6-15-2010

Educating Youth in Foster Care: Educators’ Perspectives

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Accepted by the Faculty of the Graduate College, The University of Vermont, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, specializing in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.

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Date: May 4, 2010

Specializing in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, pursuant to the regulations of the Board of Doctor of Education, accepted by the Faculty of the Graduate College, The University of Vermont in
This dissertation explores the education of foster care children through the perspectives of classroom teachers. Numerous studies have found that foster youth experience depressed educational outcomes relative to their peers. A meta-analysis of such studies reported depressed educational outcomes in terms of standardized test scores, grade averages, retention rates, and suspension and expulsion rates (Scherr, 2007). Foster care is most often associated with maltreatment, which in turn has been linked to depressed educational outcomes (Runyan, 1985). Foster youth also experience insecure attachment (Howe, 1999).

Attachment theory, which emphasizes the impact of relationships in early childhood on future relationships, informed this study. Purposeful sampling was used to identify classroom teachers in a rural Vermont high school that serves a large number of foster youth. Teachers were asked to describe distinguishing characteristics of foster youth and their relationships with peers and adults at school. Teachers were also asked to describe strategies they used to support this population.

In interviews, teachers were asked to describe distinguishing characteristics of foster youth and their relationships with peers and adults at school. Teachers described several characteristics of foster youth, including the perceived impact of trauma on foster youth’s ability to attend to school and school-related tasks. Teachers also described intense relationships between foster youth and their peers, and between foster youth and adults at school.

Intersections between the characteristics of foster youth and selected literature on attachment theory and traumatic stress are explored in the interpretation of the findings. Finally, this study utilizes a feminist ethic of care to contextualize relationships between foster youth and their teachers.

This dissertation explores the education of foster care children through the perspectives of classroom teachers. Numerous studies have found that foster youth experience depressed educational outcomes relative to their peers. A meta-analysis of such studies reported depressed educational outcomes in terms of standardized test scores, grade averages, retention rates, and suspension and expulsion rates (Scherr, 2007). Foster care is most often associated with maltreatment, which in turn has been linked to depressed educational outcomes (Runyan, 1985). Foster youth also experience insecure attachment (Howe, 1999).
Dedication

To Nancy, Hannah and Jake. I am lucky to have a wonderfully patient and supportive family. This has been a major undertaking for all of us. Thank You.
I gratefully acknowledge the work and support of all those who have helped me with this project. Thank you to the wonderful faculty of the School of Education and Social Work at the University of Vermont, especially those who teach in the Educational Leadership and Policy Program. I am especially grateful to my dissertation committee. Thank you to Dr. Gary Widrick, who graciously agreed to chair my committee, and to Dr. Cynthia Reyes, who offered valuable feedback on my dissertation committee. Thank you to Dr. Gary Widrick, who generously agreed to chair my committee, and to Dr. Cynthia Reyes, who offered valuable feedback on my dissertation committee.

This work was a catalyst in the development of my interest in the educational outcomes of foster youth. I would like to acknowledge the support of my advisor, Dr. Jennifer Jewiss, who has offered encouragement with this dissertation topic and who consistently and persistently offered enthusiastic support. Particularly, thank you to my advisor, Dr. Jennifer Jewiss for her patience, thoughtful questions, and tireless reviewing of my work. I have learned much about qualitative research and effective writing through her guidance. For her patience, thoughtful questions, and endless reviewing of my work, I have offered enthusiastic support, particularly to my advisor, Dr. Jennifer Jewiss.

I am also grateful to my colleagues and peers who have encouraged me, offered encouragement, and provided helpful feedback on drafts of the findings, specifically Dr. Pam Plummer, Dr. Amos Kornfeld, Dr. Pam Plummer, Dr. Amos Kornfeld, and Dr. Susan Hasazi who offered early encouragement with this dissertation topic and who consistently offered encouragement and feedback. I am most grateful for my extended family, who instilled in me a belief that education is intrinsically valuable, to be sought as its own end: particularly my parents, Don and Amy Turner, Denise Hill, and Amy Turner. Thank you to friends who reviewed drafts and provided helpful feedback on drafts of the findings, specifically Dr. Pam Plummer, Dr. Amos Kornfeld, and Dr. Susan Hasazi who offered early encouragement with this dissertation topic and who consistently offered encouragement and feedback. I am most grateful for my extended family, who instilled in me a belief that education is intrinsically valuable, to be sought as its own end: particularly my parents, Don and Amy Turner, Denise Hill, and Amy Turner. Thank you to friends who reviewed drafts and provided helpful feedback on drafts of the findings, specifically Dr. Pam Plummer, Dr. Amos Kornfeld, and Dr. Susan Hasazi who offered early encouragement with this dissertation topic and who consistently offered encouragement and feedback.
Bobbie and Forrest Randall. I have appreciated and valued the gentle and consistent support of my extended family, including Bette and Jerome Lorber, who’s quiet and confident, “Why not?” is the very reason I entered the program; and Pati and Richard Weintraub.
This study arose from my personal experience as a school counselor working with students in foster care. Further, I had the opportunity as a graduate student at the University of Vermont to conduct interviews for a study about foster youths’ preparedness for aging out of the foster care system (MacNeil, 2007). These interviews with students and former foster youth informed my interests in exploring the school performance of foster youths. For the purposes of this study, the terms foster care, out-of-home placement, and state custody are used interchangeably. Each is used to refer to those who typically have been placed by the court system with adults other than their birth parents as a measure designed to ensure the safety of the child. Educational performance refers to any measured school outcome, especially standardized test scores, attendance, retention, and grades, which, taken in sum, indicate depressed educational behavior. This chapter reviews the historical context for the study, as well as the findings of other studies, which, taken in sum, indicate depressed educational performance on the part of students being served by the foster care system.
Educational Outcomes for Foster Children

Working with students in foster care?

...the eyes of classroom teachers. What strategies do classroom teachers use when...

These essential questions: What observable traits distinguish students in foster care in immediate interaction between foster youth and education. The research is driven by...

...with regards to foster children. Emphasis is given to the classroom as the most...

...conception of needs and risk factors. This study explores the foundations of education learners). Students who are in the foster care system present educators with a unique...

...risk for poor school performance (e.g. students with disabilities, English language students. Schools have specific strategies for many identifiable populations deemed at a high means to accessing economic mobility. As such, public schools need to serve all...

Our public education system is grounded in the belief that access to education is economic and social mobility.

...neglected children traces its roots to these early out of home models that emphasized...

...Our current foster care system for abused and served by the children's aid society. Our current foster care system for abused and...

...opportunities for these children that some older children would request that they be sending children to the agrarian Midwest. This program was so effective in creating...

...and society. In New York in 1833 (Gish, 1999), inner city poverty was addressed by...

...a period of time to work off family debts (Hacsi, 1995). In the best...
Numerous studies provide quantitative data on the educational outcomes of foster youth. These findings are consistent, indicating that children in foster care are at risk for school failure. Measures of school performance include school completion rates, standardized test scores, grade retention, and identification for special education.

Casey Family Programs, a private organization that contracts with state agencies to provide foster placements, is a leader in researching outcomes for children in state's custody. One study report was geared towards raising awareness of the educational needs of foster youth, as well as mental health needs and employment and economic outcomes for the study participants (Casey Family Programs, 2005). The study reviewed over 650 case records of adults who had been served by foster care agencies in Oregon and Washington and conducted follow-up interviews with nearly 500 participants. The findings raised concerns regarding the educational needs of foster youth, as well as mental health needs and employment and economic outcomes.

In this study, 84.4% of the participants had earned their high school diploma or received a GED. This compares to an 87.3% completion rate in the general population. Of the participants who completed high school, 28.5% did so through the GED program, which represents a higher percentage of GED participants than found in the general population. Post-secondary program completion rates were also depressed; 16.1% completed a vocational degree and only 1.8% completed a four-year degree in comparison to 24% in the general population. Given the connection between education and economic status (Mankiw, 2007; Rouse, 2005; Schultz, 1961), it is not surprising that employment rates for study participants were lower than the national average.

In this study, one third did not have health insurance (compared to 18% in the general population, 80.1% vs. 95%), household poverty rates were three times the national average, fully 90% of household poverty rates were lower than the national average. Full one third did not have health insurance. One third did not have health insurance (compared to 18% in the general population, 80.1% vs. 95%), household poverty rates were three times the national average, fully 90% of household poverty rates were lower than the national average.
English language learners, the same is not true for children in state's custody. Because

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of this study is the fact that foster care is found within the general population. Nevertheless, districts and

not an identified at-risk population in reporting test scores. While schools are required

not an identified at-risk population in reporting test scores. While schools are required

measure of accountability. Nevertheless, the study found that 30-50% of children in foster care

Findings from a study consisting of focus group interviews with foster youth, foster parents, educators, and social service professionals (Zetlin, 2006) also raised

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difficult to accurately determine the degree to which foster children need special

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being identified or delays in their identification for special education services. It is

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highly mobile; higher rates and lack of strong advocacy might result in fewer foster children

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are more likely to be identified for special education, a secondary finding showed that

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goal of providing additional support for students. While in many instances foster youth

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general population. Because of the perceived intense needs of children in foster care,

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children in foster care received special education services, compared to 10% of the

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within the same age range) and nearly one quarter had experienced homelessness after

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Two years after graduating high school compared to 29% of the non-foster youth, 93% of the non-foster youth, 13% were enrolled in college courses where a total of 74% of the foster youth had received their diploma or GED compared to 84% of the non-foster youth participants. Within four years of the initial graduation date, about 63% of the foster youth graduated on time compared with a group of non-foster youth matched by gender, race, and abilities in reading.

The data indicate depressed educational achievement for foster youth are mounting. Using survey data collected biannually over a 6-year period and tracking a cohort of students beginning their sophomore year through the 11th grade, Wendy Whiting Blome (1997) compared the outcomes of approximately 150 foster youth with a group of non-foster youth matched by gender, race, and abilities in reading.

10% in grade 6, and 74% vs. 8% in grade 9.

Two and a half times the rate of the general population (23% vs. 9% in grade 3, 29% in grade 6, and 15% vs. 7% in grade 9.) In findings similar to the Zeltin (2006) study, foster children were identified for special education more than approximately twice the rate of the general population (15% vs. 8% in grade 3, 13% vs. 6% in grade 6, and 15% vs. 7% in grade 9.) The year compared to 86% for the general population, students in foster care were retained at a rate of 59% found that students in foster care in 11th grade completed high school at a rate of 54%.

Consistent with the Casey Family Program's study (2005), this study strengthened less, compared to the general population. Foster youth scored 15-20 points below non-foster youth in standardized test scores. Foster youth scored 15-20 points below non-foster youth in review of the educational records of foster children, one study (Burley & Halpern, 2001) found that foster care alone was associated with a 7.8% decrease in youth than for other identifiable at-risk populations. Using a regression model and a

of this, fewer data are available regarding the performance and achievement of foster

Those numbers rose to 45% and 54% respectively four years after the high school graduation date with foster youth still lagging behind their peers. Foster youth reported earning mostly C's on their high school report cards. The non-foster youth reported earning both B's and C's on their report cards.

In a meta-analysis of 31 studies conducted primarily in the United States (77% of the studies), as well as Great Britain, Canada, France, and Australia, findings reflect similar trends, with foster youth generally faring worse than their peers in terms of educational outcomes (Scherr, 2007). Foster youth were 7 times as likely as their peers to be retained in school at a rate of 33%. Foster youth were 5 times as likely to qualify for special education at a rate of 31%. Foster youth were 7 times as likely as their peers to exhibit behavior problems, including a rate of 31% for behavior at home, compared with 3% for non-foster youth. Foster youth were 7 times as likely as their peers to be suspended from school at a rate of 1.8%. Foster youth maintained a 1.84 grade point average while maltreated youth who remained in

...
Foster youth.

Classroom teachers reflected on their perceptions of experiences with and work with their home maintained a 1.61 grade point average. At the time of the report of maltreatment, 42% of the youth who were placed in foster care had passing grades. That rate improved to 44% for those in care. By contrast, 66% of those who were not placed in foster care had passing grades at the time of the report of maltreatment. Students in foster care are an easily identifiable, highly at risk population in our schools. This study asks high school teachers to reflect on their perceptions of, experiences with, and work with between foster care status and school performance. Students in foster care are an easily identifiable, highly at risk population in our schools. This study asks high school teachers to reflect on their perceptions of, experiences with, and work with foster youth.

Problem Statement

Collectively, these studies reveal a critical need to understand the relationship between foster care status and school performance. Students in foster care are an easily identifiable, highly at risk population in our schools. This study asks high school teachers to reflect on their perceptions of, experiences with, and work with foster youth.
Chapter 2

School Performance of Foster Youth

The research cited in Chapter 1 demonstrated that children in foster care are at an increased risk for school failure. While these studies have been consistent in identifying depressed educational outcomes for foster youth, many of the studies

identified depressed educational outcomes for foster youth. While these studies have been consistent in identifying depressed educational outcomes for foster youth. While these studies have been consistent in identifying depressed educational outcomes for foster youth. While these studies have been consistent in identifying depressed educational outcomes for foster youth. While these studies have been consistent in identifying depressed educational outcomes for foster youth. While these studies have been consistent in identifying depressed educational outcomes for foster youth.
High mobility also creates a challenge for the students in foster care. An accurate understanding of the learning profile of an individual student in foster care, that can accompany these placement changes, make it difficult for educators to develop effective educational plans. The McKinney-Vento Act (H.R. 5417) suspends residency requirements for attendance at a public school for homeless and foster children. Federal policies have been expanded to include foster children in secondary schools where progress is determined by credit accumulation, extended absences, and transitions mid-marking period can result in the loss of academic credit. Many of the studies included in their recommendations support the implementation of policies and procedures that would minimize the impact of increased mobility on educational outcomes.

A primary goal of the act is to minimize school transfers, so that if a child moves into a new foster home or shelter, the new foster parent contacts the school and the appropriate records are located and forwarded to the new school. Students may also miss time in school as they take time to move into a new home. The McKinney-Vento Act suspends residency requirements for attendance at a public school for homeless and foster children. A primary goal of the act is to minimize school transfers, so that if a child moves into a new foster home or shelter, the new foster parent contacts the school and the appropriate records are located and forwarded to the new school.

The McKinney-Vento Act (H.R. 5417) suspends residency requirements for attendance at a public school for homeless and foster children. Federal policies have been expanded to include foster children in secondary schools where progress is determined by credit accumulation, extended absences, and transitions mid-marking period can result in the loss of academic credit. Many of the studies included in their recommendations support the implementation of policies and procedures that would minimize the impact of increased mobility on educational outcomes.
Record keeping is also problematic for foster youth. In a study designed to measure and describe the problem of retrieving the school records of highly mobile foster youth, researchers worked with schools and child welfare agencies to retrieve and review the records of a sample of foster children (Zetlin, Weinberg, & Luderer, 2004). They found that it took 3 weeks to 8 months to track down school records for the students in the sample. Fewer than 25% of the cumulative files of a random sample of students were readily available for those students who had serious learning and behavioral problems. Consistently criticized was the lack of understanding and information regarding the limits of confidentiality and the legalities of each system. Researchers advocated for a passport approach. A passport would contain the cumulative files of the child, including information regarding which school the child attended, information regarding the status of the biological parent’s rights and current placement, and information containing the child’s academic progress and special education or disability. The vital information that should follow a child in the foster care system. Any information pertaining to the child’s education would be included in a single document that could easily be accessed by the child’s current provider. Researchers found that many of the case files of these students contained inaccurate information regarding which school the child attended. Fewer than 25% of the cumulative files of a random sample of students were readily available. Zetlin and her colleagues found that many of the students in the sample. Fewer than 25% of the cumulative files of a random sample of foster children (Zetlin, Weinberg, & Luderer, 2004). They found that it took 3 weeks to 8 months to track down school records for foster youth. Researchers worked with schools and child welfare agencies to retrieve and review the records of a sample of foster children (Zetlin, Weinberg, & Luderer, 2004). They measure and describe the problem of retrieving the school records of highly mobile foster youth. Record keeping is also problematic for foster youth. In a study designed to
Attachment Theory: An Overview

Sandra Altshuler’s study (2003) utilizing focus groups with caseworkers, educators, and students offers a thorough description of the tension between schools and social service agencies. Altshuler (2003) found that both caseworkers and educators expressed distrust of the respective roles of educators and caseworkers. Adoption of a collaborative atmosphere between the schools and the social service agencies is essential if clinicians are to effectively carry out their professional responsibilities. This study emphasized the need for a collaborative atmosphere between the schools and the social service agencies. This study concludes that cross training would be helpful in developing a shared understanding of the respective roles of educators and caseworkers. 

Attachment Theory: An Overview

This dissertation study differentiates itself from the bulk of the literature in that it utilizes the theoretical framework of attachment theory to inform the questions it asks.
Attachment theory focuses on the development of attachments in early childhood, from infancy to age 3, with the child's primary caregiver. Through the interactions between the primary caregiver and the young child, an internal working model of relationships is developed. This working model informs the fundamental assumptions the child holds about their own self-worth, their ability to rely on others, and their security model of relationships is developed which informs the fundamental assumptions the child holds about their own self-worth, their ability to rely on others, and their security.

Attachment theory grounds this inquiry, focusing questions on observed interactions rather than measured outcomes to explore ways in which foster care status may influence educational processes. Attachment theory offers an understanding of how maltreatment, especially emotional abuse, impacts behaviors, and especially relationships later in life. In the discussion that follows, I begin with an overview of attachment theory, followed by a review of the findings regarding the impact of maltreatment on attachment style. Next, I look at how the attachment style translates into behavior, motivation, and relationships. I discuss the possible impact of maltreatment on attachment style. Finally, I briefly consider resilience theory as a framework congruent with attachment theory. I consider these behaviors, motivations, and relationships to school performance. Developmental psychology emphasizes stages in human development in understanding psychological function. It defines normal development in terms of tasks done during certain stages of development and understands psychological problems in terms of interruptions to the completion of these tasks, as a model of developmental psychology, attachment theory is well suited to describe the impact of maltreatment on the development of children. Attachment theory is a model of development that explores ways in which foster care may influence educational processes.
Secure attachment (Goldberg, 2000) is the result of responsive caregiving. In these interactions, the caregiver sees emotion reflected in the face of the infant/child. In sharing affect, the caregiver helps the child develop a secure attachment and a strong, positive, integrated self. Attachment styles: secure, avoidant, resistant/ambivalent, and disorganized/disoriented.

Secure Attachment

Secure attachment is the result of responsive caregiving, having control over one's emotions and their expression. The caregiver reflects and co-constrains meaning of the infant or young child's feelings. The child sees emotion reflected in the face of the caregiver. In sharing affect, the caregiver and child regulate their internal working model and responses in stressful situations. Observations were conducted in the Strange Situation (Ainsworth, 1969), Situations included having the primary caregiver leave the child alone with the researcher/stranger, Observations included having the primary caregiver leave the child alone with the researcher/stranger.

Earl enumeration was conducted by observing young children's reactions to stressful situations in the Strange Situation evaluation. Situations included having the primary caregiver leave the child alone with the researcher/stranger, allowing the child to integrate a broad range of affective states into a sense of self. Together, the Strange situation evaluation provides scaffolding which helps the child develop a growing understanding of the diversity of feelings in these experiences allowing the child to internalize affect regulation (comfort seeking behaviors). The process of attachment provides scaffolding which helps the child develop a secure attachment and a strong, positive, integrated self.
evaluating an attachment-related experience, the style and engagement in the
any individual event or relationship with some specificity. When describing or
valuing of attachments to other important people in their lives and in ability to describe

In adulthood, secure attachment is marked by coherent and engaging dialog, a

secure attachment. In a narrative assessment, a clinician offers the start of a story to the
primary caregiver. The clinician assesses based on how he/she completes the narrative. The

child, The child is assessed based on how he/she completes the narrative. The

child, securely attached child completes stories with positive resolutions (the child

expresses trust in caregivers), They express trust in caregivers beyond their

attachment to the secure base using the telephone or a photograph. Secured

(reconstruing the secure base using the telephone or a photograph). Secured

primary caregiver is less central in regulating affect. Comfort may be achieved by

In middle childhood (ages 6-12) physically connected with the attachment figure

cohered on support and care. The child, compared to secure attachments is one of self-completeness and one where others can be

self, was able to continue with play and exploration. The internal working model for

affect associated with the anxiety of separation, and drawing on the positive sense of

communicating through non-verbal cues. The child was effective in regulating the

caregiver to join in his/her play and exploration. Insecure and caregivers are constantly

acknowledged the return with smiles, and may have offered an invitation to the

with play and exploration. When the primary caregiver returned, the child
Insecure-avoidant attachment begins with a lack of feeling or enthusiasm. When the primary caregiver leaves the child with a stranger, the child acts as though he/she did not notice, displaying indifference. When the primary caregiver returns, the child acts as though he/she does not notice, displaying indifference. When the primary caregiver leaves the child with a lack of feeling or enthusiasm, the young child's play is quiet with a marked decrease in interaction. In the strange situation evaluation with infants, the young child's play is quiet with a marked decrease in interaction, and when possible, the affect of the primary caregiver to maintain the connection. In connection, these strategies include repressing negative affect, maintaining their own connection with their secure base (caregiver) and have strategies to maintain this connection with their secure base (caregiver) and have strategies to maintain this connection with their secure base (caregiver). The internal working model of avoidant individuals emphasizes the unreliability of others. It is grounded in the assumption that others do not reliably care about him/her, and their negative feelings are weaknesses. These feelings are often overcome by anger and/or withdrawal. The internal working model of avoidant individuals emphasizes the unreliability of feelings about their child, these feelings were often overcome by anger and/or withdrawal. Responsiveness from the primary caregiver, while these caregivers had positive primary attachment of avoidant infants are described as reflective (Goldberg, 2000). Avoidant attachment is the result of inconsistency and generally slow, or non-responsive caregiving. Whether or not the experience was positive or negative (Holmes, 1999),
In middle childhood, avoidant attachment styles continue to be marked by low self-esteem and a belief that the primary caregiver is unloving and disinterested. As reported by peers, avoidant children are lacking in social skills. They lack pro-social tendencies such as sharing and empathy. They are unresponsive to the needs of their peers, mirroring the unresponsive style of their primary caregiver. Peers also describe the avoidant child as lacking autonomy. The self-reliance they developed in response to the apparent indifference of their parents does not translate into a strong sense of agency. This is likely because self-advocating behaviors require pro-social behaviors. Without a strong coherent sense of self, the avoidant-child cannot project a cohesive, self-reliant image. The self-reliance they developed in response to the apparent indifference of their parents does not translate into a strong sense of agency. This is likely because self-advocating behaviors require pro-social behaviors. Without a strong coherent sense of self, the avoidant-child cannot project a cohesive, self-reliant image. The self-reliance they developed in response to the apparent indifference of their parents does not translate into a strong sense of agency. This is likely because self-advocating behaviors require pro-social behaviors.

