Students with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Trusting Teachers

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Auburn University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Auburn, Alabama
August 9, 2025

Keywords: Trust, student-teacher relationships, ADHD

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Abstract

This qualitative narrative study explored how students diagnosed with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) experience trust in their relationships with teachers and how that trust influences their decision to graduate or drop out of high school. Guided by the theoretical framework of Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (2000) five dimensions of trust—benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness—the study sought to center student voices and lived experiences. Six participants, diagnosed with ADHD and either high school graduates or dropouts, shared their stories through in-depth interviews. Data were analyzed using Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional space approach, a priori coding based on trust facets, and thematic analysis. Findings revealed that students who experienced positive, trusting relationships with teachers were more likely to complete high school, while those with predominantly negative experiences often disengaged and dropped out. Trust was built through teacher behaviors such as active listening, availability, care, respect, and high expectations. The study affirms the vital role of trust in student-teacher relationships, especially for students with ADHD, and calls for educators to intentionally foster emotional connection, consistency, and competence in order to support academic persistence.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation is dedicated to all students, with the hope that their voices will continue to be heard, valued, and understood. May their stories remind us that trust is not a luxury in education; it is a necessity!

I want to acknowledge my dissertation chair, Dr. Lisa Kensler, who is a living example of what trust in teaching looks like. She truly represents the gold standard of student-teacher relationships. She has been a constant source of encouragement, wisdom, and grace throughout this journey. Her unwavering support and honest feedback reflected the very qualities of trust I explored in this research: benevolence, competence, reliability, honesty, and openness. She was the potter, and I am forever honored to have been her clay.

I also want to express my deep gratitude to my co-chair, Dr. A, who challenged me to think more deeply and guided me through the world of qualitative research. She introduced me to narrative inquiry and helped me understand its power to elevate student voices. Because of her influence, this study became more than a project. It became a platform for students to be heard, valued, and understood. Her thoughtful questions and insightful guidance pushed my thinking in ways that strengthened every chapter of this work.

I am also thankful to my other committee members, Dr. Strom, Dr. Shippen and Dr. Bryant, for giving their time, expertise, and support. Their insights strengthened this work, and their belief in my research added to my confidence throughout this process.

With heartfelt thanks, I acknowledge my dear friends, Sandi and Crystal, for their unwavering encouragement and belief in me throughout this journey. In loving memory of Dr. Sherry Ellison, whose love, dedication, and impact on her students and their families continue to

inspire me. She was a constant source of support, and together we proudly called ourselves "sister nerds."

I am deeply grateful for my family. My parents instilled in me a love of learning and modeled perseverance rooted in honesty and strong values. They taught me that trust is built through consistency and love. My son, Addison, who also lives with ADHD, reminded me daily of the importance of patience, perspective, and unconditional trust. His quiet strength through school became one of my greatest inspirations throughout this journey. My daughter, Alli, left over a hundred handwritten notes through the years, each one filled with encouragement, laughter, and belief in me. She truly was the best STUDY BUDDY ever and a daily reminder of the power of trust and emotional support. With a heartfelt thanks, I also honor my Aunt Becky—a lifelong educator and learner whose deep thirst for knowledge and unwavering support have always inspired and encouraged me.

Finally, to my best friend and spouse, Alan. I want to thank you for the sacrifices you made so that I could pursue this dream and for never giving up on me. Our relationship, grounded in trust, gave me the strength to complete this journey. You believed in me even when I struggled to believe in myself. You were always proud that I was doing this, even when it meant long nights and missed plans. Your steady support and quiet encouragement were a constant source of strength. Thank you for putting up with me, my never-ending stack of papers, and my tendency to take over one room after another like a wandering researcher in search of the perfect workspace. My family did not just support me; they walked this road with me, and for that, I will be forever grateful. This degree is ours!

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List of Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
APA	American Psychological Association
STR	Student-Teacher Relationship
TSR	Teacher-Student Relationship
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics

Chapter 1: Introduction

The dropout rate continues to be an area of concern for the United States. This is a troublesome fact, knowing that our fast-changing technological workforce requires knowledgeable workers who can think critically and solve problems. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2023), the number of school-aged youth who no longer attend public or private schools and do not have a high school diploma or equivalent was 2.1 million in 2022. According to the National Center for Education Statistics report titled *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972-2012*, Stark and Noel (2015) noted that high school dropouts earn approximately $21,000 less income per year, have a higher unemployment rate, and are in unfavorable health. Dropping out of high school is a problem for society. In the same report, Stark and Noel (2015) reported that when high school graduates were compared to people who dropped out of high school, “the high school dropout costs the economy approximately $250,000 over his or her lifetime in terms of lower tax contributions,” higher rates of criminal actions, higher dependence on Medicaid and Medicare, and a higher dependence on welfare (p.12).

In trying to solve the dropout crisis, a large emphasis is on academic accomplishment and very little attention is given to the socioemotional needs of students (Osterman, 2000). Looking at the importance of relationships between students and teachers, research shows that these relationships impact the student significantly. The quality of relationships between students and teachers impacts student engagement (Osterman, 2000), decreases discipline problems (Gregory & Ripski, 2008), increases student academic success (Tschannen-Moran, 2004b), and lowers the probability of dropping out of school by nearly half (Croninger & Lee, 2001). Furthermore, researchers have shown that student-teacher relationships are important for students at risk of

academic failure to be successful (Hamre & Pianta, 2001,2005; Eisenhower, Baker, & Blacher, 2007; Holzer & Daumiller, 2025). Research has found that positive student-teacher relationships can have a cushioning effect on behavioral and academic outcomes for students with social, academic, or behavioral risk factors (Eisenhower et al., 2007); risk factors that are characteristics of students with ADHD (Strine et al., 2006).

ADHD is a disorder that is characterized by difficulties with behavioral inhibition, maintaining attention, resisting distractions, and regulating activity levels according to situational demands (2002a). It is the most common psychiatric condition in children in the United States (Breslau, Miller, Chung, & Schweitzer, 2011). In 2022, 7.1 million children were diagnosed with ADHD (CDC, 2024). Sadly, many students with ADHD have difficulty socially. Their social skills do not allow them to form positive relationships with peers and teachers (DuPaul & Stoner, 2014). "A meaningful percentage of children with ADHD evidence severe social impairment" (Greene et al., 2002, p.79). A healthy student-teacher relationship is not only beneficial for all students, but it is a factor in preventing students from dropping out of school (Werner & Smith, 1982) and positive teacher-student relationships have shown to be linked to student academic achievement, particularly for at risk students (Eisenhower et al., 2007; Rudasill, 2011).

Many of these students who are at risk of dropping out of high school are males who have disabilities and low academic achievement, characteristics of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, ADHD. Teens with ADHD are less likely to graduate on time, and 1/3 of students with ADHD drop out of school (Breslau et al., 2011). Therefore, these students will become even more handicapped without receiving a high school diploma or the skills that it represents. Although students with ADHD typically have average or above average intelligence,

they have poor sustained attention to tasks and therefore perform academically low (Kotkin, 1998). In 2010, a study showed that 33% of students with ADHD did not graduate with their peers (J. Breslau, 2010).

Because students with ADHD were found to be more at risk for academic failure and grade retention (Biederman et al., 2004), having positive relationships with their teachers is of high importance. A study by Entwisle and Hayduk (1988) provided evidence that, beyond classroom behavior and cognitive functioning, student–teacher relationships predicted later academic success in school. In addition, Hamre and Pianta (2005) state that “having teachers who attend to their social and emotional needs may be as or more important to academic development than specific instructional practices” (p.962).

The Research Problem

Students with ADHD have social impairments. In fact, 30% or more of students with ADHD are behind in social skills (Barkley, 2001). Wehmeier, Schacht, and Barkley (2010) found that more than 50% of Students with ADHD have major problems with peer relationships. Furthermore, the symptoms of ADHD independently predict school and social functioning (Diamantopoulou, Rydell, Thorell, Bohlin, 2007). Because most students with ADHD have social problems (Barkley, 2002b), teachers need to know what they can do to help increase their chances in forming a healthy relationship with their students with ADHD. Not only do students with ADHD experience social dysfunction, but many students with ADHD also experience cognitive, emotional, and academic impairments in their daily life (Nijmeijer et al., 2008). Pianta and Steinberg (1992) found that healthy student-teacher relationships seem to improve the negative consequences that students with ADHD experience. A recent study by Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, and Oort (2011) concluded that “a focus on affective teacher student

relationships seems especially relevant for students at risk for academic maladjustment" (p.28). Student-teacher relationships are very important for students at risk of academic failure to be successful (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Eisenhower et al., 2007). What might we learn by listening to students with ADHD who have and have not graduated from high school? The problem is that we may not fully understand what teachers might do to help facilitate healthier relationships with their students.

Conceptual Framework

The quality of the student-teacher relationship matters to students (Pianta & Steinberg, 1992; Tschannen-Moran, 2014), and trust is a key indicator of high-quality relationships (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). The theoretical framework used to understand trust in this study is based on the research of Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999). They identified common conditions of trust and developed a multidimensional definition of trust that is widely accepted and used today in the educational leadership literature. "Trust is one's party willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is (a) benevolent, (b) reliable, (c) competent, (d) honest, and (e) open" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p.556). Hoy (2002) stated that a necessary condition for trust is dependence upon one another, known as interdependence. Also, without interdependence, there is no need for trust. All stakeholders in the school are interdependent. Parents depend on schools to do what is in the best interest of their child. Teachers depend on students to come to school ready to cooperate, do their best, and do what is right. Students depend on teachers to do their best and do what is right for them. In the daily social routines of schools is an embedded and interrelated set of mutual dependencies among key actors such as the students and teachers (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

The interaction and communication between teachers and students impact the production of trust (Adams, 2010; Cosner, 2009; Daly, 2009; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Fenizia & Parrello, 2025). Trust also makes relationships strong (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). In fact, researchers believe that trust is a necessary component of healthy relationships, and one will find trust at the heart of strong relationships that help students learn (Goddard et. al., 2001; Wooten & McCroskey, 1996). These teacher-student relationships are very important for the development of students with ADHD and students without ADHD. Research has shown that students having trusting relationships with their teacher in the early childhood, elementary, and adolescent years have a significant positive impact on student achievement (Goddard et al., 2001; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Roorda et al., 2011). Because of that fact, students with ADHD should receive the same benefits of a trusting relationship with their teacher.

According to both students and teachers, creating emotional connections between students and teachers is vital to students staying engaged in school (Klem & Connell, 2004). Studies have shown that students become less engaged in school as they progress through the grades (Marks, 2000; McDermott, Mordell, & Stoltzfus, 2001; Klem & Connell, 2004; Hughes, Luo, Kwok, & Loyd, 2008). In 2004, Klem and Connell found that secondary students who experienced “low levels of teacher support were 68% more likely to be disengaged from school” (p.269). Klem and Connell (2004) also found the following:

> In turn, high levels of engagement are associated with higher attendance and test scores - variables that strongly predict whether youth will successfully complete school and ultimately pursue postsecondary education and achieve economic self-sufficiency. Links between teacher support, student engagement, and academic performance and

commitment hold for both elementary and middle school students, providing further support for an indirect link between student experience of support and academic performance through student engagement. (p.270)

Therefore, it is possible that emotional connections become more crucial for academic achievement as students get older, especially for those students who are already academically at risk, such as students with ADHD. Roorda et al. (2011) found this to be true in their research; affective student-teacher relationships were "*more* influential for older students, even into late adolescence" (28).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore the degree to which students with ADHD reported that relationships with their teachers influenced their decision to complete high school or leave school early.

Research Questions

1. How do students with ADHD experience trust in their teacher relationships?
2. In what ways does trust help form quality relationships in students with ADHD and their teachers?
3. How and to what extent do teachers play a role in students who have ADHD in their decision to complete/drop out of high school?

Significance of the Study

Research in the field of high school dropout has tended to focus on the reasons why students drop out (Pytel, 2006). Other studies focused on what changes need to be made to reduce the number of students dropping out of high school (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Few studies have been done to analyze the impact that relationships have on students who have dropped out

of school (Croninger & Lee, 2001). A study by Roorda et al. (2011) concluded that "a focus on affective teacher-student relationships seems to be especially relevant for students at risk for academic maladjustment" (p.28). Researchers have neglected to study relationships between students with ADHD and their teachers. Scholarly research has identified the benefits of trusting relationships, particularly teachers trusting students (Adams & Forsyth, 2009; Lee, 2007; Romero, 2015). However, research on the students' perspective of trusting teachers is lacking (Lee, 2007; Yu, Johnson, Deutsch, & Varga, 2018; Holzer & Daumiller, 2025). A recent study by Holzer and Daumiller (2025) also emphasizes the importance of examining trust from both teacher and student perspectives, but additional research is needed that centers the voices of students with ADHD specifically. Because their voice is important and needs to be heard, more studies need to be done. Henricsson and Rydell (2004) commented how, "Researchers have yet to pose such pertinent questions as the nature of interactions between teachers and children with different kinds of behavior problems and the extent to which interactions may help form the quality of the teacher-child relationship as experienced by teachers and children" (p.113).

Therefore, the significance is unknown as to the impact that trusting teachers has on the students' decision to complete high school. This study aims to fill the existing void in the field by providing information about students with ADHD and their relationships, as well as offering the field additional insights into how trust influences the quality of relationships between students and teachers.

By learning more about how students perceive trusting relationships with their teachers, educators can understand what is important to students and use that information to help create more trusting relationships with all students, but specifically students with ADHD. By doing so,

more students will benefit from the advantages of trusting relationships, which should ultimately decrease the number of ADHD and non-ADHD student dropouts.

This study provides educational leaders with a deeper examination of trust as related to students with ADHD. Though this study focused on students with ADHD, student voices relating to trust, teacher-student relationships, and graduation decisions are voices that need to be heard and apply to many. In conclusion, the results offer educational leaders valuable insight into how one can facilitate and maintain nurturing, healthy, and trusting relationships with their students in hopes of decreasing the dropout rate.

Methodological Framework

This study involves a qualitative research method using narrative inquiry. I selected the method of narrative inquiry as the approach to generate data that will provide detail and depth in understanding ADHD students' experiences with their teachers and the consequences of their actions. Creswell (2007) noted that the best way to capture life experiences and detailed stories is through narrative research. The student voices, unveiled through their oral accounts of their experiences with their teachers, will be revealed by means of the narrative inquiry approach. I selected research participants for the study based on criterion sampling. I will attempt to understand the world from the students' points of view through in-depth interviews. To analyze the narrative data, I will draw upon Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional space framework—examining temporality, sociality, and place—while also using a priori coding to identify themes related to trust. These combined methods will support an understanding of how students made meaning of their relationships and decisions across time and context.

Assumptions

There are several assumptions associated with this study. The first assumption is that the responses received from the participants will accurately reflect their memories from when they were students. It is important to gain an accurate response, but time lapse does affect one's memory. A second assumption is that the participants will be open and honest with the researcher. Assurance of confidentiality will be given to the participants to encourage openness and honesty. A third assumption is that the participants have sufficient self-awareness and reflective ability to describe the role that trust played in their student-teacher relationships. Because this study centers on student voice and perception, it is assumed that participants can articulate how trust was built or broken down through their interactions with teachers. A fourth assumption is that the concept of trust, as defined by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (2000) five facets—benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness—is applicable and meaningful to the lived experiences of students with ADHD. Finally, a fifth assumption is that the researcher's perspective as both a teacher and a parent of a child with ADHD will be acknowledged and thoughtfully considered throughout the study, in order to minimize potential bias in data collection and interpretation.

Definition of Key Terms

To support clarity and understanding, the next section defines key terms and concepts that were central to this study.

ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) - A neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development. Symptoms must be present before age 12, occur in two or more settings (e.g., home, school), and negatively impact academic, social, or occupational activities (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Non-ADHD - Refers to individuals, particularly students, who do not meet the diagnostic criteria for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and who do not display persistent patterns of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interfere with functioning or development (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Trust - "Trust is one's party willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is (a) benevolent, (b) reliable, (c) competent, (d) honest, and (e) open" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p.556).

Organization of Study

The remaining chapters in this study are as follows: chapter two will provide a review of literature that looks at the quality of student-teacher relationships and the importance of trust; chapter three will discuss the methodology used for this study and the qualitative research design used for this study; chapter four will report on the findings from my study; and chapter five will provide a summary and recommendations for future research. Following chapter five will be a bibliography and appendices.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Today, educators are constantly being bombarded with phrases such as "raise the rigor," "make it relevant," "increase student engagement," and "raise those test-scores." Some educators, including myself, believe that a possible solution to making all the above come together and happen is simply "relationships." McNulty and Quaglia (2007) stated that "Schools across the country are realizing that rigor and relevance develop most naturally when they are cultivated on firm grounding in relationships" (p.18). A potential resource for enhancing developmental outcomes and an essential part of the classroom experience for every student is simply relationships with teachers (Pianta, 1999).

Chapter 2 is divided into two major sections. The first section covers literature regarding student-teacher relationships and trust. It begins by reviewing the literature on teacher-student relationships, then discusses the importance of trust, and moves to student-teacher trust. I will view my data through Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (1999) framework of trust. Wayne Hoy and Tschannen-Moran developed a multidimensional definition of trust and common conditions of trust (1999). The five facets of trust were the results of an extensive review of literature on trust that was subjected to an empirical test that framed the theoretical groundwork of the construct. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's definition of trust is still used today in the educational leadership literature.

The second section of Chapter 2 provides literature on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, ADHD. The chapter begins by looking at the multiple impairments that many students with ADHD experience: functional, social, emotional, and cognitive. The literature review ends with literature on students with ADHD and education, including the topic of ADHD being at-risk for dropping out of high school (Barkley, 2002a).

Student-Teacher Relationship Quality

The school should be a community for students; a place where students feel they belong. “A sense of community is a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p.9). According to Osterman (2000), students who experience this belonging feeling are more highly motivated, engaged in learning, and more committed to school, which in turn is closely linked to student performance and the quality of student learning. A community will provide a place for optimal learning according to the work of Vygotsky and Dewey, who view education as a social process (Glassman, 2001; Mooney, 2013). “A community orientation based in caring and support allows children to appraise school as a meaningful social context in which to function” (Baker, Terry, Bridger, & Winsor, 1997). Students will be able to achieve their potential if the community/classroom ensures a sense of psychological safety and belonging combined with academic work that promotes engagement (Baker et al., 1997). Sergiovanni (1994) noted that the community is what binds teachers and students together in special ways, and the key to an effective community is the quality of the teacher and student relationships.

Students are in daily contact with teachers and may spend more time with them than their parent(s) or guardian(s). Naturally, during this time, relationships are formed. Klem and Connell (2004) performed a longitudinal study that consisted of five years of student records and survey data from students, parents, and teachers in six elementary schools and three middle schools. Klem and Connell (2004) found that students will look to teachers for support, and these teacher-student relationships are very important for the development of children. Adams (2010) and Mikulincer, Shaver, and Pereg (2003) argued that the attachment theory, according to

Bowlby (1980), offers a psychological explanation for why these relationships are important. To feel a close attachment to adults is an innate need in children that leads to feelings of support, protection, and self-regulation (Adams, 2010). This allows children to engage effectively with other people, such as teachers and explore the environment in a classroom (Mikulincer et al., 2003). The parents are the primary attachment figures, but it is only natural that teachers assume attachment roles too, due to the amount of time children spend with their teachers on a daily basis.

Looking at the importance of relationships between students and teachers, research shows that these relationships impact the student. From her literature on students' need for belonging, Osterman (2000) found that it was teacher support that had the most absolute impact on student engagement. Even more relevant is the *quality* of the relationship. "How students feel about school and their coursework is in large measure determined by the quality of the relationship they have with their teachers." (Osterman, 2000, p.344). The quality of relationships between students and teachers impacts students in numerous ways. The quality of student-teacher relationships has been shown significantly associated with students' behavior (Gregory & Ripski, 2008), adjustment to school, (Pianta & Steinberg, 1992; Lee, 2007), academic success (Tschannen-Moran, 2004b), completion of high school (Croninger & Lee, 2001), and engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004).

