

PARTNERSHIP AS A PRODUCT OF TRUST: PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONAL TRUST
IN A LOW-INCOME URBAN SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Trust is an important factor affecting parent-teacher relationships. In urban schools, the lack of trust between parents and teachers is exacerbated by racial and social class differences (Bryk and Schneider, 2002). This paper examines how relational trust was both fostered and inhibited between low-income parents and their children's teachers in a low-income urban school. Data was collected through a qualitative research design based in observations and interviews in one high poverty urban school. Results suggest that teacher demonstrations of care for their profession, for parents, and for students were the most crucial factors for building parent trust in teachers. Parent competence and integrity emerged as the most salient facets of teacher trust in parents. This research highlights the importance of purposeful teacher action to build trust with low-income parents by demonstrating personal regard for their profession, their students, and their students' parents. Additionally, teachers must become knowledgeable about the strengths and struggles of low-income urban families and the way social class shapes parents' beliefs about childrearing methods and their role in their children's education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	II
LIST OF TABLES	VI
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose and Significance of the Study	7
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	11
How are parents involved in schools?	13
Why is parent involvement important?	16
What are barriers to parent involvement in urban schools?	19
How is trust related to parent involvement?	32
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	41
Qualitative Design	41
Site Selection and Sample	43
School District of Philadelphia	43
Selected School Site.....	44
Four Core Teacher Participants	48
Two Core Parent Participants Per Classroom	50
Data Sources.....	53
Survey Instruments.....	53
Interviews & Observations	55
Data Analysis	59
Management	59
Procedure	60

Researcher’s Role	61
Researcher Reflexivity	62
Methodological Limitations	63
CHAPTER 4: THE POWER OF PERSONAL REGARD	65
Teacher Personal Regard for the Teaching Profession:	70
Don’t Be “In It for the Paycheck”	70
Teacher Personal Regard for Child:	73
Academic and Non-Academic Care	73
Academic Care	73
Non-Academic Care	75
Teacher Personal Regard for Parent: Providing Resources, Communicating Effectively, Being Flexible and Accommodating, and Making Personal Connections	80
Providing Resources	81
Communicating Effectively	84
Being Flexible and Accommodating	88
Making Personal Connections	91
Conclusions on Care	93
CHAPTER 5: CRITIQUES ON COMPETENCE	97
Parent Competence	98
Parent Competence in Child’s Education	99
Parent Competence in Parenting	105
Parent Integrity	110
Combatting Barriers to Teacher Trust	113
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	117
Parent Trust	118
Teacher Trust	125

Recommendations.....	131
Implications for Future Research.....	135
REFERENCES	140
APPENDICES.....	146
Appendix A: Surveys	146
Teacher-Parent Trust Scale.....	146
Parent-Teacher Trust Scale.....	148
Appendix B: Baseline Interview Protocols	150
Baseline Parent Interview Protocol	150
Baseline Teacher Interview Protocol	152
Baseline Staff Interview Protocol	154
Appendix C: Subsequent Semi-Structured Interview Protocols	156
Teacher Interview Protocol 2	156
Teacher Interview Protocol 3	157
Teacher Interview Protocol 4	159
Parent Interview Protocol 2.....	160
Parent Interview Protocol 3.....	161
Parent Interview Protocol 4.....	162

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
1. Core Teacher Participant Demographics.....	49
2. Participant Data.....	51
3. Observations and Interviews.....	57

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

High school students from low-income families are up to six times more likely to drop out of school than their higher income peers (NCES, 2004). In the Philadelphia metropolitan area, the difference in graduation rates between students in the city and the more affluent suburbs is alarming: 49.2% compared to 82.4% (Grey, 2008). Low achievement, high dropout rates, low rates of college attendance, and poor wages are persistent problems for low-income youth.

These differences between students from different social class groups begin well before their high school years. In fact, children from low-income households begin their school years with notably less self-regulatory and learning capacities to support transition and engagement in school (Booth & Crouter, 2007). These early learning differences are related to the social class differences in both the quality and quantity of children's language interactions with their parents and the exposure to print in their home environments prior to entering school (Carter et al., 2009). These initial disadvantages often persist throughout students' school years and affect their likelihood of academic success and graduation.

In order for schools to address these educational disparities, it is critical that they understand the relationships between low-income parents and schools. Social class differences in children's school success are related to parents' abilities to prepare students for entry into school, navigate through school systems effectively, and persistently be involved in and committed to their children's education (Carter et al., 2009; Lareau, 1989; Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Parent involvement in many forms (learning activities at home, help with homework, governance and advocacy, communication with school, volunteering at school) has positive effects on student achievement (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Matuszny et al., 2007; Sheldon, 2005). There are social class differences in the prevalence and forms of parent involvement. Parents with a two year college degree or higher report significantly more frequent involvement at school, more parent-child education discussions at home, and higher educational expectations for their children, than parents whose children receive free or reduced-price lunch (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Increasing parents' ability to support their children's education is a critical strategy that can be used to improve the achievement and graduation rates of low-income students. In order to increase parent involvement in low-income communities, we must first understand how parents interact with schools.

Many parents in low-income communities do not successfully navigate through their children's school systems. In other words, these parents are not equipped with a set of skills, norms, and powers with which they monitor and manage their children's education. In contrast, by exercising their comfort, knowledge, and power within the educational institution, middle class parents are more likely to be actively involved in the selection of their children's schools and teachers, and to advocate for services for their children, for example (Lareau, 1989). The literature on parent-school partnerships (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Entwistle, 1978; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Lareau, 1989; Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999) highlights four factors that contribute to low-income parents' disadvantage when preparing their children for school and navigating through school systems: 1) differing sets of norms and values between school systems and low-income parents, 2) childrearing methods, 3) lack of

social network resources, and 4) poor relational trust in schools. Each of these factors, discussed below, contributes to the challenge of fostering home-school partnerships with low-income parents.

First, schools are designed and run within a middle class system of norms and values (Entwistle, 1978). Lareau (2003) explains that when low-income families move outside the home into social institutions, such as schools, they find that their cultural practices are not valued as much as those of the middle and upper classes. Middle-class families are advantaged, she argues, because of the “degree of similarity between the cultural repertoires in [their homes] and those standards adopted by institutions” (p. 237). In contrast, the differences in these cultural norms result in disadvantages for low-income children whose parents fail to meet the expectations of schools.

The second reason low-income parents are disadvantaged within school systems is that their childrearing methods often differ from that which is expected by middle-class run schools (Lareau, 2003). While teachers expect parents to be partners in students’ education, low-income parents tend to see education as the sole responsibility of the school (Lareau, 1989). This creates conflict when parents do not do what schools expect of them. Parent-teacher collaboration is further disrupted when low-income parents are unable to fulfill schools’ expectations due to lack of resources such as time, child care, and transportation (Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

In addition, parents in low-income communities do not tend to have the social connections that benefit them within school systems. Children of middle and upper class

families are advantaged by their parents' informal social networks. Compared to low-income parents, these parents are more likely to be members of social networks with more highly educated friends and neighbors, including other teachers, with whom they share educational information and collectively work to tailor their children's educational lives (Lareau, 1989; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003). While middle and high income families may benefit from their social network affiliations within schools, lower income families are at a clear disadvantage. Teachers' social networks can also affect the dynamics of home and school collaboration in an educational setting. Fukuyama's (2001) work on group solidarity can be used to explain how low-income families may be disadvantaged by educators' social networks.

Fukuyama (2001) presents an interesting argument for the negative effects of strong social networks. He asserts that group solidarity, which is fostered through a group's shared norms and values, can result in hostility for those outside of one's social network. Using his theory to examine parent-school partnerships, it is possible that teachers, generally sharing middle class norms and values, have some degree of hostility and/or lack of trust for low-income parents who may exhibit different and/or less favorable norms and values. If so, teachers' association with their own social network may negatively affect the potential to develop partnerships with low-income parents.

Finally, relationships between low-income parents and educators are often inhibited by a lack of relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). According to Bryk & Schneider's (2002) theory of relational trust, the social exchanges both within and between school stakeholder

groups (parents, students, teachers, and administrators) are grounded in an understanding of one's role responsibility and expectations as well as his/her beliefs about the responsibilities and expectations of others. Maintenance and growth of relational trust is contingent on the synchrony of these mutual obligations and expectations (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Teachers reportedly believe that many low-income parents do not fulfill their obligations in their child's education. When low-income parents discern teachers' intentions they often perceive a lack of respect and personal regard. These parent and teacher perceptions of each other result in a lack of relational trust. Without such mutual trust, partnership is unlikely (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Due to the reasons outlined above, many low-income parents do not have the advantages of cultural knowledge and resources (cultural capital) (Lareau & Horvat, 1999) and social relationships (social capital) to be successful partners in their children's education. These disadvantages manifest themselves in ways that affect low-income parents' abilities to prepare their children for entry into schools and to monitor and manage their educations. In addition to providing their children with academic and social supports to compensate for these disadvantages, schools have the power to encourage, initiate, and maintain partnerships with low-income parents. By fostering open and collaborative relationships with parents, schools can provide them with resources and supports that can lead to improved student achievement and attainment.

In order to strengthen the parent-school partnership and increase parent involvement among low-income parents, schools must create a welcoming environment for parents and

should provide them the knowledge, tools, and opportunities to be partners in their children's education. Given the importance of fostering stronger partnerships between schools and low-income parents, it is valuable to examine the relationships between them. Trust can mediate the challenges that are raised by each of the other three factors outlined above (middle-class run schools, differences in childrearing, lack of social network resources). In this paper, I examine the role of relational trust in the relationships between low-income parents and schools. I contend that relational trust is the first step toward developing a parent-school partnership that can lead to improved student achievement and attainment. If trust is not established between parents and schools, I argue that their ability to collaborate will be limited. Therefore, I have focused this research on understanding the relational trust between low-income parents and schools. My study is guided by the following research questions:

- How is relational trust fostered and inhibited in the relationships between low-income parents and their children's educators?
 - What teacher actions result in successful (and unsuccessful) partnerships with low-income parents?
 - What are teachers' beliefs about low income families' norms and values? How does this affect parent-teacher trust?

Purpose and Significance of the Study

My personal experiences teaching early elementary grades in a low-income Philadelphia community have helped me to recognize the need for this study. In these critical years, students learn the educational fundamentals that will be necessary for them to do well in their future school years and work lives. During these early years, there are two critical parent-controlled factors, school readiness and parent involvement, that have directly affected my ability as a teacher to maximize each student's achievement. Lacks of school readiness (Le et al., 2006) and parent involvement (Henderson et al., 2002) have both been linked to poor student achievement. Current research must focus on understanding these factors so that programs can be designed to assist parents in becoming effective partners with schools. I hypothesize that the development of relational trust between parents and schools is a necessary antecedent to addressing these challenges. This study provides a deeper understanding of this relationship.

The first parent-controlled critical factor is school readiness. Every child enters school with a level of pre-reading skills including letter identification, vocabulary knowledge, and book handling skills. Parents that stimulate these basic language and literacy skills have children that are more successful upon entering school. In contrast, when parents do not foster these skills their children are less prepared and less successful in their first years of schooling. Some programs such as Head Start have attempted to prepare children from low-income families for the skills they will need in school. The literature to-date documents the results of these programs. Little attention, however, has been given to understanding how family-teacher relationships can positively affect parents' participation in these programs.

Likewise, there has been little examination of how parents' levels of relational trust in these programs affect students' success within them. In other words, can the effects of programs like Head Start be maximized if parents develop relational trust in them and, consequently, become partners in their children's education? I argue that if parents have trust in these programs and their staff, they will be more likely to work collaboratively with them to maximize student achievement. For this reason, it is important to examine how relational trust can be fostered and inhibited between low-income parents and schools.

The second parent-controlled factor which is critical to student success is parent involvement. No matter how committed a teacher is to a student's learning, without parental support student potential is limited. For example, daily attendance, assistance with homework, good health, and general encouragement are all parent-controlled factors that have a critical impact on children's likelihood of school success. There are a variety of reasons some parents fail to meet these basic needs of students such as their lack of educational knowledge and resources, time constraints, child care arrangements, low confidence, role perceptions, and poor personal experiences with school systems (Gillies, 2006; Lareau, 1989; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Similarly, parent involvement may not be prevalent among parents' social circles, which makes them less likely to see involvement as important. Schools can assist low-income parents in addressing some of these challenges, particularly in a school community in which a strong relational trust is present between parents and educators.

There is a wealth of information in the literature to-date on the forms and effects of parent involvement. Likewise, many scholars have examined how social class affects

involvement. Less research has focused on how schools can compensate for the lack of social and cultural capital that hinders low-income parents' abilities to be effective partners with schools and deters them from involvement. Bryk & Schneider (2002) argue that relational trust between school role groups is a necessary predecessor to any type of effective school reform. I elaborate on this argument by contending that schools must foster mutual relational trust with low-income parents in order to successfully increase their cultural and social capital and, in so doing, improve student achievement and educational attainment.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between low-income parents and their children's teachers. I aim to understand what teacher qualities, actions, and dispositions both foster and inhibit relational trust with low-income parents. Teachers do have the power to cultivate these relationships, but the literature to-date has not provided guidance on how to do so.

This study is important because low-income parents and their children should not be disadvantaged in school systems. In order for schools to compensate for the disadvantages with which low-income parents and their children enter schools, educators must understand how they can adapt their own behaviors to support collaboration with parents. The first step toward developing family-school partnerships is to gain parents' trust. This study contributes to the current understandings of parent-teacher relational trust by providing an in-depth examination of the interactions and perceptions of teachers and low-income parents in one urban elementary school. The results provide a starting point for further research exploring how teachers can best engage with low-income parents to build relational trust. Ultimately,

no reform or instructional strategy will effectively increase the achievement and graduation rates of low-income urban students if parents are not integral players in their children's educational lives. Relational trust is the foundation of this collaboration.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the following review of the literature I will identify three theoretical perspectives present in the literature which contribute to an understanding on parent involvement in urban schools. I will argue that Joyce Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres, while valuable in identifying how parents, families, and communities should work collaboratively, fails to address the obstacles to forming these partnerships, particularly in urban school settings. In reality, relationships between parents and teachers are more easily formed when both parties are of the same culture, language, and background. These relationships require significantly more effort to build and sustain when parents and teachers are of different races, ethnicities, and social classes (Colombo, 2006). In urban schools then, which serve large numbers of students of color from low-income families, partnerships are particularly challenging. I will argue that Bourdieu's theories of social and cultural capital are useful for defining these barriers to parent-school partnerships. Finally, I will use Bryk & Schneider's (2002) theory of relational trust to examine how the interpersonal interactions of parents and educators affect the likelihood of home-school partnership.

It is widely understood that schools and parents must work collaboratively to most successfully support student learning (Decker & Decker, 2003; Epstein, 2001; Henderson et al., 2007; Olivos, 2007; Patrikakou et al., 2005). In Joyce Epstein's (2001) theory of overlapping spheres of influence, she identifies school, community, and family as three spheres that influence students' education. Individuals in each sphere can be valuable resources for the other spheres. Without effective partnerships between schools, families, and communities,

students' lives are segmented. When these spheres work in collaboration, people in each sphere gain an understanding of each other and children receive consistent messages from the adults in their family, school, and community. This consistency positively affects students' likelihood of success in school. Conversely, when these spheres work independently of each other, students are at greater risk of negative school outcomes (Sanders, 2009). Schools, then, must find ways to engage parents as partners in students' education.

The literature on parent involvement serves a number of purposes. First, scholars have written about the varying forms of parent involvement (Brandt, 1989; Epstein, 1986; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein et al., 2002; Henderson et al., 2007). They have defined the many ways parents and schools can work collaboratively. Second, studies have focused on examining the effects of parent involvement, particularly on student achievement (Decker & Decker, 2003; Henderson & Berla, 1981, 1987, 1994; Henderson et al., 2007; Patrikakou et al., 2005). The third focus in the literature is on differences in parent involvement across demographic groups (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Dom & Verhoeven, 2006; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Gillies, 2006; Lareau, 1989; Lee & Bowen, 2006). These studies identify the obstacles many families and schools face when attempting partnerships. Fourth, much of the literature on parent involvement explores the perceptions of educators and parents and how these perceptions affect partnerships (Colombo, 2006; DePlanty, et al., 2007; Epstein & Becker, 1982; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007). These studies provide an understanding of how school culture shapes the potential for collaboration. Finally, within the literature on the role of school culture, the role of trust in schools is also explored (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). This literature review will attempt to answer the following questions: *How are parents involved in*

schools? Why is parent involvement important? What are the barriers to parent involvement in urban schools? How is trust related to parent involvement? I begin this review by addressing the first question: *How are parents involved in schools?*

How are parents involved in schools?

Home-school partnerships can take many forms. Epstein et al. (2002) outlines six types of parent involvement in schools. She identifies the basic obligations of parents as the first type (Brandt, 1989; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). This includes ensuring the basic health and safety of one's child as well as exhibiting appropriate child-rearing skills (Brandt, 1989). Schools can support parents by teaching them about child development and demonstrating how home environments can support student learning (Epstein et al., 2002).

The second type of parent involvement, according to Epstein, is communication from school to home about school programs and student progress (Brandt, 1989; Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). In this case, the responsibility for parent involvement falls, not on the parents, but on the teachers and school. This not only takes some responsibility off of the parents, but also gives the school a degree of control in improving parent involvement. Communication with parents typically includes notes home, phone calls, and parent-teacher conferences (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

Parent involvement at school is the third type of parent involvement (Brandt, 1989; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). This form of parent involvement may be the most commonly identified. It includes parent attendance at school events and parent volunteering to help teachers, administrators, and students at school (Brandt, 1989).

The fourth type of parent involvement is involvement in learning activities at home (Brandt, 1989; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Parents who help their children with learning activities which they have designed or bought, as well as activities provided by teachers, are engaging in this form of parent involvement (Brandt, 1989).

Parent involvement in governance and advocacy is the fifth type of parent involvement (Brandt, 1989; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). This form is defined as parent participation in decision making, taking leadership positions, and becoming active members of parent and advocacy groups such as the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) (Brandt, 1989). This form of involvement gives parents a sense of empowerment by giving them a voice in their child's school.

The sixth and final type of parent involvement is collaboration with community organizations. This includes family access to community and support services (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). When students' safety, welfare, and health needs are met, it improves their ability to learn (Noguera, 2003). Therefore, if families and schools collaborate with community organizations to better meet a broad range of student needs, it is likely to have a positive effect on student achievement.

Although parents and schools can work together in each of the ways outlined above, according to Epstein, there are five most frequently used parent involvement activity techniques: techniques that encourage discussions between parents and children, techniques that involve reading and books, techniques based on informal activities and games using household items, techniques based on formal contracts and supervision between parents, students, and teachers, and finally, techniques that involve the tutoring and teaching of skills

and drills (Epstein, 1986). Interestingly, all of these most utilized parent involvement activities would fall under the fourth type of parent involvement: parent involvement in learning activities at home. Although each of these at home activities are beneficial, it is notable that five other categories of parent involvement are evidently less common.

The literature clearly outlines the many forms of parent involvement. In addition, there is considerable attention on the varied scopes of parent involvement initiatives. For example, many schools have no formal parent involvement program. These schools do not actively attempt to involve parents in the school. Other schools and districts develop programs specifically designed to involve families. Title I schools, those serving low-income communities, are required by the No Child Left Behind Act to have a parent-school compact. This compact, developed with parents, describes how the school and parents will partner to improve student achievement. In addition, Title I schools and districts must write a parent involvement policy, also with parent input, which outlines a plan for how parents will be involved in developing plans for improving schools and engaging families (Henderson et al., 2007).

Henderson et al. (2007) outlines four versions of partnership: partnership schools, open-door schools, come-if-we-call schools, and fortress schools. Partnership schools, they explain, believe that all families have something to offer and they are committed to working collaboratively with parents to ensure every child's success. Open-door schools invite parents to participate in activities but there is less close collaboration between schools and families. Come-if-we-call schools rely more on one-way communication and, although parents are sometimes invited to the school, school leaders do not believe parents have much to offer the

school. Finally, fortress schools believe parents belong at home, often blame families for students' lack of success, and see the community as something to be avoided. Clearly, partnership schools provide an ideal climate for home-school collaboration. The question remains, however: Why is it important for schools to collaborate with families?

Why is parent involvement important?

By comprehensively surveying the research, Henderson & Berla (1981; 1987; 1994) have collected an abundance of evidence of the positive effects of family involvement. They have compiled their findings in three editions: *The Evidence Grows* (1981), *The Evidence Continues to Grow* (1987), and *A New Generation of Evidence* (1994). These publications present the results of more than eighty-five studies, each providing evidences for positive results for family involvement. Decker & Decker (2003) organize Henderson & Berla's findings into three types of positive outcomes: effects on student success, effects on school quality, and effects on program design. Effects on student success include but are not limited to:

- *When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic/racial background, or parents' education level.*
- *The more extensive the family involvement, the higher the student achievement.*
- *Students whose families are involved have higher grades and test scores, have better attendance records, and complete their homework more consistently.*
- *When parents and families are involved, students display more positive attitudes and behavior.*
- *Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when families and professionals collaborate to bridge the gap between the home culture and the school culture.*
- *The benefits of involving parents and families are significant at all ages and grade levels.*

- *The most accurate predictor of a student's success in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which the student's family is able to 1) create a home environment that encourages learning; 2) communicate high, yet reasonable, expectations for achievement and future careers; and 3) become involved in their children's education at school and in the community.*

(Decker & Decker, 2003, p.56-57)

Effects on school quality include:

- *Schools that work well with families have better teacher morale and higher ratings of teachers by parents.*
- *Schools in which families are involved have more support from families and better reputations in the community.*
- *School programs that involve parents and families outperform identical programs without such involvement.*
- *Schools in which children are failing improve dramatically when parents and families are enabled to become partners with teachers.*
- *Schools' efforts to inform and involve parents and families are stronger determinants of whether inner-city parents will be involved in their children's education than are the level of parent education, family size, marital status, or student grade level.*

(Decker & Decker, 2003, p.57)

Effects on program design include:

- *The more the relationship between parents and educators approaches a comprehensive, well-planned partnership, the higher the student achievement.*
- *When families receive frequent and effective communication from the school or program, their involvement increases, their overall evaluation of educators is higher, and their attitudes toward the program are more positive.*
- *Parents and families are much more likely to become involved when educators encourage and assist them in helping their children with schoolwork.*
- *When parents and families are treated as partners and given relevant information by people with whom they are comfortable, they put into practice the involvement strategies they already know are effective but have been hesitant to use.*

The evidence presented by Henderson & Berla is clear. Parent involvement has a profound impact on students' education. Patrikakou et al. (2005) provide another reason for improving parent involvement. They point out that only one-quarter of children's time is spent at school while three-quarters of their time is spent at home. Because of this, they argue that changing parent involvement even a small amount can have a large cumulative effect. In other words, if schools can engage parents in their children's education, parents are more likely to make student learning also central to their home life, which would have a meaningful impact on student success.

