

**Teachers' and Pupils' views of Teacher-Pupil  
Relationships through Primary and Middle School**

**By**

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## **Disclaimer**

I certify that the work in this thesis is my own and has not been submitted as part of any other work.

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## **Abstract**

Research into teacher-pupil relationships is a rapidly expanding evidence-base with literature reporting these relationships to be fundamental to pupils' psychological and academic development. Previous research focused on educational priorities of academic achievement, as opposed to social relationships and psychological well-being. The first paper critically reviews existing research using the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) as a measure of teachers' views of teacher-pupil relationships through Primary and Middle School. The studies acknowledge the importance of teacher-pupil relationships and conclude close, supportive relationships which have low levels of conflict and dependency, significantly increase pupils' social, emotional and behavioural development, and to a lesser degree, their academic achievement. As the research in the systematic literature review focused on teachers' reports, pupils' views are insufficiently represented. Due to this, the empirical research uses Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore the factors that Year 6 pupils' think affect their relationships with their teachers through Primary School. Transcripts of semi-structured interviews with four pupils were analysed and three super-ordinate themes were produced to capture the essence of their interpretations of their lived experiences of their relationships with their teachers. Overall, the Year 6 pupils' views were in line with those reported by teachers in previous research. A supportive, inclusive relationship, with low levels of conflict and opportunities for shared experiences outside of the typical learning environment promotes pupils' social, emotional and behavioural development, as well as their level of engagement in learning and subsequently, their overall academic achievement.

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## **Chapter 1**

**The use of the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) as a  
measure of teachers' views of teacher-pupil relationships through  
Primary and Middle School**

**A Systematic Literature Review**

## **1. Abstract**

This systematic literature review critically considers existing research into teacher-pupil relationships through Primary and Middle School. The current literature concludes a close, supportive teacher-pupil relationship which has low levels of conflict and dependency significantly increases the pupils' social, emotional and behavioural development and to a lesser extent their academic achievement. Educational Psychologists (EPs) are interested in providing an evidence-base for understanding and improving outcomes for pupils therefore, the development of teacher-pupil relationships and the effects on pupils' outcomes are crucial areas of research for EPs. In addition, EPs are positioned within schools to explore issues in contexts that are important to educators, to gather views and make interpretations based on psychological knowledge to influence teaching and pupil development. This systematic literature review reveals current research into teacher-pupil relationships focuses on teacher-report measures such as the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS; Pianta, 2001), highlighting a bias towards teachers' views and demonstrating the voice of the child is insufficiently represented within this area.

## **2. Introduction**

Cemalcilar (2010, p. 248) highlights that for most young people, schools are the place in which they form their first relationships outside of the family and perhaps due to this importance, literature into teacher-pupil relationships is a rapidly expanding evidence base (Arbeau, Coplan, & Weeks, 2010; Baker, 2006; Koepke & Harkins, 2008; Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003). Researchers agree, interpersonal relationships in school influence pupils both psychologically and academically. This significantly highlights teacher-pupil relationships enhance pupil's social, emotional, behavioural development as well as their academic achievement through a greater sense of belonging and a sense of emotional connectedness, increased motivation and engagement in learning, higher self-esteem and a sense of competence as well as greater co-operation (Cemalcilar, 2010; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Osterman, 2000; Pianta, 1999). This emphasises the view that interpersonal relationships are fundamental to intellectual development and personal growth (Bowlby, 1969) and due to children spending significant amounts of time in school, teachers become important adult figures in the pupil's life (Cemalcilar, 2010).

Despite this, Koepke & Harkins (2008) highlight the phenomenon of teacher-pupil relationships is a challenging concept to explore; the social constructs that are enmeshed within teachers' and pupils' perceptions produce a degree of subjectivity and researcher interpretation (See Chapter 2, section 4, page 32). Perhaps due to this challenge of



subjectivity the wide evidence-base in the area of teacher-pupil relationships predominantly draws upon quantitative methodologies using standardised measures (Baker, 2006; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal, 2011; O'Connor, 2010).

### **2.1 The use of standardised measures for exploring teacher-pupil relationships**

Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal (2011), Wu et al (2010), O'Connor et al (2011), Baker (2006), Hamre & Pianta (2001) and Murray & Zvoch (2011) used a range of standardised tests to measure the effects of teacher-pupil relationships on pupils' cognitive outcomes. Osterman (2000) argues this highlights educational priorities, emphasising standardised achievement tests and educational attainment, as opposed to promoting community development and sense of belonging pertaining to positive teacher-pupil relationships. Furthermore, Kunc (1992) argues schools promote achievement and mastery over social relationships and these policies and practices have led to schools overlooking the crucial socio-emotional needs of pupils. Despite this, pupils who scored highly on the cognitive skills test and highly on the relationship measures may be more equipped to develop positive relationships via greater communication and social skills that support positive interactions. This highlights a link between pupils cognitive abilities and the relationships they develop with their teachers, suggesting effective communication and social interactions may enhance self-esteem and sense of belonging and consequently underpin the development of a positive teacher-pupil relationship (Forsyth, 2005; Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier, 1992; Kennedy, Landor, & Todd, 2011; McClelland, 1965; Trevarthen, 1977).

### **2.2 Factors relating to teacher-pupil relationships**

Despite the focus on standardised measures, researchers have considered a range of factors affecting teacher-pupil relationships in attempts to seek an understanding of this complex subjective phenomenon. Researchers have explored external fixed factors largely out of the control of educators as well as malleable characteristics that can be modified. Koepke & Harkins (2008), Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal (2011), Murray & Zvoch (2011), O'Connor (2010) and O'Connor & McCartney (2007) explored external fixed factors such as gender, ethnicity, maternal attachment and poverty status as early environmental and demographic factors indicating later relationship quality. Alternatively, Martin et al. (2010) and Lynch and Cicchetti (1992) explored malleable characteristics, focussing on teacher behaviour within the classroom and teacher-child relatedness. Similarly, Arbeau et al., (2010), Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell (2003), O'Connor et al. (2011) and Troop-Gordon & Kopp (2011) focussed on young peoples' interactional factors that may be important in the

development of teacher-pupil relationships such as shyness, aggression, internalising and externalising behaviour, peer victimisation and friendships.

### **2.3 Development of teacher-pupil relationships**

As teacher-pupil relationships are important to the quality of a school due to their effects on pupils' psychological well-being and academic achievement, the development of these interpersonal relationships are crucial to Educational Psychologists (EPs) in their role supporting schools to promote pupils' outcomes. Due to this, it is essential EPs are able to explain teacher-pupil relationships to educators and how they expand from regular positive momentary interactions to effective influential relationships. According to Mead (1934), interactions are current, immediate situations at the heart of the social world and refer to individuals' interpretations and responses to others in their immediate social context (Aðalsteinsdóttir, 2004). Johannessen, Grønhaug, Risholm, & Mikalsen (1997) suggest due to teachers and pupils spending substantial amounts of time together they enter an unwritten psychological contract of roles and expectations that underpin each interaction and forms the basis of their relationship. A positive relationship develops over time from positive interactions between the teacher and pupil that are underpinned by their psychological contract. These positive interactions and the subsequent positive relationship promotes attunement and increases the pupils' sense of belonging, their relatedness to school, sense of competence and self-esteem resulting in social, emotional, behavioural and academic development (Forsyth, 2005; Hagerty et al., 1992; Kennedy et al., 2011; McClelland, 1965; Trevarthen, 1977).

### **2.4 Stability of teacher-pupil relationships**

Jerome et al., (2009), Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal (2011), O'Connor (2010), O'Connor et al., (2011) and Wubbels & Brekelmans (2005) carried out longitudinal studies to seek an understanding of the development and stability of teacher-pupil relationships, however, as these relationships are complex the reports are varied; O'Connor and McCartney (2007) report a decrease in average relationship quality to 8 years old, while Jerome, et al., (2009) report overall moderate stability of teacher-pupil relationships to 11 years old. Although longitudinal research has added to what is known about the development of teacher-pupil relationships, patterns of stability remain unclear and questions about average relationship quality and moderate stability further highlight the complex subjective nature of the phenomenon of teacher-pupil relationships. This subjective nature of teacher-pupil relationships underpins most of the research providing what is

currently known about this phenomenon and therefore should be acknowledged when discussing research in this area (See Chapter 2, section 4, page 32).

## **2.5 The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS; Pianta, 2001)**

Many researchers investigating teacher-pupil relationships have used the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS; Pianta, 2001), therefore it was added to the inclusion criteria to increase homogeneity of the studies in this systematic literature review. It is a teacher-report measure consisting of three subscales; conflict, closeness and dependency.

Fraire, Longobardi & Sclavo (2008) define the three subscales. They argue 'Closeness' is founded on mutual trust and high quality communication, resulting in pupil self-competence due to the teacher being seen as a figure of help and support. They define the 'Conflict' subscale as the presence of a hostile attitude, feelings of rage or aggression and incompetence, linked to unjust punishment. The subscale of 'Dependency' refers to pupils responding negatively to separation from the teacher or seeking help when it is not required. Overall, they argue a positive teacher-pupil relationship would involve good communication and pupil confidence, not dependent on frustration or anxiety but feelings of ease, enriched by a sharing of experiences outside of the educational context. These definitions support the fundamental triangulation between psychological theory (Ainsworth, 1985; Bowlby, 1969; Deci & Ryan, 2002; Trevarthen, 1977), what is currently known about teacher-pupil relationships (Baker, 2006; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; O'Connor, 2010) and my interpretations of the experiential claims from pupils in the empirical research (See Chapter 3, section 7, page 53).

## **2.6 Teacher-pupil attachments**

Despite the limitations of the STRS (See Chapter 2, section 2.1, page 28), it draws upon many psychological theories of child development such as attachment (Ainsworth, 1985; Bowlby, 1969), attunement (Trevarthen, 1977) and motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2002). According to Attachment Theory (Ainsworth, 1985; Bowlby, 1953, 1969, 1973, 1988), attachments form from the mother's consistent, warm and responsive interactions to her child's requests for care and enables the child to learn about themselves and the social world. This attachment shapes the child's early development and initiates the formation of constructs about future relationships. These constructs underpin the child's beliefs about the 'availability of others and, in turn, the self as worthy or unworthy of care' (Sroufe, 1988, p. 18).

Trevarthen's (1977) theory of Intersubjectivity further supports the idea of attachment between a caregiver and a child; he argues humans are innately programmed to communicate in the social world, which results in emotionally sensitive exchanges between a caregiver and child based on attunement, reciprocity, mutuality and turn-taking. Allen, Porter, McFarland, McElhaney, & Marsh, (2007), Bolger, Patterson, & Kupersmidt (1998) and Cohn (1990) argue a child's early attachments significantly influence their future relationships and school experiences. Similarly, Argyle (1970) suggests emotionally sensitive exchanges between a mother and child are later mimicked between a teacher and pupil in educational settings. This view of attunement between a teacher and pupil promoting a positive relationship and subsequent pupil development, has been extended by educational psychologist's Kennedy, Landor & Todd (2011) in the principles of Video Interaction Guidance (VIG). They argue opportunities for collaborative interactions and guided participation between a teacher and pupil promote the pupils' sense of relatedness and attunement. Similarly, Dewey (1958) highlights the importance of collaborative activities, arguing pupils should function as a social group engaging in communal activities that promote inclusivity.

This is further emphasised by the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002). According to these psychologists, humans are innately motivated to behave in ways which enable their basic psychological needs to be met through the social environment. One crucial psychological need is relatedness, defined by Osterman (2000) as the need to feel securely emotionally connected with others and experience a sense of belonging to a community. Deci and Ryan (2000), Ryan and Stiller (1994) and Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggest environments that fulfil the need for relatedness result in motivation for learning, engagement and consequently, optimal social, emotional, behavioural and academic functioning. O'Connor (2010) argues pupils show greater co-operation and pro-social behaviour if they feel connected to, and emotionally supported by their teacher. This relatedness leads to a shared understanding of values and common goals further linked to intersubjectivity and attunement (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Kennedy et al., 2011; Trevarthen, 1977). In addition, Stevens (1996) argues attunement between a teacher and pupil enhances the pupil's sense of competence, autonomy and intrinsic motivation and is essential for their development as an effective learner. On the other hand, Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, and Ryan (1991) report social environments and relationships that inhibit relatedness result in reduced motivation, development and alienation. This suggests classroom environments that thwart positive teacher-pupil relationships may lead to disengagement and a lack of social, emotional, behavioural and academic development.

Due to the subjective nature and complexity of this phenomenon resulting in a range of factors being researched, systematic reviews are needed to consolidate the current literature into teacher-pupil relationships. The present review will focus on studies using the STRS by asking the question ‘What is known about the use of the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale as a measure of teachers’ views of teacher-pupil relationships through Primary and Middle School?’

### **3. Method**

This systematic literature review employs the 7-stage model described by Petticrew and Roberts (2006), (See Chapter 2, section 2.4, page 30 for a critique).

Table 1. A summary of the systematic literature review stages (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).

<b>Stage 1.</b>	<b>Formulate the research question</b>
<b>Stage 2.</b>	<b>Determine the types of studies that are relevant to the question</b>
<b>Stage 3.</b>	<b>Search for all relevant studies</b>
<b>Stage 4.</b>	<b>Screen relevant studies to identify those to be included in the synthesis</b>
<b>Stage 5.</b>	<b>Map out study findings and appraise studies for quality</b>
<b>Stage 6.</b>	<b>Synthesise studies’ findings</b>
<b>Stage 7.</b>	<b>Communicate the outcomes of the review</b>

#### **3.1 Stage 1. Formulate the research question**

What is known about the use of the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) as a measure of teachers’ views of teacher-pupil relationships through Primary and Middle School?