Caring and supportive student-teacher relationships are a way to improve student engagement and learning. In fact, a healthy student-teacher relationship increases positive student behavior, emotions, and thought processes, which leads to a higher academic performance and lower drop-out rates regardless of their socioeconomic class (Klem & Connell, 2004). Birch and Ladd (1988) conducted a longitudinal study that consisted of 199 students and

17 teachers. The students were interviewed individually during their kindergarten year and again at the end of their first-grade year while the teachers completed a Child Behavior Scale and a Student-Teacher Relationship Scale. Birch and Ladd (1998) found that student-teacher relationships in the early years of students can be predicted by their patterns and behavioral orientations and are related to subsequent academic success and school adjustment. Student-teacher relationships have the power to heal any wounds that previous negative relationships may have caused. "Just as students' behavioral problems may worsen as a consequence of negative attitudes and teacher-student interactions, they may improve over time if students have consistent and close relationships with accepting teachers" (Montague & Rinaldi, 2001, p.75).

Student-Teacher Relationship with At-Risk Students

One might wonder how student-teacher relationships affect students who are at risk of academic failure. Researchers have shown that student-teacher relationships are very important for students at risk of academic failure to be successful (Hamre & Pianta, 2001,2005; Eisenhower et al., 2007). Eisenhower et al.'s (2007) findings from their student-teacher relationship investigation of 82 students found that having a positive student-teacher relationship can have a cushioning effect on behavioral and academic outcomes, especially for students with academic, social, or behavioral risk factors. "Healthy teacher-child relationships appear to ameliorate the negative consequences of these experiences" (Pianta & Steinberg, 1992, p.64).

After observing disadvantaged students in multiple schools and programs, Boyer (1983) found that students who were succeeding had a close relationship with their teacher and that the relationship was a major factor in preventing the students from dropping out. Noam, Warner, and Van Dyken (2001) also learned from their research that "a supportive relationship with

caring adults, is an effective strategy for fostering resiliency among at-risk youth" (p.158) and use this in their prevention program.

Hamre and Pianta's 2005 national prospective study consisted of a total of 910 children. The children were followed from birth through the first grade. Hamre and Pianta looked at different ways in which students' risk of academic failure may have been alleviated by support from their teachers. From this data, they discussed three different theories that support the concept that student-teacher relationships are crucial for students who are at risk of failing school. The theories focus on (a)positive relationships, (b) teacher's emotional support, and (c) motivation. A summary of the theories is below:

(a) "a number of developmentally informed theories suggests that positive and responsive interactions with adults (…teachers…) contribute to regulation of emotional experience and social behavior, the development of skills in social interactions, and emotional understanding" (p.951).

(b) Even from a different theoretical perspective, "teachers' emotional support directly provides students with experiences that foster motivational and learning-related processes important to academic functioning" (p.951).

(c) "Theories of motivation suggest that students who experience sensitive, responsive, and positive interactions with teachers, perceive them as more supportive and are more motivated within the academic contexts of schooling" (p.951).

The following paragraphs take a closer look at each theory and the research that supports that theory.

Having a healthy relationship with the teacher is one theory that Hamre and Pianta (2005) discussed that supports the concept that student-teacher relationships are crucial for students who

are at risk of failing school. Researchers have found that students who are academically at risk of failing benefit from having positive relationships with their teachers (Birch & Ladd, 1997). This relationship plays a strong role in adjusting to school (Pianta & Steinberg, 1992; Lee, 2007). There are numerous implications for students at risk. In the lower grades, high student-teacher relationships are characterized by having fewer discipline infractions, better work habits, and lower chances of suspension (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). When Pianta, Steinberg, and Rollins (1995) looked at kindergarten students who, at the beginning of the year, were at risk for retention or special education placement (according to tests) and had a high-quality relationship with their teacher, they were less likely to be retained or placed in special education at the end of the year. Student-teacher relationships allow teachers to be a form of social capital that reduces the probability of dropping out by nearly half (Croninger & Lee, 2001).

Another theory that Hamre and Pianta (2005) discussed that supports the concept that student-teacher relationships are crucial for students who are at risk of failing school is receiving emotional support from the teacher. Hamre and Pianta's (2001) study supported the fact that teachers who offer high emotional support to students promote academic success. These teachers "were aware of and responsive to individual students' needs, offered effective and proactive behavior management, and created a positive classroom climate in which teachers and students enjoyed each other and their time in the classroom" (p.962). Werner, 1990, noted that teachers are "protective buffers" and "provide emotional support, reward competence, and promote self-esteem" and by doing so they enable high risk students to be less vulnerable in stressful life events (p.110-111). Buskist and Saville (2001) referred to creating emotional connections between teacher and student as "rapport". They stated that rapport enhances teaching and learning, and as a result, a positive emotional classroom is created.

Motivation is another theory that Hamre and Pianta (2005) discussed that supports the concept that it is critical for students who are at risk of academic failure to have student-teacher relationships. Gregory and Weinstein (2004) noted that motivational theorists have claimed that social contexts, which provide structure with distinct expectations and communicate interest in the individual, are crucial in meeting basic needs. The classroom enables students to interact with teachers and therefore competence, autonomy, and relatedness (the three basic psychological needs) may be met (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). When students perceive support and care from teachers, their motivation toward pro-social and academic goals increases (Wentzel, 1998). Battistich, Solomon, Watson, and Schaps (2010) found a higher participation in learning and on-task behavior among students with supportive and caring teachers. Whereas students who are at-risk for failing spend less time on task (Montague & Rinaldi, 2001). In summary, Roorda et al. stated that "Overall, TSRs [teacher student relationships] were more important for children who were academically at risk" (p.28) and that students who are at a higher risk of emotion difficulties and behavioral disorders are the "very students in greatest need of a supportive relationship with their teacher" Jennings and Greenberg (2009, p.501).

Teachers are able to provide students with encouragement, assistance with schoolwork, guidance, and emotional support (Croninger & Lee, 2001). Goddard (2003) noted that when students receive social support from their teachers, their chance of academic success increases. This was also found to be true for students academically at-risk. This is no surprise since researchers have shown a strong connection to academics and healthy student-teacher relationships (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). The relationship that teachers provide is a form of social capital for students. Croninger and Lee's study in 2001 focused on social capital. They used data from a National Longitudinal Study that

consisted of 10,979 students in public and private schools. The study started by surveying students in 8th grade and continued to resurvey every two years into postsecondary institutions and the workforce. Croninger and Lee used the data from the 8th through the 12th grades. Croninger and Lee (2001) defined social capital as the "ways in which social organization-in the form of small networks of relationships…enhances the productive capacity of individuals" (p.553). Teachers are an essential form of social capital for many students due to being unable to find these forms of social capital anywhere else (Croninger & Lee, 2001). Goddard (2003) and Croninger and Lee (2001) both found that social capital helps students to be more academically successful. Social capital was also found to reduce the probability of at-risk students from dropping out of high school by nearly half, and students "who have had academic difficulties in the past find guidance and assistance from teachers especially helpful" (Croninger & Lee, 2001, p.548). Croninger and Lee (2001) believed that students must trust their teacher to benefit from social capital. This belief is supported by Putnam (1993) when he mentioned that trust is a feature of social capital.

Earlier, I noted that strong student-teacher relationships may offer a meaningful solution to many of the demands being placed on both teachers and students. I believe there is one specific component of relationships that educators need to target, and that is "trust." Meier (2002) stated that the key building block in student-teacher relationships is trust. A solid, trusting, and supportive teacher-child relationship is the foundation for a nurturing relationship to be built and for building a classroom community (Watson & Ecken, 2003). Goddard et al. (2001) believed and found that "trust is at the heart of strong relationships that help children learn, particularly disadvantaged children" (p.4). Meier (2002) stated that learning happens the quickest when learners trust the setting so much that they are not anxious about doing something

stupid, making mistakes, or taking risks. Students who trust their teachers are able to learn more effectively (Kurniangsih, Yuniarti, & Kim, 2012). So, what exactly does trust encompass?

Importance of Trust

Within the literature, one would find multiple definitions of trust, and researchers agree that trust is a concept that is difficult to define (Goddard et al., 2001). However, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's definition of trust is the most accepted definition used by educational researchers. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) identified common conditions of trust and developed a multi-dimensional definition of trust that is widely accepted and used today. "Trust is one's party willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is (a) benevolent, (b) reliable, (c) competent, (d) honest, and (e) open" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p.556).

A necessary condition for trust is dependence upon one another, known as interdependence (Hoy 2002). Without interdependence, there is no need for trust. Because all stakeholders in the school are independent, students and teachers are independent of one another. Every day, teachers depend on students, and students depend on teachers. It is important to note that Birch and Ladd used the word "dependency" (a feature of student-teacher relationships) in a negative context to describe a child who is possessive and clingy. These types of students are too dependent on their teacher and tend to have a difficult time adjusting to school (Birch & Ladd, 1997). It is possible for some children to be dependent on their teachers but not have a close relationship with their teachers (Birch & Ladd, 1997). "Embedded in the daily social routines of schools is an interrelated set of mutual dependencies among all key actors. These structural dependencies create feelings of vulnerability for the individuals involved" (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p.21). If there is no vulnerability, then trust is irrelevant because the results are

insignificant for the trustor (Moorman, Deshpande, & Zaltman, 1993). Some people, including students, have a problem with vulnerability and do not trust others well. This is due to the fact that they are not comfortable with taking risks and/or being harmed. “Trust is accepted vulnerability to another’s power to harm one, a power inseparable from the power to look after some aspect of one’s good” (Baier, 1994, p.133). Parents put their prized possession in the school’s care. The schools have the power to harm, but most believe it is worth the risk. Bryk and Schneider (2002) noted that in asymmetric power relationships, such as student–teacher relationships, vulnerability is salient. Adams (2010) stated that power asymmetry explains student-teacher relationships where the students are relying on quality teaching for their development and learning.

Facets of Trust

Benevolence

The first facet of trust is the sense of caring or benevolence. Benevolence is placing other’s needs before your own. “Any actions taken by a member of a role set to reduce others’ sense of vulnerability affect their interpersonal trust. Such actions typically are interpreted as an expression of benevolent intentions and understood as signaling personal regard for the other” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p.25). Tschannen-Moran (2004a) described benevolence as stating that there will be a mutual attitude of goodwill and a feeling of care is present, not just about the current outcome, but also a sense of caring about the relationship. There are negative effects when trust in the benevolence of others is missing.

> There is likely to be a cost in overall productivity as energy is invested in making mental provisions or alternative plans or in assessing the available recourse in case of betrayal. Students who do not trust their teachers or fellow students cannot learn efficiently

> because they invest their energy in calculating ways to protect themselves instead of engaging in the learning process. (Tschannen-Moran, 2004a, p.19)

Where trust is high, people are a lot more likely to ask for help if they know that the other person can be trusted and cares about them. They are not afraid of others thinking that they are inadequate. They do not want to be indebted to another person because then they are seen as being dependent (Jones & George, 1998). If a trust in benevolence exists, students should feel free to ask questions, and teachers should be able to ask students questions.

Reliability

Tschannen-Moran (2004a) said that it is not enough to demonstrate benevolence sporadically or show support from time to time. Another important element of trust that must be sensed is one being able to depend on another consistently. Reliability is the next facet of trust to discuss.

> Reliability implies a sense of confidence that you can "rest assured" that you can count on a person doing what is expected on a regular, consistent basis. You need not invest energy worrying whether the person will come through or make mental provisions of how to manage in case of failure. (Tschannen-Moran, 2004a, p.29)

The word reliability, as a facet of trust, "is more than dependability: reliability combines a sense of dependability and predictability with benevolence" (Hoy, 2002, p.91). It can also be said that "the reliability of trust is a sense of confidence that one's needs will be met in positive ways" (Hoy, 2002, p.91). Knowing that someone is there for you and that she/he is looking out for your best interest builds trust.

Competence

The third facet of trust is competence. One may think that if someone acted in good intentions, then he/she is looking out for me and have my best interests in mind. The following scenario is a good example that Hoy (2002) gave where good intentions did not lead to trust. A surgeon may have good intentions and have a desire to heal patients. However, if this surgeon has a poor performance record, then it is very likely that the patient will not trust the doctor. In the same way that the patient was not willing to trust the surgeon, stakeholders are unwilling to trust teachers whose competence is questionable, and even when teachers are unwilling to trust students/ parents whose competence is questionable. According to Bryk and Schneider (2002), "competence in the execution of an individual's formal role of responsibilities" is a criterion for trust discernment (p.23).

Honesty

The next facet of trust is honesty. Tschannen-Moran (2004a) noted that: "Honesty concerns a person's character, their integrity, and authenticity" (p.22). Bryk and Schneider (2002) found integrity as a criterion for trust discernment and say that integrity, in a deeper sense, also implies that a moral-ethical perspective guides one's work. According to Rotter (1967), the meaning of trust is when one can be confident that the promise or word of another individual, whether written or verbal, can be depended upon. Whenever someone says one thing, but yet does another thing, then trust has been compromised. "Failure to follow through on a threat or consequence can be as damaging to trust as a broken promise. The disconnect between the person's actions and words damages trust" (Tschannen-Moran, 2004a, p.23). If a teacher or a parent tells the teacher that she/he is going to give their child a consequence and the parent doesn't follow through, then the child will be relieved and happy, but trust in this relationship

has been damaged. Simons (1999) gave a warning about dishonesty, “Words are one of a manager’s most potent tools for guiding subordinates. When credibility is sacrificed, the manager damages that tool, and is forced into additional actions to show when he or she ‘really means’ what he or she says” (p.95). Honesty is a condition for trust.

Openness

Openness is the last facet of trust. Openness is when one fully exposes one’s actions and intentions in social exchanges (Goddard, Salloum, & Berebitsky, 2009). Hoy (2002) defined openness as, “the extent to which relevant information is shared” (Hoy, 2002, p.92). By sharing information with others, one is allowing herself/himself to be vulnerable. Tschannen-Moran (2004a) made the comment that, “Sharing information increases vulnerability because with knowledge comes power” (p.25). It is important for teachers and students to have open communication. By having such openness, students are more likely to tell teachers about current or future problems. These problems may consist of not understanding the subject matter or the problems may be about a disagreement between two other students. Sometimes, the problems may be very personal, and the teacher is the only person the student feels like she/he can confide in. By being knowledgeable about the problem, it can possibly be stopped before it explodes into a terrible situation. “Where communication flows freely, problems can be disclosed, diagnosed, and corrected before they are compounded” (Tschannen-Moran, 2004a, p.26). If teachers are to help their students, then the teachers, students, and parents need to have open communication with one another. Hoy (2002) argued that “Openness breeds trust just as trust creates openness” (p.92).

Why Trust Matters in School

The quality of the student-teacher relationship matters to students (Pianta & Steinberg, 1992; Tschannen-Moran, 2004a), and trust is a key indicator of high-quality relationships (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Trust in schools is highly necessary. Trust is a necessary component to be successful. Classic examples of intricate organizations that require relational connectedness and social cohesion to facilitate competent operations are schools (Adams, 2010). Within well-functioning organizations, trust has been recognized to be a vital element (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). As Tschannen-Moran (2004) noted, "trust is vital in order for schools to fulfill their mission of educating students" (p.1). According to school reports, not all schools are educating their students to the required level (Miners, 2009). Why aren't students being educated? What is causing this problem in the schools? Could this be a reason for so many students dropping out of school? One of the answers to these questions is "trust". Researchers have begun to notice something wrong with trust relationships within the school community (Byrk & Schneider, 2002; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Goddard et al., 2001; Tschannen-Moran, 2001).

> The reluctance to trust often leads to the unraveling of the goodwill that serves as the foundation of a learning community. Often it is not until these events erode educational quality that educators realize the extent to which teaching and learning is built on a foundation of trust. (Ennis & McCauley, 2002, p.151)

Baier (1986) explained this concept by comparing trust to air; only do we notice air when it becomes scarce or polluted (p.234). Schulman (1993) said that trust is a perishable commodity, and it must be nurtured and renewed to survive. "Trust" in American schools is not what it should be and has dropped over the years. This is evident in the number of students who

have withdrawn from public schools and enrolled in homeschooling. According to the Institute of Education Services - National Center for Educational Statistics, data from the 2012 NHES survey showed an estimated 1.7 million students (1,773,000) were homeschooled in the United States in the spring of 2012. The homeschooling rate has steadily increased from 1.7 percent in 1999 to 3.4 percent in 2012 (Redford, Battle, & Bielick, 2016). This represents over a 74 percent relative increase over the 12-year period and over a 36 percent relative increase since 2003 (Bielick, 2008; Redford et al.,2016). The media, which is extremely influential, doesn't help this situation. When the media presents information on public education, it is usually not positive. Thus, the information leaves a negative impression on the audience's mind. "Attention from the media has produced negative perceptions of the contribution schools are making to society and has led to increasing distrust of schools and their mission" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p.3).

"Trust is fundamental to functioning in our complex and interdependent society" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p.549). Most parents are unable to take care of their children all the time due to having to work outside the home. Although it may be unintentional, parents trust the schools to help teach their children. Goddard et al. (2001) stated that an important element in human learning is trusting that others can be believed. "Much of the formal and informal learning that human beings acquire is based on the verbal and written statements of others, and what they learn must be significantly affected by the degree to which they believe their informants without independent evidence" (Rotter, 1967, p.651). Webb (1992) supported this by observing that a lot of what we know today in the fields of science, geography, and history can only be accepted by relying on the words of others. Webb commented,

> One is justified in believing what other people say, provided only that there is no positive reason to doubt them…After all, if I am not justified in believing others, then I don't know that there is such a place as Australia, that electrons have plus or minus one-half spin, that Pluto has a moon, or even that I am thirty-four years old (p.390).

Today, we are asked to believe information that teachers give parents and students. The teacher is inviting the student into new ways of seeing and approaching the world with curiosity, asking for evidence, and not accepting claims at face value (Meier, 2002). Trust is vital to human survival and allows learning to occur in a complex society (Goddard et al., 2001; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Hoy, 2002).

Benefits of Trust

As schools strive to become learning organizations, transparency of goals, voices, and data is necessary to ensure the flow of information to all stakeholders. Trust increases the quality of communication within learning organizations (Cosner, 2009; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). In 2002, Bryk and Schneider found that seeking new ideas, reaching out to the community, and committing to organizational goals are characteristics of schools with high trust levels. Trust in learning organizations permits the members to work together in a collaborative way to solve problems and meet student needs (Dunlap & Goldman, 1991; Kensler, Caskie, Barber, & White, 2010; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). The two-way flow of dialogue with all stakeholders can lead to a transparency of mission and goals that is key for organizational success (Blasé and Blasé, 1996; Cloke & Goldsmith, 2002). According to Somech (2005), participative leadership, in which members are given "joint decision making", may lead to better solutions. Empowerment of all stakeholders provides a sense of ownership in the educational process (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder,

1993; Blasé & Blasé, 1996). Student voice in what is taught and how the instruction is delivered is key to increasing student performance (Adams, 2010; Goddard et al., 2001; Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, 2004b). A climate of trust serves as a foundation for maintaining a creative, collaborative atmosphere for learning (Adams & Forsyth, 2009; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Hoy, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

In education, many components of the school community are affected by trust. (Adams, 2010; Adams & Forsyth, 2009; Daly, 2009; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Goddard et al., 2001; Hoy et al., 2006; Tschannen-Moran, 2000, 2001). Schools are organizations; thus, they receive the benefits that trust enables organizations to have. This would include organizational effectiveness and the quality of communication (Cosner, 2009; Kensler, 2010; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). If the members feel free to speak and voice their opinions, they are more likely to express their thoughts, ideas, opinions, and problems to the group, which will open the door to dialogue. The members of this school community will feel trusted and have a sense of empowerment. Research shows that empowerment leads to a positive climate for the organization. Other positive outcomes of trust include: an increase in student achievement (Adams, 2010; Hoy et al., 2006; Goddard et al., 2001), wide range of curricular goals being met (Adams, 2010; Daly, 2009; Ennis & McCauley, 2002), increase in collaboration (Kensler, 2009; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000), help students to overcome some of the disadvantages of poverty (Goddard et al., 2001; Tschannen-Moran, 2004a), and a decrease in student discipline (Adams & Forsyth, 2009; Ennis & McCauley, 2002).

The interaction and communication between teachers and students impact the production of trust (Adams, 2010; Cosner, 2009; Daly, 2009; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Trust also makes relationships strong (Goddard et al., 2001). In fact, Goddard et al.