Henderson et al. (2007) also highlight some important reasons for home-school partnership. They argue that partnerships help to build and sustain public support for schools because they produce higher levels of respect and trust between school staff, the community, and families. Once supporting the school, families and communities can help schools overcome some of the challenges schools are faced with. Many of the same problems that families face in their communities also result in poor student achievement. It is necessary to work collaboratively to define these problems and identify, plan, and implement possible solutions. Finally, Henderson et al. (2007) points out that teachers benefit from parent and community partnerships. Parents can share knowledge and perspectives about their children, their culture and values, and the strengths and problems in their communities.

Scholars who have defined the forms and effects of parent involvement have worked within Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence framework. They have argued that when school, family, and community work in unison to increase student learning, the effects are positive and proven. The overlapping spheres of influence framework, however, fails to address the obstacles faced by many urban schools and families in their attempts to form partnerships.

What are barriers to parent involvement in urban schools?

When urban school districts create parent involvement programs, ideally they solicit the involvement of a diversity of parents. In addition to racial and ethnic diversity, it is particularly important for urban school districts to include parents from different social class backgrounds. In order for parent initiatives to support the learning of all students, programs should be representative of the families and students within the school district. In Philadelphia, with 76% of students coming from low-income families, it is essential for schools to understand how social class affects parent involvement (SDP, 2009).

When examining the literature on social class, capital, and parent involvement it becomes clear that there are different ways scholars think about these issues. Some of the literature is focused on identifying the variation in the amount and type of parent involvement based on social class (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Other scholars have gone further by attempting to explain the reasons for class differences in involvement (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Dom &

Verhoeven, 2006; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Gillies, 2006; Lareau, 1989; Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Scholars have identified three main reasons for these differences: parents' assumptions about their roles in their children's education, parents' orientation to schools, and, most prevalent in the literature, differences in resources. Although this study is focused on the income status of parents, it would be remiss to fail to address the role race plays in parent-teacher relationships. Therefore, as I review the literature on barriers to parent involvement, I will also acknowledge the role of race, both in isolation and intersecting with social class, and its influences on family-school partnerships.

Following a synthesis of the literature on social class barriers to parent involvement, I will argue that while there is an abundance of information in the literature which identifies and explains class differences in parent involvement, there is a noticeable lack of focus on how to support low-income parents and encourage their involvement in schools. Specifically, the literature does not address how urban schools with large numbers of students from low-income families can provide effective programs and services to actively address these differences and ameliorate their effects.

The literature suggests that social class plays a role in the likelihood of parents becoming involved in their children's schools. For example, parents with a two year college degree or higher report significantly more frequent involvement at school, more parent-child education discussions at home, and higher educational expectations for their children, than parents whose children receive free or reduced price lunch (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Many studies (Gillies, 2006; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Dom & Verhoeven, 2006) have

explored the roots of these class differences in parent involvement. Some of these studies have identified class differences in how parents define their roles.

Parent & School Roles

Parents' assumptions about their roles in their children's education are an important element of parent involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1993). Lareau (1989) found that working class and poor parents separated the roles of home and school. They did not seek a home-school partnership. They felt that the schools' job was to make sure students learn and their job as parents was to teach them how to behave. In contrast, higher-income parents saw their children's education as a shared responsibility. This included integrating educational goals into students' family life and taking an active role in monitoring, intervening, and supervising their children's schools (Lareau, 1989). Higher-income parents' understanding of their role was similar to what teachers expected of them. In this way, "social class shapes the alignment of social groups with the standards of institutions" (Lareau, 1989, p. 170).

Part of how parents define their roles can be attributed to their own educational background. If low-income parents have difficulty understanding the vocabulary of the school and/or their child's schoolwork, they are less likely to have the confidence to initiate involvement. In contrast, upper middle-class parents present themselves as equals to teachers (Lareau, 1989) and often have similar or superior educational credentials. Parents' efficacy beliefs are important factors in determining parent involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1993). Therefore, higher-income parents are at an advantage in fostering partnerships with schools by virtue of their belief that it is their responsibility to engage with schools as well as their comfort

with schoolwork and norms. These parents are further benefited by their positive orientations toward schools, which have been linked to their ability to choose their children's school.

Orientation toward School

Parents' orientation toward schools is partly attributable to how the school was chosen. According to Diamond & Gomez (2004), upper middle-class parents often have the advantage of choosing a school that best meets their child's needs. These parents tend to judge their child's school quality as high, based primarily on test scores. On the other hand, with fewer resources, working class parents are typically forced to send their children to their local neighborhood school, which in many cases are comparatively low performing (Diamond & Gomez, 2004). These differences in school choice can have an impact on how parents are oriented toward their children's schools. For example, many low-income Philadelphia parents send their children to the local public school, which in many cases lacks resources and is low performing. These parents may, understandably, have a negative orientation toward their children's schools. Middle class parents in Philadelphia tend to send their children to high performing private schools. These parents are likely to have a more positive orientation to their children's schools. This scenario has been supported in the literature (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Dom & Verhoeven, 2006).

Diamond & Gomez (2004) found that middle-class parents have a positive, supportive orientation toward their children's schools. They reasoned that because middle-class parents selected their children's schools, they are more likely to find evidence that confirms their choice as a good one. Working class parents, alternatively, have a reform orientation toward their

children's schools (Diamond & Gomez, 2004). These parents organize with the goal of making substantial changes in schools (Dom & Verhoeven, 2006). They see challenging the administration and faculty as their role in ensuring their children receive a good education. These parents do not see themselves as being negatively confrontational toward schools. Rather, they view their actions as pushing for high quality education (Diamond & Gomez, 2004). Although they may be well-intentioned, parents who are not positive, supporting, and trusting of their children's schools are often criticized by educators (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). This can become a barrier to forming strong parent-teacher partnerships.

The research on parent orientation toward schools is somewhat contradictory, however. Although, according to these studies, working class parents commonly challenge schools to initiate changes, middle-class parents have the power and capability (capital) to challenge school systems more effectively (Dom & Verhoeven, 2006). In contrast to the studies by Diamond & Gomez (2004) and Dom & Verhoeven (2006), Lareau (2003) found that working class and poor parents are more likely to see teachers as the experts and are less likely to challenge the school. She argues that middle-class parents are more critical of educators than working class and poor parents (Lareau, 1989; Lareau, 2003). She attributes working class parents' passivity to their "lack of requisite vocabulary to effectively challenge" schools (Lareau, 2003, p. 199). Middle-class parents, on the other hand, closely monitor their children's educational experiences (Lareau, 2003). Taking all of these studies into consideration, it appears that middle-class parents, armed with knowledge and resources, are more likely to challenge schools in terms of their academics. In contrast, with their children attending schools with many areas of needing improvement (resources, high class size, teacher quality and

attrition); working class parents may be more likely to challenge schools in terms of their overall quality. While social class differences in role perceptions and orientations are certainly related to variations in parent involvement, arguably the most overarching influence on parent involvement is parent resources.

Resources: Cultural Capital

Lamont and Lareau (1988) defined cultural capital as “widely shared, legitimate culture made up of high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, behaviors, and goods) used in direct or indirect social and cultural exclusion.” Within schools there is a particular set of norms and behaviors which are valued. When one exhibits these norms and behaviors within schools, he/she is advantaged. In contrast, individuals who lack these norms and behaviors tend to be disadvantaged. For example, teachers expect parents to be involved in their children’s education in a variety of ways including helping with homework, volunteering, keeping abreast of what students are learning, signing and returning important papers, attending parent-teacher conferences, and participating in classroom and school events. Lareau (1989) argues that parents’ social class shapes the resources that affect whether or not parents meet teachers’ expectations. These resources become a form of cultural capital when they result in advantages within the education system. Specifically, she found that working class parents are less likely than upper-middle-class parents to comply with teachers’ requests for involvement. Working class and poor parents’ lack of college education results in their difficulty understanding some of the educational language used at school, trouble helping their children with schoolwork, and the inability to evaluate their children’s schools (Lareau, 1989). This

finding is supported by Gillies (2006) who found that working class mothers reported a failure to understand much of their children's schoolwork. He reasoned that their lack of effectiveness when helping their children with learning activities is likely to make schoolwork a source of "conflict, uncertainty, and vulnerability." Conversely, middle-class mothers described working with their children on homework and school assignments as a source of "intimate connection" (Gillies, 2006). This difference could make working class parents hesitant to become any more involved in their child's school and would certainly contribute to their feelings of exclusion from school (Lareau, 1989).

Lareau & Horvat (1999) assert that upper and middle-class parents have resources such as "large vocabularies, sense of entitlement to interact with teachers as equals, time, transportation, and child care arrangements to attend school events during the school day" which become forms of cultural capital when they result in parents' compliance with the dominant standards of schools (Lareau & Horvat, 1999, p. 42). For example, if these dominant standards include parent participation in school events, then some parents' work schedules may hinder their ability to participate. While middle-class stay-at-home moms may have time to participate, many working class parents are working one or more day and night jobs that make it impossible for them to participate. Epstein finds the expectations for parent participation "almost discriminatory toward parents that work" (Brandt, 1989). It can be assumed then that schools should adapt their expectations, schedules, and parental supports to meet the needs of low-income parents. There is little in this literature, however, to guide urban schools and districts in how to support low-income parents in ways that will either increase parents' cultural capital or create a school community in which parents' strengths are valued.

In addition to the influence of cultural capital, social capital is also a resource that affects parent involvement.

Resources: Social Capital

Robert Putnam asserts that social networks are valuable to individuals and society (Putnam, 2000). He argues that when people use connective strategies to attain mutual goals, thus increasing their social capital, society as a whole benefits (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003). Additionally, he points out that social capital can be both *bridging* (connecting individuals of diverse social backgrounds) and *bonding* (linking individuals of common backgrounds). In schools serving poor, urban communities, parents and teachers (often from different social backgrounds) ideally facilitate *bridging* social capital by working collectively toward the mutual goal of educating students. Similar to Putnam, James S. Coleman contends that within the school sphere, the tighter the social network and the more norms and values are shared by school actors, the greater the potential for student achievement (Coleman et al., 1997). In addition to shared norms and values, Coleman and Putnam agree that mutual trust and reciprocity are also essential for building social capital (Mc Lean et al., 2002). While Coleman acknowledges the needs for trustworthiness and fulfilled obligations among school actors, he fails to address the challenges to attaining them in school social networks in which families and school staff may have differing social backgrounds.

Pierre Bourdieu's contribution to the conceptualization of social capital is essential for understanding parent-teacher relationships in poor urban communities. Bourdieu (1986) acknowledges the role that differences in power and resources play in the development of social capital. In this way, his conceptualization of social capital is useful for this study as I try to

understand the role relational trust plays in parents' and teachers' abilities to work in partnership within a school social network.

According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital is the collection of actual or potential resources which are provided to members of a group. In today's socially stratified society, social groups are often divided by class membership. Therefore, individuals are typically surrounded socially with other individuals within the same socioeconomic class. In this way, parents become members of social networks, each having their own set of resources. The results of a study by Sheldon (2002) suggest that parents' social networks are resources that are likely to increase parent involvement both at home and school. If parent involvement has positive effects on student achievement, as discussed earlier, and social class affects parent involvement, then one can reason that social capital in the form of parents' social networks will have an effect on student achievement.

Although each social network may have resources that provide it advantages within their own social class, middle and upper class groups are armed with the particular set of resources that increase their likelihood of school partnerships and benefit them within the educational institution. Lareau (1989) argues that, compared to children from working class and poor families, children from middle and upper class families are at an educational advantage because of their parents' social networks. She explains that these children have families that are more highly educated and, therefore, are more strategically integrating education goals into their lives outside of school, fulfilling the "learning at home" form of parent involvement (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). In comparison, she explains that children from

working class and poor families are doing most of their learning in school, with very little transfer of education goals to the home. Similarly, children of middle and upper class families benefit from their parents' informal networks including friends and neighbors who are likewise more educated than people within the informal networks of working class and poor parents (Lareau, 1989; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003).

Many times these middle and upper class networks include other teachers (Lareau, 1989). This means that middle and upper class parents have informal access to educational information. Social networks with other children's parents in the school community are also advantageous because these parents share information about the teachers and the school (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). In fact, Horvat et al., (2003) found that middle class parents utilized their social networks to proactively tailor their children's education to meet their needs. For example, they reported that these parents mobilized members of their social networks to gather information, provide testing, challenge curriculum, and, in some cases, dispute schools' assessments. In addition, some of these middle class parents also used their networks to learn about different teachers and request specific teachers for their children. Hassrick & Schneider (2009) likewise reported that middle-class and socially connected working-class parents used their social networks with other parents to evaluate classroom information, intervene with classroom teachers, have powerful voices within schools, and to shape teacher practice. In contrast, Horvat et al., (2003) reported that working class and poor parents were much less likely to assert themselves by attempting to customize their children's education. Finally, they determined that middle class parents at times act collectively for the benefit of their children, while working class and poor parents tend to respond individually (Horvat et al., 2003). In

summary, middle and upper class parents' social networks become forms of social capital when they result in increased involvement in their children's schools in ways that benefit their children. This perspective is notably different from that of McNeal (1999).

Rather than frame levels of parent involvement as a result of social capital, McNeal (1999) argues that parent involvement is a form of social capital. He identifies three elements of social capital: form, norms of obligation and reciprocity, and resources. Form, he explains, refers to the depth and breadth of the network. By norms of obligation and reciprocity he means an expectation of return, senses of trust and obligation within the network. Finally, resources refer to the potential resources that can be drawn from being a member of a group. McNeal argues that the dyadic relationship between a parent, child, teacher, or other parents can be conceptualized as a form of social capital. He sees parent-teacher contact as a form of social capital. In a study investigating the effects of parent involvement as social capital on science achievement, truancy, and dropping out, he concluded that social capital was associated with increased achievement and less deviant behavior. However, upon differentiating the results, he found that these results were substantially less true for children of parents from low-income households. In his words, "even at comparable levels of involvement, single parents, minority parents, and lower-SES parents simply get less for their involvement" (McNeal, 1999, p. 136). Given these results, I would argue that parent involvement is not a form of social capital in itself. Rather, social class membership and resulting social networks affect the benefits gained from parent involvement.

While there are undoubtedly positive effects of social capital, it is important to recall Fukuyama's (2001) point about the role of social capital in society. He contends that social capital produces more negative effects than other forms of capital (physical, human). He explains that group solidarity is often formed at the cost of hostility toward individuals who are not within the group. He uses Harrison's (1985) phrase "radius of trust" to define the circle of people with whom co-operative norms are operative. Fukuyama's theory is supported by Baier (1986) who argued that exploitation and conspiracy often thrive when there is trust within a group. Using Fukuyama's understanding of social capital to frame parent involvement in urban schools, I question, *Do school staffs represent one network with common norms and values, while low-income parents represent another network with often different norms and values?* If so, then within each group is a certain "radius of trust" which affects how members of each group interact with each other. Additionally, these "radii of trust" affect parents' and schools' likelihood of forming partnerships.

Race and Trust

Radiuses of trust are complicated when parents and teachers are from different racial groups. According to a study of school climate issued by the Council of Urban Boards of Education, there are significant racial differences in parents' perceptions and trust of their children's teachers (American School Board Journal, 2008). They reported that minority parents do not feel welcome at schools. They found that African American parents, in particular, were most negative about the climate of their children's schools. More than 78% of these parents said they were less likely to trust their children's teachers and 69% felt that teachers generally do not respect students. These statistics are supported by other studies.

Copper (2007) reasoned that minority parents may be less involved in their children's schools because, for example, African American mothers reported having to battle an "oppressive arena" characterized by conflict, judgment, and biases (Cooper, 2007). Low income and working class African American mothers acknowledged becoming frustrated and sometimes angered because they believed educators disrespect and devalue their families (Cooper, 2007). Latino parents have also reported concerns that teachers do not always respect their children (Quijano & Daoud, 2006). If parents of color perceive contempt from teachers and administrators at their child's school, it is highly unlikely they will choose to extend themselves through participation in parent activities and events at school and trust is improbable.

Rusch (2010) recommends the use of bridging mechanisms to help build trust between individuals of different races. Although her focus is on community organizing rather than schools, her suggestions are relevant to the establishment of trust between parents and teachers. She explains that interpersonal trust, which can be established between individuals, can be fostered even in the absence of generalized trust. In other words, in the context of schools, individual teachers can establish interpersonal trust with parents of a different race or culture, even if those parents are generally distrustful of schools. Rusch (2010) admits that there is much to be learned about successful and unsuccessful bridging efforts and that practitioners would benefit from further research in this area. The proposed study aims to address this gap in the literature.

Coleman and Hoffer (1987) categorized trust as a form of social capital and stated, "A group within which there is extensive trustworthiness and extensive trust is able to accomplish

much more than a comparable group without trustworthiness and trust” (p. 69). Trust within the teacher-parent network then can function to increase the social capital of parents, thereby affecting the potential for families to reap the benefits of home-school partnership. This leads to me to the final question of this literature review:

How is trust related to parent involvement?

Trust plays an important role in parent-school partnerships. When trust is fostered between parents, school administrators, students, and teachers, there are a number of positive results for schools. First, studies have found that trust in schools is associated with higher student achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth, Barnes, & Adams; 2006; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). Even after controlling for prior achievement, socioeconomic status, and demographic variables, Goddard et al. (2001) found that trust was a significant positive predictor of differences among schools in student achievement. In addition to affecting student achievement, high levels of principals’ trust in parents are also associated with school leadership’s collaboration with parents on school-level decisions (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Likewise, trust is required in order for schools to benefit from home-school collaboration (Tschannen-Moran, 2001) and to successfully implement school reforms, improvements, and changes (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). In other words, not only is trust a predictor of home-school collaboration, but it is also a necessary component to effective partnership and school reform. There are also positive teacher results of parent-school trust. For example, parent trust of schools and principals are also strongly correlated with collective teacher efficacy (competence and confidence) and an enabling school structure (the formulization and centralization of a

school's bureaucracy and the extent to which the structures enable or hinder teachers' work) (Forsyth, Barnes, & Adams, 2006). Based on the literature, it is clear that parent-school trust is critical to home-school partnerships.

A more in-depth look at theories of trust is useful for understanding how social class barriers to partnerships manifest themselves in the interactions between individuals in schools. Bryk and Schneider (2002) argue that social relationships in school communities are a fundamental feature of their operations. They believe that the "nature of these social exchanges, and the local cultural features that shape them, condition a school's capacity to improve" (p. 5). They assert that a broad base of trust in an urban school community is a critical resource for school improvement.

Bryk & Schneider (2002) argue that in urban schools the lack of trust between parents and teachers is exacerbated by their race and class differences, which results in their difficulty maintaining genuine dialogues about shared concerns. The miscommunications between these groups often reinforce the existing prejudices and weaken efforts to collaborate. Adams et al. (2009) also assert that ethnic and economic diversity creates relational barriers to effective communication. These arguments are echoed by Goddard et al. (2001) who assert that schools serving low-income students and parents have lower levels of trust between teachers and parents. Interestingly, Adams et al. (2009) notes that low-income status is not a precondition to parent distrust, but rather is the result of "formalized and centralized structures that treat parents as outsiders" (p. 28). They argue that parent trust is less dependent on contextual classifications of schools, such as at-risk, high poverty, or academic achievement and more

dependent on the social norms that address the affective and emotional needs of parents. Bryk & Schneider (2002) likewise draw attention to these individual perceptions of parents and teachers.

Bryk and Schneider (2002) contend that relational trust is rooted in individuals' discernment of the intentions of others. These judgments of others' intentions occur within a set of role relations that is formed within the structure of schools and in the unique particularities of individual school communities, each with its own history, culture, and local understandings.

According to Bryk and Schneider (2002), when people in school communities (students, parents, teachers, administrators) discern each other's intentions, they analyze their behaviors using four lenses: respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity. Respect is determined in the by evaluating one's genuineness and listening behaviors in the context of conversations. The need for respect between low-income parents and educators is supported by Young et al. (2008) who assert that effective communication must be two-way and involve listening, being heard, and must be practical, sensitive to the audience, and in layperson's terms. Competence is measured by one's execution of their formal role responsibilities. For example, teachers expect parents to meet children's basic learning needs including making sure they get enough sleep and getting them to school on time daily. Parents, in turn, expect teachers to have control of their classes and to provide them with meaningful instruction. When one party discerns that the other is not completely fulfilling their role obligations, trust is weakened. Personal regard for others is discerned by one's perception that others genuinely

care for them and are willing to go beyond their formal role expectations to demonstrate this regard. When school community members sense they are cared for by other members of the community, “they experience a social affiliation of personal meaning and value” which initiates reciprocation and strengthens relational ties (p. 25). Finally, integrity is evaluated by whether there is consistency in what one says and does. Integrity also implies strong morals and ethics guiding one’s work. For example, it is expected that all parties will always make decisions based on what is in the best interest of the students. Bryk and Schneider (2002) argue that a deficiency in any one of the four areas of discernment can undermine the formation of trust in these social relationships. The contention that parent and teacher perceptions play important roles in their partnerships is well-supported in the literature.

Teacher Perceptions

Many studies have found that teachers’ discernment of parents’ respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity are less than favorable. Cooper (2007) found that there is a common belief among teachers that low-income and working-class African American parents are more of a deficit to their children’s educational development than they are an asset. He attributed these views to negative teacher perceptions of African American mothers. This perspective is similarly supported by Colombo (2006) who found that teachers often view families of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in terms of their deficits rather than their strengths and opportunities. These deficits may be related to teacher views that some parents mistreat or neglect their students, which Epstein claims schools use as an excuse for failing to develop parent partnerships with all parents (Brandt, 1989). In actuality, however, she finds only 2-5 % of parents are in a severe circumstance that would interfere with their

ability to have an effective partnership. When teachers do not believe parents are fulfilling their obligations, this results in a negative discernment of their competence, disrupting the potential to foster partnerships.