#### **3.2 Stage 2. Determine the types of studies that are relevant to the question**

To locate relevant studies, electronic databases were searched using the following search terms:

- Target population terms – *Primary school / elementary school / Middle school*
- Outcome terms – *Teacher pupil relation\* / Teacher child relation\* / Teacher characteristics*
- Measurement terms – *Student-Teacher Relationship Scale*

#### **3.3 Stage 3. Search for all relevant studies**

The following electronic databases were searched using the above terms: PsycInfo, ERIC (Educational Resource Index and Abstracts), Web of Science and CSA Illumina.

### **3.4 Stage 4. Screen relevant studies to identify those to be included in the synthesis**

- **Inclusion Criteria**

Three inclusion criteria were set for studies to be included in the systematic literature review. Firstly, the age-range of 4 to 14 years old was used to ensure a variety of studies were identified, covering a number of school transitions, whilst remaining within the 'childhood' age range. By age 15 one's meta-cognition is believed to represent that of adults (Selman, 1980). This aspect of social cognitive development refers to an individual's 'understanding of their social world pertaining to the understanding of others' psychological states such as beliefs, emotions and intentions' (Smentana and Villalobos, 2009, p.187). This level of social cognition may influence the individuals' interpretations of their relationships with their teachers. Due to this, only studies with pupil participants aged 4 to 14 years old were included.

Secondly, Special Education provisions were not included in the search. Specialist provisions have small class sizes enabling regular 1:1 teacher-pupil interactions. I interpreted this as a factor that may affect the relationship a pupil develops with their teachers in these environments therefore, only mainstream nurseries, primary schools and middle schools were included.

Lastly, an initial broad search of literature into teacher-pupil relationships revealed many studies have used the STRS as a quantitative teacher-report measure. This scale has shown significant test-retest correlation, high internal consistency, as well as predictive and concurrent validity (Pianta, 2001). The STRS was added as an inclusion criterion to enhance homogeneity and enable greater comparison of the studies.

- **Exclusion Criteria**

Exclusion criteria were applied to exclude studies focussing on additional specific factors that may influence the outcomes of the teacher-pupil relationship. This was to encourage the studies' relevance to the systematic literature review question. Studies focussing on the following were excluded:

- Family relationships: teacher-parent relationships / parental involvement.
- Peer relationships: peer acceptance / peer-rated liking / peer relatedness.
- Teacher-Child interactions / Child-initiated interactions.

- A specific group of young people: Those identified as having behaviour problems / Shyness / Introvert temperament.

Due to university access constraints, a small number of studies fit the criteria but were inaccessible. Despite this, I carried out a thorough search during September 2011 resulting in eight studies being included in the systematic literature review. The studies are a substantial representation of what is currently known about the use of the STRS as a measure of teachers' views of teacher-pupil relationships through Primary and Middle School.

### **3.5 Stage 5. Map out study findings and appraise studies for quality**

- **Detailed description of qualifying studies**

The eight studies were mapped for exploration focussing on the aims and research question, the participants, context, data collection, analysis and significant outcomes (See Table 2). Although some of the studies report effect sizes they are all correlational designs; therefore correlations have been included where possible, for comparison.

- **Assessing study quality and Weight of Evidence (WoE)**

Each study was then analysed to appraise quality, using the Weight of Evidence (WoE) tool (EPPI-Centre, 2007). Each study is appraised on twelve questions before being given an overall WoE rating of high, medium or low quality, based on three final questions (See Table 3);

1. Can the findings be trusted in answering the study question?
2. How appropriate are the research design and analysis for addressing the question of this systematic literature review?
3. How relevant is the focus of the study for addressing the question of this systematic literature review?

Table 2. Summary of the characteristics of the studies in the systematic literature review

Study	Participants		Context	Focus/ Research Question	Design	Method/ Source of evidence	Follow-up	Significance (p<0.05)	Correlations
	N	Age							
1. Baker (2006)	1310	5-10	Four schools in a small city in SE USA	The extent to which the Teacher-Child relationship contributed to school adjustment & the degree to which this was moderated by child characteristics (behaviour).	68 teachers completed measures for children in each school year from age 5 to 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>STRS (conflict &amp; closeness)</li> </ul>	No follow-up	<p>All sig correlations to p&lt;0.001 (except closeness &amp; reading)</p> <p>Girls have greater gains from TCRQ experiencing more closeness &amp; less conflict.</p> <p>Effects remain stable through school.</p>	<p>TCRQ correlated with: closeness (0.86) conflict (-0.89)</p> <p>Closeness correlated with : Conflict (-0.54) Conflict correlated with: externalising behaviour (0.67) School problems (0.55), social skills (-0.47) &amp; classroom adjustment (-0.56).</p>
2. Beyazkurk & Kesner (2005)	747 pupils 31 teachers from USA. 40 teachers from Turkey	5.4-7.9	12 schools in Turkey & public schools in one large metropolitan area in USA.	To examine & compare USA & Turkish sample of teachers & their perceived T-C relationships	Teachers completed the STRS at one point in time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>STRS (full scale)</li> </ul>	No follow-up	Turkish teachers reported more closeness (p<0.01) & more dependency than USA (p=0.001)	<p>MANCOVA F=12.13, p&lt;0.01 df 1,728</p> <p>F=83.0, p=0.001 df 1,728</p>
3. Maldonado-Carreno & Votruba-Drzal (2011)	1,077 families	4-11	1,364 families given birth in 1991 across 10 cities in USA  (NICHD SECC)	Determine whether between- & within-child differences are associated with teacher-child relationship quality.	Teachers & Parents reported scales through school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>STRS (conflict &amp; closeness)</li> </ul>	From birth to 11 years old (5 <sup>th</sup> grade)	<p>TCRQ important for academic achievement &amp; behaviour problems through school.</p> <p>TCRQ is negatively correlated with teacher &amp; mother reported child behaviour problems</p>	<p>TCRQ positively correlates with language, literacy &amp; maths scores</p> <p>TCRQ negatively correlates with teacher &amp; mother-reported internalising &amp; externalising behaviour scores.</p>



Study	Participants		Context	Focus / Research Question	Design	Method / Source of evidence	Follow-up	Significance (p<0.05)	Correlations
	N	Age							
4. Hamre & Pianta (2001)	179 (Subset of 436) & 26 teachers	4-14	Small city in USA	The extent to which Kindergarten teachers' perceptions of their relationships with students predicts pupils' academic & behavioural outcomes through school.	Teachers completed rating scales at Kindergarten.  Pupils' cognitive development & behaviour was reported each year.	STRS (full scale)	To age 14	TCRQ in Kindergarten was a more significant predictor of behavioural outcomes through school than academic outcomes.	Teacher-reported behaviour in Kindergarten significantly correlated with conflict (0.63) & closeness (-0.45).
5. Jerome, Hamre & Pianta (2009)	878 children	5 – 11	1,364 families giving birth in 1991 across 10 cities in USA.  (NICHD SECC)	Do conflict & closeness of teacher-child relationships stay the same over time & if not, how do they change?	Teachers completed the STRS each year.	STRS (conflict & closeness)	Each year	Teacher-rated conflict was more stable over time than closeness (p=0.002).	Conflict correlated slightly with academic achievement through school & closeness correlated slightly with academic achievement to 8 years old.
6. O'Connor (2010)	1,364 families	54 months – 11 years	1,364 families giving birth in 1991 across 10 cities in USA.  (NICHD SECC)	To examine the factors associated with quality of teacher-child relationship.	STRS completed at 1 <sup>st</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> grade.	STRS (conflict & closeness)	From birth to 11 years old (5 <sup>th</sup> grade)	Average relationship quality decreased over time but high scores in kindergarten remained high in 5 <sup>th</sup> grade – some stability.  Females scored highest on STRS & Male, African American pupils scored lowest on STRS.	No correlations given.

Study	Participants		Context	Focus / Research Question	Design	Method / Source of evidence	Follow-up	Significance (p<0.05)	Correlations
	N	Age							
7. Koepke & Harkins (2008)	698 children & 35 teachers	4-10	Four schools in a small upper middle-class suburb in NE USA	To examine gender differences in the teacher-child relationship as reported by teachers.  Can Child voice be reliably measured? Does this differ from teachers perspectives?	33 teachers reported their relationship with 668 pupils.  52 pupils completed the child-version	STRS (full)  Child-version STRS (full)	From age 4 to age 11	Gender differences were significant for closeness, conflict and total quality from teacher reports and for conflict from child reports.  Teacher & child reports were significantly different with teachers rating girls higher in closeness & boys higher in conflict.  Some stability of closeness and conflict.	No correlations given
8. Rey, Smith, Yoon, Somer & Bernett (2007)	89 African American pupils & 5 teachers	Age 8 to 13 (grades 3 to 6)	Low income area in a large city in USA.	To examine students & teachers perceptions of their relationships-  How much concordance exists between their ratings & do student ratings contribute more than teachers ratings?	Teachers completed the STRS at one point in time.	STRS (conflict & closeness)	No follow-up	Significant correlations were found between STRS and teacher-rated outcome variables.  Child-rated teacher support correlated with teacher-reported STRS.	Child-rated scale was more significant than STRS on outcome measures such as rule compliance, school interest, total adjustment, school attachment & school involvement.

Table 3. Quality assessment using EPPI Weight of Evidence

EPPI Weight of Evidence Questions	1. Baker (2006)	2. Beyazkurk & Kesner (2005)	3. Maldonado-Carreno & Votruba-Drzal (2011)	4. Hamre & Pianta (2001)	5. Jerome, Hamre & Pianta (2009)	6. O'Connor (2010)	7. Koepke & Harkins (2008)	8. Rey, Smith, Yoon, Somer & Barnett (2007)
1. Are there ethical concerns about the way the study was done?	No – Parental & teacher consent obtained.	Yes – Little detail of consent or recruitment. Teachers chose pupils to report information on.	Yes – data from larger study (no info of additional consent).	No – Parental consent obtained.	Yes – data from larger study (no info of additional consent).	Yes – data from larger study (no info of additional consent).	Yes – no recruitment or consent information.	No – Informed consent obtained.
2. Were students and/or parents appropriately involved in the design or conduct of the study?	Yes, a little – Parental consent but no pupil views.	No	Yes, a little – Parent rating scales.	No	Yes, a little – Parents gave demographic information & rated their child's behaviour.	Yes, a little – Parents gave personal & demographic information, rated their child's school & behaviour.	Yes – Children's views were sought.	Yes – Children's views were sought.
3. Is there sufficient justification for why the study was done the way it was?	Yes – valid teacher-ratings.	Yes – the question was to compare two samples of teachers' perceived relationships with their students.	Yes – Information obtained was important to the research question.	Yes – Information obtained was important to the research question.	Yes – Pupils' views were not necessary for the research question.	Yes – data was required about school, family and child.	Yes – measures used were required to answer the research question.	Yes – Information obtained was important to the research question.
4. Was the choice of research design appropriate for addressing the research question(s) posed?	No – not necessary to use data from larger study.	Yes – Teachers' views were collected using a valid and reliable measure.	Yes – longitudinal demographic information was required.	No – Conditional opportunity sample from a larger study - only participants who remained in the district were used.	Yes – longitudinal demographic information was required.	Yes – longitudinal demographic information was required.	Yes – it enabled research questions to be explored.	Yes – it enabled research questions to be explored.
5. Have sufficient attempts been made to establish the repeatability or reliability of data collection methods or tools?	Yes – all measures used have good validity & reliability.	Yes – good test-test reliability & internal reliability.	Yes, some – reliable measures used. However, missing data was estimated.	Yes, some - alteration to one measure makes reliability questionable.	Yes – good test-retest reliability, internal reliability & predictive validity.	Yes, some – reliable data collection. However, missing data was estimated.	Yes, some - reliability of the Child-measure is limited.	Yes – all measures used have good reliability.