(2001) believed that "trust is at the heart of strong relationships that help children learn" (p.4). These teacher-student relationships are very important for the development of children. Adams (2010) and Mikulincer et al. (2003) argued that the attachment theory, according to Bowlby (1973,1980) offered a psychological explanation for why these relationships are important. An innate longing to feel a close attachment to adults is possessed by children, and this attachment security leads children to have feelings of self-regulation, support, safety, and protection (Adams, 2010). As a result, children can effectively engage with other people and explore the environment with confidence (Mikulincer et al., 2003). The parents are the primary attachment figures, but it is only natural that teachers assume attachment roles as well due to the amount of time children spend with their teachers on a daily basis. The healthy perceptions of self-worth, self-value, and self-efficacy must be met and sustained during childhood in order for these perceptions to be evoked. (Mikulincer et al., 2003). These perceptions, "according to Bandura 1986, are associated with academic performance" (Adams, 2010, p.258). Therefore, trust is not only crucial for healthy psychological dependence, but for academic reasons as well.

Lack of Trust

Unfortunately, the absence of trust has many negative consequences. In the absence of trust or decline of trust, "people are increasingly unwilling to take risks, demand greater protections against the possibility of betrayal, and increasingly insist on costly sanctioning mechanisms to defend their interests" (Kramer & Tyler, 1996, p.4). Baker, Grant, and Morlock (2008) found that teacher-student relationships that lacked trust were "negatively associated with school adaptation" (p.8). The absence of trust also causes one to have a mixture of negative emotions. In 2000, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy noted that the absence of trust tends to provoke feelings of anxiety and insecurity. The school should be a comfortable place for all students; a

place where they feel safe and can learn. When students do not feel safe, they are using energy on self-protection instead of devoting that energy to learning (Walker, Kutsyuruba, & Noonan, 2011). Unfortunately, the student usually responds with self-handicapping behaviors that result in negative consequences and predicts academic failure (Thompson, 1994). "The reluctance to trust …can have serious consequences in educational institutions, such as declines in achievement and increases in student disruptions and violence" (Ennis & McCauley, 2002, p.151). Hoy (2002) mentioned that students who don't trust teachers often build barriers to learning. Trusting someone is a decision that individuals make because trust is a choice (Goddard et al., 2009; Owens & Johnson, 2009; Solomon & Flores, 2001). For some people, the decision to trust is a cognitive one. For others, it is an emotional reason. One who comes from a family where trust was uncommon or has "histories of discrimination, abuse, and violence that inflame feelings of distrust" might choose not to trust due to emotional reasons (Ennis & McCauley, 2002, p. 152).

Student-Teacher Relationships and Trust

Teachers are in daily contact with the students, and during this time, relationships are formed. Some of these relationships may never be forgotten, and some relationships may last a lifetime. "Schools are central places in which children and adolescents learn to reach beyond early conceptualizations of family trust to initiate trusting relationships with classmates and teachers" (Ennis & McCauley, 2002, p.151). Teachers, students, and family need to trust one another for the sake of learning. Tschannen-Moran (2004a) discussed how when she first began researching trust in schools, she looked at trust in parents and trust in students separately. "However, both quantitative and qualitative studies have led to connecting trust in students with trust in parents –

faculty's trust in students is inextricably linked to trust in their families" (Tschannen-Moran, 2004a, p.140).

Teacher Trust in Students

The wording of "student-teacher trust" and "teacher-student trust" is used interchangeably when referring to relationships. This section explores teachers trusting their students. There is little research on "teachers trusting students". However, what has been reported is just as important and is very similar to the research on students trusting teachers. There is one advantage of teachers trusting students that has not been mentioned because it relies on teachers trusting students for it to occur, and that is social capital.

In a study by Goddard et al. in 2001, data were gathered from 452 teachers and 2,536 fourth-grade students to examine the distribution and effects of teacher trust in students. From their study, they found that trust was a significant positive predictor of differences between schools in academic achievement. In their discussion on why trust is important to students' academic success, Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, and Hoy discussed the impact social capital can have on students. Social capital theorists believe that trust strengthens the relational networks and productive norms that assist in the progress of individual and group accomplishments (Goddard et al., 2001). According to Stanton-Salazar (1997), the structural features of "networks are analogous to social freeways that allow people to move about the complex mainstream landscape quickly and efficiently ... a fundamental dimension of social inequality is that some are able to use these freeways, while others are not" (p.4). Goddard et al. (2001) found that, unfortunately, variations in teacher trust were largely attributed to the students' economic status. "This distinction suggests that poverty has a large negative influence on social relationships between students… and teachers" (Goddard et al., 2001, p.13). Therefore, not all students (such

as disadvantaged students) can take advantage of opportunities because they cannot successfully navigate the “social freeways”.

“Teacher’s trust is key to the relationships that connect students and their families to schools” (Tschannen-Moran, 2004a, p.139). Trust is a crucial element in maintaining these relationships, according to Corrigan and Chapman (2008). In order for teachers to have a student-teacher relationship of high quality, the teacher has to be willing to trust students. This involves the teacher being willing to be vulnerable and self-disclose. Self-disclosure leads to an increase in trust (Wheeless, 1978). Self-disclosure and trust are related, and it is a natural tendency for humans to trust others who self-disclose (Wheeless & Grotz, 1977).

> By communicating with students, instructors reduce uncertainty that in turn increases trust. Therefore, it is “relational” and “individualized” trust that is recommended for our education system in hopes of creating complex instructor-student dynamics in which parties can depend upon one another with a shared vision for success. (Gewertz, 2002, p.3)

When examining trust in students specifically, not all five facets of trust appear the same way. Benevolence takes on a different form. “Because of the lower position of students in the school hierarchy, the nature of vulnerability between teachers and students was quite different from that among teachers or between teachers and principals so trust took on a different form” (Tschannen-Moran, 2004a, p.141). With teacher-student relationships, benevolence is usually characterized as respect (Tschannen-Moran, 2004a). Another facet of trust that changes due to specifically looking at trust in students is competence. Instead of academic competence, it has more to do with their conduct as students (Tschannen-Moran, 2004a).

Goddard et. al (2001) found that "trust was a significant positive predictor of differences among schools in student achievement" (p.3). In their research, they focused on teacher trust as being the key to relationships that connect students to their school. Today, trust is needed for the popular hands-on activities, collaboration lessons, and the required differentiated instructional activities. More and more schools are implementing technology that requires teachers to trust their students. An example includes teachers trusting students to stay on their assigned websites (whether it is the textbook website or research websites) and not visit a website to play games. In order for academic goals to be accomplished, teachers have to trust students and parents.

Student Trust in Teachers

We know that trust relationships between students and teachers play a crucial role in learning. Studies have shown that when student-teacher relationships include trust, then this relationship contributes to the student's performance via school adjustment, academic achievement, and behavior. The quality of relationships between students and teachers impacts the students in numerous ways. The quality of student-teacher relationships is significantly associated with students' behavior (Gregory & Ripski, 2008), adjustment to school (Pianta & Steinberg, 1992; Lee, 2007), engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004), academic success (Tschannen-Moran, 2004b), and completion of high school (Croninger & Lee, 2001).

Gregory and Ripski (2008) found that if teachers use relationship building to earn the trust and cooperation of students, then discipline problems may be prevented (Gregory, Cornell, & Fan, 2011). Hamre and Pianta (2001) stated that the student's ability to form a relationship with their teachers is a unique predictor of behavioral outcomes, and Laupa, Turiel, and Cowan (1995) suggested that the *quality* of the relationship between an adolescent and an authority figure influences the adolescent's decision to obey commands. Student-teacher relationships

significantly influence students' behavioral and overall school adjustment (Baker, et al., 1997; Pianta et al., 1995). Pianta and Steinberg (1992) stated that the student-teacher relationship is related to student adjustment in school. Lee, 2007, "revealed that the student-teacher trust relationship uniquely contributed to students' performance through school adjustment" (p.209). Student-teacher relationships are influential for many years. Pianta (1999) found that teacher-child relationships influenced classroom social adjustment, and research has shown that student-teacher relationships are necessary in helping early and elementary students adjust to school (Birch & Ladd 1997). Student-teacher relationships have also been found to influence student engagement (Osterman, 2000). When students are engaged, "they make a psychological investment in learning" (Lamborn, Newmann, & Wehlage,1992). As Fredricks et al. (2004) explained, engagement is multifaceted and is defined in three ways: behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement. Research shows that all three are influenced by student-teacher relationships (Gregory & Ripski, 2008; Lee, 2007; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). If student-teacher relationships continue (which meet students' social and developmental needs), then a pattern of positive student engagement can exist, which over time can contribute to academic success (Pianta, 1999).

Tschannen-Moran (2004b) stated that trusting relationships between the student and teacher foster student achievement. These student-teacher relationships have lasting effects. Hamre and Pianta's results from their study in 2001 suggested that early teacher-child relationships are unique predictors of academic outcomes. In 2005, they found that students who received emotional support (high quality) in the early grades moderated the risk of early school failure. It continues into the adolescent years as well. Roorda et al. (2011) found that "affective TSRs remained important, or were even more influential, for older students, even into late

adolescence" (p.28). Brake (2020) found teacher-student trust to be very critical in effectively supporting ninth-grade students who were at risk for declines in school academics and engagement. Just as important is the fact that teacher support and caring have been shown to lower the probability of dropping out of school by nearly half (Croninger & Lee, 2001). In a study of high-risk students by Werner and Smith (1982), a student-teacher relationship was determined to be one of the factors that prevented students from dropping out. In a recent study, Holzer and Daumiller (2025) found that trust is not only foundational to effective student-teacher relationships, but both students and teachers perceive trust as a co-constructed process that directly affects student engagement and well-being. Similarly, Fenizia and Parrello (2025) found that school trust is closely linked to students' sense of belonging. When nurtured, this bond supports students' well-being and helps them build academic resilience. Their work underscores how restoring trust in schools can serve as a buffer against student disengagement and dropping out, particularly for vulnerable populations. Additionally, MacLean, Krause, and Rogers (2022) explored how ADHD symptomatology affects the student-teacher relationship and found that strong, positive teacher connections can mitigate the negative impacts of ADHD behaviors on classroom functioning and student outcomes. Romero (2015) also found that students' perceptions of teacher trustworthiness were linked to positive behavioral outcomes and school success, underscoring the role of trust in shaping students' academic pathways.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

According to the American Psychological Association (which adapted its definition from the Encyclopedia of Psychology), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, ADHD,

> is a behavioral condition that makes focusing on everyday requests and routines challenging. People with ADHD typically have trouble getting organized, staying

> focused, making realistic plans and thinking before acting. They may be fidgety, noisy and unable to adapt to changing situations. Children with ADHD can be defiant, socially inept or aggressive. (American Psychological Association, n.d., para. 1)

There are three main core symptoms of ADHD: inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. Over the years, the diagnostic labels for children with impulsive behavioral problems, overactive, and inattentive have changed numerous times; however, the descriptions of the disorder have changed very little (Barkley, 2003). ADHD is a disorder that affects humans of all ages, sexes, and races. It arises in early childhood and continues through development (Barkley, 2003). ADHD is biologically based (treatable, but not curable) and is an educational disability (Pfiffner, Barkley, & DuPaul, 1998).

There are three subtypes of ADHD. They are (a) attention deficit (predominant characteristic is lack of focus), (b) hyperactive (predominant characteristics are lack of self-control and overabundance of energy), and (c) the third subtype is a combination of both attention deficit and hyperactive. For some people with ADHD, they have learned how to deal with it and adapted themselves to where they can succeed. Other adults continue to take medication or possibly still suffer from the symptoms. For the purpose of this literature review and study, I will be referring to just children and will refer to them as students. There are certain characteristics that students with ADHD display in school settings. These students are characterized by inappropriate levels of inattention (sustaining attention), effort, motivation, and/or hyperactivity (Diamantopoulou et al., 2007; Pfiffner et. al, 1998). This will be discussed later in more detail.

"ADHD is associated with functional impairments in different areas of daily life" (Nijmeijer, et al., 2008, p.692). The major areas of impairment that these students face daily are

social, emotional, cognitive, and academic functioning. (Bagwell, Molina, Pelham & Hoza, 2001; Wehmeier et. al, 2010; Nijmeijer et. al, 2008). Each of these areas will now be looked at separately.

ADHD & Social Impairments

Students with ADHD are considered to be 30% or more behind in social skills (Barkley, 2001). In Wehmeier et al.'s (2010) review article on social and emotional impairments involved in ADHD, they noted that more than half of Students with ADHD have "serious problems with peer relationships" (p.210). "The social difficulties tend to be even greater if comorbid disorders such as oppositional defiant disorder or conduct disorder are present, which is the case in approximately 60% of these individuals" (Wehmeier et al., 2010, p.210). Diamantopoulou et al. (2007) found "ADHD symptoms independently predicted social and school functioning" (p.521). The core symptoms mentioned earlier (inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity) affect ADHD students' social skills. A consequence of these ADHD symptoms include students with ADHD are more likely to be unpopular, lack friends, have conflicts with peers and adults, are less likely to be part of group activities, and from developing meaningful relationships (Bagwell et al., 2001; Forness & Kvale, 2001; Nijmeijer et al., 2008). DuPaul and Stoner (2014) noted that students with ADHD find it extremely difficult to start and keep friendships, and Bagwell et al. (2001) believed "as a result from their difficulties in childhood friendships, youths with ADHD may not develop skills that are critical for maintaining friendships into adolescence" (p.1286).

Students with ADHD, like students without ADHD, are interested in socializing with their peers, but their core symptoms (inattention, hyperactivity, impulsivity) keep getting in the way. In 2008, Nijmeijer et al. published a review article that critically reviewed research on social dysfunction in students with ADHD. They stated that "two behavioral elements are

frequently found to be associated with the social impairments of children with ADHD. These are the negative, aggressive nature of their interactions and, furthermore, their hyperactive/impulsive behavior" (p.695). Examples of the first behavioral element (negative and aggressive interactions) include hostile and controlling behavior, rule violations, and the use of verbal and physical aggression while running around, interrupting other's play, yelling, and talking at inappropriate times are examples of the second behavioral element (hyperactive impulsive behavior) (Nijmeijer et al., 2008). It is important to note that students with ADHD who are not hyperactive, impulsive, or aggressive may not exhibit the behavioral traits previously discussed; however, they still experience significant social impairments. Nijmeijer et al. (2008) stated that the core symptom of being inattentive in social situations exhibits itself by being distracted and off-task, having trouble switching roles, and not listening. Students with ADHD who are not hyperactive are often more passive and dreamy. "They also demonstrate more anxiety, shyness, and withdrawal in comparison to children with ADHD with hyperactivity….anxiety, shyness, and withdrawal may all have a negative impact on social function by diminishing the frequency of interaction with others" (Nijmeijer et al., 2008, 695).

Students with ADHD are more likely than their peers to experience social rejection. In fact, sociometric measures have found high rates of peer rejection to be very consistent (DuPaul & Stoner, 2014). Sadly, a study by Bagwell et al. (2001) found that students with ADHD, including adolescent students who no longer met the diagnostic criteria, were rejected during their teenage years more by their peers as compared to adolescent students without ADHD in childhood. Rejection can lead to low self-esteem, and that is not good for any human, with ADHD or not. Having a social impairment has an enormous effect on the ADHD student's quality of life (Wehmeier et al., 2010).

ADHD and Emotional Impairments

Another functional impairment that affects ADHD students' quality of life is emotional impairment. Many times, ADHD has a negative impact on the student's emotional well-being (Wehmeier et al., 2010). Strine et al. (2006) found that "children with a history of ADHD were 6 times as likely as those without ADHD" to have emotional problems and "more than one third of ADHD-diagnosed children" reported to have high levels of emotional difficulties (p.1). Strine et al. (2006) found from their study that:

> Children with a history of ADHD represent a high-risk group for ongoing emotional and behavioral problems and impaired functioning across various social, familial, and educational settings. Impaired functioning in these domains can have a lasting impact on the educational attainment, quality of life, and health status" from the time they are children to the time they are adults (p.5).

Students with ADHD are very likely to have low self-esteem. This is not surprising because "ADHD is known to be related to poor self-esteem" (Wehmeier et al., 2010, p.211). Previously mentioned was just one of the causes – rejection. Kurman, Rothschild-Yakar, Angel, and Katz (2015) discussed how young students with ADHD with low self-esteem were more prone to antisocial behaviors. This finding was supported by the study conducted by Pisecco, Wristers, Swank, Silva, and Baker (2001). Their results "supported the assertion that the presence of early ADHD behaviors would significantly predict the manifestation of later antisocial symptoms" (p.458). The core symptoms of ADHD also contribute to lowering their self-esteem.

Wehmeier et al. (2010) noted that some of the emotional impairments that students with ADHD have may include reduced empathy, poor self-control of emotion, greater difficulty

dealing with frustration, and greater exaggerated emotional expression (especially aggression and anger). It is common for students with ADHD to have other psychiatric disorders that deal with emotions. The most common comorbid disorders of ADHD include oppositional defiance disorder (ODD), depression, and anxiety (Elia, Ambrosini, & Berrettini, 2008; Escobar et al., 2005; Wehmeier et al., 2010). These disorders can greatly impact the lives of students with ADHD. Studies have found emotional impairments to have an impact on ADHD students' quality of life (Escobar et al., 2005; Sciberras, Efron, & Iser, 2011; Wehmeier et al., 2010). The Escobar et al. (2005) study supported this because they found "ADHD interferes with the daily lives of children…even more than asthma primarily in areas related to psychosocial functioning" (p.364).

ADHD and Cognitive Impairments

The last major area of impairment that students with ADHD face daily is cognitive functioning (Bagwell et al., 2001; Wehmeier et al., 2010; Nijmeijer et al., 2008). Students with ADHD who have been administered neuropsychological measures show significant problems in their higher cognitive abilities (Diamantopoulou et al., 2007; Gathercole & Alloway, 2006; Sergeant, Geurts, & Oosterlaan, 2002). This is very likely due to the brain itself.

Physical evidence shows that the brains of students with ADHD differ from those of students without ADHD. Friedman and Rapoport (2015) noted that longitudinal studies have made it possible for detection of irregularities in developmental trajectories in ADHD children. Shaw and his colleagues in their 2007 study of 223 children with ADHD and 223 children without ADHD showed from their 824 magnetic resonance scans that the prefrontal regions (responsible for controlling cognitive processes such as attention) were delayed in ADHD children as compared to the control group. This was true for both surface area and cortical

thickness. Regions of the brain that support cognitive functions have "structural, functional, and neurochemical brain differences" (Castellanos, Sonuga-Barke, Milham & Tannock, 2006, p.117). The specific regions of the brain include the prefrontal cortex, thalamus, and the basal ganglia (Willcutt, Doyle, Nigg, Faraone, & Pennington, 2005). Magnetic resonance imaging has shown the prefrontal cortex (prefrontal lobes) in the brain of students with ADHD to be smaller in size when compared to students without ADHD (Hynd et al., 1991; Yu-Feng et al., 2006; Shaw et al., 2007). More specifically, students with ADHD have slightly larger frontal lobes on the left side, whereas students without ADHD have larger right frontal lobes. (Yeo et al., 2003). The right frontal lobe is associated with sustained attention; something that ADHD students have difficulties with already (Barry, Lyman, & Klinger, 2002).

According to Chayer and Freedman (2001), the frontal lobe has many functions which including attention, executive functioning, memory, language, social and emotional behavior, affect and mood, personality, self-awareness, and theory of mind. "Theory of mind is the ability to be aware of the thoughts and feelings of others and to make inferences about the mental state of others" (Chayer and Freedman, 2001, p.551). This may be one of the reasons that ADHD students have trouble in forming and maintaining relationships, as mentioned earlier. The results from a study by Uekermann et al. (2010) found a relationship between impairments in social cognition (interpreting social cues, perceiving emotions by observing faces, theory of mind, and empathy) and frontal lobe dysfunction in students with ADHD.