Teachers have reported lack of preparation for school (incompetence in one's role as a parent) and lack of parent involvement as two major factors affecting low academic achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Colombo, 2006). Implied in this finding, though, is the belief that teachers feel that an increase in parent involvement would improve academic achievement for these students. Epstein & Becker (1982) found that teachers differentiated the benefits of parent involvement based on parent characteristics. Teachers acknowledged that parents can be a great help to student learning when referring to married parents with high education. On the other hand, teachers did not believe the same benefits of parent involvement could be expected for children of single parents with little education. Some teachers explained that parents in these situations were less able to conduct learning activities successfully at home (Epstein & Becker, 1982). This is supported by the finding that teachers believe parents do not get more involved in their child's education because they are intimidated by some aspect of the school or subject matter (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, Duchane, & 2007). When teachers perceive that parents are incapable of meaningful partnership, this will be reflected in their interactions with parents. Parents are unlikely to feel respected in conversations with these teachers, and are certainly unlikely to sense teachers' genuine personal regard. Trust again becomes weakened and partnership becomes improbable.

Parent Perspectives

According to Comer (1980, 1988), school professionals must recognize and understand how low-income parents perceive their actions and should reflect on how their behavior cultivates or erodes trust (Fuller et al., 2008). Parents' role activity beliefs are their beliefs about the role they should play in their child's education (Green et al., 2007). Role activity beliefs are important when we consider Bryk & Schneider's (2002) argument that when discerning parent trust, teachers judge parent competence (fulfillment of their roles). If parents' role activity beliefs differ from that of teachers' expectations, there will be a negative discernment of parent competence and, therefore, trust. Some studies have found that parents and teachers agree about what behaviors they need to participate in. For example, parents and teachers agree that making sure students attend school is the most important role of parents in their involvement. They also agree on identifying their least important roles as observing their child's classes and volunteering in school (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Dechane, 2007). On the other hand, as discussed earlier in this paper, in her studies of social class and parent involvement, Lareau (1989), found that low-income parents' beliefs about their roles in their children's education were not aligned to the expectations of teachers. Low-income parents believed that education was the sole responsibility of the school, whereas teachers generally believe parents should be partners in students' education. These differences in role assumptions can negatively affect teachers' discernment of parents' competence.

Parents are also motivated to participate in their child's education when they perceive an invitation. In addition to specific teacher and child invitations, *perceptions* of invitations

could be general feelings of being valued and welcomed at school (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007). In some cases, however, feeling unwelcome and unvalued can have a negative effect on the likelihood of parent participation. Working class parents have reported resistance to their involvement from teachers and administrators and feelings that teachers saw their lack of education as a barrier to quality parent involvement (Diamond & Gomez, 2004). When parents perceive these types of mindsets among school faculty and staff, they discern a lack of respect and personal regard from teachers and are unlikely to take any steps toward partnership.

Scholars have made many recommendations about how schools can attempt to foster stronger parent-school trust in low-income communities. They agree that it is the responsibility of school staff to bridge the communication and trust barriers with low-income parents (Adams et al., 2009; Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Bryk & Schneider (2003) acknowledge that parents and teachers are dependent on each other for achieving desired outcomes. They argue that these dependencies result in vulnerabilities for each individual and that those with less power (low-income parents) are naturally more vulnerable in these relationships. They contend that it is the responsibility of those with more power (teachers) to take deliberate actions to reduce these vulnerabilities. If teachers do not relieve parents' uncertainties, feelings of intimidation and alienation are likely to fester (Bryk & Schneider, 1996).

While Bryk & Schneider (2003) propose that teachers in urban communities need to have an empathetic understanding of their students' parents' situations and the interpersonal skills needed to engage with them effectively, they do not explicitly define these interpersonal

skills, nor do they provide guidance for fostering them in teachers. Other scholars have provided some recommendations as to how to foster parent-school trust. For example, Adams et al. (2009) found that negative contextual conditions (school environment factors determined by prior academic school performance, state school report cards, state demographic and performance evaluations) can be offset by policies, structures, and practices that “purposefully foster nonthreatening and noncontentious social exchanges between parents and school authorities” such as boundary-spanning interactions, bringing parents from the periphery into the operating core of the school, and allowing parents to share in the educational responsibility by designing inclusive operational frameworks. In order to convince parents of their caring and competence, Goddard et al. (2001) suggest that teachers be reliable, open, and honest with parents. They should confront disengaged parents with understanding and kindness, rather than disdain and judgment in order to cultivate mutual respect and trustworthiness.

While the literature to-date provides a wealth of information toward 1) an understanding of the roots of social class differences in parent involvement, 2) identifying parent role perceptions, 3) orientations, and 4) resources as influential factors in determining parent involvement, further research is necessary to determine how relational trust can be formed in schools serving low-income communities and how this trust can result in effective home-school partnerships. A number of scholars have called for future research on the role of trust in parent-school partnerships (Adams et al., 2009; Addi-Racah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008;

Forsyth et al., 2006; Goddard et al., 2001; Goddard et al., 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998). Much of the research on trust in schools to-date has been focused on school leadership (Adams & Forsyth, 2007; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Young & Carpenter, 2008) and has been quantitative in nature (Adams & Forsyth, 2007; Adams et al., 2009; Forsyth et al., 2006; Goddard et al., 2001; Goddard et al., 2009; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). While the data gathered from parent and teacher trust scales provides a starting point for studying these relationships, further qualitative methods should be used to gain a deeper understanding. Recent studies by Young & Carpenter (2008), Young, et al. (2008), Addi-Racah & Arviv-Elyashiv (2008), and Hassrick & Schneider (2009) have provided models for conducting qualitative research in the area of parent-school trust. This study's research design was modeled on their methodologies including observations and interviews to answer the following research questions:

- How is relational trust fostered and inhibited in the relationships between low-income parents and their children's teachers?
 - What teacher actions result in successful (and unsuccessful) partnerships with low-income parents?
 - What are teachers' beliefs about low income families' norms and values? How does this affect parent-teacher trust?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine relational trust between low-income parents and their children's teachers. Specifically, this study attempted to answer the following questions: *How is relational trust fostered and inhibited in the relationships between low-income parents and their children's educators? What teacher actions result in successful (and unsuccessful) partnerships with low-income parents? What are teachers' beliefs about low income families' norms and values? How does this affect parent-teacher trust?*

These questions were addressed through a qualitative research design using ethnographic methods examining the relationships between parents and early childhood teachers in one low-income community school in Philadelphia. The sample was comprised of ten teachers, ten low-income parents, and three nonteaching staff members. Data collection included observations and interviews. Below I outline the study design, sampling, data collection methods and analyses. I also address my role as the researcher and the study's limitations. In order to ensure anonymity of the school site and subjects, all proper names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

Qualitative Design

The methodology of this study was qualitative in nature. I intended to gain an understanding of relational trust between teachers and low-income parents using ethnographic methods. According to Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006), ethnographic methods allow the researcher to understand the social reality from the participants' perspective. My research

questions involved understanding the perspectives and experiences of parents and teachers. In order to gain this understanding, it was necessary for me as the researcher to closely study the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of individual parents and teachers through observations and in-depth interviews.

As I detailed in chapter two, much of the research to-date on parent-teacher relational trust has been quantitative in nature, utilizing parent and teacher trust scales (Adams & Forsyth, 2007; Adams et al., 2009; Forsyth et al., 2006; Goddard et al., 2001; Goddard et al., 2009; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). While the data gathered from parent and teacher trust scales provides a starting point for studying these relationships and has been useful in recognizing parent-teacher trust as a topic of interest and concern, further qualitative methods are necessary to gain a more thorough understanding. Recent studies by Young & Carpenter (2008), Young, et al. (2008), Addi-Racah & Arviv-Elyashiv (2008), and Hassrick & Schneider (2009) have provided models for conducting qualitative research in the area of parent-school trust. While these studies have deepened the understanding of the negative effects of low parent-school trust on parent involvement (Young, et al., 2008), the role of school leaders in developing parent-school trust (Young & Carpenter, 2008), and how teachers can boost higher income parents' trust in schools (Addi-Racah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008), I have found no qualitative studies which have specifically focused on how teachers can effectively build trust with low-income parents.

The design for this study was modeled on the qualitative methodologies utilized in other parent-school trust studies including observations and interviews. Qualitative research

provides access to an intimate understanding of this specific human experience. Through ethnographic methods I developed a deep understanding of each parent and teacher's unique experience based on their own set of backgrounds and personal interactions with each other.

Site Selection and Sample

School District of Philadelphia

Philadelphia's district-operated public schools currently serve over 160,000 students. It is the largest school district in Pennsylvania, serving 11% of the state's children. Low-income students comprise 76% of the student body, making Philadelphia a unique setting for studying the relationship between low-income parents and teachers. Academically, the school district has made inconsistent gains in student achievement since 2002. Still, however, less than half of district schools made adequate yearly progress (AYP) during the year of data collection, according to the terms of No Child Left Behind (SDP, 2011).

The School District of Philadelphia has outlined their core beliefs and guiding principles. Those that are particularly relevant to parent partnerships are highlighted below:

Core Beliefs

- *Children come first*
- *Parents are our partners*
- *Victory is in the classroom and is facilitated by a strong instructional leader*
- *Leadership and accountability are the keys to success*

- *It takes the engagement of the entire community to ensure the success of its public schools*

Guiding Principles

- *Increasing achievement and closing the opportunity and achievement gaps for all students*
- *Ensuring the equitable allocation of all District resources*
- *Holding all adults accountable for student outcomes*
- *Satisfying parents, students, and the community*

(SDP, 2009)

Based on these core beliefs and principles, the commitment to parent partnership appears to be integral to the mission of the Philadelphia School District.

Selected School Site

Jones Elementary School was the site of this research study. Jones was selected for two reasons. First, it met all of the criteria I was interested in for the study site. It is 1) a public elementary school, 2) in a high poverty neighborhood, and 3) has a record of parent satisfaction and involvement. Second, Jones was a convenient location for me as the researcher due to its proximity to my work office

Jones Elementary School is a K-8 school in West Philadelphia. It is a large four-story brick building lined with green grass and small trees and has a large concrete schoolyard. Located in a busy area approximately three and a half miles outside the city center, trolley lines

run on both sides of the school. Within one block of Jones Elementary are many establishments including a fast food burger restaurant, a dollar store, a bar, and two gas stations. A park, a cemetery, and a Baptist church are also a short walk away. A large shopping area including a home improvement store and super market are about a half-mile from the school. The homes on the streets surrounding the school are typical inner city row-homes, each two stories tall with small front porches about ten feet long and six feet wide. About one third of the homes appear to be abandoned, having graffiti and missing or boarded up windows and doors.

Jones School enrolled 370 students in the 2010-11 school year. At that time, families at Jones were 98% African American and 90.6% economically disadvantaged based on students' qualification for free or reduced price lunch. All students attending Jones live within its catchment area, walking distance from the school. While the district does have eighty charter schools for parents and students interested in school options other than their neighborhood public school, the majority of children living within Jones' catchment area attend the school. A teacher racial balancing policy is in effect in the district, resulting in a teaching staff that is 43.4% African American and 56.6% White. Like all other schools in the district, Jones has a full time parent ombudsman, Mr. Thomas, who organizes community outreach and acts as a home-school liaison for families. He helps the school to coordinate the Home and School Association and parenting programs such as Families And Schools Together and Parenting Plus. Mr. Thomas is well liked by families and staff alike.

In the spring of 2011, all third through eighth grade students in the state took the state standardized assessment. Jones performed lower than 60% of other schools in the district. In Reading, Jones scored between 5% and 15% lower than the district average in each grade level. In Math, scores varied by grade level. Some grades scored up to 10% lower than the district average, while other grade levels scored up to 5% higher than the district average. The school district overall has failed to meet adequate yearly progress for ten consecutive years.

Compared with other elementary schools in West Philadelphia, Jones was among the most highly rated by parents in the 2009 School District of Philadelphia parent survey, which was distributed to all Philadelphia schools. At Jones, survey results showed that:

91% of parents/guardians say problematic school climate issues rarely or never occur.

90% of parents/guardians agree that their child's school is safe.

84% of parents/guardians report being involved in their child's school activities.

95% of parents/guardians agree that their child's school is responsive.

93% of parents/guardians are satisfied with the school's commitment to them and their child.

92% of parents/guardians agree that their child is receiving a quality education.

The location, low-income background of most of its students, and the high ratings from parents make Jones an ideal setting for this study. I was most interested in studying relational trust in schools in which families are collectively different in socioeconomic background than

teachers (i.e., schools in poor neighborhoods). Jones fits this criterion because the majority of families are African American and low-income. The diverse teaching staff (13 white teachers, 10 black teachers) was also useful for selecting teachers of different backgrounds for the focus of the study. In addition, based on the results of the district parent survey, teachers at Jones have developed high levels of satisfaction and communication with parents. This led me to believe that teachers at Jones demonstrate the ability to foster strong relational trust with low-income parents. Similarly, given that most parents at Jones consider themselves involved in school activities and seem pleased with the school in general, I expected to find low-income parents that were willing to participate in a study that aimed to identify what skills and strategies have fostered their relational trust.

While survey results suggest that teachers at Jones School may successfully foster relational trust with parents, every school has teachers who struggle in their relationships with parents. Likewise, every teacher has different relationships with specific parents. I assumed that teachers at Jones would vary in their abilities to foster trust and partnership with parents and I deliberately selected teachers that both demonstrated strengths and struggles in this area. In doing so, I hoped to gain insight into how relational trust is not only fostered, but also inhibited.

By conducting a study of the parent-teacher relational trust at Jones, I was able to closely examine the varied experiences of a small group of parents and teachers within one low-income school community. My goal was to follow pairs of teachers and parents throughout the course of the study so that I could elicit their perspectives on shared

experiences. I wanted to identify the similarities and differences in the ways pairs of parents and teachers perceived each other in their daily interactions. Because the focus of this study is on teacher-parent relational trust, the study design holds other variables related to trust constant. By focusing on teacher-parent relationships in one school, school and community variables (such as neighborhood characteristics, school leadership, curriculum, and school climate) were held constant.

Four Core Teacher Participants

Because I was interested in closely observing and investigating the relationships between pairs of teachers and parents, I chose to focus data collection on four core teacher participants. Opportunistic purposive sampling was used to select teachers for this study. In opportunistic sampling, participants are selected after research begins in order to take advantage of unfolding events or information that will best answer the research questions (Creswell, 2008). Four core teacher participants were selected following initial observations and survey results. I chose teachers with contrasting levels of relational trust with parents (based on survey results) so that behaviors that both inhibit and those that foster trust were both examined and compared. I selected two teachers that exhibited high trust and two teachers that exhibited low trust in parents. Core teacher participants were observed and interviewed multiple times throughout the course of the school year.

Kindergarten through second grade teachers were selected as core participants in the study. There are two reasons for this subject selection. First, early elementary grade students

are typically dropped off and picked up from school by their parents, unlike their older peers who may walk themselves to and from school. Because of this, these parents often have daily interactions with teachers. Secondly, because they are beginning readers and often lack independence with schoolwork, younger students usually require more assistance in completing homework assignments than older students. This results in a higher degree of teacher expectation for parent involvement in the home. For these reasons, early elementary teachers were selected as core participants for this study. Table 1 provides a description of the four core teacher participants in the study.

Table 1 Core Teacher Participant Demographics

Teacher	Trust Level in Parents	Current Grade Taught	Years Teaching	Age	Race	College/s <i>*No participants attended urban track teaching programs</i>
Kate	Low	K	7	31	White	Penn State University (BA) University of Pennsylvania (Teaching Certification)
Maya	High	K	37	59	White	Temple University
Jeannette	High	1	10	33	African American	University of Virginia (BA) Arcadia University (Teaching Certification)
Julia	Low	1	10	32	White	Westchester University (BA) Gwynedd Mercy (MA)

Two Core Parent Participants Per Classroom

Parents were also selected using opportunistic purposive sampling. Once teacher participants were confirmed, two parents within each classroom were selected as participants for the study. They were selected based on the results of a parent-trust scale survey. Like core teacher participants, parents with varying levels of trust in teachers were selected for participation.

Additional Participants

As data collection evolved, I recruited an additional six teachers, three parents, and three nonteaching staff members to participate in one interview. Three of the additional six teachers were selected via snowball sampling based on the suggestions of other participants. In addition, I invited three teachers to participate that I had met informally at the school. These teachers were all female and had varied years of teaching experience. They included five White teachers and one African American teacher. Additional three parents whom I had met informally at dismissal, a report card conference, and at a parent meeting were asked to participate. These included two mothers and one father. The parent ombudsman, school counselor, and parent trainer were selected as three additional nonteaching staff member participants. Data from these interviews was used to authenticate the data collected from core participants and to gain a more complete understanding of the parent-teacher dynamics present in the school.

Participant Demographics

All core and additional parents were African American and low-income based on their children's qualification for free or reduced price lunch. Parent participants included seven mothers, two fathers, and one grandmother. The teachers and staff were a heterogeneous group in terms of race, age, and years of experience in the school. Table 2 outlines detailed participant data.

Table 2: Participant Data

Total participants	23
Teachers	10
<i>Female</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Male</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>African American</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>White</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Age 25-30</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Age 31-40</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Age 41-50</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Age 51 +</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Teaching 0-5 years</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Teaching 5-10 years</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Teaching 11-20 years</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Teaching 20+ years</i>	<i>3</i>

Table 2, continued

Parents	10
<i>Mother</i>	7
<i>Father</i>	2
<i>Grandmother</i>	1
<i>African American</i>	10
<i>White</i>	0
<i>Employed</i>	4
<i>Unemployed</i>	6
<i>Single parent</i>	7
<i>Married/Partnered</i>	3
Nonteaching staff	3
<i>African American</i>	1
<i>White</i>	2
<i>Female</i>	2
<i>Male</i>	1
<i>Social worker</i>	1
<i>Parent ombudsman</i>	1
<i>Parent skills trainer</i>	1

Data Sources

Survey Instruments

Two surveys were administered in this study. These surveys were used solely for the selection of both teacher and parent core participants. All of the kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers completed adapted versions of the 1997 Teacher-Parent Trust & Parent Community Ties Scales. These scales were used in Bryk & Schneider's studies of school relational trust in 1994 and 1997 in which they assessed changes in school relational trust during Chicago school reforms of the 1990's. They were combined into one 17-item scale that asks teachers to rate on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) their agreement with statements. Many of the parent-teacher trust survey items were designed to assess each teacher's beliefs about school staff's trust (as a group) in parents as well as their beliefs about parents in the school (also as a whole group). I adapted these survey items to target each teacher's beliefs about their own relational trust with parents (rather than that of the school staff as a whole) and of their individual relational trust with parents of students in their classes (rather than of parents in the school as a whole). For example, the adapted survey asked teachers to rate their agreement with these items: *I feel good about parents' support for my work. Parents have confidence in my expertise as a teacher. I work hard to build trusting relationships with parents. I feel respected by my students' parents.*

Some of the survey items focused on parent-community ties and were also geared toward collecting information about teachers' beliefs about the school community as a whole. I adapted these survey items to target each teacher's evaluation of their outreach to parents and of parent involvement in their own classrooms. Examples of items focused on parent-

community ties include: *I work closely with parents to meet students' needs. I really try to understand parents' problems and concerns. Parents are greeted warmly when they call or enter my classroom.*

The Teacher-Parent Trust Scale was scored from 17-102 (6 possible points for each of 17 items). The higher the score, the higher the teacher's trust in parents. The lower the score, the lower the teacher's trust in parents. Teachers were ranked in order of their levels of trust of parents based on scores on the Teacher-Parent Trust Scale. This ranking was used to select teachers for more in-depth study.

Based on their levels of trust in parents as evidenced by survey responses and the desire to have teachers of different races and with varied amounts of teaching experience, I invited four teachers to participate in the study. Two of these teachers demonstrated high levels of trust in parents and two had lower levels of trust in parents. All four agreed to participate. Once these four teachers were selected, the parents in each of their corresponding classrooms were asked to complete an adapted version of the Parent-Trust Scale (Forsyth & Adams, 2004). This was a 17 item scale in which parent respondents rated the degree which they agreed with statements on a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree). Items on this scale were targeted to collect information about parents' trust in school staff as a whole as well as the school principal. Items were adapted to target parents' trust in their child's teacher specifically. Examples of items on this survey include: *My child's teacher is always ready to help. My child's teacher is always honest with me. My child's teacher treats everyone with respect.*

Just as with the Teacher-Parent Trust Scale, the Parent-Teacher Trust Scale was also scored from 17-102 (6 possible points for each of 17 items). The higher the score, the higher the parent's trust in his/her child's teacher. The lower the score, the lower the parent's trust in his/her child's teacher. Parents were ranked in order of their levels of trust of teachers based on scores on the Parent-Teacher Trust Scale. Similar to teacher selection, we wanted to include parents with both high and low levels of trust in core teacher participants. Based on the survey results of the respondents, two parents from each teacher's class were invited to participate in the study. All eight parents agreed to participate. One parent initially agreed but after several attempts, we could not find a common time to meet. Another parent from that teacher's classroom, who I invited to participate, took her place as a core parent participant.

Interviews & Observations

Initial interview protocols were developed based on Bryk & Schneider's (2002) theory that trust is discerned by perceptions of other's respect, personal regard, integrity, and competence. Interviews were designed to gather teacher and parent perceptions of each other in these four areas.

For core participants, who participated in up to four interviews, subsequent semi-structured interview protocols were used, each with a particular focus. Second interviews included a series of more targeted questions about the four facets of trust development, eliciting information about perceptions of specific individuals. Third interviews focused on teacher training and school culture around parents and parent involvement. Fourth interviews focused on participant perspectives on the Jones neighborhood and on issues of race.

Additional questions during each interview were tailored to each participant based on issues and incidents they brought up during interviews and observations.

I conducted all interviews. I am a white middle class educator in my thirties who has been working as a teacher and then administrator at a neighboring school for ten years. None of the participants had met me or known of me before their participation in the study. All participants were informed of my experience working in the community. I explained to them, typically during the first interview, that my experience working in the community led to my interest in learning more about how parents and other educators perceived one another. I spoke candidly but broadly to both parents and educators about my experiences working with the community and acknowledged that these experiences included both successful and challenging relationships.