<b>EPPI Weight of Evidence Questions</b>	<b>1. Baker (2006)</b>	<b>2. Beyazkurk &amp; Kesner (2005)</b>	<b>3. Maldonado-Carreno &amp; Votruba-Drzal (2011)</b>	<b>4. Hamre &amp; Pianta (2001)</b>	<b>5. Jerome, Hamre &amp; Pianta (2009)</b>	<b>6. O'Connor (2010)</b>	<b>7. Koepke &amp; Harkins (2008)</b>	<b>8. Rey, Smith, Yoon, Somer &amp; Barnett (2007)</b>
6. Have sufficient attempts been made to establish the validity or trustworthiness of data collection tools and methods?	Yes, some – shorter version of the STRS reduces validity but acknowledged & explained.	Yes- Translated measure has strong concurrent & predictive validity.	Yes, some – shorter version of the STRS reduces validity but acknowledged & explained.	Yes, some - shorter version of the STRS reduces validity but acknowledged & explained.	Yes, some - shorter version of the STRS reduces validity but acknowledged & explained.	Yes, some - shorter version of the STRS reduces validity but acknowledged & explained.	Yes, some – Child measure has limited validity but suggestions to improve this are made. Other measures are valid.	Yes, some – shorter version of the STRS reduces validity but acknowledged & explained. Child measure may reduce validity.
7. Have sufficient attempts been made to establish the repeatability or reliability of data analysis?	Yes – clear analysis by generalised linear modeling.	Yes – clear analysis using a MANCOVA.	Yes – two-level hierarchical linear model described well with some acknowledgment of limitations.	Yes – clear analysis using a hierarchical regression procedure.	Yes – clear analysis using hierarchical linear modeling.	Yes – clear use of growth modeling analysis.	Yes – hierarchical linear modeling is explained & strengths and weaknesses for this data set are discussed.	Yes - hierarchical linear regression & correlational analysis.
8. Have sufficient attempts been made to establish the validity or trustworthiness of data analysis?	Yes – analysis is justified & valid. Limitations are discussed.	Yes, some – analysis is justified & valid. Explanations for the findings are explored but no limitations are discussed.	Yes – limitations are acknowledged and explanations for the findings are discussed.	Yes – analysis is justified and valid. Limitations are discussed.	Yes – analysis is justified and valid. Limitations are discussed.	Yes – analysis is justified & researcher acknowledges why other methods could not be used.	Yes - analysis is justified and valid. Limitations are discussed.	Yes – analysis is justified and valid.
9. To what extent are the research design and methods employed able to rule out any other sources of error/bias which would lead to alternative explanations for the findings of the study?	A little – shared source error variance	A little – shared source error variance but alternative explanations for the findings are acknowledged.	A little – error for each measure is noted.	A little –inter-rater bias & inconsistencies are acknowledged.	A little – shared source error variance but alternative explanations for the findings are acknowledged.	A little - alternative explanations for some of the findings are acknowledged.	A little – Young children’s responses were omitted from the analysis due to unreliability.	A little – questions of researcher bias but limitations are acknowledged & alternative explanations for the findings are acknowledged.
10. How generalisable are the study results?	Good - large sample & age range, consistent & comparable with other studies.	OK – sample size ok but from small parts of two countries.	Good – sample size ok & longitudinal data from 10 cities, but only in USA.	Poor – fairly small sample from one class, in one year entry, in one small city school district in USA.	Good –sample size ok, from a longitudinal study across 10 cities but only in the USA.	Good – large sample of families from a longitudinal study across 10 cities but only in the USA.	OK – sample size good but from a small upper middle-class suburb in NE USA.	Poor – Small sample size of African American children at one urban public school in a low income city in USA.

<b>EPPI Weight of Evidence Questions</b>	<b>1. Baker (2006)</b>	<b>2. Beyazkurk &amp; Kesner (2005)</b>	<b>3. Maldonado-Carreno &amp; Votruba-Drzal (2011)</b>	<b>4. Hamre &amp; Pianta (2001)</b>	<b>5. Jerome, Hamre &amp; Pianta (2009)</b>	<b>6. O'Connor (2010)</b>	<b>7. Koepke &amp; Harkins (2008)</b>	<b>8. Rey, Smith, Yoon, Somer &amp; Barnett (2007)</b>
11. In light of the above, do the reviewers differ from the authors over the findings or conclusions of the study?	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
12. Have sufficient attempts been made to justify the conclusions drawn from the findings, so that the conclusions are trustworthy?	High trustworthiness	High trustworthiness	High trustworthiness	High trustworthiness	High trustworthiness	High trustworthiness	High trustworthiness	High trustworthiness
<b>13. Weight of evidence A: Can the study findings be trusted in answering the study question?</b>	Medium trustworthiness	High trustworthiness	Medium trustworthiness	Medium trustworthiness	Medium trustworthiness	Medium trustworthiness	Medium trustworthiness	Medium trustworthiness
<b>14. Weight of evidence B: Appropriateness of research design &amp; analysis for addressing this systematic literature reviews research question?</b>	High	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
<b>15. Weight of evidence C: Relevance of particular focus of the study for addressing this systematic literature reviews research question?</b>	High	Low	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
<b>Overall Weight of Evidence rating (WoE)</b>	High	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium

**Based on:** EPPI-Centre (2007) Review Guidelines for Extracting Data and Quality Assessing Primary Studies in Educational Research. Version 2.0 London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit.

### 3.6 Stage 6. Synthesise studies' findings

- **General characteristics of the studies**

Due to the criteria, all the studies were based in mainstream schools and used the STRS (Pianta, 2001). In addition, all the studies were based in the United States of America (USA) and recruited American participants, however, Beyazkurk & Kesner (2005) recruited American and Turkish participants. Beyond this, there are considerable differences between the studies.

Sample sizes range from 89 to 1,310 children and 5 to 68 teachers, with three studies referring to families as opposed to children or failing to provide the number of teachers (Jerome et al., 2009; Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal, 2011; O'Connor, 2010). Five studies recruited participants from larger longitudinal studies. Jerome et al. (2009), Maldonado-Carreño and Votruba-Drzal (2011) and O'Connor (2010) were three of these, recruiting conditional random samples from the same USA-based study. This enabled a large sample in-depth demographic and historical data to be available to the researchers. As such, data were gathered once and used across studies to avoid repetitive data gathering, however, repeat use of participants may limit these studies as they may not be investigating different families; therefore, it raises questions of how representative and generalisable their findings are and how much additional, valid information each study adds to the field of teacher-pupil relationships.

Of the five longitudinal studies (Baker, 2006; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Jerome et al., 2009; Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal, 2011; O'Connor, 2010), missing data were reported to be more common amongst non-European American families, with a lower income-to-needs ratio, less educated mothers and children with lower academic ability scores. Higgins, Deeks, and Altman (2008) highlight data missing from a specific population should not be ignored as analysis of only available data may bias the findings. Four of these five studies acknowledge the attrition rate of their research and use a statistical model to allow for missing data.

Despite three of the eight studies using subsets of the same sample (Jerome et al., 2009; Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal, 2011; O'Connor, 2010), the findings are drawn from a range of populations. Six studies investigated teacher-pupil relationships from nursery (Four years old), whereas O'Connor (2010) used data collected from birth to age 12 and Rey et al., (2007) looked at teacher-pupil relationships between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade (Age 7 to 11 years old). Similarly, although all eight studies recruited participants from the USA, four studies

were from small cities (Baker, 2006; Beyazkurk & Kesner, 2005; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Koepke & Harkins, 2008), the three studies using data from the NICHD recruited from ten urban and suburban cities (Jerome et al., 2009; Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal, 2011; O'Connor, 2010), Koepke and Harkins (2008) specifically targeted upper middle-class families and Rey et al., (2007) targeted low income families. This wide-reaching sample involved in the systematic literature review enables the findings that are agreed across the studies to show a degree of trustworthiness and reliability in the conclusions and imply some ability to generalise across populations.

- **Experimental designs of the studies**

Four studies used all three subscales of the STRS (Beyazkurk & Kesner, 2005; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Koepke & Harkins, 2008; Rey et al., 2007), while four used shorter measures of the closeness and conflict subscales (Baker, 2006; Jerome et al., 2009; Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal, 2011; O'Connor, 2010). Studies also used additional measures such as the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach, 1991), the Teacher-Child Rating Scale (TCRS; Hightower et al., 1986) and the Woodcock-Johnson Achievement Test (Woodcock & Johnson, 1989). Outcomes of these additional measures were not accounted for in this systematic literature review to enable clearer comparison of the use of the STRS as a measure of teachers' views of the teacher-pupil relationship.

- **Weight of Evidence (WoE)**

Beyazkurk and Kesner (2005) focussed on cultural comparisons of the teacher-pupil relationship between American and Turkish students and O'Connor (2010) focussed on early childhood predictors of the teacher-pupil relationship. This reduced their relevance and appropriateness for addressing the systematic literature review question. Rey et al (2007) used a small sample of African American participants, limiting the ability to generalise the findings to a wider population. Although Koepke and Harkins (2008) produced a child-report pilot version of the STRS to account for pupils' views, this was unreliable for younger participants which reduced the study's validity. These four studies received a medium WoE quality rating.

Although all remaining studies used sub-samples of larger research, two studies received a medium WoE quality rating due to providing limited information of the data they used, from which studies and how missing data were accounted for (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Jerome et al., 2009). The other two studies received a high WoE quality rating due to acknowledging missing data and explaining how this were accounted for via a statistical database, as well

as discussing the study's limitations and alternative explanations (Baker, 2006; Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal, 2011). Despite six studies receiving a medium WoE quality rating and only two receiving a high WoE quality rating, the conclusions drawn from this systematic literature review are agreed across all eight of the studies. Due to this, I did not have to differentiate between the claims of each of the eight studies.

### **3.7 Stage 7. Communicate the outcomes of the review**

I drew four conclusions from this systematic literature review; firstly, a close, supportive relationship which has low conflict and dependency is significant for pupils' social, emotional and behavioural development and to a lesser degree, their academic achievement. Secondly, relationship quality measured by closeness and support largely remains stable through primary and middle school, with some decrease in closeness overtime. This may be due to an increase in the importance of peer relationships into early adolescence (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997).

Thirdly, the systematic literature review concludes African American pupils develop less close and more conflicting relationships with their teachers. However, as all eight studies were based in the USA, the effects of ethnicity on teacher-pupil relationships may have been exacerbated. Such findings may not be generalised to other cultures and ethnicities, therefore further research into the effects of teacher and pupil ethnicities on these relationships may be beneficial.

Lastly, the systematic literature review concludes male pupils develop less close and more conflicting relationships with their teachers than female pupils. Baker (2006, p. 225) argues this may be due to females being 'more attentive and attuned' to the social environment than male pupils. However, this finding may also have been exacerbated by the high percentage of female teachers recruited to rate relationship quality in the studies included in this systematic literature review. Further research is required with both male and female teachers to ascertain the effects of gender matches between teachers and pupils on the development of teacher-pupil relationships.

- **Limitations of this systematic literature review**

All eight studies received a medium or high WoE quality rating as they all contribute information towards further understanding teacher-pupil relationships through primary and middle school. Despite this, there are several limitations of this systematic literature review that should be considered. The lack of multiple coders for reviewing each study's findings



means conclusions are limited to one interpretation, however, the use of a well-established step-by-step process from Petticrew and Roberts (2006) was used to encourage transparency (See Chapter 2, section 2.4, page 30). Similarly, the researchers acknowledge a shared source error variance between the STRS measure and other outcome measures; teachers reported on relationship quality and pupil outcomes therefore, the link between these two measures may be exacerbated due to the same person's rating.

The ability to generalise the conclusions of this systematic literature review are limited as all participants are from the USA and all studies draw upon predominantly white female teachers' views. This aimed to reduce variability and encourage comparison of the literature but reduces the ability to generalise the findings further. Similarly, although strict inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied in this systematic literature review to increase homogeneity for comparison, the final eight studies differ considerably; the studies vary in their use of the STRS, additional measures used and their data analysis. In addition, results are reported differently with some studies reporting correlations and others reporting effect sizes. Due to this, quantitative findings cannot be compared; only a comparison of qualitative inferences can be made. In addition, it is important to acknowledge many studies are published due to reporting significant findings. Studies showing small or non-significant findings may be neglected from publication and less identifiable amongst database searches therefore, the databases that were accessible may have biased the conclusions in this literature review.

#### **4. Recommendations for future research**

As noted previously, further exploration of the effects of gender, culture, learning ability and socio-economic status on the teacher-pupil relationship may serve to rule out sampling biases or highlight positive outcomes based on matches between teachers and pupils. This may support future education policies and practices in identifying beneficially matched teacher support for pupils who are at risk of developing negative relationships due to external, fixed factors. Similarly, research into protective and risk factors is required to increase knowledge of where resources should be utilised within this area of education. This evidence-base may increase early identification of pupils at risk of poorly developed relationships and consequently those at risk of disengagement from school and poor social, emotional, behavioural and academic development.

Identifying factors that can be intervened upon to enhance teacher-pupil relationships and consequently pupils' psychological and academic development is a crucial role for EPs. Further exploration of malleable factors such as classroom environments, teaching styles,

learning culture and pupil behaviour, will be beneficial for increasing understanding of aspects of schools that require change. Aðalsteinsdóttir (2004) argues teachers' understanding of their own behaviour is of paramount importance and teacher training that encourages teachers to understand their behaviour towards pupils is vital for effective teaching and learning. Similarly, C. Thompson and Rudolph (1992) found an increase in teachers' understanding of relationships produced a positive change in their attitudes and consequently a positive change in their classroom climate. This emphasises the role of EPs in providing effective teacher training to inform schools of the importance of teacher-pupil relationships and the factors affecting them. Subsequently, EPs can support schools to effectively change the factors to benefit their pupils.

As a large amount of research into teacher-pupil relationships utilises quantitative methodologies and standardised measures, further research is required using qualitative approaches to obtain, interpret and gain an understanding of teachers' and pupils' views, without constraints impinged from quantitative methods of data collection. Qualitative approaches enable researchers to draw upon experiential claims to begin to expand what is known about this subjective phenomenon of teacher-pupil relationships.

## **5. My Research**

As Koepke & Harkins (2008) and Rey et al (2007) have begun to acknowledge, understanding the teacher-pupil relationship requires insight into pupils' perceptions of this phenomenon. Rey et al (2007) reported pupils' perceptions of the teacher-pupil relationship to be more significant in predicting school adjustment and outcomes than teachers' perceptions. Hamre & Pianta (2001) highlight the need for researchers to combine both teachers' views and pupils' views of their relationships. They suggest older pupils' perceptions in particular, may be significant indicators of teacher-pupil relationship quality.

From this literature review, it is paramount EPs explore and aim to expand the evidence-base in the area of teacher-pupil relationships, as these relationships are fundamental to the psychological well-being and academic development of pupils. EPs must seek to increase understanding of the factors that affect the positive development of these interpersonal relationships and the factors that may serve to hinder them. This has implications for my research and has led me to continue researching the phenomenon of teacher-pupil relationships using a qualitative methodology. I aim to explore the factors that Year 6 pupils think affect their relationships with their teachers through Primary School.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Bridging Document**

## **1. Abstract**

This document bridges the systematic literature review and my empirical research into teacher-pupil relationships. The systematic literature review explored the use of the quantitative Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS; Pianta, 2001) as a measure of teachers' views of teacher-pupil relationships through Primary and Middle school and concluded close, supportive relationships are fundamental to the psychological well-being and academic achievement of pupils by enhancing their social, emotional, behavioural and academic development. My empirical research extends this using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore the factors that Year 6 pupils' think affect their relationships with their teachers through Primary School.

