strict policies, large amounts of paperwork, low student attendance, a disproportionate number of special education accommodations to meet, and often limited support from administration (Barmby, 2006; Eslinger, 2014; Haberman & Rickards, 1990). High stakes testing has further increased the stress experienced by urban teachers as their jobs and livelihood became contingent upon students’ ability to pass standardized tests (Barrett, 2009). Many teachers view these limitations and stressors through the lens of their meritocratic inner working models as failures in themselves, their students, and the system, leading to increased stress and decreased self-efficacy, morale, and confidence. It would not be surprising to find these teachers experiencing increased levels of emotional exhaustion, negative self-evaluation, and cynical thoughts regarding their students, which are the hallmarks of burnout (Abidin & Robinson, 2002; Maslach, Jackson, Leiter, Schaufeli, & Schwab, 1981).

**Inner Working Models and Cultural Awareness and Beliefs.** It appears one of the more pressing issues in urban education is the cultural mismatch between the urban culture and the educational institution. Urban teachers are not only expected to meet the stressful demands of teaching, but also to do so in a culturally competent manner. Researchers suggest culturally competent teaching is the instruction of students in a manner that is responsive to the students’ home cultures (Brown, 2007) and is created through teachers obtaining a culturally diverse knowledge base, the design of culturally relevant curriculum, cultural caring, and cross-cultural communication (Gay, 2002).
teacher’s inner working model effects how they view students through a cross-cultural lens. Researchers caution that the way urban minority students are positioned or viewed with the larger societal context have grave consequences on how they are evaluated and taught (Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Many teachers are unaware of their internal biases towards their students and their students’ families as described by Eslinger (2014) and the effect such views may have on their daily interactions with students. A teachers’ cultural awareness and belief system arises from an inner working model created both by their own personal experiences and those obtained through their teacher education program while their relationship with students are rooted within historical, cultural, and social contexts (Liu & Millman, 2013). Teachers who are aware of these factors appear to be capable of adjusting their inner working models, and therefore their conceptualization of, and interactions with, students more effectively than those who are not (Sosa & Gomez, 2012).

**Saberes Docentes as the Key to Culturally Competent TSRQ.** Saberes Docentes is an important concept in Latin American and Spanish educational research and literally translates to “teaching knowledge” (Slavit & Poveda, 2011, p. 2). However, this term does not refer to pedagogical or technical learning, but instead to the knowledge that is gained daily by teachers as they are immersed in their practice. This knowledge is both multi-layered and intertwined with historical and institutional forces as well as one’s own inner working models (Heller, 1994).

This concept suggests culturally competent teaching is deeper and more intricate than learned practices but should be reflected in daily practical adaptations that are the results of professional and personal experiences and input from a variety of resources,
including one’s students (Slavit & Poveda, 2011). In this way students’ existing knowledge and experiences are valued and validated, even if this knowledge doesn’t fit perfectly within the established educational curriculum or common core standards. This daily adjustment allows urban teachers to meet students where they are, display curiosity, adjust expectations of student behavior and knowledge, and engage in mutual understanding and growth (Sosa & Gomez, 2012). A teacher’s inner working model of students, and hence their expectations of students and interactions with students, is likely more fluid and culturally competent when informed by Saberes Docentes and allowing for students’ cultural, social, economic, and political contexts to play a role.

**TSRQ in Light of Attachment Theory.** Students across all age levels have been found to use their teachers as secure bases, from which they can engage in new learning and experiences while feeling both encouraged and supported (Verschueren, 2015). This type of relationship with a teacher, one that is high in closeness and low in conflict, is more likely to occur when the teacher displays characteristics such as warmth, openness, trustworthiness, listening, and knowing students’ names, interests, and experiences (Cummings, 2012; Lindo et al., 2014; Marzano, 2003). Needless to say, these teacher characteristics, particularly those of trustworthiness and knowing students, are likely more readily apparent in teachers who have flexible inner working models and engage in Saberes Docentes regularly. Researchers agree that a single positive relationship with a teacher can affect all future student-teacher relationships students encounter and lead to increased success in social, emotional, and academic endeavors (Lindo et al., 2014; McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015; Sosa & Gomez, 2012).
Significance of Further Understanding TSRQ

Current studies point to the need for understanding the implicit teacher factors at play in positive student outcomes (Baker et al. 2015, Speybroeck et al., 2012). Rosenthal and Jacobson’s (1968) literature on resilient youth, those youth who experience positive outcomes across domains despite adverse experiences or environments, has found a single caring adult relationship or role model can have a significant positive impact on youth resiliency (Davis and Paster, 2000; Murray & Pianta, 2007; Werner & Smith, 1992). TSRQ among students of all ages, namely pre-K through college, has been found to be a significant predictor of positive outcomes across all domains of functioning student functioning: social, emotional, behavioral, and academic (Farmer, McAuliffe Lines, & Hamm, 2011; Murray & Zvoch, 2011; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011). Positive student-teacher relationships score high in closeness and low in conflict and are considered beneficial to the needs of both members of the relationship (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Though TSRQ has been found to be an effective predictor of positive outcomes, there is very little information regarding what teacher factors lead to a greater capacity for positive TSRQ building, particularly within the confines and institutional boundaries created by the current urban educational system.

The interactions occurring within a classroom between teacher and student theoretically arise from both individuals’ expectations of one another and themselves, which are informed by their inner working models. To more fully understand the TSRQ, one must understand the implicit factors upon which the relationship is built upon. With a clear understanding of the factors brought to the TSRQ by teachers, one could, theoretically, aid teachers in promoting more positive TSRQ across all students; despite
both individual student risk factors and the stressors and barriers readily apparent in urban schools. This could potentially be done through the bolstering of teachers’ own personal promotive factors and exploring how teacher successful in building and maintaining positive TSRQ mitigate or navigate factors that tend to correlate with negative TSRQ.

**Purpose of this Study**

This research sought to understand the teacher-student relationship in urban school settings through the lens of teacher burnout, cultural awareness, and beliefs. The specific objective of the quantitative part of this study was to identify implicit risk and promotive teacher factors of positive TSRQ in urban settings which arise within the context of teacher burnout levels and a teacher's cultural awareness and belief system. The qualitative piece then explored how teachers who scored the highest in TSRQ closeness navigate the identified risk factors, as well as how they secure and engage in the promotive factors in their daily practice with students. The overarching objective was to identify implicit teacher characteristics that bolster positive teacher-student relationships and how those characteristics are obtained or employed by teachers who are effective in creating and maintaining such relationships with their students within urban school settings.

**Significance of the Study**

Through examining teacher factors, such as burnout levels and cultural awareness and beliefs, this study explored salient factors in urban K-12 education as they related to TSRQ. While TSRQ greatly impacts student outcomes, both positive and negative, particularly in urban students, little is known as to which teacher specific factors lead to
positive TSRQ, particularly within urban schools. Due to the unique stressors and difficulties faced by both teachers and students in urban environments, teacher factors such as cultural awareness and beliefs and teacher burnout level provided much needed insight into TSRQ building within urban school settings. This exploration has aided in identifying significant areas for future study, provided direction for teacher education curriculum, and highlights possible areas of policy change that may affect the long-term trajectories for countless urban school students.

Summary

While the aim of this proposed study was to explore more deeply the implicit teacher factors that may influence positive TSRQ, an in-depth and all-encompassing understanding of positive TSRQ was beyond the scope of this study. However, this study sought to identify key teacher factors with a strong association to TSRQ, which to this point have only been discussed theoretically within the current literature. Overall, this research led to a broader, though not complete, conceptualization of how teacher characteristics interact to drive and bolster positive teacher-student relationships and the resulting positive student outcomes. This greater understanding may lead to real world implications into best practices for teacher education training and teacher hiring processes, particularly within urban school settings.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to review the theoretical and empirical literature to further investigate the interplay among urban K-12 educational settings, TSRQ, teacher burnout levels, and the cultural awareness and beliefs of teachers.

TSRQ as a Theoretical Function of Attachment

“Perhaps there is no other nonfamilial adult that is more significant in a child’s life than his or her teacher” (Kesner, 2000, p. 134). This assertion arises from the growing field of research focused on the role, and potential impact, of the teacher-student relationship. While several models, including social support models, socialization models, interpersonal theory, social-motivational models, and developmental systems models, have been employed to conceptualize TSRQ, attachment theory has driven the definition of ‘high quality’ teacher-student relationships, spurring the development of relationship focused research and interventions in schools (Verschueren, 2015).

Attachment theory is essentially a constructivist theory of human relating and identity development in which a child’s understanding of their ‘self’ and their role in interactions with others is built through relational experiences (Bowlby, 1998). Inner
working models are developed through repeated positive or negative experiences with others and, similar to schemas, become the lens through which the individual views the world and their place in it, particularly when interacting with others (Riley, 2009). Attachment theory began as a theory of the mother-child relationship and how that relationship leads to a child’s ability to navigate interactions with their caregivers and others.

Hazen and Shaver (1990) were the first to find empirical evidence of adults continuing to engage in attachment-based behaviors in dyadic, and mutual, relationships, suggesting internal working models extend and, with repeated exposure to certain relational experiences, can be malleable, well into adulthood. Riley (2009) posits this type of dyadic, mutual relationship occurs in the classroom, suggesting teachers and students experience relational interactions that both arise from and, theoretically, can further mold their inner working models. Pianta (1992a) pioneered the movement of viewing other adults, besides parents, as temporary or ad hoc attachment figures who provide attachment related interactions, such as offering emotional support or serving as a safe haven or secure base for children while they are separated from their familial attachment figures. These varying directions of attachment research paint a picture of attachment as a dynamic, complex, and evolving internal process that plays out in an external manifestation (Fitton, 2012). Viewing TSRQ through the multifaceted lens of attachment theory allows researchers to not only explore the significance of the emotional quality of teacher-student relationships at the individual teacher and student level, but also the role of teachers as a potential secure base for students at all grade levels (Verschueren, 2015).
Empirical Support for TSRQ as Function of Attachment. A study exploring the association, through structural equation modeling, between TSRQ and children’s appraisals of interactions with their teacher was completed with a sample of 500 Dutch, third to sixth graders and their 27 teachers. Results from this study indicate children’s expectations of their interactions with teachers were strongly correlated to their TSRQ, with negative expectations coinciding with a more negative TSRQ and a positive TSRQ associated with a greater amount of positive expectations (Jellesma, Zee, & Koomen, 2015). Closeness in relationships contributed most to positive expectations, while high levels of conflict primarily related to negative expectations, indicating that viewing TSRQ as a whole may not be as effective as viewing it through the lens of closeness and conflict. Interestingly, children were unlikely to view situation-specific appraisals of their interactions with teachers as significant in their overall expectations and TSRQ ratings (Jellesma et al., 2015). This lends credence to the use of inner working models in understanding TSRQ, with multiple experiences leading to a student’s general understanding of how they are viewed, and should expect to be treated, by their teacher beyond singular situation-specific interactions.

In a longitudinal study of 81 U.S. 4th through 6th graders and their 16 teachers, researchers found student and teacher reports of TSRQ were strongly predicted by students’ expectations of their teachers prior to the start of the school year (Gurland & Evangelista, 2015). These findings serve to highlight the influence of student inner working models and the long-lasting effects of continued negative interactions with teachers. Further, results indicate that though several students had the same teachers, there was a higher amount of within-teacher variation in TSRQ than among-teacher
variation, further suggesting that TSRQ is an individualized interaction between single students and their teachers (Gurland & Evangelista, 2015). An additional study of 414 elementary and middles school aged youth placed in special education, completed in the Netherlands around the same time, found not only was there a smaller among-teacher variation in TSRQ scores but also noted no classroom level differences in relation to TSRQ, strengthening the argument that TSRQ likely works predominantly on the individual level for students (Breeman et al., 2015).

Gurland and Evangelista (2015) then engaged in a second study of 71 U.S. 3rd through 6th graders to further explore the extent to which TSRQ is affected by a child’s expectation of liking their teacher through manipulating the participants’ expectancies of the guest teacher providing a short-term educational program. The authors created the manipulation of expectations by providing information regarding the guest teacher being either autonomy supportive or sometimes autonomy supportive and sometimes controlling (Gurland & Evangelista, 2015). Results suggest that though the manipulation of children’s expectations has an impact on students’ initial TSRQ ratings, this effect diminishes across time, particularly for older female students (Gurland & Evangelista, 2015). These results further support the idea of a more deeply ingrained social process at work in student expectations and experience of TSRQ, such as that of inner working models which require repeated exposure to support long term change in relational experiences.

**Teacher-Student Relationship Quality**

TSRQ is typically measured through teacher reports on the dimensions of closeness and conflict. While dependency was initially measured, many studies have
dropped this scale as it did not consistently maintain validity for older students nor across cultures (Doumen et al., 2009; Roorda et al., 2011; Spilt & Koomen, 2009). Relationships scoring high in close TSRQ are characterized by warmth, open communication, trust, and teacher approachableness. The teacher in close TSRQ often serves as a source of security and emotional support for students in the class. Those dyads scoring high in conflictual TSRQ often experience relationships characterized by mistrust, negative emotionality, and a break in communication, making it difficult for students to access the teacher as a source of support. Outcomes across all domains of student functioning have been found to correlate with TSRQ and will be further discussed in detail in the sections below (Hattie, 2009; Lindo et al., 2014; McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015; Murray & Pianta, 2007; Sosa & Gomez, 2012).

**TSRQ and Academics.** Higher levels of student engagement were associated with close TSRQ, while lower levels of student engagement, particularly academic or behavioral task engagement, were associated with more conflictual TSRQ in a sample of 148 Belgian kindergartners and their 33 teachers (Doumen, Koomen, Buyse, Wouters, & Verschueren, 2012). For kindergartners, school engagement levels have been found to be predictive of later academic successes (Snow, 2006). These findings support previous researchers’ assertions that TSRQ has marked effects, either positively or negatively, on children’s early academic adjustment (e.g., Baker, 2006; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Ladd & Burgess, 2001; Palermo, Hanish, Martin, Fabes, & Reiser, 2007).

Interestingly, Doumen et al. (2012) also compared observer and teacher ratings of the TSRQ in the study described above and found teacher ratings had a stronger, independent relationship between their TSRQ ratings and student engagement than did
the outside observers’ ratings. Additionally, teacher ratings of TSRQ remained stable across the school year for each student, lending further credence to TSRQ as a function of inner working models and not singular interactions with students (Doumen et al., 2012).

Though much of the research regarding TSRQ and academic achievement has been completed with pre-school or primary students, more recent studies have begun to explore the relationship between academic achievement and TSRQ in older students. In a longitudinal study of 383 rural White youth as they travelled through 5th, 6th, and 7th grades, Davidson, Gest, and Welsh (2010) determined poor TSRQ was positively correlated to concurrent deficits in academic skills ($p < .001$) and a positive, but marginal, association with concurrent academic self-concept ($p < .082$) which increases in predictive power in the following year ($p < .048$). Students experiencing poor TSRQ in 5th grade were more likely to experience a pattern of poor relationships than peers experiencing positive TSRQ (Davidson et al., 2010). Additionally, this pattern of poor relationships in primary school served as a moderating factor impairing academic skills and academic self-concept, increasing difficulties in school bonding, and decreasing reports of self-worth as students transitioned and settled into middle school despite previously on track trajectories for academic achievement in earlier grades (Davidson et al., 2010). These findings were further replicated in a study of 825 Norwegian elementary and middle school students in which conflictual TSRQ was negatively correlated with school adaptation in students ($r = -.52, p < .001$) suggesting more conflictual TSRQ is related to poorer school adaptation (Drugli, 2013).

While the research base in TSRQ is growing in the study of older students, the field is also beginning to grow in the study of minority groups, both within the US and
abroad. A study of the importance of teacher-student attachment and teacher support in two samples, one of 157 kindergartners and the other of 171 early adolescents (mean age of 13 years, 4 months), pulled from a population of students of color from U.S., low-income, urban backgrounds, found negative TSRQ was strongly associated with school-related adjustment across both samples. Positive TSRQ constructs, such as trust, were identified as an important predictors of academic achievement for both kindergartners and adolescents (Murray, Kosty, & Hauser-McClean, 2016).

In a qualitative study focused on the phenomenon of dropping out, 20 urban adolescents participated in a drop-out prevention program. Interviews with these participants had the purpose of increasing researchers understanding of the meaning these students made regarding school and dropping out. Participants highlighted family influence, a positive learning environment, and strong, lasting relationships with the leader of the intervention as protective factors inhibiting dropping out (Scheel, et al., 2009).

Structural equation modeling was utilized by Perry, Liu, and Pabian (2010) to explore the relationship between parent and teacher support, career preparation, school engagement, and grades in a sample of 285 urban middle and high school students. A significant impact of teacher support on school engagement, grades, and career prep was found. Results indicated that teachers may assume a more substantial role in student career decision making and school engagement than parents in urban school settings (Perry, et al., 2010).

An examination of associations between teacher and child perceptions of TSRQ and early school adjustment among a sample of 145 U.S. kindergartners in low-income,
urban school settings with a large proportion of minority students, found student race to be a significant moderating variable between TSRQ and early school adjustment (Murray, Waas, & Murray, 2008). Teachers in this study rated their TSRQ with students of color as more negative, while these TSRQ ratings also had a more significant association with school adjustment for students of color, suggesting race serves as a moderating variable in the relationship between TSRQ and school adjustment (Murray et al., 2008). These findings lend further credence to the cultural capital theory within educational settings (see Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), suggesting young children of color and their academic trajectories are likely impacted differently by early TSRQ than those trajectories of same-aged peers from the cultural majority. Interestingly, while teacher perceptions of the importance of TSRQ varies by student race, the child perceptions do not—all children associated higher levels of teacher support with increased adjustment (Murray et al., 2008). Results from this study contradict studies finding gender of students to be a moderating factor in the relationship between TSRQ and measures of academic or social skills (e.g., Birch & Ladd, 1998; Murray & Murray, 2004; O’Connor, 2010; Spilt, Koomen, & Jak, 2012), suggesting that in the context of low-income, urban environments, TSRQ may be a more salient and compensatory factor for all at-risk youth, regardless of gender (Murray et al., 2008).

Similar results arose in a study of 2,645 Swedish adolescents, between the ages of 10 and 18, seeking to determine whether social background affects TSRQ and whether these relationships have beneficial effects on school-related outcomes (Olsson, 2009). Findings suggest that while economically disadvantaged Swedish adolescents have poorer ratings of TSRQ than those who are not economically disadvantaged, the effects
of TSRQ are of particular importance for these students’ school-related outcomes, including engagement, academic self-efficacy, and academic achievement (Olsson, 2009). Economically disadvantaged students with a strong TSRQ were found to report 0.26 truancies per month, 1.28 less than those who were both economically disadvantaged and scoring weak in TSRQ and less than all economically advantaged peers (Olsson, 2009).

**TRSQ and Social-Emotional Functioning.** While students are in school to learn academic curriculum, there is no denying social and emotional learning and growth also occurs within the school setting. TSRQ has been found to be a significant factor in this type of development in students of all ages, particularly in youth from minority or disadvantaged backgrounds. This assertion is supported by Olsson’s (2009) findings indicating that economically disadvantaged Swedish youth, while lowest scoring in TSRQ, displayed notable differences in both self-esteem and psychological functioning when also experiencing a TSRQ high in closeness and low in conflict, with a difference of 0.65 on a 2-point scale and nearly one point on a 3-point scale, respectively, compared to economically disadvantaged peers with poor TSRQ. These increases appear even more significant when compared to those differences found between economically advantaged students with strong versus weak TSRQ, with comparisons of 0.16 and 0.37, respectively (Olsson, 2009). Additionally, economically disadvantaged students with strong TSRQ scored higher than any other group of students in self-esteem and higher than all but economically advantaged peers with strong TSRQ in psychological functioning (Olsson, 2009).
In a longitudinal study, following 1,168 U.S. children from kindergarten to sixth grade, Berry and O’Connor (2010) found TSRQ to be a predictor of social skills development as children progressed through early middle school. Positive TSRQ was found to be positively associated with social skills development, a relationship that experienced an increased effect size as children grew older (Berry & O’Connor, 2010). Berry and O’Connor (2010) suggest this may be due, in part, to both the accumulation of previous positive teacher-student relational interactions and the fact students in the late elementary/early middle school years are experiencing a stressful developmental transitional period and may utilize a teacher’s function as a secure base more often.

TSRQ’s effect on social skills development, both positive when high TSRQ and negative with low TSRQ, was found to be slightly stronger for children experiencing lower levels of internalizing problems in kindergarten (Berry & O’Connor, 2010). Social skills development appears to be an area of youth development in which repeated poor TSRQ is a risk factor, regardless of other potential early behavioral risk factors, while high TSRQ may serve to support adaptive social development in all youth (Berry & O’Connor, 2010).

Youth high in conflictual TSRQ in preschool are not only more likely to have slower development in social skills as they grow, but are also more likely to be victimized in 1st grade by peers, according to a longitudinal study completed with 377 Australian youth (Runions & Shaw, 2013). Results suggest close TSRQ in pre-K was a protective factor buffering youth from more severe peer bullying over time. Additionally, conflictual TSRQ was found to moderate the association between internalizing problems,
such as social withdrawal, and increasingly severe peer victimization over time (Runions & Shaw, 2013).

Jellesma and colleagues (2015) have suggested a mediating effect of low levels of closeness in a sample of 500 3rd through 6th grade Dutch students on later internalizing problems in students. Though closeness in TSRQ was not found to have a statistically significant primary correlation with internalizing problems, continued negative interactions with teachers may lead to increased negative expectations and the greater chance of the development of, or increase in, internalizing problems, despite the initial inner working model of closeness with teachers (Jellesma et al., 2015).

Not only is TSRQ related to an increase in internalizing and social difficulties in youth, but also in externalizing problems. In a longitudinal study seeking to understand the contribution of social connections and gender on the development of externalizing behavior of a sample of 241 U.S. children from preschool to fifth grade, higher levels of conflictual TSRQ was found to increase the odds of children being placed on either a trajectory of chronically externalizing behavioral problems or one of slowly increasing externalizing behaviors (Silver, Measelle, Armstrong, & Essex, 2010). For each unit increase in TSRQ conflict, Silver and colleagues (2010) found a youth in the low externalizing groups odds of being placed in the chronic externalizing group increased by 12.95 and the odds of being placed in the slowly increasing externalizing group increased by 2.17. Similar results of conflictual TSRQ being predictive of externalizing behaviors, as well as of the slower development of social skills, particularly as children aged, were found in a three-wave, cross-lagged longitudinal study of a sample of 981 Norwegian children from preschool to third grade that sought to examine the potential bidirectional
relation between conflictual TSRQ and both externalizing behaviors and children’s social skills (Skalicka, Stenseng, & Wichstrom, 2015). These results suggest conflictual TSRQ likely serves as a simultaneous reinforcement for, and trigger of, externalizing behaviors in young students (Silver et al., 2010; Skalicka et al., 2015). As with other studies (e.g., O’Connor, 2010; Skalicka et al., 2015), the TSRQ was found to be a stronger predictor of externalizing behavioral problems in the classroom setting than parent-child relationship quality (Silver et al., 2010).

A longitudinal study of 1,156 U.S. youth as they moved through 4th, 5th and 6th grade found, through structural equation modeling, conflictual TSRQ to be a statistically significant predictor of more engagement in risky behaviors (path coefficient of .32, \( p < .001 \)), while close TSRQ was statistically significantly (path coefficient of -.24, \( p < .001 \)) related to the engagement in less risky behaviors (Rudasill, Reio, Stipanovic, & Taylor, 2010). Results appear to provide preliminary evidence early adolescent relationships with significant adults, such as teachers, may serve as a protective factor for students at-risk for engaging in maladaptive behaviors (Rudasill et al., 2010).

**TSRQ in Relation to Student Factors.** Despite the clear ties between poor TSRQ and later social-emotional developments, there is also a wealth of research suggesting a child’s current social-emotional functioning, as well as other child factors such as demographics and gender, may have a significant impact on TSRQ.