Executive functioning (EF), higher cognitive abilities, is one of the functions of the frontal lobe. "For years, research on ADHD has focused on attention problems as the core deficit, but more recently, ADHD has been linked to deficits in executive functioning" (Gropper

& Tannock, 2009, p.574). The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2011) states that:

> Executive function and self-regulation skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. Just as an air traffic control system at a busy airport safely manages the arrivals and departures of many aircraft on multiple runways, the brain needs this skill set to filter distractions, prioritize tasks, set and achieve goals, and control impulses. (p.1)

Barry et al. (2002) developed a more detailed list of what abilities are included under EF. "The heterogeneous list of complex mental abilities considered to be part of the EF constellation generally include: planning and organizing; maintaining an appropriate solving set to achieve a future goal; inhibiting an inappropriate response or deferring a response to a more appropriate time; representing a task mentally (i.e., in working memory); cognitive flexibility; and deduction" that is based on limited information (Barry et al., 2002, p.260). It is known that students with ADHD have disruptions to occur in the EF system of their brain, which causes a weakness (Diamantopoulou et al., 2007; Wehmeier et al., 2010). In fact, a meta-analysis conducted by Willcutt et al. (2005) consisted of 83 studies with over 6700 subjects (groups of ADHD and non-ADHD) and found that the ADHD groups showed impairments in all the EF tasks. Having a weakness in EF does not allow for one to acquire information efficiently nor be able to deploy it effectively (Pfiffner et al., 1998). For students with ADHD, the weakness in EF will show itself as the inability to plan and follow through with those plans, not be able to follow game rules, and as low impulse control (Diamantopoulou et al., 2007). This affects the daily life of students with ADHD in school in multiple ways. In a study by Biederman et al. (2004), 259 children and adolescent participants with ADHD were compared to 222 participants without

ADHD. The students with ADHD with poor EF were compared to students with ADHD with adequate EF. The students with ADHD with poor EF were found to be more at risk for academic failure and grade retention (Biederman et al., 2004).

One of the main categories of executive functioning that needs discussing is working memory. Research has shown that working memory processes are impaired in students with ADHD as compared to their developing peers (Gropper & Tannock, 2009; Kasper, Alderson, and Hudec, 2012; Martinussen, Hayden, Hogg-Johnson, & Tannock, 2005). In the big picture, working memory is the ability to manipulate information within a short amount of time and retain that information (Klingberg, Forssberg & Westerberg, 2002). Many researchers refer to Baddeley's model of working memory in ADHD research. His model of working memory is composed of the central executive (responsible for focusing) and three subsidiary storage systems: the phonological loop, visuospatial sketchpad, and the episodic buffer (Baddeley, 2003;2007).

Students with ADHD are already inattentive. If the ADHD student also has impairment in working memory, then he/she will be even more challenged in the school setting. Examples of this include staying focused and retaining verbal information to write notes, following steps in a math problem, or completing procedures for a science experiment. In the earlier years of school, examples might include repeating sounds in language and learning to write by observation. Studies have shown that working memory is a predictor of academic achievement (Alloway, Gathercole, Kirkwood, & Elliott, 2009; Gropper & Tannock, 2009). Barkley believed that working memory may affect ADHD students' behavior as well (2006). Barkley (2006) noted that inattention "may not be a problem with attention to the immediate environment so much as with attention to the future" and this "may arise from impaired working memory

(holding mental representations actively in mind so as to use them to guide behavior)" and not from filtering or perceptual problems (p.77). This thought coincides with Welsh's (2002) definition of executive function: "a cluster of skills that are necessary for effective future-oriented behavior" (p.143).

In conclusion, the daily life of students with ADHD can be affected by the social, emotional, and cognitive impairments that are associated with ADHD (Nijmeijer et al., 2008). These impairments also have a huge effect on academic achievement for students with ADHD. As the research shows, differences in brain structure and function, particularly in the frontal lobe, can hinder executive functioning. Working memory and executive functioning are both essential for success in school (Barkley, 2006; Shaw et al., 2007; Gropper & Tannock, 2009).

Students with ADHD and Education

The American Psychiatric Association stated that "ADHD is one of the most common mental disorders affecting children" (Parekh, 2015, Topic Information, para. 1). School districts across the country are becoming aware and identifying more students with ADHD, and it is becoming an increasing concern for educators (Forness & Kavale, 2001). ADHD is not a separate category of special education but does account for about 60% of all children in emotional disturbance programs (Schnoes, Reid, Wagner, & Marder, 2006) and ¼ of all learning disability programs (Forness & Kavale, 2001). Barry et al.'s 2002 study found this to be true of their ADHD participants. They discovered that most of the students with ADHD in their study were either LD or had been placed in a special education class at some point in time during their school career.

The most common neurobehavioral disorder of childhood, which often persists into adulthood, is ADHD. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the

percentage of children ages 5-17 with an ADHD diagnosis continues to increase from 7.5% in 2002 to 10.2% in 2014 (National Center for Health Statistics, 2016). That would be approximately 5.9 million 5-17 years of age children have been diagnosed with ADHD in the United States. Statistics show that this disorder is not going away and is affecting more students at an increasing rate (National Center for Health Statistics, 2016). The population of students with ADHD consists of more males than females (Biederman, Faraone, & Monuteaux, 2002; National Center for Health Statistics, 2016).

The three major symptoms of ADHD (inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity) are characteristics that schools require from students. Unfortunately, inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity prevent many students with ADHD from being successful within the classroom. DuPaul and Stoner (2014) described how the core characteristics of ADHD affected students. Inattentiveness causes students to have inconsistent independent seatwork, failure in classwork that requires them to follow multiple steps, poor study skills, the inability to follow group discussions/teacher lectures, and disorganized binders to the point that things are constantly being lost. Hyperactivity not only disrupts activities that the ADHD student is a part of, but also disrupts their classmates' learning. Impulsivity causes students with ADHD to blurt out answers, talk at inappropriate times, and mention non-relevant information.

> Students with ADHD are at risk for significant difficulties in a variety of functional areas. It appears as though problems with attention, impulsivity, and high rates of physical activity serve as a "magnet" for other difficulties that are, in some cases, more severe than the core deficits of ADHD. Of these difficulties, the three most frequent correlates of ADHD are academic underachievement, high rates of noncompliance and aggression, and disturbances in peer relationships. (DuPaul & Stoner, 2014, p.6)

Classrooms today, as they have since the first one-room school, require students to do an enormous amount of sitting, listening, and staying focused for extended amounts of time. Yes, reforms are occurring within education, which does minimize the amount of time of silently learning while sitting still in a seat, but until education has a learning revolution (as Sir Ken Robinson states), the classroom itself will not change, and many students with ADHD will continue to struggle in school.

> Most ADD children will be identified by the time they reach third or fourth grade in school. By this time, they have had school problems for several years with consistent reports of short attention span, distractibility, organizational difficulties, hyperactivity, and self-control problems. They may have been retained in a grade or placed in a transitional program…but nevertheless, their problems will persist despite such interventions.
>
> The course of their disorder in school may improve or deteriorate from year to year, depending to some extent upon a teacher's classroom style and attitude. However, as academic demands requiring attentiveness, organization, planning and independent work increase, the elementary school-aged ADD child's problems generally multiply. (Parker, 2014, p.23)

So, how severe are these school problems? Studies have shown that ADHD symptoms alone are good predictors of academic underachievement (Diamantopoulou et al., 2007). Barry et. al (2002) found that students with more severe ADHD behaviors generally tend to have worse academic achievement. In fact, Cantwell and Baker (1991) stated that 80% of students with ADHD "had learning difficulties (being at least 2 years behind) in reading, spelling, mathematics, or written language" (p.9).

Students with ADHD and Teachers

Wehmeier et al. (2010) noted that "children and adolescents with ADHD are known to have poorer social and communication skills than children and adolescents without ADHD" (p.210). For 60% of students with ADHD with a comorbid disorder, the social difficulties are even more extended (Wehmeier et al., 2010). This would include social and communication skills with teachers. Pfiffner et al. (1998) noted that one of the three key supports students with ADHD needed to be successful in their education was for teachers to be actively engaged with the students.

Many teachers are not as knowledgeable about ADHD as they are other disorders, and misconceptions about ADHD are common (Arcia, Frank, Sanchez-LaCay, & Fernaindez, 2000). In a study that consisted of 21 teachers from three different states by Arcia et al. (2000), the data showed that many teachers did not implement interventions or strategies because of their lack of basic information on ADHD. This has a big impact on ADHD students' academic achievement. "Teachers are not well versed in the behavioral principles needed to design and implement an effective behavioral intervention. This ability…is critical to successful functioning and to maximizing student achievement" (Arcia et al., 2000, p.99).

The characteristics of students with ADHD (academic underachievement and disruptiveness) require a greater demand on the teacher's time and skills, and therefore become more stressful to teach (Arcia et al., 2000; Greene et al., 2002). The more knowledgeable teachers are of ADHD then the more prepared they are to handle students with ADHD. This will allow greater success for not only the students with ADHD, but also for students without ADHD. The teacher can be more effective, feel less stressed, and be able to be actively engaged with the students with ADHD. This engagement encourages student-teacher communication. This

supports the belief of Pfiffner et al. (1998) that “a positive student teacher relationship, based on teacher understanding of the student and the disorder, may improve academic and social functioning” (p.549). This belief was found to be true in the study by Baker and Blacher (2007) where their findings suggested that students with academic, behavioral, or social risk factors can be buffered from these effects by simply having a healthy student-teacher relationship. It is important for students at risk of failing academically to have a healthy student-teacher relationship (Eisenhower et al., 2007; Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

Students with ADHD At-Risk for Dropping Out

Research shows that underachievement is associated with dropping out of school, and students with ADHD are very likely to be academic underachievers (DuPaul & Stoner, 2014; Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992). There are several factors as to why students with ADHD experience significant impairments in school. The minor factors include absenteeism and grade retention. Kent et al. (2011) found that students with ADHD were more likely to be absent from school and that the number of absences increased each year during high school. Research by Barbaresi, Katusic, Colligan, Weaver, and Jacobsen (2007) and Fried et al. (2013) found that it was more common for students with ADHD to have repeated a grade than their non-ADHD peers. The research by Barbaresi et al. (2007) found that students with ADHD were “three times more likely to be retained a grade” (p.265).

The major factor as to why students with ADHD experience significant impairments in school is one of the main characteristics of ADHD: inattention. Using six longitudinal data sets that consisted of about 35,000 participants, Duncan et al. (2007) found that one of the strongest predictors of academic achievement in the later years was attention. Not only is inattentive behavior seen as a predictor of academic achievement, but in the early years of school,

inattentive behavior is a better predictor of academic achievement than any other type of behavior (Duncan et al., 2007). Studies have found that students who entered school with attention problems are associated with lower academic achievement in primary schools (Duncan et al., 2007) and in high school (Breslau et al., 2009). In the study by Breslau et al. (2009), statistics showed that attention problems significantly predicted academic achievement for students at 17 years of age. The studies used standardized tests instead of teacher grades and evaluations. "This finding also strengthens the suggestion that the association between early onset psychiatric disorders and diminished educational attainment at the high school level originates in part in early childhood" (Breslau et al., 2009, p.1475).

It is likely that attention problems negatively impact students beginning in the early years by shaping their classroom learning experiences. In these years, students are acquiring basic foundational skills, which are a necessity in mastering future skills, especially in reading and math. Eventually, this can lead to a problem of motivation in academics, which may initially lead to dropping out of high school. (Breslau et al., 2009). Duncan et al. (2007) found that students with attention problems were less engaged in the classroom and spent less time participating. The effects from this and the consequences of poor academic attainment as they proceed to the higher grades compound the situation (Duncan et al., 2007). In a study by Breslau et al. (2011), the findings showed that all three types of ADHD were associated with increased chances of not graduating from high school on time. However, the two types of inattention (inattentive and combined type) had a much stronger association with the risk of graduation than just the hyperactive type alone. This would support the idea that inattentive problems affect students during their education.

There is an abundance of research that provides strong evidence of the association between high school dropout and students with ADHD, and this research also supports ADHD as a risk factor for high school dropout (Barkley et al., 2006; Breslau et al., 2011; Chalita et al., 2012; Currie & Stabile, 2006; Fredriksen et al., 2014; Fried et al., 2013; Kent et al., 2011; Trampush, Miller, Newcorn & Halperin, 2009). In an inclusive study of academic functioning among ADHD high school students by Kent et al. (2011), the results showed ADHD adolescents were significantly more likely to fail math, English, science and social studies throughout their high school years and "8.1 times more likely to drop out of high school" than non-ADHD participants (p.460). In the study by Breslau et al. (2011), the findings showed that all three types of ADHD were associated with elevated risk of failure to graduate from HS on time, but the types that include inattention-the inattentive and combined types-had stronger associations with graduation than the type that does not include inattention (the hyperactive type) (p.299).

Students with ADHD are very likely to be on a path that leads to dropping out (Barkley, 2002a; Breslau et al., 2011). Without receiving a high school diploma, students with ADHD will become even more handicapped. When students drop out of school, it cuts students off from an important resource – teachers. "Teachers seem to represent an especially important source of social capital available to adolescents in considering whether to stay or leave" high school (Croninger & Lee, 2001, p.554).

There are many negative outcomes for those who drop out of high school. Stark and Noel (2015) noted in the National Center for Education Statistics report titled *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972-2012* that high school dropouts have a higher unemployment rate, are in worse health, and earn approximately $21,000 less income per year. Dropping out of high school is not only a problem for students with ADHD,

but also for society. In the same report, Stark and Noel (2015) reported on average that high school dropouts have a higher reliance on Medicare and Medicaid, a higher dependence on welfare, have higher rates of criminal activity and finally "costs the economy approximately $250,000 over his or her lifetime in terms of lower taxes" (p.12). Not only do taxpayers have to ultimately pay expenses for some of the ADHD high school dropouts, but taxpayers also pay more for students with ADHD in school. The estimated annual cost of an ADHD student to the United States education system is $5,007, whereas a non-ADHD student cost $318 (Robb et al., 2011).

Conclusion

The quality of student-teacher relationships is significantly correlated with engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004), adjustment to school (Lee, 2007; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992), behavior (Gregory & Ripski, 2008), academic success (Tschannen-Moran, 2004b), and completion of high school (Croninger & Lee, 2001); which are all problem areas for students with ADHD. We know from research that student-teacher relationships are critical for students at risk of academic failure such as students with ADHD and that healthy student-teacher relationships can help decrease some of the negative consequences from bad experiences and even be used as a strategy for promoting resiliency among students with ADHD at risk of academic failure (Pianta & Steinberg, 1992; Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Noam et al., 2001; Eisenhower et al., 2007). Healthy student-teacher relationships allow teachers to provide social capital, and students with ADHD could definitely benefit from this since social skills are an impairment for them (Croninger & Lee, 2001).

Students with ADHD benefit from healthy student-teacher relationships in so many ways. But, in order for student-teacher relationships to exist, students with ADHD must trust their

teacher. After all, trust is the key building block in healthy student-teacher relationships and is the heart of healthy student-teacher relationships that enable disadvantaged students (such as students with ADHD) to learn (Goddard et al., 2001; Meier, 2002). Teachers need to be knowledgeable of ADHD and be vulnerable so that students with ADHD view them as benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open so that trust may begin to form (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Fortunately, scholarly research has identified the benefits of trusting relationships, especially teachers trusting students. However, very little research has been conducted on the students' perspective of trusting teachers. Empirical research on students trusting teachers is not massive, nor is the role that relationships with teachers have played in students' decisions to drop out or remain in school. This question is particularly relevant to students with ADHD and remains unaddressed in the literature. This study attempted to fill in this void with information about ADHD student-teacher relationships.

Chapter 3: Methods

Schools are always trying to "fix things" and "make things better." Areas of reconstruction may include improving the teacher's knowledge of the subject area, gaining insight to the life of a child in poverty, guiding the teacher in learning how to ask higher-order thinking questions, or possibly how to differentiate instruction. These are areas that can be beneficial, but they target one area, much like a Band-Aid. There is a tool educators can put in their toolbox. This tool is found in healthy relationships between students and teachers that heal many areas, and it meets the social, emotional, and academic needs of students (Adams 2010; Goddard et al., 2001; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Roorda et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2000). This tool is trust.

The benefits of trusting relationships, particularly teachers trusting students, have been identified in scholarly research (Eisenhower et al., 2007; Gregory & Ripski, 2008; Osterman, 2000; Tschannen-Moran, 2004a). However, there is little research on the students' perspective of trusting teachers (Adams & Forsyth, 2009; Lee, 2007; Yu et al., 2018). Research in the area of student-teacher relationship state the benefits of trust between students and teachers (Adams 2010; Roorda et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2000), higher quality relationships produce additional benefits (Gregory & Ripski, 2008; Osterman, 2000; Tschannen-Moran, 2000b, Yu et al., 2018), student-teacher relationships are valuable for students placed at risk of academic failure to be prosperous (Eisenhower, et al., 2007; Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005), and high-quality student-teacher relationships can have a buffering effect on academic and behavioral outcomes for students with academic, behavioral, and social risk factors (Eisenhower et al., 2007); which are common for students with ADHD (Strine et al., 2006). So, the overarching question I sought to answer was this: **By exploring the students' perspectives and experiences**

in student-teacher relationships, how did trust relate to their graduation decision? Data from this study provided a deeper examination of trust as it related to students with ADHD and offered practical advice for nurturing healthy, trusting relationships with students. By conducting a narrative inquiry design, I was able to hear student voices. The following research questions were addressed:

1. According to the stories of students with ADHD 19-28 years of age or older, how do they describe their experience with trust in their teacher relationships?
2. According to the stories of students with ADHD 19-28 years of age or older, how do they describe their experience of the different ways trust helped them form quality relationships in their student-teacher relationships?
3. According to the stories of students with ADHD 19-28 years of age or older, how and to what extent did teachers play a role in their decision to complete/drop out of high school?

Why This Study is Suited to a Qualitative Design

Creswell (2013) stated that qualitative research is appropriate to use when an issue needs to be explored, and such exploration was necessary to hear the unheard voices. Qualitative research is also conducted when the researcher wants individuals to feel empowered and share their stories so their experiences can be understood (Creswell, 2013; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). This study allowed me to hear those silenced student voices and experiences. There is very little empirical research on student-teacher relationships, and a void in the field of ADHD student-teacher relationships. “Qualitative research can reveal how all the parts work together to form a whole” (Merriam, 1998, p.6). Because I was exploring how students, teachers, and trust (the parts) functioned together in quality relationships (the whole) and how these relationships influenced students’ decisions to complete or drop out of high school, I chose to conduct a

qualitative study. According to Bowen (2005), qualitative research's main strength is that it generates data that provides detail and depth to develop an understanding of lived experiences and phenomena. By choosing the method of narrative research, I attempted to understand the world from the students' points of view, to "unfold the meaning of their experiences," and find out why the students reacted to student-teacher relationships as they did (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p.3).

The Specific Methodology Employed

Several qualitative methods are available to researchers. For the purpose of this study, narrative inquiry was selected. According to the *SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry* by Schwandt (2007), the definition of narrative inquiry methodology is "a broad term encompassing the interdisciplinary study of the activities involved in generating and analyzing stories of life experience (e.g., life histories, narrative interviews, journals, diaries, memories, autobiographies, and biographies) and reporting that kind of research" (p.203). Creswell (2007) noted that narrative inquiry is a distinct type of qualitative design and according to Czarniawska, 2004, "narrative is understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected" (p.17). In this study, I explored the events and actions that occurred between the students and teachers.

Rationale for Research Approach

I chose to use Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) approach to narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Connelly are both narrative experts, and their approach to narrative inquiry is well-known in education research (Creswell, 2013). Their approach allowed me to understand the experiences of students with ADHD that might have otherwise remained unheard. Clandinin and Connelly believed that narrative is the best way of understanding and representing experience. Because

experience happens narratively, "educational experience should be studied narratively" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.19).

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) stated that a narrative study allows experience to be "reflected in the stories people tell, and through an inquiry into these stories, narrative inquiry researchers hope to understand more about why people do what they do" (p.413). Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "believe that research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making a difference in people's lives" (p.1). That was precisely what I intended to generate through my narrative research. I aimed to develop a better understanding of healthy ADHD student-teacher relationships and trust, determine whether these relationships were related to students' graduation decisions, and provide practical advice for nurturing healthy, trusting relationships with students. To ensure that participants could contribute to the purpose of the study, criteria were established for selecting individuals (Mirriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Reflexivity

Because I was a qualitative researcher, I served as the primary research instrument (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Given that the human research instrument carries biases, assumptions, and limitations that could influence the study, it was critical for me to communicate who I was in order to disclose the assumptions and biases that may have been present throughout the research (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I have been a classroom teacher for 29 years. I was diagnosed with ADD in my late twenties, and one of my children was diagnosed with ADHD in 1st grade. I have now experienced ADD as a student (grades K-12 and college), as a wife, as a mom, and as a teacher. As a teacher, I have seen students with ADHD who were successful in some classes and in others they were not. Many of my students, including those

with ADHD, were consistently successful in my classroom, and I often reflected on what contributed to that success. I thought it was because I made learning fun. During my doctoral classes, I learned that students were more successful in classes where they trusted their teacher. This made me wonder if there was a connection between trust and my successful students with ADHD. I looked at myself as a teacher through the lens of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's five facets of trust (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000) and learned more about myself as a teacher. I have always been able to understand and connect to students with ADHD because I am one of them. Throughout my educational experience, I encountered teachers I trusted and others I did not. Some relationships with teachers were meaningful and supportive, while others were virtually nonexistent. I have had teachers who encouraged me and kept pushing me, and I have had teachers who tore me down. I have walked in their shoes. ADHD has been and will continue to be a part of WHO I AM.