I have used this document to critique the STRS and the model I used in the systematic literature review by Petticrew and Roberts (2006). In addition, I explain the link between the use of the quantitative methodology in the systematic literature review and the qualitative methodology I adopted for my empirical research; I discuss my ontological and epistemological stance underpinning my choice of methodology and the subsequent method I chose to collect pupils' views. I conclude by exploring the role of Educational Psychologists (EPs) in teacher-pupil relationships by drawing upon previous research in this area of education and highlighting the benefits of a psychological evidence-base to support educators to ensure positive pupil outcomes.

## **2. Summary of the systematic literature review**

A systematic literature review was carried out between November 2011 and April 2012 into the use of the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS; Pianta, 2001) as a measure of teachers' views of teacher-pupil relationships through Primary and Middle school. The eight studies identified suggest teachers that have a close, supportive relationship with their pupils and engage in little conflict, are more likely to meet the social, emotional and academic needs of those pupils and create classroom environments more conducive to learning (Baker, 2006; Beyazkurk & Kesner, 2005; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Jerome et al., 2009; Koepke & Harkins, 2008; Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal, 2011; O'Connor, 2010; Rey et al., 2007, See Chapter 1, section 3.7, page 24).

### **2.1 Critique of the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale**

The STRS was an inclusion criterion of the systematic literature review because many studies adopted it as a tool for exploring teacher-pupil relationships (Arbeau et al., 2010;

Baker, 2006; Beyazkurk & Kesner, 2005; Jerome et al., 2009; Koepke & Harkins, 2008; Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal, 2011). Although it fails to account for pupils' views and was originally produced only as a measure for teacher-reports of young children (Murray & Zvoch, 2011), the 28-item scale has shown significant test-retest correlation, high internal consistency, as well as predictive and concurrent validity (Pianta, 2001).

In addition, the scale was produced for use in the USA and although the studies in the systematic literature review are all USA-based, the STRS has been used in other cultures; Gregoriadis and Tsigilis (2008) investigated its applicability in the Greek education system. They argue it is a valid and reliable measure of closeness, conflict and dependency in Greek classrooms and conclude findings in line with the studies in the systematic literature review. Similarly, Fraire, Longobardi and Sclavo (2008) conclude their translated scale is valid and reliable for measuring teacher-pupil relationships in Italian classrooms, again concluding similar finding to the studies in the systematic literature review. This implies the STRS may be a valid and reliable measure across cultures suggesting a comparison to UK classrooms may be justifiable. Differences between education settings across different cultures are acknowledged to affect findings and generalisability.

Baker (2006), Jerome et al (2009), Maldonado-Carreño and Votruba-Drzal (2011) and O'Connor (2010) used shortened versions of the STRS, often excluding the 'dependency' subscale due to low reliability. Similarly, Gregoriadis and Tsigilis (2008) found the dependency subscale was positively correlated with closeness as opposed to conflict in the USA-based studies. This raises questions about the interpretation of the STRS; USA studies assume high dependency is linked to negative teacher-pupil relationships though these assumptions and interpretations may be influenced by cultural factors and individual differences; other cultures may interpret a level of dependency to be a positive aspect of the teacher-pupil relationship therefore, affecting the conclusions drawn from the research findings.

## **2.2 Focus on teachers' views**

Reliance on teachers' views has since been acknowledged as a limitation. Rydell & Henricsson (2004) and Koepke & Harkins (2008) highlight child-reports of teacher-pupil relationships differ significantly from teacher-reports and Rey, Smith, Yoon et al., (2007) reported their child-rated STRS measure was a significantly more accurate predictor of school outcome measures than the teacher-rated STRS. In addition, studies in the systematic literature review are limited by the shared source error variance; teachers rated both the teacher-pupil relationship and comparative variables of school outcomes. Murray

and Zvoch (2011) highlight numerous measures from the same teacher may have inflated the associations between the teacher-pupil relationship and pupil outcomes. These limitations suggest teacher-report measures should not be used in isolation or only in conjunction with other teacher-report measures. Deatrick & Faux (1989) and Rey et al. (2007) argue children are the best source of information about themselves, offering more accurate and reliable information.

### **2.3 Child-report measures**

Docherty and Sandelowski (1999) highlight researchers have begun to acknowledge the importance of capturing children's views and a range of measures have been constructed in an attempt to do this effectively (Back, Gustafsson, Larsson, & Bertero, 2011; Docherty & Sandelowski, 1999; Koepke & Harkins, 2008; van Scheppingen, Lettinga, Duipmans, Maathuis, & Jonkman, 2008). Koepke and Harkins (2008) developed a child-report pilot version of the STRS incorporating the three subscales of the original teacher-report scale. However, this failed to reliably measure children's views aged 4 and 5 years old. The authors conclude this was due to children of that age having a less developed theory of mind required to answer some of the questions.

In addition, despite advances towards gathering children's views, research in this area remains predominantly quantitative. The use of a structured, numerical scaling measure creates boundaries for capturing children's views and therefore fails to acknowledge the subjective, fluid nature of children's experiences (Koepke & Harkins, 2008). Yamamota, Soliman, Parsons & Davies (1987) argue researchers must seek to capture the unique culture of childhood, to understand the world as it appears to the individual child. A predetermined quantitative structure may restrain children from offering their own constructs of the phenomenon being explored. Gersch (1996) argues Educational Psychologists (EPs) have led the way in obtaining pupils' views and researchers have continued to draw attention to the key role EPs play within the expansive area of psychological research within education (Harding & Atkinson, 2009; Norwich & Kelly, 2006).

### **2.4 Critique of the 7-stage systematic model (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).**

Hansen and Rieper (2009) acknowledge there is an increasing amount of literature on the approaches researchers may adopt for a systematic literature review. Farrington (2003) suggests researchers should prioritise literature based on their experimental design with randomised controlled trials at the top of the hierarchy. However, such approaches have been criticised for using too narrow quality criteria, emphasising the importance of internal

validity resulting in useful research being undervalued, unnoticed or excluded from reviews (Hansen & Rieper, 2009)..I took a broader approach to include studies with, and without statistical analysis, focusing on relevance as opposed to stringent design and methodology. Petticrew and Roberts (2006) argue this broader typology approach enables the researcher to consider which type of studies are the most appropriate for answering the main review question. Although all eight studies in this systematic literature review used the STRS to encourage homogeneity for comparison, the broader typology approach allows the studies to vary substantially on other factors therefore, a meta-analysis was not possible. Only inferences from each study's conclusions could be made and compared (See Chapter 1, section 3, page 13).

### **3. Rationale for my methodology**

In this section I will endeavour to explain my rationale and how my ontological and epistemological stance led me to the methodology and method I adopted for this empirical research.

*Ontology → Epistemology → Methodology → Method*

#### **3.1 Ontology and epistemology**

I chose to pursue a qualitative method of research as this reflects my ontological and epistemological stance and aims to extend current research about teacher-pupil relationships which focus largely on quantitative studies measuring teachers' views. Primarily the difference between quantitative and qualitative approaches lies in the ontological beliefs underpinning each one, concerning what can be said to exist (Punch, 1998). Scheurich (1997) highlights a shift in educational research from traditional Positivist approaches typically in the quantitative domain to qualitative approaches focusing on people's constructions of real world phenomena.

- **Positivist versus Social Constructionist**

Researchers with a Positivist epistemological stance take an objective view of the world arguing knowledge and understanding can be uncovered via the study of people's common sense perceptions (Madill, Jordon, & Shirley, 2000), through scientific research. Although I acknowledge this is a simplistic, somewhat naive explanation, Positivist beliefs contrast with more subjective epistemologies such as Social Constructionist beliefs, arguing knowledge and understanding is a construct of reality from the individual's perspective (Burr, 1995). Due to this emphasis on construction, reality can never truly be 'known'; it is only conceptualised

from the perceptions of the individual (Pring, 2004). Therefore, knowledge originates and largely remains with those who construct it from their conscious experiences (Crotty, 1998).

- **Critical Realist**

My epistemological stance as a Critical Realist stems from this subjective view; what individuals' think and how they think about things is dependent on the unique individual in context. I believe 'a world independent of particular human endeavours to describe it does exist' (Scott, 2005, p. 635), therefore, there are objects in the world that exist whether the individual attends to them or not.

*Subjectivity* → *Critical Realist* → *Interpretivist / Phenomenology*

Reality is interpreted from individual experience therefore, what can be truly 'known' is only what is real for that individual. Despite this, an individual's reality, created from their cognitions and sense-making of their experiences, can be accessed by another via social interaction and language. This is an interpretivist approach; language used through social interactions is interpreted by another to form meaning and understanding about the individual's cognitions and realities. A researcher can only interpret meaning about an individual's thinking from a third-person perspective. Due to this, Scott (2005) highlights absolute knowledge of anything is not possible; attempts to describe and explain the world are inevitably erroneous as categories and relationships cannot be completely justified. Descriptions of the world that are generated by social researchers have the capacity to influence and change the world making the descriptions somewhat redundant as they are revealed (Scott, 2005). Findings generated from my empirical research are open to critique due to the subjective nature in which they arise. This subjectivity makes new findings vulnerable to being replaced by a subsequent set of findings and this fallible nature of the social world makes understanding social phenomenon such a teacher-pupil relationships complex and fluid.

#### **4. Methodology**

*Critical Realist* → *Interpretivist/Phenomenology* → *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*

My epistemological stance underpins my choice of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This methodology is an inductive and dynamic approach, founded by Husserl as a way of exploring how people make sense of their world (J. Smith, 2004). From the use of



IPA I seek to gain insight into the pupil's psychological world (Willig, 2008) through interpretation, to contextualise and make sense of their unique sense-making of their conscious experiences of their relationships with their teachers through Primary school.

IPA is based on three main principles; it is interpretivist, phenomenological and idiographic. The interpretative view is that individual's make sense of their world by interpreting their conscious, lived experiences. This sense-making is known as hermeneutics, 'the theory of interpretation' (J. Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 3). The researcher subsequently interprets meaning from what the participant tells them about their individual experience of the phenomenon. These two levels of interpretation result in a 'double hermeneutic' (J. Smith et al., 2009, p. 3). Discourse Analysis and Grounded Theory are also interpretivist approaches and have similarities to IPA; they are all interested in the social interactions that allow us to gather experiential claims (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). IPA extends this by exploring and interpreting meaning and consequent effects on the individual (See Table 4).

Table 4. – Similarities and differences of three interpretivist approaches adapted from Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007)

	<b>IPA</b>	<b>Discourse Analysis</b>	<b>Grounded Theory</b>
<b>Philosophy</b>	There exists an essential, perceived reality with common features	Knowledge & meaning is produced through interaction with multiple discourses	Theory is discovered by examining concepts grounded in the data
<b>Goal</b>	Describe the meaning of the lived experience of a phenomenon	Understand how people use language to create & enact identities & activities	Develop an explanatory theory of basic social processes
<b>Methodology</b>	What is the lived experience of the phenomenon of interest	What discourses are used & how do they shape identities, activities & relationships?	How does the basic social process of X happen in the context of Y

The phenomenological aspect of IPA derives from this being a subjective methodology. It is based on the study of individuals' conscious beliefs and aims to 'give voice' to the participant's views (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006, p. 102), remaining explicitly linked to the experiential claims of the individual. Due to this, IPA research expresses experience in its own terms as opposed to fitting with predefined categories (J. Smith et al., 2009). In addition, IPA is idiographic due to focussing on the detailed exploration and analysis of an individual's account of their experience. Research adopting this type of methodology often draws upon small homogenous samples of a specific group. This is in order to gain an in-depth insight into their unique experiential claims of the phenomenon being explored.

## 4.1 Bracketing

Bracketing is the process of the researcher acknowledging preconceptions and endeavouring not to allow them to shape the data collection and analysis (Ahern, 1999). Due to my epistemological beliefs that individuals are people-in-context, dependent on the social world in which their conscious experiences occur, I believe my preconceptions, values and views affect my interpretations of the pupils' experiential accounts I seek to discover. As I am part of the social world I am researching, it is not possible to take a completely objective view therefore, achieving absolute bracketing is impossible (Crotty, 1996).

Ahern (1999) argues researcher preconceptions are beneficial for enabling broader issues of the phenomenon to be identified; commonalities amongst my preconceptions and the pupils' experiential accounts can promote identification of higher-order themes that encapsulate broader human experience. Porter (1993) emphasises attempts at bracketing should be made to demonstrate a level of trustworthiness in the findings to enable the reader to assess the level at which the findings are free from researcher influence, therefore, I have made attempts to understand and effectively bracket my influences and biases on the data via constant reflection and explicit links to the raw data (See Chapter 3, section 4, page 44).

## 5. Method

*Critical Realist* → *Interpretivist/Phenomenology* → *IPA* → *Semi-structured Interviews*

- **Research Question**

*What are the factors that Year 6 pupils' think affect their relationships with their teachers through Primary School?*

### 5.1 Semi-structured Interview

I used semi-structured interviews as my data gathering method. Baker-Ward, Gordon, Ornstein et al., (1993) highlight children often depend on direct questions to provide a basic structure of conversation. On the other hand, Docherty & Sandelowski (1999) stress researchers should seek to explore experiences without the strict adherence to an apriori format. A semi-structured method enabled flexibility whilst following a broad structure to facilitate the discussion within the range of teacher-pupil relationships.