In a prospective, longitudinal, examination of factors associated with TSRQ in 1,364 urban and suburban, U.S. youth from 1st through 5th grade, TSRQ was found to decline slightly throughout elementary school (O’Connor, 2010). This finding is consistent with previous longitudinal research (Jerome, Hamre, & Pianta, 2009). At the
child level, behavioral problems were predictive of both a more rapid decline in TSRQ and lower levels of high TSRQ compared to peers while in the fifth grade, with each additional unit higher on the behavior problem measure predicting a decrease of .12 points on the measure of TSRQ (O’Connor, 2010). Children with high TSRQ in kindergarten displayed the ability to maintain high TSRQ at the fifth-grade level, with children who scored one point higher in TSRQ in kindergarten also scored .16 points higher in TSRQ in the fifth grade, suggesting children develop inner working models of teacher-child relationships early in school and apply these inner working models to subsequent interactions with teachers (O’Connor, 2010). The TSRQ in kindergarten was a greater predictor of TSRQ in later years than was maternal attachment, suggesting TSRQ may serve as a compensatory relationship for children with insecure attachment to maternal caregivers (O’Connor, 2010). In terms of child-based factors, this study suggests behavioral problems set a trajectory of increasing conflictual TSRQ for the student, regardless of other factors or individual teacher interactions as they have created an inner working model of teachers as unapproachable and untrustworthy.

The study completed by Drugli (2013) of 825 Norwegian school children in grades 1-7 explored the relationship between TSRQ, demographics, including child gender, teacher gender, and grade, and student mental health. Results support previous findings of both girls and younger students having a TSRQ rated as high in closeness (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Murray & Murray, 2004; O’Connor, 2010). A strong relationship with a correlation of .80, $p < .001$, between conflictual TSRQ and externalizing problems displayed by students was also identified (Drugli, 2013). Generally, this study supports previous work (Murray & Murray, 2004) which suggests close TSRQ is closely related to
the demographic factors of students’ gender, age, and grade level as well as teachers’ years of experience and gender, while conflictual TSRQ is most closely related to student behavioral or mental health problems occurring within the classroom.

To further support this assertion, a study of 414 Dutch children, receiving special education services for emotional and behavioral disorders, and their 56 teachers, found individual students with high levels of emotional and behavioral problems having a negative relationship to TSRQ ratings, with structural equation modeling path coefficients of -.24 and -.18 respectively (Breeman et al., 2015). Similar results were found in a sample of 500 3rd through 6th grade Dutch students in which high levels of conflict in TSRQ were directly related to children’s internalizing problems (Jellesma et al., 2015). These findings were further echoed in a three-wave, cross-lagged longitudinal study of a sample of 981 Norwegian children from preschool to third grade that sought to examine the potential bidirectional relation between conflictual TSRQ and externalizing behaviors and children’s social skills (Skalicka et al., 2015). This study’s results indicated externalizing behavior serves as a stronger predictor than social skills of conflictual TSRQ, further supporting previous studies (Hamre, Pianta, Downer, and Mashburn, 2008; Howes, 2000) in which children’s antisocial, but not prosocial, behaviors predicted conflictual TSRQ (Skalicka et al., 2015). Alternatively, high levels of close TSRQ were found to be correlated with high levels of prosocial behavior and less peer dislike at the individual student level, suggesting increased social skills may aid a child in maintaining a closer TSRQ (Breeman et al., 2015).

An investigation of TSRQ for U.S. six-year-olds further supports the assertion that preexisting social skills have an influence on TSRQ. A sample of six-year-olds with
(n = 58) and without (n = 82) an intellectual disability (ID) found children with ID experienced TSRQ that was more conflictual and less close than those without ID (Eisenhower, Baker, & Blacher, 2007). However, the variance in TSRQ between those with and without ID was not accounted for completely by IQ differences. This difference was fully mediated by mother and teacher reported behavioral problems and social skills at age six, as well as by the child’s self-regulatory behavior at age 3 (Eisenhower et al., 2007).

Similar results arose in a study of TSRQ in relation to children’s histories of difficult temperaments, characterized by negative emotionality, irritability, inflexibility and a high level of intensity (Sanson, Hemphill, & Smart, 2004), and later peer interactions of 1,364 U.S. students in kindergarten, 1st or 2nd grade. The researchers found conflictual TSRQ was positively associated with a history of difficult temperament in preschool (Sanson et al., 2004). Conflictual TSRQ was also found to mediate the association between the history of difficult temperament and future difficulties in peer interactions in the third grade (Rudasill, Niehaus, Buhs, & White, 2013). These findings suggest temperamental problems lead to an increased likelihood of conflictual TSRQ which then leads to a greater chance of difficult peer interactions. Teachers may have the ability to adjust the strength in the relationship between a history of temperamental difficulties and later trouble in peer interactions.

While teachers or schools may have the ability to intervene in some of the identified child factors, such as externalizing or internalizing behavioral problems, the area of demographics is one in which teachers, schools, policies, etc. cannot change. The current literature addresses, though in a very limited fashion, gender, special education
status, economic disadvantages, and race as demographic factors that may relate to TSRQ.

In a longitudinal study examining the mediating role of TSRQ on the relation between student background, difficult early temperament, and risky behavior in 6th grade in a sample of 1,156 U.S. youth as they moved through 4th, 5th, and 6th grades, structural equation modeling was used to suggest students’ family income, gender, status of receiving special education, and a history of difficult temperaments were associated with risky behaviors, with TSRQ serving as a mediator (Rudasill et al., 2010). In line with earlier discussed studies (Eisenhower et al., 2007; Rudasill et al., 2013), high levels of conflict were positively correlated with a history of difficult temperaments. However, conflictual TSRQ was also statistically significantly related to students who had any of the following characteristics: low income, boys, and/or receiving special education services with correlations of .19, .19, and .17 respectively, all at p < .01 values (Rudasill et al., 2010). Alternatively, close TSRQ was closely associated with students who were from high income families and received general education services (Rudasill et al., 2010).

A study exploring gender effects of both teachers and students on TSRQ in a sample of 659 Dutch primary school teachers and their 1,493 students in grades 1 through 6 arose from the consistent demonstration in the literature that male students tend to have less close and more conflictual TSRQ than female students and the fact the majority of these studies relied on samples of predominantly female teachers (Spilt et al., 2012). Results from their study indicate boys experienced more conflictual TSRQ with teachers, regardless of teacher gender, with the highest levels of conflict stemming from relationships between male teachers and male students (Spilt et al., 2012). This
contradicts the common belief that male teachers may be best suited to teach and relate to male students (Cushman, 2007). Overall, findings from this study continue to suggest that being a male student is a risk-factor for both more conflictual and less close TSRQ, regardless of other factors.

As discussed in prior sections of this literature review, demographic factors such as race (Murray & Murray, 2008) and economic disadvantages (Olsson, 2010) have been identified not only in the role of mediator or moderator variables when discussing TSRQ, but also to independently predict both less close and more conflictual TSRQ, regardless of other factors. This discrepancy is most clearly described in a study by Thijs and Eilbracht (2012) to determine why Morrocon-Dutch students experiences a higher rate of conflictual TSRQ than their native Dutch and Turkish-Dutch peers. The relationships between parent-child relationship, ethnicity, and conflictual TSRQ was examined in a study of 36 native Dutch teachers and their Turkish-Dutch, Morroccan-Dutch, and native Dutch students (Thijs & Eilbracht, 2012). Findings suggest the ethnic mismatch and possible increased bias towards Moroccans in the Netherlands (see Verkuyten & Thijs, 2010) most likely accounts for the higher rate of conflictual TSRQ between native Dutch teachers and Morroccan-Dutch students (Thijs & Eilbracht, 2012). It is because of findings such as these that this study aims to view TSRQ through the lens of teacher factors related to cultural awareness and beliefs.

**TSRQ in Relation to Teacher Factors.** While this study seeks to view TSRQ through the lens of specific teacher factors, it is important to understand the current empirical literature surrounding teacher factors as they relate to TSRQ. This will allow
for connections to be made between current literature and this teacher factors within this study.

A study of 48 Dutch teachers with the purpose of obtaining evidence of the validity of the Teacher Relationship Interview (TRI; Pianta, 1999) did so by identifying connections between teacher relationship narratives, reported TSRQ, and children’s externalizing behaviors. The teachers were asked to identify one child with problematic classroom behaviors and one without to identify differences in TSRQ and teacher narratives within the same teacher but across different students (Spilt & Koomen, 2009). Results support prior research (Pianta, 2001) and indicate TSRQ embodies two relatively independent dimensions: a negative dimension, conflict, reflecting anger, difficulty managing negative responses, and disruptions in the relationship and a positive dimension, closeness, reflecting warmth, a positive affect, and a mutually caring relationship. Teachers’ feelings of helplessness were found to be a negative predictor of close TSRQ, suggesting feeling non-close levels of TSRQ may lead teachers to feel ineffective and lead to less attempts to invest in relationship building with the student (Spilt & Koomen, 2009). This cost-benefit ratio related to the investment given to youth and the expected ‘emotional return’ from students is further discussed in the literature (e.g., Hargreaves, 2000; Newberry & Davis, 2008) and may be driven, in part, by a teacher’s level of emotional exhaustion, desire to connect to others, or a sense of diminished personal achievement, which are all characteristics of teacher burnout.

In a qualitative inquiry of the effectiveness of 10 teachers nominated as supportive teachers by both colleagues and graduating high school seniors in a U.S., urban high school serving predominantly Latino students, teachers identified as most
supportive were also those who displayed the most teaching self-efficacy in interviews and observed classroom sessions (Sosa & Gomez, 2012). These teachers identified themselves as effective and capable to both emotionally and academically support the students who most needed it (Sosa & Gomez, 2012). They indicated a belief that what they bring to the TSRQ is lacking in other teachers, stemming from their positive, personal, and genuine relationship with, and realistically high expectations of, students (Sosa & Gomez, 2012). This type of TSRQ is in direct opposition to other research findings (Fine, 1991; Valenzuela, 1999) in which students attending large, urban schools often experience teachers who are apathetic or appear distant and unapproachable to students.

A prospective, longitudinal, examination of factors associated with TSRQ in 1364 urban and suburban, U.S. youth from 1st through 5th grade also identified teacher self-efficacy as an important factor in TSRQ (O’Connor, 2010). Teacher self-efficacy was found to be positively associated with a less rapid decline in TSRQ across the elementary years and a higher TSRQ in the fifth grade (O’Connor, 2010). At the fifth-grade level, child race was a moderator of the effect of teacher self-efficacy, indicating lower levels of teacher self-efficacy were predictive of substantially lower TSRQ ratings in African American students, while teachers reporting high levels of self-efficacy rated TSRQ as similar across races (O’Connor, 2010). O’Connor (2010) also identified higher teacher salaries as indicative of a slower decline in TSRQ across the years as well as a more positive TSRQ at the fifth-grade level.

Importantly, a positive classroom environment was related to a less rapid decline in TSRQ and was also found to be statistically more significant in TSRQ ratings for
African-American students than for Caucasian students (O’Connor, 2010). These results support those by Johnson and Stevens (2006) in which the strongest predictor of TSRQ was found to be the emotional climate of the classroom. Bowlby (1998) suggests that inner working models of attachment, while relatively stable, do change in response to modifications in the caregiving environment, such as a positive classroom environment or increased teacher self-efficacy. Therefore, if teachers are emotionally and culturally able to provide such positive environments, they may be able to change some of the negative or damaging trajectories of their students.

Specific positive teacher characteristics arose through several quantitative and qualitative studies of TSRQ and minority or at-risk students. Interestingly, and in line with the hypotheses of this study, many of the suggested teacher factors are related to cultural awareness and teachers’ emotional availability. In a qualitative study, exploring TSRQ through the lived experiences of 34 minority students from three different U.S. urban high schools, participants identified culturally-responsive teaching, including knowledge of students as individuals and as situated within their cultures and communities as the most important factor in promoting and maintaining positive TSRQ (Phillippo, 2012). Students further identified teacher characteristics such as being respectful, competent, displaying unconditional positive regard combined with having high expectations for student success (Phillippo, 2012). These findings were supported by a study of 157 kindergarten and 171 adolescent U.S. students of color from low-income, urban backgrounds in which authors found that attachment-based constructs, such as conflict, alienation, and trust were consistently related more strongly to ratings of adjustment than social support constructs (Murray et al., 2016).
Teacher competence was found to be associated with more positive TSRQ ratings in a study of 414 Dutch children receiving special education services from 56 different teachers (Beerman et al., 2015). Eisenhower and colleagues’ (2007) study of 58 U.S. six-year-old children with intellectual disability and 82 without, found teachers’ expectations regarding a student’s behavior or academic preparedness likely plays a role in how the teacher establishes a relationship with the student. They further suggested that when there is a gap between the expected performance and actual performance of a student, the teacher may have difficulty forming positive relationships with the student (Eisenhower et al., 2007). Both teacher competence and their expectations of students can be clouded by the teacher’s cultural awareness and emotional stability, as was evidenced by Thijs and Eilbracht (2012) in their study of the impact of implicit biases held by native Dutch teachers against Morroccan-Dutch students.

**Burnout**

“The term ‘burnout’—a metaphor to describe a state or process of mental exhaustion—was first used in the United States in the late sixties and early seventies of the past century, although the particular experience itself is likely to be of all time and all places” (Schaufeli, 2003, p. 1).

The formal concept of job burnout appeared in the 1970s, its initial founding attributed to both Freudenberger (1974, 1975) and Maslach (1976). Freudenberger, in his study of professional caregivers, described burnout as a stage of fatigue or frustration arising from professional relationships that did not produce the desired reward or benefit (1974, 1975), while Maslach identified, through her interviews of human service workers, burnout as the result of emotional stress (1976). As discussed previously, the
cost-benefit ratio of working with urban youth may not meet teachers’ expectations (e.g., Hargreaves, 2000; Newberry & Davis, 2008), leading to the fatigue or frustrations identified by Freudenberger (1975). When teachers face these high levels of emotional stress and fatigue, connecting with others, particularly with those students whom the teacher’s inner working models suggest will not provide a reciprocally emotionally satisfying relationship, becomes more difficult theoretically leading to decreased closeness and increased conflict in TSRQ with those students (Spilt & Koomen, 2009). This assertion will be further explored in the section ‘burnout and theory’ below.

Burnout, as a concept, quickly became defined as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment specific to individuals working within the helping professions (Maslach et al., 1981). Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being emotionally depleted. Depersonalization refers to a cynical and negative attitude towards work and students, leading to distancing or uncaring reactions towards colleagues or students. Emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are often seen as the core components of burnout (Milatz et al., 2015). The third component of burnout, reduced personal accomplishment, has become a controversial discussion in which some view it as referring to a personal characteristic, as it is most strongly positively related to feelings of self-efficacy (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Alarcon, Eschleman, & Bowling., 2009). Additionally, individuals suffering from severe burnout were found to experience high levels of not only emotional but cognitive exhaustion, reporting symptoms such as difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, and struggling to solve complex tasks (Schaufeli, Bakker, Schapp, Kladler, & Hoogduin, 35
suggesting perhaps the need to explore cognitive exhaustion in addition to emotional exhaustion.

More recent studies, completed in the past two decades, have found burnout to be a concern across both human services and non-human services samples (e.g., Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2002). Burnout may be a larger problem among U.S. citizens, as is suggested by a comparison study of 57 US studies (total \(n = 12,239\)) and 27 Dutch studies (total \(n = 10,502\)) which shows emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were significantly higher in the US population, whereas, personal accomplishment was significantly lower (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). These results were further supported by a more recent multivariate meta-analysis in which teacher burnout levels were found to be higher in U.S. studies than non-U.S. studies (Aloe, Shisler, Norris, Nickerson, and Rinker, 2014). U.S. teacher burnout levels were also more positively correlated with student problem behaviors than those participants in studies occurring outside of the U.S. (Aloe et al., 2014).

**Burnout and theory.** Social exchange theory appears to be the most empirically supportive theory through which to view burnout, at least within the majority of Dutch studies where a significant portion of large scale and statistically mature studies of burnout have been completed (Schaufeli, 2003). The theory also blends well with the overarching attachment perspective of the current proposed study, particularly in the assertion that a cost benefit analysis, particularly in the form of emotional elements, drives relationship decisions (West & Turner, 2007). Costs include those elements of relationships that have a negative value, such as effort or the emotional unpleasantness of
interacting with the other individual, while rewards are those elements that have a positive value, such as feeling acceptance or companionship (West & Turner, 2007).

The basic assumptions this theory holds regarding the nature of relationships: that relationships are interdependent and relational life is a process, hearken back to the relative stability and effect of inner working models on all current and future interactions (West & Turner, 2007). Through the lens of social exchange theory, as informed by attachment theory, one could assert that when relational or interactional aspects at work appear to require more input than what the teacher perceives the interactions are worth, or the interactions are lacking in reciprocity, these teachers are a greater risk of experiencing burnout.

This may be particularly true when the costs are emotional and habitual in nature (Milatz et al., 2015). Therefore, burnout develops when interactions with colleagues, students, and/or the profession begin to create a pattern of unpleasant, unfulfilling, and unrewarding interactions (Milatz et al., 2015) which further exacerbates a repeated cycle of negative judgments of student behavior, increased negative emotions, such as anger, and decreased enjoyment (Chang, 2009; Chang & Davis, 2009). The habitual pattern of emotional costs outweighing benefits in interactions at work theoretically lead to an inner working model of a positive TSRQ as not worth the effort, further moderating the future judgments of students’ daily behaviors (Chang, 2013; Spilt et al., 2011). This effect is seen most strongly in teachers whose inner working model and implicit theory of their role in the classroom is one in which investment in relationships is seen as valuable and important (Chang, 2013).
The lack of reciprocity in interactions with students appears to be one of the key factors in adapting an inner working model that does not value investing in relationships with students, as discussed by Chang (2013). Data were collected from 492 teachers in the U.S. Midwest in a study exploring teachers’ appraisals of disruptive student behavior and the use of adaptive coping and emotion regulation strategies aimed at easing teacher burnout levels (Chang, 2013). Results indicate the intensity of unpleasant emotions from a singular episode of disruptive student behavior is able to impact a teacher’s overall level of burnout, suggesting that a single emotionally charged event can change the trajectory of both the TSRQ and teacher burnout levels (Chang, 2013). The study further indicates a lack of problem-solving efficacy served as a driving force behind the link between anger/frustration and teachers’ negative appraisals of students’ behaviors (Chang, 2013).

Only problem-focused coping strategies appeared to mediate the effect found between the intensity of unpleasant emotions and burnout levels which is consistent with the literature (Davis, DiStefano, & Schutz, 2008; Lazarus, 1993). Finally, teachers scoring highly in proactive coping strategies also scored low in teacher burnout, suggesting proactive coping serves as a protective variable against the dimensions of burnout (Chang, 2013). Chang (2013) suggests that teachers engaging in proactive strategies may be more prepared to face difficulties in the classroom or not encounter feelings of threat or loss, as the result of discipline issues in the classroom.

**Burnout in teachers.** Due to the interpersonal and emotional high demands of teaching, it has been rated as one of the most stressful jobs (McIntyre, McIntyre, & Francis, 2017). Researchers around the world (e.g., Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Hastings
Bham, 2003; Kokkinos, 2007; McCormick & Barnett, 2011; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007) agree that up to 30% of teachers are affected by burnout and the related mental health symptoms. A review of burnout literature suggests high levels of burnout have been linked to increases in depressive symptomology, psychosomatic complaints, and physical health problems as well as to increased absenteeism, decreased productivity, and poor commitment to one’s professional responsibilities (Schaufeli, 2003). This lack of commitment is illustrated clearly by the fact that in the United States nearly half of all new teachers leave the teaching profession within five years (Pas, Bradshaw, & Hershfeldt, 2012). Teacher attrition appears to be closely tied to increased levels of burnout, reinforcing the need to further understand and research burnout in teachers.

Despite the knowledge that high levels of burnout garner negative outcomes, it has been difficult for researchers to pin down specific teacher factors that interact significantly with burnout. Longitudinal, multilevel modeling was used to examine the influence of school- and teacher-level factors in the development of teacher burnout and efficacy (Pas et al., 2012). Data were collected three times across a two-year time period from 600 teachers in 31 elementary schools in the US. Results indicate that burnout increases overtime, though its growth appeared unaffected by demographic characteristics not experience (Pas et al., 2012). Teacher-level factors such as preparedness, collegial leadership, and teacher affiliation scales were each related to lower levels of burnout in the first data collection; however, the relationships did not maintain significance across the two-year time frame. School-level factors did not appear to have an effect on teacher burnout levels (Pas et al., 2012).
Causes of teacher burnout. Burnout levels appear to increase as sense of job autonomy decreases and perceived workload increases (Schaufeli, 2003). This may be of special importance to U.S. teachers in urban settings as they face increased administrative expectations and the subsequent lack of autonomy in curriculum-based decision making. Alternatively, desirable social behaviors of students and social support from colleagues have been shown to diminish teachers’ burnout levels (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Hastings & Bham, 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

A multivariate meta-analysis of student misbehavior and teacher burnout utilized 19 studies with 21 independent samples and a total of 63 effect sizes (Aloe et al., 2014). Results indicate a statistically significant relationship between the three dimensions of burnout and student misbehavior with the largest effect occurring between student misbehavior and emotional exhaustion, followed by depersonalization and misbehavior (Aloe et al., 2014). A negative relationship was found between personal accomplishment and student misbehavior, suggesting that as misbehavior increases, the teacher’s sense of personal accomplishments decreases (Aloe et al., 2014). These correlations were in the moderate range, highlighting student misbehavior as a critical correlate of teacher burnout (Aloe et al., 2014). The moderate to large correlation between emotional exhaustion and misbehavior suggests a teacher’s ability to use effective positive behavior management in the face of misbehavior may be compromised by repeated student misbehaviors, leading to a punitive classroom environment (Aloe et al., 2014).

In line with student misbehavior is that of the teacher’s competence in their ability to manage difficult student behaviors. A multivariate meta-analysis of 16 studies of elementary school teachers investigated the relationship between classroom management
self-efficacy and burnout (Aloe, Amo, & Shanahan, 2013). Results indicated a moderate relationship between classroom management self-efficacy and the three dimensions of burnout with the largest effect found between classroom management self-efficacy and lowered personal accomplishment (Aloe et al., 2013). A greater sense of competency in classroom management appears to lead to feeling more accomplished (Aloe et al., 2013). However, when classroom management self-efficacy falters, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization rise (Aloe et al., 2013).

Outcomes of teacher burnout. Trends in burnout studies appear to suggest a decreased quality in service as an employee experiences increased levels of emotional exhaustion (Garman, Corrigan, & Morris, 2002; Singh, 2000). When examining teacher burnout specifically, researchers (Klusmann, Kunter, Trautwein, Ludtke, & Baumert, 2008; McLean and Connor, 2015) agree that a main consequence of burnout induced teacher ill-being is lower educational quality and decreased student achievement levels.

In a study of the relationship between special education referrals and both teacher efficacy and burnout of a sample of 106 U.S. elementary school teachers from urban (n = 38), suburban (n = 40), and rural (n = 28) schools found teachers who were uncertain about their decision of whether to refer a child to special education were also more likely to experience significantly higher levels of burnout than those teachers who were certain they would or would not refer (Egyed & Short, 2006). The authors (Egyed & Short, 2006) suggest that this may be because teachers who are experiencing limited levels of burnout have either not given up on the student (would not refer) or see special education as the best option (would refer) and therefore are likely to believe in clear, effective options are possible. This type of lack of decision making has been linked to an
inflexibility in thinking, a close-mindedness to innovation, that is common in those experiencing burnout (Freudenberger, 1977) and could impact a teacher’s willingness to try new strategies or interventions within the classroom (Egyed & Short, 2006). Theoretically, this lack of drive to try new approaches to teaching, which may be characteristic of increased levels of burnout, may make it difficult for teachers to engage in culturally informed teaching and culturally aware interactions with students, particularly those interactions involving the daily integration of new, implicit, knowledge found in Saberes Docentes (Slavit & Poveda, 2011).

While much research exists regarding the negative impact of teacher burnout on classroom management and student achievement, there is also emerging data regarding the additional negative outcomes of teacher burnout for the teacher, as well. A longitudinal, three-wave study gathered data three times every six months for 18 months in a sample of 499 South Korean middle and high school teachers in order to determine the relationship between teacher burnout and depression levels (Shin, Noh, Jang, Park, & Lee 2012). Results indicate burnout may serve as the initial phase in the development of depression for this sample of teachers (Shin et al., 2012). This supports prior findings suggesting that though the relationship is reciprocal between burnout and depression, the path from burnout to depression appears stronger than the path from depression to burnout (Ahola & Hakanen, 2007). Mental health, in general, appears to worsen as burnout advances, with severe burnout closely resembling depression (Salmela-Aro, Savolainen, & Holopainen, 2009). It is not a jump to suggest that increased levels of depression are also detrimental to a teacher’s ability to build positive TSRQ and to effectively teach, especially if teaching students that are considered difficult.
**TSRQ and teacher burnout.** There is only one study, to this author’s knowledge, that specifically examines the relationship between TSRQ and teacher burnout. The study investigates the role of TSRQ and teacher attachment experiences on teacher burnout levels in a sample of 83 ($n = 65$ from Austrian schools and $n = 18$ from German schools) elementary school teachers (Milatz et al., 2015). Teachers were asked to rate their TSRQ for both the student with whom they had the best relationship and the student with whom they have the worth relationship (Milatz et al., 2015).

