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“She Let Us be Smart:” Low-Income African-American First-Grade Students’ Understandings of Closeness and Influence

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to explore low-income, African-American first-grade students’ understandings of teacher closeness and influence. Several questions guided our inquiry: How do these children understand their relationships with their teachers, specifically with regard to teacher closeness and influence? To what extent are their understandings of these concepts malleable? How might their feelings of closeness and influence relate to their motivation to engage in mathematics activities? Qualitative data for this project includes a sample of 27 interviews (16 boys, 11 girls). Findings are organized into a working model and describe the ways in which children’s conceptions of closeness and influence were embedded in their understandings and perceptions of equity in the classroom.

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Teacher Control and Affiliation: Do Students and Teachers Agree?

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Abstract: Using an interpersonal circumplex model, we examined whether teachers and students in secondary education apply a similar frame of reference when thinking about how a teacher relates to students. We also examined the alignment of teacher and student perceptions of two dimensions of the teacher-student relationship: Control and Affiliation. Results showed that although teachers and students use a similar framework, they do not agree on the amount of teacher Control and Affiliation in a given classroom. This study contributes to our understanding of teacher self-reports by comparing student and teacher perceptions of the teacher-student relationship.

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Classroom Emotional Climate, Teacher Affiliation, and Student Conduct

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Abstract: Using a multi-method, multi-level approach, this study examined the link between classroom emotional climate and student conduct, including as a mediator the role of teacher affiliation, i.e., students' perceptions of their relationships with their teachers. Data were collected from 90 fifth- and sixth-grade classrooms (n = 2,000 students) and included classroom observations, student ratings of teacher affiliation, and conduct grades on report cards. As predicted, when controlling for teacher characteristics and the organizational and instructional aspects of the classroom, there was a direct, positive relationship between classroom emotional climate and conduct that also was mediated by teacher affiliation. Effects were robust across grade level and student gender. We highlight the role of emotionally supportive classroom environments in promoting teacher affiliation and better conduct among students.

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