The semi-structured interview guide follows recommendations set out by Willig (2008) and Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009), however they emphasise the process should be non-prescriptive and dynamic, with open-ended and non-directive questions, 'to enter the participant's lifeworld' (J. Smith et al., 2009, p. 58). Table 5 illustrates the link between types of research questions suggested by J. Smith et al. (2009) and my interview questions. I acknowledge the interview guide is inevitably erroneous due to the subjective nature of the social world and our effects within it. Despite this, these questions were believed to be appropriate and beneficial at the time of carrying out the empirical research to enable me to seek an understanding of the unique interpretations of Year 6 pupils' views of the phenomenon of teacher-pupil relationships (See Chapter 2, section 3, page 31).

Table 5. – Semi-structured interview questions adapted from Smith et al. (2009, pp. 60 - 61)

Question Type	Example given by Smith et al (2009)	My Research Question	Explanation
Descriptive	Please could you tell me what you do in your job?	Can you tell me about the teachers in your school?	An initial, broad, open-ended question to encourage the individual's unique beliefs about the topic & to allow the pupil to begin the interview as they interpreted.
Narrative	Can you tell me about how you came to get the job?	Can you tell me about 'good' teachers in your school?	Another open-ended question but that begins to guide the pupil to a narrow focus, using the common construct of 'good-bad' whilst remaining non-directive enough to remain phenomenological, allowing for individual interpretation..
Evaluative	How do you feel after a bad day at work?	What does it mean to you to have a good teacher?	This narrows the focus of the interview again, to assign internal states to the experiences the pupil is choosing to discuss and encourages richer, deeper-level discussion.
Contrast	What are the main differences between a good day and a bad day at work?	What are the differences between a good and bad Teacher?	This contrast question serves to check and strengthen my understanding and interpretation of the individual's unique view of their teachers (double hermeneutics).
Contrast/Comparative	What do you think your life would be like if you worked somewhere else?	What do you dislike about the teachers in your school? and What do you like about the teachers in your school?	This offers the pupil an alternative interpretation of the 'good-bad' construct. It encourages additional experiences to be discussed and enables another way of checking my understanding, to strengthen my interpretations.

- **Funnelling technique (J. Smith et al., 2009)**

The interview followed a funnelling technique whereby a broad question initiates the pupil to recount a fairly descriptive experience pertaining to the phenomenon of teacher-pupil

relationships before subsequent questions or follow-up prompts navigate the interview narrower. Follow-up questions and prompts were formulated to encourage deeper-level discussions and examples from the pupil were encouraged throughout the interview to capture individual memories of interactions and significant events from which the pupil was drawing their interpretations.

## **5.2 The use of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP)**

To support the pupil to narrow their focus on the phenomenon, I used polar-opposite constructs from Kelly's (1955) Personal Construct Psychology (PCP). He argues people form constructs from their experiences that act as templates to guide perceptions, interpretations and behaviours. Each individual has a personal construction system made up of an infinite number of constructs that are strengthened by each experience and shapes the way that individual anticipates future experiences. According to PCP, a child's constructs of their teacher will form from previous experiences and will serve to influence future experiences and interactions with teachers.

This view is evident in the STRS as the three subscales form two relationship types characterised by a 'positive-negative' construct. In addition, findings from the systematic literature review conclude high closeness, low dependency and low conflict lead to a 'positive' relationship whereas low closeness and high dependency and conflict lead to the opposing construct, a 'negative' relationship (See Chapter 1, section 3.7, page 24). This 'positive-negative' construct assigned to teacher-pupil relationships from the STRS, stemming from PCP, influenced my semi-structured interview guide.

The construct 'good-bad' was used as a child-friendly version of 'positive-negative' and served as a base from which to discuss relationships as opposed to assigning teachers to categories of 'good' or 'bad' (See Chapter 3, section 6, page 51). Bretherton and Beeghly (1982) reported children as young as 28 months old were able to use 'good' and 'bad' appropriately. Similarly, Lyn, Franks and Savage-Rumbagh (2008) argue morality is a concept based on value judgments of 'good' and 'bad' and Hauser (2006) discusses the idea that morality may be an innate human concept suggesting children at birth may have some understanding of the construct 'good-bad'. This suggests 'good-bad' is perhaps one of the earliest constructs children form, implying such terms are well understood and widely accepted. Furthermore, Heyman and Dweck (1998) looked at children's interpretations of human behaviour using the terms 'good' and 'bad' and reported children aged 10 were able to appropriately label behaviours using this construct. These studies strongly suggest by the age of 10 years old, children have a thorough understanding of basic morality judgement

words such as 'good' and 'bad' and are competent using the 'good-bad' construct to interpret their own experiences and relationships.

## **6. Ethical Practice**

### **6.1 Informed Consent**

Each pupil was met prior to the interview and told what would be required of them and their right to withdraw from the research at any stage. This was to ensure each individual had the opportunity to think about their experiences and their relationships with their teachers before the interview. Verbal consent was obtained from each pupil during this initial explanation of the study and again before the interview began. Pupils were informed of their right not to answer any questions they did not want to and they were made aware of the confidentiality and security of the data collected (See Appendix 4).

### **6.2 Terminology**

The term 'relationship' was not used in the semi-structured interview questions despite the concept of relationships being the dominant aspect of the phenomenon being explored. This was due to the subjective nature of this concept enhancing possible interpretations of a romantic relationship; one of the Oxford Dictionary definitions of 'relationship' is 'an emotional and sexual association between two people'. At the time of this empirical research I believed not using this concept to be appropriate and did not believe completing the data gathering without the use of this concept to be detrimental to the findings.

### **6.3 Power dynamics**

I worked in the three schools involved in my empirical research each week over the 2011-2012 academic year and acknowledge the affects of this on the research process. Although this may have been beneficial in building a relationship quickly with the pupils due to familiarity, this may have led to the pupils viewing me as a teacher; young people commonly assign adults in their school under the role of 'teacher'. This interpretation may have created a barrier for pupils hindering them from sharing certain information or expressing their views honestly. Due to this, prior to each interview I explained my typical role in school as well as my role in the current interview situation. Despite this, the power dynamics and external influences affecting the interview are acknowledged and taken into account.

## **7. The role of the EP**

Poulou (2005) highlights Educational Psychology is an evidence-based profession concerned with research in education, to understand and improve teaching and consequently to improve pupils' outcomes. EPs are positioned within schools to explore issues in contexts that are important to educators such as teacher-pupil relationships, and make interpretations based on psychological knowledge, to explain and influence teaching and pupil development. Researchers have acknowledged the crucial role of EPs in gathering pupils' views (Gersch, 1996; Harding & Atkinson, 2009; Norwich & Kelly, 2006) and Psychologists have made vital contributions to the area of teacher-pupil relationships and underpinning psychological theories (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Kennedy et al., 2011). My empirical research extends what is currently known about teacher-pupil relationships by exploring pupils' views of this complex phenomenon.

## **Chapter 3**

**What are the factors that Year 6 pupils' think affect their relationships with their teachers through Primary School?**

### **Empirical Research**

## **1. Abstract**

Literature exploring teacher-pupil relationships is dominated by teacher-report measures such as the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS; Pianta, 2001). A systematic literature review of this research concluded close, supportive relationships, with low levels of conflict and dependency significantly increase pupils' social, emotional and behavioural development and to a lesser degree, their academic achievement. This empirical research used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore the factors that Year 6 pupils' think affect their relationships with their teachers through Primary School. Four Year 6 pupils with a good level of English completed semi-structured interviews. The interviews were analysed to seek an understanding of each pupils' interpretation of their lived experiences of the teacher-pupil relationship. Three super-ordinate themes were produced; learning, being told off and outcomes. Broadly, the pupils' experiential claims highlighted influential factors similar to those found in previous research of teachers' reports. A supportive, inclusive relationship, with low levels of conflict and opportunities for shared experiences outside the typical learning environment promotes pupils' social, emotional and behavioural development, as well as their level of engagement in learning and consequently their overall academic achievement. The findings have far reaching implications for education policies, teacher training and the role of Educational Psychologists (EPs) in supporting educators to develop schools conducive to effective teacher-pupil relationships.

## **2. Introduction**

The teacher-pupil relationship has been of interest to educators for many years with literature in this area becoming a rapidly expanding evidence-base (Bonnett, 1996; Christensen, 1960; Fišer, 1972; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hirsh-Pasek & Burchinal, 2006; Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal, 2011; D. M. Smith & Cooper, 1965). I completed an in-depth systematic literature review to explore the use of the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) as a measure of teachers' views of teacher-pupil relationships through Primary and Middle School. The literature concluded close, supportive relationships, with low levels of conflict and dependency significantly increase pupils' social, emotional and behavioural development and to a lesser degree, their academic achievement (Baker, 2006; Beyazkurk & Kesner, 2005; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Jerome et al., 2009; Koepke & Harkins, 2008; Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal, 2011).

The phenomenon of teacher-pupil relationships arguably stems from Attachment Theory into children's relationships with a significant caregiver (Ainsworth, 1985; Bowlby, 1953, 1969, 1973, 1988). This is linked to Trevarthen's (1977) theory of intersubjectivity and principles of



Video Interactive Guidance (Forsyth, 2005; Kennedy et al., 2011). These theories and principles suggest reciprocity, mutuality and turn-taking, seen between a mother and child is due to attunement developed from emotionally sensitive exchanges that fulfil the need for relatedness and an emotional sense of connectedness (See Chapter 1, section 2.6, page 11). Researchers such as Baker (2006), Arbeau et al. (2010) and Murray and Zvoch (2011) have extended these theories of relationships between parent and child, to teachers and pupils, highlighting that teachers become significant adult figures in a young person's life due to children spending large amounts of time in school (Johannessen et al., 1997). Furthermore, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) suggests pupils' views should be sought on matters that affect them and a range of government policies have continued to suggest greater consultation and participation with young people (Whitty & Wisby, 2007).

My research question takes this into account by asking 'What are the factors that Year 6 pupils' think affect their relationships with their teachers through Primary School?' From the literature review findings, I developed four sub-questions to answer my main research question;

1. *What factors do pupils believe support them in building a good relationship with their teachers (Protective factors)?*

Current literature largely focuses on external fixed factors such as socioeconomic status, gender and ethnicity (Koepke & Harkins, 2008; Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal, 2011; Murray & Zvoch, 2011; O'Connor, 2010). This sub-question aims to explore malleable factors that pupils' interpret to protect a positive teacher-pupil relationship and that are influenced by the pupil. For example, the pupils' behaviour, attitude towards learning, response to consequences and school engagement. This sub-question also explores characteristics of teaching and the learning environment that pupils' view as beneficial. Findings from this sub-question may support current research into the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) in teacher training of effective classroom environments, behaviour management and pupil engagement (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Hart, 2010). Psychologists Deci and Ryan (2002) argue competence is a basic human need and Merrett and Wheldall (1993) found many teachers feel incompetent in managing classroom behaviour. EPs therefore, have a role in supporting teachers to create learning environments conducive to positive teacher-pupil relationships leading to increased pupil co-operation and behaviour compliance, consequently increasing teacher competence.

2. *What factors do pupils believe hinder them from building a good relationship with their teachers (Risk factors)?*

Risk factors or aspects of a pupil, teacher or the learning environment, which may act as a barrier to positive teacher-pupil relationships, are largely overlooked in current literature. This sub-question aims to shed light on malleable factors that pupils' interpret as impeding a positive teacher-pupil relationship to highlight aspects which pupils' view as requiring effective change. Findings from this sub-question may highlight the role of the EP working in consultation with teachers and pupils to bring about effective change (Hayes, Hindle, & Withington, 2007; Swinson, 2010). C. Thompson and Rudolph (1992) found an increase in teachers' understanding of relationships and the effects of their behaviour towards pupils' significantly enhanced classroom climate. Teacher training from EPs about the factors that pupils' think hinder positive teacher-pupil relationships may serve to reduce the risk factors and enhance positive teacher-pupil relationships.

3. *Do pupils think they benefit from good teacher-pupil relationships and if so, how do they think they benefit (Positive outcomes)?*

Current literature explores the effects of teacher-pupil relationships on pupils' social, emotional and behavioural adjustment and cognitive outcomes based on quantitative measures and concludes a range of positive outcomes as a result of positive teacher-pupil relationships (Baker, 2006; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal, 2011; O'Connor et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2010). This sub-question aims to explore pupils' interpretations of what outcomes they experience as a result of a positive teacher-pupil relationship. I acknowledge this highlights my assumption that pupils experience positive outcomes as a result of a positive teacher-pupil relationship. Due to the systematic literature review concluding a positive teacher-pupil relationship significantly increases pupils' social, emotional, behavioural and academic development, it seems important to further explore this from the views of the pupils.

4. *Is there any link to previous research findings into teachers' views of teacher-pupil relationships (Comparative views)?*

This final sub-question aims to explore whether pupils' views of the teacher-pupil relationship from this empirical research is in line with teachers' reports from quantitative research in the systematic literature review. Similarities may emphasise a positive shared understanding between teachers and pupils further strengthening what is known about the phenomenon of

teacher-pupil relationships. On the other hand, differences amongst teachers' and pupils' views may highlight areas requiring further exploration. EPs are placed to work effectively in schools to obtain teachers' and pupils' views and have the psychological knowledge to apply and interpret research findings to effect positive change and contribute to educational policy (Emmer & Stough, 2001). Differences found from this sub-question may emphasise areas EPs may work with schools to reduce differences and increase common goals and shared understanding between teachers and pupils.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Sampling**

I selected Year 6 pupils from three Primary schools I worked in, in a North East Local Authority in 2012. From those with parental consent, I selected four pupils with a good level of verbal English language. This was to ensure they had the ability to offer detailed insight into their experiences relating to their relationships with teachers. Smith et al (2009, p. 49) suggest participants should be 'selected on the basis that they can grant us access to a particular perspective on the phenomenon under study' and due to the type of in-depth data Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology generates, a sample size of between three and six participants is sufficient.