Similarly to avoidant attachment, resistant or ambivalent attachment is marked by an insecure attachment. Resistant Resistant/Ambivalent Attachment

...
child is significantly deficit in communicating interest and commitment. The primary caregivers of resistant infants are insensitive to the infant’s signals but not rejecting. They show little or no spontaneous affection and seem uncomfortable or unskilled with physical contact. In the strange situation evaluation, the resistant young child may appear wary even before the separation. They display distress when the caregiver leaves (Holmes, 2001). These children maximize their attachment seeking behavior in order to overcome the caregiver’s neglect. They display disengagement as the caregiver leaves. (Holmes, 2001). These children manifest their attachment seeking behavior in order to appease the caregiver even before the separation. They are less engaged in play and exploration physically than the secure child. They show little or no spontaneous affection and seem uncomfortable or uncertain with the caregiver. The primary caregivers of resistant infants are insensitive to the infant’s signals but not rejecting. The child is significantly deficit in communicating interest and commitment. The primary
is an attempt to secure the support and attention of their friends, teachers, and/or caregivers.

In adulthood the resistant/ambivalent style is renamed preoccupied, reflecting the individual’s preoccupation with past attachment relationships and experiences. In narrative assessments, the preoccupied adult offers long sentences that lack structure and grammar, and congruent, clear content. The adult speaks with anger, passivity, or fear (Holmes, 2001). Relationships continue to be marked by manipulation and overdependence. There is an expression of distrust in the authenticity of others: no one loves the preoccupied adult as strongly or as completely as they love themselves. Dependency on others. There is an expression of distress in the authenticity of others’ care (Holmes, 2001).

Insecure-Dissociated Attachment

Insecure-Dissociated Attachment is most often associated with childhood trauma and/or substance abuse issues. In contrast to the insecure attachment styles of avoidant and resistant, the disorganized individual has no organized behavioral strategy to regulate their affect or connect with their caregiver. These individuals are unable to adapt their behavior to the caregiving relationship (Howe, 1999). In the strange situation, disorganized infants may freeze with their hands in the air, holding a trance-like expression. They may initially respond to the parent’s return, but then lay on the floor. They seem to be detached from the parent.

Relationships continue to be marked by manipulation and overdependence. The adult speaks with anger, passivity, or manipulation, and continually clear concerns. The preoccupied adult offers long sentences that lack structure and congruity. Relationships are characterized by preoccupation with past attachment relationships and experiences. In adulthood the resistant/ambivalent style is renamed preoccupied.
Inconsistently, the narrative sometimes matches the avoidant style, sometimes the
assessment, much of the narration matches the other attachment styles, but
relationships to have multiple meanings (Pagon & Richardson, 2001). In the narrative
resolved leading to dissociation. These are multiple selves, allowing the same
himself as worthless and the parent as perfect becomes unattainable and cannot be
dichotomy between attachment and mismatched role in the child who perceives
In adulthood, disorganized attachment has been linked to dissociation. The
child will assume they are worthless and the parent is faultless. if having been mistreated by a caregiver, but remaining attached to that caregiver, the
non-responsive figures such as animals or the self. In an effort to resolve the conflict
attachment process begins outwardly. A reaction might be misattributed as internal or
sorrow may become anger. In a self-protection effort, the child with disorganized
selves are confirmed so that when the child is feeling one thing, they display another;
 frequent misunderstandings and mis-managed social situations. Various emotional
struggle to identify their own emotions and the emotions of others. This results in
child lacks time and energy to engage with peers to explore, and to play. They
share of anxiety that results from being unable to seek caring support. The disorganized
associated with strength and is predictable (Hove, 1999). Because of this pattern,
In middle childhood anger often becomes a central strategy. Anger is
are frightening, unpredictable, and unreliable.
There is no model for the relationships of the disorganized individual because others
uncertainty. The internal working model is limited in that it simply doesn’t work.
emphasizes a negative self-view and a concept of others that is marked by fear and
have insecure attachment and 93% of maltreated 4 year olds. Researchers have
performed trials into years 3 and 4, where again 80% of maltreated 3 year olds were found to
secure style, and other times the preoccupied styles. At times, however, the discourse
disorganized attachment behavior versus 20% of infants in the control group
in neglect. In one study, over 80% of maltreated infants were described as having
Disorganized attachment has been most frequently and closely associated with

In an insecure attachment style, but fails to protect the child from a threat, security is not provided. This also can lead
insecure attachment style. In situations where the primary caregiver is not the threat,
secure attachment style. The Strange Situation Scenario is an effective measure of attachment
security, than that of the secure base is unresponsive in the case of neglect, or the
because it creates a stressful situation to which the young child responds. It is not
stressful situation. The Strange Situation Scenario is an effective measure of attachment
recognizes with that secure base as a survival mechanism to manage and endure the

Insecure (Ambivalent Brother, 2001) style. The primary caregiver
the infant. Maltreatment (neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and/or sexual
Attachment is a function of the relationship between the primary caregiver and
Attachment and Malattachment
(Holmes, 2001).

causal statements. These may be periods of prolonged silence or crotrophic speech
is marked by the absence of reasoning monitoring. The adult will make unreasonable
secure style, and other times the preoccupied styles. At times, however, the discourse
observed the need to study the possible correlations between the type of maltreatment and the resulting specific insecure attachment style (Baer & Martinez, 2006). In cross-cultural comparative studies, descriptions and characteristics of secure and insecure attachment styles remain consistent (Howe, 1999) indicating that attachment is not a culturally bound construct. Furthermore, barring unusual and dramatic events, the attachment style developed in early childhood persists through adolescence, the importance of peer relationships is ever increasing (Kemps & Richardson, 2005). The negative impact of maltreatment on attachment is enduring.

At the same age that children are starting school, they are beginning to seek engagement and performance (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Toth & Cicchetti, 1996). Schools provide an early opportunity for children to form a relationship with an adult outside of the home. For some students, kindergarten may represent the first opportunity to form an attachment relationship with someone other than the primary caregiver. Several studies have documented the correlation between attachment style and the relationships children develop at school. Schools are fundamentally social places, and learning in school is often a structured, social activity. Students are constantly interacting with peers whether it is working together on a group or class project assigned by the teacher, or self-initiated on the playground and in the lunchroom. Schools provide an early opportunity for working together on a group or class project assigned by the teacher, or self-initiated on playground, social activity. Students are constantly interacting with peers whether it is structuring, social activity. Schools are fundamentally social places, and learning in school is often a structured, social activity. Students are constantly interacting with peers whether it is working together on a group or class project assigned by the teacher, or self-initiated on the playground and in the lunchroom.

Attachment and School

An enduring negative impact of maltreatment on attachment is observed in cross-cultural comparative studies, descriptions and characteristics of secure and insecure attachment styles remain consistent (Baer & Martinez, 2006).
tied to friendships in addition to, and eventually to a greater degree than, attachment to the primary caregiver. However, the internal working model developed with the primary caregiver continues to color these future attachments. A strong sense of self-worth is closely associated with the development of secure friendships (Kerns & Richardson, 2005). Because children with a secure attachment style have a higher number of reported positive social relationships, they shift between high and low behaviors (withdrawal and aggression).

Social withdrawal from and aggression towards peers has been linked to the disorganized attachment style. Because children with a disorganized attachment style (Kerns & Richardson, 2005), self-worth is a correlate of secure attachment. Self-worth is a correlate of low self-worth, and high self-worth is a correlate of secure attachment. A well-developed friendship quality, and high self-worth was a significant mediator. A strong sense of self-worth is closely associated with the development of secure friendships (Kerns & Richardson, 2005). Booth-LaForce et al. (in Kerns & Richardson, 2005) found that attachment security with parents was closely correlated to quality friendships, whereas youth in foster care have a higher number of reported behavioral issues in school (Fantuzzo & Perlman, 2007). This suggests why nearly 25% of foster youth have been suspended or expelled during their school career in comparison with 7% of the general population (Scherr, 2007).

Because children with a disorganized attachment style do not feel they can competently engage in peer relationships, they shift between high and low behaviors (withdrawal and aggression). Thus, it is not surprising that children in foster care have a lower sense of security in the primary caregiver bond, but in such cases, quality friendships are less likely to develop because of low self-worth. Secure friendships were found to compensate for a low sense of quality friendships. Secure friendships were found to compensate for a low sense of quality friendships. Secure friendships were found to compensate for a low sense of quality friendships. Secure friendships were found to compensate for a low sense of quality friendships.
In this study insecurely attached children scored lower on communication, cognitive engagement, and mastery motivation. When students had a strong relationship with the teacher (Kerns & Richardson, 2005), they often maintained strong and supportive peer relationships. Toth and Cicchetti (1996) found that maltreated children had lower ego resistance than did non-maltreated children. Ego resistance describes an individual's ability to maintain a healthy self-esteem in the face of criticism and failure. School requires a form of risk-taking, where students are constantly subjecting themselves to feedback, including criticism. Reduced ego-resistance, a function of insecure attachment, makes such risk-taking especially challenging.

Insecurely attached students' relationships with their teachers can serve as a strong counterbalance, improving educational outcomes (Kerns & Richardson, 2005). If the teacher is able to serve as a secure base for the student, the risk-taking associated with learning becomes more possible. While the teacher-student relationship is not the same as a primary caregiver-child relationship, the teacher can serve as a base for learning becomes more possible. When the teacher-student relationship is strong, counterbalancing improving educational outcomes (Kerns & Richardson, 2005), insecurely attached students' relationships with their teacher can serve as a secure base for the student.

Behavioral issues, and in turn the correlation between maltreatment and disorganized behaviors. Given the high correlation between disorganized attachment and reduced ego-resistance, a form of risk-taking, where students are constantly subjecting themselves to increased criticism, in their academic work. Reduced ego-resistance is also a form of risk-taking, where students are constantly subjecting themselves to increased criticism and/or failure. School challenges students to face difficult challenges or experiencing criticism and/or failure. Reduced ego-resistance describes an individual's ability to maintain a healthy self-esteem when facing these challenges. Child maltreatment describes an individual’s ability to maintain a healthy self-esteem. The (1996) found that maltreated children had lower ego-resistance than did non-maltreated children. Ego-resistance is a function of insecure attachment, cognitive engagement, and mastery motivation. Kerns and Richardson (2005) found that maltreated children scored lower on communication, cognitive engagement, and mastery motivation.
attachment, serious obstacles stand between maltreated students and a strong relationship with their teachers.

**Further Support for Attachment Perspective**

**Resiliency Theory**

Resilience is the successful adaptation of the individual to overcome adversity (Klein, Kufeldt, & Rideout, 2006). Adversity is understood to be significant trauma or hardship (Klein, Kufeldt, & Rideout, 2006). A resilient individual is able to solve problems effectively and is not isolated. Resilient students are able to interact effectively with others, increasing their access to resources (Klein, Kufeldt, & Rideout, 2006). They are able to overcome adversity more easily, are less likely to use illegal drugs, are more likely to continue in school, are less likely to be involved in the legal system, and are less likely to use illegal drugs. A resilient youth fare better (Fernandez, 2006). They are able to overcome adversity more easily, are less likely to be involved in the legal system, and are less likely to use illegal drugs. Resilient youth continue in school and are less likely to be involved in the legal system. There is a substantial body of work devoted to researching the implications of resiliency theory and its application to child welfare. This body of work informs practitioners who seek to improve outcomes by promoting resilience in child welfare clients.

Resiliency theory has been applied as a framework to examine programming in schools (e.g., after school programs, mentoring programs, and supportive programs) and to better understand the outcomes for youth in foster care (Henderson, 2006). The development of after school programs, mentoring programs, and supportive programs in schools has been applied as a framework to examine programming in schools (e.g., after school programs, mentoring programs, and supportive programs) and to better understand the outcomes for youth in foster care (Henderson, 2006). The development of after school programs, mentoring programs, and supportive programs in schools has been applied as a framework to examine programming in schools (e.g., after school programs, mentoring programs, and supportive programs) and to better understand the outcomes for youth in foster care (Henderson, 2006). The development of after school programs, mentoring programs, and supportive programs in schools has been applied as a framework to examine programming in schools (e.g., after school programs, mentoring programs, and supportive programs) and to better understand the outcomes for youth in foster care (Henderson, 2006). The development of after school programs, mentoring programs, and supportive programs in schools has been applied as a framework to examine programming in schools (e.g., after school programs, mentoring programs, and supportive programs) and to better understand the outcomes for youth in foster care (Henderson, 2006).
Individual resiliency is understood in terms of risk factors and protective factors. These factors are categorized in terms of the individual, family, school, and community arenas (Brooks, 2006; Search-Institute, 2010). Examples of individual risk factors include: difficult temperament, behavior problems, learning disability, peers who are involved with substance abuse, and early antisocial behaviors. Family risk factors include: non-authoritarian parenting, positive attitude towards the child, sense of purpose, time orientation, and strong self-image. Family protective factors can include: non-authoritarian parenting, positive attitude towards the child, sense of purpose, time orientation, and strong self-image. Key protective factors on the individual level include: self-esteeem, internal locus of control, and a sense of purpose. The greater the resilience, the lower the risk factors. The lower the resilience, the more risk factors. Both risk and protective factors are cumulative. (For a more complete list of risk factors see Klein, Kufeldt & Rideout, 2006.)

Compassion, respect, opportunity for involvement, and high but developable standards are important in this study are the school protective factors. Caring and supportive teachers, education, and encouragement of child involvement in decision making. Especially key protective factors are nonauthoritarian parenting, positive attitude towards the child, sense of purpose, time orientation, and strong self-image. Family protective factors include: non-authoritarian parenting, positive attitude towards the child, sense of purpose, time orientation, and strong self-image. Family protective factors can include: non-authoritarian parenting, positive attitude towards the child, sense of purpose, time orientation, and strong self-image. Key protective factors on the individual level include: self-esteeem, internal locus of control, and a sense of purpose. The greater the resilience, the lower the risk factors. The lower the resilience, the more risk factors. Both risk and protective factors are cumulative. (For a more complete list of risk factors see Klein, Kufeldt & Rideout, 2006.)

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The mentoring movement has strong ties to resiliency theory because of the strong protective factor of caring adult relationships (Fernandez, 2006). According to Fernandez, outcomes for children and youth in out-of-home care are directly related to the strength of their relationships with adults. Because these children do not have strong familial relationships, what would otherwise be seen as peripheral or secondary relationships become significantly more important. The relationship with a teacher, a mentor, a coach, or a neighbor may become a critical protective factor in terms of the child's resiliency.

In her 5-year longitudinal study, Elizabeth Fernandez (2006) found that children in the foster care system frequently reported having difficulty with concentration and attention. All of the children in her study reported anxiety symptoms. This anxiety by school changes, both of which inhibiting the development of caring relationships with adults. The influence of peer relationships is often greater for these children (Fernandez, 2006). Placement changes frequently are accompanied by the trauma experienced by youth, and by the unpredictability of life in foster care (Fernandez, 2006). The relevance of relationships is further supported by some authors in the fields of neuroscience and attachment theory. The relevance of relationships is supported by the identification of caring adult relationships as a protective factor in resiliency theory. The relevancy of relationships is further supported by some authors in the fields of neuroscience and attachment theory. The relevance is supported by the identification of caring adult relationships as a protective factor in resiliency theory. The relevancy of relationships is further supported by some authors in the fields of neuroscience and attachment theory. The relevance is supported by the identification of caring adult relationships as a protective factor in resiliency theory.
Child abuse and severe neglect can impact the physiology of the brain. Severe neglect can also impair both the emotional and cognitive development of children (Cicchetti, 2002; Debellis, 2005; Haight, Kagle, & Black, 2003). Caring, therapeutic, long-lasting relationships can help to heal or compensate for the altered brain development (Cicchetti, 2002). However, the mobility associated with foster care may inhibit the development of these relationships.

This study builds on the understanding of the impact of maltreatment on social development. Maltreatment most often results in insecure attachment styles, which inhibit the formation of meaningful and lasting relationships. These strategies are dysfunctional in that they are managed and regulating anxiety. These strategies have been subject to various forms of maltreatment such as neglect, physical abuse, and emotional abuse. Individuals who have been maltreated have different strategies for managing and regulating anxiety. These strategies are dysfunctional in that they are rooted in withdrawal and isolation, manipulation, and/or unpredictability.

Attachment theory explains the impact maltreatment has on an individual’s ability to develop meaningful and lasting relationships. Learning is a risk-taking behavior. One must acknowledge a weakness (absence of knowledge) for learning to occur. Attachment theory explains the impact maltreatment has on the development of learning. Attachment is central to understanding the performance of foster youth in school.

Application to this Study

This study grounds itself in attachment theory as a framework for understanding the lower academic achievement of students in foster care; students who by definition have been subject to various forms of maltreatment such as neglect, physical abuse, and emotional abuse. Attachment theory explains the impact maltreatment has on an individual’s ability to internalize security and thereby manage and regulate emotions. Children who have been abused and/or neglected have experienced altered development of the brain, which has a long-lasting impact on their ability to build relationships. Caring, therapeutic, long-lasting relationships can help to heal or repair both the emotional and cognitive development of children (Cicchetti, 2002; Debellis, 2005; Haight, Kagle, & Black, 2003). Simply put, according to these researchers, children who have been abused and/or neglected have experienced altered development, which has a long-lasting impact on their ability to build relationships.
Youth with some emphasis on the relationships the teachers build with foster youth.

The study asks teachers about specific support strategies used with foster youth. Attachment theory provides a foundation for the questions asked in this study. Attachment theory has been used to describe, in terms of school relationships, distinguishing characteristics of the interactions and interventions used by these educators. This study asks educators to begin to describe, in terms of school relationships, distinguishing characteristics of the interactions and interventions used by these educators. This study asks educators to begin to describe, in terms of school relationships, distinguishing characteristics of the interactions and interventions used by these educators. This study asks educators to begin to describe, in terms of school relationships, distinguishing characteristics of the interactions and interventions used by these educators. This study asks educators to begin to describe, in terms of school relationships, distinguishing characteristics of the interactions and interventions used by these educators. This study asks educators to begin to describe, in terms of school relationships, distinguishing characteristics of the interactions and interventions used by these educators. This study asks educators to begin to describe, in terms of school relationships, distinguishing characteristics of

While brain development research is still in its infancy with regards attachment theory, a supporting theoretical framework that complements the explanations offered by attachment theory provides a foundation for the questions asked in this study. Attachment theory is one of the ways to understand and overcome hardships. It offers a more direct discussion of resilience because it emphasizes the positive impact of adult relationships in individuals' ability to engage in and manage relationships. It includes a brief discussion of stress responses. Further, attachment theory explains the impact of maltreatment on an
Chapter 3

Methodology

I am a high school counselor. My interest in the educational outcomes of students in foster care has developed as I work with former students who are, or have been, in foster care. My strong identity as a counselor has informed both my research questions and my methodology. As a school counselor, I am uniquely positioned within the school system, focusing simultaneously on issues of psychological and emotional development and on education.

This study examines the perspectives of classroom teachers who work with students in foster care. Through interviews, teachers are asked to reflect on their experiences with foster youth. The study seeks to develop an understanding of the observable traits that distinguish students in foster care in the eyes of classroom teachers in foster care. The study seeks to develop an understanding of the observable traits that distinguish students in foster care in the eyes of classroom teachers in foster care. The study seeks to develop an understanding of the observable traits that distinguish students in foster care in the eyes of classroom teachers in foster care. The study seeks to develop an understanding of the observable traits that distinguish students in foster care in the eyes of classroom teachers in foster care.

While not purely phenomenological in its approach, the study bears some of the characteristics of such studies. Patton (2002) states that "Phenomenology seeks answers to the question, "What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of phenomena for this person or group of people?" (p. 132). This study seeks to describe the lived experience of educators in their work with foster care. Research projects (Patton, 2002) because little work has been done focusing on perceived as effective when working with students in foster care. It is an exploratory research project that distinguishes students in foster care in the eyes of classroom teachers in foster care. Through interviews, teachers are asked to reflect on their experiences with foster care. The study examines the perspectives of classroom teachers who work with students in foster care. Psychological and emotional development and on education.

Positioned within the school system, focusing simultaneously on issues of research questions and my methodology. As a school counselor, I am uniquely informed by my former work in foster care. My strong identity as a counselor has informed both my interest in the educational outcomes of students in foster care. I have been in foster care, and I work with a number of students who are, or have been, in foster care. My interest in the educational outcomes of former students in foster care has developed as I work with former students who are, or have been, in foster care. My strong identity as a counselor has informed both my research questions and my methodology. As a school counselor, I am uniquely positioned within the school system, focusing simultaneously on issues of psychological and emotional development and on education.

Methodology
the meanings constructed by professional educators regarding the relationships students in the foster care system have with peers and adults at school. Further, this research seeks to explore how these educators have to the phenomenon. This study seeks to uncover the understandings educators have of the phenomena. This research in the foster care system are with peers and adults at school. Further, this research

students in foster care and schools.