In an effort to make interviews convenient to participants and to make them as comfortable as possible, participants had the option to participate in interviews at the school, in their homes, in public community establishments, or at my work office in the neighborhood. All teachers chose to be interviewed at the school before or after school hours or during teacher preparation periods. The bulk of parent interviews took place at their homes. Two parent interviews took place at the school and a few parents preferred to meet at my work office. Eight out of the ten parent participants had at least one interview in their homes. Between one and four interviews were conducted with each participant. Baseline interview protocols were the most comprehensive, resulting in interviews lasting about forty minutes. Subsequent interviews with core participants tended to be between twenty and thirty minutes

in length. While I requested four interviews with each core parent participant, the number of interviews conducted with each varied based on parent availability and interest in participation.

Parents, teachers, and staff were observed during arrival, dismissal, parent meetings and workshops, and parent-teacher report card conferences. Field notes were recorded during each observation. These notes were focused on both verbal and nonverbal communication between parents and teachers/staff. While I had hoped observations would be an opportunity for me to identify visible parent and teacher behaviors that attributed to perceived respect, competence, integrity, and personal regard, they did not provide valuable data. Due to my own schedule limitations, observations were infrequent. I sensed that participants never quite got used to my presence and I suspected that their awareness of my presence affected their behavior. For this reason, the observational data did not play an integral role when analyzing the data and drawing conclusions. Table 3 provides a detailed outline of the number of observations and interviews conducted.

Table 3: Observations & Interviews

Total # of Observations	20
<i>Arrival</i>	5
<i>Dismissal</i>	5
<i>Individual report card conference</i>	7
<i>Parent training</i>	1
<i>Home & School Assoc. meeting</i>	1

Table 3, continued

Total # of interviews	54
<i>Parent</i>	29
<i>Teacher</i>	22
<i>Nonteaching staff</i>	3
Core Teacher Participants	Number of Interviews
<i>Kate</i>	4
<i>Maya</i>	4
<i>Julia</i>	4
<i>Jeannette</i>	4
Additional Teacher Participants	Number of Interviews
<i>Allison</i>	1
<i>Marissa</i>	1
<i>Tina</i>	1
<i>Maive</i>	1
<i>Michelle</i>	1
<i>Simone</i>	1
Core Parent Participants	Number of Interviews
<i>Mary</i>	1
<i>Tora</i>	3
<i>Shana</i>	3
<i>Shaheed</i>	3
<i>Jim</i>	4

Table 3, continued

<i>Tamika</i>	4
<i>Barbara</i>	4
<i>Dominique</i>	4
Additional Parent Participants	Number of Interviews
<i>Wanda</i>	1
<i>Tyrell</i>	1
<i>Renee</i>	1
Nonteaching Staff Participants	Number of Interviews
<i>Naomi-School Counselor</i>	1
<i>Dorothy-Parenting Trainer</i>	1
<i>Bernard-Parent Ombudsman</i>	1

Data Analysis

Management

All observation notes were typed and organized by date and observation type in a password protected computer document folder. Interviews were audiorecorded and uploaded to computer files. Each interview was transcribed in a timely manner to ensure that the workload was manageable and that any impressions or interpretations were also readily documented.

Procedure

Each of the fifty-four interviews was audiotaped and transcribed. All transcriptions were uploaded into Atlas.ti. Data were reviewed and coded. A few initial codes were pre-specified (Miles & Huberman, 1984) based on Bryk & Schneider's theory of relational trust (2002). These included coding for data related to *competence, respect, personal regard, and integrity*, the four areas Bryk & Schneider found were central to the discernment of others' intentions. Additional codes were developed based on themes that emerged from the data. There were a total of eighty-seven codes used in the analyses. Twenty-two of these were grounded in at least twenty occurrences within the data. The codes grounded in the most occurrences were: *communication, barriers to parent involvement, parent competence, parent incompetence, teacher personal regard for child, teacher personal regard for parent, teacher strategies, parent complaint of teacher, community/neighborhood, teacher empathy, teacher frustration, and difficulty communicating.*

Once all data was coded, networks were created which provided a web-like visual representation of all quotes within each code. Within each network view, then, quotes were further organized into categories based on patterns that emerged. This process was repeated for multiple codes. Additionally, analyses were run to determine the frequency with which multiple codes occurred simultaneously within the data. In those cases where linkages between codes were evident, patterns were identified, networks were created, and data was further categorized. Field notes and memos were likewise analyzed. Data was broken down into segments and then categorized, ordered, and examined for connections, patterns, and propositions that explained the data (Simons, 2009).

Researcher's Role

My experience as a lower elementary school teacher and administrator in the same neighborhood of West Philadelphia as Jones for the past seven years has shaped this research study. I have had the opportunity to know and work with over a hundred parents in the neighborhood, some of whom have also had children at Jones. I have had both positive and negative experiences working with parents in the community and have found relational trust to be an extremely important part of my own successes and failures in fostering a parent-school partnership. These experiences coupled with my understanding of the literature on social class and relational trust in schools have helped me to shape this research study.

As a young white graduate student with a teaching background, I anticipated that it might be a challenge for me to develop relational trust with low-income parents participating in this study. I feared that parents might assume that my loyalty lay with teachers and/or that they could not or should not speak candidly and honestly with me. I attempted to compensate for this by first establishing communication and contact with the parent organization (Home & School Association) within the school. The parent ombudsman who led the group, Mr. Thomas, was supportive of my study. Parents respected Mr. Thomas and valued his role in the school. He introduced me to parents in the school. His warm demeanor with me, hug greetings (in the presence of parents), and kind introductions helped parents to view me as a parent advocate, rather than simply as a researcher. This was an effective method for establishing my credibility and trustworthiness.

Another effective method of developing trust with parent participants was to conduct interviews in parents' homes. I found that parents were more comfortable and relaxed when in their own space. Interviewing a parent while sitting on their couch or at their kitchen table created a more intimate atmosphere for honest, informal conversation that often resulted in parents letting their guards down and the sharing of personal histories, fears, triumphs, and experiences. On multiple occasions, parents expressed their enjoyment of our "talks" and their appreciation of being "heard."

Researcher Reflexivity

Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006) define reflexivity as the ongoing questioning of one's place and power relations within the research process. In support of Sandra Harding's (1993) contribution of "strong objectivity", they contend that when researchers select their topic, create initial research questions, construct a study design, and move through data collection, analysis, and representation, they must not ignore the subjectivity (politics, emotions, and standpoint) that they bring to bear on their research, but rather "own it, disclose it, and critically engage with it" (p. 27). Given my standpoint as a white, middle class teacher, administrator, and researcher, it is critical that I acknowledge how my positionality has affected the questions I have proposed, the design of the study, the data collection, and analyses. As I worked with parent participants in this predominantly low-income African American community, (whose positionality likely differs from my own), I made every effort to maintain my awareness of the differences and similarities between them and myself as the researcher in

order to develop a more in-depth understanding of how these parents talk about teachers and trust (Hesse & Biber, 2006). In other words, by recognizing how my standpoint differs from that of study participants, I was more capable of gaining insight into participants' thoughts, beliefs, and actions.

Methodological Limitations

This study took place in one Philadelphia elementary school and focused on a small sample of teachers and parents. While it provides meaningful data about understanding the role relational trust plays in these relationships, the findings are not be generalizable to other schools and settings. Further research is necessary to confirm and generalize the results.

Another limitation of this study is the possibility of a Hawthorne Effect. Through participation in the research study and knowledge of its focus on parent-teacher trust, participants may have become more reflective on their relationships with each other. This awareness could have resulted in changes in their behaviors. These changes would affect the validity of the data collection and findings. I was conscious of this possibility during data collection and analysis and I attempted to uncover signs of the Hawthorne Effect during interviews with participants as I asked them to elaborate on their experiences participating in the study and on their thoughts and behaviors related to their relationships with each other over the course of the study.

As a white woman, I was aware of the role race may have played in my interviews with African American participants. While race did not emerge in the early interviews as salient to understanding parent-teacher relationships, I wanted to specifically discuss this issue with

study participants. During the fourth interview with core participants, much of the interview protocol was focused on participants' perceptions of the role and importance of race between parents and teachers. African American parent and teacher participants almost exclusively reported that race was not a relevant or important issue between parents and teachers. Due to their lack of acknowledgement of race as a significant factor in parent-teacher relationships, I did not include issues of race in my analyses of the data. It is possible that my positionality as a white woman affected African American participants' responses to my questions regarding race and that, consequently, I did not have valid data on participants' true beliefs about the role of race in parent-teacher relationships.

It should also be noted that my ten years of personal experience as a lower elementary school teacher and administrator in Philadelphia might have affected the way that I interpreted the data. I made a conscious and consistent effort to take a balanced stand when observing, interviewing, and analyzing the data to ensure that my interpretations of participants' behaviors and words were valid and credible.

CHAPTER 4: THE POWER OF PERSONAL REGARD

Relational trust is critical to effective relationships between teachers and parents. In this study I aimed to answer the question: How is relational trust both fostered and inhibited in the relationships between low-income parents and their children's teachers? I intended to identify teacher actions that resulted in both successful and unsuccessful relationships with parents. I observed parents, teachers, and their interactions with one another and gave both parents and teachers the opportunity to openly discuss their perceptions of each other in each of the four aspects of trust development (personal regard, respect, competence, and integrity). Over the course of the study it became clear that the degree to which parent trust in teachers was fostered or inhibited was largely dependent on one of the four aspects of trust development: personal regard. Prior research has not explored which of the four identified elements of trust are most critical to teachers in building effective relationships with parents.

While the data illustrate that all four aspects of trust are important, perceived personal regard for another (demonstration of care/concern) was the most powerful indicator of parent trust in teachers. The importance of personal regard for others was evidenced by both the frequency of its occurrence within the data and the level of intensity and emotional depth with which parent participants talked about their perceptions of teachers' care. Parent responses to interview questions that focused on eliciting their perspectives on teacher competence, respect, and integrity tended to be brief and generally positive. Responses to open ended questions such as, "How has everything been going at the school?" tended to elicit unsolicited parent reports that focused almost exclusively on perceived teacher personal regard. Because

all parent interviews, aside from the baseline interviews, began with general questions such as these, parents were provided with the opportunity to share stories about whatever was important to them. Upon analyzing the data, I realized that much of this participant initiated data related to parent perceived teacher personal regard. I illustrate this phenomenon below with excerpts from my interviews with Barbara, a grandmother of a first grade student. I begin with her responses to questions focusing on perceived competence, respect, and integrity, respectively. Notice in these responses that when responding to questions regarding teacher competence, respect, and integrity, Barbara provides brief, nonspecific comments about her grandson's teacher. She does not express any concerns and does not elaborate on these facets of trust.

Competence- (fulfilling the expectations of one's role responsibilities)

Researcher: "What are your expectations for [your grandson's teacher] or any teacher? What's her job?"

Barbara: "Well she does a good job what she doin'. Teachin' him and he's learning the things that he needs to be. You know, so um, and that's what I expect them to do."

Researcher: "Have you ever known a teacher that, in your opinion, didn't do their job?"

Barbara: "No. No."

Respect- (listening and being genuine in conversation)

Researcher: "Does she seem to be somebody you can talk to easily?"

Barbara: "Yeah. And she's very pleasant. You know, she's a nice person. I haven't met a teacher that didn't have a nice disposition. I haven't met anybody like that. They probably out there but I haven't met them. And she's just so nice and friendly, you know. She's a very nice lady."

Integrity- (being reliable to do what one says he/she will do)

Researcher: "Do you feel like if [the teacher] tells you she's gonna do something, that she follows through and does it?"

Barbara: "Mmhmm."

Researcher: "Can you think of an example of when she did something like that?"

Barbara: "Goin' over stuff with him. Makin' sure that he gets the concept of what she's teachin' and makin' sure he understands it. Like she'll do a little one on one with 'em."

In response to the question, "Has anything been going on?" Barbara shared a story about a gym teacher who she reached out to. She felt he blew her off and did appreciate his lack of care to speak to her or to elaborate on her grandson's progress in gym class.

His gym teacher, I hadn't really talked to him too much. The first time they had the um, the first report, I caught him in the hallway and he was like, "Well, there's not too much goin' on with Nijel". It was like real brief... He was like, "Oh, I have other parents to talk to." But that was the gym teacher. But I just wanted to know like do he be participatin' in the things in gym. You know, stuff like that... He was like "There's not much goin' on

with Nijel. He's a good kid but right now I have to see other parents, so." And I never talked to him no more.

This parent-teacher interaction stood out to Barbara. It was present enough in her mind for her to initiate telling me about it. I argue that this was an important incident to her because it was a time she did not feel the teacher cared about her grandson or about speaking to her. Here Mary also responds to a general question with a detailed story of how her first grade son's teacher demonstrated personal regard.

Researcher: So how would you describe your relationship with [your son's teacher]?

Mary: Honestly, I feel as though we have a good rapport. Like, I have requests of her and she has no problem accommodating. Just like she has requests of me and I am more than willing to like, help her out because I think she is like really wonderful. We have, like open communication. It's like a two way street. She just doesn't let it fall on deaf ears. She actually listens when you talk and have different questions and concerns about your child in her classroom.

Researcher: How do you know that she listens?

Mary: When we had the parent teacher conference, that was the first time I met her. And, um, and we were talking about different things. And so I was letting her know different things that my son likes. And um, like he likes the Trouble game. I said, "If you get the Trouble game, he will play with another student" because they have free time and he doesn't like to be with the kids. He likes to be with her. I said, "So if you buy a

Trouble game or like different card games". He loves cards. "And if you do that, he'll play with another student." And so she said, "I'm going out tonight after conferences and I'm going to go buy the Trouble game." And so the next day I asked my son, I said, "Did you play the Trouble game in school today?" He said, "Yeah, [my teacher] has it. And we played Old Maid." Because she already has the cards in the closet and she said she will pull them out. I said, "Wow." Some people will say, "Yeah, I'll do it," but it just goes right up top of their head.

Exchanges such as these where parents responded to an open ended question with a story that illustrated the presence or absence of personal regard were typical in my interviews with parents. The stories they were most eager to share and most elaborative with were stories related to their perceptions of teacher personal regard.

In the findings presented in this chapter, I will illustrate the importance of personal regard for parents and provide a deeper examination of this important aspect of parental trust in schools. The data revealed that parents identified three categories of teachers' personal regard for others that were important to them: personal regard for the teaching profession, personal regard for children, and personal regard for parents.

Teacher Personal Regard for the Teaching Profession: Don't Be "In It for the Paycheck"

Parents in this study were very observant of teachers. They noticed when teachers looked happy and engaged with students. They were also attuned to teacher frustration and irritation. They felt that teaching should not just be a "job" for teachers; rather, teachers should have a level of commitment and love for their profession that goes beyond that of a typical job. Parents noted when teachers seemed to enjoy their work and the children and when they appeared to be disengaged. Some parents believed they could perceive when a teacher was committed to her job. Here Jim, a parent of a kindergartener and second grader said, "She likes her job. You can tell. You can tell when a person is like just there for the money. You can tell the [person that's] there for the kids. She's there for the kids." Similarly this kindergarten mother explained, "You can see through people. Like she not there just because of the paycheck. She want them to learn."

Dominique, a mother of a first and fourth grader, was an active member of the school community. As the treasurer of the Home and School Association, she considered herself a member of the school staff. Because of her presence in the school, she had the opportunity to observe and interact with teachers. She noticed when teachers did not look happy to greet the children in the morning. While she acknowledged that children give teachers a hard time, she clearly preferred and appreciated the teachers that did appear happy. "[It is] very rare that I see a teacher smiling when they come to them kids and I don't blame them. Those kids are

horrible. Some of 'em, they do smile. Like the science teacher, I love her. She's very sweet."

Parents were also perceptive of signs that teachers were *not* committed to their jobs. Parents noticed when teachers did not pay attention to the children, spent time talking with other teachers, and lacked a sense of enjoyment being with the children. The belief that some teachers were "in it for the paycheck" was prevalent among the participants. Shana, a kindergarten mother, said: "They just there for the paycheck." Dominique echoed this sentiment while also acknowledging the difficult job teachers have. She was frustrated by her son's reports that his teacher was too busy dealing with other students' misbehaviors to attend to his academic needs. She said:

You know she tryin' to keep them contained and tryin' to teach the ones that wanna learn. I understand that but when [you have] someone that wanna learn, and you tell them that you don't got time, you not doin' your job. You know, you get paid to give your undivided attention to a child if they need it, you know?

Parents were able to distinguish between teachers whose behaviors indicated that they were committed to their jobs and, in contrast, those who seemed disengaged from their students. Jim walked his two sons to and from school every day. He was pleased with his sons' teachers, but critical of the school in general. Here he compares his son's teacher to others he observed in the school.

Like my son's teacher... I really think that she feels great if she sees those children growin' up. Other teachers, from just walkin' past them earhuffin' (overhearing) the conversation, it seems like it's just an eight hour job. It's just about the paycheck. That's

basically what it is, from the majority of what I'm lookin' at...From my eyes goin' to get my son, some of the teachers, I see them doin' more conversatin' with each other than they be doin' with the children. I don't care what time it is. You know, your job is done when the parents come get their children.

When Jim picked his sons up from the schoolyard at dismissal, he was observant of the way the teachers dismissed the children from the schoolyard at the end of the school day. Here he described teachers' urgency to get children off school property. He interpreted this as a sign that when the dismissal bell rang, teachers stopped caring. To him, their lack of commitment to their jobs was clear.

They rushes them off the grounds. I mean, that makes me think, y'all rushin' them so y'all can hurry up and go home. Like for real? That's how y'all really feel? Like, "Come on hurry up. Long as you off the grounds you can do whatever you want." That's what they tell the kids.

Dominique also placed importance on teachers' behavior at dismissal. She noticed a difference between teachers who went straight to their cars to leave and those who stayed late to work in the school. She said, "Some of 'em, just, they get in their car and go home. They got their other problems at home to deal with. But some be tryin' to stick in there like I do." When teachers demonstrated a commitment to their jobs (ex: staying after school hours or smiling when interacting with the children), this evoked a sense of trust among parents. Conversely, when a lack of care or commitment was perceived (ex: talking to other teachers rather than children or rushing students off the school grounds), parents became distrustful of teachers. Parents also

discerned teacher personal regard for their children.

Teacher Personal Regard for Child: Academic and Non-Academic Care

Parents in this study shared stories of their appreciation of teachers' demonstrations of personal regard (or care) for their children. They took note when teachers met their child's needs both academically and non-academically. This care was critical to the building of trust between parent and teacher.

Academic Care

Teachers in this study demonstrated personal regard for a child by being aware of their academic needs, providing individualized support, communicating these needs and supports to parents, and telling the child and parent when he or she was proud of a child's academic accomplishments. Teachers who were able to do some or all of these things enhanced trust with their parents. Jeannette Gill, an African American first grade teacher, knew each of her students' academic strengths and weaknesses and she effectively communicated these to parents. Barbara, the grandmother of one of her students, was impressed with the level of detail Jeannette was able to use in describing her grandson's academic progress. She was particularly struck by Jeannette's knowledge of her grandson's progress in subjects that Jeannette did not teach.

She knows how he doin' in art, how he doin' in science. But Ms. Gill, she tells me about all them other subjects... She's more concerned with my grandson. And that makes me feel good, when you can observe things that I'm seein'. Then she'll tell me

how good he knows the work. So she observes and that's good.

In addition to being able to communicate children's academic progress to parents, teachers in this study also took the time to have the students demonstrate their learning for parents. Tyrell appreciated that his kindergarten son's teacher took the time to have his son demonstrate for him what he had learned. He said, "When he was out in the hallway, you know, she had him count. 'Show your dad what you can do.' They came out they way to show me what my son can do." By taking the time to have students showcase their learning for parents, teachers demonstrated their personal regard for their student's academic progress. Conversely, parents also noticed when teachers did not care for their children academically. Wanda voiced her frustration about feeling that her first grade daughter's kindergarten teacher did not know her child well academically.

When she got to first grade and her teacher tellin' me she strugglin', she don't even know how she made it to first grade, that makes me wonder. I'm not gonna say she was a bad teacher but I think that if a child's strugglin'... she might not even've seened it. I can't say she seened it. You should be seened it. So I don't know how that gap came between but it just made me wonder. Like why didn't she see that my child was strugglin'?

Parents in this study appreciated when teachers shared their knowledge of students' academic progress with them, both verbally and by having students demonstrate. By being able to communicate students' strengths and needs, these teachers showed parents that they cared about their children, helping to foster a sense of parent-teacher trust.

Non-Academic Care

Parents at Jones School also wanted teachers to care about their children as people, not just about their academic progress. Parents perceived that teachers cared about their children as people when they showed affection for students in the form of hugs, for example, and by attending to students' emotional and social needs. Dominique's reflection on her own experience as a student provides insight into what she is looking for from her children's teachers. Here is Dominique reflecting on her own experience as a student.

As a kid when I was growing up and now that I am grew up, one thing I did get out and I would like to still see it is the teachers that care for a kid and not only just to teach 'um. But know where that kid [is]... and that's how it was for me. Ms. Wilson knew... I'm gonna tell ya. Did you eat breakfast? This was the kinda teacher. Did you have socks? Just don't say (gesturing handing a child a paper) "Here you go. This what we gonna do." And I didn't get that. My teachers cared. You know, it was like caring, like a family at school every time when I was growin' up. And that's how I want it to be for my kids.

She recalled feeling that her teachers truly cared for her. They created a family-like classroom community by demonstrating care and concern for the children. She hoped her children would have the same positive experiences with their teachers.

Just as teachers adapt instructional support based on students' individual academic needs, non-academic care can also be differentiated for students based on individual social-emotional needs. For instance, Renee said that her third grade daughter was very shy and she felt the teachers purposefully tried to bring her daughter out of her shell. She experienced this

attention from teachers as a form of care.

Jalen don't like talkin'. [Her teachers] takin' their time out. [They] say that when they call on Jalen, she wouldn't talk. Ms. Botman would say to the class, "The only voice I wanna hear today is Jalen's." And she knew she would get quiet so that means you need to be as quiet or as loud as Jalen was. So I knew she cared about her. And even now, she'll come in and she'll say "Jalen"... they say "I can't hear you." They do things like that even now. They'll ask her, because she doesn't talk, they take the initiative to talk to her.