TSRQ was found to be characterized by closeness across multiple students in the same class and was correlated most positively with lower levels of both depersonalization and emotional exhaustion, while distant relationships or incongruent relationships across students was correlated with higher levels of burnout (Milatz et al., 2015). A teacher’s attachment experiences appeared to foster their ability to engage in closer TSRQ (Milatz et al. 2015). Interestingly, teachers who had low TSRQ across multiple students in the same class reported an equally low level of emotional exhaustion as those teachers reporting high TSRQ (Milatz et al., 2015). Milatz and colleagues (2015) suggest that this may be due to low relationship engagement, which may be used as a strategy to save energy and feel less exhausted. Results also suggest that teachers experiencing incongruent TSRQ across students experienced increases in depersonalization and emotional exhaustion as the range between TSRQ increased, indicating the more incongruent the TSRQ, the higher the level of burnout (Milatz et al., 2015). This may increase a teacher’s level of emotional stress and frustration while also decrease their sense of competence and sense of support (Milatz et al., 2015).
Teachers engaging in poor TSRQ interactions with students may be actively engaged in experiential avoidance, defined as attempts to avoid one’s own emotional reactions. Spilt and Koomen (2009) found that teachers engaging in the Teacher Relationship Interview (TRI, Pianta, 1999), who were asked to focus on students with externalizing behaviors, showed a tendency to engage in negative emotion suppression, perhaps in a move to act more ‘professionally’ as a means of controlling conflict. Babad (1990) suggests that students are aware of the negative affect of their teachers, despite teachers’ attempts to maintain professional supportiveness.

An examination of the role of experiential avoidance in burnout and depression in a sample of 529 U.S. middle and elementary school teachers found experiential avoidance to be positively associated with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and depression, as well as negatively associated with personal accomplishment (Hinds, Jones, Gau, Forrester, & Biglan, 2015). Special education teachers were found to report more stress as a result of difficult student behaviors, making them more at risk for job attrition or a reduced sensitivity to student needs and subpar teaching effectiveness (Hinds et al., 2015). Student problem behaviors were the largest predictor of both burnout and depression, followed by lack of collegial support (Hinds et al., 2015). Experiential avoidance appeared to mediate the impact of stress on both the burnout and depression levels reported by teachers, suggesting teachers who actively avoid emotional responses experience higher levels of both burnout and depression, increasing negative outcomes for themselves and their students, possibly through the increased likelihood of a negative TSRQ (Hinds et al., 2015).
Culturally Aware and Responsive Teaching

“While schools and teachers attempted, often skillfully and sensitively, to build relationships, students navigated these efforts in a context rife with reasons to mistrust educators and governmental institutions” (Phillippo, 2012, p. 459).

In the U.S., despite some schools’ and teachers’ attempts to promote positive TSRQ, there is a long history of uncomfortable, and often oppressed, relationships between minority groups and governmental institutions, reaching into and well beyond any single teacher-student dyad. One of the most critical issues caused by this history of contention between minority groups and governmental institutions is the ‘demographic divide’ (Gay, 2010; Milner, 2012) existing today as a result of historical integration in which Black teachers were pushed out of public schools (Foster, 1997) and segregated Black school communities were dismantled and bused into predominantly White school systems (Siddle Walker, 2001). The ‘demographic divide’ represented numerically indicates the teaching force in public schools is predominately White (82%) with Black teachers (7.4%) underrepresented in the U.S. teaching force, leaving many minority students having only, or at least a majority of, White teachers (Ford & Sassi, 2014).

Of particular importance to TSRQ is that the history, and resulting ‘demographic divide’, has also affected White teachers understanding of what it means to be a teacher, as they too have experienced a majority of, if not all, White teachers. This lack of diversity in the teaching profession undoubtedly influences White teachers’ construction of the students whom they teach, coloring their conception of diverse student populations and limiting their beliefs regarding what minority students can accomplish (e.g Sleeter, 2004; Warren, 2015). Beliefs regarding likelihood of student success in academic ability
and achievement (see Ferguson, 2003), academic engagement and appropriate classroom behaviors (see Downey & Pribesh, 2004; McGrady & Reynolds, 2013) are found to be lower for Black and/or Latino students than White or Asian students from White teachers. Empirical evidence further suggests that there are notable racial variations in White teachers’ reactions to students exhibiting similar behaviors (Murray, 1996).

These core understandings, often informed by the misperceptions of minority students discussed above, form the teacher’s inner working model of what it means to be a teacher of minority students, of their role as teacher, which then drives the creation of expectations for students, communication patterns, and attempts to connect with their students. Perhaps this history, and its effect on both minority students’ and teachers’ inner working models of one another and their roles in education helps to explain both the increased lack of, and need for, positive TSRQ in urban school settings. This history and the resulting internalized views of education may also play a part in Phillippo’s (2012) suggestion that TSRQ with minority groups may follow a different relational path than that with students from the majority; a relational path with a specific focus on culturally responsive interactions and the earning of respect on behalf of the teacher.

**Results of ethnic mismatch.** Ethic incongruence between teachers and students may lead to a difference in both values and expectations (Yeh, 2004), leading to exacerbated communication difficulties and increased negative perceptions of one another (e.g., Saft & Pianta, 2001; Thijs, Westhof, & Koomen, 2012). Teachers appear more likely to misinterpret the behaviors of children who are different from them, viewing them through a lens of negativity (Saft & Pianta, 2001; Thijs & Eilbracht, 2012). This has led to teachers’ tendency to report more positive TSRQ with students who share
their race/ethnicity (O’Connor, 2010; Saft & Pianta, 2001). This ethnic match effect is not seen in teachers with greater teacher self-efficacy, suggesting teachers who experience competency and success in work with urban or minority students may be better able to accurately and passively observe student behaviors (O’Connor, 2010), further lending credence to the importance of daily cultural integration, such as that seen in Saberes Docentes.

Although relatively little research on teacher–student attachments has focused on U.S. students of color from urban environments, some findings suggest that African American students have poorer quality relationships with teachers than do White students (Saft & Pianta, 2001). In a U.S. study of 840 students and their 197 preschool and kindergarten teachers, child ethnicity and teacher-child ethnic mismatch explained up to 27% of the variance in teachers’ negative perceptions of the TSRQ, particularly in teacher-student conflict (Saft and Pianta, 2001). A later study of 711 U.S. children and their 210 prekindergarten teachers found White teachers are more likely to view their relationships with all students more negatively than are teachers of color, regardless of student race when other variables such as child-teacher ratios, self-efficacy, and years of teaching experience were controlled for (Mashburn et al., 2006). Moreover, emerging findings suggest the beneficial effects of teacher–student relationships may actually be more strongly associated with outcomes among students of color than among White students (Murray et al., 2008). While TSRQ research regularly incorporates student SES, race and ethnicity, demonstrating the increased benefits for youth from nondominant groups, seldom do they address factors leading to positive TSRQ, particularly factors that may be especially beneficial for these minority groups of students (Phillippo, 2012).
A phenomenological study of four white, female, early career teachers in an U.S., urban high school with a majority of Black students found young teachers taking on the task of teaching in an urban school setting with the good intention as serving as a change agent must also fashion their help based on the input of their student stakeholders (Warren, 2015). Participants in this study engaged in teaching in a way they identified as effective and particularly helpful to their student population; however, structured interviews with participants and their professional colleagues determined student outcomes across domains were limited. The teaching practices identified by participants as helpful or effective for their students were either misinformed by their lack of cultural awareness or culturally incongruent with the students’ definitions of helpful or effective teacher interactions (Warren, 2015). Additionally, though three participants identified themselves as having positive relationships with students, results from interviews with their colleagues suggested each teacher experienced some level of significant problems in maintaining positive TSRQ with their students (Warren, 2015).

Not only should individual teachers be aware of their own cultural incongruence with students, but also of the institutionalized issues that may occur when working in urban environments due to the history of oppression in U.S. education and the enduring perpetuation of cultural incongruence. This institutionalized oppression is clear in a qualitative study employing interviews and live observations of 10 teachers identified as effective in encouraging student resilience in youth attending a predominately Latino, U.S., urban high school participants (Sosa & Gomez, 2012). All participants were unable to identify specific instances in which they received training or incentives for addressing students’ social-emotional needs (Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Constraints in
providing quality education and social-emotional support for students identified by these participants echoed those of previous studies of school support for Latino students (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999) and included scant material resources, lack of administrative support, a dearth of effective and caring teachers, over-scheduling of teachers leaving limited time for connecting with students, and the tendency of the education institution to look at students only from an academic standpoint, as opposed to ensuring their general well-being (Sosa & Gomez, 2012).

Cultural diversity tends to signify differences in customs, values, behaviors, and lifestyles; with youth negotiating multiples sets of norms and identities in K-12 settings (Yeh, 2004). The K-12 educational system is situated within the dominant culture of the US, namely White European Americans with wealth and power (Helms, 1990). In response to the growing literature suggesting the incongruence between the current educational system and minority students’ experiences may be the culprit in minority students’ struggles in schools; culturally aware teaching strategies began to pop up in the literature and teacher education programs with the underlying purpose of closing the achievement gap (Nieto, 2009). However, culturally aware teaching strategies appear to be capable of positively effecting outcomes across multiple domains for minority students.

Culturally responsive pedagogy. Culturally responsive pedagogy has emerged as the umbrella term encompassing a number of practical teaching orientations and approaches promoting strong, supportive relationships between teachers and their minority students (Phillippo, 2012). This umbrella term generally refers to drawing on the knowledge, experiences, and perspectives of the minority students when providing
learning and skills building opportunities, which, in turn increases student engagement and, theoretically, TSRQ (e.g. Garcia, Arias, Murri, & Serna, 2010; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Nieto, 2009). When a teacher is able to draw on this knowledge, experience, and perspectives of students, in addition to the historical perspectives discussed earlier, and use this wealth of knowledge to modify interactions with, and curriculum for, students daily, the teacher is engaging in Saberes Docentes (Slavit & Poveda, 2011).

At the heart of culturally responsive approaches is that of the relationship between teachers and students, with three themes of culturally responsive relationship building arising in the literature (Phillipo, 2012). First, the teacher’s deep knowledge of their students’ cultures, communities, and sociopolitical experiences are viewed as a necessary base upon which teacher can build understanding and effective engagement with their students (e.g., Bondy, Ross, Gallingane, & Hambacher, 2007; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2009, Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Yeh (2004) cautions that it is important to consider the multidimensionality of student identities when acquiring knowledge regarding student backgrounds. Second, due to the tendency for minority students to have encountered low expectations, the TSRQ is seen as necessarily paired with academic press, a quality defined as a ‘warm demander’ and often described as a balance of nurturing support and high expectations (Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus 2006; Gay, 2002; Nieto, 2009; Ware, 2006). Finally, teachers are encouraged to utilize ways of interacting that are common in the students’ cultures as a means of building relationships that, theoretically, feel more natural to the students’ inner working models of supportive and caring adults (Irvine, 1990). Currently, researchers disagree as to whether TSRQ and instruction are dependent upon one another (e.g., Jimenez & Rose, 2010), positive TSRQ
leads to effective instruction (e.g., Delpit, 1995; Sleeter, 2000), or positive TSRQ is dependent upon an understanding of, and responsiveness to, students’ ethnic backgrounds (e.g., Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Young, 2010).

A phenomenological qualitative study, with a sample of 14 teachers identified by their reputations of success with struggling urban high school students in the U.S. found four primary ways these respected and successful urban educators viewed and executed their role within the classroom (Cheung, 2009). This study identified successful urban teachers were able to accept student behavioral and emotional struggles as a part of their work with students and continued to maintain high expectations, despite unfavorable student reactions (Cheung, 2009). Further, the majority of these teachers had an underlying commitment to social justice and/or believed additional roles, such as counseling and intensive academic support were integral pieces of a teacher’s professional obligations to their students (Cheung, 2009). Student engagement was prioritized in the development of instructional plans and teachers often adapted lessons in order to maximize on this engagement (Cheung, 2009). Finally, these teachers were found to provide additional support to students outside of the classroom and often served in leadership or training roles within their schools (Cheung, 2009). All teachers in this study highlighted difficulties in continuing to engage successfully with tough students arising from increased workload, lack of administrative support, and larger, systemic roadblocks, such as poverty, discrimination, and lack of funding for programs or initiatives aimed at increasing student engagement (Cheung, 2009).

The participants in this study were able to engage in all aspects of culturally aware and responsive teaching, through the use of high expectations, understanding of
students within their cultural contexts, warmth in the utilization of additional roles such as counseling, and the use of students’ cultural norms in order to build more engaging educational experiences. Most importantly, they were able to do so despite the myriad of institutionalized difficulties often found within urban school settings, while also witnessing increased academic success and emotional growth in students (Cheung, 2009).

It is unlikely that these successful teachers would have been able to engage in effective instruction or relationship building with their students without the use of cultural awareness and perspective taking. Researchers (Barr, 2011; McGrady & Reynolds, 2013) suggest a teachers’ ability to engage in perspective-taking significantly improved the teachers’ culturally informed interpretations and effective responses to student behaviors; hence limiting the negative outcomes that often arise from cultural incongruence. Warren (2015) cautions that without a genuine connection with students and the knowledge gleaned about the student as an individual, situated within larger sociocultural contexts, perspective taking will not be able to occur to the degree needed to consistently produce favorable outcomes for minority students (Warren, 2015). This perspective-taking allows for culturally informed interpretation of student behaviors, interactions, and comments, leading to the decreased possibility of misunderstandings or misperceptions resulting from cultural incongruence (Warren, 2015).

A grounded theory, cross-cultural case study examined the differences in in-class interactions between a Black teacher who exemplified a traditional warm demander and a White teacher who was able to successfully build positive TSRQ with multiple classes of Black students (Ford & Sassi, 2014). Through the use of the culturally congruent communication style of left-handed complements, the White teacher was better able to
connect to Black students than were she to engage in the less direct, soft-spoken manner typical to her culture or to engage in the direct, mean-talk that worked well for the Black teacher participating in this study (Ford & Sassi, 2014). Both the left-handed complements and the direct, mean-talk styles of communication are typical communication styles in the African American community, meeting the third theme of utilizing culturally aware and responsive teaching in that both teachers engaged in communication that was culturally specific and comfortable to their students (Irvine, 1990). The White teacher also used her warmth to build trust and respect in order to allow for open and direct discussions about race in her class surrounding both curriculum and institutional policies and barriers, which additionally planted her firmly as an ally against racism in her students’ eyes (Ford & Sassi, 2014). This building of trust and respect before entering a difficult topic, paired with her willingness to discuss racial issues so openly allows her to engage in the direct communication, display of warmth, and cultural values transmission in a way the Black teacher participant was able to engage in more fluidly as a result of a shared culture with students (Ford & Sassi, 2014). Additionally, through addressing conflict, as opposed to avoiding confrontation after an issue arises in class, the White teacher was able to engage in a more traditional African American communication style, causing the student to report not only a repaired, but strengthened TSRQ (Ford & Sassi, 2014). This case study further supports prior qualitative work regarding Asian and White teachers’ abilities to effectively engage in culturally aware and responsive practice and eliminate many of the negative outcomes associated with cultural incongruence (Bondy et al., 2007); however, it was possible only
through the teacher’s consistent awareness and purposeful navigation of the differences between her and her students’ cultural values, norms, and expectations of one another.

Students shared similar experiences across several qualitative studies. In a qualitative study, exploring TSRQ through the lived experiences of 34 minority students from three different small U.S. urban high schools, participants identified culturally-responsive teaching, including knowledge of students as individuals and as situated within their cultures and communities as the most important factor in promoting and maintaining positive TSRQ (Phillippo, 2012). Specific examples of teachers’ knowledge of students as individuals mentioned by participants included teachers understanding of students’ daily lives, knowledge of students’ current goals and stressors, and awareness of students’ family and friend connections (Phillippo, 2012). While much of the literature surrounding culturally responsive pedagogy suggests teachers must have knowledge of the students within the large sociocultural context, student participants in this study mentioned personal knowledge such as those identified above almost three times as often as cultural knowledge while engaging in interviews (Phillippo, 2012). This does not mean the contextual piece doesn’t matter, just that the day to day interactions and knowledge, when informed by the larger contextual piece, may be the most important and noticeable to students, again lending credence to the practice of Saberes Docentes (Slavit & Poveda, 2011).

Participants also identified the use of teacher supported high expectations, as essential in positive TSRQ, particularly through criticizing teachers who held low expectations for both student academic and behavioral performances (Phillippo, 2012). Student participants appeared to feel disrespected and let down by teachers who did not
engage in the warm demander role. Finally, a teacher’s unconditional positive regard, popularized by psychotherapist Carl Rogers (1961) was identified as important for building positive TSRQ (Phillippo, 2012). This perspective provides the space for a teacher to accept a student with no hesitation or qualifications (Rogers, 1959) leading to the teacher’s emotional accessibility for students, despite the student experiencing struggles such as disciplinary actions, academic failure, or involvement in the legal system (Phillippo, 2012).

These findings are supported by previous studies in which individual student definitions of, and interest in, caring relationships with teachers manifested in varying socio-cultural norms and students’ past experiences with teachers (Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999). An illustration of such varying norms can be seen in Garza’s (2009) qualitative study of 49 Latino and 44 White, high school students in U.S. suburban school settings. This study found Latino students tended to rank academic support as the most important aspect of teacher care, whereas White students appeared to prefer acts of kindness and attention from their teachers (Garza, 2009). These differences lend credence to the students preferring teachers who act within their culturally informed inner working model of what a teacher is and how a teacher should best interact with their students.

Summary and Gaps in the Literature

TSRQ has been identified as a key factor in student outcomes across a variety of domains of functioning; however, very little is found in the literature regarding the role of teacher factors in building and maintaining TSRQ. The literature review also found that students who were often most in need of positive TSRQ, such as those with behavioral
problems or minority students, are also in the position of benefitting the most from TSRQ characterized by high closeness and low conflict. Despite these findings, studies were seldom completed with teachers of students who meet that criteria, and when completed, often viewed the study through a student deficits-based lens.

This study sought to view TSRQ through the lens of teacher characteristics including burnout level and cultural awareness and beliefs. Each of these characteristics have been found to relate independently with TSRQ, as well as with one another in a small number of studies; however, no studies to date have explored all three domains at the same time. The correlation amongst variables is likely very high, though direction or causality may not be readily apparent. This study sought to employ interviewing after the quantitative analysis with the purpose of better understanding TSRQ through a strengths based approach, focused on how teachers experience TSRQ through the lens of the identified teacher factors of burnout and cultural awareness.

This study sampled only urban teachers. This decision was informed by the literature review suggesting urban students are more at risk for developing negative TSRQ, which has long lasting and detrimental effects for students. Additionally, burnout has been found to increase in urban settings (Chang, 2009) and cultural awareness on behalf of teachers may be most imperative in teachers working in urban settings (Warren, 2015). These teacher factors were hypothesized to be more likely to play a significant role in the relationship between teacher factors and TSRQ in an urban educational setting, than in a suburban or rural educational setting.

A more thorough understanding of the relationship among TSRQ and teacher factors, particularly when viewed through both a quantitative and qualitative lens,
uncovered information that could potentially prove beneficial to education programs, teacher professional development groups, and teachers wishing to become more effective in urban school settings. The relationship among teacher factors, specifically teacher burnout and cultural awareness, and TSRQ provided some insight into the missing link discussed in the literature review, in which differences in TSRQ could not be described by traditional demographic data alone; therefore, the outcomes related to TSRQ could not be fully attributed to traditional demographic data alone. Qualitatively, a thorough exploration of how teachers who are effective in building positive TSRQ, in relation to potential levels of burnout and within their cultural framework of awareness and beliefs, contributed to a theory of effective urban teaching upon which further suggestions for training staff in relationship building with students, burnout prevention, and increasing cultural awareness has been initiated.

Aims, Hypotheses, and Research Questions

The purpose of this two phased study was to explore the relationship between TSRQ and teacher factors, namely burnout levels and cultural competence, in urban education K-12 settings. More specifically, the first, quantitative phase of this study sought to identify correlations among the teacher factors and both close and conflictual TSRQ to determine whether there were differences in associations or strengths of associations among teacher variables and the two types of TSRQ. The second phase, the qualitative portion of this study, then sought to further explore the associations identified in the first phase of the study, gaining a better understanding of how teacher factors, including burnout and cultural awareness, are experienced within the context of
attempting to build and maintain a closer, less conflictual, TSRQ with students perceived as difficult in urban educational settings.

**Phase I Aim**

1. Phase I of this study aimed to provide descriptive statistics of the contextual background variables within the sample of urban educators, namely demographic (e.g., gender, age, and ethnicity), employment information (e.g., years teaching and grade level teaching), and student demographics for the student chosen when completing the measure of teacher-student relationship quality (e.g., special education status, age, grade, gender, and ethnicity).

**Phase I Hypothesis**

1a. Research Hypothesis: There will be a relationship between teacher cultural competence [teacher beliefs, school climate, culturally responsive classroom management, home community school, cultural awareness, curriculum and instruction, cultural sensitivity, and teacher efficacy] and teacher burnout [emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, decreased personal accomplishment] with urban teachers’ teacher-student relationship quality ratings [closeness and conflict].

1b. Null Hypothesis: There will be no relationship between teacher cultural competence [teacher beliefs, school climate, culturally responsive classroom management, home community school, cultural awareness, curriculum and instruction, cultural sensitivity, and teacher efficacy] or teacher burnout [emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, decreased personal accomplishment] with urban teachers’ ratings of teacher-student relationship quality [closeness and conflict].
Teacher cultural competence was measured through the 36 item Cultural Awareness and Beliefs Inventory (CABI; Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005). The CABI uses teachers’ self-report to measure the following subscales, within the larger context of working within an urban environment: teacher beliefs, school climate, culturally responsive classroom management, home community school, cultural awareness, curriculum and instruction, cultural sensitivity, and teacher efficacy. While all the subscale titles may not imply it, the CABI is designed to identify how teacher perceptions of minority students inform the effectiveness or implementation of each distinct subscale in daily classroom activities and interactions. Teacher burnout was measured using the 22-item, self-report, Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES; Maslach et al., 1981). This MBI-ES consists of three subscales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The measure is meant to ascertain the extent to which teachers experience each of the three separate dimensions of burnout. Urban teachers’ teacher-student relationship quality was measured using the 15-item, self-report, Student-Teacher Relationship Scale-Short Form (STRS-SF; Pianta, 1992b). The STRS-SF is an instrument designed to measure the quality of teacher-student relationships from the teacher’s perspective. It is broken into two distinct subscales, teacher-student closeness and teacher-student conflict.

**Phase II Aims**

1. Phase II of this study aimed to gain a more thorough understanding of the experience of urban teachers who are found in Phase I to be successful in building and maintaining positive relationships with difficult students. This phase of the study expressly aimed to understand how these particular teachers experience, navigate, and manipulate the teacher
specific factors of burnout and cultural awareness in order to continue to experience positive relationships with their students.
CHAPTER III
JUSTIFICATION FOR MIXED METHODS APPROACH AND PHASE I RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes the research design, participants, data collection measures, procedure, data analysis, and the interpretative limitations of this mixed methods study. Quantitative data collection and analysis, Phase I, preceded and influenced the collection and analysis of qualitative data, Phase II; therefore, an overview of the mixed methods approach utilized and a full discussion of Phase I methodology is discussed in this chapter, while a full discussion of Phase II methodology is discussed in Chapter 5.

Research Designs

This study utilized a mixed methods approach (Tashakkorori & Teddlie, 2003), which blended the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data within a single study, with the purpose of understanding a research problem more holistically. This mixed methods design was employed in a sequential approach, with quantitative data collected and analyzed first (Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, & Petska, 2005). The results arising from the quantitative analysis then drove the qualitative phase of the study, informing the sampling, interview questions, and data analysis of the qualitative Phase II.
This particular mixed methods research design sequence has been identified as a sequential explanatory design (Hanson et al., 2005). Sequential explanatory design has been found to be particularly useful in explaining relationships or study findings, particularly when such relationships are not readily found within the current literature (Hanson et al., 2005).