Each year, and want to increase my own understanding of the interactions between

the values they bring to their work with students in foster care, and as they create

constructive and humanistic approaches to work with educators as they both discover

which they interpret (Cousseau, 2006). As a fledgling researcher, I drew on my

qualitative researchers seek to make sense of personal narratives and the ways in

constructive, working with high school students and their personal narratives.

A task for each of us is to create meaning in our lives. This closely parallels my work as a

I am a constructivist (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) in that I believe that a primary

from their experiences. My background is well suited to qualitative questions such as

with high school students as they struggle to identify their truths and create meaning

religious beliefs, rather than to seek a singular religious truth. As a counselor, I work

comparative religion, I was trained to look for the truths of a given culture and set of

introduced to the distinction between the "Truth" and "truths." As I studied

professional background. Early in my undergraduate work in the humanities, I was

A constructivist research perspective is consistent with my academic and

the efforts teachers make to support the academic achievement of foster youth.

seeks to uncover the understandings educators bring to their work with foster youth and

seeks to explore the responses these educators have to the phenomenon. This study

in the foster care system have with peers and adults at school. Further, this research

the meanings constructed by professional educators regarding the relationships students
This study is not a case study. However, the literature on case studies provided strong guidance in selecting the site for this project. In case study research, "The researcher examines various interests in the phenomenon, selecting a case of some interest, and organizing the study to learn" (Stake, 2005).

In finding a suitable site for this study, I sought a high school that is in many ways typical of Vermont high schools in size and setting. The study site is a union high school serving 6 towns in rural northern Vermont. The school serves approximately 650 students each year (Newamerica.net, 2008). This organization provides extensive respite support for foster families in the area. The organization provides extensive respite support for foster families. Foster youth are able to spend time (i.e., a weekend) with a respite family to ease stress and conflict between the foster youth and the foster family. Foster families provide strong support.

While similar to many rural Vermont high schools demographically, the school also received grants to expand supports for fosters children. The school has also received grants to expand supports for fosters children. The school also received grants to expand supports for fosters children.

The study site is not a case study. However, the literature on case studies provided strong guidance in selecting the site for this project.
Their career, where educators confront the challenges of teaching students in foster care regularly in an information rich setting allows this study to focus on the phenomenon in a setting effective support strategies for foster youth. Because this is an exploratory study, such educators have also had many opportunities to discover and practice insights in the experiences of the teachers. These teachers have a wealth of experience representation of teacher perspectives and experiences exchanged in favor of greater breadth of develop a case sample in a form of purposeful sampling that allows the researcher to take advantage of information rich cases (Patton, 2002). Such cases experience with foster youth makes this an information rich site (Patton, 2002) for this study. In their classrooms at the time of the study, The depth and persistance of the teachers’ participation teachers had at least two and as many as fifteen students in foster care recent interactions with students in foster care than teachers in other settings. Each of these teachers had at least two and as many as fifteen students in foster care and schools. Educators in this school are likely to have more frequent and intensive interactions with students and have a wealth of experience the phenomenon between students in students compared to 1199 (high-schools.com). Because of the increased density, this is approximately half that of the high school where I am a school counselor (629 students). As a point of reference, this school has twice the concentration of students in foster care as the high school in which I work. Both schools served approximately 15 students.
Through my doctoral coursework at the University of Vermont, I had the opportunity to conduct a preliminary study in this school system, interviewing the superintendent, a school counselor, and a special educator. Through this process I learned that a special educator had been hired to serve as a case manager exclusively to foster youth receiving special education services in the school. This position is grant funded at the state level rather than funded by local tax revenues. State funding for the position recognizes the fact that foster youth are more likely to receive special education services than their peers (30-50% of foster youth receive special education services compared to 10% in the general population according to one Washington study (Zetlin, 2006)).

Qualitative research asks the researcher to carefully consider the benefits and risks associated with his/her previous knowledge about the subject (Glesne, 2006; Patton, 2002). In selecting a school for the study, I carefully considered my familiarity with my study site. A high school was selected because it is a setting familiar to me as a high school counselor. My familiarity served three primary functions. First, conducting a study in a context that is familiar to me helped me frame interviews with the school counselor. My familiarity served these primary functions. Finally, in selecting a school for the study, I carefully considered my familiarity with the high school. This dissertation study uncovers the consideration given by teachers to the challenge of meeting the educational needs of foster youth in the classroom. The findings uncovered in this dissertation study uncover the consideration given by teachers to the need to address the impact that serving many foster students has on the school and its student population. The findings of my preliminary study indicated that this is a school system that has considered and created an added burden to the local tax base for educational support services, which increases the number of students in foster care and the special education needs of this population and the school had a comparatively high concentration of foster youth. The high concentration of foster youth in the school is reflected in the education services they receive. Their peers (30-50% of foster youth receive special education services) only receive special education services because they are more likely to receive special education services at the state level. The number of foster youth served by local tax revenues, which is small, is not considered.
I am familiar with the roles and responsibilities classroom teachers typically have in high schools. I have a professional understanding of peer relationships in high school and of the relationships high school teachers typically have with their students.

I am familiar with the support systems common in a public high school. Second, familiarity supported the development of rapport (Glesne, 2006), for a review of this literature see Blalock, A. L., & Landers, 2001; MacNeel, 2000; Casey Family Services, 2001; Lenz-Rashid, 2000; and MacNeel, 2007. Furthermore, I have developed relationships with their biological families or legal custody through adoption. These findings from this study have direct application to my own work. I engaged in the interviews with participants and further supported the development of rapport. Third, findings with participants and further supported the development of rapport. Third, findings with participants and further supported the development of rapport. Third, findings with participants and further supported the development of rapport. Third, findings with participants and further supported the development of rapport. Third, findings with participants and further supported the development of rapport. 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in foster care and their school relationships were gauged in these interviews. A copy
interviews oriented me to the study site. No data specific to the functioning of students
the educators, the primary data source, work. Information gleaned from these
keyboard. These interviews provided me with an understanding of the context in which
consistently identified and the support the school offers these students and their
administration was asked about structural supports and professional development.
These interviews also served to orient the researcher to the study site. The

and experience and effectiveness with, foster youth as perceived by the school
provide insights about foster youth. Teachers were identified based on their interests in,
the counselor with a primary goal of identifying classroom teachers who would be able to
semi-structured individual interviews with a school administrator and a school
interest and/or effectiveness in working with foster youth. Data collection began with
emphasized identifying classroom teachers who were perceived as having particular

Using a purposeful sample (sampled which is aimed at insight rather than

Data Collection

Data collection in qualitative studies can take many forms (Glesne, 2006;

sense of urgency for their educational success. Their proximity to adulthood. The impending independence of these students creates a
The Participants

The primary purpose of the administrator and counselor interviews was to provide insight about foster youth in school. The identified teachers were well positioned, according to the counselor and administrator, to provide information about the counselor and administration’s knowledge of the candidates who had enjoyed, or been successful in classes taught by these teachers. The identified teachers were supportive and confirmed that they knew of specific foster children in foster care. Twelve teachers were identified. The counselor provided the names of seven teachers. The administrator confirmed these lists and added five more teachers who were well positioned in the school. The counselor and administrator emphasized the quality of the relationships with the identified teachers. Teachers who have a high degree of experience with, interest in, and success with children in foster care. Twelve teachers were identified. The counselor and administrator were asked to identify teachers who have a high degree of experience with, interest in, and success with children in foster care.
Being a counselor is central to my identity and has influenced the conduct of this study. Because I am a school counselor, I found it relatively easy to quickly build rapport with the participants in this study. There is a commonality to our respective identities as educators. That common ground served as a foundation for the interviews that emerged. Strong rapport with the participants allowed me to follow-up on comments with probing questions, and I believe, allowed the participants to feel heard and understood in a way that may not have been possible had someone with a different background conducted the interviews.

However, the ease of developing rapport had its drawbacks. I conducted the bulk of each round of interviews in a single day, moving about the school from one teacher to another during the time they had for lesson planning and preparation during the day. Having met with three teachers in the morning of my first day of interviews, I took a break for lunch and left the school. As I was driving, I was struck by how much I was enjoying my interactions with the teachers I had met. I also found myself concerned that the interviews might have strayed, at times, into dialogue, discourse, or conversation. Had I strayed from my researcher role? The teachers had questions about the function of a guidance counselor with respect to students in foster care: what information about students in foster care did a counselor have? Do I tell my colleagues what I have learned about students in foster care? Were my conversations with the teachers ethical? Had I strayed from my researcher role? The teachers had questions about the school in which I work: is it different? Is it a different place, with different people, and at times different?

What do I think the counselors should do when a student is in foster care? What do I think the counselors should do when a student in foster care transitions to the school part way through the school year? What is the function of a guidance counselor with respect to students in foster care? What information about students in foster care did a counselor have? Do I tell my colleagues what I have learned about students in foster care? Were my conversations with the teachers ethical? Had I strayed from my researcher role? The teachers had questions about the school in which I work: is it different? Is it a different place, with different people, and at times different?
While all of the participants were appreciative of my assurances of confidentiality, one interviewee asked on three or more occasions, "This is all

confidential," another area where

the interviewee was vulnerable to judgment. Because of the expertise and degree of control over the study content and process, the researcher holds the power to guide the conversation. Counselors are trained to ask probing, direct questions while maintaining a stance of openness to whatever answer is offered. It is also a critical skill for a researcher conducting interviews. To respond with genuine interest and enthusiasm, counselors conducting counseling interviews: to respond with genuine interest and enthusiasm, counselors are taught to ask probing, direct questions. However, counselors are taught to ask probing, direct questions. However, counselors are taught to ask probing, direct questions. However, counselors are taught to ask probing, direct questions. A second strength I brought to the interview process as a counselor was my approach to asking questions. Counselors are taught to ask probing, direct questions.
experiences of the participants. Most of the interviews occurred during teaching.

As a means of insuring that the findings accurately represent the thoughts and

analytical thoughts with study participants (Glesne, 2006; Maxwell, 1996; Patton, 2002).

interviews are member checking. Member checking is the sharing of themes and

interviews I reviewed key points raised across the interviewee pool in the proceeding

share new or refined ideas in subsequent interviews. At the start of each successive

interview there has been the opportunity to

member checking interviews. This schedule provided the teachers with time to reflect on the

Proceeding interview. This schedule provided the teachers with time to reflect on the

day. Each successive round of interviews occurred three weeks to one month after the

interviews in recognition of the time constraints classroom teachers face during the school

immediately after the school day. The design called for three interviews of 20 to 30

interviews started in May 2009 and were, with two exceptions, conducted during or

Two others were interviewed twice as scheduling conflicts prohibited a third interview.

Seven of the participating teachers were interviewed individually three times.

The Interview Process

well into the role as a qualitative researcher.

of our interactions are well within my skill set as a counselor. It is a skill that I have

promises for which others may say no, doing and assuring others of the confidential nature

and confidential information daily. Explaining confidentiality, its limits, I cannot make

and respect for confidentiality. As educators, they understand that I deal with sensitive

well aware that I am a school counselor, could have confidence in my understanding of

My identity as a counselor was helpful. First, it was helpful because the participants,
In each round of interviews, and the purpose of the interviews, below. The table reflects the timing of the interviews, which participants were included. The data collection process is outlined in the Data Collection Table (Table 3.1).

Phases of data analysis:

In addition to providing member checking during early opportunities to revisit ideas from preceding interviews allowed the teachers more time to reflect on their experiences with students in foster care. In addition to checking my understanding of the teachers’ perspectives, the daily tasks associated with teaching to reflect on the teachers’ perspectives. They were asked to shift focus from the preparation periods during the school day. They were asked to shift focus from the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 13, 2009</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>1 School Administrator</td>
<td>1. Develop researcher's understanding of the school and context of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Identify potential participants based on perceived interest and effect with students in foster care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 13, 2009</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>1 School Counselor</td>
<td>1. Develop researcher's understanding of the school and context of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Identify potential participants based on perceived interest and effect with students in foster care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 5–13, 2009</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>9 Classroom Teachers</td>
<td>1. Teacher perceptions of interactions between students in foster care and peers in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Exploration of interactions between students in foster care and adults in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Member checking re: contrasting these student/adult interactions and teacher perceptions of interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 26–27, 2009</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>9 Classroom Teachers</td>
<td>1. Review of 2nd interview and member checking re: emerging themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Teacher perceptions of interactions between students in foster care and adults in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Exploration of these student/adult relationships and teacher perceptions of interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Member checking re: contrasting these student/adult interactions and teacher perceptions of interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 15–29, 2009</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>7 Classroom Teachers</td>
<td>1. Review of 2nd interview and member checking re: emerging themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Perceived impact of relationships at school on student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Teacher perceptions of interactions between students in foster care and adults in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Exploration of these student/adult relationships and teacher perceptions of interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Member checking re: contrasting these student/adult interactions and teacher perceptions of interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 20, 2009</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>2 Participating Classroom Teachers</td>
<td>1. Present developed themes and share their findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Member checking for validity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Review of 2nd interview and member checking re: contrasting these student/adult interactions and teacher perceptions of interactions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All nine teachers participated in the first two interviews. However, due to scheduling challenges, two of the teachers were unable to participate in the third round of interviews. The third round of interviews coincided with professional days at the end of the school year used for completing grades and other tasks. One of the teachers was not in the building at the time of the scheduled interview. Follow-up contact was attempted but was not effective. Similarly, the other teacher who did not participate in the third round of interviews was caught up in the busy pace of the end of the school year. No interview was scheduled for this teacher as they did not respond to my attempts to set an appointment.

The original study design called for eight participants, and I discussed both the number of interviews and the number of interviewees at length with my dissertation committee. The original study design called for eight participants, and I discussed both the number of interviews and the number of interviewees at length with my dissertation committee. The original study design called for eight participants, and I discussed both the number of interviews and the number of interviewees at length with my dissertation committee.

The third round of interviews appeared to have been canceled at the last minute due to the busy pace of the end of the school year used for completing grades and other tasks. One of the teachers was not in the building at the time of the scheduled interview. Follow-up contact was not effective.

All nine teachers participated in the first two interviews. However, due to scheduling challenges, two of the teachers were unable to participate in the third round of interviews. Pizza was provided at this meeting in an effort to attract participation. Only two of the participants were able to attend the completion of the individual interviews. Pizza was provided at this meeting in an effort to attract participation. Only two of the participants were able to attend the completion of the individual interviews. Pizza was provided at this meeting in an effort to attract participation. Only two of the participants were able to attend the completion of the individual interviews.
given an early draft of the findings and offered feedback about their representation in writing.

Data Analysis

Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed within days of the interview. I read and reread the interview transcriptions, identifying observations made by each individual teacher, and then identifying themes across interview transcriptions. This process was completed after each round of interviews so that the participants could provide feedback on the emerging themes at the start of the next round of interviews. I coded each data segment based on themes whose accuracy had been confirmed through member checking. I organized these codes into broader categories of related themes. After coding and categorizing each segment of interview transcription based on its content, I identified patterns and connections that occurred throughout the transcriptions (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Miles and Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1994) describe and offer many examples of the benefit of graphically representing qualitative data during analysis. I developed a table (3.2) to indicate how often each theme appeared in the interviews and by which participants.

Data Analysis

Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed within days of the interview.
Table 3.2 Theme Distribution Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>P2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Caring</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Space</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transference</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resiliency</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult caregiving</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult caregiving</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult caregiving</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the strategy of member-checking (Glesne, 2006; Maxwell, 1996; Patton, 2002), I asked participants to check the accuracy of the themes during the earliest stages of coding. I confirmed that my understanding was congruent with the perspectives of the participants.
It was also able to check my own and/or verify the analysis of each data set. Using triangulation, I was able to check for internal and external validity. The analysis of these sets serves to challenge the completeness of my findings. In this study, each interview participated and each separate interview was compared to a variety of data sources to check and cross-reference findings. Consistency between and amongst data sources helps ensure the findings are robust.

Triangulation is a means of ensuring that the findings authentically represent the perspectives and understandings of the participants. Triangulation combines and compares different data sources, investigators, or methods (Glesne, 2006; Maxwell, 1996). This study used data triangulation, comparing different data sources, researchers, or methods (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Patton, 2002). Consistency in using consistent themes and findings across multiple data sources is a means of ensuring that the findings authentically represent the perspectives and understandings of the participants.

Language was identified in the interview transcripts. Common phrases were with the themes expressed more directly. As a modification of this practice, common language and beliefs held by participants. How does specific language and metaphor fit with the themes expressed more directly? What is the significance of perspectives and understandings of the participants? Metaphors and analogies give access to possible meaning behind the metaphors used. Metaphors and analogies look for common language used by participants. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) describe metaphor analysis as central to their qualitative research. The researcher questions, "What is the signif
dissect my analysis of the experiences of the study participants? As each code and
poster can tell require examination. In particular, how do my experiences color or
research process. As a school counselor, I have my own experiences with students in
and maintain keen awareness of how this subjectivity informs and influences the
She states that in qualitative research, the researcher must monitor his/her subjectivity
researcher’s subjectivity informs the questions asked in a research project. Glesne
Qualitative research uses the subjectivity of the researcher (Glesne, 2006). A
analytical and interpretation also involves the careful reflection of the researcher.
broader fields of knowledge.
comparison to the narrative description of the linkages between the findings and
interpretative process progressed, the concept map became less meaningful in
strategy that informed my thinking on the interpretation of the findings. As the
connections between the findings and other fields of knowledge was an analytical
Holloway, 1994). The process of developing the concept map and interpretive
knowledge is a strategy for interpreting qualitative data (Glesne, 2006). Where A
school counselor. Linking the findings of a qualitative study to other fields of
the findings of this study and specific fields of knowledge familiar to the researcher as
through the development of a concept map, connections were made between
data segments from multiple interviews that reinforced the developing themes.
coded data segments that appeared to correspond with each other. I was also able to identify
offered by each of the nine participants. Using triangulation, I looked for and identified
understanding of teachers’ experiences with foster youth by comparing the perspectives
offered by each of the nine participants. Using triangulation, I looked for and identified
and maintained keen awareness of how this subjectivity informs and influences the
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Qualitative research uses the subjectivity of the researcher (Glesne, 2006). A
analytical and interpretation also involves the careful reflection of the researcher.
My interest and enthusiasm for the study was grounded in my personal
interest and eagerness to explore the topic further. The data collected and
analyzed provided a rich and detailed portrayal of the experiences and perspectives
of the respondents. However, the subjective aspect of my own experiences and
perspectives may have influenced the development of certain themes. In order to
explore these themes further, I engaged in a process of personal reflection and
self-assessment. I questioned how my own experiences and perspectives
affected the themes I identified, and I attempted to consider alternative
interpretations of the data. This process involved identifying themes that were
most closely aligned with my own experiences, and then exploring how these themes
could be interpreted differently.

Personal reflection played a crucial role in this process. I engaged in
ongoing dialogue with my advisor and students, and I also sought feedback from
my peers and colleagues. This feedback helped me to identify areas where my
subjectivity may have influenced the analysis. I also relied on negative case
analysis as a means of increasing validity. Negative case analysis involves
identifying data that contradict or challenge the emerging themes. By carefully
considering my own experiences and perspectives, I was able to identify and
interpret these negative cases correctly.

Through this process, I was able to explore my own subjectivity and
understand how my personal experiences and perspectives may have influenced
the development of certain themes. I also considered the role of other
researchers who have explored similar topics. Through personal reflection,
emails, and meetings with my dissertation advisor, I gained a deeper
understanding of my own subjectivity. I also engaged in peer debriefing to
consider my own subjectivity. Through these interactions, I was able to
explore my own subjective experiences and perspectives.

Proposed findings:

I found that my own experiences and perspectives may have influenced the
development of certain themes. However, the data collected and analyzed
provided a rich and detailed portrayal of the experiences and perspectives
of the respondents. It is important to consider how one's own experiences
and perspectives may influence the research process and the interpretation
of data.

In conclusion, my interest and enthusiasm for the study was grounded in my personal
interest and eagerness to explore the topic further. The data collected and
analyzed provided a rich and detailed portrayal of the experiences and perspectives
of the respondents. However, the subjective aspect of my own experiences and
perspectives may have influenced the development of certain themes. In order to
explore these themes further, I engaged in a process of personal reflection and
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understanding of my own subjectivity. I also engaged in peer debriefing to
consider my own subjectivity. Through these interactions, I was able to
explore my own subjective experiences and perspectives.
experience with several of my counselees who were in foster care. I was able to relate, through personal experience, to the experiences of the participating teachers, adding personal understanding to the interview process. As a researcher and school counselor, I brought my own experiences to the analysis and interpretation process. My own perspective informed and shaped what I heard in the interviews, and the follow-up questions I asked. I evaluated the perspectives of the teachers in analysis and interpretation, and my own experiences influenced that evaluation. In this regard, I am not only the researcher but a research instrument (Maxwell, 1996). I bring my own subjectivity to various aspects of the research process. My professional experience and interests give rise to my research questions and to a set of assumptions and beliefs I hold (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spillett, 2003). Peer debriefing was central to identifying and reflecting on my subjectivity. In counseling, peer debriefing is used to support the counselor in identifying and managing the impact of his/her own feelings about the counseling relationship, and in counseling, peer supervision is used to identify and reflect on my subjectivity. In counseling, peer supervision is needed to have a realistic idea of the education of students in foster care.

When are the data segments that contradicted the
ideas and values. I revealed my data analysis assuring, “How does this challenge the
with colleagues and fellow graduate students. I increased my awareness about my own
dialog with my advisor, and peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spillett, 2003)
do the counseling needs of my students. Through personal reflection, emails, and
spend time with my colleagues to reflect on my work to ensure that I am remaining true
to the counseling. This practice is central to my work as a school counselor. I regularly
other counselors, a counselor is able to reflect on his/her subjectivity and is impacted on
on the counselor-client relationship (Mouldson, 1993). Through consultation with
support the counselor in identifying and managing the impact of his/her own feelings
about the counseling relationship, and in counseling, peer supervision is needed to
have a realistic idea of the education of students in foster care.