The teacher's attention to Jalen and acknowledgement of her special need to be drawn out was critical in her mother perceiving that the teachers understood her daughter and went out of their way to connect with her. Renee perceived the teacher's behavior as a form of care. Other students required different kinds of attention. Mary had been frustrated by teachers in the past. Her son tended to have disruptive behavior patterns with previous teachers but she felt his first grade teacher, Julia, was successful with her son because she showed him she cared for him. Here Mary describes how Julia effectively demonstrated care for her son. From her perspective, this care resulted in her son's ability to improve his behavior in school.

I don't want you to just sit and cater to him but he's a person just like you are and the rest of your students. If he feels as though he's being ignored, that's when he'll act out to get attention. You know, and she doesn't do that. He'll come in with an angry face and she'll say, "Do you need a hug?" and she'll give him a hug and his day starts off good.

Like other parents in this study, Mary placed importance on the teacher's non-academic care because it resulted in her child's success. From her perspective, when the teacher offered her son a hug, this was a sign that she cared for him. This gesture built trust between both Julia and Mary and Julia and the child. This trust resulted in Julia and Mary's ability to have frequent, honest, and productive communication about this student's challenging behaviors. Their parent-teacher partnership became a powerful tool for supporting his success in school.

Parents not only observed non-academic care for students, it was also communicated to them directly by the teacher and recounted to them by students. Both types of communication had the power to foster parent trust in teachers. Kate, a kindergarten teacher, explained that it was important to her that her students' parents knew that she cared for their children and that she acknowledged how they each contributed to the class. Here she talked about how she used written communication to build trust with parents. "Once a week I will just put a little note in saying, 'I like how your daughter was helping today', or 'She really was friendly during centers' or something like that." No matter how challenging a student, Kate always took the time to share these types of positive reports with parents. She found this to be an effective method for building trusting parent-teacher relationships.

Kate also communicated her non-academic care to parents by offering to help their children beyond the classroom. For example, one of her students told her that his brother was bullying him on the walk to and from school. She asked the mother if it was okay for her to pick him up and walk him to school everyday. The mother agreed and Kate escorted him safely to school for the rest of the school year.

Maive, a second grade special education teacher, described a mother who distrusted the school. Although Maive was not her child's teacher, she had a special relationship with him. She said:

One parent, she does not like this school, does not trust anyone with her child, but if the child needs help, time-out, assistance, or just needs to calm down and regroup... he'll come here and that's what the parent wants... I think maybe because I've built that rapport with the student and the student goes home and discusses that with the parent.

Even though this mother distrusted the school, she had a unique trust for Maive because her son had told her about the caring relationship she had built with him. Children often share stories about school with their parents. These stories provided parents evidence of teacher personal regard for their children.

When asked to reflect on their own experiences as students, parents recalled fondly those teachers that they felt cared for them beyond their academic progress. Here Tamika describes her favorite teacher from her childhood.

There was one teacher I liked. I really did care about. I was in middle school. Very sweet teacher. I could talk to him about anything. He was just there for me... He was a caring person. He always listened to other people's problems, try to solve problems, and overall he was just one of my best teachers that I did have.

She also commented on teachers she did not like as a child. She said,

They were adults and I was a child... It's like, they want the best for me but, I guess because I was a loner, you know, they just walked right past me, you know, just didn't pay attention to me. I was okay with it. You know, people gonna be people.

Tamika's comparison of her childhood teachers reflects her own appreciation of teachers that demonstrated that they cared for her, beyond her academic progress. Shaheed, a Jones father and former Jones student, had a complicated family situation. He was involved in different social service programs and was raised primarily by his grandmother. He also recalled his favorite teacher. He said,

She just always took time with me. Me and my sister cause my sister had her too. And um, but with me she just took her time with me. She knew what I was goin' through far as my family situation... She just work with me, kept in contact with my grandmom. Her and my grandmom always talked. So it was just, she just took her time with me... She was just caring. She always made sure I was up on my work. If she seen me slippin', I mean, she keep me after and we go over this or she help me with this, call my grandmom and my grandmom would work with me on certain things. She was always bringin' up new ideas to help me along with what I was goin' through. So she was cool.

These childhood experiences travel with parents and help shape the expectations they have of their own children's teachers. Here Tora explains how her childhood experiences have affected her hopes for her children's experiences with their teachers.

Like I said, as a kid when I was growing up and now that I am grew up, one thing I did get out and I would like to still see it is the teachers that care for a kid and not only just

to teach 'um. But know where that kid... and that's how it was for me. [My teacher] Ms. Washington knew... I'm gonna tell ya. "Did you eat breakfast?" This was the kinda teacher. "Did you have socks?" Just don't say (gesturing handing a child a paper), "Here you go. This what we gonna do." And I didn't get that. My teachers cared. You know, it was like caring, like a family at school every time when I was growin' up. And that's how I want it to be for my kids.

Nell Noddings' work on care in schools is relevant to this finding. She argues that schools today are so focused on students' academic progress that they fail to address important non-academic growth (Noddings, 2005). She also points out a decline in community trust in schools. She suggests that a teacher focus on students' social and emotional needs and being hospitable toward parents may be part of a more holistic approach to educating the child and building family trust in schools (Noddings, 2005). The findings presented here build on her work by further suggesting that a part of being warm and welcoming towards parents should include teachers sharing and demonstrating ways they care for students academically and non-academically.

Teacher Personal Regard for Parent: Providing Resources, Communicating Effectively, Being Flexible and Accommodating, and Making Personal Connections

In addition to being appreciative of teachers' demonstrations of personal regard for their children, parents were also receptive to teachers' demonstrations of care for themselves as individuals and as parents. I identify four types of teacher demonstrations of care toward

parents: providing resources, communicating effectively, being flexible and accommodating, and making personal connections. These demonstrations of teacher care address both parents' expressed needs, those identified by parents, and inferred needs, those determined by the observation and perceptions of teachers (Noddings, 2005). In both cases, parents in this study recognized and acknowledged teachers' care.

Providing Resources

We know that many low-income parents do not feel confident supporting their children's learning (Lareau, 1989; Gillies, 2006) and that at times they are struggling financially. Parents consistently identified help with resources as a way that they felt cared for by their children's teachers. Teachers also knew that this was important to parents and actively worked to help parents locate the resources that they needed to support their children. At Jones School, teachers provided resources to parents by donating needed school supplies and clothing, providing extra work or suggesting strategies for helping their child at home, assistance getting outside services, and offering parent workshops. Here Maya, a kindergarten teacher, talked about the rapport that she built with parents by providing necessary resources.

I think you build that rapport with parents. ... If a child was coming without gloves, I'd give the child a pair of gloves and say, "This is from Mrs. T" or if I see that a parent is struggling with something, I say, "What can I do? Can we make arrangements for you to get some help?" You know, I've been there with parents.

In addition to providing clothing or noticing if a parent or family is struggling, teachers talked about how they worked to provide parents with academic resources to support their

children. Many parents in low income urban communities such as Jones do not feel equipped, perhaps in some cases based on their own limited educational experiences, to assist with homework and do not have familiarity with many strategies to help them support their children academically. Teachers at Jones took initiative to support parents when they recognized that parents needed resources to support their children's learning at home. Below Maive, a second grade special education teacher, talked about how she partnered with parents by providing them those types of resources.

Giving them resources to different approaches to workin' with their kids at home and through the summer. Behaviors, trying to have that rapport where it's like if you work on the behaviors at home and have incentives then I can do it as well.

In other circumstances parents self-identified the need for resources and explicitly requested them of teachers. Maya, a kindergarten teacher explains,

There are some parents that will come to me and ask all the time for extra stuff. What can I do to support my child at home? And I say, "She's doing great." And they say, "But she can always do better." They really want to know what they can try and they will try...So parents who asked me for extra stuff, I try to say, "Let me get it right now." I will just try to give it to them right there.

Many students at Jones qualified for supplemental education services such as special education, mental health services, and counseling. Parents expressed difficulty requesting and coordinating these services. When teachers helped guide them through these processes, parents felt teachers cared for them. Here Tamika, a kindergarten mother, shared how

important the resources her daughter's teacher was able to share with her were. Tamika had been frustrated by her daughter Jada's behavior. She thought Jada had attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and did not know how to support her. She said, "I love her teacher 100% because she's helpin' me out with Jada, tryin' to get Jada the resources, getting ME the resources that I need to help Jada. And she is really helping me out a lot and I love her." Maya, a kindergarten teacher, also tried to connect families with important resources. She said, "I'm really good at getting on top of things. If it's a speech problem, if I see a behavior problem right away, calling the parent and saying, you know, 'Come in. Let's talk about this.' Or I refer the child and I need to let the parent know that I did that."

In addition to providing parents strategies to work with their children at home and resources to manage learning and behavior issues, the school helped parents to get important school supplies. Here Barbara, a first grade grandmother explained,

They try to reach out. One time with the uniform. They grow so fast... I spoke to Ms. H about the uniforms and stuff. But they helped me. People were like donatin' shirts and pants and stuff of that nature. Yeah, so they very helpful in that aspect.

Like many other parents in low-income urban neighborhoods, Jones parents sometimes struggled to find the resources they needed to meet their children's needs. These parents appreciated when teachers assisted them with acquiring resources such as finding a donated uniform, connecting to a parent to a child's supplemental services, or providing useful strategies for parents to use at home with their children. These teacher efforts improved the trust between parents and teachers.

Communicating Effectively

Communication between low-income parents and their children's teachers can be strained by differences in race and social class (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). The teachers in this study who developed trusting relationships with parents worked hard to effectively communicate with parents. When teachers communicated with parents effectively, parents perceived that teachers cared for them. Teachers worked to communicate effectively with parents by both maintaining an open and friendly demeanor with parents and by sharing useful and important information about students with parents. Teachers took care to learn parents' names and acknowledge parents by saying hello and exchanging general pleasantries. Teachers also sent home notes and daily behavior charts and worked hard to communicate effectively at conferences. When teachers offered consistent communication such as notes and daily behavior charts, parents felt the teacher cared about their role in their child's education.

Barbara stated that her grandson's teacher made her feel comfortable. When asked how, she said, "The way that she, um, explain things to me, as far as my grandson. She don't worry about goin' out of her way about nothin'. She just nice."

The way that Kate, a kindergarten teacher, communicated with her parents exemplifies the type of communication that built trust between parents and teacher. For instance when she was going to be out of school for an operation she communicated about her absence with this parent in a way that showed him that she acknowledged his potential concerns and was willing to go out of her way to reassure him. Jim said of Kate's communication with him about her upcoming surgery,

It's just that she pulled me to the side and said, "I won't be here. I have an operation but Saleem will be taken care of very kindly. If he not, please let me know." Then, she even called me from home. "You're son's been doing good. " Telling me he's been doing good. I'm lookin' at my phone like, "This lady's takin' her time to let me know about my kid."

Many parents have anxiety about going into report card conferences. This is especially true if the parents did not have positive experiences in school themselves. Often parents are seated across a table from the teacher and are immediately handed the report card to review. Kate approached the conference differently. She sat side by side with each parent without a table and discussed the student's progress before she even referenced the report card. When she did show parents the report card, she explained it in a way that parents found helpful. Here again Jim described how Kate communicated effectively with him.

Before she even showed me the report card she talk to me, let me know the situation, let me know how his progress is gettin' with the work, and what stuff he need helps on at home. Then we sit and she um, cause I never could understand those report cards, so she broke it down for me. Let me know what was what.

Teacher participants found providing positive feedback to be a powerful tool when communicating with parents. When talking to parents about a behavior concern, for example, teachers reported parents getting defensive if they began the conversation by explaining the problem. Teachers found that when they began these conversations with a positive tone and did not jump straight into reporting the behavior concern, parents were more likely to see

themselves and the teacher as a team. Here's what Melissa, a second year first grade teacher said,

No matter whose parent I'm talking to, even if I'm calling because there's a behavior concern, I try to say something positive first and not just all negative, even though sometimes (laughs) if a kid had a day, you just wanna be like, "He did this and he did that" but just try to ease that into the conversation and don't just like, you know, get into it as soon as they pick up the phone. But I would like for them to see us as a team, you know, that we're working together. We all have the same common goal.

Simone, a veteran sixth grade teacher, likewise understood the power of positivity. In addition, she skillfully communicated discipline concerns to parents by purposefully using language that made parents feel like they were on the same team.

I always look at it positive. Nobody wants to always hear about their child bein' a pain. They don't. You wouldn't. And I think about how I want to be treated as a parent. And I try to do the same thing back. So even when I know that I've got a little itch and I know he can be a pain, I seriously don't want you callin' me and telling me that everyday. Now I know sometimes you may have to call me, but it's how we approach our parents, what we say in the beginning, and always back to the parents, "Girl, I know you're gonna be upset with him." Always put it right back to them. "I knew you were gonna be upset. I told him. I know you don't allow this." So already I put it in your lap. And I say "Don't be upset with him too bad." I always take that edge off.

By using language such as, “ I knew you were gonna be upset” and “I know you don’t allow this,” Simone skillfully got parents to take her concerns seriously. Then following up with, “Don’t be upset with him too bad,” let the parent know that while as parents and teacher they should be disappointed with the child and should expect better in the future, the incident was forgivable and should not be taken too seriously. She also does not blame the parent for the student’s behavior. The way she communicated with parents fostered a sense of teamwork and trust.

Teachers shared other communication strategies that helped foster trust with parents. Kate actively used strategies to let her kindergarten parents know she was listening in conversation.

I do a lot of, “Oh I hear what you’re saying”, I just like rephrase what they said or, like, “From what I’m understanding you’re having trouble getting here because...” I try to rephrase it so that they know I’m understanding what they’ve told me.

Melissa, a first grade teacher, found something as simple as small-talk to be effective when interacting with parents.

I think it’s not just a matter of talking to parents, but of being able to talk to people... I think a lot of people maybe don’t know how to make small talk. Not just teachers here, but teachers at other schools that I’ve worked at. They don’t know how to talk to the parent as a person instead of like this parent who’s almost like the enemy sometimes... Even if you start out by talking about the weather, or everybody here likes the Phillies, you know, just something besides... or if you know one of their other kids that aren’t

your student... if you ask how they're doing, how's their family doing, that kind of thing. I mean it seems like an obvious thing, like just be a natural person.

Teachers at Jones used a variety of strategies to effectively communicate with their students' parents. By sharing information, communicating often, maintaining positivity, and making small talk, these teachers developed trusting parent-teacher relationships.

Being Flexible and Accommodating

Being flexible and accommodating also helped parents perceive that teachers care. For example, having a phone conference with a sick parent who can't come to the school, doing a home visit if a parent is disabled, or offering to come in early or stay after school to meet a parent are all examples of ways parents perceive that a teacher is flexible and accommodating.

When Tora, a mother of four children at Jones, was transferring her children to this school, the counselor was very helpful and, from the parent's perspective, did all the work to make the transfer occur and the parent appreciated that.

My sons at the time had IEPs. You know, they were goin' through the transition of gettin' help. So that's what I was mainly lookin' for... not just the school, but [one] that had that program. And that's the main thing that drew me to that school, cause Ms. Smith was awesome. When I first went there I explained to her about my boys. She said, "You don't have to do nothin'." She communicated with the other school. She did everything.

Having four children at the school, Tora appreciated that the teachers set up all three of her children's report card conferences on the same day. This made it much more convenient for

her.

It was a great visit. It really was. I got time... usually when I go I have to wait in the hallways, wait for the next parent. But this time the time was good. I went there, I seen three teachers, no waitin', so this was a good one.... Everybody's was on the same day and that was another plus for me. Usually I have to go Wednesday for the two little ones and Thursday for the big one.

When teachers and staff are not accommodating to parents, parents may perceive they are not welcome in the school. Renee, mother of a third grader, had some health and mobility problems. She shared a story about a time she had a transportation service pick her up from Jones School for a doctor appointment after dropping her daughter off there in the morning.

We had our differences... Last year I got sick and they wanted me to go to the doctor's. When I did go to the appointment, somebody help me go to the doctor's. I went in the school and [the principal] told me that I was not supposed to be hangin' around the school waitin' for anybody.

When the principal told Renee she shouldn't be hanging around the school, Renee perceived that the school was not willing to accommodate her health and mobility needs. This perception resulted in Renee feeling unwelcome and uncared for at her child's school.

Many teachers spoke openly that there were teachers that had good relationships with parents and other teachers who struggled in this area. Some teachers attributed good teacher-parent relationships to teacher flexibility. Here Simone, a veteran sixth grade teacher, explained

that through her decades of teaching experience she has learned that a “my way or the highway” teacher attitude will not be successful when working with parents.

One part of it is flexibility. This is who I am. This is how I am. You can't work as a teacher and say “this is it” with parents either. And as you teach, and each year, and I laugh, some wars aren't important anymore... You have to pick your battles you really want to go for. And some teachers always have a battle. And it's probably part of their personality to say, you know, “Cause this is me. I won't stand for thus and such.”

Jeannette, a first grade teacher, explained to parents that she is willing to be flexible with deadlines for the completion of assignments or submitting field trip money as long as parents communicate with her about their circumstances. She said,

Just making sure that they know that I'm open to any type of communication. Any time there's a project due, or anytime there's a trip or anything like that... Just let them know that if there's ever a problem or if they ever have, you know, financial situations if they're not able to do such thing, then I'm open to helping them. They just have to contact me. I let them know.

Many teachers showed their care for parents by being flexible when arranging for report card conferences. They acknowledged that parents' inflexible work schedules and limited day care options and were willing adjust their hours to accommodate parents. For example, fourth grade teacher Michelle, explained,

We have certain days for report card conferences and parents will say that's not

convenient for them. And I even have gone above and beyond and said, “Well alright then, I’ll stay late or I’ll come early” and in two instances I did make arrangements to do that.

Low-income parents and their children’s teachers often have difficulty developing trusting relationships as a result of the cultural differences caused by differences in social class (Adams, Forsyth, & Mitchel, 2009; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). When teachers at Jones showed their personal regard for parents by being flexible and accommodating to parents’ needs, parents perceived that teachers cared and that their participation in their children’s education was valued. This sense of personal regard established through teacher flexibility was an important building block for trusting relationships.

Making Personal Connections

Finally, it can be very meaningful to parents when teachers make personal connections with them. Talking to parents about their children and about their lives made parents in this study feel that teachers cared for them. When teachers found ways to let a parent know that they liked them and appreciated them, it built a trusting parent-teacher relationship.

Jim was very pleased with his son’s kindergarten teacher, Kate. This was in part because she made him feel valued. She acknowledged him in some way everyday. Jim recalled,

Well, my third day to pick my child up, she gave me two thumbs up. And it kind of made me teary eyed because it let’s me know that I’m a good dad. You know, cause I help them with their homework. And I guess it looks excellent cause he’s got all stars. Every time I come in, she gives me two thumbs up, like, “Okay Mr. B. You’re doing

good.” And I like the other school they [were] in, but they never done that.

One day a couple of Kate’s friends came to the school to see her at dismissal. By introducing Jim to her friends, he perceived that she valued him. “She even introduced me. Two ladies came to meet her after work. She introduced me to them. I felt like I was special. Yeah, I felt special.”

Here is an example of how Jim’s other child’s teacher, Anne, made a personal connection with him:

On Thursday Marcus did somethin’ and she waited in the schoolyard till I got there. And she grabbed me by the... she put her hand around my neck. She said, “Come here Mr. B. Let us take a walk.” And we took a walk while she was tellin’ me what Marcus was doin’.

In response, I asked Jim how it made him feel when the teacher touched him. He said,

She only talked to me once but I liked what she did. Yeah, cause she’s trustin’ me. I look at it like, for her bein’ in the neighborhood for one and dealin’ with the kids that she are... To come up and just grab someone and touch them, some people get very uncomfortable for that, but for her to have that open heart to do that, to see if that person would be like that, I like that.

Some teachers purposefully attempted to make personal connections with parents. Kate used strategies such as paying close attention to events in her students’ families’ lives, expressing interest or concern in regard to these events, and learning family members’ names.

I just tried to put little tidbits and I tried to pay personal attention like, the five-year-olds

tell you everything. Like if someone is having a baby, I know if there was a death in the family, so I just try to convey, you know, “I’m thinking about you” or “Oh my gosh, how is the new baby?” I know there’s a lot going on at home. So I try to keep a personal connection going on with everyone. ... I make it a point to be friendly and respectful. Like I make it a point to learn everyone’s name and, that it’s Jamal’s brother that picks him up, to really get to know people.

In order for parents and teachers to develop trust at this school, parents needed to feel seen and heard by teachers. They needed to perceive that they were valued for their efforts, for their strengths, as parents, and as people.

Personal regard emerged as the most crucial facet for trust development. I have identified three types of teacher personal regard: personal regard for the teaching profession, personal regard for children (academic and nonacademic), and personal regard for parents (providing resources, communicating effectively, being flexible and accommodating, and making personal connections). When teachers demonstrate these forms of personal regard, trust is fostered.

Conclusions on Care

It has been well established in the literature that there are many positive effects of parental involvement in schools including higher student achievement and increased teacher and parent satisfaction (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Schools with high levels of trust likewise

have increased levels of student achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth, Barnes, & Adams; 2006; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). The benefits of parent involvement and school trust are not disconnected from one another. Trust is required in order for schools to benefit from parent involvement (Tschannen-Moran, 2001) and to successfully implement school reforms, improvements, and changes (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). In other words, not only is trust a predictor of parent involvement, but it is also a necessary component to effective partnership and school reform. Parent-teacher trust, therefore, plays a critical role in the success of today's schools and continues to be an area that must be better understood.

While prior research on parent trust in schools identifies the predictors and effects of trust and defines the multiple facets of trust (Adams, 2008; Adams & Forsyth, 2007; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Tschannen-Moran, 2001), it is silent on which facets of trust are most critical in the development of trust. Additionally, the bulk of the parent trust research has relied on survey data and has, therefore, failed to provide a refined understanding of the experiences of parents and teachers. By using in-depth interviews and observations as the primary sources of data, the findings presented here provide a more detailed and accurate understanding of the relationships between parents and teachers. The research question: *How is relational trust both fostered and inhibited in the relationships between low-income parents and their children's teachers?*, has been answered here in terms of parents' trust in teachers. Based on this data, I build on prior research by identifying 'personal regard for others' as the most significant facet of parent trust in teachers. I argue that parent trust in teachers is fostered when parents perceive that teachers demonstrate care and is inhibited when parents perceive a lack of teacher care. Finally, I expand the current definition

of 'personal regard for others' by outlining three types of teacher personal regard and the specific teacher actions that are associated with them: personal regard for the teaching profession, personal regard for students (demonstrating academic and nonacademic care), and personal regard for parents (providing resources, communicating effectively, being flexible and accommodating, and making personal connections).