#### **3.2 Design**

I contacted schools and following initial discussions, I sent letters to the Head Teachers informing them of the research (See Appendix 2). I sent consent forms to Parents / Carers of all Year 6 pupils, following each schools mailing procedure (See Appendix 3). I split the returned consent forms by gender and chose two participants from each. I developed a semi-structured interview schedule following a funnelling technique (J. Smith et al., 2009) and drawing upon findings from the systematic literature review and relevant theories (See Chapter 2, section 5.1, page 34). This formed 6 open-ended questions (See Appendix 6).

#### **3.3 Interview Process**

- **The initial meeting**

I conducted pilot interviews with two Year 6 pupils from one Primary School. Although this did not lead to any changes to the interview guide, I learnt to alter my delivery of the interview questions. Following this, I met each pupil at his or her school during school hours the day before the interview. I asked them to think about their relationships with their

teachers to promote their ability to give detailed insight into their experiences the next day and to give them the opportunity to ask questions about the research. Each pupil was told of the ethical procedures and gave their verbal consent (See Chapter 2, section 6, page 37 and Appendix 4).

- **The Interview**

I met the pupil in a small room allocated for one-to-one work in school. I reminded them of the ethical procedures and completed the information sheet to signify their informed consent (See Appendix 5). Following a brief informal dialogue to create a relaxed atmosphere and build rapport, the voice recorder was turned on and I proceeded to ask the first question. Following this, subsequent questions and follow-up prompts were asked when appropriate to encourage detail and continuity of the interview. When the pupil signified the end of the interview I turned off the voice recorder. I debriefed them and they had the opportunity to ask further questions. I also gave them a Debriefing Sheet for themselves and their Parents/Carers (See Appendix 7).

#### **4. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**

To analyse the data, I chose a phenomenological approach in line with my epistemology (See Chapter 2, section 3, page 31). J. Smith et al. (2009, p. 83) suggest an analytic process which IPA research may follow but acknowledge it is not a prescriptive account and ‘there are no rules about what is commented upon’. They stress it is crucial all interpretations ‘arise from attending to the participant’s words’ and are therefore, ‘stimulated by, and tied to the text’ (J. Smith et al., 2009, p. 90). My interpretation of the IPA process is discussed below.

##### **4.1 Single-case Analysis**

- **Steps 1 & 2 - Reading & re-reading and initial noting**

I transcribed each interview in isolation. I read them repeatedly to become entrenched in the narrative of the pupil’s account of their relationships with their teachers and analysed each transcript line-by-line, questioning the raw semantic content. I started with a prescriptive process suggested by Smith et al (2009, pp. 83-91) but found this removed the individuality of each pupil’s transcript. My aim to discover and understand the phenomenon from the individual’s perspective meant maintaining an explicit link to their experiential claims. The prescriptive process of identifying specific types of comments reduced flexibility and failed to

account for direct quotes and individual interpretations that didn't fit with these predetermined categories.

I used free association to analyse each interview; I underlined words and sentences that seemed important and noted whatever came to mind when reading the transcript. Larkin et al. (2006, p. 111) name this stage first-order coding, whereby the researcher identifies 'key objects of concern' in the participant's world. When re-reading the transcripts, I expanded on, and questioned why I had considered these aspects to be important. This links with J. Smith et al. (2009) suggestion of noting descriptive comments. Although this can often lead to IPA being criticised as being a simple, descriptive methodology (Larkin et al., 2006), combining free association with the expanding questioning highlighted the dissonance between my preconceptions about teacher-pupil relationships and my new understanding from the transcripts. This helped me to bracket-off early summarising of the data, by encouraging a deeper level of interpretation, drawing upon reflections of the interviews, as well as my own prior experiential and professional knowledge (Gadamer, 1990). This links to Ahern's (1999) view of the benefits of not achieving absolute bracketing, encouraging me to interpret themes that encapsulate broader human experience (See Chapter 2, section 4.1, page 34).

- **Step 3 - Developing emergent themes**

In this stage, I expanded from the descriptive noting to seek an understanding of, and contextualise the individual's interpretation of the phenomenon. This second-order analysis led to my emergent themes and reflects the double hermeneutic process, combining both a description of the pupil's narrative and my interpretation of their sense-making (See Chapter 2, section 4, page 32). This generates the deeper-level interpretative analysis IPA research enables.

- **Step 4 - Searching for connections across emergent themes (Super-ordinate themes)**

From this deeper-level of interpretation, I identified commonalities amongst the emergent themes. This led me to develop super-ordinate themes. These incorporated my most important and interesting interpretations of the pupil's accounts of their lived experiences of the phenomenon (See Appendix 8). Smith et al (2009, p. 96) highlight this process often results in some emergent themes being discarded to produce the next stage of themes from the higher-level analysis.

- **Step 5 - Moving to the next case**

I repeated steps 1 to 4 in isolation for each pupil's interview. Themes and ideas that emerged inevitably influenced my interpretations of subsequent transcripts, but to ensure my commitment to the idiographic aspect of IPA analysis, I regularly checked themes explicitly linked to the raw data, to encourage bracketing and maintain an explicit link to the individual's sense-making of experiences. This promotes trustworthiness in the findings (See Chapter 2, section 4, page 32).

## **4.2 Cross-case Analysis**

- **Step 6 - Looking for patterns across cases**

Following the individual analysis of each pupil's transcript, I identified relationships between themes and across transcripts to form a structure that incorporated all the important and interesting aspects interpreted from the pupils' experiential claims. After a month, I re-analysed the transcripts to allow myself to develop new perspectives on the data. This deeper-level analysis involved re-configuring some themes to create three final themes (See Appendix 9). Again, I checked these explicitly linked to the raw data to ensure the individuals' experiential claims and sense-making of the phenomenon had not been lost or biased through my interpretations. These final themes triangulate current literature findings from teacher reports (See Chapter 1, section 3.7, page 24), direct quotes from pupils' interpretations of their lived experiences, and my interpretations of the pupils' views, to report a valid conclusion of what factors Year 6 pupils' think affect of their relationships with their teachers through Primary School (See Chapter 3, section 7, page 53).

## **5. Findings**

Through the IPA process, I interpreted the transcripts to form three final themes to capture the essence of Year 6 pupils' views about what factors they think affect their relationships with their teachers. The table below shows examples of my interpretations of individual experiential claims by using quotes from the transcripts that led to three themes of learning, being told off and outcomes.

Table 6. The link between transcript quotes and the highest order final three themes

Quotes	Grouped Super-ordinate themes	Final Themes
<p>'..they always like tell you, like like, if you do something wrong they make sure that you realise.' (1.1.6)<sup>1</sup></p> <p>'They should have just let everyone go.' (3.2.36)</p> <p>'...they shout and sometimes they don't help ya, and not that kind.' (4.1.38)</p> <p>'...'cause it makes ya have like a break from what we've been doin'..' (1.1.37)</p> <p>'...so we'd do like all together, like on the carpet, and then we'd do like just do all together fun activities.' (2.2.15)</p> <p>'..playing with us, doin' loadsa things, helpin' when we're stuck on questions, and prepare us for SATs n' stuff for us and they make you get ready for goin' high school.' (3.2.22)</p> <p>'..I know that she'd probably sort it out quicker.' (1.1.22)</p> <p>'...it means ya do better in your work because if they shout at you you'll be in a mood..' (2.2.18)</p> <p>'Feel warm inside..' (4.1.32).. 'When I get told good stuff about us.' (4.1.35)</p>	<p>Power &amp; authority Shout / 'told off' / 'strict' / 'get wrong' / unjust consequences for behaviour Misunderstandings Expectations Shared understanding – acceptance of consequences</p> <p>Importance of learning &amp; desire to learn Help with learning Balanced workload / breaks Joint / collaborative working Inclusion in activities Fun / interesting v boring</p> <p>Respect / trust Interest in pupils / recognition / relatedness &amp; attunement Disengagement / blame / emotional responses</p>	<p>Being 'told off'</p> <p>Learning</p> <p>Outcomes</p>

## 5.1 Super-ordinate Themes

- **'Learning' as a protective factor**

The most pertinent aspect of this theme is how much the pupil views the teacher's role as being to teach them and the pupil's desire to learn. If these two levels match, a shared understanding emerges via attunement and an emotional sense of relatedness (Cemalcilar, 2010; Deci & Ryan, 2002; Osterman, 2000). This leads to shared goals between the teacher and pupil, consequently reducing conflict (Brown & Abrams, 1986; Ryen & Kahn, 1975).

*'...it means a lot because I know that I'm gonna get teached, an' I'm gonna get taught well and I know I'm gonna get a better education'*  
(1.2.6).

<sup>1</sup> Indicates where in the transcript that quote is from. For example (1.1.6) is from interview 1, page 1 of that interview, on line 6. (3.2.36) is from interview 3, page 2 of that interview, on line 36.

Three factors affect the emergence of a shared understanding; support, balance and inclusion. Firstly, if a pupil believes they will gain adequate teacher support, they perceive themselves as more likely to succeed. This increases the pupils' sense of competence, engagement, motivation and self-esteem (Atkinson, 1957; McClelland, 1965). Furthermore, if a pupil's success is recognised by the teacher, their behaviour is reinforced and consequently their learning is enhanced. This view of learning via positive reinforcement is in line with Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) and leads to increased behavioural, emotional and academic development.

*'...good teachers always help ya sometimes and they're kind and, help ya when ya stuck...', (4.1.37).*

Secondly, if a pupil views work is balanced, fun and interesting, with opportunities for collaborative activities, the pupil's sense of relatedness and attunement is enhanced (Dewey, 1958; Kennedy et al., 2011). This is linked with Fraire et al. (2008) and Dewey (1958) who argue pupils should engage in communal activities that enhance inclusivity (See Chapter 1, section 2.5, page 11).

*'...I like them 'cause they're interesting, they make sure the lessons are interesting... they give you enough to make you learn but not too much ...' (1.3.17).*

*'..we went on loadsa trips an' done loadsa good stuff..' (2.1.18).*

The third aspect is inclusion linked to the pupil's sense of belonging and emotional relatedness (Cemalcilar, 2010; Deci & Ryan, 2002; Osterman, 2000). This develops from the teacher's inclusive practices promoting the pupil as an integral, valued part of the school community. This is in line with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) leading to enhanced in-group co-operation and emphasising the pupils' acceptance of group rules and routines.

*'...they let you like go on trips an' school like football team an', even if you weren't like good at football an' just to enjoy goin' out...' (2.3.3).*

- **Being 'told off' as a risk factor**

This theme was formed using words from the pupils' experiential claims to explicitly link the raw transcripts to the final themes. This aimed to promote the trustworthiness of the findings by maintaining a transparent trail of interpretation (See Chapter 2, section 4, page 32). Pupils



used constructs of 'nice-strict' and 'kind-shouting' to interpret their lived experiences of their relationships with their teachers.

*'..she didn't shout either an' she was like dead kind..' (2.1.12).*

I interpreted pupils experiential claims to suggest they view 'being told off' as unjust as they often do not understand, or disagree with, the teacher's reaction to their behaviour and the consequence they receive. This suggests a lack of attunement between the teacher and pupil, leading to a controlling teaching style and increased criticality (Hobson, 2002).

*'...they don't have to shout at us if we do a silly mistake' (3.2.13)*

In addition, these misunderstandings or disagreements negatively affect the pupils' conscious emotions towards school, teachers and learning, resulting in reduced motivation and disengagement.

*'... if they shout at you you'll be in a mood an' then you might not wanna work' (2.2.18).*

Crucially, pupils' view shouting and disciplining as part of the teacher's role therefore, they expect to be shouted at occasionally. If pupils' view the frequency of 'being told off' as low it is effective and non-detrimental to the teacher-pupil relationship.

*'...she did shout an' like when we needed to work so everyone worked harder 'cause we knew we had to do better work' (2.2.28).*

On the other hand, pupils' views of 'being told off' regularly were interpreted to be the greatest barrier to the development of a positive teacher-pupil relationship and the most pertinent aspect of a negative teacher-pupil relationship.

*'...if it was other people they'd say well done but if it was us they wouldn't say anything, they'd just keep shouting at us...' (2.3.28).*

*'..I don't like some I don't like when they shout' (4.1.12).*

This negative correlation between the frequency of 'being told off' and its effectiveness stems from studies of Habituation (Shalter, Peeke, & Petrinovich, 1984; R. Thompson, Glanzman, Tighe, & Leaton, 1976). This theory suggests that when a stimulus is presented

repeatedly or for a prolonged time the effect of that stimulus is reduced; if a pupil views themselves to be told off regularly their response to being told off will decrease and the teacher's behaviour will cease to have effect. In addition, regular conflict and consequences of exclusion may serve to further decrease relatedness and the pupil's sense of belonging to the classroom and school community leading to reduced motivation and disengagement in learning and consequently poor social, emotional, behavioural and academic development.

- **Outcomes**

This theme is my interpretation of pupils' experiential claims about their emotional, behavioural and academic outcomes as a result of positive and negative teacher-pupil relationships. The pupils explicitly distinguished between the effects of a positive teacher-pupil relationship compared to a negative teacher-pupil relationship. From their experiential claims I interpreted the primary outcome to be emotional which consequently affects their behavioural and academic outcomes.