With a target population of urban K-12 teachers, this mixed methods, sequential exploratory design was most suited for addressing the research aims of this study. There is limited information in the literature regarding specific teacher factors at play in positive TSRQ, and with that limited amount of scholarship is a lack of teacher voice in this area of research. This lack of literature supported the need for explorative work, both quantitatively and qualitatively, focused on identifying teacher factors associated with positive TSRQ and eliciting teachers’ voices regarding the building and maintenance of positive TSRQ in tandem with these identified factors, especially within the unique contextual setting of urban school districts (Morse, 1994). The mixed methods approach allowed for a richer and more thorough understanding of urban TSRQ that could not be obtained from only quantitative or only qualitative approaches alone.

The philosophical rationale that encouraged the blend of quantitative and qualitative research models into a single study is known as pragmatism. Pragmatism refers to doing what works best in order to achieve the desired result (Morgan, 2007). Working through a pragmatic paradigm allows a researcher to engage in multiple research models as it assumes the research aims, hypotheses, and questions intrinsically determine which methods are best suited to the study in question, thus allowing for multiple methods when the research aims, hypotheses and/or questions support it.
This pragmatic philosophy led to the systematic application of appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods outlined below focused on meeting this study’s aims and addressing the research hypothesis.

**Mixed Methods Design Overview.** Table 1 provides a brief outline of this study’s multi-phase design, as well as how the design corresponds with data collection and analysis across both Phase I and Phase II. In the sections following, the specific research sub-design, sample, instruments, procedures, data collection, and data analysis of Phase I of this mixed methods design will be discussed, with Phase II’s methodological specifics being outlined in Chapter IV, as they arise from the results in Phase I.

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<th>Table 1: Mixed Methods Study Design</th>
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### Phase I

#### Quantitative Research Design

Phase I of this study utilized a non-experimental, correlational research design, which allowed for the exploration of the potential relationships among variables of interest without active manipulation by the researcher of independent variables (Heppner, Wampold, Owen, Thompson, & Wang, 2016). Non-experimental designs do not involve control groups nor manipulations of situations, circumstances, nor the participants’ experiences, lending to more realistic interactions among variables and less control of...
extraneous variables that may impact any, or all, variables. Correlational designs identify relationships among variables, highlighting predictable patterns within the sample group (Ader, Mellenbergh, & Hand, 2008). Relationships among two sets of variables were explored in Phase I of this study through the use of canonical correlation. The first set of variables is that of TSRQ, namely teacher-student closeness and teacher-student conflict. The second set of variables is that of teacher factors, particularly teacher burnout, which is represented by three domains (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased personal accomplishment) and teacher cultural competence, which is represented by eight subscales (teacher beliefs, school climate, culturally responsive classroom management, home community school, cultural awareness, curriculum and instruction, cultural sensitivity, and teacher efficacy).

Sample. An initial sample was drawn from a national listserv for K-12 educators, which was a sample of convenience in that the author has access to the listserv. Convenience sampling allowed the author to reach a much larger pool of potential participants than other types of purposive sampling within local school districts only. As the author was unable to secure a large enough sample size through the national listserv, a second, localized convenience sampling was attempted through reaching out to local school district administrators in order to gain access to district wide email lists or listservs. This sampling approach had limited success and personal connections were utilized to reach a minimum sample size. Inclusionary criteria for Phase I of this study included: a.) currently teaching in an urban setting and b.) having taught, as a licensed teacher, for at least one full school year in an urban setting. Teacher eligibility to
participate in this study, as outlined by this inclusionary criteria, was determined through the demographic questionnaire.

Current guidelines for canonical correlations suggest at least 10 participants per variable, if all variables are considered highly valid and reliable, in order to obtain sufficient power (Hair, 2010). As the measures in this proposed study are all self-report measures of relationships, beliefs, and perceptions, it was hoped to utilize a larger sample size than the base recommendation with a goal of roughly 200 participants.

**Instruments.**

**Demographic Questionnaire.** A short demographic questionnaire was administered to gather data on participant age, gender, ethnicity, and highest level of education. Participants indicated the number of years they have taught, the number of years they have taught in urban settings, and the setting, grade level, and subject(s) they currently teach. Participants were prompted to think of one student with whom they have experienced “a moderate degree of difficulty relating to in the current school year.” The participants were asked to include information regarding this student’s age, gender, ethnicity, and whether the student is receiving special education services. This student is labeled the “focus student” in this study.

**Student-Teacher Relationship Scale-Short Form (STRS-SF; Pianta 1992b).** The STRS, with items derived from attachment theory, observations, and a review of teacher-child interactions, aims to assess teachers’ perceptions of their relationship quality with students (Iruka, Burchinal, & Cai, 2010). While originally designed for early elementary settings; the STRS has been shown, through factor analysis, to be applicable through early high school (see Davis & Lease, 2007; Roorda et al., 2011;
Participants in this study were asked to complete the 15-item STRS-short form with their focus student in mind. Similar requests have occurred previously in the literature when asking teachers to complete a separate STRS for each student in their class is not conducive to study purposes (Baker, Grant, & Morlock, 2008; Iruka et al., 2009).

While the original STRS addresses Closeness, Conflict, and Dependence, the STRS-Short Form consists only of Closeness and Conflict (Pianta, 1992b). Dependency has been excluded from most research in the past decade as studies using multiple methods examining TSRQ have found dependency may not be a valid measure of a dyadic relational quality (Doumen et al., 2009; Roorda et al., 2011; Spilt & Koomen, 2009). Additionally, in many studies found in Roorda and colleagues’ (2011) meta-analysis of studies of TSRQ and achievement, the dependency dimension was not included within the composite TSRQ score. The originator of the STRS, Pianta, has proposed the STRS-SF is best utilized when teacher-student relationship is being assessed along with other variables, as it requires less time, yet continues to yield similar results to the original STRS, with the only notable exception being the exclusion of the dependency subscale (Pianta et al., 2003).

The Conflict subscale, consisting of 8 items, is designed to measure the extent to which teacher participants feel that they are experiencing friction with a student. Items within the Conflict dimension include “dealing with this child drains my energy” and “this child and I always seem to be struggling with each other” (Pianta, 1992b). The Closeness subscale, including 7 items, is designed to assess the teacher’s feelings of respect and comfort in their relationship with a student. Items in the Closeness
dimension include items such as “I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child” and “It is easy to be in tune with what this child is feeling” (Pianta, 1992b). Responses are given on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating the item does not apply to the specific teacher-student relationship and 5 indicated the item definitely applies to the specific relationship. Scores for each subscale are summed. Higher scores in each dimension signal higher levels of each dimension (Pianta, 1992b).

Internal consistency reliability estimates were reported in the form of Cronbach’s alpha. Pianta (1992a) broke the information down into full normative sample ($N = 1535$), male students ($n = 788$), female students ($n = 708$), Caucasians ($n = 967$), African Americans ($n = 276$) and Hispanic Americans ($n = 154$). Cronbach alphas for the entire normative sample were as follows: Conflict, .92; Closeness, .86; and Total, .89 (Pianta, 1992a). Male student Cronbach alphas were Conflict, .88; Closeness, .78; and Total, .82 and female student Cronbach alphas were Conflict, .86; Closeness, .82; and Total, .84. Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic American Cronbach alphas were as follows: Conflict: .86, .89, .88; Closeness: .80, .78, .76; and Total: .83, .85, .84.

Test-retest reliability was obtained from a subgroup ($n = 72$) of the normative sample used in measurement creation. The STRS was completed twice, with a 4-week interval with test-retest correlations for this subgroup as follows: Closeness, .88; Conflict, .92; Total, .90 (Pianta, 1992a).

Validity studies have indicated the STRS predictably correlated with both concurrent and future measure of academic skills (Hamre & Pianta, 2001), peer relations (Birch & Ladd, 1998), and problematic classroom behaviors (Pianta et al., 1995) with correlations of .35, .41, and .54, respectively. Webb and Neuharth-Pritchett (2011)
completed exploratory factor analyses of the original STRS for samples of teachers of African American (n = 178) and European American (n = 130) youth, with a mean age of 5, after identifying small, but statistically significant, differences in the groups in the confirmatory factor analysis. They found the three-factor model, consisting of closeness, conflict, and dependence, to account for 49.64% of the common variance in the African American sample and 54.99% of the variance in the European American sample (Webb & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2011). There was evidence to suggest a different factor structure in the STRS for African American and European American youth due to the discrepancies in factor loading, particularly in the dependency factor with dependency items representing 6.85% of the variance for African American youth and 8.15% of the variance for European American youth, with eigenvalues of 1.92 and 2.28 respectively (Webb & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2011). There was also marked variance in four items on the closeness scale, in which European American and African American youth experienced factor loadings that differed significantly (Webb & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2011). Similar results were found by Tsigilis and Gregoriadis (2008) in a sample of Greek students, leading to their decision to use the STRS-SF which does not include the dependency subscale and has a shortened version of both the closeness and conflict subscales, eliminating the four items considered questionable by Webb & Neuharth-Pritchett (2011).

Confirmatory factor analyses have been completed on the STRS-SF with a sample of 56 Greek kindergarten teachers and their 336 students (Tsigilis & Gregoriadis, 2008) and a sample of 863 kindergarten through 8th grade Norwegian teachers (Drugli & Hjemdal, 2013). These studies found a moderately good model of fit with the comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.93 in both studies and a root mean square error of
approximation (RMSEA) of .056 (Tsigilis & Gregodiadis, 2008) and .066 (Drugli & Hjemdal, 2013). STRS is currently the most established instrument in the field for measure TSRQ in the field (Yiu, 2011).

_Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES; Maslach et al., 1981)._ The original Maslach Burnout Inventory was a 22-item Human Services Survey. The Maslach Burnout Inventory began as a 47-item measure derived from the experiences of Maslach and colleagues (1981). Factor analytic techniques led to a reduction in number and response styles and identified three key factors of predominance within the construct of burnout as measured by the MBI. The Educators Survey is the 22-item MBI Human Services Survey, with the additional change of the word recipients to students. Burnout is defined as a “syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with people in some capacity” (Maslach et al., 1981, p. 4). Participants rate each item on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from Never to Every day, describing the frequency with which they experience the feeling expressed in the item. In the MBI-ES, scores are summed and interpreted independently for each dimension, from the nine items reflecting fatigue or stress (Emotional Exhaustion), five items representing callousness or indifference towards students (Depersonalization), and eight items referring to enthusiasm and effectiveness in working with students (Personal Accomplishment). Low scores in Depersonalization and Emotional Exhaustion subscales suggest low levels of burnout, while high scores in the Personal Accomplishment subscale indicate a low degree of burnout. Scores of Personal Accomplishment will be reverse scored and the name of the subscale will be renamed to Reduced Personal Accomplishment.
Several studies support reliability of the MBI-ES’s three-factor structure and internal reliability (Gold, 1984; Iwanicki & Schwab, 1981). Cronbach alphas reported by Iwanicki and Schwab (1981), and similar to those reported by Gold (1984), were as follows: .90 for emotional exhaustion, .76 for Depersonalization, and .76 for Personal Accomplishment. Test-retest reliability was assessed after a few weeks, 3 months, and one year. Scores within the few week range were highest (.60-.82) while those a year later were the lowest (.54-.60).

Construct validity of the MBI specifically focused on educators was initially assessed through preliminary factor analysis of 469 U.S. educators (Iwankicki & Schwab, 1981). The identified factors of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment accounted for 55% of the total variance among participants, findings significant enough it led to the quick creation of the MBI-ES (Iwankicki & Schwab, 1981). A study of the construct validity of the MBI-ES sampling 150 U.S. suburban, middle school teachers, using confirmatory factor analysis, the three-factor measure, consisting of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased personal accomplishment, was found to have adequate construct validity as evidenced by a goodness-of-fit index of .777 and root means square residual of .085 (Holland, Michael, & Kim, 1994).

*Cultural Awareness and Beliefs Inventory (CABI; Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005)*. The CABI originally consisted of 46 items, answered on a four-point Likert scale, intended to measure cultural awareness and beliefs in urban teachers. Data from 1,873 urban public school pre-K-12 teachers was collected, created a sample through which to assess the validity and reliability of the CABI (Roberts-Walter, 2007). An exploratory
factor analysis was used to investigate the internal structure and eight key factors were found within 36 items (Roberts-Walter, 2007). The eight factors include: Teacher’s Beliefs, School Climate, Culturally Responsive Classroom Management, Home Community School, Cultural Awareness, Curriculum and Instruction, Cultural Sensitivity, and Teacher Efficacy (Roberts-Walter, 2007). A Cronbach’s alpha was .83 for the measure as a whole (Roberts-Walter, 2007). The following reliability coefficients, represented by Cronbach’s alpha, were reported by Roberts-Walter (2007) for the subscales of the CABI: School Climate (.76), Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (.75), Cultural Awareness (.60), Home Community School (.60), Curriculum and Instruction (.51), Cultural Sensitivity (.51), Teacher Beliefs (.39) and Teacher Efficacy (.39). Teacher factors such as teacher ethnicity and years of experience have been found to significantly affect scores in Teacher’s Beliefs, Culturally Responsive Classroom Management, Cultural Sensitivity, and Teacher Efficacy (Roberts-Walter, 2007).

Teacher Beliefs factor comprises eight items representing teacher beliefs from a deficit perspective (Roberts-Walter, 2007). Five items reflect beliefs towards African American students and three items reflect beliefs regarding students representing underserved populations. Examples include, “I believe African American students have more problems than other students” and “I believe I have experienced difficulty getting families from African American communities involved in the education of their students” (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005). These items are reverse scored to represent a more positive scale. The structure coefficients, or the correlation between individual items and the factor, range from .44-.81 (Roberts-Walter, 2007).
The School Climate factor includes five items indicating teacher perceptions of administrative support and general school climate. Examples of items representing this factor include, “I feel supported by my building principal” and “I believe my contributions are appreciated by my colleagues” (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005). The structure coefficients range from .65-.77 (Roberts-Walter, 2007).

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management, the third factor, is comprised of three items focused on the teacher’s perception of how they effectively manage the classroom. Example items include, “I believe I am able to effectively manage students from all racial groups” and “I believe I have a clear understanding of the issues surrounding classroom management” (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005). The structure coefficients ranged from .78-.91 (Roberts-Walter, 2007).

Factor four refers to Home and Community Support and incorporates four items. Examples of items in this factor include “I believe my families of African American students in my school district are supportive of our mission to effectively teach all students” and “I believe families in my school district are supportive of our mission to effectively teach all students” (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005). Structure coefficients range from .48-.80 (Roberts-Walter, 2007).

Cultural Awareness, the fifth factor, represents five items focused on teacher perceptions of cultural awareness as it relates to integrating the cultures of students into curriculum planning, parent communications, and identifying with racial groups other than one’s own. An example includes, “I believe Individualized Education Program meetings or planning should be scheduled for the convenience of the family” (Webb-
Factor six, Curriculum and Instruction, is comprised of four items describing the implementation of culturally responsive instruction strategies and utilizing cultural materials. An example of an item from this factor is “I believe frequently used material within my class represents at least three different ethnic groups” (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005). Structure coefficients range from .42 to .60 (Roberts-Walter, 2007).

Cultural Sensitivity, the seventh factor, consists of items related to integrating cultural sensitively with communication and social relations. An example from and item used in this factor is “I believe a child should be referred for testing if learning difficulties appear to be due to cultural differences. (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005). Structure coefficients range from .45 to .72 (Roberts-Walter, 2007).

The final factor, Teacher Efficacy, consists of four items reflecting a teacher’s sense of efficacy in relation to working with difficult students or situations out of the teachers control. An example of an item in this factor is “I believe that some students do not want to learn” (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005). Responses within this factor should be reverse scored to indicate a positive scale. Structure coefficients range from .42-.52 (Roberts-Walter, 2007).

Wording in several questions of the CABI needed to be adjusted. Those questions regarding African American students do not consider that some classrooms in a national sample may have a large population of a different oppressed minority group. Therefore, ‘African American’ was replaced with ‘minority.’ Additionally, one of the curriculum
and instruction questions refers to the Texas state standards; the wording was adjusted to ‘state and federal education standards.’

Structural validity was assessed by Natesan, Webb-Hasan, Garter, and Walter (2011) through the use of exploratory factor analysis, specifically principal components analysis with a sample of 1,253 urban educators in both elementary and secondary schools. They found support for the 36 item, eight factor measure described above, with the percent of total variance explained by each factor as follows: Teacher’s Beliefs (7.78%), School Climate (6.38%), Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (5.81%), Home Community School (5.36%), Cultural Awareness (4.81%), Curriculum and Instruction (4.06%), Cultural Sensitivity (3.9%), and Teacher Efficacy (3.41%) (Natesan et al., 2011). Content validity was determined through consultation with a jury of experts, consisting of four urban and multicultural education scholars and urban educational doctoral students. Qualitative, narrative analysis was used on the 200 responses to the open-ended questions given to the sample of 1,253 participants in order to establish substantive validity (Natesan et al., 2011). Natesan and colleagues (2011) report themes occurring in the narrative analysis concur with common themes of deficit-based reporting regarding students and their families, color blindness, and lack of awareness.

Data Collection. The technique for collecting Phase I, quantitative data was a web-based questionnaire, which was accessible to potential participants through a link in a call for participants, emailed through a national listserv, as well as through local district blast emails or listservs as needed. This study is specifically focused on urban teachers TSRQ through the lens of teacher burnout and cultural awareness, therefore, ideally, this
survey was meant to be administered in the Spring, allowing teachers nearly a full year to build relationships with their current cohort of students. However, enough participants were not collected in the Spring, so calls were resent beginning towards the end of October, allowing teachers the time necessary to build new relationships with students. Potential participants were first taken to a page describing the informed consent and the inclusionary criteria, and upon agreeing to the fact they met inclusionary criteria and accepted the informed consent, they began the survey. The questionnaire included demographic questions as well as the measures detailed above.

When completing the measure of TSRQ, participants were asked to consider a student with whom they have had ‘a moderate degree of difficulty relating with this current school year.’ This strategy was implemented to help eliminate the likelihood of teachers identifying students across a wide spectrum of TSRQ or focusing only on those students with whom they had very strong TSRQ. As each individual teacher-student dyad maintains a separate TSRQ from others within any given class, it was considered more beneficial to view the association between variables for students who are theoretically more difficult to build and maintain relationships with than those who were easy to relate with, particularly as the research suggests many of these identified students may benefit the most from a positive TSRQ (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015). Using the term moderate in the prompt was deliberately used to bolster the study against responses that are disproportionately negative and deficits-based. The total questionnaire was expected to take participants no more than 30 minutes to complete; the average time to complete was 17 minutes with a range of 12 to 32 minutes for those completing all sections of the survey.
A final question was posed to participants asking about their willingness to participate in a possible interview or focus group follow up, based on Phase I results. If they agreed to this, participants were asked for contact information, which was kept confidential. To improve response rate, additional calls were sent five, ten, and 15 days after the initial email call.

Data Analysis. Once data were collected, Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized to conduct statistical procedures. Descriptive analyses were utilized to provide descriptive information of participant demographics and the measures.

Canonical correlation was implemented to determine possible simultaneous relationships occurring between two sets of variables, known as canonical variates. In this study close and conflictual TSRQ are considered one canonical variate, the criterion variate, and teacher factors, namely the three dimensions of teacher burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased personal accomplishment) and the eight traits of teacher cultural competency (Teacher’s Beliefs, School Climate, Culturally Responsive Classroom Management, Home Community School, Cultural Awareness, Curriculum and Instruction, Cultural Sensitivity, and Teacher Efficacy) comprised the second canonical variate, the predictive variate. In other words, one canonical variate comprised two variables, from TSRQ, and the other canonical variate comprised 11 variables, from teacher factors.

The use of canonical correlation provided the opportunity to simultaneously examine closeness and conflict in TSRQ and their relationship with the identified teacher factors canonical variate. This approach limited the likelihood of Type I errors by utilizing the entire data set in one analysis, as opposed to running two separate univariate
analyses. Due to the unclear, and likely bi-directional, relationships between and among variables, a causal research design, such as structural equational modeling was not appropriate.

The canonical model as a whole was tested for significance as well as any statistically significant roots. In canonical correlation a root refers to a pair of canonical variates. The research design identifies the roots by strength with the most closely related variates arising as the first root. Canonical correlation differs from factor analysis in that the second root is determined from the residuals of the first, meaning variables may fall into several roots at varying weights, or strengths. Therefore, implicit teacher factors may impact both TSRQ closeness and conflict simultaneously and/or in varying strengths when paired with other factors. Roots were examined for the unique relationships among teacher burnout and cultural awareness factors and both closeness and conflict in TSRQ.

Limitations

This study sought to be specific in its sample, with a particular focus on urban student populations and their teachers. This focus limits the generalizability of the study’s findings, but may bring valuable information to a less studied population. Additionally, it was difficult to get the number of participants needed for this study. Though accessing a potentially large pool of participants, the use of email calls for participants on a listserv did not generate the percentage of responses needed to run a canonical correlation, leading to a smaller sample size than desired. Towards the end of data collection, a potential participant contacted the researcher and indicated the platform utilized for data collection was unwieldy and difficulty to utilize through one’s cell phone, which likely contributes to the high attrition rate for those starting the measure.
CHAPTER IV

PHASE I RESULTS

Aims and Hypotheses

The purpose of this two-phased study was to explore the relationship between TSRQ and intrinsic teacher factors, namely burnout levels and cultural awareness, in urban education K-12 settings. More specifically, the first, quantitative phase of this study sought to identify correlations among these teacher factors and both close and conflictual TSRQ to determine whether there were differences in associations, or strengths of associations, among teacher variables and the two types of TSRQ. The second phase, the qualitative portion of this study, then sought to further explore the associations identified in the first phase of the study, with the goal of gaining a better understanding of how teacher factors, including burnout and cultural awareness, are experienced within the context of attempting to build and maintain a closer, less conflictual, TSRQ with students perceived as difficult in urban educational settings.

Phase I Aim. Phase I of this study aimed to provide descriptive statistics of the contextual background variables within the sample of urban educators, namely demographic (e.g., gender, age, and ethnicity), employment information (e.g., years
teaching and grade level teaching), and student demographics for the student chosen when completing the measure of teacher-student relationship quality (e.g., special education status, age, grade, gender, and ethnicity).

**Phase I Hypothesis.** The null and research hypotheses of this study were:

1a. Research Hypothesis: There will be a relationship between teacher cultural competence [teacher beliefs, school climate, culturally responsive classroom management, home community school, cultural awareness, curriculum and instruction, cultural sensitivity, and teacher efficacy] and teacher burnout [emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, decreased personal accomplishment] with urban teachers’ teacher-student relationship quality ratings [closeness and conflict].

1b. Null Hypothesis: There will be no relationship between teacher cultural competence [teacher beliefs, school climate, culturally responsive classroom management, home community school, cultural awareness, curriculum and instruction, cultural sensitivity, and teacher efficacy] or teacher burnout [emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, decreased personal accomplishment] with urban teachers’ ratings of teacher-student relationship quality [closeness and conflict].

**Phase I Demographics**

Five hundred ninety-three individuals followed the initial link to the survey for phase I of this study. Of those 593 potential participants, individuals who did not complete one or more measures (437 potential participants), missed one or more items on a subscale (9 participants), or who did not meet the selection criteria for inclusion in the study (12 potential participants) were removed from the study, resulting in 135 participants who completed all items on all measures and met inclusionary criteria.
While the initial goal was to obtain at least 150 participants for this study, researchers indicate at least 10 participants per variable is adequate for a canonical correlation analysis (Salkind, 2010; Thorndike, 1978). Therefore, the total of 135 is sufficient for the minimum requirement of 130.

Participants were mostly female (70%), Caucasian (80%; followed by African American 7%, Multiracial 5%, and Hispanic and Asian American 4% each), and teaching general education classes (74%); however, 92% of respondents reported teaching at least one student per day who has been identified as in need of special education services. Participants have taught for an average of 13 years and the vast majority have obtained a Master’s degree as their highest form of education (76.3%).

Each teacher was asked to identify a focus student to consider when they were completing the survey questions regarding the quality of teacher-student relationships. The average age of these students was 13.07 and ranged from age 5 to age 18. The majority of these students were African American (49%), male (72%), and 40% were reported as meeting criteria for special education classification.