Because of who I am, I held certain assumptions that needed to be acknowledged. I assumed that my participants and I had shared some similar experiences as students with ADHD. Because of this common link, I believed I would be able to understand and relate to some of their reasoning and perspectives. I also believed that I would be able to ask more insightful questions when clarification or elaboration was needed. As a researcher, I worked diligently to avoid assumptions. I continuously asked myself, "What am I projecting onto the data based on my life experiences and beliefs?" as suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016).

Now that the study is complete, I can reflect more fully on my role as a researcher and the impact of my identity on the process. Being an adult with ADD and a teacher of students with ADHD shaped how I listened, responded, and interpreted the stories that were shared. I found myself emotionally invested in many of the narratives, not only because of what I heard

but because I had felt similar things as a student and as a parent. This emotional connection helped build rapport with participants, but it also required constant awareness of my subjectivity.

There were moments during interviews when I had to remind myself to stay in the role of listener and not “fix” or offer suggestions, as I would in a classroom. I was not there to teach, but instead I was there to learn from their stories. Writing field notes and keeping a reflexive journal became essential practices for me. They gave me space to pause, step back, and examine whether my reactions or assumptions might be influencing the data or my analysis.

In hindsight, my shared experience with ADHD was both a strength and a responsibility. It allowed me to hear things that may have been overlooked by others, but it also meant I had to work hard to ensure I was not leading or assuming. I believe I was successful in that balance, but I only know that because I constantly reflected on my position throughout the process.

Qualitative research and narrative analysis were the right fit for me because I was aware of how little research focused on students’ perspectives regarding student–teacher relationships and trust. This lack of representation concerned me. As a teacher, I had always believed it was essential to listen to my students. By hearing their perspectives, I was able to identify what was effective in my classroom and what was not. My students were often able to see things that I could not see from my position. Even when it pertained to discipline, I listened. I always listened to the student’s story before taking disciplinary action so I could understand what actually happened and whether the student deserved the consequence. Listening to my students was important to me, and I believed it was equally important to them. I also believed that listening was essential to building relationships. For this reason, I spent a great deal of time listening to my participants’ experiences. As the narrative enquirer, I entered into what is known as research relationships (Clandinin, 2016). The participant and I were in the middle of our individual lives,

yet "when our lives come together in an inquiry relationship, we are in the midst" (Clandinin, 2013, p.32). Our lives were shaped by tending to present, past, and future unfolding cultural, linguistic, familial, and institutional narratives (Clandinin, 2016). I always knew that I wanted to conduct qualitative research because it would allow me to listen to students' voices and, in turn, help their voices be heard by others. I chose narrative analysis as my qualitative research design because it allowed my research questions to be answered through listening to their stories. I wanted to hear what students had to say and learn from their experiences. "Narrative analysis uses the stories people tell, analyzing them in various ways, to understand the meaning of the experiences as revealed in the story" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24)

Design

I used Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) approach to narrative research as a guide. Clandinin and Connelly's approach to narrative inquiry is used by many educational researchers (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Their methods of conducting a narrative study do not have linear steps that must be followed or a specific set of procedures (Clandinin, 2013; Creswell, 2013). Instead, Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) approach is a fluid inquiry "that is open to where the stories of participants' experience take each researcher" (Clandinin, 2013; p.25). Creswell (2013) noted specific procedures that occur in their approach, and I used these procedures as a guide. The first procedure was to determine if my research question even fit narrative research. My research question required participants to provide descriptive accounts of their student-teacher relationship experiences over time and how trust related to their decision to graduate. There were six participants. Narrative research "is best for capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of… a small number of individuals" (Creswell, 2013; p.55). As the

researcher, I began by developing a list of initial and follow-up questions, along with probing prompts, to guide my conversations with participants (see Appendix A).

The second procedure, Creswell (2013) explained, is to select individuals who have the life experiences or stories to tell and spend time with them. This was where I gathered my data, which Clandinin and Connelly (2000) referred to as "field texts." Field texts are "experiential, intersubjective texts rather than objective texts. Field texts are co-compositions that are reflective of the experiences of researchers and participants" (Clandinin, 2013; p.34). The field texts were my records, which included transcripts of conversations and field notes. My field notes consisted of observations and notes taken during my interviews and conversations. I chose to use a research journal because it provided a place for my reflections on the data and became "more self-aware not only of his or her biases and assumptions but also of the reason for making certain decisions and to obtain insight into his or her own behavior" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.37). My research journal included notes regarding my reactions during data collection and the reactions of the students as well (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Upon IRB approval, I began scheduling, conducting, and recording the semi-structured interviews and conversations. All of this required me to interact with my participants and form a relationship.

The third procedure, Creswell (2013) noted, had me collecting information about the context of the stories told. I, as the narrative inquirer, had to "situate individual stories within participants' personal experiences, their culture, and their historical contexts" (Creswell, 2013, p.56). This was also the time when I approached the data from a narrative perspective, which, according to Clandinin (2013), involved the phenomenological components of time, social interactions, and place. Clandinin and other narrative researchers refer to these three components as the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality, and place

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In understanding a narrative inquiry, these commonplaces (temporality, sociality, and place) need to be explored by the inquirer (Clandinin, 2016). Further explanation of the commonplaces is warranted. Clandinin (2016) stated that by attending to events under study in temporal ways, the researcher will be pointed toward the "past, present, and future of people, places, things, and events under study" (p.29). Temporality is the very "when" that is embedded within the participant's stories. Chan, Keyes, and Ross (2012) explained that "narrative inquirers play with the boundary of time" (p.5). Narrative inquirers envision that the experiences told may have happened in a different order, while also reimagining how the sequence of events influences the meaning derived from the experience (Chan et. al, 2012). As the researcher, one ultimately chooses the event that will be the beginning point of the narrative data that is being interpreted. However, the researcher will find themselves in the beginning of the story "drawing past experiences or details forward that occurred chronologically earlier or even later (perhaps even beyond the end point of the story) in order to make clearer or provide evidence for the meaning we are making" (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2012, p.5). This is why Clandinin and Connelly, 2006, stated that "events under study are in temporal transition" (p. 479). Another commonplace of narrative inquiry is sociality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). According to Clandinin (2016), sociality includes social and personal conditions that must both be attended to simultaneously. Social conditions are mainly understood in terms of social, cultural, institutional, linguistic, and familial narratives (Clandinin, 2016). These social conditions are revealed as the participants' events and experiences unfold (Clandinin, 2016). The personal conditions of the participant and inquirer being attended include the "feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006, p. 480). The commonplace sociality must also examine the social relationship developed

between the researcher and the participant (Clandinin, 2016). The third commonplace is place. Place is defined as "the specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006, p. 480). Clandinin (2016) mentioned that stories, people, and place are intertwined, and recognizing that all events have to occur somewhere is the key to the commonplace of place. The commonplaces require narrative inquirers to look inward to their moral responses, emotions, and their aesthetic reactions and observe how these are molded by family stories and narratives, social and cultural narratives, and even institutional narratives (Clandinin, 2016). These commonplaces also require narrative inquirers to turn outward and observe what is occurring to the people and events in their experiences (Clandinin, 2016). Narrative inquirers ponder concurrently forward and backward, outward and inward, with consideration to places (Clandinin, 2016). "As we think within the three commonplaces, we need to remind ourselves that we are within the metaphorical three-dimensional space with participants. These spaces, shaped as they are, are in the making and always open to revision change" (Clandinin, 2016, p.30). "Attending to experience through attending to all three commonplaces simultaneously is, in part, what distinguishes narrative inquiry from other methodologies" (Clandinin, 2016, p.29). I attended to the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality, and place. I considered the timing of events in participants' lives, the social and personal conditions surrounding their experiences, and the physical settings in which those experiences occurred. These elements helped me interpret their stories more fully and understand how trust in student–teacher relationships influenced their educational paths.

The fourth procedure, Creswell (2013) stated, required me to "restory." Many times, when stories are told, the stories are not shared in chronological order. I gathered the

participants' stories and reorganized them within a chronological sequence to better understand their experiences before retelling the narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013). I also worked with the participants to create timelines of the events they shared, helping both of us make sense of how the stories unfolded. Not only did the process of creating the timelines support "restorying", but it also aligned with Creswell's (2013) final procedure of including participants in the research process by encouraging collaboration. After the initial interviews, I asked participants which questions were meaningful or possibly unclear. Based on their suggestions, I revised and reordered some prompts to create a more natural flow of conversation. On one occasion, I shared a portion of my research journal with a participant so they could see how their words influenced my thinking and offer any feedback. These collaborative practices helped ensure that participants remained engaged in shaping how their experiences were shared and interpreted.

Participants

The rationale for selecting participants in this qualitative study was based on a theoretical strategy. The participants in a theoretical strategy are not chosen based on the concern for representativeness, but instead are chosen for their relevance to the research question and explanation being generated in the research (Schwandt, 2014). In a narrative study, the researcher focuses more on whom to sample because the participants must have a story to tell. I wanted my participants to have been diagnosed with ADHD and be of a certain age. Because of this, I chose to use criterion sampling.

Criterion sampling requires all participants to meet certain criteria. Therefore, the participants are purposefully chosen. The criteria for this study required that all participants were between the ages of 19 and 28, had graduated or not graduated from a public or private

high school, and had been diagnosed with ADHD by a medical professional. Because one of my research questions required data from both graduates and non-graduates, I included participants who had either graduated from high school or had not. My goal was for school graduates to represent 50% of the participants, with non-graduates comprising the other 50%. This goal was successfully achieved. In order for participants to have had the opportunity to graduate or not graduate from high school, they needed to be at least 18 years old. Because of late birthdays or academic retention, it was possible that students might not have graduated until age 19. Due to these possibilities, I required all participants to be 19 years of age or older. Additionally, since the study relied on detailed recollections and individuals tend to forget specifics over time, I required all participants to be no older than 28 years of age. The last criterion required that participants had been diagnosed with ADHD by a medical professional, rather than by a teacher or parent. This was to ensure that the participant had a confirmed diagnosis of ADHD and not one based solely on opinion. In summary, all graduate and non-graduate participants had been students who had the opportunity to complete high school and were between the ages of 19-28, had experiences forming student-teacher relationships, and had received a formal ADHD diagnosis from a medical professional.

One of the key features of qualitative sampling is that "qualitative researchers usually work with *small* samples of people, nested in their context and studied in-depth" (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014, p.31). In other words, it was appropriate to have a few participants as long as the research was more focused on detail and depth. Corbin and Strauss (2015) noted that there is no specific number of participants. Patton (1990) believed that the quality of the data was more important than the quantity of data. The number of individuals being interviewed alone does not disclose the quality of the data (Roy, Zvonkovick, Goldberg, Sharp, LaRossa,

2015). “There are many circumstances where a small-N study yields a voluminous set of high-quality information, because of the depth of information” (Roy, et al, 2015, p.245). Therefore, the number of participants was not a major concern of this narrative inquiry, but instead, an in-depth understanding of the participants’ experiences was of major concern. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) suggested that qualitative researchers set boundaries that allow the researcher to study within one’s means and time. For these reasons, I had six participants based on criterion sampling.

Recruiting

Once I had determined the criteria that participants needed to meet, my next step was to develop a recruitment strategy to identify and enroll eligible participants. My first strategy was to contact individuals who had expressed an interest in participating in my research. Over the years, I had casually mentioned my project to others while out in public. One participant came from a conversation I had while waiting for a medical procedure. Another expressed interest after his mother told him about my research. I asked each of these individuals to refer others who might meet the criteria. I gave my email address to the original participants, granting them permission to share my email address with possible participants. This approach was an example of my next step in gaining participants, which involved using a snowball sampling technique, a method commonly used in qualitative research (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). The definition of snowball sampling is where the original participants were used to recruit additional participants; therefore, the number of participants grows like a rolling snowball (Schwandt, 2014). My third recruitment strategy was to post a shortened version of the flyer on Facebook, allowing interested participants to contact me via the email address provided. The final strategy involved reaching out to psychologists and therapists to help distribute flyers to

young adults with ADHD who had recently graduated or left high school. However, I ultimately did not need to implement either of these strategies, as I was able to recruit all participants through earlier methods.

Before I began interviewing my participants, they had read over the consent form. The consent form explained the purpose of the study and stated that the interview would be audio recorded. The participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The form clearly stated that participation was voluntary and that they could choose to answer some, all, or none of the questions. Once I heard from a potential participant, I sent them a copy of the consent form to review at their convenience. My contact information was included in case they had any questions. At the beginning of the first interview, I emailed the participant another copy of the same consent form. I then gave them time to review it again and ask any questions they had. After we discussed their questions, the participant either signed and returned the form, and the interview proceeded, or they declined participation, and the interview ended. Before each interview, I reminded the participant that they could stop and withdraw consent at any time without any penalties.

Data Collection

Conversations and interviews as conversations addressed the research questions. This form of data collection is frequently used in narrative research (Clandinin, 2013; Creswell, 2013). Conversations are used more frequently than interviews to compose field texts (Clandinin, 2013). Conversations are more engaging than interviews. Clandinin (2013) explained that "conversations create a space for the stories of both participants and researchers to be composed" and "conversations are not to be guided by predetermined questions" (p.33). I was able to gain an understanding of each participant's point of view by actively listening and

engaging in authentic interactions with each of them (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Because I needed structure to help guide my questioning, I conducted a minimum of three semi-structured interview sessions with each participant. I planned for additional interviews and conversations to occur as needed until each participant's story was complete. I chose to conduct three interviews because I expected to get a bulk of each participant's story during that time, and to prepare for the possibility that a participant might not have more to share. The first interview and conversation included an introduction to the study, information about me, and questions to gather background information. The second session included a recap of the first interview and included follow-up questions as well as new questions about trust. The third session provided a recap of the second interview and addressed any additional questions that emerged. I engaged with each participant in a series of at least three conversations shaped by the research questions around how students with ADHD experienced trust in their teacher relationship and how these student-teacher relationships influenced their decision to stay or leave school. The ultimate goal was to hear the students' stories on student-teacher trust as it informed their school decisions. Each conversation used a semi-structured format. Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) described semi-structured interviews as a guide that will contain topics in an outlined format that need to be covered with suggested questions. This allowed me to be flexible in expanding on specific questions. After I had asked the participant to tell me a story about their experiences, my main role as the narrative interviewer was to remain quiet, avoid interrupting, listen carefully, and ask questions for clarification or to help the participant continue their story (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). I was aware that I was a co-producer of the narrative and that my job was to encourage the telling of their story (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The interview began with introductory questions (Questions 1-5) to help everyone feel at ease while gathering background information.

The remaining questions were asked or modified depending on time and how the conversations flowed. All interviews were conducted on Zoom, recorded with audio, and automatically transcribed using Zoom's transcript feature. Because I was not a fast writer, I found this very comforting. Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) stated that using an audio recorder allows the interviewer to be able to concentrate on the dynamics of the interview and on the topic. This allowed me, as the interviewer, to concentrate on my field notes and memos without worrying that I had missed something. Recording the interview through Zoom allowed me to listen to the conversations multiple times.

The *SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry* by Schwandt (2014) described field notes as a type of evidence on which analysts base claims about understanding and meaning. According to Schwandt (2014), there is no standard definition of field notes or their contents. The researcher defines it to meet their needs. I defined field notes as my data, which included notes in my field notebook taken during the interviews and conversations. I had my interview questions and prompts listed with plenty of space under each question for both descriptive and reflective notes. I used a field notebook to write detailed descriptions of what I saw, heard, and experienced. I used Zoom to record the participants' spoken words and the field notebook to record their non-verbal communication. The field notebook served not only to record what I observed, but also to capture what I experienced.

Data Analysis

My data collection method consisted of a minimum of three sets of interviews and conversation sessions per participant. The participants were involved in semi-structured interviews with prompts. Each interview took place on Zoom, where audio was recorded, and Zoom's transcription feature was used to transcribe the conversations and interviews with each

participant. My field texts were primarily composed of conversation transcripts, and my field notes were also included. I used two different approaches to analyze my data. The first approach mirrored Clandinin's method of analysis, and the second was a priori coding.

I used Clandinin's (2013) *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry* to help guide me in analyzing the data. Immediately after each conversation, I had it transcribed. While I waited for Zoom to send me the transcript, I played the audio and listened to it. The first time I listened, I placed myself back into the conversation and paid attention to any feelings I had during the interview. I wrote down additional notes in my field notes. Sometimes, Zoom's automatic transcript feature typed incorrect words or phrases. After receiving the transcription, I followed Clandinin's recommendation to listen to the recording and read the transcript at the same time to check for accuracy. Listening while reading allowed me to catch errors in the transcription and correct them before continuing my analysis. I found this step important in making sure the participants' words were accurate. After that second review, I listened to the audio one more time while rereading the transcript, this time focusing more deeply on the meaning within the conversation. I then followed Corbin and Strauss's (2015) advice to read the full interview again without beginning any formal analysis. Their advice was to enter vicariously into the participants' lives, feel what they were experiencing, and truly hear what they were saying through their words (p. 86).

The next step required me to take notes while thinking within the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry: sociality, temporality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As the previous steps occurred, I made notes about what I wanted to explore in the next conversation. I also noted any moments of tension that the participant experienced so I could revisit them in the following interview. Therefore, data collection and analysis were performed simultaneously,

allowing me to use the results from the first interview to help guide the second interview (Miles et al, 2014). Clandinin (2013) discussed how one needed to make sure not to become too focused on the words in the transcript but instead stay focused on the overall narrative. I used the information from the first interview to help develop semi-structured questions for the second interview. Before the second interview, I developed a timeline on paper so the participant could check it for accuracy and add anything they wished. I added data to the timeline after each interview. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated that a timeline helped researchers make sense of some of the participants' experiences.

During the second interview, I allowed the participant to respond to the first draft of the narrative account. All of the previous steps were repeated. After the second interview, I transcribed the new data, reread the transcript, and listened to the audio again. I continued this process until I had gathered the participant's full story. I then began to create a draft of the narrative account of the participant and me in relation, using our conversations, all my notes, the timeline, and by working within the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry: sociality, temporality, and place (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The narrative draft represented the participant's experiences chronologically. I gave the participant a copy of the draft and a pencil. I read the draft out loud, allowing the participant to stop me at any time to add or delete anything that needed to be changed. It was important that the participant felt comfortable with their written story.

Once I had completed the narrative accounts of all my participants, I proceeded to what Clandinin (2014) calls the "second level of analysis" (p.98). At this stage, I looked across the "individual narrative accounts to inquire into resonant threads or patterns" that emerged (Clandinin, 2014; p.98). I followed plotlines that wove together place and time within each

participant's story. Clandinin (2014) explained that this process involved searching for "resonances or echoes" that are repeated across the narrative accounts. Clandinin (2014) does not search for common themes across participants. Clandinin and Connelly believe in holding on to storied lives and not reducing the stories to themes or categories (Clandinin, 2014). This was not the final unit of analysis. The final unit of analysis consisted of the narrative "restory" that presented each participant's experiences in chronological order.

My next step in analyzing the data had me focused on "trust'. To better understand which aspects of trust were most commonly present or potentially problematic in student-teacher relationships, I narrowed my focus specifically to trust. It was at this time that I analyzed the data using an a priori coding scheme based on the definition of "trust". I used the definition of trust by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy as the a priori lens through which I passed my data. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2000) multidimensional definition of trust is composed of benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. The codebook, which contains a list of these a priori codes along with their definitions, can be found in Appendix B. The a priori coding method was best suited to answering my first two research questions in this study.
Another tool I used to analyze my data was the computer program, Atlas.ti. Miles and Huberman (1994) explained Atlis.ti as a "code-and-retrieve program" that "helps you divide text into segments or chunks, attach codes to the chunks, and find and display all instances of coded chunks" (p.312).