I brought my own experience to the personal interview process as a researcher and school counselor. Through personal experience, I was able to relate,
themes that I have found through analysis? What does my negative case analysis reveal about my "subjective I" and the trustworthiness of my findings?

**Authenticity**

Authenticity is used to judge the quality and credibility of a qualitative study (Patton, 2002). Authenticity is understood, in part, as a deliberate effort to ensure that all voices in the inquiry are represented in the text (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Authenticity is "reflexive consciousness about one's own perspectives, appreciation for the perspectives of others, and fairness in depicting constructions" (Patton, 2002, p. 546). The purpose of this study is to accurately represent the experiences, perspectives, and practices of public school educators in serving students in foster care. Critical to the credibility of this study is the authenticity with which it portrays the voices of participating educators with diverse perspectives.

Glesne (2006) notes that Creswell identified eight verification procedures, not all of which need to be used in a given study. A combination of these procedures helps to ensure the authenticity of the findings of this study. **Verification**

- **Triangulation**
- **Clarification of researcher bias**
- **Negative case analysis**
- **Additional verification procedures**

As described above, triangulation among multiple data sources was used to support the findings are an authentic representation of the perspectives shared by the teachers.

Several strategies were utilized to ensure the authenticity of the findings of this study. **Verification**

Participating educators with diverse perspectives, and practices of public school educators in serving students in foster care, critical to the credibility of this study is the authenticity with which it portrays the voices of the perspectives of others, and fairness in depicting constructions (Patton, 2002).

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Triangulation among multiple data sources was used to support the findings are an authentic representation of the perspectives shared by the teachers.

As described above, triangulation among multiple data sources was used to support the findings are an authentic representation of the perspectives shared by the teachers.
Last, and most importantly, I utilized member checking extensively. This is a study to ask, when data contradicts the beliefs I have held in my own work with foster youth, to ensure that divergent points of view were included in the findings. My reflections on my biases strengthened the qualitative case analysis. I was able to find. Patton (2002) explains that heterogeneity within small samples is a strength in qualitative research. "Common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon" (Patton, 2002, p. 235). The diversity amongst the teachers in this study (subject area, gender, tenure as a classroom teacher) adds value to the common patterns that appeared in the participants' perceptions and experiences with foster youth.

My own experiences with students in the foster care system may have led to biases. I utilized the strategy of clarification of researcher bias (Glesne, 2006; Patton, 2002). To further this work I utilized qualitative case analysis (Glesne, 2006; Patton, 2002) and to reflect on my work with foster youth, relationships with the study participants and to reflect on my work with foster youth. To reflect on my role as a researcher, I also spoke with my colleagues in the school counseling office and to reflect on my experiences with research, I spoke with my colleagues who were in the process of conducting dissertation research. I spoke with my colleagues about my role as a researcher. I also spoke with fellow graduate students who were in the process of conducting dissertation research with regularity with reflections and questions about my role as a researcher. I also spoke about my experiences with my peers, their interpretations of the data, and how I made my advisor a peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stryker, 2003) to reflect on how my similar model for reflecting on my subjectivity during the research process. I utilized a research journal, my comfort with peer supervision in counseling led me to utilize a research journal, my comfort with peer supervision in counseling led me to utilize a negative case analysis (Glesne, 2006; Patton, 2002). I included in the report reflections on my subjectivity. While I had intended to utilize a negative case analysis, the strength of clarification of researcher bias (Glesne, 2006), I have my own experiences with students in the foster care system may have led to

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My own experiences with students in the foster care system may have led to...
about teachers’ perceptions, and only through member checking could I ensure that I was authentically reflecting their experiences and points of view. As noted above, the second and third rounds of interviews with each participant began with member checking in the form of clarification and verification of the emerging themes. At the conclusion of the third interviews, I invited the participants to meet once I had concluded the first round of data analysis inclusive of all of the interviews to ensure that my emerging analysis accurately reflected the content and intent expressed during the interviews. I asked one of the study participants (who was unable to join the group meeting to review the findings) to read an early draft of the findings to ensure that the reporting of the findings remained true to his experience and perspective with foster youth.

When I considered approaches to reporting the data, I returned to my belief as a counselor and researcher that meaning is created and co-created. My hope is that the portrayal of the interviews of this study is honest and accurate. My objective in

Reporting

Youth

Reporting of the findings remained true to his experience and perspective with foster youth. In order to review the findings, I read an early draft of the findings to ensure that I had understood the interviews. I asked one of the study participants (who was unable to join the group) what my emerging analyses accurately reflected the content and meaning expressed during the interviews. I concluded the first round of data analysis inclusive of all of the interviews to ensure that my emerging themes were authentic reflections of their experiences and points of view. As noted above, the member checking in the form of clarification and verification of the emerging themes. At the conclusion of the third interviews, I invited the participants to meet once I had concluded the first round of data analysis inclusive of all of the interviews to ensure that my emerging analysis accurately reflected the content and intent expressed during the interviews. I asked one of the study participants (who was unable to join the group meeting to review the findings) to read an early draft of the findings to ensure that the reporting of the findings remained true to his experience and perspective with foster youth.

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Reporting

Youth

Reporting of the findings remained true to his experience and perspective with foster youth. In order to review the findings, I read an early draft of the findings to ensure that I had understood the interviews. I asked one of the study participants (who was unable to join the group) what my emerging analyses accurately reflected the content and meaning expressed during the interviews. I concluded the first round of data analysis inclusive of all of the interviews to ensure that my emerging themes were authentic reflections of their experiences and points of view. As noted above, the
serve as a catalyst for reflection on one's own experiences. I sought to provide enough access to the raw data in the form of quotes and examples to allow readers to clearly understand the themes as the study participants presented them.

Glesne (2006) notes three strategies for organizing text in reporting findings in a qualitative study. She offers a natural history approach, a chronological approach, and a thematic approach. Similarly, the chronological approach involves the participant observation procedures the use of "thick description" (Glesne, 2006) that would support seek to promote. However, the reliance of this study on interview data rather than engaged the reader in the analyses and interpretation process supporting the reduction of research process of exploration and discovery. Such an approach may have chronological approaches had much to offer. A naturalistic approach appeals to reflected on my desire to invite the reader into a dialogue both the natural history and approach for exploring themes and presenting data that supports a theme or idea. As a thematic representation of the findings, all of my academic writing to date has been a thematic approach. My approach to data analysis and personal style lead me to favor qualitative study. She offers a natural history approach, a chronological approach, and Glesne (2006) notes these strategies for organizing text in reporting findings in a understand the themes as the study participants presented them.

access to the raw data in the form of quotes and examples to allow readers to clearly serve as a catalyst for reflection on one's own experiences. I sought to provide enough
The approach I use in writing and conveying my findings is thematic, working to carefully present to the reader each of the themes that are developed through data collection and analysis. Lengthy quotes from the interviews are used to give the reader access to the raw data. These quotes provide the reader with direct access to the collection and analysis, enabling the themes that are developed through data collection and analysis to carefully present to the reader each of the themes that are developed through data collection and analysis.
to gain insight into the processes and interactions that may influence findings can be generalized with confidence (Patton, 2002). This study used purposive sampling to ensure that the sample of the population. Such studies require a large sample size to ensure that the research. Some studies seek to represent a larger population by using a representative sample. This study has a number of limitations including several common in qualitative research. Limitations

Limited counselor relationships.

Examine the interviews. The literature on the feminine ethic of care is frequently used to describe teacher attitudes and practices believed to be effective in supporting foster youth in school and the feminine ethic of care is described in the literature on psychological terms. Linkages between findings that describe human behavior in psychological terms. Linkages between findings that describe the characteristics of foster youth are related to key concepts drawn from adolescent theory and established theory and developing fields of knowledge. Findings in the chapter on interpretation report connections discovered between the points of intersection I found deepening my understanding of the findings of this study and report on the linkages and understanding of what I had learned from the participants. I explored areas in the literature that helped familiar to me as a school counselor.
classroom teacher. In one Vermont high school. The purposeful sampling method used in this study would streamline access to the interviewees and facilitate a reflective case study. I concluded that the familiarity between the researcher and several of the participants in this study would streamline access to the interviewees and facilitate a reflective case study. A careful decision was made regarding potential biases. Every effort was made to eliminate bias in both the interview process and the data analysis process. However, five of the eleven participants and I were familiar to each other. We knew each other through mutual friendships and organizational affiliations. I am a community member whose own children are students within the same school district, through this role, I have access to resources. Although I am not an employee of this district, I am a colleague in the relatively small pool of high school educators in northern Vermont. There are risks and benefits associated with conducting research in one's own local community. A degree of familiarity with the participants and the researcher promotes the development of rapport and access. However, the same relationships that offer the researcher a degree of familiarity between participants and the researcher promote the development of potential biases. A careful decision was made regarding potential biases. While the findings of this study are intended to foster reflection and dialogue in other settings, there are no answers to be found here that can be readily and directly applied to other settings. Every effort was made to eliminate bias in both the interview process and the findings. Limited diversity of students. While the findings of this study are intended to inform and other characteristics of this site and pool of interviewees (e.g., rural Vermont, children in foster care) and other settings in which unique population density of foster children in this classroom teachers in one Vermont high school. The purposeful sampling method used to
Drift of the findings.

In three participations, two who met with me after data analysis and a third who read a draft of the findings also participated in all three rounds of interviews. A total of 27 interview transcripts comprised the interview data, rather than the 25 interview transcripts that would have been available had attrition not occurred. The final round of member checking was limited to three participants, rather than the seven participating before the third round. More data would have been collected had all nine teachers had participated in all three rounds of interviews and the attrition of seven participants prior to the concluding round limited the data. This study is also limited by the attrition of two interviewees before the third round.

Multiple rounds of member checking also helped to formalize the handling of the data to guard against the influence of bias. During the interview and analysis process, multiple rounds of member checking also over two years prior to the study, thereby minimizing the potential for bias of influence.
This study asked nine educators to describe their experiences with and perceptions of foster youth in public high school classrooms. The objective of this exploratory study was to better understand how classroom teachers understand the perceptions of foster youth in public high school classrooms. The objective of this study is to describe their experiences with and perceptions of foster youth, to explore the educational experiences of foster youth, and to discuss the strategies they use to support foster children in school.

Chapter 4

Findings
and there’s how they ended up in foster care. By definition, a student in foster care has
remarked, “a lot of students have had some type of traumatic situation happen to them,
though no specific questions regarding trauma were asked.” One teacher
concerns about the impact a history of trauma had on the students’ performance and
the nine interviewees. In each round of interviews, nearly every participant raised
the role of trauma in the lives of students in foster care was raised by at least one

Trauma

care, they articulated common traits shared by many of their students in foster care.
all of their students, and an understanding of the diversity among students in foster care.
They’re all so different. After teachers expressed a strong belief in the individuality of
asked to describe students in foster care, one teacher commented, “It’s hard because
explicitly stated that each student, regardless of foster care status, is unique. When
unique set of strengths and needs in the classroom. Seven of the nine participants
The participating teachers recognized all students as unique individuals, with a

Student Characteristics

the category of organizational level concerns. Changes and other sources of stress for foster youth. These concerns are described in
concerns about what information was made available to teachers regarding placement
about the frequency with which foster youth changed foster homes and schools and
within their classrooms. Importantly, concerns remained. Teachers expressed concerns
teachers felt that they were able to offer substantial support to students in foster care.
include the teacher attitudes, qualities, and behaviors that the participants felt supported

include the teacher attitudes, qualities, and behaviors that the participants felt supported
experienced trauma. Trauma is defined as physical or emotional violence marked by lasting effects (American Psychological Association, 1994). The maltreatment (physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect) of these students has been confirmed by state authorities and resulted in foster placement. While the participating teachers were often unaware of the details, they conveyed great sensitivity to the students’ past maltreatment, and believed they saw the results of a history of trauma in terms of the students’ behaviors, interactions, and relationships in school.

One teacher explained, “It was a stable situation [the foster student] got put in. But those students placed in stable, caring foster homes showed signs of trauma that’s still, perhaps wasn’t enough to overcome the fact that they’re away from their family and what has happened. It was just not enough. Teachers understood that family and what has happened. It was just not enough.”

Participants expressed a belief that, because trauma has a lasting effect, even those students placed in stable, caring foster homes showed signs of a traumatic past. The radical change in routine and ritual that may accompany placement in a foster home is, for some, an emotional challenge and a major adjustment for these students. The radical change in

This sudden and potentially dramatic change in routine and rituals that distinguish one household from another reflected the change not only in the relationships that distinguish one family from another, but also in the routines and rituals that define the lives. The participants referred to removal from their home rather than removal from their family. Within the context of the interviews, this distinction was interesting because the participants referred to removal from their home rather than traumatic events in the lives of these students resulting in new challenges and issues. It

in crisis terms of the students’ behaviors, interactions, and relationships in school. Teachers were often unaware of the details, they conveyed great sensitivity to the physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect (American Psychological Association, 1994). The maltreatment experienced trauma.
trauma. Children in foster care have been taken, often suddenly, from a home environment that while unsafe, was familiar and was their home. The stress and uncertainty that accompanied this change in routines, rituals, and relationships impacted the students’ behavior and functioning in the classroom.

One participant suggested that the transition could be a cultural shock. Even dysfunctional families provide children with household norms, a set of rules guiding behavior within a family. When placed in a foster home, the teacher explained, the household norms and the rules guiding behavior within a family can change dramatically. Regardless of the positive nature of the change, the shift is sudden and radical. The participating teachers empathized with these students because of their history of trauma. The participating teachers expressed that students in foster care are victims of misfortune at best, and possibly victims of violent abuse. The teachers were}

The participating teachers expressed that students in foster care are victims of misfortune at best, and possibly victims of violent abuse. The teachers were
Two teachers described the perceived impact of a history of trauma in diagnostic terms, revealing a deep understanding of the impact of past experiences on foster youth. Given the intentional absence of psychological and/or diagnostic language in the interview protocols, it was telling that these two teachers used diagnostic language in describing students in foster care. Using a disability label common in schools for special education eligibility purposes, a teacher with a long history of working with at risk youth in both public and private educational settings observed,

*For kids with EBD [emotional/behavioral disability], I think it's*

observed.

Regardless of their individual's situation at home, educational services specifically designed for reasons that would, in his mind, exist developed as a result of past trauma, whereas other students in need of special education difficulties as a result of disability related to math calculation (based on their perceived abilities) as dyslexia or a disability related to math calculation (based on their perceived abilities) such as dyslexia or disability and special education difficulties from other types of disability and special education difficulties (such as dyslexia or disability) were described as a function of their situations at home and as a disorder that developed over time. The teacher quoted above distinguished these disabilities in school were described as a function of their situations at home and as disabilities in general, most learning disabilities and the disability EBD, which was perceived to be a function of the students' trauma and history. The difficulty students with an emotional/behavioral disability EBD, which was perceived to be a function of the students' trauma and history. The difficulty students with an emotional/behavioral disability EBD, which was perceived to be a function of the students' trauma and history. The difficulty students with an emotional/behavioral disability EBD, which was perceived to be a function of the students' trauma and history. The difficulty students with an emotional/behavioral disability EBD, which was perceived to be a function of the students' trauma and history. The difficulty students with an emotional/behavioral disability EBD, which was perceived to be a function of the students' trauma and history. The difficulty students with an emotional/behavioral disable...
Another teacher spoke of the impact of past trauma in terms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Post-traumatic stress disorder is an anxiety disorder directly resulting from traumatic experiences in which the person has been exposed to events where the threat of death, serious injury, or threat to the physical integrity of the self or others is present. Further, the individual’s response to the threat involved intense fear and helplessness (American Psychological Association, 1994). This participant believed that the maltreatment that resulted in a student’s placement in foster care could also lead to PTSD and PTSD-related symptoms. He explained, “A lot of students have had some type of traumatic situation happen to them. And that’s how they got into foster care. So I think it’s more of… how they’re dealing with the PTSD.”

Both of these teachers observed that the traumatic events in these students’ lives had a direct impact on their functioning at school. Like the other seven study participants, these teachers distinguished between a traumatic history and foster care, noting that some students who are not in foster care have also experienced trauma. While these teachers distinguished between a traumatic history and foster care, nothing that what happens to them while they are in foster care: causal issues... We are seeing the [impact of PTSD] and it just affects management. So it’s not necessarily [being in foster care] that is... how they’re dealing with the PTSD... their boundary issues. It’s more of... how they’ve got into foster care. So I think it’s more of a traumatic situation happen to foster care could also lead to PTSD and PTSD-related symptoms. He explained, “A lot of students have had some type of traumatic situation happen to them. And that’s how they got into foster care. So I think it’s more of... how they’re dealing with the PTSD.”

Another teacher spoke of the impact of past trauma in terms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
Two of the teachers described specific instances in which students in foster care projected characteristics of past relationships and trauma onto their relationship with the teacher. The teacher believed that the student's interaction between the student and teacher, with individual characteristics of age and gender with the student's mother, the teacher viewed her negative relationship with the student had with her mother. Because she shared the general expectations from one relationship into another relationship (Denzin-Smith, 1988).

Transference occurs when an individual projects emotions, experiences and projected characteristics of past relationships onto new relationships within the teacher in the field of counseling, this form of projection is known as transference. Two of the teachers described specific instances in which students in foster care...
Interviewees were asked to report what they noticed about the relationships foster students had with their peers. For about half of the participants, the initial response was that these relationships were "typical." However, once participants were asked to describe specific student interactions, patterns developed. Though the structure of the classroom often hid the intense peer relationships from casual observation, when prompted to describe the peer relations maintained by foster youth, teachers were consistent as they described intensity of varying types. The identified patterns reflected potency in the relationships foster youth had with their peers. In some instances, the relationships were seen as a great strength for the foster youth. More often, the relationships were described as tumultuous and made it difficult for the foster youth to develop an effective peer support network. While some of the foster youth did, according to the teachers, manage and maintain typical peer relationships, many others struggled in their daily interactions with peers.

Several teachers shared examples of interactions with peers that were supportive:

Positive intense peer interactions

According to the teachers, many and maintain typical peer relationships, many others develop an effective peer support network. While some of the foster youth did, relationships were described as tumultuous and made it difficult for the foster youth to relationships were seen as a great strength for the foster youth. More often, the potential for the relationships foster youth had with their peers. In some instances, these consistent as they described intensity of varying types. The identified patterns reflected prominent to describe the peer relations maintained by foster youth, teachers were asked to describe the specific student interactions, patterns developed. Though the structure response was that these relationships were "typical." However, once participants were asked to report what they noticed about the relationships foster students had with their peers. For about half of the participants, the initial
noted that many other students share similar family stressors (e.g. poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, extreme anger) in their homes regardless of their foster status. These shared family stressors sometimes were reported as the foundation for supportive, protective friendships.

A teacher warmly described a supportive friendship between two classmates, one of whom was in foster care. She explained that if one student didn’t have all of the materials needed for class, the other shared her materials, or helped speak to the teacher about the need for materials. The teacher’s use of familial language captured what he believed was the close bond shared by foster youth.

Another interviewee spoke of a “brotherhood” amongst foster youth, noting that these protective friendships maintained by some students in foster care was found in other interviews. The use of familial language in describing the positive interactions she observed, the use of familial language in describing the positive way of dealing with each other, really close friends. And you know, it’s almost sisterly. That’s just a realistic, so I think they do have that in common. And they seem to be very close. One of them isn’t in foster care, but her home life is really tight. And they seem to look out for each other. They’re very close. And they seem to look out for each other. The teacher worriedly described a supportive friendship between two classmates:

One of whom was in foster care. She explained that all of the students didn’t have all of the protective friendships.

These shared family stressors sometimes were reported as the foundation for supportive, protective friendships. They noted that many other students share similar family stressors (e.g. poverty, alcohol and...
The shared characteristics of stressful lives were emphasized in the descriptions of positive peer relations. Foster youth supported each other because, according to one teacher, "they know better than to give this person a hard time, because they're already having a hard time in other areas." The close bond between some foster youth and peers was reported as grounded in empathy. The foundation for these friendships was the personal understanding each had about the hardships the other faced. In this way, peers was reported as "grounded in empathy." The foundation for these friendships was having a hard time in other areas." Teachers know better than to give this person a hard time, because they're already close bond between some foster youth and peers.

Negative Intense Peer Interactions

Quick generalizations like these were frequently offered early in the interviews. Students in foster care are a little less mature, that they struggle with... social cues. Quick generalizations like these were frequently offered early in the interviews. Students in foster care are a little less mature, that they struggle with... social cues.

In addition to the stories capturing positive peer relationships, the participating teachers often described negative peer relationships. Reports of negative peer relationships outnumbered reports of positive peer relationships approximately two to one. Interviewees explained how students in foster care frequently struggled with daily relationships. Teachers often described negative peer relationships. Reports of negative peer relationships.

Whose relationships were based on a common interest or shared activity?

These friendships were described as different from those maintained by their peers. The personal understanding each had about the hardships the other faced. In this way, peers was reported as "grounded in empathy." The foundation for these friendships was having a hard time in other areas." Teachers know better than to give this person a hard time, because they're already close bond between some foster youth and peers.

The shared characteristics of stressful lives were emphasized in the descriptions...
One teacher, who worked in a small classroom to provide support to students

suffered more intensely with the development of healthy peer relationships.