*'...they make you feel, erm, like happy, they, they, erm, they feel that we'll do good in our work and that we'll enjoy school better than comin' to school all the time an' gettin' shouted at...'* (2.3.35).

Pupils' experiential claims suggest positive teacher-pupil relationships lead to feelings of trust and respect for their teacher.

*'They make ya' feel safe because I know that if anything goes on I can trust them an' they will sort it out'* (1.3.22).  
*'...happy an' excited 'cause we have them...'* (3.3.8).

This positive emotional link was further interpreted to lead to positive behavioural and academic outcomes due to enhancing the pupil's sense of belonging and emotional relatedness to the school community leading to increased engagement, motivation and consequently enhanced psychological and academic development. This is also in line with Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) suggesting pupils positive emotions and subsequent behaviour is positively reinforced through a positive teacher-pupil relationship which leads to greater academic development.

*'...they make you feel, erm, like happy, they, they, erm, they feel that we'll do good in our work and that we'll enjoy school better...'* (2.3.35).

In contrast, pupils linked a negative teacher-pupil relationship to negative emotions towards teachers and learning resulting in a lack of enjoyment, disengagement and disinterest in school, and consequently reduced academic achievement. These interactional effects highlight the multidimensional characteristics of the factors involved in this complex, subjective phenomenon and emphasise the need for educators to adopt a multidimensional approach to ensuring school environments are conducive to positive teacher-pupil relationships.

*'...if they shout at you you'll be in a mood an' then you might not wanna work...'* (2.2.18).

## **6. Discussion**

The Year 6 pupils interviewed were able to discuss factors they thought affected their relationships with their teachers highlighting both protective and risk factors influencing a positive teacher-pupil relationship. They were able to draw upon personal experiences relating to the phenomenon to discuss 'good' and 'bad' teacher-pupil relationships and the effects to their learning, social, emotional and behavioural development. In addition, pupils have views about what they benefit from and value about school and learning. Specifically, pupils have views about what they like, the way they are taught, their educational environment and school community. This has implications for EPs in emphasising the importance of their role in obtaining pupils' views regarding improving educational environments to support pupil development.

Furthermore, this research promotes the use of semi-structured interviews and demonstrates IPA offers an adaptable and accessible approach to phenomenological research, which gives an in-depth account that enables researchers and educators to understand individual experiences (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, & Hendry, 2011). This has implications for Initial Teacher Training programs, as well as Teachers' Continuous Professional Development to ensure teachers understand their behaviour towards individual pupils and are aware of the individual factors that may affect a pupils' relationship with their teacher. This research also adds to teachers' current knowledge of effective classroom environments, behaviour management and pupil engagement and may be used to enhance their level of competence in creating learning environments conducive to positive teacher-pupil relationships.

The effect of teacher-pupil relationships on pupils' social, emotional and behavioural development, in addition to their learning, has further implications for the education profession regarding whole-school interventions such as the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) program (SEAL; Department for Education, 2005). As this research emphasises the importance of positive teacher-pupil relationships to pupils' social, emotional and behavioural development, this aspect of education may be given higher priority within such whole-school intervention programs.

## **6.1 Limitations**

Due to the choice of methodology, only four pupils were chosen (See Chapter 3, section 3, page 43). This reduces the ability to generalise findings to a wider population. Similarly, all four pupils had similar characteristics, such as their age, where they lived and their level of English language ability. This further reduces the ability to generalise these findings to other age groups, geographical areas and different cultures. Despite this, Malim, Birch and Wadeley (1992) argue generalisations are not typically feasible in IPA research due to the focus being on the uniqueness of the individual's experiences and interpretations of the phenomenon. Due to the idiographic nature of this research, it may be criticised for being subjective and intuitive, however, Reid, Flowers and Larkin (2005) suggest commonalities across reported interpretations strengthen the researchers insight into the phenomenon and result in wider implications.

Smith et al (2009) emphasise findings must be rich, transparent and sufficiently related to current literature to achieve validity. I have achieved this by using an open, reflective approach allowing triangulation of my findings (Munhall, 1994; Pringle et al., 2011). Furthermore, I have ensured my analysis is explicitly rooted in the pupils' accounts of their lived experiences, maintaining direct quotes throughout my interpretations; however, it is important to acknowledge and understand the highly subjective nature of this research.

I created a semi-structured interview based on the schedule by Willig (2008), attempting to guarantee questions were open-ended, not leading or bias and only served to further explore the pupil's view. My predetermined questions are subjective and may have influenced the experiences and interpretations discussed by the pupils. The interview questions may have implied pupils benefit from a positive teacher-pupil relationship, therefore, pupil reports suggesting they interpret benefits from a positive teacher-pupil relationship may have been exacerbated or over-emphasised due to this type of questioning. In addition, my use of a 'good-bad' construct to elicit experiences and interpretations, may have encouraged pupils to form negative constructs about their teachers, leading to

questions of ethicality and teacher trust. Despite this, it would be somewhat naive for me to have assumed all teacher-pupil relationships are positive and therefore, to disregard or take too lightly the almost inevitable negativity of some teacher-pupil relationships. In order for me to gain an in-depth insight into the pupils' views of their relationships with their teachers, it was crucial I explored and interpreted all aspects of the phenomenon. At the time of the research, this was deemed to be a child-friendly way of ascertaining pupils' views about teacher-pupil relationships.

My current role in the schools as part of my doctoral training programme may have influenced the experiences and interpretations the pupils chose to discuss due to their interpretation of the power dynamics; viewing my position as closer to teacher status than pupil confidant. On the other hand, my previous involvement in the schools may have helped to create a relaxed atmosphere during the interview, due to some degree of familiarity. This is important to take into account when interpreting the findings of this research.

## **7. Conclusion**

From this empirical research, I aimed to offer an insight into Year 6 pupils' views of the phenomenon of teacher-pupil relationships. To do this, I asked 'What are the factors that Year 6 pupils' think affect their relationships with their teachers through Primary School?' To support me in answering this main research question I developed four sub-questions. These will be addressed throughout this section before concluding to answer the main research question.

1. *What factors do pupils believe support them in building a good relationship with their teachers (Protective factors)?*

Transcripts from the four interviews were interpreted to conclude Year 6 pupils' view protective factors primarily linked to learning activities. Inclusive learning activities and adequate support for learning, with opportunities for interactions outside of the typical learning environment are the dominant protective factors that pupils' view as pertaining to positive teacher-pupil relationships. This links to findings from previous research into teachers' views which conclude support is an integral characteristic of positive teacher-pupil relationships (See Chapter 1, section 3.7, page 24). In addition, the importance of these characteristics are emphasised by many Psychologists and researchers (Cemalcilar, 2010; Deci & Ryan, 2002; Kennedy et al., 2011; Osterman, 2000; Trevarthen, 1977). They report supportive environments that promote inclusivity and shared experiences outside of the

typical learning environment enable emotional relatedness and a sense of belonging via attunement. This promotes the pupil's motivation and engagement in learning and consequently their psychological well-being and academic achievement.

*2. What factors do pupils believe hinder them from building a good relationship with their teachers (Risk factors)?*

'Being told off' was the theme predominantly linked to a negative teacher-pupil relationship, however, occasional shouting was interpreted to be deemed acceptable and expected of teachers, not a factor jeopardising or hindering a positive teacher-pupil relationship. A pupil's interpretation of the frequency with which they view themselves to be told off is the dominant aspect; a high frequency of teacher shouting is the factor hindering the development of a positive teacher-pupil relationship. Importantly, this factor is cyclical, influenced by the factors discussed above of support, inclusivity and external shared experiences and influencing the pupil's subsequent sense of relatedness, engagement and motivation towards learning. These factors interact to affect the pupil's emotional, behavioural and academic development (See Figure 1, page 56).

*3. Do pupils think they benefit, and how, from having a good relationship with their teachers (Positive outcomes)?*

I interpreted the four interviews to suggest pupils' believe they benefit from a positive teacher-pupil relationship. The benefits are interpreted to be interrelated and circular; support for learning in inclusive, well-balanced lessons, stems from a shared understanding and attunement that promotes respect, pupil's acceptance of occasional shouting and positive emotions towards school and learning. This positive emotional link is related to the pupil's sense of competence and self-esteem, enhancing motivation and engagement further strengthening the positive teacher-pupil relationship.

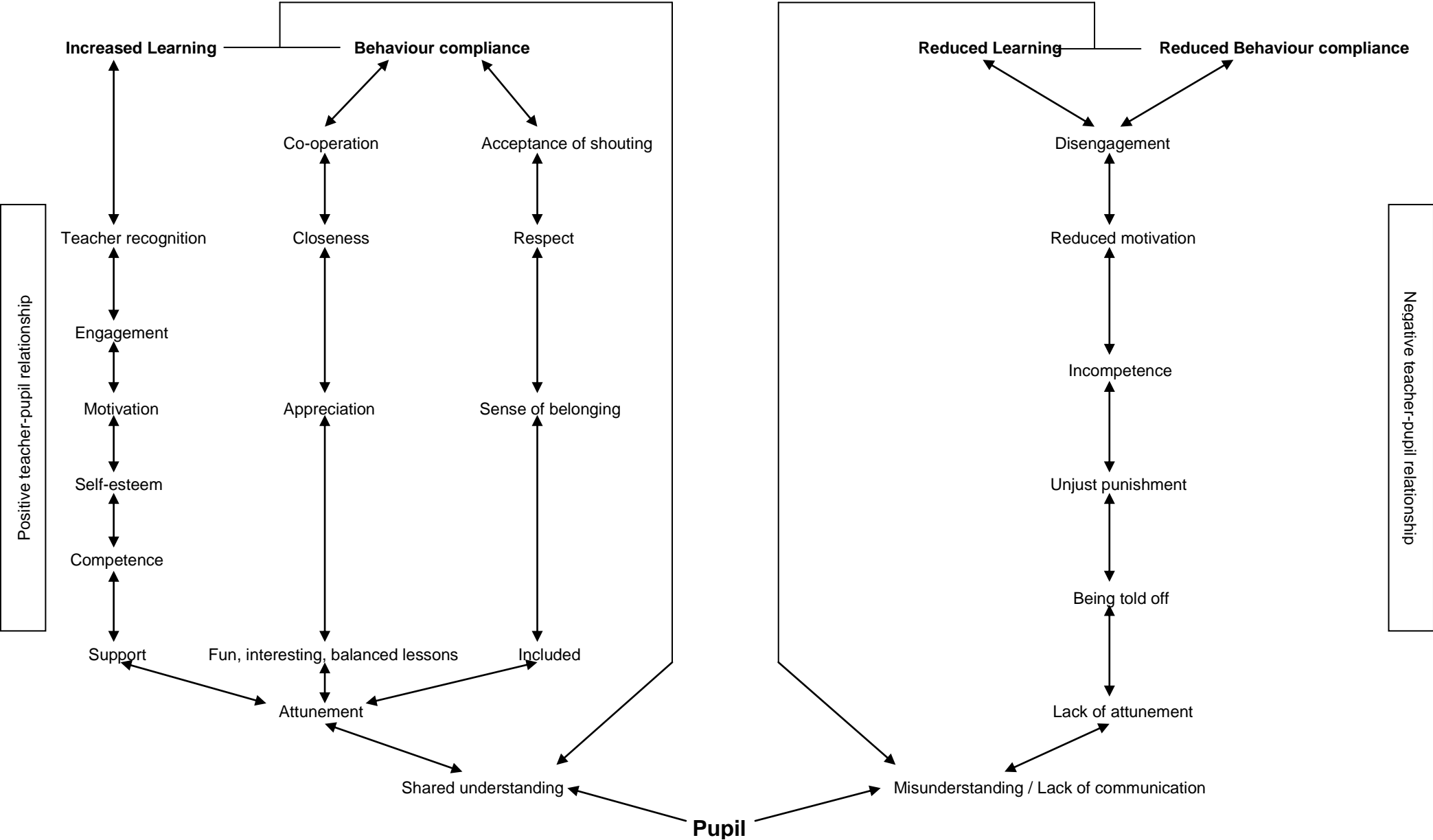
*4. Is there any link to previous research findings into teachers' views of teacher-pupil relationships (Comparative views)?*

Previous research into the teacher-pupil relationship focuses primarily on teachers' views of this phenomenon and concludes close, supportive relationships, with low levels of conflict, promote pupils' social, emotional, behavioural and academic development. Fraire et al. (2008) argue a positive teacher-pupil relationship characterised by closeness, support and low conflict is founded on mutual trust and high quality communication enriched by a sharing

of experiences and understanding which results in confidence about competence and efficiency due to the teacher being seen as a figure of help and support. This clearly links with my themes of learning and outcomes relating to a positive teacher-pupil relationship. Similarly, 'Being told off' links with teachers' reports of 'conflict' described by Fraire et al (2008) as the presence of a hostile attitude, feelings of rage or aggression and incompetence, linked to unjust punishment. I interpreted pupils' views of 'being told off' as a factor stemming from misunderstandings and a lack of communication leading to views of unjust consequences. This again highlights the similarities between pupils' views and previously reported teachers' views (See Chapter 1, section 3.7, page 24).