It is unavoidable, but every researcher brings their own biases and assumptions to their research. I am human and was the primary instrument for collecting data. Therefore, the data was filtered through my biases and particular theoretical position (Merriam, 1998). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that the researcher and the participant both bring biases to the interview that

will affect the data. However, it was important to identify the biases and monitor them so that I was aware of how they shaped “the collection and interpretation of the data” (Meriam and Tisdell, 2016, p.16). When it came to data analysis, biases and assumptions had the potential to significantly impact the process (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To guard against these influences while analyzing and coding the data on trust, one of the first strategies I implemented was keeping a research journal. The research journal allowed me to record impressions, responses, and feelings and to document any “biases that cannot be controlled” (Merriam, 1998). Corbin and Strauss (2015) noted that the journal is an effective tool in helping the researcher to remain “aware.”

Many researchers believe it is helpful to have others review and analyze your work to increase awareness of potential biases and strengthen the study’s credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1995; Merriam, 1998; Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al, 2014). Therefore, I included the techniques of peer review and member checks. Peer reviewers weighed the value of my findings against their own interpretation of the data (Miles et al, 2014). Peer reviewing served to assist me by providing fresh eyes on the data, while member checks used the participants’ eyes to check my work. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stressed this with Maxwell’s explanation of how important member checking actually is: “This is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do…as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstanding of what you observed” (Maxwell, 2013, pp.126-127).

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) coined the term “trustworthiness” to describe a set of criteria that judges the quality of qualitative research. It answers the big question of “Is it noteworthy to

readers?" The four criteria of trustworthiness include: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Because I wanted my project to be considered trustworthy, I worked to meet all four criteria.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) believed that of all the factors establishing trustworthiness, credibility was the most important. Credibility requires my results from the study to be plausible. I made sure that my participants' views and what I reported matched (Schwandt, 2007). To add credibility to my research, I implemented several techniques. The first strategy was my research method of interviewing. Conducting interviews and then transcribing them into data are well-established research methods. I used member checking, as recommended by Lincoln, and Guba (1985), to enhance credibility. Member checking allowed the participants to review the data they provided during the interviews. Each participant was given a copy of their transcripts, analysis, and drafts to ensure shared meaning and agreement before anything became final. I also used the technique of peer reviewing/debriefing to help verify the credibility of my data and reduce the influence of my personal bias (Lather, 1986). I selected two peer reviewers to examine my analyses (Miles et al., 2014). Both reviewers were educators and understood the importance of peer reviews in research. One of the peer reviewers completed a qualitative research project and was very knowledgeable about the process. The other peer reviewer conducted a quantitative research project, but had strong expertise in ADHD.

The second criterion of trustworthiness by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is transferability. This criterion ensured that my results were contextually relevant. By providing thick, rich descriptions, I brought the participants' stories to life. Schwandt's *SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry (2014)* defined transferability as the researcher's "responsibility for providing readers with sufficient information on the case studied such that readers could

establish the degree of similarity between the case studied and the case to be transferred" (p.370).

Dependability is the third criterion of trustworthiness. It required that my results remain stable and ensured "the process was logical, traceable, and documented" (Schwandt, 2007, p.299). To meet this requirement, I used the technique of auditing. My audit trail was very detailed and precise, providing documentation that captured the development and completion of my research. Other researchers should easily be able to follow my audit trail and replicate my procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles et al., 2014).

The last criterion of trustworthiness outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is confirmability. Confirmability established that the conclusions were not simply based on my personal opinions. To meet this requirement, I used the technique of reflexivity. I maintained a reflexive journal to explore and self-critique my experiences, biases, and thoughts throughout the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2013). I also warranted my assertions with supporting data.

Ethics

Before I began my study, I received approval from the Auburn University Institutional Review Board by completing the required application. I also completed the mandatory CITI Social/Behavioral group training for this study. The data were recorded in a way that the participants could be directly or indirectly identified. The data collection involved the use of interviews and audio recordings. The participant population consisted of males and females, and I did not provide compensation. While breach of confidentiality posed a potential risk, participants were not expected to experience any physical or emotional discomfort. They were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time, which helped reduce any possible

distress. The participants were not part of a vulnerable population. They were told that they did not have to answer any questions they were uncomfortable with and could withdraw at any time. These precautions helped minimize risk. All identifying information was deleted after I completed the transcriptions. Participants were not assigned codes. The only link between the audio recordings and the participants was their voice. Consent forms, audiotapes, transcripts, memos, and my research journal were stored in a locked file cabinet at my house. Audio recordings and transcripts were also saved on a password-protected, encrypted computer using the Auburn Box Cloud Storage. Once the study was finalized, the audio recordings were deleted, and the final transcripts used pseudonyms to protect participant identities.

Before I began interviewing my participants, each one signed an informed consent form. This was done via email. The consent form outlined what was involved in participating in the project. It explained that participation in the study was completely voluntary, and that the participant could withdraw from the research study at any time.

Significance and Limitations

As I prepared to conduct this study, I anticipated several limitations that would be unavoidable. A limitation I expected to encounter involved establishing relational trust with participants. As a narrative inquirer, I needed to build strong, authentic relationships in order to access meaningful stories. I was aware that this process might take time and could influence how much participants disclosed. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained, "it is crucial to be able to articulate a relationship between one's personal interests and sense of significance and larger social concerns expressed in the works and lives of others" (p.122). This awareness guided my efforts to form genuine connections with each participant.

Another limitation I anticipated was my inexperience as a new researcher. As Corbin and Strauss (2015) noted, there are limits to what can be discovered based on the researcher's access to data and analytic experience. I addressed these limitations by relying on peer review, using member checking, and maintaining a research journal to monitor my assumptions and decisions throughout the study. These strategies helped me remain reflective and responsive as I moved through the research process.

Chapter 4: Findings

Purpose of the Study

The rate of students dropping out of high school in the United States, especially with ADHD, is an area of concern. This is a concerning fact, knowing that our current workforce requires knowledgeable workers who can solve problems and think critically. Students with combined types of ADHD are 33% more likely not to graduate on time as compared to peers without psychiatric disorders (Breslau et al., 2011). In trying to solve this dilemma, a considerable amount of emphasis is on the student's academic accomplishment, and very little regard is given to the socioemotional needs of students (Osterman, 2000). Research shows that the relationships between students and teachers impact the student significantly. The quality of these relationships between students and teachers increases student academic success (Tschannen-Moran, 2004b), lowers the probability of dropping out of high school by nearly half (Croninger & Lee, 2001), and impacts student engagement (Osterman, 2000). Researchers have found that student-teacher relationships are critical for students at risk of academic failure to be successful (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Eisenhower et al., 2007). Previous research on the students' perspectives of trusting teachers has occurred (Adams & Forsyth, 2007; Holzer & Daumiller, 2025; Lee, 2007). Romero (2015) emphasized that trust can predict improved behavior and academic outcomes, particularly for students at risk. My research addressed a gap in the field by amplifying ADHD student voices through qualitative methods. The purpose of my qualitative narrative study was to explore and listen to ADHD student experiences with their teachers and provide additional information about how trust in student-teacher relationships related to their graduation decision. Six participants were selected to interview based on criterion sampling that consisted of being an ADHD school graduate or non-graduate, at least 19

years of age or older, and diagnosed with ADHD by a medical professional. Three of the students graduated, and the other three had dropped out of high school.

My investigation was guided by these questions:

1. How do ADHD students experience trust in their teacher relationships?
2. In what ways does trust help form quality relationships in ADHD students and their teachers?
3. How and to what extent do teachers play a role in ADHD students' decisions to complete/drop out of high school?

The quality of student-teacher relationship is of great importance to students (Pianta & Steinberg, 1992; Tschannen-Moran, 2014) and trust is a major indicator of top-quality relationships (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (1999) research on trust is the theoretical framework I used to understand trust and where I derived my guiding questions. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran identified common conditions of trust and generated a multidimensional definition of trust that is used in educational leadership literature. "Trust is one's party willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is (a) benevolent, (b) reliable, (c) competent, (d) honest, and (e) open" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p.556). According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000), the facets of trust defined are:

- Benevolence - A sense of caring. Students are more likely to ask for help if they know that the teacher can be trusted and cares about them. Students will not be seen as inadequate by their peers.

- Reliability - One being able to depend on another consistently. Students will find the teacher is dependable and predictable with benevolence and their needs will be met in positive ways (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).
- Competence - Ability to do something successfully. Students are more likely to trust their teacher who is competent.
- Honesty - Integrity. Students will find teachers who follow through with their consequence or threat to be more trusting.
- Openness - Sharing information in social exchanges. Students are willing to become vulnerable and have open communication with their teacher.

This framework served as a lens for viewing my data and assisted in interpreting my findings. I answered the research questions by using the responses provided by the participants, tied them into the theoretical framework of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2000) conditions of trust, and used critical narrative analysis to analyze the data. This allowed my research questions to be answered by listening to my participants stories and "understand the meaning of the experiences as revealed in the story" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.24).

Participants

All of the participants for this study were chosen based on criterion sampling. The six participants had been diagnosed with ADHD by a medical professional during their school career, were between the ages of 19-28, and were public/private school graduates or non-graduates. I was able to meet my goal and have school graduates represent 50% of my participants and non-graduates represent the other 50%. At this time, I will introduce the participants who were willing to share their stories with me.

Norman

Norman was diagnosed by a medical professional with ADHD in 5th or 6th grade. He is a 19-year-old male who did not graduate high school. He wants to get his GED one day. I was introduced to Norman by another participant, Mike.

Christina

Christina was diagnosed by a medical professional with ADHD in 7th grade. She is a 21-year-old female and a high school graduate. Christina had heard about my research and volunteered to help. Her mother is an educator, and she mentioned that she wanted to help educators and ADHD students.

Mishelle

Mishelle was not diagnosed by a medical professional with ADHD until she entered college. She stated many times during our conversations that she wished she had known earlier and could have gotten help. She is a 25-year-old female and did graduate high school. I was introduced to Mishelle by my other female participant, Christina.

Mike

Mike was diagnosed by a medical professional with ADHD around 3rd or 4th grade. He is a 26-year-old male and did not graduate from high school. He did get his GED and attempted college. Mike, an acquaintance of mine, agreed to be a participant.

Shane

Shane was diagnosed by a medical professional with ADHD in the 2nd grade. He is a 28-year-old male who did not graduate high school. Shane is a former student of mine who was eager to be a participant.

Ricky

Ricky was diagnosed by a medical professional with ADHD in 1st grade. He is a 22-year-old male who did graduate from high school. He did not want to go to college. A family member introduced me to Ricky.

Table 1 below provides an overview of each participant's graduation status and overall student-teacher relationship experience.

Table 1

Student Graduation Status and Overall Student-Teacher Relationship Experience

Name	Graduated or Dropped Out	Overall STR Experience
Norman	Dropped Out	Negative
Christina	Graduated	Positive
Mishelle	Graduated	Positive
Mike	Dropped Out	Negative
Shane	Dropped Out	Negative
Ricky	Graduated	Positive

Note. This table summarizes each participant's graduation status along with their overall experience with student-teacher relationships (STRs).

Findings

Research Question 1: How do ADHD students experience trust in their teacher relationships?

To preserve the authenticity of my participants' responses, I had to avoid using the word "trust" during our conversations. I did not want to lead or influence their thoughts. Instead of

looking for the word "trust" in our conversations, I looked for Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's common conditions of trust listed in their multidimensional definition that is widely used in educational leadership research (2000). To discover the answer to my first research question, "How do ADHD students experience trust in their teacher relationships?" the participants were asked a series of open-ended interview questions to explore their experiences with teachers. The questions that helped me answer my research question the most included: "Tell me some of your good, bad, and ugly experiences with teachers," "Tell me about any experiences with teachers that were embarrassing," "If I were to ask you to name a teacher that you remember the most out of all of your school years, who is the first teacher that pops into your mind," and "What makes good and bad teachers different from one another?" I wanted to keep my data extremely visual for myself. I chose to label a piece of poster paper with a different facet of trust as the heading. Every time the facet of trust was implied in a conversation, I highlighted it with a specific color and added that piece of data to the facet of trust it was representing. In the end, I asked each participant to read their quotes and confirm whether they agreed or disagreed with how I had identified them as examples of a particular facet of trust.

In answering research question number one, I discovered that all five facets of trust (benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness) had been mentioned. To get a better understanding of how these students experienced trust in their teacher relationships, I will give examples of each facet that was mentioned in their stories. I found that some of the students' phrases contained more than just one type of trust. When this occurred, I listed it under each facet of trust that was represented.

Benevolence

The students never used the word benevolence, but instead they used words or phrases that implied benevolence. The word "cared" was used multiple times to represent benevolence. This is understandable since benevolence is the sense of caring. Students mentioned Benevolence throughout the interviews. However, every student mentioned Benevolence in their response to the question of "What makes good and bad teachers different from one another?" Examples of how the students experienced Benevolence in their student-teacher relationship is listed below.

Norman:

"She was really kind and cared a lot."

"He would check on us and make sure we were ok."

Christina:

"A good teacher will have compassion for her students."

"She cared for us."

Mishelle:

"You could tell she cared and never belittled."

"It was like we were a big family and he loved us."

Mike:

"…surprise us with candy"

Shane:

"She took interest in me."

"…made me feel like I belonged."

Ricky:

"A good teacher shows that she cares."

“She cared for us… learned my name…. would make us treats”

The quotes from their stories reflect benevolence, the perception that someone genuinely cares for you. These students valued teachers who demonstrated care, kindness, and personal attention. Every participant recalled specific behaviors (checking in, remembering names, giving treats, or expressing compassion) that made them feel seen and supported. Almost every student’s story emphasized the emotional warmth that benevolence gives. This suggests that benevolence is one way that ADHD students experience trust in their teacher relationships.

Reliability

Another element of trust that must be felt is Reliability. Reliability is being able to depend on another consistently. Reliability does entail more than just consistency. According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998), reliability in the context of trust involves consistently meeting others' needs in ways that are positive, caring, and dependable. It reflects a steady pattern of actions that foster confidence and demonstrate goodwill.

From their stories, the students frequently verbalized Reliability with the word “always.” With the exception of Mike, who did not share a direct quote describing reliability, the examples below illustrate how the other students described reliability in their student-teacher relationships.

Norman:

“She treated everybody fair.”

Christina:

“She was always willing to help us - even if it was after school.”

“Her door was always open for us.”

Mishelle:

“He was always there for us…would stay late after practice.”

Shane:

“She never gave up on me.”

Ricky:

“He would always be there for you.”

“She would push me, and it would make me mad, but now I know she was wanting me to be better.”

The quotes from the stories above reflect reliability. The students perceived their teachers to be dependable and consistently available in more than just one way. Christina and Mishelle perceived their teachers to be reliable in a physical sense. They had experiences where their teacher was there for them in person after school and was there for the students above and beyond the required time. Shane and Ricky perceived their teachers to be emotionally reliable. They had experiences where their teacher pushed them and was always there, even during the challenging times. These quotes suggest that Reliability is another way that ADHD students experience trust in their teacher relationships.

Competence

Competence is the third facet of trust. In education, stakeholders are not as likely to trust teachers whose competence is questionable. This is the same for students trusting their teachers. None of the stories mentioned the exact words competence or incompetent. However, the word passionate was used by two students. When the students described what a passionate teacher was to them, their answers reflected qualities of a competent teacher. In their stories, students told me about teachers with whom they had a positive student-teacher relationship would incorporate hands-on learning. In order for hands-on learning to occur effectively, teachers must have classroom management, which is a characteristic of competence (Saracaloğlu & Altın, 2021).

There were no specific interview questions in which Competence was described. Competence was discussed throughout the questions during the multiple interviews. Examples of how the participants experienced Competence in their student-teacher relationship are listed below.

Norman:

"We got to move around a lot."

"Teachers who made me want to come to school were more passionate...had hands on stuff"

"…more passionate about the kids."

Christina:

"She was passionate…she would help the best and worst students"

Mishelle:

"She would let us get into groups and make stuff"

Mike:

"I worked for her cause she had a lot of hands on"

Shane:

"She knew her stuff and would help me in other subjects too."

Ricky:

"Good teachers are passionate about their job….she knows her stuff"

"They helped me stay engaged."

"She was a good one and very knowledgeable on her content."

"…keeps the lesson interactive."

Competence is reflected in the quotes from the stories above. The students perceived their teachers to be able to effectively deliver instruction, be knowledgeable in their content area, and keep the students engaged. The stories did emphasize two key words: a *passion* for teaching

and students and *engagement.* Norman, Christina, and Ricky each used the word *passionate* when describing teachers with whom they had healthy student-teacher relationships. Christina and Shane's thoughts, "she was passionate… she would help the best and worst students" and "she knew her stuff and would help me in other subjects too" suggests that they not only valued their teacher being knowledgeable in their subject area, but they also valued their teacher being willing to support students of all levels. These descriptions show that ADHD students do notice and value Competence and how it is another way they experience trust in their teacher relationships.

Honesty

Honesty is the next facet of trust and was mentioned the least of all the facets. Tschannen-Moran (2004a) noted that honesty is about "a person's character, their integrity, and authenticity" (p.22) and "Failure to follow through on a threat or consequence can be as damaging to trust as a broken promise" (p.23). While Norman, Christina, Mike, and Shane did not share direct quotes related to honesty, the examples below reflect how the remaining students experienced honesty in their student-teacher relationships.

Mishelle:

"She would apologize if she accused wrongly."

"There were no surprises… she said what she meant."

Ricky:

"We always knew her expectations."

The three quotes above told me how these two students experienced honesty in their student-teacher relationships. Mishelle told me how one of her teachers, with whom she had a very close relationship with, would "apologize if she was accused wrongly." This showed

Mishelle and the other students that truth and fairness were valued more than complete authority. The other quotes, “There were no surprises…she said what she meant” (Mishelle) and “We always knew her expectations.” (Ricky), are both referring to communication between the teacher and student. Mishelle’s teacher’s words reinforced her actions, showing Mishelle that what she said was true and dependable. Ricky’s experience implied honest communication with a teacher with whom he had a positive student-teacher relationship.

What I want to consider now is possibly why so few participants did not mention *honesty*. The fact that fewer students mentioned *honesty* may suggest that *honesty* is often taken for granted and/or possibly overshadowed by more visible behaviors, like kindness. It is also possible that students assumed *honesty* was a trait that all teachers should automatically have because they are a “teacher.” As humans, we tend to remember more memorable things from our past. Perhaps *honesty* is not as memorable as other traits, such as caring and passion.

Openness

The exact word “openness” was never used, but its meaning was implied. Openness was defined by Tschannan-Moran and Hoy (2000) as “the extent to which relevant information is shared” (Tschannan-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p.7). When a student shares information with the teacher, then the student is allowing herself/himself to be vulnerable. This involves the student being willing to be vulnerable and self-disclose, and self-disclosure will lead to an increase in trust (Wheeless, 1978).

From their stories, the students verbalized Openness mainly as the teacher listening and talking to them. Students mentioned Openness all throughout the interview, but examples of Openness did appear more often with the following two questions: “Tell me some of your good,

bad, and ugly experiences with teachers.” and “What makes good and bad teachers different from one another?”

Examples of how the students experienced Openness in their student-teacher relationship is listed below.

Norman:

“…listened and took time when we had questions.”

“…listened to our concerns as students.”

Christina:

“…always willing to answer my questions.”

“The door was always open for us <u>if we had a question or just to talk.</u>”

Mishelle:

“He would talk and listen to us.”

“She would listen to me.”

Mike:

“She actually listened.”

“…took time to help me.”

“…noticed when I was having an issue and would come over.”

Shane –

“That teacher spent time with me.”

“…told us personal stories…”

Ricky –

“Talked with me one on one.”

“We still talk and have a great friendship as adults.”

"…took extra time with our questions."

"She took time to learn about me as a person."