It is important to note that this study did not seek to measure levels of parent trust. Rather, the methods and findings were based on the assumption, as established in previous trust research (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), that trust is determined by one's discernment of the intention of others in four areas: respect, competence, integrity, and personal regard for others. I assume that positive parent perceptions of teachers in these four identified facets of trust are evidence of trust. Findings are based on this understanding of trust. This data indicates that parent trust in teachers is most dependent on their perception that teachers are committed to their jobs, care for their students, and care for the parents themselves. When parents discerned that teachers showed care in these areas, trust was established and parent-teacher relationships flourished.

Parent-teacher trust is difficult to develop in many urban schools due to differences in race and social class (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Based on these findings, I argue that teachers serving low-income families in urban schools can take purposeful action to foster trust with their students' parents. The most important indicator of parent trust in teachers is parent perception of teacher care for their job, their students, and the parents. If teachers make concerted efforts to demonstrate a love of teaching and to communicate to parents that they

care for their students and know them well as individuals, then parents are likely to be more trusting of the teacher. Based on examples from this research, this personal regard can be communicated to parents by teachers by explicitly telling parents about their child's individual academic strengths and needs and by sharing stories that demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of students' unique personalities. Teachers should also take the time to engage parents in daily pleasantries such as asking how their day is going or wishing them a great weekend. Acknowledging parents' efforts to help their children will also help foster trust.

The strategies I identify are easily understood. Teachers can be *taught* how to build trust with parents. They can learn to become aware of how they appear to parents. They can learn the importance of communicating their care and concerns for students both academic and non-academic with parents. They can be *taught* to demonstrate personal regard for parents by providing them resources, communicating information effectively, making accommodations, and making personal connections.

We know that children benefit from their parents' involvement in their education. We know that race and social class differences between parents and teachers can complicate their relationship and the likelihood of building trust. These findings provide a starting point for understanding how urban schoolteachers can purposefully take actions to develop trust with parents. By learning how parents discern trust, teachers could more effectively navigate their interactions with parents. It is the responsibility of teacher training programs and school leaders to prepare urban educators to develop trust with parents so that they have a strong foundation for home-school partnership.

CHAPTER 5: CRITIQUES ON COMPETENCE

In chapter four, I argued that in order for teachers in low-income urban communities to foster trust with their students' parents, they must demonstrate personal regard for the teaching profession, for their students, and for the parents themselves. This alone, however, cannot solve the problem of low parent-teacher trust in urban schools. In order for truly trusting relationships to exist, the trust must be mutual. Parents must trust teachers, but it is also imperative that teachers trust parents. In this chapter, I will continue to address the question: *How is relational trust both fostered and inhibited in the relationships between low-income parents and their children's teachers.* In chapter four, findings on parent trust in teachers were presented. Here I will focus on teacher trust in parents. I will also address the questions: *What are teachers' beliefs about low income families' norms and values? How does this affect parent-teacher trust?* I will outline the results collected primarily from teacher data and will highlight three barriers to teacher trust in parents in low-income urban schools: 1) an incongruence of the teacher and parent expectations of parental responsibility in children's education, 2) teacher belief that parents lack appropriate parenting skills, and 3) teacher perception of parent unreliability. These barriers play an important role in the development of teacher trust in parents in urban schools. I will begin below by presenting data on which facets of relational trust were found to be the most important in determining teacher trust in parents.

If we continue to assume that relational trust is determined, as Bryk & Schneider (2002) suggested, by one's perceptions of another in terms of their competence, respect, personal regard, and integrity, then there is evidence within these data to suggest that teacher relational

trust in low-income parents will indeed be strained or fostered based on these criteria. According to the data collected from teacher participants, teachers expected parents to be generally respectful and to have some degree of personal regard. The most salient factors, however, affecting the fostering or inhibiting of teachers' trust in parents were their discernments of parents' competence and integrity. Teacher trust was easily established when parents fulfilled teachers' expectations for how parents should support their children's learning as well as how they parent in general. When parents did not meet teachers' expectations (incompetence) and/or did not follow through on what they said they would do (lack of integrity), teacher trust was quickly eroded.

As noted in the methods section, core teacher participant selection was based on teachers' scores on a Teacher-Parent Trust Scale. From these results, two teachers with lower levels of teacher trust in parents (Kate and Julia) and two teachers with higher levels of teacher trust in parents (Maya and Jeanette) were selected to participate. These initial trust levels were not respectively reflected in the interview and observational data. For example, although Kate had scored lower on teacher trust in parents than other survey takers, there was little evidence of a low level of trust in her interviews and observations. In fact, she fostered some of the most trusting relationships with parents, compared to other teachers. So, while these initial survey results allowed me to select teachers with seemingly varied levels of trust, these initial distinctions did not play out as expected in the results. Therefore, initial trust orientation will not be considered in the discussion of the findings below.

Parent Competence

For teachers in this study, parent competence was determined based on their participation in their children's education and on their perceived parenting skills. Teachers' judgments of parents' norms and values are evident here. In terms of parents' participation in their children's education, teachers often believed that parents did not value education as they should. When discussing parents' parenting skills, teachers demonstrated their critique of parents' childrearing norms. These teacher beliefs about parents' norms and values negatively affected their trust in parents.

Parent Competence in Child's Education

When asked to identify their expectations of parents, teachers uniformly expressed that their expectations of parents were minimal. All teachers in this study expected parents to participate in their children's education in basic ways such as helping their children with homework and attending parent-teacher report card conferences. Here kindergarten teacher, Kate, explains, "I have expectations as far as that I want them to help with homework and reading to them each night and stuff." Similarly, first grade teacher Julia said her expectations for parents were, "Homework and showing up for report card conferences." Kindergarten teacher, Maya, likewise stated, "I expect the parents to make sure the homework is done every night... I expect them to read with their children every night." Maya and other teachers also expected parents to talk to their children about school and to have knowledge of what their children were learning. She continued,

I expect them to ask their children how their day was, what did they do. That they'll go on trips with us. Just what the normal expectations would be for any parent anywhere,

you know, whether they're in the suburbs or [the city].

Marissa, first grade teacher, expected parents to value their children's education. She explained,

That they're helping with homework, that they are aware of their students' progress and what they need, that they're reading with them at home, that they're supportive, that they value education, and that they... that they value it is really the big thing. That they feel like it's important that the kids go home and read.

Michelle, fourth grade teacher, also expected parents to place importance on their children's education. She said,

I expect parents to be involved in your children's education. Know what's going on. Now I understand that maybe they don't have the education themselves but they should want their child to receive the best education they can.

Teachers in this study were frustrated by parents who did not acknowledge the important role they play in their children's education. They believed that a child's education required a partnership between school and home. This teacher belief contrasts with the belief of many low-income parents who do not see education as a shared responsibility. Low-income parents often see education as the responsibility of the teacher, as the educational expert (Lareau, 1989, 2003). Not surprisingly then, many teachers suspected that parents did not feel that active participation in their child's education was a part of their responsibility as a parent. For example, first grade teacher Julia complained, "They think it's basically the teacher's job. A

lot of them have said, 'They come to school. That's where they learn. That's not what happens at home'." Allison, second grade teacher, had a similar perception.

I think you'll hear where a lot of them will say to their children, "You go to school for an education, not to play around, not to make friends." They say it but they don't hold any accountability to themselves. It's kind of, the teacher will teach you what you need to know so when they do come home there isn't an expectation that you have to sit down at the table and give some time for some work.

Simone, a sixth grade teacher, recalled one father's resistance to helping his child with schoolwork at home. She said,

I've had a parent that was very belligerent about me sending work home that he thought was the teacher's job. He thought, his statement was, "You want me to do your job." [I said,] "No, it's your son." [He said,] "Well, you get paid to do that at school. I don't think it's fair you dump this on parents. That's what I mean about YOU teachers."

Like the other teachers quoted above, Simone was frustrated by this parent's belief that he should not have to be an active participant in his child's education. He was not fulfilling her expectation that he support his child's learning at home. Simone, therefore, failed to see this father as a competent parent and clearly this parent also did not feel Simone was fulfilling his expectations of her as a teacher. This incongruence in reciprocal role expectations led to a lack of trust between Simone and her student's father. These differences in role expectations led me to ask parent participants about their beliefs about their role in their children's education.

All parent participants acknowledged that they played a role in their child's education. In general, parents reported that their role was to support the teacher in helping their children learn. Like the teachers, they identified helping with homework as a part of this parental support. There was frustration among some parents with the amount and difficulty level of homework. This finding is supported by Gillies (2006) who found that working class mothers reported a failure to understand much of their children's schoolwork. He reasoned that their lack of effectiveness when helping their children with learning activities is likely to make schoolwork a source of "conflict, uncertainty, and vulnerability." This sense of "conflict, uncertainty, and vulnerability" may be a part of the frustration reported by Dominique, mother of a third grade student:

I don't know half the stuff that they're doin'. I been out of school for god knows how long. I don't remember that stuff. I aint gonna say a lie. I don't know this stuff and if I don't know somethin' I'll pick up the phone or I'll go on my laptop and find out. I don't know this stuff. I ain't been in school for fifteen years!

Jim, father of a kindergartener and second grader was displeased by the amount of homework his kindergarten student came home with. He, like other parents, felt that the learning and teaching should be taking place at school led by a teacher, not at home by a parent. He complained,

But I want to know why, when we grew up, the homework we came home with we already knew what we had to do because we studied it on the board already. My son... his math he's good in. The words and stuff, and the reading and writing down what you

read. I have to help him with that when he come home. Like I feel like the teacher. You know, I'm ready to ask them for some of their paychecks because I'm doin' when they come home what they should be doin' in class.

Jim also felt that time at school should be focused on learning. He was frustrated that his kindergarten son took naps during the school day. He felt that time would be better spent learning and that he would have less schoolwork to do at home if the teacher made better use of time at school. He said,

They take naps. I don't think they need to. Plus they give them a lot of [home]work for kindergarten. Six pages...Why give them all that to come home with? The time they napping they could be doin' some of that. That's the only part I don't like.

The difference in role expectations between parents and teachers in this study led to a lack of trust because teachers began to see parents as incompetent in their role in their children's education. When parents repeatedly did not meet teachers' expectations, teachers became disappointed, frustrated, and distrustful. In some cases, teachers reported feeling jaded and lowering their expectations of parents. Here kindergarten teacher Kate reports teachers' frustrations with parents who they perceived did not fulfill their role in their children's education.

I think just that when they need parents to be involved and parents can't or aren't for whatever reason they translate it into the parents don't care... kind of voicing that frustration. And when it happens repeatedly, you can get jaded.

Allison, second grade teacher, acknowledged that some parents do fulfill her expectations, but she admitted that teachers are often frustrated by the parents who do not do what teachers expect of them. She explains,

I think that teachers, we're always respectful when we talk to parents or even about parents but I definitely sense there's a frustration in the lack of support from so many. Again, appreciative for those that are on top of it, you know, do what they need to do as a parent. But definitely a sense of frustration.

Maya, a veteran kindergarten teacher, reported that many teachers give up on parents after being disappointed by their lack of support. She said, "There's lots of teachers at [this school], in the school district in general, that say these parents can't do anything for their kids or like I'm tired of trying. It's very easy to fall into that mentality."

Julia, a first grade teacher, openly discussed her aggravation over parents' lack of involvement in their children's education. In this interview exchange, I asked her if parents were valued at Jones School.

Julia: Valued? Like by us?

Researcher: Yeah, or the leadership. Just in general.

Julia: No, I don't value them. I'd say maybe two parents out of my class. But no.

Researcher: What do you value about the ones that...

Julia: Cause you can tell that they read with them at home or work with them at home or teach them how to tie their shoes or come to school clean.

Researcher: And the other parents, when you say you don't value them you say that because you feel like they don't meet those expectations?

Julia: No. No. And I feel like my expectations are so minimal.

There was a clear, pervasive sense among this group of teacher participants that when parents did not fulfill their perceived role responsibilities in supporting their children's education, teachers distrusted and devalued parents. This is particularly troublesome when we consider the disadvantages with which low-income parents enter schools (Lareau, 2003). For example, if a mother with little education and low confidence in schoolwork believes the teacher is the expert in her child's education and, therefore, does not become involved in ways expected by the teacher, the teacher will likely become increasingly frustrated and distrustful of the parent. This teacher will in turn be unlikely to take steps to demonstrate personal regard for the parent and child, compounding the distrust between them. This cycle of distrust was evident among many parents and teachers in this study.

Parent Competence in Parenting

In addition to teachers' discernment of parents' competence in their role in their children's education, teachers also judged parents in terms of their parenting methods. Lareau (1989) argued that low-income parents are disadvantaged within school systems because their childrearing methods often differ from that which is expected by middle-class run schools. Teachers in this study saw students as a reflection of the quality of parenting they received. This resulted in teachers attributing "good" students to "good" parenting and "bad" students to "bad" parenting. This cause/effect thinking pattern was prevalent among the urban school

teachers in this study.

Some teachers expressed the belief that students' behaviors were a reflection of their parents' behavior. They felt parents were not good role models for students. Tina, an instructional coach and former teacher in the school, told me about one parent in the school who has a habit of calling or coming up to the school yelling and screaming. She commented, "You can see where the child is when you see the parent because I have a saying that 'the apple doesn't fall far from the tree' and boy it really doesn't sometimes." Tina felt that this mother's aggressiveness in the school was repeated by her child who also exhibited problematic behaviors at school. Her statement implies the belief that when students do not act appropriately in school this is a direct result of having a poor parent role model. Maya explained her concerns about Shana's parenting of her kindergarten student. She said, "There's no control whatsoever and I think she really needs some work with parenting skills." She also suggested on multiple occasions that Shana's son's limitations might be a result of Shana's intellectual limitations. She went on,

And also [she] maybe [needs some work on knowing] what to do with him to help him improve. Like, he's making progress but I'm not sure how limited he may be. I've actually recommended him for speech. The speech teacher said, it really isn't speech. If you listen to her speak, he picked up her... whatever.

Fourth grade teacher, Michelle, was openly frustrated with student misbehaviors in her classroom. She also had several confrontations with parents of her students. One incident she described involved a mother that pointed her finger in Michelle's face during an argument in

the schoolyard at dismissal. This experience as well as her daily struggles with student discipline led Michelle to make this statement:

I feel its all the home. It has to start at the home. [Students] have no respect for themselves. They don't have respect for others. They don't have respect for school property or the classroom. They'll come into the room and within minutes there's stuff all over the floor. I'm like, "This isn't your personal trash can"... And I guess this is what they see at home and this is what they do at home. And they use foul language because they see their parents and they hear their parents using foul language.

Michelle clearly believed that her students' parents were poor role models and that, as a result, her students did not know how to respect her, the school, or each other.

In addition to feeling that some parents failed to be positive role models, some Jones School teachers felt that parents did not have good parenting skills. For example, first-grade teacher Julia said:

I mean if he does this stuff here, he obviously gets away with stuff at home. It just doesn't happen overnight or in school. I know he doesn't have a father so I think everything is just inconsistent with her (mom)... He'll pout or stomp his feet and I feel like when kids do that, that's what they do at home and they get away with that at home.

Allison, second grade teacher, also reported a failure in parenting skills. She explained:

A lot of the kids almost act as if, “Ah, it doesn’t matter because there’s not consequences for me. My mom let me play my video game anyway.” And I think that even goes back to the “as long as you’re not bothering me, do what you need to do.”

Allison was also critical of the school’s actions that she felt perpetuated parents’ lack of parental responsibility. She complained:

We started last year with the breakfast. And a certain percentage of children were expected to be fed this breakfast and I know teacher’s rumble kind of was, how much responsibility we keep taking away from the parents because there is no accountability. Now they don’t have to feed their children breakfast because school will. They don’t have to feed their kids lunch because school does. Any of those that stay after school, they get like a full snack. It’s like a lunch. So it seems like what we used to expect parents to do, we’re even taking some of that basic responsibility away... like feed and clothe your child before they come to school. So I know that’s kind of something teachers get frustrated with.

Allison’s perspective on school-provided meals shows a striking lack of understanding about the financial struggles of the impoverished community in which Jones School is located. It is her ignorance to these struggles that causes her to have unrealistic expectations and a lack of empathy for parents in this community. Then, when parents fail to meet her expectations, her trust in parents is inhibited.

Some teachers, like first grade teacher Jeanette, admitted to feeling that some parents were neglectful of their children. She described her concerns here:

But, in my experience, some, not all, not even 75% of them, but some of them that I have the biggest problem with, it just feels to me that they don't care enough. That, "I'm just sending my kid to school" that "I don't even know if that's the same uniform they wore yesterday with the big ketchup stain on it." That is what frustrates me the most. I mean, you are sending your child out and, ultimately, what your child looks like, what your child says, you know, how clean your child is. That is a reflection on you. The fact that you don't care enough, it doesn't matter to you, that's some of the things that really irritate me about some of the parents definitely not all of them I would say maybe one or two I have a year. This year I have a little boy whose late every single day. He has been late every single day.

Jeanette's concern is not uncommon at Jones School. Most teacher participants expressed a frustration with some parents' neglect of students' basic needs (being clean, clothed, having a backpack, completed homework, and regular school attendance). These tended to be the same parents that teachers had the hardest time getting in touch with and forming any type of partnership with. Often phone numbers were disconnected, homework was not completed or was missing, and parent-teacher conferences were unattended. In these instances, teachers expressed a sense of powerlessness and jadedness that affected their trust in these specific parents and often an overall distrust of parents in the community in general. Parent integrity also played a role in teacher trust.

Parent Integrity

Teachers appreciated when parents were reliable and followed through on what they said they would do to support their children's education. Teachers in this study were critical of parents who they perceived did not make their child's education their priority. Even though many teachers acknowledged that parents have "a lot going on", they believed there was no excuse for not making their child's education a top priority. There was very little teacher tolerance for parents that did not support their children's education in ways they had stated they would. Trust was quickly broken in these instances.

Julia, first grade teacher, was openly distrustful of the majority of parents of her students. Here she recounts some of the instances when parents have not followed through on what they have said they will do:

Reading with their children every night, the 100 book challenge. I have kids whose folders are completely empty from October on. But when I see them, "Oh, we read every night." But you can tell they're not. I have another little girl who's very, very dirty and we sat the mom down and told her about how to bathe properly. "I'll do it tonight." The girl came in with a squirt of perfume on instead of being clean. You know, they say yes, just to say yes and then nothing...

Julia's use of "they" in the last sentence demonstrates her general distrust of parents, rather than isolated individuals. She seemed to lump parents together and accuse "them" of lacking integrity. Special education teacher, Maive, also found parent unreliability to be a pervasive

problem in the school. She said, “Daily a parent doesn’t show up for a meeting. Daily a parent calls and says one thing and does another thing.”

Unlike Julia and Maive, most teachers in this study found only a minority of parents to be unreliable. Still, incidents in which parents demonstrated a lack of integrity left teachers feeling frustrated, disrespected, and unappreciated. Maya, kindergarten teacher, reported the the majority of her students’ parents were reliable but she admits, “But you always get those few that don’t follow through. They’ll lie to your face and after awhile you just know.” Believing that education must be a partnership between teachers and parents, without parent dependability, at times all teachers felt helpless to ensure their students would get the most out of their education. Instructional coach and former teacher Tina’s use of “we” in this statement implies that the teaching staff discusses this lack of integrity of some parents in the school:

We also have the kind of parents that when we have them in for meetings, they’ll tell us exactly what we want to hear but there’s no follow through. So we say it’s like they talk the talk but not walk the walk.

Julia, first grade teacher, shared an example of a time several parents disappointed her on the day of a class field trip.

I had five parent chaperones that had volunteered and that morning when I got here they had all canceled. I didn’t know what to do. My student teacher was with me and then I had to recruit somebody else so I had to walk around with like seven kids...They didn’t give reasons but I asked the kids why. One said because his mom’s hair wasn’t

done and the other said she had to work.

Michelle, fourth grade teacher, also recalled instances when parents did not show up when they said they would.

We have certain days for report card conferences and parents will say that's not convenient for them. And I even have gone above and beyond and said, "Well alright then, I'll stay late or I'll come early" and in two instances I did make arrangements to do that and the parents never showed in both cases. So where I came in early and they never bothered to call or show up. And I even sent home a reminder the day before and I even had an appointment set up where a parent said he could be here by 5:00 and I waited for two hours and he never showed.

When teachers in this study perceived a pattern of unreliability in their students' parents, they developed distrust. Based on the language they used when describing their frustrations with parents, it was clear that some teachers' distrust applied only to the specific parents that they perceived to have a lack of integrity. This was true for Jeannette, for example, who used phrases such as, "some, not all... don't care enough." It was also true for Maya, who described unreliable parents as the "few that don't follow through." Teachers like Jeannette and Maya continued to have a favorable view of Jones parents in general. For other teachers, such as Julia, however, the distrust seemed to permeate their opinions on Jones parents more broadly. For example, Julia frequently referred to parents as "they" when complaining about them. Michelle also referred to parents as a uniform group when expressing her frustrations. She said, "They really beat you down, the kids as well as the parents." These teachers appeared

to be jaded by the unreliability of parents and they tended to have a negative outlook and low expectation of all Jones parents. In an environment such as this, in which teacher distrust in parents becomes prevalent among teachers and discussed between teachers, parent-teacher trust and parent-teacher partnership will not be fostered. Even when a lack of parent integrity and competence is perceived by teachers among only a minority of parents in the school, there appears to be a danger of teacher dissent and generalized distrust in parents. These isolated incidents become a real barrier to parent-teacher trust.

Combatting Barriers to Teacher Trust

Teachers in this study had no specific training in terms of understanding how the parents in this high poverty community were disadvantaged within schools. Teachers learned from experience that some parents did not see themselves as important in their child's education, but teachers were not trained to view this in terms of parents' disadvantage (lack of cultural capital) within school systems. Rather, teachers attributed these unfulfilled role responsibilities to parents that "don't care enough." Because they perceived that parents did not prioritize their children's education, teachers were critical of parents' skewed values. Within this school, teachers valued parents who fit into a middle class definition of good parent involvement. Parents who had time to read with their children nightly, assisted students with research projects, fed them a healthy breakfast, ensured they had clean uniforms, paid for field trips, attended meetings, donated supplies, volunteered, and were regularly present in the school were most valued. When parents did not fit into the teachers' model of appropriate childrearing, teachers were critical of their norms of parenting. There were many reasons that it

was difficult for parents in this school to fulfill these expectations (ex: work schedules, transportation, lack of access to healthy foods, no washer/dryer, financial instability, etc...). Teachers were not particularly knowledgeable about these contributing factors nor were they self-reflective about the role they may play in perpetuating parents' disadvantages.