**Phase I Preliminary Analysis**

While some researchers posit canonical correlation analysis methodology does not make strong normality assumptions (Malacarne, 2014), there are recommendations to review the data for outliers and multivariate normality, particularly when utilizing a relatively small sample size (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

**Tests of Statistical Assumptions.** Skewness and kurtosis were analyzed for all variables to be used in the study to aid in identifying potential outliers and supporting the assumptions of normality. All variables, except for Depersonalization (skewness statistic
had skewness statistics that fell between -.517 and .520 (standard deviation .209). These statistical measures indicate all variables, with the exception of depersonalization, are fairly symmetrical. The Depersonalization variable was found to be positively skewed; however, this was determined to not be due to outliers, but instead to the nature of the variable. An analysis of kurtosis determined all variables meet criteria for normal distribution in this area. Mahalanobis distance was utilized to identify any potential outliers. There were no statistically significant deviations \( p < .001 \) found using the Mahalanobis statistic.

The Box’s M statistical analysis was utilized to ensure dependent variables followed a multivariate normal distribution by testing for within group covariance. In this case, Box M \( (p = .015) \) was not statistically significant at the required \( p < .001 \) value; therefor there do not appear to be statistically significant distortions across groups within this study.

Multicollinearity was explored through examining both the variance inflation factors (VIF) and the tolerance values for the predictor variables. VIFs indicate whether there a strong linear association exists between the identified variable and all other remaining predictor variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). A general role of thumb is that as long as VIFs fall below 10, there is no reason to be concerned about multicollinearity, as measured by the VIF (Stevens, 2002). VIFs in this study ranged from 1.163 to 2.422, well below the assumed threshold of 10. Tolerance values refer to the degree to which a predictor value can be predicted by other predictor values in the study. The higher the value of tolerance, the less likely multicollinearity exists. A tolerance value of .10 is considered the minimum acceptable level for assuming absence
of multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007); however, values of .20 (Menard, 1995) and .25 (Huber & Stephens, 1993) have also been suggested. Tolerance values in this study ranged from .413 to .860 meeting all minimum values suggested in the literature for assuming the absence of problematic levels of multicollinearity.

Skewness and kurtosis are highlighted in Table 2 while means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients for each of the variables can be found in Table 3. One will note lower levels of Cronbach’s alpha for both Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) and Teacher Self-Efficacy (TE); while not ideal, these results are not surprising considering each subscale houses only 4 items and the subscales as a whole have limited reliability, with overall Cronbach alpha’s during development of .51 and .39 respectively (Roberts-Walter, 2007).

**Multivariate Analysis**

A canonical correlation analysis was utilized to determine whether a true association existed between a set of predictor variables and a set of criterion variables. In this study, predictor variables included the subtests of the CABI (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005), including Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM), Cultural Sensitivity (CS), Cultural Awareness (CA), Teacher’s Beliefs (TB), Curriculum and Instruction (C&I), Teacher Efficacy (TE), Home, School, Community Communication and Collaboration (HSC), and School Climate (SC), as well as subtests from the MBI-ES (Maslach et al., 1981), including Reduced Personal Accomplishment (RPA), Depersonalization (DP), and Emotional Exhaustion (EE), while criterion variables included the Closeness and Conflict subscales from the STRS-SF (Pianta, 1992b).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Std. Error of Skewness</th>
<th>z</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
<th>Std. Error of Kurtosis</th>
<th>Z</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>.414</td>
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</table>

Note: CABI=Cultural Awareness and Beliefs Inventory; MBI-ES=Maslach Burnout Inventory, Educators Survey; STRS-SF=Student-Teacher Relationship Survey, Short Form; CRCM=culturally responsive classroom management; CS=Cultural Sensitivity; CA=Cultural Awareness; TB=Teacher’s Beliefs; C&I=Curriculum and Instruction; TE=Teacher Efficacy; HSC=Home, School, Community Communication and Collaboration; SC=School Climate; RPA=Reduced Personal Accomplishment; DP=Depersonalization; EE=Emotional Exahustion. $z = 3.69 = p < .0011$; a $z$ in excess of 3.69 indicates some degree of kurtosis or skewness at the univariate level.
### Table 3

**Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliability Coefficients of CABI, MBI-ES, and STRS-SF Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
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<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
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<td>3. CA</td>
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<td>4. TB</td>
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<td>.41**</td>
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<td>.40**</td>
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<td>.30**</td>
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<td>.22*</td>
<td>.31**</td>
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<td>.30**</td>
<td>.51**</td>
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<td>11. EE</td>
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<td>.17*</td>
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<td>.18*</td>
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<td>.25**</td>
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<td>.05</td>
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<td>.16</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.31**</td>
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<td>5.45</td>
<td>8.71</td>
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<td>8.67</td>
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<td>10.05</td>
<td>17.99</td>
<td>12.43</td>
<td>36.32</td>
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<td>26.27</td>
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<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.98</td>
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<td>2.27</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>7.39</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>13.91</td>
<td>6.49</td>
<td>6.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s Alpha</td>
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<td>.60</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.78</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note: CABI=Cultural Awareness and Beliefs Inventory; MBI-ES=Maslach Burnout Inventory, Educators Survey; STRS-SF=Student-Teacher Relationship Survey, Short Form; CRCM=culturally responsive classroom management; CS=Cultural Sensitivity; CA=Cultural Awareness; TB=Teacher’s Beliefs; C&I=Curriculum and Instruction; TE=Teacher Efficacy; HSC=Home, School, Community Communication and Collaboration; SC=School Climate; RPA=Reduced Personal Accomplishment; DP=Depersonalization; EE=Emotional Exhaustion; SD=Standard Deviation; *p < .05; **p < .01.*
**Canonical Model Analysis.** The use of canonical correlation analysis provided the opportunity to simultaneously examine closeness and conflict in TSRQ and their relationships with the identified teacher factors in the predictor canonical variate. One initially viewed the model as a whole for both statistical and practical significance. In canonical correlations, effect size is often used to augment statistical significance testing to give additional attention to the practical implications of potential results (Fan & Konold, 2010). Upon finding practical and/or statistical significance for the model as a whole, one then examines the individual canonical roots for significance. Canonical analysis allows for any residuals from the first canonical root to be contribute to subsequent roots; which allows for a single factor to play a significant role across several roots.

To assess whether a relationship does exist between the predictor and criterion variable sets, the canonical model as a whole is interpreted first. The full canonical model was statistically significant with $\text{Wilks' } \lambda = .63$, $F(22, 24) = 2.85$, $p < .001$.

Based on a commonly used equation of $1- \text{Wilks' } \lambda = R^2$ one can get a basic understanding of the variance accounted for by the model, similar to the $R^2$ metric in a regression analysis (Sherry & Henson, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). This metric is viewed similarly to that of effect size; however, due to the multivariate nature of canonical correlation, Fan and Konold (2010) recommend using the following descriptors: $.04 = \text{small effect size}; .24 = \text{medium effect size}, \text{and } .45 = \text{large effect size}$. Therefore, following these guidelines, the canonical model for this study has a moderate effect, accounting for 37% of the variance in TSRQ as measured by teacher closeness and conflict with students.
**Canonical Root Analysis.** To more precisely interpret the nature of the relationships between predictor and criterion variables, a dimension reduction analysis was performed, yielding two canonical roots. Canonical correlation analysis can only produce as many roots as there are number of variables in the smaller set of variables, which in this case is two, as the criterion variable in this study has a total of two variables. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$. The first root was statistically significant ($p < .001$), accounting for 37% of variance found in the dimension. The second root, while not found to be statistically significant ($p = .081$), did appear to be a trend, both as additional participants were added and in terms of later qualitative analysis, so it has been included in further analysis. This second, trending root captured an additional 13% of variance in the criterion variable set. It is not unusual for canonical roots to sum into a greater percentage of the variance than that of the canonical mode, due to the orthogonal nature of canonical correlation analysis (Sherry & Henson, 2005). The hierarchical significance test of canonical roots is represented in Table 4, while the canonical correlations for each root as well as the eigenvalues are represented in Table 5.

Table 4

*Hierarchical Representation of Canonical Roots*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roots</th>
<th>Wilks $\lambda$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>Hypothesis $Df$</th>
<th>Error $df$</th>
<th>Significance of $F$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2</td>
<td>.63323</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 2</td>
<td>.87477</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>.081</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

Eigenvalues and Canonical Correlations by Canonical Root

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root Number</th>
<th>Eigenvalue</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
<th>Canonical Correlation</th>
<th>Squared Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.385</td>
<td>73.24</td>
<td>73.24</td>
<td>.527</td>
<td>.278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>26.76</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>.351</td>
<td>.123</td>
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</table>

**Canonical Function Coefficient and Structure Coefficient Analysis.** There is a unique set of function and structure coefficients for each canonical root, or pair of canonical variates (Fan & Konold, 2010). As this study found one statistically significant canonical root, *Wilks' λ* = .63, *F* (22, 244) = 2.85, *p* < .001, and one trending root, *Wilks' λ* = .87, *F* (10, 123) = 1.73, *p* = .081, two sets of canonical variates will be discussed in depth through the lens of canonical function coefficients and canonical structure coefficients.

Standardized canonical function coefficients represent a given variable’s association with a canonical variate after the variable’s association with other variables in its own variate set has been controlled for (Fan & Konold, 2010). Canonical structure coefficients measure the zero-order correlation between a given variable and the related canonical variate, reflecting the overall degree of association between said variable and variate without controlling for possible relationships between this variable and others within its own canonical variate set. There is a consensus among researchers that canonical structure coefficients are necessary in developing a comprehensive understanding of canonical functions (e.g. Pedhazur, 1997; Thompson, 2000). Fan and Konold (2010) suggest researchers use caution in interpreting results in which structure and function coefficients differ greatly. In instances of high function and low structure...
coefficients, a suppression effect is likely, suggesting the variable may not actually share much in common with the variate (Fan & Konold, 2010). Alternatively, low function and high structure coefficients suggest the identified variable shares a good deal with the corresponding variate, but the contribution overlaps with those of other variables due to collinearity within that variable’s variate set. Standardized canonical function and canonical structure coefficients from the statistically significant canonical root and the trending root are presented in Table 6. Structure coefficients equal to, or greater than, |.32| are considered to be practically meaningful, providing at least 10% of the variance within the criterion variate (Fan & Konold, 2010); therefore, variables meeting this criteria have been included in the analysis of the following dimensions.

**Dimension I.** This first dimension, clarified through the first canonical root, is characterized by high loadings of cultural awareness and a sense of personal accomplishment for teachers and moderate loadings of culturally responsive classroom management, decreased teacher self-efficacy, and the ability to refrain from depersonalizing students as the key variables within the predictor variate. The criterion variate in this dimension is very heavily influenced by the closeness variable, though the conflict variable is moderately loaded in an inverse relationship with the predictor variate. This dimension appears to pull heavily from both the teacher’s sense of self (self-efficacy and personal accomplishment) and their direct interactions with students (depersonalization and classroom management practices). The second phase of this study sought to provide greater insight into this, and the following dimension, and will be discussed in far greater detail in the following sections of this paper.
**Dimension II.** The second dimension, clarified through the second canonical root, is characterized by a very high loading of the conflict variable in the criterion variate. The conflict variate is inversely correlated with the predictor variate in this dimension, including moderate loadings of culturally responsive classroom management, communication between home, school, and community, and school climate. Of note, and somewhat surprising, cultural awareness has a moderate, positive relationship with the criterion variate, which is heavily loaded by conflict. This dimension appears to be characterized more by the environment or the interaction between the teacher and the environment, opposed to the first dimension which was characterized by the teacher’s sense of self and direct interactions with the student. While it appears the first dimension is mostly a description of closeness indicators, and the second dimension a description of conflict indicators, a more in-depth analysis arises through the additional data available through the qualitative phase of this study. Further discussion of these dimension will arise in the following sections of this paper.
### Table 6

**Standardized Canonical Function Coefficients and Canonical Structure Coefficients for Significant Canonical Roots**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Root 1</th>
<th>Root 2</th>
<th>Root 2</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Predictor Variate</strong></td>
<td>Coef</td>
<td>$r_s$</td>
<td>$r^2_s$ (%)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.41</td>
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<td>CS</td>
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<td>.57</td>
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<td>TB</td>
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<td>.11</td>
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<td>C&amp;I</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Closeness Conflict</td>
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<td>.99</td>
<td>98.62</td>
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</table>

Note: CRCM = culturally responsive classroom management; CS = Cultural Sensitivity; CA = Cultural Awareness; TB = Teacher’s Beliefs; C&I = Curriculum and Instruction; TE = Teacher Efficacy; HSC = Home, School, Community Communication and Collaboration; SC = School Climate; RPA = Reduced Personal Accomplishment; DP = Depersonalization; EE = Emotional Exhaustion; SD = Standard Deviation. Coef = standardized canonical function coefficient; $r_s$ = structure coefficient; $r^2_s$ = squared structure coefficient; $h^2$ = communality coefficient. Structure coefficients equal or greater than $|\.32|$ are in bold. Communality coefficients equal or greater than 25% are in bold.
CHAPTER V

PHASE II RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Phase II Research Design

The second phase employed a basic, exploratory, qualitative inquiry approach, utilizing grounded theory methods (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), in which data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview is meant to elicit a dynamic exchange of ideas growing from open-ended questions that are designed to elicit details and explanations (Trainor & Graue, 2013). This interviewing approach also allows for loosely sequenced questions that can grow and change during and between interviews based on the details and explanations arising from past and current participants’ responses (Trainor & Graue, 2013). The overarching aim of this qualitative design was to explore, and begin to synthesize, the experiences of urban teachers who are able to build and maintain positive TSRQ with students through the lens of their reactions to, and interactions with, teacher specific factors, including burnout and cultural competency.

Data collection and analysis in Phase II was informed by the grounded theory approach. This approach allows for data analysis to constantly drive data collection,
known as comparative analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The purpose of a grounded theory approach is to identify plausible connections among concepts as they arise within the context of the participants’ realities, leading to potential, and likely, changes in interview questions, researcher’s focus, and direction on possible hypotheses, as everything is considered data and all of the current data drives the collection of subsequent data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Patterns of action and interaction between and among various actors and variables become the driving force behind these conceptual connections that may lead to plausible hypotheses or theories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

The pragmatist approach to theory formulation is that it is the interpretation adopted by a researcher and created from multiple given perspectives (Addelson, 1990). This approach appeared to be the most appropriate to Phase II’s aim of identifying how positive teacher-student relationships in urban schools are created and maintained, by teachers adept at relationship building, both through and around teacher specific factors, including burnout and cultural competency. Grounded theory approaches allowed for patterns of interacting with students, schools, and teacher factors to arise fluidly, and in concert with additional teacher characteristics, inner working models, or factors that aided them in navigating the teacher-student relationship in a positive and effective manner.

Sample

The sample for Phase II of the study was drawn from the participants in Phase I who indicated interest in potentially participating in the interview process. Results from Phase I determined the specific qualification parameters for Phase II beyond the interest expressed in Phase I. Initially, high quality relationship was conceptualized by this
researcher as a relationship rated as high in closeness and low in conflict on the TSRQ measure; however, quantitative results of closeness and conflict did not display in the balanced way that was expected. High scores in one subtest did not predicate low scores in the other; instead these scores appeared to measure different dimensions of the same relationship, supporting the decision to utilize canonical correlational analysis in this study.

Therefore, selection criteria were altered based on Phase I findings to include all those teachers who scored at least one standard deviation above the mean in closeness. \((M = 21.09, SD = 6.49, 1\ SD \text{ above the mean} = 27.58).\) The reason for this, as opposed to looking at conflict, was two-fold: the focus on a strengths-based analysis and the fact that the strongest canonical root was most closely related to closeness.

Originally, the author had hoped to engage in purposive, potential sampling for Phase II to include teachers of all grade levels and both general and special education. However, generalized sampling was not available due to sample bias by participants. Out of the 90 participants who indicated interest in participating in Phase II, only 69 included contact information. Of the 69 potential participants who expressed interest and provided contact information, nearly 32\% (22 participants) had a background in special education, slightly more than 50\% (35 participants) taught high school students, about 18\% (16 participants) taught middle school students, slightly more than 15\% (10 participants) taught grades 3-5, and about 7\% taught grades pre-K-2\textsuperscript{nd} grade with 3 participants teaching mixed grades, either late elementary and middle school grades or middle and high school grades.
Of these possible participants, 13 met criteria for participation in Phase II interviews, scoring 28 or higher on the closeness scale. Seven of these individuals had special education training, an overrepresentation of the national average of 12% of all educators (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Elementary education was represented by 8 participants, high school by 4 and there were no purely middle school teachers represented within the sample, as the final participant taught both middle and high school. This spread across grades is notably different from that of the US averages, in which 49% of educators teach elementary grades, 20% teach middle school grades, and 31% teach high school grades (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). The inconsistencies between the sample’s teaching positions and that of the US educational landscape continues into those participants who returned the call for participation in Phase II. There was a notable overrepresentation of over 50% special education teachers and roughly 80% of final participants meeting criteria and responding to the request for an interview taught elementary school aged students. It is important to note that in grounded theory approaches, generalized samples are not necessary, as long as saturation is accomplished.

Potential participants were contacted for a telephone, Skype interview, or an in-person interview. If potential participants had not responded within a week, the next name on the list of those meeting exclusionary criteria was contacted. The goal was to interview at least eight teachers with strong TSRQ in a variety of settings within urban education. Sampling was unable to continue beyond seven participants, as all individuals meeting exclusionary criteria had been contacted.
Instrument

Qualitative Research Questions. The purpose of these questions was to effectively understand teacher-student relationship quality through educators' experiences with building and maintaining positive relationships with students, as discussed in Chapter IV of this study. Through interviewing teachers adept at building and maintaining positive relationships, the vague dimensions found in the quantitative analysis gained clarity and additional meaning. The following questions were asked of each Phase II participant, in the same order, with questions in parentheses representing typical follow up questions to gain more in-depth understanding of participants' experiences:

1. Tell me a bit about the student you chose as your focus student in the survey. (What were some of the biggest challenges and rewards in working with this student? What role did cultural aspects play?)

2. How did you navigate the challenges? (Who did you involve? Did you receive support? Who/what equipped you with the necessary resources to navigate these difficulties? Was burnout an issue for you—if so, how did you navigate this?)

3. What do you believe your role(s) is/are in students' lives? How do you go about fulfilling this/these role(s)?

4. How do you measure your success as an educator? (Where does the measure arise from—self, education, and/or administration?)

5. Is there any additional information you think may be helpful? Any final thoughts about relationship building and maintenance with students, burnout in teachers, and/or cultural competency that you would like to add?
Question 1 was chosen as a means of gaining understanding of participant definition and understanding of culture in relationship to their student and their teaching as well as to begin to explore potential indicators of burnout. Question 2 continued along the theme of potential stressors and burnout indicators, arising from the trending canonical root that was tied tightly to conflict. Additionally, this question led to an exploration of how teachers navigated those challenges. Question 3 was designed to more deeply explore the statistically significant root 1 through the lens of an inner working model, focused on how teacher view themselves in their role of teacher and how they act that out. As expected, they discussed classroom management, viewing the child holistically as opposed to through a depersonalized lens, awareness of their own and their students’ contexts, and their sense of accomplishment through a variety of roles. Question 4 further explored the teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and personal accomplishment from root 1, as well as how they navigated environments that may not be explicitly rewarding. Question 5 allowed for teacher participants to give voice to that which they felt the most strongly about as a result of the interviewing process. This step proved to be beneficial in both data collection and analysis, as these end of interview additions tended to hold the majority of the teachers’ passion and indicated areas for continued exploration with later participants or in the coding process.

**Data Collection**

Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured hour to hour and a half long interviews via phone or in person. As constant comparative methods were utilized, the interviews were based on not only a comprehensive literature review and the statistical findings from Phase I of this study, but also on previous interviews and
reflections. Informed consent for Phase II was obtained via the initial email or phone conversation scheduling the interviews. Interviews were recorded upon participants’ assent and researcher maintained a notebook to jot down responses and initial memos and connecting lines. Throughout data collection, pseudonyms, which were chosen by the participants, were utilized to protect participant confidentiality. In one case, (Kelli), the recording was unintelligible, due to outside noises. Fortunately, there were ample notes taken during the interview, allowing for Kelli’s responses to be used in the data analysis.

Interviews were each coded prior to the next interview. Field notes during interviews and reflexive memos immediately preceding and following each interview, as well as regularly throughout the data analysis process, were also utilized. These notes and memos served as data within the data analysis.

Data Analysis

As each interview was completed, the interview and any memos made by the researcher were loaded into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis computer software package that supports qualitative and mixed methods research through providing a platform in which researchers can efficiently store, sort, code, classify, analyze, and visualize large amounts of information. Upon being loaded into NVivo, interviews and memos were then coded, using open coding in a line by line approach, prior to the beginning of the next interview. Open coding allowed for an interview to be broken into smaller segments and encouraged a variety of categories to emerge (Saldana, 2015) with a focus on not only descriptive level codes, but also on abstract concepts that may be emerging (Strauss & Corbin, 1996). The procedure of open coding one interview, and any memos that were created, before moving on to the next interview allowed for the process of comparative
analysis to occur. Comparative analysis is a key component of grounded theory, in which each subsequent interview reflects new and relevant findings from previous data collection, in this study that included previous interviews, the Phase I analysis, concepts discussed in the literature as outlined in the literature review, and any relevant memos created by the researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Axial coding occurred both within and among interviews, supporting the researcher in identifying links between categories within and among individuals’ experiences. Axial coding began within the memos as connections began to arise between interviews and continued in in-vivo as categories and subcategories for codes began to appear. From axial coding arose patterns running throughout the various sources of data, including interviews, reflexive memos, and the quantitative data (Saldana, 2015). Common patterns arising in axial coding include causal conditions, context, interactions, consequences and intervening conditions among different codes (Rothgangel & Saup, 2017). For example, codes of parent interaction and behavior management were found to have differing relationships in axial coding with some teachers utilizing parent interaction as a means of punishment and others utilizing it as a means of reinforcement—yet both fall into a large umbrella, namely, consequences of behavior management through parental interaction patterns.

Finally, upon completion of the coding of all individual interviews and the following axial coding required to begin to grasp the intricacies of interactions amongst and between codes, selective coding was employed. The selective coding process required several reflexive memos and returns to review and reconsider the quantitative analysis in order to best understand the data as a whole. Selective coding is the selection
of key themes and the interrelationships among these themes and additional categories (Saldana, 2015). Strauss and Corbin (1996) recommend identifying a core category or central theme during selective coding and reviewing how axial coding interplays with this core category. While similar to axial coding, this process falls into a more abstract level of analysis, requiring higher levels of integration across sources.

The end result of this coding process was an understanding of the experiences and realities of urban educators who remain adept in building and maintaining positive TSRQ, particularly in light of teacher beliefs, emotions, and perceptions as measured in Phase I through burnout and cultural competency subscales. The expected finished product of this basic qualitative inquiry relying on grounded theory data analysis was a verbal statement and visual model that serves to explain or illustrate this understanding of urban teachers maintaining a strong TSRQ, particularly as it interacts with the teacher factors addressed throughout study.

**Researcher Role and Bias**

**As a Teacher.** As a past teacher, my biases can run deeply when it comes to teacher-student relationship quality, burnout, and cultural competency. I worked in alternative schools, with students whom most teachers, myself included, struggled to build and maintain high quality relationships. These were the students who experienced school failure across multiple domains—academic, interpersonal, and developmental. Yet, they were the students who seemed most in need of successes, of someone believing in them and meeting them with a fresh slate and a smile each day. They also were the students most likely to bring on feelings of failure as a teacher, those who struggled to meet the academic expectations set forth by standardized tests, administrators who only
seemed to see through a lens of expectations and discipline, and state standards. This led to feelings of frustration, strife between educators and administrators, and feelings of burnout. I am biased in the fact that I have experienced burnout; I have experienced struggling to relate, struggling to see students as people and not poor behaviors, and I have felt lost and unsure in my role as an educator.

**As a White Teacher.** As a white woman who spent all of her years as an educator not only in alternative schools, but in urban alternative schools with 90-95% minority students each year I am also biased. Initially, I started my teaching very aware of the racial differences, being overly mindful and cautious with what I said and how I said it, feeling inadequate and challenged by students, parents, and occasionally coworkers when my naivety regarding racial development and institutionalized barriers were apparent. I am biased in that I used these experiences to grow; I acknowledged our differences and sought to learn with and from my students and their families; I asked my coworkers to check me and challenge me when necessary. Also, I grew in awareness, as is common, of the many within group differences of my students. I began to understand how even two city blocks could change a student’s environment, the influence of family and friend groups, the differing definitions student gave to being Black, Mixed or Latino. As a White teacher, I am biased through my learning from my minority students. I see race, it’s impact, and its barriers, and I see the myriad of other factors and identities at play for urban students; the intersectionalities matter. I recognize that ‘cultural competency’ is more than Black and White, but wondered if my participants would see it that way.