Court dates related to their placement and plans as foster children were described as

causes (especially plans and timelines for reunification with their parents), and upcoming

actions of others. Changes in living situations, uncertainty about the status of their

teachers, often seemed unprovoked by disproportionality to, and/or unrelated to the

stress level. Foster students' reactions to their peers, as observed by the participating

relationships that were unpredictable and at the mercy of the foster youth's mood and

not only did this participant describe outbursts of anger directed at peers, he described

students to help them process their thoughts and emotions and plan their way through

their emotions and planning their responses to challenging situations. She worked with

with their academic subjects, described foster youth as having difficulty understanding

friendships seemingly as often and as quickly as they were formed. According to her

teacher, her friendships did not have the give and take of support seen in other

friendships because she struggled with anger. The student's unpredictable and at times

extreme anger prevented her peers from supporting her during difficult times. While

she was good at making friends, she struggled to maintain these relationships. While

get into a lot of fights, or... bad arguments. If you get on her bad

side, she's got a temper... I've seen her get along real good with kids

she was good at making friends, she struggled to maintain these relationships.

friendships because she struggled with anger. The student's unpredictable and at times

teacher, her friendships did not have the give and take of support seen in other
challenges. The challenges included conflicts with teachers, completion of schoolwork, and managing behaviors to avoid disciplinary consequences. Other challenges included processing and planning around peer relations. She described the foster youth as lacking the skills needed to process social input and plan an appropriate response. In peer interactions, students in foster care sometimes misunderstood the actions, words, and/or intentions of their peers. The foster youth's reaction was often seen as misguided or disproportionate to the situation. The teacher described the conflicts and/or interactions among peers. The foster youth's reaction oftentimes misinterpreted the actions. Words, phrases, and language behaviors to avoid disciplinary consequences. Other challenges included
these same stressors interfered with the development and maintenance of friendships. The stressors present in foster youth's families of origin, as well as the stresses of adapting to new homes, were described as causing peer interactions marked by unexplained anger, impatience, and often, the misinterpretation of social cues. Foster youth were characterized as moody, and their friends had to tolerate these moods or look elsewhere for companionship. Several teachers explained that the peer relationships of foster youth were fraught with conflict because these youth were less skilled than their peers in reading social cues and planning responses.

Intense Student-Teacher Interactions

The teachers described their own interactions with foster youth in addition to their observations of peer interactions. Foster students' interactions with adults were reported as sharing the hall of intensity, and participants distinguished their roles and responsibilities from those of other adults. Several participants explained that the student-teacher relationship is well defined in public schools, varying relationships with foster youth from those of other adults. Several participants explained that the routine of school, and the predictability and stability it provided, made many teacher-student relationships predictable for foster youth, in contrast to the routines and rituals that are unique in each home.

Relationships with teachers, even new teachers, were seen as being made predictable by the routines of school. Teachers believed they provided stability and predictability for foster youth. In this regard, teachers explained that the peer interactions of foster youth were frequently conflictual because these youth were less skilled than their peers in reading social cues and planning responses.

Foster youth were described as moody, and their friends had to tolerate these moods or look elsewhere for companionship. Several teachers explained that the peer relationships of foster youth were fraught with conflict because these youth were less skilled than their peers in reading social cues and planning responses.
the room where the teacher had a defined teaching space with his/her desk or materials and a board or technology for sharing information. The teachers noted that the routines of instruction, practice, and assessment are fairly consistent, even as styles vary from teacher to teacher. As stated by one participant, "In class, there’s the teacher there every day. They’re stable…. That teacher’s always going to be there, same as they always have been." The role of the teacher is described as reliable and predictable for the students, which was not always the case for foster youth with adult caregivers outside of school. The roles of foster parent, social worker, and counselor were perceived as less stable and varied compared to teachers in public school classrooms. By contrast, the participating foster youth had strong schema regarding teachers as a result of their experiences with the routines of school. The participating teachers were consistent in their belief that the clarity of the teachers’ role provided foster students with a sense of safety. Foster youths’ relationships with participating teachers were consistent in their belief that the clarity of the teachers’ role outside of school and because of the dynamics of their relationships with adults in their lives and routines of public school classrooms. As high school students, the foster students in foster care had strong schema regarding teachers as a result of the stability of interactions with these adults. By contrast, according to this study participant, the belief held in this study that foster youth were less likely to have well developed expectations for their counselor, which were seen as new and more varied in students in foster care, was not universally shared. The role of the teacher is described as reliable and predictable for the every day. They’re stable…. That teacher’s always going to be there, same as they always are. "The role of the teacher is described as reliable and predictable for the teacher to teacher. As stated by one participant, "In class, there’s the teacher there of instruction, practice, and assessment and fairly consistent, even as styles vary from the routine that the teacher had a defined teaching space with his/her desk or materials."
All but two of the study participants stated that students in foster care actively sought out the support of adults in the building. All of the participants believed that adult support at school was important to the academic success and aspirations of students in foster care. The teachers felt that adults in the homes of most of their students provided the support needed for success. Foster youth differ in that they were seen as in greater need of, and less likely to receive, adequate adult support outside of school to nurture academic aspiration and success. Teachers recognized that they could not serve as the strong adult support to each of their students. Several participants observed that adolescents want opportunities to connect with adults on many levels. Teenagers look beyond their family for adult role models as they begin to construct their adult identity (Goldberg, 2000). Participants understood this as a normal developmental task of adolescence. A traditional classroom teacher drew on his 30 years of experience to observe, "I think ultimately, what most young people want is confidence in their adult identity. Children look beyond their family for adult role models as they begin on many levels. Adolescents want opportunities to connect with adults in the building, and not just with adults [in general]. And as long as they have that connection with an adult who cares about them... that's just what young people are looking for." Foster youth were perceived as having fewer stable adults in their lives. As the teacher explained, "They feel more about them... that's just what young people are looking for. Foster youth in their homes... And as long as they have that connection with an adult who cares about them... that's just what young people are looking for." Participants observed that adolescents want opportunities to connect with adults in the building. This participant expressed her hope that the students who need it most are able to connect with at least one teacher in the building. "I don't connect with... you hope they have a better connection with somebody else." A traditional classroom teacher drew on his 30 years of experience to observe, "I think ultimately, what most young people want is to relate with adults... And as long as they have that connection with an adult who cares about them... that's just what young people are looking for. Foster youth in their homes... And as long as they have that connection with an adult who cares about them... that's just what young people are looking for." Participants observed that adolescents want opportunities to connect with adults in the building. Teachers recognized that they could not serve as the strong adult support to each of their students. Several participants explained that the faculty functions like a team, and only as a team can they provide caring support for all students. One participant noted, "I know there are some kids I don't connect with... You hope they have a better connection with somebody else." Participants observed that adolescents want opportunities to connect with adults in the building.
formed with adults and those relationships that were prescribed by specific roles. Participating distinction between the trusting relationships the foster youth naturally
These relationships were seen as more authentic and real for the foster youth. The
way a teacher based on their own sense of compatibility or connection with the teacher.
The youth saw at least eight different teachers each day, and could form a connection
relationships with adults, noting that foster youth are told to trust their social workers,
Two teachers spoke particularly strongly of this need for choice in establishing trusting
choose the adult with whom they connected to talk about the challenges they faced.
Several participants commented that it was important for the foster youth to

adulthood faced in their own lives. Consequently, the foster youth were seen as more likely
relationship was not believed to be consistent and stable because of the situations these
Perhaps these adults were stable in terms of the duration of the relationships, the
The youth. In this sense, these adults were not seen as stable role models. While
effectively manage their own lives in a way that allowed them to support and nurture
consistent support and care associated with parenting. These adults struggled to
with homes where, for a multitude of reasons, the parent(s) struggled to provide the
not consistent in their ability to serve as positive role models. Foster youth came from
role models in the sense that the primary adults in their lives (their birth parents) were
relationship with the same adult. He noted that foster youth also lacked stable adult
relationships were not stable in the sense that foster youth did not have a long-term
For foster youth, as a result, their adult role models frequently changed. Adult
Students were described as taking advantage of opportunities and situations that lent themselves to opening up to an adult at school. One teacher spoke of her involvement in athletics. She described the long bus rides to and from events as opportunities when student-athletes and coaches connected. "You're riding on a bus for two hours. I find some girls will seek you out. They just want to talk to you about things or let you know what's going on." While not exclusive to students in foster care, this pattern allowed a teacher involved in athletics and other after school activities to gain insights and offer support to students. This interviewee also described the wealth of information gained through simple conversations about who was picking a student up after practice or schedule conflicts that arose. Through these conversations, she felt she was more likely to know that a student was in foster care and what was going on in the student's life. The teacher expressed a strong commitment to co-curricular activities because she felt it was an important opportunity to identify students who would benefit from a supportive adult relationship. She suggested that co-curricular activities also provided an opportunity to reach out to these students and forge a relationship. Interviewees reported that foster youth actively seek the support of teachers.
Sincere and supportive relationships with adults are important for foster youth. One teacher described a strong relationship with a student. They understood the student's situation and offered support. Teachers reported that these relationships are crucial in helping foster youth feel supported and understood.

Interviewees described fostering youth as presenting teachers with challenging behaviors. Teachers recognized the importance of these relationships in terms of developing trust and understanding the student's unique needs. Time was a critical resource in supporting these relationships, and teachers were often stretched thin.

Teachers recognized the limits of their skill and expertise in supporting these students and sought additional support from school counselors when needed. Time was reported to be a serious constraint on teachers' ability to fully engage with these students during stressful times.

Teachers described fostering youth as presenting teachers with challenging behaviors. They understood these behaviors in terms of difficulty the youth had in developing trusting relationships with adults. Teachers reported that these behaviors were often a sign of the youth's unmet needs and desires for support. Teachers recognized the importance of these relationships in helping foster youth feel understood and supported.

Testing adults

Interviewees described fostering youth as presenting teachers with challenging behaviors. They understood these behaviors in terms of difficulty the youth had in developing trusting relationships with adults. Teachers reported that these relationships were crucial in helping foster youth feel supported and understood.

Three of the interviewees talked about the challenges that could accompany these important relationships between teachers and foster youth.

Teaching adults
The student was rejected and removed from his home (a family experience to the
form a trusting relationship with the foster parents. She explained that he felt safer for
speculated that the student sabotaged the relationship because it was too difficult to
sabotaged the relationship. "In the beginning change described above, the teacher
was pretty invested, and they got used to being non-compliant. I don't know if she
One teacher described a foster placement that did not work out. "This was a family that
may have prevented the development of supportive relationships with other adults.
Teachersones shared examples of testing behaviors exhibited by the foster youth that
reported they had to be patient while a supportive relationship was slowly formed.
defined towards the teachers, and were not invested in their schoolwork. Teachers
of teaching, which interviewees described as a time when the students acted out, were
vulnerable and open in the relationship. Trusting relationships were built after a period
in which was trustworthy and committed to the student before the student would be
shifting landscape of adults. The participants believed foster youth needed to know that
the interns. Once in foster care, these students experienced what was described as a
had experience with adults who either failed to protect them from a threat or who were
and frequent transitions associated with foster care. As noted above, foster youth have
commitment was understood as a reflection of the trauma these students experienced
day... With not just me, but with a lot of different teachers." The need to test adults'
scenario. "When he first came to us he drove me nuts... He's the worst behaviorist
to make sure we were still going to be here in the end." Another teacher shared a similar
months for him to figure out he did have a support base. [10] pull us through the tests...
student who repeatedly tested the commitment of the teacher's support. It took 6
anger exhibited by foster youth in peer interactions described above was also prevalent

and conflicts with women.

not understand why the student manipulated the situation and created interpersonal
drama, but viewed it as consistent with the student's history of changes in foster homes.

After this event, it took time for the teacher to begin to trust the student again. She did
create drama between the three of us.

mom came back, lashed back out at me. [The student] was rioting to

She told the foster mom I said things that I didn't say. And the foster

[quickly] created a made up drama with me, the foster mom, and her.

In her current place, she was also conflating with this mom. And she

family.

history of conflict with foster mothers. At the time, she was living with her third foster

manage the relationships. One teacher described a situation with a student who had a

suggested that foster youth sometimes try to manipulate these adults in an effort to

with many adults including teachers, foster parents, and social workers. Two teachers

trust adults. Students in foster care struggle to manage and maintain relationships

Several teachers understood these behaviors as a result of foster youth's difficulty in

Participating described manipulative behaviors displayed by the foster youth.

June reflection by the foster family.

the relationship rather than having to trust and be vulnerable to the possibility of a

relationship, the student remained in control and was responsible for the termination of

student's time to forge a positive relationship with the foster family. In sabotaging the
in relationships with adults. One teacher explained that, given the stressful context in which many foster children live, their moods tend to shift quickly and unpredictably. Describing the challenge of confronting a student about a school issue, he noted, "You have to really tread softly around her because I don't know what kind of mood she's going to be in from day to day… If I try to hold her accountable, she blows up."

The shifts in mood observed by this teacher were attributed to the changing stressors in the foster children's lives and the resulting struggle to manage these stressors. Teachers expressed empathy and understanding for these challenges and often accepted the low priority assigned to the students by the foster care system. Foster youth were described as facing so many stressors in their lives that they had limited cognitive space, or mental attention, available for schoolwork. These students were seen as struggling with anger management and other school tasks. Teachers expressed an understanding of the underlying cause of these difficulties, which they described as the foster children's "cognitive space" or the lack of mental space available for schoolwork.

Teachers and the related family history and safety of an angry response were seen as an underlying cause of the foster youth's struggle with anger management. The combination of high stress levels and the relative familiarity and safety of anger responses were seen as a reason for the students' high stress levels. The combination of high stress and the resulting shifts in mood and behavior were attributed to the changing stressors in the foster children's lives. The shifts in mood observed by this teacher were attributed to the changing stressors in their lives, and the results were described as predictable.

Kind of mood she's going to be in from day to day… If I try to hold her accountable, she blows up.

You have to really tread softly around her because I don't know what she's going to be like the next day."
Support Strategies

Shared in class.

Youth to such a degree that they are unable to absorb and process the information of school. These preoccupations frequently dominate the cognitive space of the foster.

The students in foster care were often seen as being preoccupied with concerns outside.

Got nothing to do with school.

at the end of the day; they’re still thinking about that subject. And it’s thinking about. And they’ll tell you one thing. And you ask them again.

[Foster Youth] come in in the morning and you ask them what they’re

with many more issues and adults than their peers. One teacher remarked:

advocates, counselors, and responsible families. Foster youth were portrayed as dealing

but not limited to: social workers, educational surrogates, foster parents, legal

and function within the complex foster care system with many adult players including

relationships. Participants were aware that these students needed to learn, understand,

limited by foster youths’ need to manage living in a new home with new roles and

Cognitive space available for school related matters was also described as

resolved. Teachers understood that students in foster care have a lot on their minds.

whether or not the issues that resulted in their removal from the home would be fully

described as eager and impatient for reunification; they frequently worried about

Foster youth were anxious about reunification with their parents. Foster youth were

Foster youth whose parents were incarcerated worried about the

about biological parent’s whereabouts and wellbeing. Several teachers spoke of
Study participants offered well-formulated responses to the constellation of needs presented by students in foster care. The teachers' responses appeared to be grounded in genuine caring, with a critical connection between teaching and caring. One teacher explained, "If they have someone caring here, their investment in the students' success, which the participants felt, was well-represented in their responses.

The investment and caring of the teachers was seen as central to students' success. Interviewees described forging relationships, offering emotional support and nurturing, along with the differentiation of academic work, as critical to the development of stronger and supportive relationships.

Caring

of emotional support and nurturing, along with the differentiation of academic work, are grounded in genuine caring for students. Demonstrations of caring included the offering of emotional support and mentoring, along with the differentiation of academic work.
the student is exhibiting the testing behaviors described above, encourages students to engage more fully with their education. Given the cognitive space issues also described
in sharing the book, the teacher demonstrated his understanding of the experience of everybody else:

thinking about where you are and that I recognize you're different from
days... If anything, it's just another way to show that the teacher is
He took that thing home and read it cover to cover in the course of five
you're there, you're one of them... And one kid was like, "Holy Cow!"
i school and some of what they've done and haven't done... And
you're in this situation right now. Here's some other case studies of kids
[I just say], "Hey Jim, here's one you might be interested in cause
Foster care:

book of case studies of foster youth. He shared the book with a couple of students in
Foster care. For instance, one teacher had read Orphans of the Living (Toth, 1997), a
Teachers in this study actively sought opportunities to connect with students in
mechanism for mutual investment.

that student cared more about their success in school. Caring was described as a
interviewee explained that when a teacher at school cared about a student in foster care,
adults in the school supported foster youth in focusing on their academic work. This
community in their academic work. The development of strong relationships with
above, this teacher understood the difficulty foster youth have focusing on and
encourage more fully with their education. Given the cognitive space issues also described
the student is exhibiting the testing behaviors described above, encourages students to
Foster youth may have felt less alone in their experience because they were able to read about similar experiences, and also because they discovered that a teacher knew about other youth with similar backgrounds. His description of the foster youths' response to the book indicates that they were impressed that he had taken the time to read a book that would give him insight into their lives. The teacher demonstrated a deep understanding of the importance of sensitivity towards foster youth, showing his students that they were valued in class and in the hallway or lunchroom by using their name and acknowledging foster youth in the hallway or lunchroom by asking their name and closely than they did for other students. They spoke of the importance of extra care when assigning foster youth to work with classmates. When assigning students extra care when assigning foster youth to work with classmates, many teachers explained that they took extra care when asking foster youth to work with study partners who would be patient and supportive. Participating explained that during group work, they made sure that students in foster care would be comfortable with at least one of the group members. Participating also talked about making sure they spoke individually with students in foster care. Participating emphasized the need to speak privately with these students about behavioral or academic concerns so their peers would not hear. More than half of the participants emphasized the need to speak privately with these students about their needs.

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about him, never did what was best for him. These kids feel like no one had ever listened to him, never cared about him. Just listening to him. And you know, with him, he was one of the more talkative kids. I’ve learned a lot of time with him and talk and talk and talk and talk. And I spent a lot of time with him and talked and talked. Every study hall period, he would come in already here, waiting to get in the door. He sat here every morning and afternoon. He had my first period class. So when I got here at 8AM, he was always always

of a relationship that was important to her and the student in foster care.

of communicating with and supporting students in foster care. One teacher spoke at length about listening more than any other single activity as a means of connecting with and supporting students in foster care.

Listening

Understanding was a central variable identified by the participating teachers. The teachers in the study were well practiced in checking their assumptions about their students. They expressed an understanding of and appreciation for the complex forces that act on students in foster care. Seeking information and then responding with understanding was a central strategy identified by the participating teachers.

If there’s an academic problem, there might be something else that’s with questions of… has something been going on? Is everything okay? I think… first, you’ve got to ask. You always… proceed with caution.

Care: One teacher commented, the night before as displaced in school or in care. On the part of the student in foster care teachers avoid mistaking a missed assignment for another result of a situation at home. Draw conclusions about missed assignments or absences. Asking questions helped the
Listening was the single most powerful tool she had to connect with and support this student. After several months of listening, she was able to encourage him to make some friends and connect with peers. Given the safety of his relationship with this teacher, he was able to do so, and his teacher reported seeing a steady improvement in his investment in school, his grades, and his overall affect as a result.

Listening required patience on the part of the teachers. Many interviewees described interactions as most effective when the student initiated the conversations. Teachers needed to be prepared to drop the task at hand when the student was ready to talk. Participants recognized these students' vulnerability and the challenge they faced in letting down their guard. Several teachers noted that if they felt disengaged, they would feel disengaged and be less effective in engaging the students in open, honest conversations. Participants offered descriptions of their open, patient approach to the students in foster care, where they felt the students had a right to be thinking, to feel, and to express their feelings and thoughts. Several teachers noted that if they felt disengaged, they would feel disengaged.

Listening required patience on the part of the teachers. Many interviewees spoke to the importance of respecting the student's privacy and confidentiality. They felt the students already had a number of adults in their lives who told them where they should be, how they must feel, and what they ought to be thinking. The classroom teachers offered a safe space for the students to vocalize their concerns and thoughts. One teacher described her relationship with foster youth, noting, "I'm there to listen a lot, to kind of hear them. Knowing that you're not judging them. You're there to listen with foster youth, not judge. I'm there to listen," she said. The participating teachers were patient and waited for the students to initiate the conversations. Several teachers noted that it felt disrespectful and ineffective to barrage the students with questions beyond those directly related to schoolwork. Participants offered descriptions of themselves as active listeners, not in their pursuit of conversation with students in foster care, but in their open posture of patient preparedness, which allowed the students to communicate their thoughts and concerns. Participants offered descriptions of their open, patient approach to the students in foster care, where they felt the students had a right to be thinking, to feel, and to express their feelings and thoughts. Several teachers noted that if they felt disengaged, they would feel disengaged.
Listening was critical to understanding the student's situation before making judgments. Teachers emphasized the importance of listening before coming to conclusions. They felt that adults, particularly adults in positions of authority such as teachers, can easily and unintentionally squelch the thought process of the foster youth by imposing their solutions, suggestions, and criticisms. Listening to foster youth, as described by the teachers, provided the students with an opportunity to explore their thoughts and feelings.

Listening was seen as essential for connecting with all students, but especially students in foster care. These connections were viewed as central to the success of foster youth in school. Listening also served another vital role in supporting students in foster care. Through active listening and a demonstrated history of interest in the foster youth's school, teachers were able to gain accurate information about the challenges the students faced. Gathering information, as noted above, before reacting was seen as an important aspect of caring, and listening was reported as crucial for gathering that information. The importance of asking questions sensitively when raising a concern is also an important aspect of gathering information.

Students reported that teachers responded accordingly once the information was gathered. Listening and historical records played a significant role in the foster youth's school, teachers' perceptions of students, and decisions about the challenges the students faced. Listening was seen as essential for connecting with all students, but especially those in foster care. These connections were viewed as central to the success of fostering youth.