Teachers had no education specific to understanding the struggles of families living in poverty. Based on their responses to interview questions focused on their teacher preparation, none of the teacher participants had teacher preparation coursework that was focused on understanding an urban school setting. They also had no training in how to successfully interact with parents and how to involve them in their children's education. When I asked her about teacher preparation, Maya, a veteran teacher of over thirty years, suggested,

I think they need more psychological types of classes, you know, classes that deal more with psychological problems. Not even so much behavior, but understanding... really understanding where these kids come from and why they may be the way they are... and how to deal with a lot of it."

Julia admitted to feeling unprepared for an urban teaching setting. She said, "I wasn't in a classroom until I student taught. And that was... very suburbanish. So it was kind of was a culture shock when I did come to Philadelphia." Similarly, when I asked second grade teacher Maive if her teacher preparation coursework helped prepare her for an urban setting, she said, "No... My student teaching placements and my practicums were completely different. You know, we had one or two kids who were... what we're dealing with today."

Parents also acknowledged teachers' lack of knowledge about the Jones community. When asked if Jones teachers had a good understanding of the neighborhood, Barbara said, "I wouldn't say very well but I think they have a idea." Tamika, mother of two Jones students, stated, "[Teachers] don't know nothin' about this neighborhood."

In order for urban educators to effectively support parents' involvement in their children's education, teacher education programs and school leaders should better prepare them by including coursework and professional development focused on urban settings and on parent involvement. Specifically, urban educators should have a foundational understanding of how poverty affects families. They should be aware of how public policies and practices negatively affect low-income families (Anyon, 2005). There are specific ways teachers can involve parents in their children's education. Teacher preparation programs should include courses that prepare teachers to develop strong home-school partnerships. Urban educators should also learn how low-income parents often define their roles in their children's education differently than teachers define them (Lareau, 1989). These differences in role expectations often complicate the parent-teacher relationship, perhaps because teachers and parents are unaware of each other's perspective. By teaching urban educators about the families and communities they serve, teachers will be better prepared to foster strong home-school partnerships. Perhaps if teachers had a better understanding of parents' life experiences, they would be less quick to blame parents and would be more empathetic to the possible reasons that some parents fail to fulfill their expectations. This is not to excuse parents from any responsibility, but more to provide teachers with a context for understanding the many underlying reasons why some low-income parents may not live up to their expectations. When

teachers do have professional development or coursework that is relevant to understanding their students and parents better, this can have a positive impact on teachers' actions. Here Kate reflects on a class she was currently taking:

I've been taking an ESL (English as a Second Language) class and we have to do a project for it and since I don't have ESL training, I was permitted to do something on culturally responsive classrooms. My culture is so different from my students' culture. So I've been reading everything and it says, you know, teachers have to be careful not to have negative expectations of parents because you haven't gotten support in the past and you should try different avenues. And I was like shame on me because that's exactly what I think I tend to do sometimes. I think I tend to think that a parent can't support their child the way they need to maybe.

If other teachers had the opportunity, like Kate, to think through some of their biases and reflect on how their actions affect parents and are perceived by parents, they would be better prepared to purposefully foster parent-teacher trust.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusions

I began this research with one main research question: How is relational trust both fostered and inhibited between low-income parents and their children's teachers? Specifically, I sought to identify what teacher actions directly influence parent-teacher trust. Based on Lareau's work (1989, 2003) on how social class differences influence parent's roles in their children's education and childrearing methods, I also wondered how teachers' perceptions of low-income families' norms and values might affect the development of parent-teacher trust.

In this concluding chapter, I will summarize my findings and will explain how they build on Bryk & Schneider's work on relational trust in schools (2002). First, I identify teacher personal regard for others as the most critical facet of parent trust development. I expand on Bryk & Schneider's (2002) current definition of personal regard by outlining three types of perceived teacher personal regard: personal regard for the teaching profession, personal regard for students, and personal regard for parents. I identify the teacher actions that are associated with parent perceptions of each of these three types of personal regard. Then, I explain that, compared to other facets of trust development, perceived parent competence and integrity are the most important predictors of teacher trust in parents. I argue that Lareau's (1989, 2003) research provides a useful lens for interpreting the results on teacher trust in parents. Finally, I will provide recommendations regarding policy and suggestions for future research.

Parent Trust

The prior research on parent trust in schools has outlined four common elements of trust: perceived care (also referred to as benevolence), respect (also referred to as honesty/openness), integrity (also referred to as reliability), and competence (Adams, 2008; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). This body of research, however, does not provide insight into which of these elements of trust may be more or less critical to parent trust development. As I began analyzing the data, it was clear that the four elements of trust development (perceived care, respect, integrity, and competence) (Bryk & Schneider, 2002) did not carry equal weight in terms of their importance in the development of parent-teacher trust. These differences were evident both due to the quantity of occurrences within the data and the passion with which parents and teachers spoke about particular aspects of trust. The results suggest that compared to other aspects of trust development (perceived respect, integrity, and competence), the most powerful indicators of parent trust in teachers were parents' perceptions that teachers' actions demonstrated care/commitment to their jobs, care for their students, and care for the parents themselves.

Parent trust was fostered when teachers' actions demonstrated to parents that they cared about and enjoyed their jobs. This care was perceived when teachers appeared happy to be at the school and to be with students, when teachers had high expectations for student achievement, and when teachers held students accountable to appropriate behavior. On the other hand, when teachers, for example, went straight to their cars at dismissal, appeared miserable at work, or spent time talking to teachers rather than closely monitoring students in

the school, parents perceived that teachers did not care about their jobs and that they were not truly committed to the school and the students. Parent participants distinguished between some teachers that appeared to love their jobs and others who looked like they “don’t wanna be there.” When parents described teachers who did not appear to care for their jobs, they expressed a lack of trust in those teachers. They often accused these teachers of being “in it for a paycheck.” This accusation was prevalent among parent participants and was discussed openly between parents, further deepening the distrust in teachers among the Jones parent population.

Teaching in low-income urban schools can be challenging. Many teachers struggle to meet the increasing demands of high stakes testing, maintain classroom management in the face of difficult student behaviors, address varying student ability levels, and develop consistent parent involvement (Byrd-Blake, Afolayan, Hunt, Fabunmi, Pryor, & Leander, 2010). Teachers in high poverty schools are also more likely to be suffering from ill health and high stress than teachers in higher income school communities (Stewart, 2006). These concerns are very real for many teachers and they certainly have an effect on morale, appearance, and commitment to their jobs. Although many parents acknowledged that teaching at Jones School was not an easy job and some even expressed empathy for teachers, they still did not want their children in the care of teachers who appeared to be unhappy or disconnected from their students or their responsibilities.

The second type of parent-perceived teacher care was for students. Two types of teacher care for students emerged in the data: academic and non-academic care. Parents

appreciated when teachers were able to articulate students' specific learning needs, strengths, and styles. Parents relied on teachers' input to understand their children's learning patterns and often referred to statements teachers had made when describing their children's academic progress. When teachers gave detailed analyses of children's academics, parents attributed this to teachers' attentiveness and care for their children. When teachers failed to be able to accurately describe students' academic growth, when teachers did not communicate about children's academics clearly to parents, or when parents perceived that teachers did not provide adequate academic support to struggling students, parents suspected a lack of teacher care. When parents perceived that their child's teacher did not genuinely care about their children's academic progress, their trust in teachers was diminished.

Teacher demonstrations of nonacademic care for children were also significant to parents' trust in teachers. Many parent participants told stories about the special relationships their children had with particular teachers. They referenced evidence such as a kindergarten child wanting to hug and kiss the teacher good-bye at dismissal, a teacher buying a child's favorite game for the classroom, and a teacher being sensitive and attentive to a child's shyness. Parents also shared stories of times that they had suspected teachers of not caring for their child. For example, one parent perceived that her daughter's teacher was not doing enough to prevent bullying of her daughter. Another parent felt that her daughter's teacher was affectionate with other children, but not with her daughter. A father complained that the manner in which teachers rushed students off school grounds at dismissal showed they really did not care about the children. When parents perceived that their children were cared for by teachers beyond their academic progress, they were comforted and they trusted that their

children would be safe and were in good hands when they dropped them off at school. When parents did not sense that teachers cared for their children, they were less confident in their child's safety and happiness and were far more critical of the teachers. Trust was difficult to foster in these situations.

These findings are supported by the work of Nell Noddings (2012). She argues that in the teacher-student relationship, the teacher's role as the carer is to be attentive to the students' academic needs, what she refers to as "assumed" needs, as well as to their "expressed" needs for moral guidance, emotional support, or shared human interest. She identifies two types of teachers: "virtue carers", those who primarily address the "assumed" or academic needs, and "relational carers", those who attend to both academic and nonacademic ("expressed") needs. When teachers demonstrate care for students both academically and non-academically, the teacher-student relationship can have a positive impact on a child's moral, social, and emotional development and on the type of professional and citizen they become (Noddings, 2012). While the importance of care has been well established here, the parent perspective on teacher care for students has not been fully explored. I agree with Noddings (2012) that both academic and nonacademic teacher care for students are essential for student trust, but I further argue that these teacher demonstrations of care for students are also critical to the development of parent trust in teachers.

The third type of teacher care that resulted in parent trust was parent perceived teacher care for the parents themselves. Four types of teacher care for parents emerged in the data: providing resources, communicating effectively, being flexible and accommodating, and making

personal connections. Each type is associated with specific teacher actions that were observed or experienced by parents.

First, trust was built when teachers supported parents by providing them resources. In this study, these resources ranged from teachers assisting parents to navigate through the process of obtaining supplemental education services for their children, to supplying families with donated book bags and school uniforms, to providing resources for supporting learning at home. While middle and upper class parents typically have the knowledge and confidence to actively customize their children's education, support their children academically at home, and to navigate through a school system (Horvat et al., 2003), low-income parents often do not enter schools with the experiences or knowledge to support learning at home and to independently advocate for their children in schools. In these cases, teacher assistance can guide parents as they work to support their children's education. When teachers took the time to assist parents with obtaining resources, parent trust in teachers was fostered.

Another type of teacher action that resulted in parent perceived teacher care was effective teacher communication. Within this data, effective communication was defined by many specific teacher actions. First, parent trust in teachers was developed when teachers exhibited a friendly demeanor by greeting parents by name and making small talk. When teachers did not dialogue with parents or skipped the chitchat and jumped right into discussing student issues, teachers missed an opportunity to develop a good rapport and a foundation of trust with parents.

The frequency and length of time that teachers spent communicating with parents was also relevant to parent perceived teacher care. Daily written communication via a student behavior chart was an effective method of making parents feel the teacher was keeping them informed. Parents rely on teachers to be informed of their children's progress and to feel connected to their children's educational experience (McGrath, 2007). Parents also appreciated when teachers took their time when explaining things to parents. When parents sensed that teachers were rushed or did not have time to talk to them, they felt slighted by teachers. By keeping daily written communication and offering occasional verbal communication, parents felt that teachers valued their participation in their children's education. This sense of being valued built parent trust in teachers. This finding is supported by other research that has found that increased amounts of parent-teacher communication via written notes, email, or phone results in more frequent parent visits to the school, parent support, and better parent reception of teacher suggestions (Reilly, 2008).

Teacher's communication of positive feedback was essential to building parent trust. Parents were immediately put off when teachers initiated communication with a list of complaints about a student, for example. When teachers took the time to say what children had done well, even when ultimately delivering bad news about a child's school day, the parent was less likely to react defensively toward the teacher. It was also effective when teachers used language that communicated that the parent and teacher were on the same side (ex: "I knew you'd be upset with him.") Sandwiching difficult news with positive comments and keeping a positive, nonjudgmental tone resulted in productive conversation and collaborative

parent-teacher strategizing for student improvements. When parents and teachers were able to work together to improve student learning and behavior, trust was fostered.

Parents perceived that teachers cared for them when teachers' actions demonstrated flexibility and accommodation of parents' needs and schedules. For parents who are in school, work multiple jobs, or are participating in job training programs, it is challenging to coordinate their own schedules with parent involvement activities at school (Shiffman, 2013). Meeting with parents outside of school hours to accommodate their schedules helped to alleviate some of the parent stress around balancing working and parenting. It also demonstrated to parents that teachers valued parent-teacher communication and were sensitive to many parents' inflexible work schedules. These demonstrations of teacher care for parents resulted in parent appreciation and trust in teachers.

Schools serving low-income families have a tendency to treat parents as outsiders (Adams, et al., 2009). This can be combated when teachers take action to build personal connections with parents. In this study, parent trust was fostered when teachers demonstrated care for parents by making personal connections with them. Teachers who made parents feel heard, seen, and understood as peers and as people, were well liked and trusted by parents. Creating a sense of personal connection with parents was a powerful tool for fostering effective parent-teacher relationships. Teachers in this study made personal connections with parents by taking actions that made parents feel valued. For example, introducing a parent to a coworker or friend, using a friendly gesture (ex: thumbs up), and touching or hugging a parent are all ways in which teachers in this study built parent-teacher trust. When teachers interact with

parents as peers, as they would with other adult acquaintances, parents sense a genuine connection with teachers. This connection cultivates parent-teacher trust.

The findings outlined above add to the current understanding of trust in schools by identifying personal regard (care) as the most powerful facet of parent trust development. Additionally, I have further refined Bryk & Schneider's current definition of personal regard by identifying three types of teacher care: care for their profession, for students, and for parents. Based on these findings, I contend that teachers can purposefully foster parent trust by taking actions to demonstrate care for their jobs, for their students, and for parents. Parent trust in teachers will likely result in increased parent involvement and, therefore, improvements in student achievement (Henderson & Berla, 1981; 1987; 1994). Parent trust is a critical component of school improvement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Teacher Trust

In order for trust to truly be relational, it must be mutual. It is essential that parent trust and teacher trust exist in the presence of one another; otherwise the benefits of trust are unlikely to develop. Just as it is important to identify how parent trust is fostered and inhibited, it is equally important to examine what factors affect the cultivation of teacher trust in parents.

Like parent trust, not all facets of trust development (personal regard, respect, competence, integrity) held equal weight when determining teacher trust. While parent personal regard and respect were appreciated by teachers, their trust in parents was much more influenced by their perceptions of parent competence and integrity. This finding again

builds on Bryk & Schneider's (2002) work, by differentiating the relative importance of the four elements of teacher trust development that they defined. Data analyses revealed teachers placed importance on two types of parent competence: competence in supporting their children's education and competence in parenting skills. Lareau (1989, 2003) identified the difference in role expectations and beliefs about childrearing between low-income parents and teachers. Using Bryk & Schneider's framework of relational trust, I add to her work by demonstrating how these differences in beliefs relate to teacher trust in parents. Integrity was perceived based on whether or not parents followed through on what they said they would do. Teachers acknowledged and valued parents' competence and integrity. Teachers were trustful of parents who exhibited behaviors teachers associated with competence and integrity and distrustful of parents who they perceived to be incompetent or lacking in integrity.

Teacher participants believed that education was a shared responsibility between home and school. While the parent participants also acknowledged that they played a role in their children's education, there was a sense of frustration among teachers that there were many parents at Jones that did not fulfill their expectations of parent involvement: helping with homework, reading to their children, ensuring daily attendance, attending parent-teacher conferences, valuing their children's education, and sending their children prepared to school with a clean uniform and necessary materials. Teachers shared many stories about parents who did not meet these expectations. Parent involvement is related to parents' assumptions about their roles in their children's education (Eccles & Harold, 1993). Lareau (1989, 2003) found that working class and poor parents separated the roles of home and school. They did not seek a home-school partnership. They felt that the schools' job was to make sure students learn and

their job as parents was to teach them how to behave. This is in contrast to higher-income parents, who saw their children's education as a shared responsibility. Trust between the low-income parents at Jones and their children's teachers became difficult to foster due to this misalignment of perceived role responsibilities.

A number of teachers in this study suggested that parents' lack of involvement was a sign that parents did not care about their children's education. This was certainly not always the case. In addition to a difference in role expectations, parents also failed to meet teachers' expectations because of their lack of comfort and confidence supporting their children in some of their academic work. Parents in this study expressed frustration with the amount and level of difficulty of students' homework. They admitted to not remembering how to do some of the work their children were coming home with. This finding is supported by Gillies (2006) who found that working class mothers reported a failure to understand much of their children's schoolwork. He reasoned that their lack of effectiveness when helping their children with learning activities is likely to make schoolwork a source of "conflict, uncertainty, and vulnerability." These feelings of inadequacy could make low-income parents hesitant to become involved in their children's school and could result in feelings of exclusion from school (Lareau, 1989). Feelings of exclusion are particularly likely if teachers wrongly assume a lack of parent care and, therefore, develop unwarranted resentments and distrust in parents.

Teachers in this study were highly critical of parents at Jones. There was a widespread assumption that many Jones parents did not have adequate parenting skills. Teachers often placed blame on parents for lacking "control" and for letting children "get away with stuff at

home.” When teachers identified inappropriate behaviors in students, they repeatedly attributed the problem to poor parenting skills. Lareau’s work (2003) on social class differences in childrearing methods is relevant here. She found that lower income families often provide less structure and oversight in their children’s daily lives than higher income families. She compares this “accomplishment of natural growth” parenting style to the “concerted cultivation” parenting style exhibited by higher income parents in which they provide their children with structured daily schedules of activities, extensive monitoring, and educational dialogues. Because most of the teachers at Jones have a middle-upper class mindset and possess a different set of norms and values regarding parenting than Jones parents, they often failed to appreciate the many ways students flourished socially and creatively as a result of the independence their parents allowed them. Instead, teachers devalued parents’ childrearing methods and repeatedly suggested that their parenting skills were inadequate and inappropriate. This teacher perception that Jones parents lacked competence as parents led to teacher judgment, blame and a lack of teacher trust. Teacher perceived lack of parent integrity further deepened this distrust.

Parent integrity, or reliability, was perceived by teachers based on parent follow through on helping students with homework, reading with students, and providing supplemental activities to struggling students at home. Schnee & Bose (2010) outlined the varied ways that urban school parents are involved in their children’s schoolwork at home. These included sitting side-by-side assisting students with each item, positioning themselves near students so students could elicit help when needed, checking homework to see if it was completed, or reviewing homework once it had been returned from the teacher. Other parents

did not get involved at all in their children's homework. Schnee & Bose (2010) argue that each of these forms of homework involvement were purposeful actions (or inactions) taken by parents, rather than due to varied levels of interest or engagement in their children's education. They reasoned that parents' actions could be explained by differing goals and beliefs. For example, they found that some parents' inaction was a result of the belief that homework was the student's responsibility because it was a contract between the teacher and student. Others wanted to instill self-reliance in their children. They feared that it would hinder students to provide too much support. Still others believed that checking homework was the teacher's responsibility. There were also parents, like parents in this study, who acknowledged their own limitations understanding their children's homework. Considering Schnee & Bose's (2010) findings then, I argue that in some circumstances Jones teachers mistook a parents' purposeful inaction for parent disengagement or disinterest in their children's education. In those cases, the resulting teacher distrust was misplaced and unwarranted.

In addition to discerning parents' reliability in terms of supporting student learning at home, teachers at Jones also gained or lost trust in parents based on whether or not they attended scheduled meetings and conferences. When parents demonstrated dependability attending previously scheduled meetings at the school, teachers felt parents valued their child's education and the teachers' time. In contrast, when parents did not show up, teachers perceived that parents did not care about their children's education and they felt their time was not valued by parents. Teachers expressed contempt for parents who failed to show up in these ways.

Compared to parent perceptions of teachers in this study, the bulk of the data on teacher perceptions of parents was notably negative. I propose some reasons for this difference. First, many of parents' negative comments were focused on the school in general, rather than on the specific actions or perceptions of teachers. There were many areas in which parents expressed dissatisfaction, but these were not specifically related to teachers and, therefore, were not included in the results of the study. Second, parents interact with as few as one teacher in the building so their scope of reference is small in relation to their perception of teachers. Teachers, on the other hand, interact with at least twenty parents every year so they have a wider and more varied view of parent behaviors, both positive and negative, to interpret and develop conclusions from. Third, teachers may be influenced by the "culture of poverty" perspective that permeates much of middle and upper class American society. While they acknowledged some of the challenges parents are faced with in their community, at times teachers expressed the belief that parents were irresponsible, poor role models, and that they did not care enough about their children. These negative value judgments are reflective of the "culture of poverty" mindset.

While teacher distrust in Jones parents due to perceived lack of competence and integrity was at times misguided, it is important to acknowledge that in some cases parents are genuinely neglectful of their children. Whether due to addiction, a history of abuse, or a mental health issue, teachers are witnesses to parent neglect or abuse of their children. It would be unfair and untrue to argue that all teachers' negative perceptions of parents are unfounded. In truth, teachers in the Jones school district, as in many others, are trained annually on how to identify abuse and neglect and how to report it to the Department of Human Services. While

uncommon, many urban schoolteachers at some point in their careers do encounter abuse or neglect of a student. While these instances are rare, teachers do not quickly forget these experiences and their memory can play a role in their perceptions and suspicions of other parents.

Teacher trust is essential to the parent-teacher relationship. It is important for teachers to have the knowledge and training to understand why parents may or may not meet their expectations. With a developed understanding and respect for parents' role expectations, childrearing methods, and possible reasons for lack of involvement at home and school, teachers would be less likely to make assumptions, place blame, and develop generalized distrust in low-income parents whose norms and values may differ from their own.

Recommendations

Scholars agree that differences in race and class can complicate the parent-teacher relationship and can be a barrier to trust development. Because teachers have more power than low-income parents within the education setting, they argue that it is the responsibility of teachers to take deliberate actions to bridge this communication and trust barrier (Adams, et al., Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Based on the findings presented here, I recommend that teachers take purposeful action to build trust with low-income parents by demonstrating personal regard for their profession, their students, and their students' parents. Additionally, teachers must become knowledgeable about the strengths and struggles of low-income urban families

and the way social class shapes parents' beliefs about their role in their children's education and childrearing methods.