**As a Parent.** As a parent, I am also biased. I recognize how quickly parents can feel alienated by teachers and schools, especially when their child is viewed as the
‘problem child’. I see how my feelings about a particular teacher impact my child’s view of that teacher and my comments about school and the importance, or lack thereof, impact the amount of energy my children put into homework activities. I also see how my children react to different types of teacher personalities and approaches and how some educators change their approach to interaction with each of my children and how some maintain the same approach. I have my preference, as do my children, and I was interested to see that play out in the following results.

**As a Psychologist in Training.** As a psychologist in training, I also bring bias. I recognize the importance of context, both in therapeutic and educational settings. I feel frustration that others don’t see it, don’t know it. I must remind myself regularly that not everyone has learned this information. Not everyone knows how to display genuine positive regard and meet clients/students where they are.

**Reflexivity.** I found myself connecting with the qualitative participants and seeing my own philosophy and approach in their words. This fed into the comparative analysis as I sought patterns across all participants and not just participants and myself. I found a sense of self and familiarity in these participants and the ability to put words to, and categorize, things which I felt and observed as a novice educator in both myself and those professionals around me. It was important in these moments of connection between self and participant that I engage in reflexive memos. This helped me to separate my story from participants story and to clarify between patterns that meant something to me, and those that meant something to the participant and to the study as a whole.
Limitations

Due to a lack of potential participants meeting exclusionary criteria for Phase II, it was difficult to reach the necessary level of saturation in data analysis for a complete grounded theory analysis. While able to create a substantive theory, additional interviews are encouraged to create a formal, more generalizable theory that transcends just urban educators (Glaser, 2002).
CHAPTER VI
PHASE II FINDINGS

This second phase, the qualitative portion of this study, was built upon the results from the first phase. Potential participants were approached, and research questions crafted, based upon results from Phase I. Phase II sought to gain a more nuanced understanding of the intrinsic characteristics of teachers adept in building and maintaining high quality relationships with challenging students. While the quantitative results shed a very important light on the correlations between certain teacher characteristics or approaches and both closeness and conflict, these remained vague and shallow constructs without the added conceptual meaning participants’ stories and lived experiences can provide.

Phase II Aim

Phase II of this study aimed to gain a more thorough understanding of the experience of urban teachers who were found to be successful in building and maintaining positive relationships with difficult students in Phase I data analysis. As discussed in the introduction to this study, the literature tends to view urban students through a meritocratic, deficits-based approach (e.g., Sosa & Gomez, 2012; Wilson,
This study sought not only to identify intrinsic teacher factors tied to teacher-student relationship quality but to utilize a strengths-based approach in understanding how high quality relationships are built and maintained in urban settings. In this phase of the study the purpose was to understand how these particular teachers experienced, navigated, and manipulated the teacher specific factors of burnout and cultural competency within the urban educational environment in order to continue to experience positive relationships with their students. A special focus in interviews and qualitative data analysis was given to those characteristics which accounted for the largest variances within the Phase I canonical correlation analysis. These variables included Cultural Awareness (CA), Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM), and Reduced Personal Accomplishment (RPA) with smaller, but still notable correlations with Home, Community and School Communication and Collaboration (HCS), School Climate (SC), and Depersonalization (DP).

Phase II Participant Selection

Of the 135 participants in Phase I, 69 participants both expressed a willingness to participate in Phase II of the study and provided contact information, representing 51% of the total study participants. Exclusionary criteria were based upon Phase I results, with the goal of securing research participants who demonstrated the ability to build and maintain high quality relationships with students. Of the 69 individuals who indicated willingness to be considered for participation, 13 had scores of 28 or higher, at least one standard deviation above the mean, in closeness. Contact was initiated with each of these 13 individuals. As the goal of this phase of the study was to gain a conceptual understanding of high quality teacher-student relationships, interviewing a greater
number of teachers with high closeness scores trumped the hope for a representative sample of participants. Per Glaser (2002), the purpose of grounded theory approaches is to identify patterns that answer the larger question, answers that should transcend person, time, or place. There appeared to be a bias in individuals both willing to participate in Phase II and those scoring high in closeness, with over half of the 13 qualifying individuals reporting a background in special education and over three-quarters working in grades five and below.

**Phase II Demographics.** Of the 13 qualifying potential participants, eight responded to initial contact made by researcher and seven followed through with participation in this study. Of the seven who followed through with participation, four of them have a background in special education. Participant demographics, and the demographics of their chosen focus student, are represented visually in Table 7. Participants were predominantly Caucasian, female and elementary school teachers, while focus students were predominantly male, African American, and had experienced a lack of success in school. While the teacher participant demographics do not adequately cover the range of grade levels, other demographics do closely resemble the picture painted by the literature (see Gay, 2002 for example), that of female, European American teachers experiencing challenges in connecting with male, African American students in need of additional interventions to succeed in the learning environment.

**Core Themes**

Through the qualitative analysis, three rather distinct themes arose, two of which mirrored quite closely the dimensions found in the canonical analysis. The first theme was that of a challenging teaching environment, the specifics of which differed by
participant, though often highlighted institutionalized barriers, concerns that were contextually or culturally relevant, and unattainable expectations or performance metrics. This environment appeared to have a circular relationship with burnout, with challenging situations increasing feelings of burnout and feelings of burnout leading to additional challenging situations.

The second theme was that of the teachers’ inner working model, their philosophies of teaching, learning and living seamlessly tied to their conceptualizations of students and their interactions. Woven throughout the two themes was that of the students and how the teachers’ philosophical approaches and “being” interacted with the challenging environments, seeking to meet the students’ needs, both academic and social emotional while also maintaining expectations and limits. The interplay between teacher and student, when positive, served as a buffer for burnout, providing positive reinforcement for the teacher to continue to engage in positive interactions with students through the natural mutuality of relationships.

The third theme to emerge, intertwined with both of the above-described dimensions, was that of the student. This theme included the students’ families and cultural influences, the students’ interactions within the teacher-student relationship, and the teachers’ abilities to view the student as an individual person (as opposed to depersonalizing them from person to student to behavioral problem). The student is a key piece in the teacher-student relationship and both mold, and are molded by, the challenging environment; yet, without the qualitative inquiry utilized in this study the student would be viewed as an extraneous variable.
Table 7

**Phase II Participant and Focus Student Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Participant Gender</th>
<th>Participant Age</th>
<th>Participant Ethnicity</th>
<th>Grade Level Taught</th>
<th>Special Education Training?</th>
<th>Years Experience Teaching</th>
<th>Focus Student Gender</th>
<th>Focus Student Age</th>
<th>Focus Student Ethnicity</th>
<th>Focus Student IEP/504?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>European American</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. C</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>European American</td>
<td>Late E.S.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacey</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Late E.S.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>No*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy Jones</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>European American</td>
<td>Late E.S.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>No*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelli</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>European American</td>
<td>Early E.S.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. L</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>European American</td>
<td>Early E.S.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>Early E.S.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>African Immigrant</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: H.S. = High School, E.S. = Elementary School (early=K-2, Late=3-5); * = while these students were not currently receiving special education accommodations, they were actively receiving tier 1 and tier 2 interventions and teachers, parents, and administration had discussed the possibility of engaging in a special education evaluation.
Breakdown of the Core Themes

The following is part of a memo created during the move from axial coding to selective coding, when the researcher began to realize that a single core theme of teacher-student relationship would not suffice and would need to be broken into the above themes:

It is so much bigger than just a single child and their teacher. It is the environment and how a teacher, a player in the environment, navigates that environment. Not just with that one child, but as a philosophy, in general, as a person, as a teacher.

—Researcher memo

“What We Are Up Against”. This quote, from Ms. C. became the in-vivo code for the first theme of the challenging environment that was described in these participants stories and descriptions of their quest to build and maintain high quality relationships with their students. All Phase II participants, regardless of the level of support they received from their building administrators, spoke to the challenges inherent in both teaching in general and teaching in an urban environment.

Cultural/Contextual. A reality of teaching in urban schools, as described by Phase II participants, is that of a lack of resources; which bears with it a host of challenges. In these teachers’ experiences, lack of resources was characterized not only by poverty, which was seen as an umbrella for a more complex understanding of lack of resources by most, but also by a lack of familial support, missing skills necessary for education, and lack of safety in the home and community.

There are two school systems. The rich and private and the poor and public, especially urban public where we are teaching testing and worried about scores, but in reality, everything [falls] under the umbrella of poverty. Kids really need a holistic approach. It’s hard to do the holistic approach when kids need so much remedial healing. Teachers, we need to be aware...you know, they are tired, they have issues getting to the doctor, they might be in the ER all night because they
are sick and they don’t have health care. And that’s just some of it… With poverty, it is so important to understand the intricacies under the umbrella.

--Kelli

Ms. L.’s description of the living environment for her focus student highlights many of the challenges typical for her students as a result of the “intricacies of poverty.”

Last year I had a student that was particularly difficult to connect with because of his behaviors and dysfunctional coping mechanisms…He came from a chaotic, unstructured, dangerous household. Two brothers were in foster care, Mom had frequent changes in boyfriends, and the most recent one was threatening her and hitting her in front of my student.

--Ms. L.

A pattern emerged of students who were unprepared for school, through no fault (or at least limited fault) of their own, with families who were putting forth as much time and effort as they were able to, but still coming short in terms of meeting school expectations. A prime example of such a student was that of Judy Jones’ focus student:

I met him partway through third grade. He was having a very rough home life…he was raised by a grandparent, she may have actually been a great grandparent, his mom had reentered the picture in the last month, his dad is in prison. School was just not important to the family—he hasn’t really had school, there was no structured background, no consistent discipline and a complete lack of work ethic. It was a challenge just to get him to do work, I think he just didn’t know how to do school. I called grandma, we made a plan. I really think grandma had good intention, but she was working full time, usually nights, and there was no one there to help her. There was no one there to look over his shoulder and make sure he did his homework or brought his backpack to school.

--Judy Jones

While several participant’s spoke to students’ trauma through their discussion of specific experiences of specific students, none directly named it trauma, except for Stacey. Stacey clearly describes the potential of long lasting and far-reaching consequences of trauma and its impact on student learning.

And then there’s trauma. Trauma effects children completely differently than adults. They don’t have the vocabulary, the language, to express themselves. I
don’t even think they know how to process what it is they are experiencing. And then we want them to do math and to read. They don’t even feel safe! --Stacey

**Unattainable Expectations and Disciplinary Reactions.** These students were then expected to meet stringent academic standards and pass statewide assessments. All of the teachers discussed, to some extent, frustration with teaching to tests, particularly when viewing students through the contextual lens described above. Kelli was the most vocal about the negative impact of teaching to testing, though her concerns reverberated through all participant experiences.

Testing is a real problem. We teach to the test and our worth is based on the test. If a kid can’t do the test, it’s the teacher’s problem and the student’s problem. They don’t consider all the other stuff. What if that kid didn’t get a good night’s sleep, what if he takes care of his siblings every night or doesn’t ever get to sleep because mom’s working in the other room? What if he’s hungry and scared and learning isn’t a priority for him right now? None of that matters to them, they just want the scores and most teachers don’t have the time, or take the time, to focus on all that other stuff because their job relies on the test scores...so they just teach the test.

--Kelli

Most frustrating to the participants appeared to be the school-wide responses to student difficulties in meeting the unattainable expectations asked of students and teachers. Any behaviors outside of the expectation to sit quietly and pass academic assignments were grounds for disciplinary action in nearly all the schools discussed. Ms. L highlights this beautifully in her description of her students, who are placed in an alternative school due to not meeting their school districts’ expectations, while Ms. C. discusses the problems with disciplining all kids in the same manner:

Many of my students ask for love in the most unloving ways. They attend our center because their public school is not able to manage their behavior and emotional difficulties.

--Ms. L.
Administration doesn’t get it, they are not proactive but reactive. They have a lot to prioritize and they don’t know students like we do. They just go around handing out suspensions, not even looking at behavioral plans. A child [with and IEP/504] does one thing wrong and they are compared to general kids. It’s like swimming, you don’t take a beginner kid and just throw them in!

--Ms. C.

**Impact of Administration.** For several of the participants, administration in their school was helpful, active in their interactions with students, teachers and families.

These administrators, we’ll call them aware admins, while not able to completely erase the challenges of poverty, institutional barriers, and state testing, were able to serve as a buffer to protect teachers to some extent from the challenging environment and potential burnout inherent in urban educational settings. Stacey discusses her interaction with aware admins, while Judy Jones extols the buffering virtues of aware admins.

My principal the past five years has been awesome. She really values the relationships that I have made with my students, with my parents. So, she tells me to ‘do what you do, smile, and be quiet at the meetings.’

--Stacey

I was fried by the end of the year. I handled it through going to speak with the principal. He was helpful, pointing out the ‘rights’ I was doing, asking what I felt was not going well, and talking with me, the kids grandma and his other teachers to discuss possible solutions. I felt supported in everything I did.

--Judy Jones

For those participants who did not have aware admins, there appeared to be two acceptable courses of action: stay out of the way while seeking support elsewhere or rebel, with the idea of quitting or transferring to a different position or school district mentioned several times as a possible solution, particularly when engaged in the discussion of burnout. These reactions fall in line with, respectively, freeze, fight or flight type responses to the increased stress of challenging environments. Ms. C
discusses rebelling again the administration; Alex personified the freeze approach; and
Ms. L. shares the desire to take flight:

Administration wholly disagrees with what I am doing, but I do it anyway. I do
worry some about job security, but one administrator doesn’t have a
[administrative] license and the other has never even been a teacher. I feel like
Mickey and Minnie are running the show but I stay for the kids.
--Ms. C.

I have never asked for administrative support. Every time I have a question or
need something, I get the answers somewhere else. I go to the library, Barnes and
Noble or talk to my coworkers. I have a reader for my class who is like my
mentor figure now. I just don’t feel comfortable going to them with problems.
The assistant principal will occasionally drop into the classroom and he seems
nice enough, I just don’t feel comfortable asking them for help.
--Alex

I tried to handle my burnout by talking with colleagues, part venting I think and
part looking for advice, for anything that could help, really. But, while he was in
my classroom, I felt like a bad, ineffective teacher and often thought about
leaving teaching.

--Ms. L.

Institutionalized Barriers. An underlying theme through much of what
participants discussed was that of a school that did not adequately meet the needs of the
student population which they served. While no participant clearly spoke to the
mismatch, the results bled through their discussion of children ill prepared for school,
parents who did not trust the school, administrators, and teachers, and the tendency of
peers or administration to turn to discipline to get kids ‘in line’ as opposed to the school
and community agreeing upon a standardized set of cultural norms. Urban students are
currently in a war zone between competing values of the American educational system,
with its common core, assessments, and expectations of well-mannered, quiet, engaged
students and that of urban communities and generations of poor experiences with the
American educational system, lack of resources, and encouragement of speaking up.
These teachers, those with positive relationships with students, share the experience of joining their students in this war zone and helping students to navigate the challenging environment.

It is important to note that for many of the participants, this challenging environment was a part of their daily reality, regardless of who their focus student was and whether that student was attending on any given day. Teachers indicated that what they are up against transcends a single student and includes cultural/contextual concerns, including a lack of resources, trauma, and familial expectations, unattainable expectations of schools and the disciplinary reactions for not meeting those expectations, and the underlying institutionalized barriers that feed the mismatch between student culture/context and schoolwide expectations. Teacher’s joining their students in the war between their and school culture share an experience of increasing feelings of being stretched beyond their ability to manage.

“They’re Little Humans” (and separate from the challenging environment).

This is an in-vivo code arising from one of the participants who was discussing her philosophy of students being valued in her classroom, regardless of their daily behaviors. This assertion was echoed by several participants, who further discussed the children’s need for, and right to, a voice as well as the teacher’s role in hearing that voice and applying it to their understanding of, and interactions with, the student.

Those students that are a challenge, it’s often because they feel they don’t have a voice. They are trying to tell us something with their behavior. I know what it’s like to not have a voice. I wasn’t able to share my feelings when I was growing up, you know. I couldn’t ask why, that was disrespectful. I see each of my kids as a human, a person. They are little adults and I treat them like that.

--Stacey
My Kids. While not necessarily explicitly stated by all participants, a pattern became apparent of participants seeing their focus student as an individual seated within a variety of contexts, deserving of respect, and worthy of love. Participants overwhelmingly saw their students, even those with whom they struggled, as their children. This conceptualization of students as their own, taking ownership of the students, impacted not only the teachers’ ability to connect with students but also opened the door to new ways of experiencing personal accomplishment, allowing for dynamic and meaningful two-way relationships. This, in turn, also appeared to make the relationship more ‘real’ and meaningful for the students. See below for several participants’ conceptualizations of this concept, the idea of students as their own:

Being an old white man people used to say I could not relate with urban poor black students. I never saw it that way. I always felt that they were MY kids and had little trouble relating.

--James

I think she needed to know she was loved and cared for and I wasn’t just another grownup telling her what to do. I always loved her, all my students, but didn’t really show it or say it so specifically. I cared for her like a mom, and now she knew it too.

--Alex

I tell them, my job is to love you and discipline you like my own kids.

--Judy Jones

My students are my children. I call them that. I feel that they are.

--Stacey

Advocate for My Kids. All participants indicated they felt called to support the focus child in their class because they felt someone had to, and if not them, then who? The focus student becomes the poster child for the need to challenge the system, to buck against the structural inequalities and to question institutionalized barriers such as over identification of African American boys in special education, suspending kindergarteners,
or constantly calling parents to manage student behaviors. Such instances are highlighted in commentary below from Alex, Judy Jones, and Kelli:

He [focus student] would mock me when I read, pull other students’ hair, and was constantly messing with others. I used to sit him far away from the group, then I realized he won’t learn that way and I didn’t want to exclude him, especially being aware of his race. He was African, and if he was acting out and kept acting out he would end up being a statistic. I didn’t want him to become a statistic.

--Alex

We had a meeting, several actually. He [focus student] was expelled and suspended often and we considered a possible behavior plan through a 504 plan. But, when the final decision came, and it was my choice, I did not want to label him. I saw the behaviors as more of results of a lack of awareness of his expectations and immaturity, not an actual diagnosable condition.

--Judy Jones

I do not text or call parents if the kids are misbehaving...I think it’s important to treat parents with respect, they do difficult way more than I do. They are with their kids way more. They send their kids to school and expect the school to care for them. And don’t get me started on suspensions for five-year olds! That’s ridiculous. I have kids that kick, hit, headbutt, scratch. At that age it’s not assault, they had a bad day. You should make it a learning experience not send them home.

--Kelli

Finding the Why to Change Behaviors. While focus students’ behaviors in school were viewed as problematic and disruptive to the class, and at times stressful and nerve wracking to participants; these same participants displayed the innate ability to question the source of the behaviors, to support problem solving, and to work with the child (and often the child’s family) to find effective means of limiting or eliminating problem behaviors. Questioning the source of behaviors is succinctly summed up by Stacey when she states, “there is a reason a child is acting in any way—it is important to find the why.”
In the excerpts below, James and Judy discuss their approach to engaging in problem solving with their students based on the why (though not explicitly stated) and with the intention of changing behaviors without disciplining, including giving students time to regulate themselves, engaging in purposeful discussion and problem solving, and providing the student with explicit instruction on needed skills as well as manipulating the environment where able.

If a student is having a meltdown, I give them 4 minutes. I use my watch because it seems like forever. I will talk to them in private in the next 24 hours, but never immediately to discuss their choices and the thought process they went into before they had their meltdown.

--James

Since there was no home support, I began to keep him after school. I wanted to teach him study skills and help him catch up on work in a structured and regular environment.

--Judy Jones

When it came to the mechanics of the singular relationships occurring within their classrooms, participants were able to identify the impact of the challenging environment on not only themselves, but their students, particularly their most vulnerable students and instead of punishing the student for not being able to thrive in the challenging environment, they attempted to provide the students with the necessary skills and support to effectively meet the expectations of that environment. This is the piece the outside observer is most able to see, this is the observed behavior of “relationship.” This was the answer to the original core question, yet, without a thorough understanding of what teachers face (the challenges inherent in the environment) and what teachers do (how they conceptualize and respond to the environment) the discussion is thin and unstructured.
“It’s Just What They Do.” Glaser (2002) cautions that in grounded theory analysis, unlike qualitative descriptive analysis, the researcher is seeking not the participant’s voice, but an abstraction of both their experiences and their meaning. He writes these abstractions can be found in the mundane, as “it’s just what they do” (Glaser, 2002, p. 25). This assertion became apparent in this study, as patterns began to arise across various participants. To them, they were just discussing their approach to a difficult student, their struggle to learn more, their desire to be a real person to their students. Yet, as a researcher, an overarching theme of a teaching philosophy began to arise, informed by so many smaller pieces and parts that it almost felt intangible. For the teacher, “it’s just what they do” but for anyone attempting to replicate their approach, it is so much more than that.

**Teacher Roles.** These participants viewed their role as not only an educator, but a parent, counselor, and facilitator. Success was measured in combinations of individual student gains, student levels of engagement, and students experiencing success, not in test scores or singular academic tasks, but in life skills, social skills, language development, and emotional management. The excerpts below highlight the differing levels of awareness teachers have regarding their understanding of their role in students’ lives. James, while correct, and sharing much of the same information as Ms. L, does not dive as far into the intricacies of aiding in the process of socialization or the differences that he does impact. This doesn’t mean he, or other participants, don’t have that type of impact, just that it is a part of their daily quest to “make a difference” and not often something teachers have formally considered, labeled or mapped out.
I get jazzed when I can look at a student and think I made a difference. I have a dual role, to assist student in academic achievement but also assist them in the process of socialization.

--James

My role is that of a mom, teacher, and counselor. I am responsible for providing a safe, loving, fun environment; for inspiring intellectual curiosity; for figuring out what works for different learners and different personalities and personalizing learning experiences for them, for making them feel valued and successful, for exposing them to the wonders of the world (and space!), and in some cases, re-parenting them to teach them how to function effectively at school. To fulfill the mom and counselor role, I think about skills deficits that are hindering them like not knowing the social skills necessary to take turns in classroom discussions or interact appropriately with adults, or lacking emotional skills that allow them to manage frustration and communicate their feelings as opposed to acting out. I then try to explicitly teach and model and help them practice those skills. I also try to give praise, and hugs, and play with them, and be silly with them, and still provide consistent structure and consequences.

--Ms. L

Roles as Result of Holistic View of Students. Participants were able to fulfill their many roles through recognizing the value in identifying student strengths early and playing to those strengths through contacting parents with good news, creating leaders in the class, and engaging the students in discussions or activities focused on their interests. They valued their students as people, got to know them as individuals, and allowed the students to see them as people, not just as authority figures. In short, these participants created an environment in which students were viewed in a holistic manner, allowing for individual interventions and the intersection of family, school, and community to enter into classroom decision making. In the following quotes, Ms. C highlights her reasoning for focusing on student strengths and small successes, while Alex discusses her use of notes home to bring family members into the celebration of student successes and strength. Stacey beautifully highlights both the approach of knowing students as
individuals and the impact on students when she allows them to see her as an individual and a part of their community.

I am their cheerleader. I am there to be like “you’re awesome” and I will keep telling you that and showing you that. All small success are like “rah, rah, rah” to encourage them to want to accomplish more and more and more.

--Ms. C

In the beginning of the year, I used to send notes home when they acted out, but not, I reach out when they do something really good. I write quick good notes or letters home, complementing and thanking parents for raising such good kids.

--Alex

I am goofy, I watched basketball and learned the lingo, went to his games, allowed him to earn basketball time. I took his passion and that’s where the road to him being successful started...I like in the community. They see me. And when they see me out in the community, or at the pool, and I interact with them and they see me interact with my own, they’re like, oh, you do treat us like your own. They believe me. They see me.

--Stacey

**Conscious Behavioral Management.** To these teachers, students were capable of decision making and problem solving, even the youngest ones. If there was a behavioral problem, participants did not address it in a purely disciplinarian manner, but instead used it as a learning experience, as an opportunity for a skills building session. Students were empowered to problem solve, not just punished. These teachers utilized conscious responding as opposed to reactivity in their behavioral management approach, which, ultimately led to a feeling of greater control within the classroom. Potential problems were planned for ahead of time, often with the student’s input, allowing less time to be spent on warnings and discipline and more on problem solving, instruction, and repairing the relationship afterwards.