Listening was critical to understanding the student's situation before making judgments.
was reported as contributing to heightened sensitivity of foster youth maintaining a respectful posture towards the students. A pronounced display of respect students in foster care to do better was seen as both the result of and a component to more of a coaching role. Empowering the student to do better "Empowering" getting down on them, and other people have really been down on them before...It's some students did not work well with students in foster care. "They see us ass you colleague they gave careful consideration to how foster youth may interpret the criticism than their peers. Before teachers commented on an academic concern, they respected to students in foster care. These students were seen as being more sensitive to participants found a variety of ways to consistently and authentically express Consistent, Authentic Respect

with assignments as discussed in more detail below.

student's engagement in school. It also allowed the teachers to better need. Respectfully in the context of a caring relationship, provided the teachers with the particular in the context of a caring relationship, provided the teachers with the success of the student (could well be jeopardized). Questioning and listening, through active listening, the investment of the student (and thereby the academic investment of the student). If a teacher jumped to conclusions without understanding situations before responding, the student would react with anger. As noted by the participant above, the teachers' investment was understood to directly impact the situation. A conclusion. He explained that if proper care were not taken to fully understand a
Several interviewees emphasized the importance of communicating faith in the foster youths' ability to find and follow through with solutions to issues at school.

Much of the respect expressed to foster youth involved what one teacher described as "[putting] it in their court." The teachers coached and encouraged the foster youth to develop their own solutions to problems rather than telling the foster youth what to do. Numerous participants noted that foster youth had many teachers at school, and could choose whether or not to share information with some, all, or none of their teachers. Many participants noted that foster youth were often told to trust counselors and foster parents, and teachers felt that distinguishing their role and relationship to the foster youth from that of the assigned roles and relationships of counselors, social workers, and foster parents. They felt that sharing their experiences and feelings, interviewees felt that the element of choice, made their relationship, or their they could choose to connect on a more personal level with a teacher, than other adults in these students' lives was that the students had choice about the friend and try to get to know and open up. The advantage that participants felt they had over other adults in these students' lives was that the students had choice about the relationship. One teacher, who expressed a particularly strong commitment to fostering relationships, when needed, added emphasis to student-initiated conversations.

Above, teachers asked questions specifically related to achievements and work privacy and allowing them to decide what they would share and with whom. As noted, many participants emphasized the importance of respecting the students' development and solutions to problems. Rather than telling the foster youth what to do, much of the respect expressed to foster youth involved being a guide and follow through with solutions to issues at school. Foster youths' ability to find and follow through with solutions at school.
The development of strong relationships with students in foster care, and the listening described above, positioned the teachers to better understand the needs of the students in foster care. Participants were specifically asked about ways in which they might differentiate instruction and/or classroom practices in response to the needs of foster youth. They were consistent in their responses. The foster students the interviewees spoke of required no change in instruction or curriculum and the teachers did not make any modifications for students based solely on foster status. They reported making modifications or adjustments to assignments for students in foster care as they would for any of their students, based on specific, expressed need. Many teachers spoke of accommodating poor attendance patterns. Students in foster care were reported to have more absences than their peers. This was presumed to be a result of meetings and changes associated with foster care. Teachers responded to frequent and at times prolonged absences as they would for students with a medical condition. Accommodations included extending time to complete assignments and altering due dates. One teacher expressed the importance of being flexible while still holding the student accountable for the material.

"If a student comes in and doesn't have something done, or has to leave for some reason, I still expect that they'll get the work done, or get an extended amount of work done under a different timeline or circumstance."
Participants felt it was important to have enough information regarding the student’s circumstances to understand the need for alternatives. This allowed teachers to be what one participant called “fair, but unequal” in their treatment of students. Foster students were sometimes given assignments or due dates that were different from their classmates, and teachers felt that some justification was needed to support those modifications.

Another teacher advised consent methodologies to accommodate students in foster care. She offered choices to all students regarding how they demonstrated their knowledge or mastery of content. She felt that assignment choice for all students in the class was particularly important for students in foster care, as it gives them access to accommodations without needing to be singled out or identified in the classroom. As noted above, participants viewed foster youth as being particularly sensitive. This teacher felt that assignment choice for all students in the class was particularly important for students in foster care, who are often given assignments that are different from their classmates, and who may need special accommodations to support their education (e.g., work appropriate to their needs and abilities). One teacher spoke about the practice of differentiating assignments.

Modifications, and teachers felt that some justification was needed to support those modifications, and teachers felt that some justification was needed to support those modifications, and teachers felt that some justification was needed to support those modifications. One participant called “fair, but unequal” in their treatment of students. Foster students were sometimes given assignments or due dates that were different from their classmates. This allowed teachers to be what participants felt it was important to have enough information regarding the student’s circumstances to understand the need for alternatives. This allowed teachers to be what one participant called “fair, but unequal” in their treatment of students. Foster students were sometimes given assignments or due dates that were different from their classmates, and teachers felt that some justification was needed to support those modifications.

One teacher spoke about the practice of differentiating assignments.
That was a real problem. [Foster] kids were either real late with that, or... you really needed to be aware of what's going on. I had one kid in that was a real problem. [Foster] kids were either real late with that, or...
They needed to appropriately support foster youth in their classrooms. As noted above, the participants expressed a strong commitment to knowing and connecting with their students. Teachers wanted to be informed about significant events in the lives of foster youth outside of school so as to quickly and accurately identify the needs of these students and to appropriately balance flexibility and accountability. They also felt that the students’ connection with peers and adults at school, and the continuity of their academic development, suffered because of the transient nature of being in foster care. Teachers reported that changes in foster home placement resulted in time out of school, sometimes meant transfers of students, and contributed to the difficulty foster youth had in focusing on their academics.

**Desire for Information**

Participants were asked how many of their students were in foster care. Each teacher responded with the caveat that they do not always know if a student is in foster care. "I can have half my kids in foster care and never even know it," commented one teacher. Because the interviews occurred in May and June, teachers had approximately nine months to learn about the home life of their students. Teachers had approximately nine months to learn about the home life of their students. Had the study been conducted earlier in the school year, rather than in May and June, teachers had approximately two months to learn about the home life of their students.

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Participants were asked how many of their students were in foster care. Each teacher implied that they needed to appropriately support foster youth in their classrooms. Teachers wanted to be informed about significant events in the lives of foster youth outside of school so
School and their relative success in school.

Agencies focus on the intersection between what is happening for a student outside of the participation above would have allowed involved school personnel and social service professionals and/or academic changes. The team meeting and coordination suggested by lives outside of school so they could respond appropriately to any accompanying changes between foster homes, and when those were other significant changes in the student's particular school programs. Teachers wanted to know when transitions were occurring.

He noted that such meetings were common for students on specific plans or in each student in foster care and see exactly what is going on.

With some and not others. If I would be nice to have a meeting about case meetings with some of these kids... I don't know why I have them counselors, foster parents, and social workers sit down... I've been to I think they should have a meeting where they [foster youth, teachers, and social workers] sit down and discuss: Appropriate responsiveness. One teacher offered the following suggestion: of their situation, yet enough information was shared for the teachers to be aware of who is in foster care.

Her colleagues who do not make the same effort to know their students would be less
Information about changes in a student’s foster placement was perceived as central to the daily interactions between the teacher and the student. Lacking accurate information about a change in placement, one teacher described his frustration when he blamed a student for her poor attendance.

I didn’t know she had been kicked out of her foster home and re-placed in another part of the county…. It was an issue for her to get to school. And nobody told me about it until I had already gotten pissed off at her.

The teacher was frustrated by his angry response to the student’s attendance, but felt he was not fully responsible for becoming frustrated with her because he was not informed of her situation. The teacher suggested that his relationship with this student was damaged by this interaction.

Three interviewees noted that they felt that less information about individual students was presently shared with teachers compared to ten or more years ago. They suggested that the efficiency of e-mail and its associated risks with regards to confidentiality, and an increased awareness of privacy laws, resulted in teachers avoiding sharing sensitive information with teachers.

Three interviewees noted that they felt that less information about individual students was presently shared with teachers compared to ten or more years ago. They suggested that the efficiency of e-mail and its associated risks with regards to confidentiality, and an increased awareness of privacy laws, resulted in teachers avoiding sharing sensitive information with teachers.
Today, colleagues and administrators withhold information in fear of lawsuits. These teachers spoke nostalgically of past experiences when a colleague or guidance counselor pulled them into the hall to quietly and discretely pass on information about a student. It is so much more helpful when you have either a case manager or somebody clue you in on this stuff. Just someone to pull you aside in the hallway and say, "Hey, I just wanted to let you know, but feel they had a right to know, and that they had a need to know the information. None of the participants had a clear understanding of what information they had a right to know, but felt they had.

In education, confidential information is shared if the teacher has a need to know. This teacher went on to suggest that the use of e-mail rather than private conversations to communicate with teachers might be one cause for the change. He also suggested that there are new school personnel involved who may be less comfortable with the informal sharing of information.

Confidentiality is supposed to be confidential, but you should tell your boss because it's supposed to be confidential, but you should when they do now... I'm not necessarily supposed to on. It seems like they used to do that a lot more 10 years ago police came and they had to change houses so there's some shift going the hallway and say, "Hey, I just wanted to let you know, somebody else's you in on this stuff. Just someone to pull you aside in if is so much more helpful when you have either a case manager or student counselor pulled them into the hall to quietly and discretely pass on information about a teacher's role in providing confidential information in the course of their interview because of my role as a school provided. Frequently, interviewees asked for clarification about the limits of the need to know more information about students' foster status than was understood of when information they had a right to know, but feel they had a right to know the information. None of the participants had a clear understanding of what information they had a right to know, and that they had a need to know the information.

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teachers expressed strong feelings about the need to know some things, sometimes, about some students, especially those in foster care. One teacher likened aspects of being in foster care to a health issue, saying, "It would make a difference in how you teach sometimes and I think sometimes people get so hung up over confidentiality that they’re reluctant [to share]." Teachers also noted that having more information about students in foster care could improve the development and communication of expectations. For example, if a student in foster care is staying in a respite home for the weekend, a teacher may not expect the student to have all of his or her assignments completed on the following Monday. Other teachers mentioned the importance of flexibility, especially when interviewing parents or other caregivers. Participants emphasized that the amount of information teachers had about students in foster care influenced their decisions and the level of support they provided. Participants also expressed a desire for increased protection for foster youth and a need for clarification about the constraints of privacy and confidentiality. Many hoped the study would result in increased protection for foster youth.
communication and information sharing within and between schools and social 

Placement Stability

A second organizational level concern, raised by the participants, was related to frequent placement changes. While the first concern focused on communication systems within the school, this concern focused on social service agencies.

Placement Stability

This interviewee felt that, in addition to relationships within individual classrooms, much more would be possible with students in foster care because the move so often to the school, every body is able to make a good relationship with the relationship like with the school... Over the period of years in that system is that they move so much. It's hard to build that long-term relationship like with the kid in foster care. I feel like one of the biggest problems I deal with in the foster care system is that the kid’s relationship that exists between a student and a school model.

Students in foster care are in a perpetual state of transition. His colleague, speaking of this teacher felt that simply shifting from a student in foster care is always the new kid. This teacher felt that describing well makes foster students unique in their peer relationships, one teacher described how placement changes, while the first concern focused on communication and information sharing within and between schools and social service agencies.

References:
Teachers, peers, and foster families. Stable placements allowed the supporting were seen as assets in that they promoted long-term, predictable relationships with home was not accompanied by a change in school. They also reported trust issues that resulted from what one teacher called the "transitory nature" of the foster care system. More distant..."They're going to be more self-conscious... They're just [thinking... this way. Another interviewee described the impact in terms of foster youths' connection with the people at school. "If they're only [here] a couple months, they're not développed as harmed by the belief that they would be transitioning again soon. The students' interest in connecting with the school community and personnel wasn't back at [the other school] next year, so what do I care? Why am I even going to try?" believes the students must think, "Well in five months [I might move] anyway, I'll be connected with these students because of their frequent moves. She explained when she another participant reinforced the notion that it was particularly challenging to supported foster youth towards academic success. is particularly important. Careful relationship building was one way the teachers broader school community, the investment of and relationships with individual teachers foster care can be invested in school. Because foster youth may be less connected to the care. As noted above, investment on the part of the teacher encourages students in increased the need for teachers to develop strong relationships with students in foster in their academic progress. One interviewee suggested that placement changes hinder homes made it challenging for foster youth to invest in their relationships at school and foster youth. The frequent moves between schools that sometimes accompany changes in home was not accompanied by a change in school. They also reported trust issues that
Many of the teachers shared concerns about the foster youth's ability to maintain the keep pace with their schoolwork because she did not have access to all of her materials. This particular student was not able to identify this as major factor contributing to the difficulty foster youth had maintaining with this uncertainty on the part of foster youth regarding where they will be staying was This sort of uncertainty contributed to the student's difficulty in focusing on school.

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She was looking for a book. And she was like, "Well I don't have my student who could not find her textbook to follow through on assignments. One teacher explained the impact when describing a development of relationships and investment at school. It impacted the students' ability abilities in very concrete ways. Regardless of the impact of placement stability on the

Changes in placement were also reported to impact the students' organizational

sometimes sudden changes were reported to interfere with those relationships.

Institutions (schools and the Department of Children and Families) to know and

Summary

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Interviewees identified characteristics that they felt distinguished foster youth from their peers in school. They noted differences in the relationships foster youth maintained at school with both peers and adults.

Teachers described the impact that a history of trauma and involvement in what was seen as a complex social service network had on foster youth’s relationships and focus at school. They explained the need to modify assignments and timelines to accommodate foster youth. Emphasis was given to caring, active listening, and intentionally and carefully supporting foster youth. Participants explained the need to accommodate the unique challenges foster youth faced.

Though focusing on experiences and observations in their classrooms, the teachers raised organizational level concerns about the impact that limited information sharing raised organizational level concerns about the impact that limited information sharing had on teachers’ abilities to serve the needs of foster youth and school. They noted they were uniquely positioned to develop supportive relationships with foster youth because of their clearly defined and predictable role as teachers, and because foster youth could choose whether or not they wanted to receive non-academic support from those teachers. Emphasis was given to caring, active listening, and intentionally and carefully supporting foster youth. They noted they were uniquely positioned to develop supportive relationships with foster youth because of their clearly defined and predictable role as teachers, and because foster youth could choose whether or not they wanted to receive non-academic support from those teachers.

Emphasis was given to caring, active listening, and intentionally and carefully supporting foster youth. Teachers emphasized the attitudes, understandings, and actions that they relied on to support students in foster care. They noted they were uniquely positioned to develop supportive relationships with foster youth because of their clearly defined and predictable role as teachers and because foster youth could choose whether or not they wanted to receive non-academic support from those teachers.
Chapter 5

Considering the Study Findings in Light of Established Theory: A Practitioner/Researcher Perspective

The findings of this study reflect the experiences and perceptions of nine classroom teachers in one rural high school in Vermont. In individual interviews, teachers were asked to offer their observations based on their classroom interactions with students in foster care. The findings represent a classroom perspective. Participating teachers described their experiences with foster youth and their perceptions of this population, which pointed to several distinguishing characteristics of foster youth in school. These characteristics were understood as resulting from a history of trauma and neglect.

The study was built on the supposition that public education, while imperfect, is intended to guarantee that all students achieve a minimal level of education. Anyone, regardless of age, can access free public education and earn a high school diploma is central to this premise. However, foster youth are an identifiable population that does not fully and consistently realize the outcome public education is intended to guarantee (as recently as Cerossia, 2006). Foster youth are an identifiable population that does not realize access to an education, regardless of age, and all students achieve a minimal level of education. Anyone’s

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Heterogeneity on content will allow me to think broadly when conceptualizing the needs of youth. In particular, an emerging understanding of complex trauma, and the findings of this study, allow educators to connect their individual experiences with broader concepts in the literature on attachment, trauma, and caring. Interpretation of study findings involves asking what the findings mean, connecting findings to personal experience, and/or connecting findings to theory (Glesne, 2006). Connections between the findings of this study and key concepts in broader fields of study are explored in this chapter. My goal is to connect the experiences of the study participants with broader fields of knowledge. Qualitative research leads to raising more questions than it answers (Patton, 2002). This study was designed as an exploration of the experiences of a group of high school teachers who have had in working with students in foster care. In interpreting the findings, I continued the theme of exploration. I explored areas of interest and relevance to me as a counselor to deepen my understanding of the findings. As noted in the introduction to this study, I am a researcher/practitioner. My interpretive work focuses on connecting the specific experiences of the participating teachers with broader understandings of the phenomena. The work of researchers as interpreters produces new knowledge and enables us to understand the experiences of others in relation to broader conceptual frameworks. My interpretive work involves connecting the findings of this study with attachment theory, an emerging understanding of complex trauma, and the literature on caring. Researcher as Interpreters

Researchers are interpreters of the study participants' experiences based on their own knowledge, values, and beliefs. The goal is to connect the findings of the study to broader fields of knowledge, and to connect the findings with the literature on the topic. This study was designed as an exploration of the experiences of a group of high school teachers who have had in working with students in foster care. In interpreting the findings, I continued the theme of exploration. I explored areas of interest and relevance to me as a counselor to deepen my understanding of the findings. As noted in the introduction to this study, I am a researcher/practitioner. My interpretive work involves connecting the specific experiences of the participating teachers with broader understandings to further my work with students in foster care. My goal is to connect the findings of this study with attachment theory, an emerging understanding of complex trauma, and the literature on caring. The findings of this study, when paired with relevant insights offered in the population, allow educators to connect the individual characteristics or have particular needs, distinct from the general
classroom teachers and their perspectives. We share the common goal of educating
counselor and researcher, I have a unique perspective. I am professionally aligned with
attachment theory, traumatic stress, and the feminist ethic of care. As a school

The findings of this study reflect and relate to key concepts in the literature on
professional knowledge, the community of educators with whom I work, meaningful to me. This study has positioned me to share my newly expanded
leader within my community of practice has been central in making my research
research/practitioner, using my new knowledge to support my work as an informal
school counselor and member of a professional school community. As a
informal, and will continue to inform, my own practice and professional dialogue as a
inkages that can inform dialogue within educational communities of practice. It has
effectiveness (Niesz, 2010). This study offers findings and explores theoretical
community that emphasizes shared learning as a means of increasing organizational
development of communities of practice. A community of practice is a professional
The coursework in the doctoral program emphasizes the role of leadership in the
at the University of Vermont. I am working towards a professional practice degree.
As a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program

experiences (Ertl, 1994).

knowledge. It is knowledge generated by professionals as they make meaning of their
knowledge. Professional knowledge is differentiated from other formal forms of
the needs of specific students and will promote the development of professional
practitioner/researcher, this work will inform my collaboration with colleagues about
my students and will support my collaboration with colleagues. As a
In the literature related to trauma and traumatic stress would far exceed the scope of 
neuropsychology, memory, learning, and human development. Exploring all that is available 
in the diagnosis and meaning of trauma as well as the relationships between trauma, 
There is a vast, rapidly growing, and interdisciplinary web of research developed 
Youth had focusing on their academics. 

Supportive linkages were found between attachment theory and the difficulty foster 
(in the sections on intense peer interactions and intense adult interactions), Additional 
patterns of foster youth as described by the interviewees and captured in the findings 
this study. I identified connections that offered insight regarding the relationships 
preparation for this study, I looked for key concepts that intersected with the findings of 
Beginning with the review of the literature on attachment theory I conducted in 
the development of knowledge within the academic tradition. 

Development of pragmatic understanding as needed by the practitioner, as well as to 
within the psychological literature as a practitioner/researcher, giving emphasis to the 
students in foster care. I explored the intersections and areas of potential alignment 
professional knowledge and understanding as a school counselor who works with 
students with attachment theory and the literature on traumatic stress responses in adolescents. I 

The classroom teachers to certain aspects of other fields of knowledge including 
background are different, allowing me to connect the experiences and perceptions of 
emphasizes the social and emotional development of adolescents. My training and 
experience in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment, my expertise as an educator 
adolescents in a public high school. While classroom teachers focus on, and have
Instead, I focused on the work of Bessel van der Kolk, a leading trauma expert who has committed himself to imparting practitioners (counselors, educators, health workers, etc.) with an understanding of traumatic stress. I turned to the literature review and summary offered in a work edited by leaders in the field (van der Kolk, McFarlane, & Weisaeth, 1996). Focusing on the content addressing traumatic experience and adolescence I found core concepts that support the participants’ observations regarding the impact that a traumatic past has on students in foster care and the overwhelmed and distracted presentation of these students that the teachers characterized as limited cognitive space. My understanding of these concepts was further developed by an article that offered guidance in the diagnosis of children and adolescents with histories of complex trauma (van der Kolk, 2005). This article offered descriptions of the impact complex trauma has on the relationships, behaviors, and the emotional state of these children and adolescents. I was able to identify observable characteristics associated with a history of trauma. I was also able to identify many intersections between the symptoms of complex trauma described by van der Kolk and the characteristics of foster youth described by the teachers in this study. The literature on trauma and attachment provides tools for conceptualizing and understanding the characteristics of foster youth as described in the findings of this study. The support strategies offered in this study can be similarly conceptualized and used in practice. McFarlane & Weiss (1996) focused on the concept of trauma and juvenile justice. Review and summary offered in a work edited by leaders in the field (van der Kolk, health workers, etc.) with an understanding of traumatic stress. I turned to the literature expert who has committed himself to imparting practitioners (counselors, educators, and other professionals) with an understanding of trauma. Instead, I focused on the work of Bessel van der Kolk, a leading trauma
Caring relationships, as described by both the participants and the literature on caring, serve as strong counterpoints to the relationships that resulted in a student entering foster care. Through my doctoral course work, I was introduced to the concept of a feminist ethic of care. The feminist ethic of care emphasizes the use of caring relationships to support students and others (Noddings, 2005). As a model of social justice, the feminist ethic of care emphasizes equity of outcomes, rather than the equity of inputs associated with other models of fairness (Streitmatter, 1996). The participants' frequent use of the term care when describing support strategies they found effective led me to return to the literature on care. I explored the literature on care and specifically the literature that described caring relationships and behaviors to identify areas of intersection with the characteristics and behaviors study participants identified as effective in supporting students in foster care. These intersections became a tool to organize an understanding of potentially effective teacher behaviors. Intersections between the findings of this study and key concepts from the feminist ethic of care are highlighted in this chapter. Focus of the Interpretation

Youth characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors in support of the educational experiences of foster children became a tool to organize an understanding of potentially effective teacher behaviors. Intersections between the findings of this study and key concepts from the literature on attachment theory, traumatic stress response in adolescents, and caring relationships became a tool to organize an understanding of potentially effective teacher behaviors. Intersections between the findings of this study and key concepts from the literature on attachment theory, traumatic stress response in adolescents, and caring relationships are highlighted in this chapter. Focus of the Interpretation

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Characteristics of Foster Youth

Youth from a broader systems perspective rather than a classroom perspective.