Overall, I conclude Year 6 pupils' think teacher-pupil relationships are affected by how supportive and inclusive they perceive their teacher to be and how fun, interesting and balanced they view the lessons, with opportunities for interactions outside of the typical learning environment. If a pupil perceives high support, inclusion and balance via attunement and relatedness, they are more likely to engage in the lesson and be motivated to learn, leading to increased self-esteem and greater sense of competency, creating more opportunities for positive teacher recognition. This further enhances relatedness to the teacher, school and community and consequently increases their academic, social, emotional and behavioural development. This highlights a role of the EP in training teachers to understand aspects of the teacher-pupil relationship that pupils' value and to promote these factors that pupils' view as enhancing positive teacher-pupil relationships. Frequently being told off is an additional factor that affects teacher-pupil relationships, with infrequent, occasional conflict being expected and non-damaging. Supporting teachers to recognise and understand their behaviour towards their pupils that influence the teacher-pupil relationship is a crucial role of the EP as well as working with teachers to effectively change the malleable factors that may be hindering positive teacher-pupil relationships.

Figure 1. Diagram of the interrelated factors I have interpreted Year 6 pupils' think affect teacher-pupil relationships through primary school





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## Appendix 1 – 28-item version of the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (Pianta, 2001)



### Student-Teacher Relationship Scale™ Response Form

Teacher's name \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M F Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M F Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Please reflect on the degree to which each of the following statements currently applies to your relationship with this child. Using the point scale below, CIRCLE the appropriate number for each item. If you need to change your answer, DO NOT ERASE! Make an X through the incorrect answer and circle the correct answer.

	<b>1</b> Definitely does not apply	<b>2</b> Does not really apply	<b>3</b> Neutral, not sure	<b>4</b> Applies somewhat	<b>5</b> Definitely applies
1. I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child.	2	3	4	5	
2. This child and I always seem to be struggling with each other.	2	3	4	5	
3. If upset, this child will seek comfort from me.	2	3	4	5	
4. This child is uncomfortable with physical affection or touch from me.	2	3	4	5	
5. This child values his/her relationship with me.	2	3	4	5	
6. This child appears hurt or embarrassed when I correct him/her.	2	3	4	5	
7. When I praise this child, he/she beams with pride.	2	3	4	5	
8. This child reacts strongly to separation from me.	2	3	4	5	
9. This child spontaneously shares information about himself/herself.	2	3	4	5	
10. This child is overly dependent on me.	2	3	4	5	
11. This child easily becomes angry with me.	2	3	4	5	
12. This child tries to please me.	2	3	4	5	
13. This child feels that I treat him/her unfairly.	2	3	4	5	
14. This child asks for my help when he/she really does not need help.	2	3	4	5	
15. It is easy to be in tune with what this child is feeling.	2	3	4	5	
16. This child sees me as a source of punishment and criticism.	2	3	4	5	
17. This child expresses hurt or jealousy when I spend time with other children.	2	3	4	5	
18. This child remains angry or is resistant after being disciplined.	2	3	4	5	
19. When this child is misbehaving, he/she responds well to my look or tone of voice.	2	3	4	5	
20. Dealing with this child drains my energy.	2	3	4	5	
21. I've noticed this child copying my behavior or ways of doing things.	2	3	4	5	
22. When this child is in a bad mood, I know we're in for a long and difficult day.	2	3	4	5	
23. This child's feelings toward me can be unpredictable or can change suddenly.	2	3	4	5	
24. Despite my best efforts, I'm uncomfortable with how this child and I get along.	2	3	4	5	
25. This child whines or cries when he/she wants something from me.	2	3	4	5	
26. This child is sneaky or manipulative with me.	2	3	4	5	
27. This child openly shares his/her feelings and experiences with me.	2	3	4	5	
28. My interactions with this child make me feel effective and confident.	2	3	4	5	



## **Appendix 2. – Information Sheet to Head Teachers**



Dear (Head Teacher),

Following discussions regarding the research for my Doctorate in Educational Psychology, I am writing to provide you with some background information and details of my research proposal. I hope you and your staff can see the benefits the research may provide for your school and will be able to support me.

My research looks at pupil's experiences of their relationships with Teachers. I am particularly interested in the views of Year 6 pupils who have a wealth of Primary School experience, because most research in this area has focussed on teacher's views.

The research highlights the benefits of positive teacher-pupils relationships to school adjustment and academic achievement as well as social, emotional and behavioural developments across cultures and age ranges. Having a greater understanding of children's experiences and their views of relationships with teachers may support us to work towards ensuring each pupil has a positive, effective relationship with teachers in their school.

I intend to conduct semi-structured interviews with Year 6 children whose parents have given consent and who will be chosen at random. Each interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Due to the in-depth, qualitative nature of the research, I will only require a maximum of 3 pupils from your school. I am aware your pupils have a range of first languages and this will be taken into account. I would be very grateful for your support in obtaining parental consent. To obtain this ethically I hope to offer information to Parents in a language with which they are familiar and would appreciate any advice you could offer to translate the Parental Consent forms.

Each child's responses to the interview questions will remain anonymous and will only be shared with staff if necessary, in line with the safeguarding policy. The research paper can be presented to school should staff wish to be informed of the findings once this is complete.

I need at least 3 pupil's Parental Consent forms completed by October so I can begin the interviews in the first term. Please contact me to confirm your support and do not hesitate to contact me or my Supervisor if you have any questions.

Thank you.

Leanne Burns  
Trainee Educational Psychologist

leanne.burns@ncl.ac.uk (Supervisor, David Lumsdon – [david.lumsdon@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:david.lumsdon@ncl.ac.uk))  
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**Appendix 3. – Information & consent form for Parents / Carers**



Dear Parent/Carer,

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist, from Newcastle University who works in your child's school. As part of my training I am doing some research and want to look at children's experiences of their relationships with teachers. I am interested in Year 6 pupils who have been through most of Primary School.

I will use a set of questions to help me talk to the children. I will only need 3, Year 6 children from your child's school. If you are happy for your child to be involved I will pick 3 children at random from those whose parents gave consent. So I don't miss any of what the children say I will use a voice recorder so I can listen back and type everything they said. This interview data will be stored on a computer and password protected, and it will be deleted after five years.

No one will know who said what and no names will be given to anyone. The only people who will see this will be those who need to because of my research. You or your child can withdraw from the research at any time. If you are happy for your child to take part please fill in the form below, tick the box provided to give your consent and bring it to school by the end of this week.

Please contact me or my Supervisor if you have any questions at [leanne.burns@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:leanne.burns@ncl.ac.uk) / [david.lumsdon@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:david.lumsdon@ncl.ac.uk) or School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences, Newcastle University, King George VI Building, Queen Victoria. Road, Newcastle, NE1 7RU

Thank you.

Leanne Burns

Trainee Educational Psychologist

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I give consent for my child to take part in research regarding teacher-pupil relationships.

Please tick to show you have understood the information provided and give your consent.

Child's name..... Male/Female

Parent/carer signature..... Date.....



**(Semi-structured Interview information to be read to the child the day before)**

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist who works in your school each week and I work with lots of different children but tomorrow I'll be coming into school just to talk to some children in your class.

I want to know what some of the children in your class think about the teachers in your School. So would it be ok if I come to talk with you tomorrow about what you think about the teachers in your school?

It will just be me and you having a talk and I won't write your name on anything so no-one will find out what you have said unless it is something important that we need to tell the teachers to make sure you are safe.

We can stop talking about things whenever you want to, or you can say you don't want to answer anything I ask you.

Because I want to remember all the important things you say, I will be recording our voices on a voice recorder but no-one will know it is you talking on it. Eventually it will be deleted off the voice recorder.

Are you happy for me to come and talk with you tomorrow? So we have some things to talk about tomorrow could you have a think tonight about all the teachers you have had in School, how well you get on with them, and what you think makes a good teacher.

Thank you,

Leanne Burns

[leanne.burns@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:leanne.burns@ncl.ac.uk) (Supervisor - [david.lumsdon@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:david.lumsdon@ncl.ac.uk))

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**Appendix 5. – Child Consent Form**



I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist who works in your school each week and I work with lots of different children but today I'm just going to talk to some children in your class. I want to know what some of the children in your class think about the Teachers in your School.

It just me and you having a talk and I won't write your name on anything so no teachers will find out what you have said unless we need to tell them something you tell me to make sure you are safe.

Please tick the box if you understand

We can stop talking about things whenever you want to, or you can say you don't want to answer anything I ask you.

Please tick the box if you understand

Because I want to remember all the important things you say, I will be recording our voices on a voice recorder but no-one will know it is you talking on it. After a while it will be deleted off the voice recorder.

Please tick the box if you understand

Are you happy to take part?

Please tick the box to give your consent

Verbal consent obtained: .....(Researcher signature)

Date:.....

Thank you.

Leanne Burns

leanne.burns@ncl.ac.uk (Supervisor - david.lumsdon@ncl.ac.uk)  
School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences  
Newcastle University,  
King George VI Building,  
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Newcastle,  
NE1 7RU

## **Appendix 6. – Interview Questions**

### **1. In your own words, can you tell me about the Teachers in your school?**

*Prompt: what are the Teachers like in your school?*

*Examples: Can you give me some examples of what the Teachers are like in your school?*

### **2. Can you tell me about good Teachers in your school?**

*Prompt: what are they like?*

*Prompt: what makes them a good Teacher?*

*Examples: Can you give me some examples of the good Teachers?*

### **3. What does it mean to you to have a good Teacher?**

*Prompt: How does having a good Teacher affect you?*

*Examples: Can you think of a time when it has been important for you to have a good Teacher?*

### **4. What are the differences between a good Teacher and a bad Teacher?**

*Prompt: What is a bad Teacher like?*

*Examples: Can you give me some examples of good and bad Teachers?*

### **5. What do you dislike about the Teachers in your school?**

*Prompt: Why do you dislike these Teachers?*

*Prompt: How do they make you feel?*

*Examples: Can you give me an example of when you have felt like that in school?*

### **6. What do you like about the Teachers in your school?**

*Prompt: Why do you like these Teachers?*

*Prompt: How do they make you feel?*

*Examples: Can you give me an example of when you have felt like that in school?*

Thank you for answering my questions. Remember your name is not on anything so no-one will know what you have said.

## Appendix 7. – Debriefing Sheet



Thank you for participating in this study.

One of the main aims of this study was to explore children's experiences of their relationships with teachers.

I used semi-structured interviews to gather individual pupils' views about their experiences with their teachers through Primary School.

One of the reasons for studying this is due to research suggesting the relationships pupils form with their teachers have a beneficial effect on pupils' social, emotional, and behavioural development and well as their academic success. However, little research into pupils' views of this relationship exists.

Your child's contribution to this study is therefore very valuable and very much appreciated.

If you would like more information, or have any further questions about any aspect of this study, or would like to read the final research paper, then please feel free to contact me or my Supervisor, David Lumsdon at:

leanne.burns@ncl.ac.uk

david.lumsdon@ncl.ac.uk

or

Leanne Burns / David Lumsdon

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Newcastle University,

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## Appendix 8 – Emergent themes from each transcript

	<b>Emergent themes from each interview</b>	
Transcript 1.	<p>Teachers use of power &amp; authority            'Strict' / being 'told off' for behaviour            Strict-kind construct            Respect for teachers            Accepting consequences when they are rare &amp; understood            Teacher's misunderstanding pupil behaviour            Teacher and pupils' shared understanding of the importance of learning            Pupil's views of many consequences being unjust            Teachers provide feelings of protection &amp; safety and pupil's trust in teachers keeping them safe</p>	<p>Joint, collaborative &amp; interactive lessons            Balanced workload, with breaks &amp; change            Teacher's interest in pupil            Expectations of rules            Feelings of relatedness to the school &amp; teachers attunement to pupil            Pupil's desire to learn            Fun &amp; interesting lessons or boring lessons            Wanting teacher to recognise and reward pupil efforts</p>
Transcript 2.	<p>Shout-kind construct            Teachers interest in pupil            Pupils' view of many consequences being unjust            Pupils' desire to learn            Balanced workload, with breaks            Fun &amp; interesting lessons or boring lessons            Emotional responses about teachers &amp; school            Lack of enjoyment in school</p>	<p>Misunderstanding's of behaviour &amp; consequences            Teacher use of power &amp; authority to blame &amp; exclude            Relatedness to school &amp; attunement to teachers            Recognition for positive efforts            Expectations of shouting            Joint, collaborative inclusive lessons            Shared understanding about teachers role being to teach            Disengagement in learning</p>
Transcript 3.	<p>Acceptance of consequences when understood            Feelings of unjust consequences            Emotional responses to teachers            Importance of learning and a desire to learn            Help with learning            Being 'told off' / shouting about pupil behaviour</p>	<p>Misunderstanding's about pupil behaviour &amp; consequences            Teacher's use of power            Pupil respect for teachers            Relatedness &amp; attunement between teacher &amp; pupil            Views that teachers should be more inclusive            Nice / Fun / kind – moody / nasty construct</p>
Transcript 4.	<p>Teachers are kind, funny, caring            Shout / 'strict' / 'told off' / 'get wrong' for behaviour            Help with learning            Teachers use of power to include &amp; recognition</p>	<p>Misunderstanding of consequences            Emotional responses            Acceptance of consequences            Help / kind – shout construct</p>

**Appendix 9 – Connections between themes & final themes**

Grouped Super-ordinate themes	Final Themes
<p style="text-align: right;">Power &amp; authority</p> <p>Shout / 'told off' / 'strict' / 'get wrong' / unjust consequences for behaviour</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Misunderstandings</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Expectations</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Shared understanding – acceptance of consequences</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Importance &amp; desire to learn</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Help with learning</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Balanced workload / breaks</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Joint, collaborative inclusion in activities</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Fun / interesting v boring</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Respect / trust</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Interest in pupils / recognition / relatedness &amp; attunement</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Disengagement / blame / emotional responses</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Being 'told off'</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Learning</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Outcomes</p>