Participants discuss this conscious behavioral management approach below. Ms. L. highlights the prevention of increased problems by having a behavior plan set up
ahead of time based on student input, Ms. C discusses student input and the value of explicitly teaching emotional regulation skills, while Kelli succinctly summarizes conscious classroom management into two sentences:

On really bad days, he would spend time in the next class up. His behavior tended to be better when he switched classrooms for a few hours, because he wanted to look ‘cool’ in front of the other students. Also, by switching, we removed him from the conflict he was involved in and gave him a ‘fresh start’.

--Ms. L.

It took him a while to calm down, so I introduced deep breathing because he liked the mindfulness and meditation program we used. He could walk down the hall which allowed him to escape while also being safe.

--Ms. C.

We should be using a problem-solving approach instead of just disciplining. It’s not about managing them; it really should be about teaching them to manage themselves.

--Kelli

Cultural Awareness. Cultural context was also considered by each of the participants. And not just in a basic one-dimensional way. They discussed students in terms of intersecting identities, family dynamics, community values, and past school experiences. They conceptualized each of their students through the lens of that student’s individual context. And, they used that information to inform their expectations of the student, their interactions with the student, and their decisions regarding the student (i.e. special education or not; expectations of parents; the extent to which they involve parents and how, etc.). For many of the participants, cultural context was not something they discussed only when prompted, it flowed throughout the discussion, apparent in every decision they made regarding the child. The awareness of cultural context is like that, it becomes tied to one’s philosophy of not only teaching but of life, becoming a lens through which one views the world around one.
Kelli discusses the need to be flexible and open in one’s understanding of children, highlighting that while textbook versions of cultural awareness are helpful, one must be able to view the child through the lens of his/her many different contexts.

Children are variable. Flexibility is so important in teaching. You need to be aware of the bell curve of life. The context, like they’re poor or they’re from a single parent home, that doesn’t mean all of the negative or all of the positive stuff associated with those contexts. Everyone falls in that bell curve.

--Kelli

Ms. L describes how her awareness of cultural contexts led to her awareness of self as teacher through the students’ point of view and her approach to directly discuss race and identify with students in class. She also highlights how her awareness of student context impacted her decision making regarding whether to involve the student’s mother in school-based discipline.

I know that cultural aspects creep into my relationships with my students. Did he view me as the white woman social worker who put his brothers in foster care? The white system that his mother fears? …I did not involve his mother [in behavior management] because she punished him for poor behavior at school, which I did not believe was helpful. … It’s not like kids haven’t noticed we look different. Don’t pretend you “don’t even notice race” or that you’re “color-blind.” Students are grappling with race and identity all the time; talk about it and ask about their perspectives on stuff in the news, in their culture, in their lives.

--Ms. L

Stacey succinctly shares how her cultural awareness impacted her view of her focus student’s behavioral problems in school as well as her approach to managing these behaviors, leading to an approach that taught the student life-long skills and refrained from punishing him for not knowing behavioral management skills he had never learned.

He was a sweet kid, he just didn’t know how to process his feelings. No one ever told him he could be angry. I told him he was allowed to be angry. I taught him how to be angry in a safe way.

--Stacey

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Where Did They Learn to Do What They Do? Participants weren’t sure why they did things this way. Some said it was their gut reaction, but then laughed it off as if that weren’t a valid answer; others indicated their own teachers had acted in this way and it meant something intangible to them as students. Many pointed to outside learning, additional coursework, reading, and professional development opportunities they sought in order to become more adept in understanding their students and their students’ interactions with the teachers, classrooms, and communities surrounding them. Regardless of specifics, a pattern of being able to integrate experiences, both new and old, into one’s teaching philosophy arose. None of the participants engaged in dichotomous thinking; none held a single perspective. They all sought to understand more, to question, and to integrate. This need for understanding, for making various theories, experiences, and situations fit seemed to be the overarching reason why participants approached teaching in the way they have. The following excerpts give voice to the various experiences from which teachers philosophies and approaches to teaching have arisen, and how those various ways interact uniquely across educators.

I make decisions based on my gut. Maybe that’s the wrong answer, since it’s not supported by research. I see my own kids’ experiences. And, I’m aware of the kid, the kid’s family, where they come from because I listen. I listen to the kids and to their parents.

--Kelli

I have always loved kids and sought to learn about early childhood, developmental approaches. I practice mindfulness and the way I look at human beings is different. My values are different than [other teachers]. What I see in human beings—I get how behaviors are formed, that people are more willing to work towards motivation, I was seeking out learning and enhancing my intuition by studying behavior analysis. But, it’s a life philosophy, I practice Buddhism. As a whole, every student needs to get the spirit of kindness.

--Ms. C.
I am always trying to hone my craft. I read Ron Clark, Sean Corey, Ruby Paine. I take extra courses. I consider how I do my own children and what my teachers did that worked for me when I was a student. I have my students evaluate me. They take it seriously and I take it to hear and check in with them on my progress.

--Stacey

**Perspective Plays a Role.** ‘Why?’ and ‘How?’ are difficult questions to answer when an individual is just doing what they do. A pattern emerged among participants in that they all touched on the need for empathy. Participants were not only able to identify the multiple contextual factors of a student’s life but were able to speak to the possible outcomes of such contextual factors and how they impacted the student daily. This type of awareness doesn’t come only through reading; it comes through perspective taking, awareness of one’s own assumptions and the ability to challenge these assumptions as needed. This ability came from different places and in different ways for participants, often tied to either their own personal experiences or previous learning; yet, was a common pattern throughout. Alex discussed empathy towards a mom paired with her own experiences in similar situations and James discusses his experiences with discrimination.

I just kept on thinking about his mom and how her face looked at dismissal, as well as thinking about my own son, who is also challenging. This helped me to not give up on him.

--Alex

I have no idea why or how I could relate so easily, except that when I was young I experienced severe religious discrimination and was aware of what that feels like.

--James

Judy Jones and Stacey take the discussion a step further and discuss how a lack of awareness or experiences leading to awareness lead to unconscious biases on behalf of educators. They highlight the need to grow in awareness of bias and to check these biases.
If I hadn’t known my student’s background, the lack of parents, poverty, overwhelmed grandma, it really would have changed my level of empathy. Understanding that he didn’t go to school earlier helped me be more aware of his behaviors, more understanding. Anybody in education, or wanting to get into education, should do home visits to gain awareness of how your students are living, how others are living. Force them to look outside of their bubble, grow their empathy. Bias is a big part of it, you have what you grew up with. I learned to do this from my parents, my dad always said, “you never know what people go through”. I was exposed to this by being with families, for dinner and to play, where were renting homes from my dad when I was young.

--Judy Jones

Ruby Payne writes we teach to how we grew up—we view everyone as how we grew up and if your students are not growing up how you grew up, that’s not your knowledge base. We need to reflect on biases. We need to have serious conversations as teachers. We need to acknowledge our biases and prejudices. We all have them.

--Stacey

This section is best ended with a quote from Stacey regarding the abstract, but powerful, nature of relating with students:

I love teaching. I really do. I try to explain it to others…but, it just so hard. I tell them it’s like trying to describe the sunset. There are no words to describe just how beautiful, just how powerful, just how, wow, it is, you know. It’s indescribable, yet everyone who sees it understands.

--Stacey
CHAPTER VII
DISCUSSION

The benefit of the mixed-methods approach chosen for this study is the blending of both qualitative and quantitative analysis with the purpose of forming a well-rounded understanding of the overarching study questions: What are the relationships, if any, between TSRQ and intrinsic teacher factors, such as burnout and cultural competency? And how do these relationships play out in urban student-teacher relationships in which teachers are adept at building high quality relationships?

This study began by utilizing a canonical correlation in order to examine the relationship between dimensions of teacher-student relationship quality as measured by the STRS-SF (Pianta, 1992), including closeness and conflict, and those of teacher burnout and cultural competency. Burnout as measured by the MBI-ES (Maslach et al., 1981), includes subscales of emotional exhaustion, reduced personal feelings of accomplishment, and depersonalization. Cultural competence, as measured by the CABI (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005), is broken into the following eight subscales: teacher beliefs, school climate, culturally responsive classroom management, home community school, cultural awareness, curriculum and instruction, cultural sensitivity, and teacher
efficacy. The study then took the relational results from this canonical correlation analysis (the "what") and employed qualitative interviewing to understand the "how."

**Overview of Results and Ties to Literature**

**Phase I: Dimension 1**

Phase I identified two distinct dimensions at play in teacher-student relationship quality through the application of canonical correlation analysis. The first dimension was found to be statistically significant (Wilks’ $\lambda = .63$, $F(22, 244) = 2.85, p < .001$) and was characterized by high loadings of cultural awareness ($r_s = .70$) and a sense of personal accomplishment ($r_s = .50$), moderate loadings of culturally responsive classroom management ($r_s = .41$), decreased teacher efficacy ($r_s = .34$), and the ability to refrain from depersonalizing students ($r_s = .35$) within the predictor variate. The criterion variate in this dimension was heavily influenced by the closeness variable ($r_s = .99$), though conflict ($r_s = .43$) is also moderately loaded in an inverse relationship to the predictor variate. This dimension appears to highlight what the teacher brings into the relationship—awareness, feelings of accomplishment, appropriate classroom management techniques, lack of depersonalizing, and levels of efficacy.

The negative relationship between teacher self-efficacy and closeness and positive relationship between teacher self-efficacy and conflict found in this canonical root is not supported in previous research. Sosa and Gomez (2012) found teachers who displayed the highest levels of teaching self-efficacy were also identified as the most emotional and academically supportive to students. O’Connor (2010) found teacher self-efficacy to be an indicator of stability of TSRQ across grades for students. One contributing factor in the variance found in this study’s results may be due to the differences in measures of
self-efficacy. Sosa and Gomez (2012) utilized interviews and O’Connor (2010) employed the Teacher Self Efficacy Scale (Bandura, 1986) with 21 items focused on teacher self-efficacy, while the current study utilized a sub-scale, with limited reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .48$), which was pulled from a larger measure (CABI, Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005). Alternatively, it is possible teachers experience a feeling of less teaching-efficacy due to their inability to meet student needs across all domains, due to the challenging teaching environment discussed in Phase I: Dimension II, suggesting the environmental impact of impoverished schools (O’Connor, 2010; Pianta et al., 2003) on TSRQ may also impact teaching self-efficacy.

Other results from this first dimension fall in line with previous findings, in which cultural awareness, emotional availability, and culturally responsive interactions with students are tied to positive TSRQ (Cheung, 2009; Phillippo, 2012). Additionally, low levels of depersonalization have been found to be specifically correlated with positive TSRQ, while emotional exhaustion was correlated to both high and low quality TSRQ (Milatz et al., 2015) which may help to explain why emotional exhaustion was not a significant predictor in the canonical correlation analysis utilized in the current study.

**Phase I: Dimension II**

The second dimension was found to be a trend, not statistically significant, but worth exploring further (Wilks’ $\lambda = .87$, $F (10, 123) = 1.73$, $p = .081$) and was characterized by a high loading on the conflict variable ($r_s = .90$) in the criterion variate which is inversely correlated with the predictor variate including moderate loadings of culturally responsive classroom management ($r_s = -.42$), communication between school, home, and community ($r_s = -.44$) and school climate ($r_s = -.35$). There was also a
somewhat surprising, moderate, positive relationship with cultural awareness \( (r_s = .34) \). This second dimension appears to highlight the environment in which the teacher-student relationship exists.

Increase conflict tied to decreased culturally responsive classroom management has been noted in the literature in the form of a qualitative studies, in which teachers able to discipline in a manner considered culturally aligned found strengthened TSRQ with students (Slavit & Poveda, 2011; Phillippo, 2012; Ford & Sassi, 2014). Additionally, without a teacher’s deep knowledge of student culture, sociopolitical experiences, and community norms, effective engagement, and therefore relationship building, with students becomes increasingly more difficult (Bondy et al., 2007; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2009; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). These findings support the current study’s finding that an absence or decrease in communication between school and both home and community is likely to lead to increased conflict between the teacher and student. Conflict also appeared to arise more frequently in environments in which there was a lack of high expectations (Eisenhower et al., 2007), increased stress (Hinds et al., 2015), and feelings of alienation or mistrust (Murray et al., 2016) highlighting the importance of attending to the school climate when attempting to build high quality TSRQ.

The positive relationship between cultural awareness and conflict was surprising, especially considering the opposite relationship found in the first dimension; however, Warren (2015) cautions that cultural awareness without the individual connection with students and the ability to engage in perspective taking may lead to inconsistent positive outcomes for minority students. It is possible participants have a certain level of
awareness, gleaned from professional development and experience, without the skills necessary to effectively utilize their awareness in building and maintain positive relationships with their students.

**Phase II: Considerations**

Interviews with seven participants capable of building and maintaining high quality relationships with students brought to light several key themes and considerations. The demographics of participants in Phase II were somewhat unexpected, with an overrepresentation of special education teachers not only participating in the study in general but also qualifying to participate in Phase II. It is possible individuals trained in special education may be more aware of the importance of TSRQ and its use in behavior management therefore they may be more likely to participate in a measure focused on this topic. As for qualifying for participation in Phase II, the overrepresentation is somewhat controversial to previous findings that students identified as in need of special education services are less likely to experience high quality TSRQ than their general education peers (McGrath & Bergen, 2015). Yet, with smaller class sizes and specific training in the importance of relationship building, it is possible special education teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to mitigate the special education identification of students and any accompanying behavioral and academic issues.

There were three core themes that were extracted from the data and will be discussed in greater depth below. These themes are: “What We Are Up Against,” “They’re Little Humans,” and “It’s Just What They Do.”
Phase II: Core Theme 1; “What We Are Up Against”

Three core themes arose across participants in Phase II. The first, ‘What We Are Up Against’ embodied the challenging environment in which urban educators work. This theme arose from cultural and contextual realities of urban students’ lives, including lack of resources, trauma histories, and lack of trust in the educational system. These students then struggled to meet academic expectations, arriving unprepared, not knowing the ‘norms’, and unable to effectively navigate the high stakes world that education has become with increased standardized testing, common core expectations, and third-grade reading guarantees. For both participants and their students, it seemed that there was much to lose and seldom enough time and support to gain the skills and strategies necessary to win—they are constantly working from a losing position. While administration appeared to either buffer participants from some of the stressors inherent in urban education; others appeared to increase the pressure of unrealistic expectations. The outcome, particularly in schools with ‘unaware administration,’ or administration that did not appear to have a focus on the child and their nonacademic needs, often showed in teaching to the tests or blanket policies regarding educational expectations, followed by zero-tolerance policies regarding behavioral acting out, increased referrals to special education, suspensions, and holding students back. Participants shared that often their colleagues fall in line with the overarching press for seemingly unrealistic expectations; attempting to meet the high demands on them through pushing their students through the required check boxes. In closing, this theme highlighted participants’ perceptions of a mismatch between the student population’s cultural norms, needs and expectations of school and those of the educational system. Teachers who are
able to build and maintain positive relationships with students appeared to recognize this mismatch and to serve as an advocate and ally for their students and their students’ families.

This theme embodies research showing urban and minority students are disproportionately represented in free/reduced lunch programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2018), and factors such as poor or absent medical care, hunger, increased depression, witnessing or experiencing abuse, and drug use are found to be strongly correlated to living in poverty (Yoshikawa, Aber, & Beardslee, 2012). It is not surprising that families eventually lose trust in, or value for, the urban school systems after experiencing not only their daily dearth of resources, but also structural inequalities permeating the school experience across generations (Sosa & Gomez, 2012, Talbert-Johnson, 2004; Wilson, 2009), and an overarching meritocratic discourse explaining school failure away as a result of lack of student motivation or family issues.

A lack of trust in the educational environment was found to be an important predictor of academic engagement and achievement in both kindergartners and adolescents (Murray et al., 2016, Murray & Malmgren, 2005) suggesting that not only does the lack of trust impact a student’s readiness and motivation to learn, but also their ability to learn effectively. This theme paints a picture of students who experience life struggles, then experience additional struggles navigating school and continue to fall further behind; a perception supported by the literature in which patterns of poor relationships with teachers, peers, and administrators may lead to decreased academic achievement, which in turn may lead to more conflictual, less close relationships (Davidson et al., 2010; Doumen et al., 2012). The qualitative findings in this study
helped to paint a more detailed picture than the quantitative based findings found throughout the literature (Berliner, 2006; Talber-Johnson, 2004; Turkheimer et al., 2003) of the realities of the impact of the relationship between poverty, educational policies focused on high stakes measurements of achievement and zero-tolerance for academic or behavioral difficulties, and the resulting ‘achievement gap’.

**Phase II: Core Theme 2; “They’re Little Humans”**

The second core theme that emerged was that of the child as separate from the challenging environment, titled “They’re Little Humans.” This theme embodied participants’ perceptions of students as individuals who are to be respected and valued, regardless of their behaviors or their shortcomings. All participants referred to their students as their own children in some form during interviews; they genuinely cared for their students as people. This approach of viewing students, while certainly considered meaningful for students, was also perceived as beneficial for participants as they were able to engage in dyadic, mutually rewarding, relationships with students. Viewing students through a holistic, multi-dimensional lens appeared to serve as a protective factor to engaging in depersonalization, a dimension of burnout.

The body of research to date has consistently found TSRQ high in closeness and low in conflict for teachers who display genuine care for their students through warmth, openness, trustworthiness, interest in students as individuals, and the ability to engage in listening (Cummings, 2012; Lindo et al., 2014; Marzano, 2003). The mutuality in these relationships, as described by Phase II participants, reflects the body of literature focused on teaching as a form of attachment that is dynamic, complex, and evolving (Fitton, 2012). Riley (2009) posited dyadic, mutual relational interactions occur within the
classroom that arise from, and continue to mold, both teacher and student inner working models. This is further supported by Gurland and Evangelista’s (2015) findings that TSRQ is more variable from student to student within a single classroom than they are across student/teacher dyads in different classrooms.

Participants indicated a desire to advocate for their students, pushing against the challenging environment and zero-tolerance policies that do not consider the child’s environment or experiences. Instead of a ‘behavior equals consequences’ approach, these teachers took a more holistic view of student behaviors, likely informed by their own view of the student. Participants were seeking the why in student behaviors as a means of identifying appropriate ways to challenge and change behaviors.

Sosa and Gomez (2012) found that the positive, mutually satisfying relationships, similar to those discussed by Phase II participants, lead to increased teacher efficacy, which led to teachers’ ability to buffer against difficult environments and effectively both advocate daily for their students and protect themselves from feelings of reduced personal accomplishment. Verschueren (2015) highlighted the teacher’s role, through the lens of attachment theory (Bowlby 1973), as a secure base for students; providing a safe haven for students to return to after attempting to try new experiences. Theoretically, one could argue providing a safe haven within an environment that feels unsafe is a form of advocacy. Teachers who are able to balance advocacy and high expectations in both academics and the social/emotional realm are referred to as warm demanders (Gay, 2002; Nieto, 2009; Ware, 2006). Warm demander characterizes this dimension well, with a focus on not only the care and mutuality of the relationship, but also expectations for both self and students. To some extent, this study’s findings were surprising. The literature
was pretty clear that teachers engaging in warm demanding was not commonplace in situations in which behavioral concerns were occurring, with quantitative researchers finding behavioral problems to be indicative of low quality TSRQ (Hamre et al., 2008; Howes, 2008; Skalicka et al., 2015). However, qualitative studies identified a trend of teachers accepting the management of behaviors as a part of the job and embracing the role of educator of social skills in addition to academics, and in doing so found success in fostering high quality TSRQ regardless of behavioral concerns (Cheung, 2009; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). The donning of additional roles may also protect teachers from burnout, as they experience feelings of accomplishment in these roles even when experiencing reduced success in the role of provider of academic information.

This theme is the core of interacting—seeing one another as a person, with individualized wants, needs, and experiences and responding to each other accordingly. Teachers are not required to engage in dynamic relating with students in this way; yet, those who are adept in relationship building and maintenance appear to approach all relationships with all students in this manner. As an outsider looking in, this is the theme one can easily observe; it is similar to the tip of the iceberg, in that we would call it the teacher-student relationship, though the other two themes represent the water and the part of the iceberg we cannot see, supporting that which we can see.

**Phase II: Core Theme 3; “It’s Just What They Do.”**

The third theme is the ‘how’ this study was seeking in the qualitative analysis. This theme is titled “It’s just what they do” because it arises from actions discussed in interviews, not specific thoughts or theories, but the blend of everything the teacher knows, thinks and believes themselves to be, and how these fragments channel into
cohesive, multi-dimensional, daily interactions with students. At first, it was tempting to visualize this theme as that of the participant’s teaching philosophy; however, it is far more pervasive, personal, and profound than that; this theme appears to be the embodiment of a teacher’s inner working model (Bowlby, 1969). Inner working models, a key concept in attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), arise from repeated interactions, experiences, and exposures to information, becoming ingrained in the lens through which one views the world. This theme touched on each of the types of inner working models as outlined by Pianta and colleagues (2003)—global (view of self in relationships in general), domain-specific (sense of self as a teacher), and teacher-specific (sense of self as seated within relationship with a single student).

All participants reported experiencing a domain-specific inner working model of self as more than just a teacher to students; they see themselves as parents, counselors, and cheerleaders, responsible for not only educating their students in academics, but in social skills, communication, problem solving, and navigating life in general. This inner working model of self as fulfilling many roles appeared to grow directly from the teachers’ holistic views of students; a view which also led to increased positive interactions with family and community members, as they were seen as crucial pieces of the child’s daily being within the classroom. Another facet that was notably impacted by the holistic view of students and the teacher’s many roles in a student’s life was that of behavior management approaches. When the student is viewed as a whole person and the teacher as engaging in a variety of roles in addition to providing academic instruction, there appears to grow a space in which conscious behavioral management can prosper; problem solving is taught and practiced, providing opportunities for life skills learning.
and increased feelings of empowerment for students. Teachers utilizing conscious behavioral management plan for potential problems using their holistic knowledge of the student, engage in tweaking the classroom environment where possible, and attempt to repair the relationship with students after a conflict occurs.

An integral component of viewing students holistically arises from complex cultural awareness that considers the intersecting identities of the student, their family and community norms and expectations, and the child’s individual characteristics. For participants, the integration of cultural awareness into their inner working models permeated all layers of working models, from global relating, to self as teacher, to self in interaction with a specific student. The reason for this appears to be that the participants’ use of cultural awareness as a means of understanding and navigating through everyday life is an integral part of who they are and how they function. This type of awareness doesn’t come from a professional development course or a single course in graduate school; this comes from seeking out knowledge and opportunities to build additional skills, from checking one’s own biases, from connecting their own experiences to those of their students, and from a willingness to embrace the unknown and continue to grow. All participants displayed the ability to engage in critical, abstract thought regarding a student’s reality, pulling from multiple sources and perspectives when discussing their understanding of the student as an individual seated within a relationship with the participant. Despite a lack of empirical evidence regarding the impact of cultural awareness on teacher-student relationship quality; a literature review by McGrath and Van Bergen (2015) suggests cultural competence may be one of the most influential components in both TSRQ and student achievement.
In this vein, participants’ cultural awareness integrates nicely with the literature surrounding the counseling psychology field’s multicultural competence approach, which stands on the three pillars of lifelong accumulation of awareness, knowledge, and skills (Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001). Awareness includes one’s ability to understand one’s own attitudes, cultural conditioning, and how that is at play in one’s daily interactions. Knowledge is the understanding of others’ worldviews and skills are characterized by one’s ability to utilize culturally appropriate communication and interventions (Sue, et al., 1982).

These cornerstones of multicultural competence grew into American Psychological Association’s (2017) Multicultural Guidelines, focused on context, identity and intersectionality. These guidelines, paired with the cornerstones of multicultural competence, suggest cultural competence is a lifelong process of reflection of the dynamic, nested systems at play in an individual’s life, both historically and within the moment. The professional working from a multiculturally informed approach is aware not only of race/ethnicity but also the intersecting identities arising from gender, ability status, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, language, education levels, gender, gender identity, religion, spirituality, and culture.

Saberes Docentes, or learning and adjusting with each interaction, growing in new awareness and applying new knowledge to previous knowledge and course correcting skills and approaches as needed appears to illustrate the experiences described by participants in this theme (Slavit & Poveda, 2011). For participants, Saberes Docentes is the embodiment of their multiculturally informed inner working model,
constantly informing and being informed by multi-layered and intertwined, current and historical, knowledge and awareness (Heller, 1994).