Organizational level concerns for those studying the educational experience of foster youth from a broader systems perspective. I have incorporated the perspectives of classroom educators in their work with foster youth. The concerns raised by the participants were related to classroom management, organization, and the impact of foster youth on the classroom. However, this study focused on the classroom. To connect the findings with attachment theory, the participants were asked about aspects of foster youth and complex trauma studies offer insight into the teachers’ descriptions of foster youth.

Strengthened by the experiences of foster youth in school, the teachers were asked about observable characteristics of foster youth in school. They described what they felt was the impact of trauma these students had experienced in terms of cognitive space limitations that affected the student’s ability to focus on school and relationships.

The teachers in this study offered many examples and descriptions capturing the observable characteristics of foster youth. In this chapter, I seek to identify concepts that will directly connect the findings with attachment theory.
themes (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). This allowed the themes to arise organically from the interview data and to accurately reflect the understandings of the teachers. To utilize attachment theory at that stage in the study would be to impose a theoretical construct onto the meanings constructed by the participants. Similarly, I investigated characteristics associated with children and adolescents who have experienced complex trauma after the completion of coding and analysis as a means of broadening the context of the findings of this study rather than imposing these constructs on the analysis of the data.

Impact of Trauma

In his writing on the diagnosis of the complex and interactive symptoms of traumatic stress and complex trauma, Bessel van der Kolk (2005) describes observable characteristics of children and adolescents who have experienced trauma. Many of these descriptors were consistent with the observations made by the teachers. He explained that the multiple, observable symptoms tended to be pervasive, impacting all areas of a youth’s life. He explained that there is no singular collection of symptoms that captures the impact of trauma; instead, there are many characteristics that may or may not be true for a particular adolescent who has experienced complex trauma. He argued that there is a highly significant relationship between “adverse childhood experiences” (van der Kolk, 2005, p.2) and observable self-destructive behaviors. He explained that these characteristics may include depression, medical issues, and impulsivity and at times self-destructive behaviors. He explained that these characteristics may include depression, medical issues, and impulsivity and at times self-destructive behaviors.

In his writing on the diagnoses of the complex and interactive symptoms of trauma...
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To develop their response to an issue. She felt it was important to work with these
usually with anger, but not be able to identify or explain the thought process they used
developing an appropriate response strategy. She noted that they would respond,
many of her students in foster care exhibited in thinking through a problem and
particular noticed the impact of trauma in these terms. She described the difficulty
their feelings, and information to create a cohesive understanding. One teacher in
challenging for foster youth to develop a cohesive understanding of their experiences,

2005). The history of trauma associated with being in foster care may make it
sensory, emotional, and cognitive information into a cohesive whole (van der Kolk.
A history of trauma is understood to negatively impact the capacity to integrate
highlighted in the following discussion.

sample of the literature on traumatic stress. Those common characteristics are
are common conclusions of characteristics as described by the teachers and in a
adolescents who have experienced trauma share the same characteristics. In both, these
responses. Not all students in foster care share the same characteristics, nor do all

effects of complex trauma

felt us that complex trauma will manifest itself in a diverse and complex network of
noted by the participants, each student is an individual, and Bessel van der Kolk (2005)
with predictable characteristics of youth who have experienced traumatic stress. As
If it is not possible to directly link the observations made during the interviews
Kolk’s description of the pervasive and lasting effects of complex trauma.
Foster care impacts their current functioning in school was consistent with van der
school. The participants believed that the traumatic or adverse experiences of students in
history of trauma as a major contributing factor to the challenges facing foster youth in
Students to develop processing skills because they so often lacked the ability to integrate multiple sources of information into a whole that could effectively guide their response.

Many of the teachers described foster youth as struggling to manage peer relations because they did not always respond to social cues or responded in ways that missed social cues. Teachers described foster youth as struggling to manage peer relations because they often lacked the ability to integrate multiple sources of information into a whole that could effectively guide their response.

Many of the teachers described foster youth as struggling to manage peer relations because they often lacked the ability to integrate multiple sources of information into a whole that could effectively guide their response.
Van der Kolk’s research raises interesting questions about the participants’ observation that foster youth appeared to misunderstand or fail to respond appropriately to social cues. The literature on trauma suggests that educators and school counselors may want to consider the impact of complex trauma on the social development of their students. Educators and school counselors may also experience many new relationships with teachers, peers, foster families, and social service providers. These students encounter many relationships that have potential to be either helpful to the foster youth or very supportive and caring. The potential and uncertainty of these relationships may preoccupy foster youth. This form of preoccupation may be significant enough to result in foster placement. Like the insecure-preoccupied attachment relationship, the past attachment relationships of these students may have been significantly flawed, resulting in foster placement. 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co
tribute to the seemingly distracted state of the foster youth described by the
participants.

Traumatic stress is associated with long-term susceptibility to secondary stresses (van der Kolk, McFarlane, & Weisaeth, 1996). They

complex traumas have heightened reactivity to stresses in terms of their mental,
focus on the same non-school issue all day. Children and adolescents with a history of

One participant explained the preoccupied state of a student in terms of a strong

preoccupation with self-protection from secondary stresses.

focusing on the European Renaissance, as noted by one teacher, these students may be

The secondary stresses noted above may be present in the school setting. Rather than

be further understood in terms of the vulnerability of foster youth to secondary stress,

then foster youth appeared to have less cognitive space available for school tasks. Higher

adolescents who have experienced traumatic stress. Study participants’ observations

identified the stresses from these secondary stresses as a central task for

impacted by the traumatic experience (C. Responding to questions about living

meaningful relationships with peers and adults when these relationships are directly

stresses include changes in care taking (e.g., a change in foster home), and the stress of

incidences can induce stress responses that are intense and unmanageable. Secondary

child or adolescent. For the individual who has experienced traumatic stress, these

secondary adversities are incidences that further complicate the stress response of the

stress (van der Kolk, McFarlane, & Weisaeth, 1996). Secondary stresses or

Traumatic stress is associated with long-term susceptibility to secondary

participants.

contribute to the seemingly distracted state of the foster youth described by the
Trauma stress is also associated with a fear of the recurrence of trauma and secondary stress.

Secondary stress can be understood in terms of these students' vulnerability and complex response to schoolwork. The limited cognitive space of foster youth observed by interviewees may interfere with their peer group at school, making it difficult for these students to focus on work. Maladaptive coping strategies and difficulty in adjusting to changes make it harder for them to manage stress responses. Foster youth need to exert a greater effort than their peers to adapt to changes. Moreover, these youth may struggle to effectively access supports and resources needed to adjust to change and manage peer relationships because of the types of secondary stress.

Can contribute to the youths' efforts to adjust to changes, including maladaptive coping strategies. These stresses may result in the teacher's observation that a student will focus on a single stress response. Focus on secondary stress and efforts to manage the response to that stress may result in higher anxiety and decreased ability to access social supports. Further, these youth may struggle to effectively access supports and resources needed to adjust to changes and manage peer relationships because of the types of secondary stress.
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participating to refer to a "brotherhood" among foster youth, and another to describe a

themseves in anyed relationships. The intensity in peer relationships that led one

1996). In addition, adolescents experiencing traumatic stress tended to involve

stress was also associated with complex trauma (van der Kolk, McFarlane, & Weiss

definition of a peer group as a projection of defense against traumatic

anxiety to the point of wanting to get in a fight with a peer.

a student who was very skilled at forming friendships, but would just as quickly get

trauma. This description aligns with the observation that one teacher offered regarding

researchers have associated abrupt changes in adolescent relationships with traumatic

have a negative impact on peer relations (van der Kolk, McFarlane, & Weiss, 1996).

associated with traumatic stress offer insights into these findings. Traumatic stress may

support; more often they were related to anger and frustration. The characteristics

foster youth as tumultuous. These relationships were marked by times, by strong

the teachers in this study described the peer interactions and relationships of

Peer Interactions

from safety concerns may contribute to a difficulty in focusing on school-related tasks.

an increased anxiety associated with traumatic stress. Heightened anxiety resulting

the tasks of schooling may be linked to what van der Kolk and his colleagues described

observations of the limited cognitive space that foster youth seem to have available for

back home when they age out of the foster care system, if not sooner. The teachers

youth anticipated reunification with their parents, taking about their plans to move

insecure parents. The teachers also spoke of the eagerness with which some foster
reestablished through affect attenuation (Hughes, 2004). The primary caregiver annu-

friendship as being “sisterly”, parallels this research. The familial language may have
captured the protective nature of these relationships. This common metaphor describes a
mother bird protecting her young. The teacher captured the protective attitude this foster youth had with some of her peers. The emphasis given to the perceived family dysfunction common to this peer grouping suggests that the relationships foster youth forged with peers were within a small subset of students and thus atypical. As noted by one participant, these relationships were unique in their

attachment theory also offers insight into the intense peer relations of foster

relationships parallel the findings of many studies summarized by van der Kolk. 10-day changes in their relationships with peers. The interviews’ descriptions of peer

described foster youth as moody. The moodiness of foster youth was observed as day-

to-day changes in their relationships with peers. The interviews’ descriptions of peer

students will have sudden changes in their relationships. Study participants frequently

impose control reported by van der Kolk is consistent with the notion that these relationships of a student wanting to get in a fight with a friend. The difficulty with
described by the participating teachers were marked by bursts of aggression as seen in
described by the participating teachers were marked by bursts of aggression as seen in

relationships with caregivers and peers” (van der Kolk, 2005). The peer relationships

with unmodulated aggression and impulse control and difficulty regulating both emotion and behavior. Numerous studies of traumatized children find problems

attachment theory also offers insight into the intense peer relations of foster

Complex trauma and traumatic stress are associated with difficulty in regulating

they were friendships based on shared hardship rather than shared interests.

and thus atypical. As noted by one participant, these relationships were unique in their

the relationships foster youth forged with peers were within a small subset of students
given to the perceived family dysfunction common to this peer grouping suggested that

the participant quotes illustrate this foster youth had with some of her peers. The

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captured the participant quotes illustrate this foster youth had with some of her peers. The
captured the protective nature of these relationships. One teacher explained, as noted

friendship as being “sisterly”, parallels this research. The familial language may have
himself/herself to the affect of the child, reflects that child's affect and, in concert with the child, shifts a negative affect (i.e., frustration) into a positive one (i.e., confidence).

Affect attunement supports the child as he/she learns and develops an understanding of the diverse and complex emotions he/she experiences. Foster youth may struggle with affect regulation as a result of an insecure attachment style. Several of the participants noted that foster youth exhibit frequent and sometimes rapid shifts in mood, which may reflect poor affect regulation as a result of an insecure attachment style.

All three of the insecure attachment styles (avoidant, ambivalent/resistant, and disorganized) result in deficits in terms of relationship development. The insecure-avoidant individual is described by peers as lacking social skills and unresponsive to the needs of his/her peers (Howe, 1999). This attachment style may contribute to the missing social cues identified by study participants. The insecure-ambivalent/resistant individual displays anger and aggression. He/she threatens to stop caring. This is the result of a maladaptive working model that emphasizes the unpredictability of others. The insecure-disorganized individual lacks a working model on which to base their relationship behaviors. This individual struggles to identify his/her own emotions and those of others. The disorganized individual may feel one thing and display another. There may be a linkage between insecure-disorganized attachment and the apparent moodiness of foster youth as described by the teachers. The apparent shifts in mood may be related to the child's affect and, in concert with himself/herself to the affect of the child, reflects that child's affect and, in concert with
difficulty in identifying and regulating their own emotions. Each of these attachment styles presents major obstacles to the development of supportive peer relationships.

Interactions with Adults

Participants described foster youth as seeking out adults from whom they could receive support at school. The participants described foster youth as seeking adult support from adults in school. Students in foster care may cling to supportive adults in an effort to calm their anxiety. These students experience excessive anxiety, anger and longings to be taken care of (van der Kolk, 2005, p5). Students in foster care may experience complex trauma, these students experience excessive anxiety, emotional regulation, and as a result they rely on others to help them regulate their emotions.

Children and adolescents who have experienced complex trauma struggle with caregivers as well as with peers for individuals who have experienced traumatic stress.

Participants described foster youth as seeking adult support, as wanting interaction from supportive adults at times, and as seeking adults' trustworthiness. As noted above, traumatic stress studies point to difficulties in relationships with peers.

Attachment theory offers a slightly different explanation for the clingy behavior observed by study participants. The working model of insecure-avoidant individuals emphasizes the need to manipulate others in order to maintain a caring relationship. These individuals manipulate their own affect, as well as the affect of others, to ensure a caring response and to continue to receive a caring response (Howe, 1999).

Similarly, the insecure-ambivalent/resistant individual believes they must continue to manipulate the world in order to receive a caring response.
demonstrate their need to be cared for in order to elicit reassuring attachment behaviors. The intense desire for adult support described by the teachers in some foster youth may reflect these two attachment styles and their associated affect manipulation.

Participants described some foster youth as wanting frequent contact with supportive adults at school, which may reflect manipulative behaviors intended to ensure caring responses from the teachers. The summaries of traumatic stress studies and attachment theory offer understandings of the phenomenon of seeking adult support described by the participants. These findings from the broader literature might inform the way that educators approach their interactions with foster youth.

Teachers also described foster youths' struggle to trust them. One teacher described a six-month testing period before the student trusted that the teacher really did care and wanted to support the student. Insecure attachment is a result of either unresponsive caregiving in the case of neglect (whether due to will or ability), or a caregiver who is a threat to the child's safety. Caring had been associated with hurting maltreated children (Danforth & Smith, 2005). When teachers attempted to step into a care-giving role and offer support, a youth's negative past experiences may interfere with their ability to trust the teacher. Insecure past experiences may interfere with their ability to trust the teacher. In

Complex trauma is associated with uncertainty about the reliability and availability of others (van der Kolk, 2005). The difficulty foster youth had in

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Effective Support Strategies

...
The adults in this study described their efforts to work with and support students in foster care. They understood the important, positive impact student-teacher relationships can have and tried to respond in ways that are consistent with the feminist ethic of care. Caring adults are important in the lives of young people in general, and especially so for those with insecure attachment styles. One study found that the relationship a student with an insecure attachment style has with his/her teacher serves as a strong counterbalance to insecure attachment (Kerns & Richardson, 2005). Similarly, resilience theory describes the cumulative effect of all protective factors in countering risk factors such as maltreatment (Kerns, Kufeldt, & Rideout, 2006). Resilience theory and attachment theory suggest that caring adults outside of the home can dramatically improve outcomes for children and youth whose circumstances (e.g., poverty and maltreatment) place them at risk. The mentoring movement is strongly linked to resilience theory, and a researcher who writes about the importance of mentoring notes that the long-term outcomes (e.g., education completion, employment rates, stable housing) of foster youth are directly related to the relationships these youth have with adults (Fernandez, 2006). Caring and supportive teachers are one of the protective factors identified by resilience theory. The mentoring movement is strongly linked to the protective factors in countering risk factors such as maltreatment (Kerns, Kufeldt, & Rideout, 2005). Similarly, resilience theory describes the cumulative effect of all protective factors in countering risk factors such as maltreatment (Kerns, Kufeldt, & Rideout, 2005). Caring adults are important in the lives of young people in general, and especially so for those with insecure attachment styles. The adults in this study described their efforts to work with and support students in foster care. They understood the important, positive impact student-teacher relationships can have and tried to respond in ways that are consistent with my reading of the literature on the feminist ethic of care. Caring adults are important in the lives of young people in general, and especially so for those with insecure attachment styles.
The teachers described a strong desire for students to be recognized as individuals, to be listened to, and to be cared about. Phelan, Davidson, and Cao (1992) noted that caring can be expressed by a teacher who takes the time to read and critique a paper closely and to write comments (p. 698). This directly parallels the comment made by a teacher in this study, who noted the importance of doing the "real work" of reading and marking up student papers. This effort represented one way of recognizing and valuing the individuality of each student, as well as the importance of knowing what factors were at play.

The feminist ethic of care emphasizes the individuality of each student. Other models of justice emphasize outcome equality. Each student's individual needs must be met if similar outcomes are to be achieved by all students (Streitmatter, 1996). If this is the same, caring emphasizes outcome equality, where a "fair" teacher treats each student.

In this study, teachers emphasized the individuality of each student and the importance of knowing what factors were at play. Teachers in this study emphasized the ethic that is observed in the current study. The teachers noted that caring can be expressed by a teacher who takes the time to read and critique a paper closely and to write comments (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1992; Whitney, Leonard, Camelio, & Camelio, 2005). Students describe a strong desire to be recognized as individuals, to be listened to, and to be cared about. Phelan, Davidson, and Cao (1992) noted that caring can be expressed by a teacher who takes the time to read and critique a paper closely and to write comments (p. 698). This directly parallels the comment made by a teacher in this study, who noted the importance of doing the "real work" of reading and marking up student papers. This effort represented one way of recognizing and valuing the individuality of each student, as well as the importance of knowing what factors were at play.

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described the importance of asking questions and resisting quick conclusions in their work with students in foster care, striving to get the whole picture before drawing a conclusion about how best to respond. An ethic of care emphasizes the needs of the student (Noddings, 2005). Specifically, an ethic of care focuses first on expressed needs, which are needs identified by the student. Teachers described themselves in a manner consistent with an ethic of care in their emphasis on the expressed needs of the student, even accepting expressed needs. Teachers described themselves in a manner consistent with an ethic of care in their emphasis on the expressed needs of the student, even accepting expressed needs. Teachers described themselves in a manner consistent with an ethic of care in their emphasis on the expressed needs of the student, even accepting expressed needs. 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Tarlow describes eight themes of caring: time, being there, talking, sensitivity, acting in the best interest of others, caring as feeling, caring as doing, and reciprocity (Danforth & Smith, 2005). Teachers in this study described their responses to the needs of their students in foster care in terms of making themselves available to a student after the student had a conflict. One teacher explained being there in a student's activity. The student explained being there for a private conversation when things weren't going well, or involving oneself in a student's activity. All of the teachers in this study described being there for students in some form or another, whether it was meaningful attendance and claimed to be someone actively listening. All of the teachers in this study were available and emotionally available for a student. Being there means being physically present and emotionally available for a student. Being there means being both physically present and emotionally available for a student. Being there means being both physically present and emotionally available for a student.

Caring requires "being there" for someone. Being there means being both physically present and emotionally available for a student. Being there means being both physically present and emotionally available for a student.

Being There

Sporting events. The investment of time communizes care and interest in others. When the students spoke of the personal sharing that occurred on long bus rides to and from school, they described caring relationships. They described their realization of the importance of time in maintaining caring relationships. One teacher described the time he spent listening to the students on the bus to school. Another teacher spoke of the extra time needed to connect with students. One teacher spent virtually every morning before school with a student in foster care. Just listening. Time together is critical to the relationship. Caring means investing time in the relationship. Teachers described taking the time of caring reviewed below and the teachers' described responses. Needs of their students in foster care. I found strong links between TARLOW's eight themes of caring reviewed below and the teachers' described responses to the needs of their students in foster care. (Danforth & Smith, 2005). Teachers in this study described their responses to the needs of their students in foster care in terms of making themselves available to a student after the student had a conflict. One teacher explained being there in a student's activity. The student explained being there for a private conversation when things weren't going well, or involving oneself in a student's activity. All of the teachers in this study described being there for students in some form or another, whether it was meaningful attendance and claimed to be someone actively listening. All of the teachers in this study were available and emotionally available for a student. Being there means being both physically present and emotionally available for a student.
showed sensitivity to the student's potential feelings of isolation and to the many
throughfully selected book to his student in foster care demonstrating sensitivity. He
care aside when giving feedback on academic work. The teacher who offered a
demonstrated sensitivity to their students in many ways, including pulling students in foster
understanding of even subtly expressed frustration or stress. The teachers in this study
accordingly. Caring teachers act with sensitivity when they indicate their
student. A caring teacher is a keen observer, noticing shifts in affect and responding
Susceptibility involves taking the time to empathize and understand the mood of the
when as a personal characteristic. Sensitivity is demonstrated in the caring relationship.
Sensitivity is viewed as an action rather than as a personal characteristic. Sensitivity

Sensitivity

The teachers described these conversations as meaningful to them, as well as to the
school bus, in classrooms, in hallways, during class time, and before or after school. These conversations occurred on the
described conversations with students in foster care that were meaningful opportunities
expression of caring and the forming of a connection. Every teacher in this study
Talking allows the teacher to learn the expressed needs of the student. It is also an
Conversation was the single most emphasized aspect of caring in this study.

Talking

the moment with the student
meaning and taking the time to understand the student's concern. He was fully there in
physical presence. The teacher also demonstrated that he was emotionally available by
mother against each other. This teacher was invested in his student on an emotional level, and his foster care had been dysfunctional. The student's experience set the teacher and the foster mother against each other. One teacher described feeling hurt and disillusioned after a student in foster care had been dishonest. The student described the impact of trauma, expressing feelings of sorrow for the past experiences.