Openness is reflected in multiple quotes from the stories above. The students perceived their teachers as willing to engage in meaningful conversations, listen without judgment, and be available to talk about life. Quotes such as "listened and took time when we had questions" (Norman), "she would listen to me"(Mishelle), and "she actually listened"(Mike) demonstrate that the students felt heard by their teacher. Statements like "the door was always open for us"(Christina) and "we still talk and have a great friendship as adults"(Ricky) suggest that these students perceived their teachers were willing to continuously allow interactions in a safe and welcoming space outside of class time. Mike and Ricky described times when their teacher went beyond academics and responded with care and attention. Shane's quote, "told us personal stories" shows that the teacher was also vulnerable. This type of reciprocal sharing helps students feel comfortable and be open in return. Some indicators of Openness in the quotes above include the repeated references to one-on-one time. "Talked with me one on one"(Ricky), "spent time with me"(Shane), and "took extra time with our questions"(Ricky) all demonstrate the student receiving individual support from a teacher who was genuinely interested in them. These descriptions show that ADHD students do notice and value Openness and how it is another way they experience trust in their teacher relationships.

With a better understanding of how students with ADHD experience trust in their relationships with teachers through the five facets of benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness, it is time to shift the focus to the bigger picture. While the first research question, "How do ADHD students experience trust in their teacher relationships?" helped identify the specific ways students recognized and described trust, the next question looks deeper

into how those experiences with trust helped shape their high-quality student-teacher relationships. This second part of the study moves beyond the individual facets and starts to uncover what trust really means in building high-quality teacher relationships with ADHD students.

Research Question 2: In what ways does trust help form quality relationships in ADHD students and their teachers?

In order to have quality relationships, trust has to be present. Research has shown that when students have strong relationships with their teachers, it impacts their behavior (Gregory & Ripski, 2008), how engaged they are in school (Fredricks et al., 2004), how well they adjust to the school environment (Pianta & Steinberg, 1992), and even whether they complete high school (Croninger & Lee, 2001). These outcomes show just how important it is for students, especially those with ADHD, to have meaningful, trust-based relationships with their teachers. This leads into my second research question: In what ways does trust help form quality relationships in ADHD students and their teachers?

To better understand how the next phase of analysis builds on the first, it's helpful to distinguish the focus of my first research question from that of the second research question. Research question one explored how students with ADHD experienced trust in their relationships with teachers, using the five facets of trust to organize their responses. Research question 2 took a broader look at how trust helped build those relationships. Instead of using a preset framework, I let themes come from the students' own words. The themes: active listening, care, and clear expectations, were grouped into three areas: Teacher-Student Interaction, Emotional Support, and Teaching Effectiveness. In summary, research question one focused on what trust looked like, and research question 2 focused on what trust did.

The interview questions I asked were open-ended and gave students space to share their honest experiences. Questions such as "Tell me some of your good, bad, and ugly experiences with teachers" and "What makes good and bad teachers different from one another?" helped them reflect on real situations where trust was either built or broken. Asking, "Who is the first teacher that pops into your mind?" led students to tell stories about meaningful relationships. When I asked, "As an ADHD student, how were your relationships with your teachers?" it helped them think about how their diagnosis shaped those connections. These questions directly supported my second research question by showing how trust grew through things like structure, support, and personal connection. Their stories helped me understand what trust looked like in a high-quality student-teacher relationship. By exploring the students' experiences, I was able to identify patterns that highlight how trust shows up in their relationships and how it contributes to a supportive classroom environment. The next section breaks down the traits that emerged and how they point to trust as a building block for high-quality student-teacher relationships.

To analyze how trust contributes to high-quality student-teacher relationships for students with ADHD, I used ATLAS.ti to help organize and make sense of the experiences my participants shared with me. After reading through each transcript multiple times, I began coding segments that reflected meaningful interactions or patterns that pointed to trust playing a role in shaping relationships. A total of eight traits repeatedly showed up across the data. The traits consist of active listening, availability and openness, personal connection and support, care and empathy, respect and fair treatment, passion and engagement, knowledge and competence and finally boundaries and expectations. As ATLAS.ti helped me group the similar traits together, three broad headings naturally emerged: Teacher-Student Interaction, Emotional Support, and Teaching Effectiveness.

The first heading, Teacher-Student Interaction, focuses on the different ways that teachers actively engage with their students. The three traits that emerged: active listening, availability and openness, and personal connection and support were seen across the student experiences. For example, students described how their teachers "listened and took time when we had questions"(Norman) and "listened to our concerns as students"(Christina). Mike recalled, "She actually listened," while another shared that their teacher "listened to both sides of the story"(Ricky). These examples of active listening made students feel heard and valued in their classroom. Availability and openness were also commonly expressed. Students appreciated when "the door was always open for us if we had a question"(Christina) and when teachers were "always willing to answer my questions"(Christina). This kind of openness even went beyond academics. Ricky shared that a teacher "talked with me one on one," and another teacher "took extra time with our questions." These actions showed students that their teachers were approachable, present, and invested in them. Students also told me about the personal support they felt from teachers. Mike said his teacher "took time to help me" and also recalled, "she noticed when I was having an issue and came over." Ricky emphasized lasting bonds, "we still talk and have a great friendship as adults" and a different teacher "took time to learn about me as a person." These types of personal connections helped students feel seen and supported in the classroom. In summary, active listening, availability and openness, and personal connection and support were three traits that emerged from the students' experiences that demonstrated ways of Teacher-Student Interaction that helped form their high-quality relationships.

The second heading, Emotional Support, included two traits: care and empathy, and respect and fair treatment. The students valued teachers who genuinely cared for them. One simply stated, "she actually cared," while another noted, "they thought about the kids." Empathy

came through in comments like, “being polite and kind,” which reflected a tone of mutual understanding. Respect was another major theme. Students recalled, “they respected me and did not belittle me,” and emphasized, “treated you fairly,” and “mutual respect.” One student added that their teacher “set boundaries,” which showed that respectful relationships also involved structure. Care and empathy and respect and fair treatment are the two themes that compose the second heading, Emotional Support. Their experiences described Emotional Support as another way to form high-quality student-teacher relationships in the classroom.

The final category, Teaching Effectiveness, focused more on how trust was built through strong instruction. Passion and engagement stood out in the students’ experiences. They mentioned teachers being “passionate about teaching,” and “more passionate about the kids.” Several pointed out how their teachers “kept us interactive” and “made us special treats.” Those quotes suggest that when teachers enjoyed what they were doing, it made students want to be more involved. Students also noticed when their teachers were skilled at teaching, describing them as “knowledgeable on the content” and saying they “knew the content.” Boundaries and expectations also mattered. Students responded well to teachers who “set boundaries,” “had expectations,” and “got on to you when you needed it.” These things gave students consistency and structure, which promoted high-quality relationships with their teacher.

According to their experiences, the students identified eight specific traits that helped them feel supported, understood, and connected to their teachers. These traits were grouped into three broader categories: Teacher-Student Interaction, Emotional Support, and Teaching Effectiveness. Each category reflects a different aspect of how trust was built and maintained in the classroom. Together, these characteristics created classroom environments where students with ADHD felt safe and motivated to engage. Table 2 presents these eight traits organized under

their respective categories, offering a clear summary of the ways trust contributed to high-quality student-teacher relationships.

Table 2

Themes That Support High-Quality Student-Teacher Relationships Through Trust

Heading	Trait	Example Quotes
Teacher-Student Interaction	Active Listening	Listened and took time when we had questions (Norman) Listened to our concerns as students (Christina) He would talk and listen to us (Mishelle) She actually listened (Mike) Listened to both sides of the story (Ricky)
	Availability and Openness	The door was always open for us if we had a question (Christina) Always willing to answer my questions (Christina) Took extra time with our questions (Ricky) Talked with me one on one (Ricky)
	Personal Connection and Support	Noticed when I was having an issue and came over (Mike) Took time to help me (Mike) That teacher spent time with me (Shane) Took time to learn about me as a person (Ricky) We still talk and have a great friendship as adults (Ricky) Building relationships with your students makes them more comfortable (Norman)
Emotional Support	Care and Empathy	She actually cared (Norman) Thought about the kids (Shane) Being polite and kind (Christina) Treated you fairly (Shane) Mutual respect (Christina)

Heading	Trait	Example Quotes
Teaching Effectiveness	Passion and Engagement	Passionate about teaching (Ricky) More passionate about the kids (Norman) Kept us interactive (Norman) Made us special treats (Ricky)
	Knowledge and Competence	Knowledgeable on her content (Ricky) Knows the content (Christina)
	Boundaries and Expectations	Set boundaries (Norman) Knew expectations (Ricky) Got on to you when you needed it (Ricky) She said what she meant (Mishelle)

Note. This table categorizes student quotes according to traits that reflect how trust contributes to quality student-teacher relationships for students with ADHD.

As participants described how trust was built through traits such as active listening, availability, and emotional support, their focus remained on day-to-day interactions with teachers. Notably, participants were not asked about, nor did they mention, receiving any formal support services such as IEPs or 504 plans. In conclusion, the students' experiences showed that trust is built through meaningful interaction, emotional support, and strong teaching. These traits helped form high-quality relationships with their teachers—relationships that made students feel supported, respected, and connected. As these trusting relationships developed, students shared how they were more willing to participate, stay engaged, and try harder in class. This leads to the next part of the study: looking at how those relationships may have influenced something even bigger—whether or not they stayed in high school and graduated.

Research Question 3: How and to what extent do teachers play a role in ADHD students' decisions to complete/drop out of high school?

Trust plays a powerful role in shaping the overall student-teacher relationship, and the benefits of that trust can have long-term effects on students, both academically and personally. When trust is present, it improves communication (Cosner, 2009; Kensler, 2009; Tschannen-Moran, 2000, 2001), creates a more collaborative learning environment (Adams & Forsyth, 2009; Ennis & McCauley, 2002), and has been linked to increases in student achievement and decreases in discipline issues (Adams, 2010; Goddard et al., 2001; Hoy et al., 2006). Trust can even help reduce the impact of challenges like poverty (Tschannen-Moran, 2004a). On the other hand, a lack of trust between students and teachers can lead to anxiety, insecurity, and difficulty adjusting to school (Baker et al., 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). When students do not feel secure in the relationship, they are less likely to take risks in their learning, which can impact not just their academic success but also their motivation to stay in school. This sets the stage for the third research question: How and to what extent do teachers play a role in ADHD students' decisions to complete or drop out of high school? In this section, I explore the ways students described the influence of teachers on one of the most critical outcomes in their educational journey: whether they stayed in school and graduated or left school before graduating.

As students reflected on their school experiences, it became clear that trust, or the lack of it, was a major factor in whether they felt connected to school. The six students interviewed showed a noticeable pattern: those who graduated described mostly positive student-teacher relationships, while those who dropped out recalled mostly negative ones. For students with ADHD, the consistency of emotional support, patience, and trust played a key role in whether school felt like a place worth staying.

Christina graduated from high school and shared that she had never experienced a negative student-teacher relationship. Throughout her interviews, she repeatedly spoke about how important open communication was to her. Her teachers were described as approachable and consistently available. She said they were "always willing to answer my questions," "listened to our concerns," and that "the door was always open for us if we had a question or just to talk." These relationships created a sense of safety, connection, and trust that seemed to carry throughout her school years.

Ricky, who also graduated, echoed similar feelings. He described all of his student-teacher relationships as positive. His teachers adapted to his needs, treated him fairly, and went out of their way to support him. Ricky shared that a teacher once talked with him privately and offered morning help, which he said, "goes a long way to help you work." He remembered teachers who kept lessons interactive, made learning personal, and helped him stay engaged. He said he "worked harder" for the teachers who cared, and this support helped him stay focused and in school.

Mishelle graduated but had a more mixed experience. She spoke about many supportive relationships but also mentioned two negative ones that stuck with her. One of those was a math teacher who falsely accused her, which caused her to shut down in that class. "I stopped listening in math after that," she said. Even though she experienced a couple of breakdowns in trust, she also remembered teachers who "made me feel special, not stupid," and helped her stay encouraged. These positive relationships outweighed the negative ones and played a role in helping her complete high school.

In contrast, Norman, Mike, and Shane did not graduate from high school. All three shared stories of mostly negative student-teacher relationships, with only a few isolated examples of teachers who showed support or understanding.

Norman had two positive student-teacher relationships: one with his Scout Master, who was school-affiliated and always willing to listen and help, and one with a teacher who was respectful when he asked questions. However, most of his school experiences were marked by frustration, especially with reading and traditional classroom settings. He said classes were rarely hands-on and described English as a struggle. Without consistent support or connection, Norman eventually dropped out.

Mike also had two positive student-teacher relationships, but like Norman, he described most of his relationships as negative. Mike talked about feeling ignored, unsupported, and bored. Teachers often left him alone, which may have seemed like they were giving him space, but really made him feel unseen. He remembered being made to read out loud despite his anxiety, which pushed him further away. The few teachers who noticed his strengths, such as the teacher one who praised his work in a cooking class, left a positive impression, but the positivity was not enough to outweigh the sense of detachment he felt overall.

Shane described only one strong relationship with a teacher. This teacher took an interest in him, spent time with him, and made him feel like he belonged. She even brought him into her personal and family life, inviting him to her house and to church. That relationship stood out and left a lasting impact. However, most of Shane's school experience was shaped by teachers who didn't understand him, sent him out of class, or failed to connect. Without a consistent sense of trust and support, Shane's connection to school faded.

These stories, supported by the overall data, suggest that teachers play a significant role in whether students with ADHD stay in school or drop out. Students who completed high school had a history of multiple high-quality relationships with teachers who listened, supported, and stayed involved. Those who dropped out had few of these experiences, and in many cases, described school as a place where they did not feel understood. For students managing the daily challenges of ADHD, one or two positive relationships made a difference, but more consistent support seemed to matter most in helping them stay the course.

Table 3 shows the number of positive and negative student-teacher relationships reported by each participant.

Table 3

Details of Student-Teacher Relationships in Relation to High School Completion

Name	Graduated or Dropped Out	Overall STR Experience	Positive STRs Experienced	Negative STRs Experienced
Norman	Dropped Out	Negative	2 positive STR	Mostly
Christina	Graduated	Positive	All	None
Mishelle	Graduated	Positive	Mostly	2 negative STR
Mike	Dropped Out	Negative	2 positive STR	Mostly
Name	**Graduated or Dropped Out**	**Overall STR Experience**	**Positive STRs Experienced**	**Negative STRs Experienced**
Shane	Dropped Out	Negative	1 positive STR	Mostly
Ricky	Graduated	Positive	All	None

Note. This table provides more detailed information about the number of positive and negative student-teacher relationships (STRs) each participant experienced, as related to their high school completion status.

In conclusion, the stories shared by the six students revealed a strong connection between the quality of student-teacher relationships and whether or not they completed high school. All three students who graduated described having mostly positive relationships with their teachers. These teachers supported them, listened, and stayed involved. In contrast, the three students who dropped out recalled mostly negative relationships, marked by misunderstanding, lack of support, or disconnection. While each student's experience was unique, a clear pattern emerged: students with more positive student-teacher relationships were more likely to graduate, while those with mostly negative relationships were more likely to leave school before finishing. These findings suggest that high-quality relationships with teachers may play a critical role in helping students with ADHD stay in school.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, and Conclusions

This study explored how trust in student-teacher relationships affects the educational experiences of students diagnosed with ADHD, especially in their decisions to graduate or drop out of high school. The study was guided by three research questions: (1) How do students with ADHD experience trust in their teacher relationships? (2) In what ways does trust help form quality relationships in students with ADHD and their teachers? (3) How and to what extent do teachers play a role in students who have ADHD in their decision to complete or drop out of high school?

Summary of Research Findings

Each research question focused on a distinct, yet connected component of trust in education. The first question examined the lived experiences of trust from the students' perspectives. Students described trust through emotional safety, care, reliability, and feeling understood. Their responses aligned with Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (1999) five dimensions of trust: benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. This demonstrated that students recognized and valued specific teacher behaviors and attitudes that conveyed trust. For example, Christina said her teachers were "always willing to answer my questions" and that "the door was always open for us." Ricky said, "They actually listened to our concerns, not just pretended to." Shane added, "One teacher, she never gave up on me. She even took me to church. I felt like I belonged." Mike recalled, "Mrs. Little praised me for finishing my work. It made me want to keep going." These comments reflect the importance of consistent support, genuine care, and open lines of communication that made students feel valued and safe to take academic and personal risks.

The second research question built upon this understanding and took it to the next level by exploring how trust helped form high-quality relationships. Through thematic coding using ATLAS.ti, eight recurring traits emerged from the conversations: active listening, availability and openness, personal connection and support, care and empathy, respect and fair treatment, passion and engagement, knowledge and competence, and boundaries and expectations. These traits were grouped into three broader categories: Teacher-Student Interaction, Emotional Support, and Teaching Effectiveness. The presence of these traits consistently aligned with students' feelings of connection and trust in their teachers, which led to shaping high-quality relationships. Participants identified these characteristics as essential in building a trusting classroom environment. Ricky recalled that "my math teacher had a talk with me, and afterwards she was helping me more if I came in the morning," showing how a teacher's willingness to connect increased his engagement. Mishelle described a teacher who "noticed I was overwhelmed and let me talk it out. She made me feel like my voice mattered." Christina said, "They were always there to listen and help. That mattered a lot to me." Shane explained, "She took time with me. She brought me to her house and treated me like one of her own." According to their experiences, these eight traits reflect the characteristics that students believed helped build a classroom environment characterized by trust. This supports existing literature that highlights how trust fosters a collaborative and supportive learning environment (Tschannen-Moran, 2004b; Adams & Forsyth, 2009; Holzer & Daumiller, 2025).

The third research question shifted focus to explore the broader outcome of these high-quality student-teacher relationships. It examined the role teachers played in students' decisions to complete or drop out of high school. The data showed a clear trend. Participants who had mostly positive student-teacher relationships completed high school. In contrast, participants

who dropped out reported mostly negative or absent relationships with teachers. The pattern suggests a strong association between the quality of student-teacher relationships and educational persistence. This finding supports Croninger and Lee's (2001) conclusion that supportive relationships can significantly lower dropout rates. Similarly, Romero (2015) found that students' perceptions of trust in teachers were linked to improved behavior and school completion, emphasizing the importance of the student perspective in understanding academic outcomes. Norman said that his Scout Master was the only teacher he truly connected with, adding that he "listened and took time when we had questions," which was a quality missing in most of his other teachers. Mike shared, "Most teachers didn't get me. I was always in trouble. The ones who took time with me, they made school better." Shane reflected, "I always got sent out of class. Except for her. She actually cared."

Together, these three questions provide a layered understanding of trust, from how students experience it, to how it is built, and finally to how it affects high-stakes outcomes like graduation. The findings affirm and extend previous research while highlighting trust as a central factor in educational success for students with ADHD.

Discussion

The results of this study support and extend existing research in several important ways. First, the presence of trust as a foundational component in relationships supports what scholars like Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) have long argued. Trust is multidimensional and central to effective school relationships. Students' lived experiences in this study mirror the five facets of trust outlined in their work.

Second, the findings from research question two specifically align with literature that emphasizes the critical role of teacher behavior and emotional support in fostering trust and

improving student outcomes. The traits that emerged, including care and empathy, availability, and passion, reflect findings from Hamre and Pianta (2001, 2005) and Eisenhower et al. (2007), who demonstrated that students at academic risk benefit from emotionally supportive relationships. MacLean et. al (2022) also found that strong student-teacher relationships serve as a buffer against the challenges posed by ADHD symptomatology, reinforcing the importance of emotional connection in supporting positive student outcomes. The importance of emotional connection and availability also reinforces the work of Klem and Connell (2004), who found that high levels of teacher support lead to greater engagement and lower dropout rates.

The study also confirms motivational theory in education, as described by Wentzel (1998) and Connell and Wellborn (1991). These theorists explain that students are more motivated to learn and stay in school when they perceive their teachers and environment as supportive, fair, and encouraging. The students' narratives in this study echo those theories, reinforcing the idea that a strong student-teacher relationship built on trust can serve as a barrier against academic disengagement. Fenizia and Parrello (2025) found that school trust was a key contributor to students' sense of belonging and well-being, both of which are necessary conditions for academic resilience and persistence.

Finally, this research adds to the work by Breslau et al. (2011) and Barkley (2002a), which showed that students with ADHD are at greater risk of academic failure and dropping out. What my study contributes is a deeper understanding of the why. Specifically, it highlights the role of trust and relational quality in either buffering against or heightening that risk. This confirms that positive student-teacher relationships act as a form of social capital (Croninger & Lee, 2001) and are critical in helping students with ADHD navigate school successfully.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study suggest that teachers have a powerful impact on ADHD students through the quality of their relationships. Teachers can foster trust and high-quality relationships by actively listening, being available, showing empathy, and maintaining clear expectations. These practices align with the five facets of trust and can help support students both academically and socially.