The responsibility for training teachers falls on teacher preparation programs and school leaders who arrange staff professional development. When we consider the four facets of trust development as defined by Bryk & Schneider (2002) (personal regard, respect, competence, and integrity), teacher preparation programs and professional developments are generally focused on teacher competence. They train teachers primarily in classroom instruction and management. Respect may not be explicitly taught, but being respectful to coworkers, parents, and students is certainly an expectation of any teaching position and teachers who do not exhibit such respect are likely to be addressed by administration. Likewise, integrity is not specifically taught to teachers but being reliable, dependable, and punctual are necessary elements of any teaching position.

I reviewed samples of national teacher evaluations and discovered that administrators typically assess teacher competence, respect, and dependability in teacher evaluations. Teachers are evaluated on the quality of their instructional craft and ability to effectively manage a classroom. Their respect is evaluated based on their ability to communicate appropriately and collaboratively with coworkers, parents, and students. Finally, teacher reliability is evaluated by administrators based on teachers' punctuality arriving to work and to scheduled meetings and dependability when submitting lesson plans and other paperwork. What was strikingly missing from these evaluations was an assessment of teachers' demonstrations of personal regard. It seems that teachers are at no point formally trained nor

evaluated on whether or not they demonstrate care for their profession, their students, and their students' parents.

I do not point out the absence of teacher care on evaluations to suggest that teacher care necessarily be a part of teacher evaluations. Rather, I use teacher evaluations to point out that the other three facets of trust development are presently addressed and monitored by school administration. I propose that because these elements of trust development are addressed and monitored, teachers are generally meeting parent expectations of teacher competence, respect, and integrity, as the data presented here suggests. Perhaps parents in this study so passionately and eagerly shared stories of teacher demonstrations of care or lack of care because this is the facet of trust development that has the most variability between teachers.

I argue that without teacher training on how to build parent trust through demonstrations of personal regard or attention to this aspect of teaching in evaluations, demonstrations of teacher care will be dependent on individual teacher personality, temperaments, and social interaction styles. Without training and effective continuing professional development and support, many teachers will not possess the innate skills to foster parent trust. Some teachers must be explicitly taught the specific actions they can take to demonstrate personal regard and build parent trust. Based on the findings presented in this study, these actions include demonstrating care and commitment to the teaching profession (by focusing attention and dialogue on students rather than coworkers and using positive facial expressions and body language when interacting with students), demonstrating academic and

nonacademic care for students, providing parents resources, communicating with parents effectively, being flexible and accommodating to parents' needs and schedules, and purposefully making personal connections with parents. Each of these types of demonstrations of teacher care can be broken down into specific behaviors that teachers can be taught to do, particularly in the presence of parents, to build parent trust. Teacher training on building parent trust is one method of improving parent-teacher trust in low-income urban schools. Building teacher knowledge and understanding of urban poverty and social class differences in role expectations and childrearing methods is another important step toward building stronger parent-teacher trust.

Teachers in this study reported that they did not have coursework or trainings focused on understanding low-income urban children and families. They acknowledged feeling unprepared for the urban teaching experience. In the last decade, some teacher preparations programs have started offering urban teaching tracks, which provide students with underlying knowledge and experiences to equip them to understand the urban school environment. I suggest that programs such as these should continue to grow in colleges and universities in and surrounding urban communities. These programs should include coursework specifically designed to develop students' awareness of the many disadvantages families in poverty face and to challenge students' thinking by encouraging them to be self-reflective about the role education plays in perpetuating those disadvantages. Courses designed to influence teacher attitudes about working with low-income families have resulted in less stereotypical assumptions about families and more confidence using family involvement practices (Amatea, Cholewa, & Mixon, 2012). Coursework focused on building home-school partnership is also

essential. These courses should provide prospective teachers with an understanding of low-income parents' potential role expectations as well as a respect for the childrearing methods that they may practice. They should teach strategies for building parent trust including taking deliberate actions to demonstrate care for their profession, their students, and their students' parents. Additionally, I recommend that these programs include fieldwork or internships in urban community-based organizations, perhaps unrelated to education. Working and collaborating with community members will provide teacher candidates with experiences bridging race and class barriers, practice communicating effectively with people who may differ culturally, and develop their understanding of the strengths and struggles of families living in poverty.

Training pre-service teachers will not adequately nor permanently prepare teachers for building trust with parents. These skills must be continually reviewed with educators through professional development opportunities. It is the responsibility of school leaders to ensure their teachers are developing trusting parent-teacher partnerships and to provide ongoing training for them as needed. School leaders must prioritize parent-school trust as a critical component of school improvement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Implications for Future Research

These findings have extended the current understanding of parent-teacher trust by identifying personal regard as the most critical element of parent trust and outlining the

specific actions teachers can take to foster parent trust. I also contribute to the existing research on parent-teacher trust by examining the complexities of teacher trust in parents and identified the types of teacher training that could provide context and clarity to teachers' current understanding of low income parents. Based on these findings, some questions remain.

First, how have urban teaching tracks affected teachers' understandings of low-income urban families? Have their courses and fieldwork better prepared teachers for bridging the cultural and class barriers that inhibit parent-teacher communication and collaboration? Have graduates of these programs fostered more trusting parent-teacher relationships compared to teachers in regular education programs? I found only one study that addressed some of these issues. Rigoni, Pugach, Longwell-Grice, & Ford (2013) assessed the impact of an urban track teacher education program on a number of outcomes including connecting with families in authentic and significant ways. They found limited evidence that teachers connected with parents beyond the limited contact requirements of the program. Future research should continue to examine and compare urban track teacher education program effectiveness in terms of teacher capacity for building trusting parent-teacher partnerships.

Second, the role of race in parent-teacher trust was not thoroughly researched in this study. As noted in the methods section of the paper, it is unclear how my race, as a white woman, affected participants' answers to questions related to race. While race did not appear to play a role in parent-teacher trust based on this data, researchers should continue to explore this further. Perhaps data collected through a similar study in a low-income white community in a school with all white teachers conducted by a white researcher could provide data that is

reliably based on social class differences in parents and teachers, rather than the possible intersection of race and class.

Next, this study analyzed teacher behaviors mostly through the reports of parents and teachers. More thorough observational research is needed to analyze the specific parent and teacher facial expressions and body language that affect parent-teacher trust. Are there particular expressions, postures, or body movements that are interpreted by parents and teachers that result in discerning one's personal regard, respect, competence, and integrity? Can these behaviors be taught to teachers as a method for building parent trust?

Also, the study of parent-teacher trust in low-income schools requires a thorough understanding and consideration of the pathologies that confront many urban school environments. People working in urban schools are faced by a number of barriers to their motivation and job satisfaction. Lack of resources, student mobility, and the demands of high stakes testing make teaching in urban schools challenging. Parents in low-income urban communities are likewise confronted with a litany of difficult life circumstances that affect their interactions with others including financial insecurity, neighborhood safety, job access, and medical needs. Parent-teacher trust is essentially about relationships between people. How do the challenges of working or living in a low-income urban community affect a person's ability to develop relational trust?

Finally, I argue that teachers need to understand that many low-income parents believe that they should play a limited role in their children's education. I argue that this will help them understand the reasons that many families do not meet their expectations for involvement and

that, perhaps, this will prevent teachers from losing trust in parents. If, however, teachers do develop an awareness of differing role expectations between themselves and their students' parents, what should they do with this knowledge? Knowing that parent involvement has many positive results on students' motivation and student achievement (Henderson & Berla, 1981; 1987; 1994), teachers will continue to pursue the involvement of their students' parents in order to maximize their students' learning. If they accept parents' beliefs about their involvement and do not continue to expect and elicit parent involvement, are they doing their students a disservice? This is a complex question requiring considerable future research. Can and should schools attempt to change low-income parents' beliefs about their involvement in their children's education? Schools in urban communities have been attempting to do so for decades. What strategies have been effective? Can parent involvement initiatives change parents' beliefs about their potential impact on their children's education? Some studies have explored the effectiveness of teacher parent involvement trainings and have identified successes (Hoover-Demsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002; Lemmer, 2011), but specific effects on parent beliefs about their role in their children's education have not been determined. What are the differences between effective and ineffective teacher trainings and parent involvement initiatives? Some charter schools in urban environments require parent involvement. I have found no research to date indicating the success of these mandatory involvement practices. Future research should continue to examine how teachers and schools should react in response to understanding social class differences in educational role expectations.

The income gap in student achievement continues to widen (Reardon, 2012). Schools in low-income communities must continue to explore every avenue for improving student

achievement. Trust in schools is associated with higher student achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth, Barnes, & Adams; 2006; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001) and, therefore, should be a part of school reform in low performing schools serving impoverished communities (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). This study responded to the current body of research identifying the importance (Tschannen-Moran, 2001) and facets (Adams, 2008; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999) of parent-teacher trust. The results have added to the current understanding of how trust can be fostered with low-income parents by identifying the facets of trust development that are the most critical for parent-teacher trust. While this study has answered some important questions, it has also raised new questions about parent-teacher trust. This study, along with other existing research on trust in schools, has just scratched the surface on understanding the role of trust in parent-teacher relationships. It is essential that research continue to examine how teacher preparations programs, school leaders, and teachers can collectively contribute to the deliberate fostering of parent-teacher trust.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Surveys

Teacher-Parent Trust Scale

Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the quality of relationships between parents and teachers in schools. Your answers are confidential.

Please indicate the extent that you agree or disagree with each of the statements about your students' parents, circling 1-6 on the right, ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (6) Strongly Agree.

1 Strongly

2 Strongly

Disagree

Agree

1. I work closely with parents to meet my students' needs.

1 2 3 4 5 6

2. Parents have confidence in my expertise as a teacher.

1 2 3 4 5 6

3. I invite parents to visit our classroom.

1 2 3 4 5 6

4. I work at communicating with parents about how to support their child's education.

1 2 3 4 5 6

5. I work hard to build trusting relationships with parents.

1 2 3 4 5 6

6. I encourage feedback from parents.

1 2 3 4 5 6

7. I try to understand parents' problems and concerns.

1 2 3 4 5 6

8. I greet parents warmly when they call or visit the classroom.

1 2 3 4 5 6

9. I greet parents warmly when I see them during arrival and dismissal.

1 2 3 4 5 6

10. I receive a great deal of support from parents for the work that I do.

1 2 3 4 5 6

11. My students' parents respect me.

1 2 3 4 5 6

12. I respect my students' parents.

1 2 3 4 5 6

13. My students' parents fulfill their responsibilities in their children's education.

1 2 3 4 5 6

14. My students' parents are friendly to me.

1 2 3 4 5 6

15. I feel comfortable talking to my students' parents.

1 2 3 4 5 6

16. My students' parents always do what they say they will do.

1 2 3 4 5 6

17. My students' parents are honest with me.

1 2 3 4 5 6

Parent-Teacher Trust Scale

Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the quality of relationships between parents and teachers in schools. Your answers are confidential. Please indicate the extent that you agree or disagree with each of the statements about your child's teacher, circling 1-6 on the right, ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (6) Strongly Agree.

**1 Strongly
Disagree**

**6 Strongly
Agree**

1. My child's teacher is always ready to help.
1 2 3 4 5 6
2. My child's teacher has high expectations for all children.
1 2 3 4 5 6
3. My child's teacher keeps me well-informed.
1 2 3 4 5 6
4. Children in my child's class are well cared for.
1 2 3 4 5 6
5. My child's teacher always does what he/she is supposed to do.
1 2 3 4 5 6
6. My child's teacher always listens to me.
1 2 3 4 5 6
7. My child's teacher is always honest with me.
1 2 3 4 5 6
8. My child's teacher can be counted on to do his/her job.
1 2 3 4 5 6
9. I really trust my child's teacher.
1 2 3 4 5 6
10. My child's teacher treats everyone with respect.
1 2 3 4 5 6
11. My child's teacher makes me feel welcome in the classroom.
1 2 3 4 5 6

12. My child's teacher invites both criticism and praise from parents.

1 2 3 4 5 6

13. My child's teacher owns up to his/her mistakes.

1 2 3 4 5 6

14. My child's teacher is well-intentioned.

1 2 3 4 5 6

15. My child's teacher likes to talk to parents.

1 2 3 4 5 6

16. My child's teacher is very reliable.

1 2 3 4 5 6

17. My child's teacher is always there when I need him/her.

1 2 3 4 5 6

Appendix B: Baseline Interview Protocols

Baseline Parent Interview Protocol

1. Do you feel your child is receiving a high quality education at this school? Why or why not?
2. How would you describe parent-teacher interactions at this school?
3. How does this school involve parents?
4. Do you feel welcome at this school? Why or why not?
5. Do you feel the administration at this school values parents? Why or why not?
6. Have you ever voiced a concern or complaint at this school? Tell me about that. How was the situation resolved.
7. How would you describe your relationships with your child's teacher?
8. What strategies do you use to develop positive relationships with your child's teacher?
9. What are your expectations for your child's teacher? (competence)
10. Does your child's teacher fulfill your expectations? Why or why not?(competence)
11. What do you believe teachers expect of you as a parent? Do you believe teachers feel you fulfill these expectations? (competence)
12. Describe the kinds of conversations you have with your child's teachers?

- How genuine/comfortable do you feel your conversations are with your child's teacher? (respect)
- Can you give an example of a recent interaction you've had with a teacher?

13. How do teachers show they are listening to you in conversation? (respect)

14. How well do you feel you follow through on what you tell teachers you will do? Can you give an example? (integrity)

15. How well do you feel teachers follow through on what they tell you they will do? Can you give an example? (integrity)

16. How honest do you feel that your child's teacher is with you? Why?

17. How much do you trust your child's teacher? Why?

18. How welcomed do you feel in your child's classroom? Why?

19. Can you describe an instance when your child's teacher treated you or your child with respect?

a. How about another school staff member?

20. Can you describe an instance when your child's teacher treated you or your child with disrespect?

a. How about another school staff member?

21. What was your experience like as a student?

a. How would you describe your teachers?

b. How did your teachers interact with your parents?

22. Is there anything you learned from being a student that has affected the way you think about your child's education?

Baseline Teacher Interview Protocol

1. How would you describe parents at this school?

2. How do parents and teachers relate to each other at this school?

3. In your experience, are parents involved in this school? How?

4. In your experience, do you think parents are valued at this school? Why or why not?

5. How would you describe your relationships with your students' parents?

6. What strategies do you use to develop positive relationships with your students' parents?

7. What are your expectations for your students' parents?

- Do your students' parents meet your expectations? Why or why not? What might get in the way of your parents being able to meet your expectations?

8. What do you believe parents expect of you as their child's teacher? Do you believe parents feel you fulfill these expectations?

9. How would you describe your relationship with (parent participant)?
10. How often do you have contact with him/her?
 - a. What forms of contact?
 - b. How satisfied are you with the level of contact you have with him/her?
11. Does (parent participant) fulfill your expectations for his/her role in his/her child's education?
12. How genuine do you feel your conversations are with him/her?
13. Do you think he/she understands and appreciates your job as his/her child's teacher?
Why or why not?
14. Does he/she initiate communication with you? When/how? Or why not?
15. How would you describe his/her parenting style?
16. How well do you feel you follow through on what you tell parents you will do?
17. How well do you feel (parent participant) follows through on what they tell you they will do?

Baseline Staff Interview Protocol

1. What is your role in the school?
2. What kind of interactions do you have with parents?
 - a. How frequent?
 - b. In what context?
3. How would you describe parents at this school?
4. How do parents and teachers relate to each other at this school?
5. How are parents involved at this school?
6. Are parents valued at this school? How so?
7. What are the qualities/characteristics/behaviors of teachers that have good relationships with parents?
8. What are the qualities/characteristics/behaviors of teachers that have more strained relationships with parents?
9. What are the qualities/characteristics/behaviors of parents that have good relationships with teachers?
10. What are the qualities/characteristics/behaviors of parents that have strained relationships with teachers?

11. How do you think social class differences between parents and teachers affects their likelihood of trusting each other and working together?
12. How do you think race affects parents' and teachers' likelihood of trusting each other and working together?
13. What strategies do you use to foster relationships with parents? Have they been effective?
14. Is there anything you think the school, in general, or the teachers, more specifically, could do to improve parent-teacher relationships?

Appendix C: Subsequent Semi-Structured Interview Protocols

Teacher Interview Protocol 2

1. How would you describe your relationships with your students' parents?
2. What strategies do you use to develop positive relationships with your students' parents?
3. What are your expectations for your students' parents? (competence)
 - Do your students' parents meet your expectations? Why or why not? What might get in the way of your parents being able to meet your expectations? (competence)
4. What do you believe parents expect of you as their child's teacher? Do you believe parents feel you fulfill these expectations? (competence)
5. How genuine do you feel your conversations are with your students' parents? (respect)
6. How do you show you are listening to your students' parents in conversation? (respect)
7. How do parents show they are listening to you in conversation? (respect)
8. How do you show care and concern for your students' families? (personal regard)
 - How do you show you care for students and families by going beyond what is expected of you as a teacher? How? Why or why not? (personal regard)

- Do you believe your students' parents feel you genuinely care about their families? Why or why not?(personal regard for others)
9. How well do you feel you follow through on what you tell parents you will do?
(integrity)
10. How well do you feel parents follow through on what they tell you they will do?
(integrity)

Teacher Interview Protocol 3

1. Touch base about any parent communication since the last interview
2. Review journal
3. Discuss conferences
4. Collect documents
5. Background questions
 - a. How long teaching?
 - b. Where went to teacher prep school?
 - c. How long at Jones School?
 - d. Why Jones School?
 - e. Why urban school?
 - f. Did your teacher preparation program prepare you for an urban school setting?
 - g. How long planning to be at Jones School?
 - h. Any plan to transition out of urban schools? Why? Why not?
6. Jones School questions

- a. How has school leadership talked about parents/involvement?
- b. What role has Dr. Spink played in fostering parent involvement?
- c. As far as you know, how has she interacted with parents?
- d. How do you see her leaving affecting parents and families?
- e. Is there a teachers' lounge? What kinds of things do teachers talk about work related issues?
- f. Would you say teachers use that space as a place to vent about the challenges of their jobs?
- g. How often do you hear other teachers complain about parents?
- h. How often do you complain about parents?
- i. Are parents valued at this school? How so? By who? Who not?
- j. What are the qualities/characteristics/behaviors of teachers that have good relationships with parents?
- k. What are the qualities/characteristics/behaviors of teachers that have more strained relationships with parents?
- l. What are the qualities/characteristics/behaviors of parents that have good relationships with teachers?
- m. Is there anything you think the school, in general, or the teachers, more specifically, could do to improve parent-teacher relationships?

Teacher Interview Protocol 4

- 1) Check ins
- 2) What do you see as the strengths of this community?
- 3) What do you see as the greatest challenges of this community?
- 4) In a few of my interviews with other teachers in the building, the teacher has brought up race as an issue that affects how parents and teachers interact.

- Do you think race affects parent-teacher interactions at this school? How so?
- Do you think African American teachers at this school have an advantage when interacting with parents? How so?
- Have you ever heard any of the African American staff members express the belief that students at Jones should have Black teachers?
- Have you ever heard any of the parents express the belief that students at Jones should have Black teachers?
- Do you think African American teachers have a better understanding of Jones students than white teachers? Why or why not?
- Have you ever felt any tension with a parent that you feel was race-based?
- Has a parent ever accused you of being a racist? Explain.

Parent Interview Protocol 2

1. How would you describe your relationships with your child's teacher?
2. What strategies do you use to develop positive relationships with your child's teacher?
3. What are your expectations for your child's teacher? (competence)
4. Does your child's teacher fulfill your expectations? Why or why not?(competence)
5. What do you believe teachers expect of you as a parent? Do you believe teachers feel you fulfill these expectations? (competence)
6. Describe the kinds of conversations you have with your child's teachers?
 - How genuine/comfortable do you feel your conversations are with your child's teacher? (respect)
 - Can you give an example of a recent interaction you've had with a teacher?
7. How do teachers show they are listening to you in conversation? (respect)
8. How well do you feel you follow through on what you tell teachers you will do? Can you give an example? (integrity)
9. How well do you feel teachers follow through on what they tell you they will do? Can you give an example? (integrity)
10. How honest do you feel that your child's teacher is with you? Why?
11. How much do you trust your child's teacher? Why?

12. How welcomed do you feel in your child's classroom? Why?

13. Can you describe an instance when your child's teacher treated you or your child with respect?

14. Can you describe an instance when your child's teacher treated you or your child with disrespect?

Parent Interview Protocol 3

1) Updates

2) Did you hear about the principal's resignation? How did you hear? What are your feelings about her leaving? Do you see her leaving affecting the school? How?

3) When you drop your child off at the school, do the staff/teachers seem genuinely happy to see your child? You?

4) When you pick your child up from the school, do the staff/teachers how would you describe the typical mood of the teacher/s? Do they seem to be rushing the students out?

5) How is your child's attendance? Does he/she arrive on time everyday?

6) Who do you see as the expert on your child's education?

If teacher- Does your child's teacher explain things to you in a way that you understand?

7) Do you feel that as a parent at Jones you are valued as an important part of your child's education? How/Why? By who?

8) Do you feel that you are valued and appreciated as an individual by (teacher) and the staff at Jones? Why or why not?

9) How do you define success?

10) What are your hopes/dreams for your child's future?

How do you see your role in helping him/her meet those goals?

What role to teachers play in helping him/her meet those goals?

Parent Interview Protocol 4

Check ins

What do you see as the strengths of this community?

Do you think teachers at Jones School identify these strengths?

What do you see as the challenges of this community?

Do you think teachers at Jones School understand the challenges of this community?

Some of my questions today are going to focus on race. I hope that at this point you trust me enough to be honest with me. You will in no way offend me as a white woman during this discussion so please be as open and honest as possible.

Do you think race affects parent-teacher interactions at Jones School? How so?

Do you think Jones School should have more teachers of the same race or ethnicity of the students? Why or why not?

Have you ever heard any parents express the belief that students at Jones School should have Black teachers?

Do you think African American teachers at Jones School have an advantage when interacting with parents? How so?

Would you prefer your students have Black teachers? Why/why not?

Do you think African American teachers have a better understanding of Jones School students than white teachers? Why or why not?

Have you ever felt that a teacher or staff member at Jones School was racist? Explain. What was your reaction?