The teachers in this study expressed a desire to be as flexible as possible with their students' schedules and deadlines, expressing real pride and satisfaction in the accomplishments of their students. The teachers spoke with compassion when they described students' stories as heartwrenching, and framed the goals and aspirations of the students, development. Teachers in this study expressed feeling frustrated, described students' emotional and relational needs as emotional as well as professional investments in their students. Emotion is involved in a caring student-teacher relationship. The teacher's need for attention may not align with the possible expense of planning, grading, and coordinating tasks that might take time to talk when students need the time, again placing students' needs at the forefront. The challenging task of assessment. Flexibility was also expressed in terms of addressing the needs of the teacher for whom common deadlines and assignments were ahead of the needs of the teacher. This flexibility placed the unique needs of the student above the desires of the teacher. Teachers in this study expressed a desire to be as flexible as possible with assignments.

In caring for their students, these teachers focused on the needs of each other. They understood their students' needs and their own needs. This was an act of sensitivity because it increased their ability to empathize and understand their students' unique challenges in foster care. This teacher had increased his own knowledge about the experience of being in foster care by reading the book himself.

Caring as Feeling

need attention.

fore, at the possible expense of planning, grading, and coordinating tasks that might take time to talk when students need the time, again placing students' needs at the forefront. The challenging task of assessment. Flexibility was also expressed in terms of addressing the needs of the teacher for whom common deadlines and assignments were ahead of the needs of the teacher. This flexibility placed the unique needs of the student above the desires of the teacher. Teachers in this study expressed a desire to be as flexible as possible with assignments.

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look long periods of time to develop a trusting, caring relationship with students in
by a teacher transferred into the foster youth's classroom about school. In many cases it
became more fully engaged in school. Reciprocity occurred when the care expressed
nothing as one teacher did, that through caring relationships with teachers, the students
and teacher in a caring relationship. Teachers in this study described this reciprocity,
Caring is seen as a reciprocal exchange. There is reciprocity between the student
Reciprocity

to connect with students,
explained her commitment to co-curricular activities in terms of creating opportunities
consecutively with these students. Caring as doing was underscored by the teacher who
students in foster care by name in the hall or lunchroom as another way of actively
making themselves available to these students. The teachers spoke of recognizing
partners with whom they would likely find success, and reaching out by intentionally
welcoming the students into their classrooms, asking questions, assigning students to
study were active in their classroom for students in foster care. They look charge by
Nevertheless, students have identified caring actions they associate with good
Danzoff and Smillie (2005) state that students use the words caring and teaching
Caring as Doing

Component of care was evident in the interviews with the teachers.
with the emotional investment required to care for each student. The emotional
spoke of the challenge of balancing the needs of the large number of students they work
level and felt betrayed by and disrespected of the student after this even. Participants
Teacher and student needs reflect the importance of fostering a trusting relationship. Classroom teachers who have fostered youth in their classrooms have an opportunity to support them in developing their understanding of the experiences and needs of foster youth. Incorporating a formalized understanding of attachment theory classrooms to support them in developing their understanding of the experiences and be made available to classroom teachers who have, or may have, foster youth in their classrooms to support them in developing their understanding of the experiences and needs of foster youth.

Implications for Future Research

Student Characteristics

Implications for Future Research

School that improved learning outcomes.

They did so in part because of the reciprocal relationships the students developed. They also actively involved the classroom teacher in their learning. As adults, they actively involved the classroom teacher in their learning.

Foster care. These students struggle with issues of trust. The caring relationship grows
The existing body of research regarding educational outcomes for students in foster care and complex trauma studies, classroom level strategies and interventions for theory and attachment theory are grounded in attachment theory and traumatic stress could strong inferences between the experiences of foster youth in school and attachment theory literature noted above, further study is warranted. If further research confirms the experience these teachers developed through extensive experience: training to all teachers who work with foster youth may support teachers in developing professional development opportunities regarding attachment theory and complex systems improve their effective practices already used in their classrooms.  

Enhancing their understanding for these teachers through professional development would likely enhance their effectiveness and school functioning of students in foster care. Providing structure to participants also demonstrated an understanding of the complex interplay between past experiences and school functioning of students in foster care. The selected for this study as being particularly effective with students in foster care, such an understanding may support teachers in their classrooms, a school counselor and school administrators identified the teachers provided a clear and confident response to the needs of foster youth in their classrooms.
This study gathered the perspectives of classroom teachers in describing common characteristics of foster youth in school. Additional studies are needed to focus on the perspectives of other stakeholder groups such as foster parents, social workers, and perhaps most importantly, foster youth themselves. This study focuses on nine teachers in one high school.

Support Strategies

Further studies exploring the perceptions of students in foster care and how these perceptions relate to the teacher perspective offered in this study are warranted. Studies that explore the perceptions of students in foster care in similar settings would provide a balance to the research in Vermont. Given these linkages, further support strategies need to be developed that work with students in foster care and focus on educational outcomes.

If sufficient data are gathered supporting the effectiveness of caring relationships in improving educational outcomes for foster youth, classroom teachers need to be trained in the development of support strategies that can inform studies across grade levels, settings, and with different stakeholders. Conducting similar observational studies on the high school level, do teachers at other grade levels make similar observations? How might these needs be identified and met through intervention models?

This study gathered the perspectives of classroom teachers in describing common characteristics of foster youth in school. Additional studies are needed to focus on the perspectives of other stakeholder groups such as foster parents, social workers, and perhaps most importantly, foster youth themselves. This study focuses on nine teachers in one high school.
This study found that some students in foster care exhibited characteristics consistent with an ethic of care. This study focused on the perspectives of nine classroom teachers in one setting. It also found that the participating teachers described their responses as trauma-informed. Key concepts from the literature on attachment theory and complex trauma and the needs of students in foster care by offering professional development opportunities and teacher training programs. Professional development opportunities and teacher training programs could ground their efforts to support these students.

This population, formalizing their understanding of caring in the context of schooling, could ground these teachers' understanding of the needs of students in foster care. Formalizing their understanding of the unique needs of teachers in this study appeared to have been driven by concern for students, their perspectives of this study. Professional development opportunities and teacher training programs could also prove beneficial in guiding the development of caring practices in schools to the support of foster youth. Such programs could be complementary to the development of caring practices in the classroom, as well as the perspectives of social workers, foster parents, and students in foster care. Formalizing their understanding of the unique needs of students in foster care by offering professional development opportunities and teacher training programs could be beneficial.

Conclusion

This study found that some students in foster care exhibited characteristics consistent with key concepts from the literature on attachment theory and complex trauma. It also found that the participating teachers described their responses as trauma-informed. Key concepts from the literature on attachment theory and complex trauma and the needs of students in foster care by offering professional development opportunities and teacher training programs could ground their efforts to support these students.

This study found that some students in foster care exhibited characteristics consistent with an ethic of care. This study focused on the perspectives of nine classroom teachers in one setting. It also found that the participating teachers described their responses as trauma-informed. Key concepts from the literature on attachment theory and complex trauma and the needs of students in foster care by offering professional development opportunities and teacher training programs could be beneficial.

Interventions could then be tested in future research. This study was limited in scope to classroom teachers in one setting. While these nine teachers believed that their interventions could be designed based on an ethic of care, the effects of these interventions could not be assessed.
classroom teachers to inform their work with students in foster care.

of foster youth. Such interventions, if found to be effective, could be adopted by
interventions could be evaluated in terms of their impact on the educational outcomes
of attachment theory, complex trauma, and an ethic of care. Once developed, these
findings, classroom level interventions could be developed based on an understanding
of these experiences, further explorations into the nature of these experiences could be
foster parents, and students in foster care.

Further supported by similar research involving other stakeholders (e.g., social workers,
cannot be generalized to other settings. The usefulness of this study would be
experience of these teachers, while consistent with each other, may be unique and
with all qualitative research limits in that the findings cannot be generalized. The
classroom teachers in one high school in rural Vermont. As a qualitative study it shares
References


Holmes, J. (2001). From Indenture to Family Foster Care: A Brief History of Child Protection. OHSU, Portland, OR.


Appendix A

Participant Information Sheet

Title of Research Project:
Educational Outcomes of Students in Foster Care and School Relationships: Vermont Educators’ Perspective

Principle Investigator:
Preston Randall, MA

Sponsor:
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program at the University of Vermont

Advisor:
Jennifer Jewiss, Ed.D.
University of Vermont
Jennifer.Jewiss@uvm.edu
(802) 656-2711

You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are an educator in a school district that has a high number of students served by Vermont’s foster care system. I am interested in your experience and perspective in working with these students. You are encouraged to ask questions and take the opportunity to discuss your experiences. I am interested in your experience and perspective in working with these students. You are encouraged to ask questions and take the opportunity to discuss how the experience of being in foster care impacts the educational experience of these students. I am interested in the relationships students in foster care have with peers and adults to better understand Leadership and Policy Studies Program at the University of Vermont. I want to explore why this research is being conducted.

Why is this research being conducted?

In addition to fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program at the University of Vermont, I want to explore the relationships students in foster care have with peers and adults to better understand how the experience of being in foster care impacts the educational experience of these students. I am interested in your experience and perspective in working with these students. You are encouraged to ask questions and take the opportunity to discuss your experiences. I am interested in your experience and perspective in working with these students. You are encouraged to ask questions and take the opportunity to discuss how the experience of being in foster care impacts the educational experience of these students. I am interested in the relationships students in foster care have with peers and adults to better understand Leadership and Policy Studies Program at the University of Vermont. I want to explore why this research is being conducted.

Advise:

Jennifer Jewiss, Ed.D.
University of Vermont

Sponsor:
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program at the University of Vermont

Principal Investigator:
Preston Randall, MA

School Relevancy: Vermont Educators’ Perspective.

Title of Research Project:
Educational Outcomes of Students in Foster Care and School Relationships: Vermont Educators’ Perspective.

Participant Information Sheet

Appendix A
is to gather contextual information that will be used to inform the researcher about the

As a school administrator or school counselor you will be interviewed only once.

School Administrators and School Counselors:

School Administrators or School Counselors may be asked to review a draft of the findings after

You will also be taking notes during the interview to help me remember some of the details I will ask. You will be interviewed three times over a period of 2-3 months. I will ask the following about your foster students' relationships with their peers and about your relationship with foster students in your classroom/school. Each interview will last approximately 60 minutes. With your permission, the interviews will be audio-taped. I will take notes during the interviews to help me remember some of the details. This is done to ensure that the final analysis has been complete on a voluntary basis. I will also be taking notes during the interview to help me remember some of the details you share with me for reference later in our conversation. The audio-tapes and notes will be destroyed once the project is complete.

Classroom Teachers:

Two classroom teachers will be asked to review a draft of the findings after analysis has been complete on a voluntary basis. This is done to ensure that the final work accurately reflects the work and perceptions of the participants and to minimize or eliminate researcher bias.

I plan to interview a building level administrator, a school counselor, and 5-8 classroom teachers at this high school. In total, approximately 7-10 people in your school will participate in the study.

What is involved in this study?

What is involved in this study?
Can you withdraw or be withdrawn from this study?

Is there compensation?

There is no personal compensation for participation. The school will be offered a presentation of the findings at the conclusion of the study for interested faculty and staff.

Are there any costs?

There is no cost to you for being involved in this study.

You can choose not to participate in this study. What are the benefits of participating in this study?

Participation in this study provides you with a structured opportunity to reflect on your work with students in foster care. I am hoping that the information gathered in this study will be useful to you and other educators as you develop your classroom/school practices.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

There are no known risks to participating in this study. As caring educators, it may be difficult at times to talk about our challenging experiences and some participants may feel some discomfort associated with strong feelings of empathy and/or frustration.

What are the risks of participating in this study?

There are no known risks to participating in this study. I will also take notes during the interview to help me remember some of the details you share with me. The audio-tape of the interview, with your permission, will be audio-taped. The audio-tapes and the notes will be destroyed once the project is completed.
If you agree to participate in this study you are free to stop at any time. If any of the questions make you feel uncomfortable you do not have to answer them. You may also decline to participate all together. You will not be penalized for declining to participate.

School Administrators and School Counselors: Your interviews focus on teaching. You will not be asked to identify classroom teachers who may be asked to participate in the study. However, the same guidelines for confidentiality will be followed regarding data collected in your interviews with one exception. You will be asked to identify classroom teachers who may be asked to participate in the study. You will not be penalized for declining to participate.

Confidentiality

The results of the study may eventually be published, but all names will be replaced with pseudonyms. For any students in whom you refer, the researcher will code the information collected with a master list of participants secured and kept separately. You will not be asked for any identifiable information about students. You should use pseudonyms for any students to whom you refer. The researcher will code the information collected, with a master list of participants secured and kept separately. You will not be asked for any identifiable information about students. You should use pseudonyms for any students to whom you refer. The researcher will code the information collected with a master list of participants secured and kept separately.

School Administrators and School Counselors: Your interviews focus on program information that is less confidential in nature. However, the same guidelines given above will be followed regarding data collected in your interviews with one exception. You will be asked to identify classroom teachers who may be asked to participate in the study. You will not be penalized for declining to participate.

What about confidentiality?

Participate or stop as you wish; the study is underway. You may also decline to participate all together. You will not be penalized for declining to participate. You may also decline to participate all together. You will not be penalized for declining to participate. You may also decline to participate all together. You will not be penalized for declining to participate.
participate in the study. Participants will be told that you recommended them for the study when that is the case.

Given the limited size of the school and number of students in foster care, it may be possible for some members of the district to recognize some of the participants despite my efforts to mask participants’ identities.

Contact Information

Dr. Jennifer Jewiss will be overseeing this project as my advisor from the University of Vermont. Please feel free to contact her if you have any further questions or concerns at (802) 656-2711 or via email at Jennifer.jewiss@uvm.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in a research project or for more information on how to proceed if you feel the researcher engaged in unethical research practices, you should contact the Research Protections Office of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Vermont at (802) 656-5040.

I will leave a copy of the interview questions with each participant after the interview. Sometimes people think of additional things they want to say after the interview, so I will leave a copy of the interview questions with each participant after the interview.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project or for more information on how to proceed if you feel the researcher engaged in unethical research practices, you should contact the Research Protections Office of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Vermont at (802) 656-5040.

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Dr. Jennifer Jewiss will be overseeing this project as my advisor from the University of Vermont. Please feel free to contact her if you have any further questions or concerns at (802) 656-2711 or via email at Jennifer.jewiss@uvm.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in a research project or for more information on how to proceed if you feel the researcher engaged in unethical research practices, you should contact the Research Protections Office of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Vermont at (802) 656-5040.

I will leave a copy of the interview questions with each participant after the interview. Sometimes people think of additional things they want to say after the interview, so I will leave a copy of the interview questions with each participant after the interview.

Despite my efforts to mask participants’ identities, it may be possible for some members of the district to recognize some of the participants when that is the case.
Appendix B
Informed Consent

I have been given and have read a summary of this research study. If I have any further questions about the research, I may contact the Preston Randall at the address and telephone number given below. My participation is voluntary and I may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice. Further questions about this research, I may contact the Preston Randall at the address. If I have any informed consent.

______ I agree to have the interview audio-taped.

____________________________________________
Signature of Participant

____________________________________________
Date

____________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant

____________________________________________
Signature of Principle Investigator

____________________________________________
Date

This form is valid only if the Committee on Human Research's current stamp of approval is shown below.
Appendix C

School Administrator/Counselor Interview Protocol

I. Introductory Questions

a. How long have you been employed in this district? Have you been an administrator/counselor that entire time?

b. What are your current enrollment numbers?

c. Can you estimate for me the number of students in your school currently served by the foster care system?

d. How has that figure changed in your time here?

e. Have any professional development opportunities been offered specifically for foster children?

f. Have any professional development opportunities been offered specifically for teachers working with students in foster care?

g. At the school level, what resources and/or programs are available for students in foster care?

h. Are any of these programs specifically for foster children?

II. Systems

a. If so, please describe the nature of the professional development activity and your interest in having faculty participate.

b. How have you seen these programs impact the school performance of foster children (i.e. academic performance, attendance, behavior)?

c. What are your current enrollment numbers? How long have you been employed in this district? Have you been an administrator/counselor that entire time?
c. Were you involved in the development and/or implementation of these programs?

b. What were the challenges in implementing these programs (i.e., community support, faculty support, financial support)?

c. What need was identified that prompted the development of these programs?

d. In what ways have you seen these resources impact the academic resources?

III. Community Level

a. What resources are available in the community for students in foster care?

b. In what ways are these resources effective in supporting foster students in foster care?

c. What is the school’s role, if any, in accessing these resources or helping academic development?

d. In what ways have you seen these resources impact the academic development of foster children?
Appendix D

Classroom Teacher Interview Protocols

Interview #1

I. Introductory Questions

a. How long have you each been in education and in what capacities (grade levels, subjects, schools)?

b. Can you estimate for me the number of students you have had over your career who have been in foster care?

c. How many of your current students are in foster care?

II. Peer Relationships

a. How would you characterize the interactions your students in foster care have observed between a student in foster care and another student?

b. Please describe a friendship you have observed between a student in foster care and another student. What about this friendship stands out to you?

i. In what ways is this friendship similar and/or different from the friendships formed and maintained by other foster children you have worked with?

ii. In what ways is this friendship typical of friendships for high school students? In what ways is it unique?
c. Can you describe an interaction between these two students you have observed?

b. When we work with students we develop explanations for why things are the way they are. What type of explanations have you developed for any differences you observe in the friendships students develop and maintain in school?

III. Wrapping up

a. Before we finish, is there anything else you think I should understand about the relationships students in foster care develop and maintain at school with their peers?

b. Thank you very much for your time. Sometimes we think of things we would like to share after an interview. I will leave you with the questions we talked about today. Please feel free to call or e-mail me with any other thoughts you have.

c. As you know, this study is designed with another interview in about a month. The second interview will focus on the relationships students in foster care develop and maintain with adults in school. Are we able to set a date and time for the second interview today?
II. Review of interview #1

a. In our first meeting we talked about the relationships students in foster care develop and maintain with their classmates. Have you thought any more about that since our last meeting?

b. I have identified some themes from our first interview, and similar interviews with other teachers. I will review the themes I have identified to date. Is that accurate to your experience? In what ways is this relationship similar and/or different from your relationships with other students in foster care?

c. What stands out for you about this relationship?

d. Is there anything you would like to add?

II. Adult Relationships

a. How would you characterize your relationships with your students who are in foster care?

b. Can you describe a relationship you have with a student in foster care? What stands out for you about this relationship?

i. In what ways is this relationship similar and/or different from your relationships with other students in foster care?

ii. In what ways is this relationship typical of the relationships you form with your students? How is it different?
c. How do you understand or explain the similarities and/or differences in your relationships and interactions with students in foster care?

III. Wrapping Up

d. Before we finish, is there anything else you think I should understand about the relationships students in foster care develop and maintain at school with either peers or adults?

e. Thank you very much for your time. Sometimes we think of things we would like to share after an interview. I will leave you with the questions we talked about today. Please feel free to call or e-mail me with any other thoughts you have.

f. As you know, this study is designed with another interview in about a month. The third interview will focus on the impact of foster students on their academics. Are we able to set a date and month?

I. As you know, this study is designed with another interview in about a month. The third interview will focus on the impact of foster students on their academics. Are we able to set a date and month? The third interview will focus on the impact of foster students on their academics. Are we able to set a date and month?
Interview #3 (approximately 1 month later)

I. Revisit themes:

a. At our first interviews I asked you about the relationships students in foster care have with their peers and adults. Through this interview, and similar interviews with other classroom teachers the following general themes emerged (I will describe the general themes that have emerged from initial data analysis and provide a written list of themes and brief descriptions)

i. In what ways do you feel these themes accurately reflect your experience with this population?

ii. Which themes best capture your experience with this population?

iii. Which, if any, do not fit with your experience with this population?

II. Educating Foster Children

a. How do these relationships impact the functioning of foster children in school? Can you give examples of the impact you have observed?

b. How are your interactions with these students informed by your understanding of their relationships with peers and adults at school?

i. Do you manage your daily interactions with these students differently than with other students? For instance, do you offer a different type of greeting in the morning? Can you give examples of any differences?
Do you offer different explanations or instruction to these students? Can you give examples?

Do you express academic or behavioral concerns to these students in differently? In what ways? Can you give examples?

III. Wrapping Up

c. Before we finish, is there anything else you think I should understand about the relationships students in foster care develop and maintain at school with either peers or adults?

d. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your work with foster students?

e. Thank you very much for your time. Sometimes we think of things we would like to share after an interview. I will leave you with the questions we talked about today and my contact information. Please feel free to call or e-mail me with any other thoughts you have.

Can you give examples?
Appendix E

Study Timeline

April 13, 2009: Conduct Administrator and Counselor interviews to develop an understanding of the school context.

May 5 – May 13, 2009: Classroom Teacher Interviews, Round 1

May 13 – 22, 2009: Interview transcription and initial coding/analyses

May 26 – 27, 2009: Second round of Classroom Teacher Interviews

May 26 – May 27, 2009: Interview transcription, coding and analyses of data

June 15 – 29, 2009: Third round of Classroom Teacher Interviews

June 29 – July 5, 2009: Interview transcription, coding and analyses of data

July 20, 2009: Group Participant meeting to present initial findings and get feedback

July 29 – August 7, 2009: Explore linkages between findings and attachment theory, trauma studies, feminist ethic of care. Write initial draft of findings in

September 2009 – November 2009: Explore linkages between findings and attachment theory, trauma studies, feminist ethic of care. Write initial draft of findings in

August 2009 – September 2009: Write initial draft of findings (Chapter 4), member checking. Prepare for participation.

July 20, 2009: Group Participant meeting to present initial findings and get feedback

May 4, 2010: Dissertation defense

April 2010: Final revisions on dissertation

September 2009 – April 2010: Revisions, peer debriefing

May 29, 2009: Develop phd proposal

April 2009 – September 2009: Revision, peer debriefing

April 2009 – May 2010: Revisions, peer debriefing, final draft

April 2010: Final revisions on dissertation

July 20, 2009: Group Participant meeting to present initial findings and get feedback

May 4, 2010: Dissertation defense