This process, the blending of multicultural competence, Saberes Docentes, and a willingness to view students holistically leads to a teacher’s ability to meet students where they are, display curiosity, adjust expectations of student behavior and knowledge, and engage in mutual understanding and growth (Sosa & Gomez, 2012).

**Conclusion Through Blending Phase I and Phase II Results**

This study sought to understand teacher-student relationships through seeking relationships between implicit teacher factors, including burnout and cultural competence, and the quality of teacher-student relationships. Interviewing teachers adept at building and maintaining strong relationships with challenging students was then employed to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships than provided in the canonical analysis, as initial quantitative analysis had identified two possible dimensions at play in teacher-student relationships but gave little insight into the “how” and “why” of these dimensions.

Data collected from these interviews served to not only begin to explain the how and why, but also to name and more fully describe the dimensions identified in Phase I. This blended analysis paints a picture of a mutual, dyadic relationship between teachers and students, growing from challenging environments and influenced significantly through the teacher’s inner working model of self as an educator.

The challenging environment, ‘what we are up against’, appears to be quantitatively described through the trending Dimension II in the above analysis. This dimension was qualitatively described by participants as arising within a lack of
resources, unattainable expectations and resulting disciplinary measures, and institutionalized barriers. All participants spoke to decreased levels of equity, access, and opportunity their students experienced. They were aware of the myth of meritocracy and its impact on their students. This ties closely with the quantitative finding of correlations between increased conflict and decreased home, school, and community communication and collaboration.

Participants indicated that the challenging environment outlined above led to a school culture in which discipline over problem solving, potentially difficult administrators, and an increased likelihood of burnout were the norm. These types of school environments were also present in Dimension II of the quantitative analysis, with higher levels of conflictual relationships related to less positive school climate and less culturally aware behavioral management techniques—such as discipline over problem solving. Because of how well this qualitative theme embodies and explains Dimension II, from this point forward, Dimension II will be discussed concurrently with the qualitative theme, identified as the challenging environment or ‘what we are up against.’

Despite the challenging environment, participants were still able to create and maintain high quality relationships with students. These relationships appeared to gain strength through the teacher’s understanding of the challenges inherent in the environment, not only for themselves but for their students. This awareness likely served as a buffer for students, insulating them from some of the negative effects of the challenging environment. An example of this would be, despite a school climate of discipline or punishment over problem solving, individual teachers aware of the challenging environment and its many factors could effectively utilize a conscious
behavioral management approach focused on modifying the environment, teaching problem solving strategies, and engaging in processing of factors from the challenging environment that are impacting student behaviors. This process not only buffered students from the impact of the challenging educational environment, but also provided teachers with a sense of accomplishment and the chance to see students through a personalized lens, buffering the teacher from potential burnout.

Such awareness seems to be the cornerstone to the second theme, that of a teacher’s philosophy, or inner working model, of self, education, and teaching. This is the vehicle through which teachers understand and navigate the challenging environment and their student’s place within that environment. For participants adept in building and maintaining high quality relationships with challenging students, flexibility, awareness and critical thought were necessary in not only creating a teaching philosophy but in allowing it to grow and mold over time as new learning, new experiences, and new successes and failures occur in a process that could be identified as Saberes Docentes (Slavit & Poveda, 2011). These participants were aware of, and consistently checking, their biases and perspectives regarding not only their students, but their students’ families, the administration, and other teachers. Their own experiences, both through personal and professional routes, aided in their awareness of the need to engage in this type of process on a regular basis. This qualitative finding blends with the quantitative findings of Dimension I, in which closeness is correlated with cultural awareness; however, it’s not as simple as just cultural awareness.

Participants displayed awareness of not only cultural pieces, but decision making in the classroom and conceptualization of students were also heavily influenced by
classroom dynamics, developmental levels, ability levels, and student individuality—including their family dynamics, their interests, their strengths, and their personalities. Such awareness led to dynamic approaches to both teaching and behavioral management within the class. Participants were able to tailor individual behavioral approaches for each student through their awareness of the student as an individual. Instead of having to wait for poor behaviors and delivering prescriptive consequences, teachers could, and did, use the relationship as a preventive measure, explicitly teach useful emotional regulation skills, and view behaviors within the context of student experiences and context. This possibly led to increased empathy and a decreased likelihood of suspension or special education classifications. From a quantitative analysis viewpoint, this relationship between increased closeness and culturally responsive classroom management and lack of depersonalization can be found in Dimension I as well.

This awareness of students as individuals and the resulting inner working model built upon understanding students and meeting their educational, developmental, and emotional needs, leads to the creation of mutual relationships, which impact both student and teacher well-being. Most participants identified that if they valued their worth based solely on district or school-based metrics of success, they would be missing the mark. However, many of the participants were very clear in their discussion of their role in the classroom and how they measure success, and none based this solely on test scores or academic measures.

None of the participants viewed themselves as only a teacher. They all found value in fulfilling multiple roles for their students; yet another decision influenced by a philosophy, or an inner working model, that is much more flexible and complex than
simply providing academic excellence. Teachers found success in the daily, mundane
tasks of education. They experienced success when students used their words to say, ‘leave me alone’ instead of their behaviors, when a student was able to sit through math class, for an entire class period, without the math teacher calling the participant to come get the student for poor behaviors, when a parent said, ‘thank you.’ Teachers who are consciously aware of the many roles they play within the classroom can find additional successes in their daily interactions with students. This was apparent in the correlation between increased sense of personal accomplishment and increased closeness in Dimension I of the quantitative analysis.

Finally, teachers who are aware of their roles, of their students, and of themselves also appear to be more aware of the fact the interactions they have with students are a two-way street. It is a dyadic and mutual relationship, both the teacher and the student give to, and receive from, the relationship. Participants discussed feeling as if students were their children. This ownership allows teachers to not only own the responsibility for fulfilling their multiple roles in the classroom, but also to own all the positives that go with it, from the notes and pictures of students to the smiles and feelings of success when your child finally understands something. Accepting ownership of the child allows the teacher to not only experience the downs of a challenging environment but also the ups of overcoming it with the student.

**Framework of Relating**

Participants in both Phases of this study provided data that created a multi-dimensional understanding of teacher student relationship quality. While the individual, one dimensional, results did not differ much from the existing literature, the big picture view
participants provided through the mixed-methods approach, is a notable addition to the current available research. The data collected through Phase I and Phase II of this study, particularly when processed through the lens of grounded theory, led to the creation of a Framework of Relating that encompasses not only the two dimensions and three core themes found in the quantitative and qualitative analyses of this study, but also existing educational, developmental, sociological, and psychological theories as well. This Framework of Relating is an attempt from this author to make visual sense of the environment in which student-teacher relationship are housed and the intricacies of not only the teacher inner working model, but the multi-leveled interactions occurring between the teacher, environment and student. A visual representation of the multi-level, multi-dimensional reality of high quality TSRQ is provided in Figure 1.

**Implications for Theory**

The findings from the current study provide a starting point for a framework of effective relationship building in school settings. This study shines a light on the multi-dimensional, multi-level, cross-disciplinary reality of relationship building between students and teachers. This study suggests teachers adept at building positive teacher-student relationships hold a certain type of inner working model and are flexible enough to engage in adjusting their awareness, knowledge, and skills on a daily basis through Saberes Docentes. This type of contextual awareness is supported, theoretically, through the developmental-contextualism lens (Lerner, 1985). One’s development, according to this theory, is considered inextricably embedded in culture, society, community, school, neighborhood, and family (Walsh, Galassi, Murphy, & Taylor, 2002). These contexts are
Figure 1. Framework of Relating: The Process of Engaging in High Quality Relationship Building.
considered the facilitators and/or constrainers in the process of development, allowing for unique, personal struggles and the growth of resiliency (Walsh, et al., 2002). It is not enough for teachers to just be aware of context and knowledgeable of development, they must understand how the two inform, and are informed, by one another in order to most efficiently aid in student growth and development (Vondracek and Porfeli, 2004). While this process appears to be rather innate in participants in this study, the research in the counseling field regarding teaching and building multicultural competency is promising (Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001).

Participants in this study actually embodied several of American Psychological Association’s (2017) multicultural guidelines. They sought to recognize and understand the fluidity and complexity of student identities, particularly through the lens of the student social contexts, moving beyond conceptualizations rooted within categorical assumptions—such as just viewing students through their racial identity (Guideline 1 and 2). These teachers consistently sought new knowledge, increasing their understanding of how student development impacted student identity, socialization, and growth (Guideline 8). They utilized a strengths-based approach, focused on building resiliency in their students.

Additionally, participants were area of both the social and physical environments their students moved through and were cognizant of the historical and contemporary impact of power, privilege, inequalities and institutionalized barriers housed within these environments (Guidelines 4 and 5). This awareness led to the advocacy for students within and across the educational system (Guideline 6; American Psychological Association, 2017).
These findings also indicate that current research is lacking in its ability to create a cohesive picture of the many dimensions and levels within teacher-student relationships. There are countless theories; theories of teaching, of learning, of development, theories of attachment, cultural competency and leadership. These theories arise from education, psychology, business, and philosophy and yet, they struggle to adequately describe what is happening in a high-quality teacher-student relationship without the input from, and interaction with, one another. This is the crux of the additive value this study provides to the current literature and current theory. This study has begun to formulate a framework which may complement theories of relating (Arredondo & Arciniego, 2001 for example), attachment (Bowlby, 1969), ecological systems (Brofenbrenner, 1994), developmental-contextualism (Lerner, 1985), development (Maslow, 1943, for example), teaching (Bruner, 1977, for example), learning (Piaget, as cited by Wadsworth, 1996, for example), etc. in order to more effectively define and describe the intricate patterns of relating, growing, interacting, impeding, and encouraging that occur in every nuance of a single reaction between a teacher and a student. It is hoped that implications of the existence of such a framework to theory may add to the complex, interdisciplinary nature of education and the need for additional research and decision making that considers multi-disciplinary viewpoints and encourages collaboration across dimensions, disciplines, and theories. This call for a collaborative approach is not new, and in fact echoes a similar one from nearly 15 years ago: “Children and adolescents have major educational needs at a time of inadequate budgets and it is critically important that professions collaborate…to maximize their contributions” (Romano & Kachgal, 2004a, p. 185).
Implications for Research

The implications for research are numerous. A larger scale study could be employed to determine consistency of this framework across all teachers, not just those who score high in TSRQ, preferably within a single school district so that some of the overarching theories remain similar across participants. It could be beneficial to explore which theories teachers most strongly subscribe to, in order to gain an understanding of which theories hold the most predictive value in high quality relationship building with students. Also beneficial may be further exploration of teacher concepts of culture and how it is informed by, or differs from, race, as in this study teachers were empowered to define cultural context, leading to the possibility of glossing over some of the potential impacts of racism in teacher-student relationships.

It could also prove beneficial to engage in exploration of how the Framework of Relating may apply to the counseling and psychology fields, providing a single framework within which one can classify and categorize theories of development, counseling, and ways through which psychologists and clients view the world, the relationship, and one another. If nothing else, this framework provides additional means through which one can explore the creation and maintenance of inner working models.

There were also surprising results concerning cultural awareness and teacher efficacy, as measured by the CABI (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005), indicating the need to utilize either different measures focused purely on those aspects of the CABI that were found to be significant within the canonical analysis (culturally responsive behavior management, cultural awareness, teacher efficacy, communication between home, school, and community, and school climate) or to engage in validity and reliability
checks for the CABI and engage in fine-tuning the instrument. While discussing the quantitative results, it is also important to note that there are likely additional implicit teacher factors, particularly in light of the additional qualitative information gleaned, that may help to explain the additional variance in TSRQ. Further research into those factors, such as multicultural competence levels (perhaps through repurposing the Multicultural Competency Inventory, MCI, Sodowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, & Wise, 1994), utilization of global inner working models, and maintaining multiple roles aside from just educator may each provide additional insight into which intrinsic factors most impact TSRQ.

As there were a variety of theories that arose as integral in the larger Framework of Relating; it would be beneficial to extend both quantitative and qualitative analysis into those additional areas, such as cultural competency as defined through awareness, knowledge and skills or the awareness of developmental needs of students. Such an analysis may continue to provide additional information regarding the key factors at play in TSRQ and how teachers’ understanding and implementation of individual theories manifest within the relating process. It could also lead to the creation of multi-cultural guidelines for educators.

A subtheme was arising of aware versus unaware administrators; however, it lacked the necessary saturation to be a focus. Further research into school climates that are aware of student context could be beneficial. A helpful framework to use in this research may be that of cultural sensitivity of organizations, as highlighted by Sue (2013). All participants in this study were aware of urban education as being predominantly monocultural, primarily Eurocentric, and structured to the advantage of
the majority with one best way of delivering education, teaching and administrating. However, those with ‘aware administrators’ appeared to attempt to provide a nondiscriminatory organization, attempting to change but unable to fully address the system (Sue, 2013).

Finally, an important implication for research arising from this study is that of the power of mixed-methods approaches, especially in gaining answers to both the ‘what’ and the ‘how.’ Had this study been only quantitative in nature, the take home message would be the possibility of two dimensions of implicit teaching characteristics at play in TSRQ that account for less than 20% of the variance in TSRQ. Had the study been only qualitative in nature, there would not have been as advanced of a starting point for interviews, leading to less specific questions and the likelihood of gleaning less refined, more single-dimensional information from participants. Only through the mixed-methods approach could a final product as multi-level, multi-dimensional, and cross-disciplinary arise. Moving forward, researchers (in both education and psychology) should consider engaging in cross-disciplinary studies, seek literature from outside of their field, and be flexible in how they choose their methodologies. One example of such a cross-disciplinary approach is the research-service collaboration utilized by Jackson et al. (2011) in which counseling psychology students and faculty engage in field-based program development, implementation, and evaluation with the goal of informing evidence-based practice for underserved groups. For that to occur, a breakdown of the compartmentalization of college departments needs to occur, allowing counseling psychology students to engage in applied research focused not only on the individual and intrapsychic variables but also holistic, dynamic and integrated approaches focused on
larger, ecologically informed approaches seeking to understand the complexities inherent in education as an institution (Yeh, 2004).

**Implications for Practice**

Teachers capable of building and maintaining positive relationships with students are those that are able to see the student through a holistic lens, to understand the behavioral, cultural, developmental, and contextual reasons behind some of the most difficult student behaviors. These teachers have a worldview that encourages inclusivity, self-awareness, flexibility, and a growth mindset. They have the same pressures as other teachers in their schools; yet, they find a way to advocate for their students, to engage in meaningful self-care, and to effectively navigate their administration and school-based expectations. These stand out teachers have many of the same qualities as stand out psychologists.

One of the biggest implications for practice is that of hiring. If schools could more effectively identify teachers capable of building and maintaining high quality relationships, they would be more likely to reap the rewards for students, including increase engagement, academic achievement, and decreased behavioral problems. One suggestion is for schools to utilize a behavioral interviewing approach in which job applicants are asked to discuss experiences they have had in prior settings, their thoughts processes, and their approaches to problem solving. One example is to ask about a difficult student behavior they have encountered and how they went about managing said behavior. If the applicant took the time to consider the student's background, developmental level, experiences during the day, relationship with the teacher, and the potential consequences for said behavior as well as discuss a process of engaging the
student in problem solving and relationship repair, the individual is more likely to engage in culturally responsive classroom management. Other questions may focus on multicultural competency, focused on the process of gaining awareness, knowledge, and skills; while another may focus on the most recent experience the teacher had attempting to grow in their craft. Similar approaches are also suggested for identifying psychologists capable of building and maintaining high quality rapport with clients.

Training is another area in which findings from this study have important implications. Because this framework is so large and encompassing, it provides a multitude of entry points for various types of trainings. In the qualitative phase of the study, further supported by the quantitative importance of culturally responsive classroom management, there were several times that special education teachers alluded to their training in differentiation, development, and seeing students as individuals with varying levels of ability. It could be beneficial to engage general education teachers in an introduction to special education type course to increase awareness of differences, knowledge of how to identify the differences, and skills in how to approach the differences effectively. Additionally, a review of behavioral theory as it applies to the classroom setting could be particularly beneficial, especially if also paired with an introduction to the person-centered approach of counseling, including unconditional positive regard, genuineness, and empathic concern (Rogers, 1957; Romano & Kachgal, 2004b), and an introduction to multicultural competency and possibly the Multicultural Guidelines (American Psychological Association, 2017). This could be an ideal way to engage in the cross-disciplinary approach discussed previously, with psychologists, or psychologist-in-training, providing workshops, courses, or materials to schools, districts,
or, ideally, teacher training programs. Not only would it aid the teachers, but it would provide a novel experience for most psychologists, increase the likelihood of continued inter-disciplinary collaboration, and allow the psychologist to increase his or her awareness, knowledge, and skills. However, this author is also aware that teachers are often asked to place their time into a variety of important, cutting edge topics and strengthening one’s standing within this particular framework may not align with the individual teacher’s values though it does align with several different value systems within the world of education (see Pantic & Wubbels, 2012, for a more in depth discussion of teacher decision making based on differing values).

This framework helps to widen our understanding of what is important in the day-to-day life of our students. It is not just academic achievements or safety or test scores. There are so many fragmented pieces at play in a school day that it is hard to keep track of them all. In practice, this framework can provide parameters for teachers and schools regarding what fragments are within their control. It also provides a visual representation that can support educators in identifying areas of strength and those of continued growth. Again, a similar approach can be utilized by psychologists as well, in which they explore the framework and identify which theories are at play in their interactions with clients, which theories they tend to navigate towards and which they can use a refresher, or additional practice, in applying.

Limitations

There was one key limitation to this study that impacted every aspect. The number of participants in Phase I was not as high as desired or anticipated. This led to not only decreased power in the canonical correlation analysis but also a decrease pool of potential
subjects for Phase II. The decreased pool of subjects in Phase II led to the inability to secure a sample of teachers adept at building high quality relationships with students that matched the general population of teachers. This leads to uncertainty regarding how generalizable results may be. Qualitatively, though saturation did appear within all core themes, the subthemes and how teachers viewed them or navigated them were not as clearly saturated due to the limited number of Phase II participants.

Along that same vein, all participants were urban educators. While this was the desired sample, as stated in the IRB and research proposal, utilizing specific geographical locations and setting types limits the ability to confidently generalize results to suburban and rural environments without additional research. This researcher also chose to allow participants to define cultural context, as opposed to specifically delineating race as an important factor. Part of this decision was due to researchers experience as an urban educator and assumption participants viewed students through an ecological lens, and part was due to the fear that poorly framed race talk may lead participants to feel challenged and invalidated; lessening the depth of discussion during interviews. It is arguable whether this was the right approach; however, Sue (2013) suggested asking directly about race often leads white participants to provide superficial and noncommittal responses grounded in strategic color-blindness. There is the distinct possibility that teacher racial biases play a role in their interactions with students and their Inner Working Models; however, this study is limited in its ability to speak to that possibility due to the decision to not speak specifically about race unless the participant discussed it directly.

Additionally, as individuals answered a call to participate, this allows for sampling bias to occur. It is likely that those who chose to participate shared some of the same traits
or experiences. This is likely even more true for those who chose to be considered for Phase II and those who actually returned the researcher request for an interview. Therefore, the sample gleaned for Phase I and Phase II may not be representative of the actual distribution of urban educators.

Finally, there were some issues with reliability of CABI (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005) subscales. In general, the CABI subscales had relatively low internal consistency scores; however, it fit the need for exploring cultural competency in school settings. Minimal Cronbach’s alphas were found for both Curriculum and Instruction (.45) and Teacher Self-Efficacy (.48) in this study; while not ideal, these results are not surprising considering each subscale houses only 4 items and the subscales as a whole have limited reliability, with overall Cronbach alpha’s during development of .51 and .39 respectively (Roberts-Walter, 2007). This was especially problematic as teacher efficacy was found to be a significant variable in the first canonical root and in a direction that was not anticipated. In the future, if this study is to be replicated, a specific measure of teacher efficacy is suggested.

**Summary**

Researchers across multiple disciplines have suggested that teacher-student relationship quality (TSRQ) has a strong, and often unassessed, association with not only students’ academic achievement, but with positive student outcomes across all domains of student functioning: social, emotional, behavioral, and academic (Hattie, 2009; Lindo et al., 2014; McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015; Murray & Pianta, 2007; Noddings, 2015; Rogers, 1959; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Positive TSRQ serves as a moderating factor across a variety of social, emotional and academic outcome measure scores for students.
of color (Murray et al., 2008) and for those who are considered economically disadvantaged (Olsson, 2009). Based on the previous literature, TSRQ may be of considerable significance for U.S. urban student outcomes.

Despite the clear literature surrounding the benefits of positive TSRQ, there has been a scarcity of literature regarding teacher specific factors that may impact TSRQ, particularly within urban educational settings. This study was the first to explore TSRQ in relation to implicit teacher factors through mixed methods analysis. This study hypothesized that urban teacher ratings of TSRQ would be related to teacher factors other than teacher or student demographics, specifically those of teacher reported levels of burnout and teacher cultural competency. These specific teacher factors were chosen as most recent literature reviews suggested that they may be particularly integral in urban settings in relation to TSRQ (Aloe et al., 2014; Warren, 2015).

This study utilized a two tier, mixed-methods approach in order to understand ‘what’ implicit teacher factors may related to TSRQ and ‘how’ those relationships transpire organically during the school day. Overall, this study found that intrinsic teacher factors at play in building and maintaining high quality relationships include both specific, measurable factors, and less specific ways of seeing the world, making decisions, and processing difficulties that both impact the measurable factors and add additional layers to the teacher-student relationship.

When viewed together, the results from Phase I and Phase II create a Framework of Relating that is multi-dimensional, multi-level, and interdisciplinary in nature. This framework includes not only the student and teacher and their nuanced relationship, but also the many factors that impact the student, such as poverty, trauma history, and a
family that does not trust the educational system. There are then two distinct, yet intertwined, dimensions at play in determining the direction of the relationship; towards closeness or towards conflict. ‘What we are up against’ signifies the challenging environment inherent in urban school districts, taking into account high stakes testing, discipline over problem solving, the ravages of poverty, and unaware administrators. ‘It’s just what we do’ signifies the teacher’s inner working model; this is the collection of all of the teachers awareness of self and others, knowledge of theories of teaching, learning, behavior, development, etc. as well as the knowledge of each specific kid and their likes, dislikes, preferences, etc.; and skills in behavior management, in connecting with students, diffusing situations, listening, etc. For flexible teachers this inner working model is constantly in flux, taking in new information with every interaction, rewriting and rewiring to ‘do better’ the next time. This process is known as Saberes Docentes. Within the framework falls not only the specific, implicit teacher factors, but also where the teachers learned them, how the teachers internalized them, and how the teachers purposely utilize or rebuff them daily to build and maintain effective relationships with their students.

The Framework of Relating can provide a map for teachers and teachers-in-training to identify areas for continued growth and additional knowledge gain. It serves as a reminder to check one’s biases and to see each little, independent interaction with a student as housed within a much large framework of theories, awareness, biases, judgments, knowledge, skills building, and opportunities for growth. As Stacey stated, trying to describe teaching is “like trying to describe the sunset”; there are too many pieces and parts
at play, all separate, yet together; working in concert, but never actually touching in both relationship building and sunsetting.
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APPENDIX

Demographic Survey
Demographics Section of Survey

This survey will assist us in understanding your perceptions of our current challenge in meeting the needs of all of your students.

1. Gender
   - Female
   - Male
   - Other, please specify

2. Type of Degree
   - A. Bachelor’s
   - B. Master’s
   - C. Doctorate

3. Years of Experience
   - Enter total years of teaching
   - Enter total years taught in each of the following settings: Urban__; Suburban__; Rural__;
   - Special Education__

4. What is your ethnicity? (Check all that apply)
   - African American
   - European American
   - Arab American
   - Hispanic American
   - Asian American
   - Native American
   - Pacific Islander
   - Other, please specify

5. What grade level(s) are you currently teaching?

6. How many different students do you currently provide instruction to on a daily? __ Weekly? __

7. Do you currently provide instruction to students receiving special education services?
   - If yes, how many different students per day? ____ Per week? ____

8. Consider one student you currently have this school year who you experience a moderate degree of difficulty relating to. Answer the following prompts based on this student:
   - Student’s Age: ____
   - Student’s Race: ____
   - Student’s Gender: ____
   - Student’s Grade: ____
   - Does this student receive Special Education Services? ____
   - How many hours per week do you usually spend with this student? ______

9. What setting do you currently work in? Rural ___, Suburban ___, Urban ______