For practitioners, this means that strategies for classroom management and instructional practice must go beyond the academic content. Building relationships should be viewed as a critical component of teaching, especially for students with ADHD. As Hamre and Pianta (2005) suggested, attending to students' emotional and social needs may be as important as instructional practices. Schools and districts should provide professional development that helps teachers better understand ADHD and equips them with tools for building trust with students.

The responses to research question two, "In what ways does trust help form quality relationships in ADHD students and their teachers?" offer specific strategies teachers can apply in their classrooms to build high-quality relationships with their students. When students said their teachers "listened and took time when we had questions," or that "the door was always open," these statements highlight how accessibility and active listening impact trust. A teacher who makes time before or after school for check-ins, or who is available for one-on-one support, builds trust that encourages students to be more engaged. When students described teachers who "took time to learn about me as a person" or "talked with me one on one," they were expressing appreciation for personal connection, something that can be cultivated through advisory programs, morning meetings, or consistent daily routines that make space for student voice. When students said teachers "got on to you when you needed it" but also "treated you fairly," it

shows that clear expectations and mutual respect are not opposites but rather two sides of the same coin. A few strategies for supporting clear expectations and mutual respect include respectfully redirecting behavior, using restorative questions in place of immediate punishment, and co-creating class norms with students.

These findings correspond to three core themes identified in the study: Teacher-Student Interaction, Emotional Support, and Teaching Effectiveness. Teachers can enhance student trust through strong interaction practices like active listening, consistent availability, and building personal rapport. Emotional support can be strengthened by showing care and empathy and treating students with respect and fairness. Finally, teaching effectiveness plays a role in trust when educators demonstrate passion for teaching, maintain clear academic expectations, and show strong content knowledge. These are all practical classroom actions that can help ADHD students experience trust and thrive.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed the concept of trustworthiness to describe the standards used to evaluate the quality of qualitative research. Their framework includes four essential components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Each of these elements was addressed in this study to ensure the research was well founded and meaningful.

Credibility, the most important criterion according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), was ensured by aligning the participants' perspectives with my analysis. Interviews were used to collect data, and member checks were conducted by providing the participants with transcripts and early drafts to confirm that their experiences were accurately represented. I also used peer debriefing by selecting two peer reviewers. One had conducted a qualitative research project and

was familiar with its design, while the other had completed a quantitative study and was knowledgeable about ADHD. These reviewers helped me minimize personal bias and improve the trustworthiness of the analysis.

Transferability was addressed by providing thick descriptions of each participant's experiences, allowing readers to understand the context and determine whether the findings apply to their own settings. By presenting vivid and detailed narratives, the goal was to bring participants' voices to life so the relevance of the data could be evaluated.

Dependability was supported through a clear and thorough audit trail. This included detailed documentation of my research process, decisions, and reflections. The audit trail ensures that other researchers can trace my methods and understand how I arrived at my conclusions.

Confirmability was established by practicing reflexivity throughout the research process. I maintained a reflexive journal to examine my own, bias, and experiences. This allowed me to be transparent about how my role as a teacher and researcher may have influenced the study. My conclusions were always grounded in the participants' words and data collected.

Limitations

Of the two limitations I anticipated in Chapter 3, only one proved to be valid: my limited experience as a researcher. As Corbin and Strauss (2015) noted, the ability to interpret findings is influenced by both access to data and the researcher's level of experience. I addressed this limitation through reflexive journaling, peer review, and member checking. These methods helped me stay aware of my assumptions and refine my analysis throughout the process.

The second anticipated limitation was relational trust, which I initially believed might hinder the study, but ultimately became a strength. Because I also have ADHD, I found that my

shared experience helped me build authentic connections with participants. This common ground encouraged more open and detailed storytelling. At the same time, I remained mindful that these connections could shape how I interpreted their stories. To make sure their voices were represented accurately, I relied on reflexive journaling and member checking. As a result, what I once viewed as a potential barrier became an asset that enriched the data and deepened the narratives shared.

While I had carefully considered potential limitations before beginning the study, an unanticipated challenge became apparent: the use of Zoom for conducting interviews. While video conferencing offered convenience and accessibility, it sometimes made it more difficult to fully observe nonverbal cues such as body language and physical posture. These subtle cues are often essential in narrative inquiry. As a narrative inquirer, I relied not only on participants' words but also on emotional tone and physical presence, which are elements that can add depth to their stories. The reduced ability to observe these cues may have influenced how I interpreted the emotional meaning of their experiences.

These limitations, both expected and unexpected, gave me opportunities to pause and reflect. They reminded me to stay thoughtful and aware as I moved through each part of the study. By facing these challenges directly, I worked to keep the research honest and true to the stories shared.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study opens the door for several future lines of inquiry that can deepen our understanding of trust, ADHD, and student-teacher relationships. First, future research could expand on this study by exploring a larger and more diverse sample of students. Including a broader range of geographic regions, school types, and cultural backgrounds could help

researchers determine whether the findings of this study are transferable across contexts (Schwandt, 2014). Additionally, studies that include female students with ADHD and those from underrepresented populations would allow for further exploration of overlapping experiences that were not captured in this study.

Second, longitudinal studies would help track how student-teacher trust develops and changes over time, particularly in key transition years such as from middle to high school. This type of research could provide valuable insights into when and how interventions might be most effective for fostering trust and preventing disengagement (Klem & Connell, 2004). Future studies could also examine how early experiences with trust in elementary school impact long-term educational outcomes for students with ADHD.

Another area of future research might focus on teacher perspectives. Understanding how teachers perceive trust and how they believe they build or damage trust with students with ADHD could complement and extend this work. Future studies could also benefit from juxtaposing teachers' self-reports with students' perceptions of trust, offering a deeper understanding of alignment or mismatch in trust-building efforts. Moreover, intervention studies could be developed to evaluate the impact of professional development focused on building trust with neurodiverse learners and how those strategies influence student achievement, engagement, and retention.

Finally, researchers might also consider using mixed methods to pair rich narrative data with quantitative indicators of academic performance, discipline referrals, or graduation rates. Such studies could help show how relationships affect learning by adding data like test scores or graduation rates, giving a clearer picture of how trust matters in education. Future research could also explore measurable elements of building trust, such as the relationship between the

amount of time teachers spend with students and the students' trust levels. Additionally, using instruments like Tschannen-Moran's Student Trust Scale could offer standardized data to compare. Exploring trust through multiple perspectives and methodologies will help strengthen the field's understanding of what makes student-teacher relationships effective and lasting, especially for students with ADHD.

Reflexivity

As a teacher with 30 years of experience, I brought my own understanding, assumptions, and hopes into this research. I care deeply about students with ADHD and wanted to better understand how to support them. I was aware that my own beliefs could shape how I interpreted the data, and I took steps to remain as objective as possible by allowing the students' voices to guide my analysis. Their words, stories, and insights were central to how I developed the themes and understood the role of trust in their lives.

My identity as a teacher with ADHD and as the parent of a child with ADHD played a significant role in shaping my perspective. I have walked in the shoes of my participants—not just as a teacher, but also as a student and a parent. I knew how important it was to remain a listener rather than a participant. Many times during the interviews I wanted to jump in and say, "me too," but I resisted, knowing that sharing my experiences could interfere with their thought processes. This required intentional restraint and a strong commitment to prioritizing their voices over my own. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasized, articulating a relationship between one's personal experiences and the lives of others is critical to narrative inquiry.

As a parent, I found myself emotionally moved by several of the stories. When participants talked about their struggles in specific subjects, it brought back painful memories of helping my own son with schoolwork—nights filled with frustration, tears, and arguments about

grades and unfinished assignments. These stories reminded me of how deeply school experiences affect not just students, but their families. I often felt a deep sense of responsibility and even embarrassment when participants described being ignored or unsupported by teachers. These moments challenged me to reflect on the larger role educators play beyond content delivery.

My own school experiences were largely positive, and I recognize that privilege. This may have influenced how surprised I was by the depth of distrust and negative emotions some students shared. At the same time, it helped me understand how impactful a positive student-teacher relationship can be. It made me even more determined to ensure that all students, especially those with ADHD, have access to supportive, trusting environments.

What originally drew me to this topic was my desire to understand why certain students, those often labeled as difficult or distracted, seemed to thrive in my classroom. I always rooted for the underdog. Whether it was because I made learning fun or because I understood their behavior through my own lens, I began to suspect there was more to it. One day during a doctoral class, a professor's lecture on trust made everything click. That was the moment my research question was born, and it has guided every part of this study since.

There were definitely times when I found it difficult to separate my own beliefs from my analysis. To mitigate this, I maintained a reflexive journal, as suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2015), where I documented my thoughts, reactions, and decisions. I returned to the data often and relied on member checks and peer reviews to ensure my interpretations remained grounded in the participants' perspectives.

One of the most surprising findings for me was the emphasis participants placed on teacher competence. I had not anticipated that a teacher's knowledge and skill would play such a

significant role in establishing trust. This finding pushed me to reflect more deeply on the multifaceted nature of trust and how it is built in the classroom.

This study has changed me both as a teacher and as a researcher. As a teacher, I now understand even more clearly the importance of setting a strong relational foundation in the first weeks of school. I know that students must feel safe and valued before they can take academic risks. I intentionally create a calm and welcoming classroom, incorporating soft music, flexible seating, and routines that support all learners. These practices are beneficial for everyone, but especially for students with ADHD.

As a researcher, I learned that dissertation work is vastly different from traditional coursework. I struggled with time management and found it difficult to move forward without external deadlines. Yet, I also discovered the joy and value of letting thoughts percolate until the right words came. This process has helped me grow in patience, persistence, and self-awareness.

Ultimately, I believe my role as both an insider and an outsider gave me a unique perspective. I am deeply connected to this topic, but I also remained committed to amplifying student voices rather than centering my own. My hope is that by sharing their stories, we can begin to understand the power of trust and relationships in helping students with ADHD not just survive school but succeed.

Conclusion

This study reinforces the powerful role that trust plays in student-teacher relationships, especially for students with ADHD. When students experience teachers as caring, consistent, competent, and open, it helps build trust, which in turn supports academic success and long-term school engagement (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). The stories shared by participants in this study highlight the deep impact that a trusting relationship can have, not only on students' academic achievement but also on their decision to complete or leave high school. Students who felt listened to, valued, and supported described stronger connections to school, while those who lacked such trust were more likely to become disengaged and eventually drop out.

As this study confirms, trust is not a supporting detail in the classroom, it is the foundation upon which learning is built. Research has consistently shown that emotionally supportive relationships buffer students from the negative outcomes associated with academic and behavioral challenges (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Eisenhower et. al, 2007). This is particularly relevant for students with ADHD, who often face difficulties with attention, impulsivity, and emotional regulation (Wehmeier et al., 2010). When trust is present, it can serve as a stabilizing force, helping students stay motivated, engaged, and resilient even in the face of challenges.

The findings of this research align with motivational theory, which suggests that students are more likely to thrive when they feel emotionally connected and supported by their teachers (Wentzel, 1998; Connell & Wellborn, 1991). Teachers who build relationships characterized by warmth, structure, and fairness can create a classroom climate where students are willing to take academic risks, persevere through challenges, and stay committed to their educational goals.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the growing body of literature that calls for a more relational approach to education. In a time when schools are constantly seeking ways to improve

outcomes, trust should be viewed as a powerful tool that supports not only academic achievement but also student well-being. As educators, we have both the responsibility and the opportunity to cultivate classrooms where trust is felt and lived every day. This is not just beneficial for students with ADHD but is essential for ALL students. Trust allows students to feel safe, understood, and capable of success. When we create these kinds of relationships, we do more than teach—we transform lives.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Interview #1 Questions

1. What is your favorite thing to do?
2. Tell me about yourself.
3. At what age or grade level were you diagnosed with ADHD by a doctor?
4. Did you graduate high school?
5. At what age did you graduate or drop out of school?
6. What does ADHD mean to you?
7. Tell me a story about yourself as a student.
8. I would like to hear about your experiences with teachers. Please tell me about the good, the bad, and the ugly experiences you had with teachers. I want to know about any teacher and the stories that come to your mind.

Some follow-up questions were adapted based on participants' earlier responses; sample prompts are included below.

Interview #2 Prompts

1. Can you tell me about a time with a teacher that felt embarrassing for you?
2. Was there a teacher who often praised or corrected you? What was that like?
3. As an ADHD student, how were your relationships with your teachers?
4. What do you think teachers believe ADHD means?
5. If you had to name one teacher who really stands out in your memory, who would it be and why?
6. What was it like to be a student with ADHD in school?
7. What makes good and bad teachers the same?
8. If you were to go back and thank any teacher, who would it be and WHY?

Interview #3 Prompts

1. What makes good and bad teachers different from one another?
2. Tell me a story about any teachers who made learning harder for you.
3. Tell me a story about any teacher who helped you the most in your education.
4. What does being a passionate teacher mean to you?
5. Thinking about the teachers you had a strong connection with, how did they handle discipline?
6. Is there anything else you'd like to share, or do you have any questions for me?

Appendix B

Codebook: A Priori Codes

The following a priori codes and definitions were developed before data analysis and are based on Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2000) multidimensional framework of trust. These codes guided the deductive analysis of participant narratives.

Benevolence

A sense of caring and goodwill. Benevolence is placing others' needs before your own. When students perceive benevolence, they are more likely to feel comfortable seeking help and expressing vulnerability with their teacher.

Reliability

Consistent dependability. Reliability goes beyond simple dependability and implies predictability paired with caring. Students trust teachers who meet their needs consistently and follow through with their promises or expectations.

Competence

The ability to perform one's role effectively. Trust in competence means students believe their teacher has the necessary knowledge and skill to teach well and manage the classroom effectively.

Honesty

Integrity, truthfulness, and fairness. Trust in honesty refers to believing that the teacher is sincere, consistent in values, and does not mislead.

Openness

Transparency in communication. Openness is defined as the extent to which relevant information is shared in a timely and authentic manner. This enables vulnerability and mutual understanding.

Appendix C

Auburn University IRB Permission Form

Revised 10/18/2022

1

AUBURN UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM (HRPP)

EXEMPT REVIEW APPLICATION

For assistance, contact: **The Office of Research Compliance (ORC)**
Phone: **334-844-5966** E-Mail: **IRBAdmin@auburn.edu** Web Address: **http://www.auburn.edu/research/vpr/ohs**
Submit completed form and supporting materials as one PDF through the IRB Submission Page
Hand written forms are not accepted. Where links are found hold down the control button (Ctrl) then click the link..

1. **Project Identification** **Today's Date: January 16, 2024**

Anticipated start date of the project: November 16, 2023 Anticipated duration of project: 1 Year

a. **Project Title:** ADHD Students Trusting Teachers

b. **Principal Investigator (PI): Christie H. Broom** Degree(s): Click or tap here to enter text.
Rank/Title: Graduate Student Department/School: Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology
Role/responsibilities in this project: **Recruitment of participants, Interviewer, Data Collector, Data Analyst, Consent the participants**
Preferred Phone Number: **256-749-6064** AU Email: chb0004@auburn.edu

Faculty Advisor Principal Investigator (if applicable): Dr. Lisa Kensler
Rank/Title: Professor Department/School: Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology
Role/responsibilities in this project: **Chair of dissertation committee, help with data analysis, oversee research project**
Preferred Phone Number: **334-844-3020** AU Email: lak0008@auburn.edu

Department Head: Dr. Hank Murrah Department/School: Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology
Preferred Phone Number: **334-844-3806** AU Email: wmm0017@auburn.edu
Role/responsibilities in this project: Click or tap here to enter text.

c. **Project Key Personnel –** Identify all key personnel who will be involved with the conduct of the research and describe their role in the project. Role may include design, recruitment, consent process, data collection, data analysis, and reporting. (To determine key personnel, see decision tree**).** *Exempt determinations are made by individual institutions; reliance on other institutions for exempt determination is not feasible. Non-AU personnel conducting exempt research activities must obtain approval from the IRB at their home institution.*

Key personnel are required to maintain human subjects training through CITI. Only for EXEMPT level research is documentation of completed CITI training NO LONGER REQUIRED to be included in the submission packet. NOTE however, **the IRB will perform random audits of CITI training records to confirm** reported training courses and expiration dates. Course title and expiration dates are shown on training certificates.

Name: Christie H. Broom Degree(s): **EdS Elementary Education**
Rank/Title: Graduate Student Department/School: Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology
Role/responsibilities in this project: Click or tap here to enter text. **Recruitment of participants, Interviewer, Data Collector, Data Analyst, Consent the participants**

- AU affiliated? ☒ Yes ☐ No If no, name of home institution: Click or tap here to enter text.
- Plan for IRB approval for non-AU affiliated personnel? Click or tap here to enter text.
- Do you have any known competing financial interests, personal relationships, or other interests that could have influence or appear to have influence on the work conducted in this project? ☐ Yes ☒ No

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- If yes, briefly describe the potential or real conflict of interest: Click or tap here to enter text.
- Completed required CITI training? ☒ Yes ☐ No If NO, complete the appropriate CITI basic course and update the revised Exempt Application form.
- If YES, choose course(s) the researcher has completed: Human Sciences Basic Course 2/25/2025
  Refresher Course 2/25/2027

Name: Dr. Lisa Kensler Degree(s): **Ed.D. in Educational Leadership**
Rank/Title: Professor Department/School: Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology
Role/responsibilities in this project: **Chair of dissertation committee, help with data analysis, oversee research project**

- AU affiliated? ☒ Yes ☐ No If no, name of home institution: Click or tap here to enter text.
- Plan for IRB approval for non-AU affiliated personnel? Click or tap here to enter text.
- Do you have any known competing financial interests, personal relationships, or other interests that could have influence or appear to have influence on the work conducted in this project? ☐ Yes ☒ No
- If yes, briefly describe the potential or real conflict of interest: Click or tap here to enter text.
- Completed required CITI training? ☒ Yes ☐ No If NO, complete the appropriate CITI basic course and update the revised EXEMPT application form.
- If YES, choose course(s) the researcher has completed: Refresher Course 9/26/2026
  Human Sciences Basic Course 9/28/2025

Name: Dr. Carey Andrzejewski Degree(s): **Ph.D. in Teacher Education Policy and Leadership**

Rank/Title: Professor Department/School: Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology
Role/responsibilities in this project: **Co-Chair of dissertation committee, Help with data analysis, oversee research project**

- AU affiliated? ☒ Yes ☐ No If no, name of home institution: Click or tap here to enter text.
- Plan for IRB approval for non-AU affiliated personnel? Click or tap here to enter text.
- Do you have any known competing financial interests, personal relationships, or other interests that could have influence or appear to have influence on the work conducted in this project? ☐ Yes ☒ No
- If yes, briefly describe the potential or real conflict of interest: Click or tap here to enter text.
- Completed required CITI training? ☒ Yes ☐ No If NO, complete the appropriate CITI basic course and update the revised EXEMPT application form.
- If YES, choose course(s) the researcher has completed: Human Sciences Basic Course 3/16/2026
  Refresher Course 8/15/2027

d. Funding Source – Is this project funded by the investigator(s)? Yes ☒ No ☐
Is this project funded by AU? Yes ☐ No ☒ If YES, identify source Click or tap here to enter text.
Is this project funded by an external sponsor? Yes ☐ No ☒ If YES, provide name of sponsor, type of sponsor (governmental, non-profit, corporate, other), and an identification number for the award.
Name: Click or tap here to enter text. Type: Click or tap here to enter text. Grant #: Click or tap here to enter text.

e. List other AU IRB-approved research projects and/or IRB approvals from other institutions that are associated with this project. Describe the association between this project and the listed project(s):
Click or tap here to enter text.

Revised 10/18/2022

2. Project Summary

a. Does the study *TARGET* any special populations? Answer YES or NO to all.

Minors (under 18 years of age; if minor participants, at least 2 adults must be present during all research procedures that include the minors)	Yes ☐ No ☒
Auburn University Students	Yes ☐ No ☒
Pregnant women, fetuses, or any products of conception	Yes ☐ No ☒
Prisoners or wards (unless incidental, not allowed for Exempt research)	Yes ☐ No ☒
Temporarily or permanently impaired	Yes ☐ No ☒

b. Does the research pose more than minimal risk to participants? Yes ☐ No ☒

If YES, to question 2.b, then the research activity is NOT eligible for EXEMPT review. Minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research is not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or test. 42 CFR 46.102(i)

c. Does the study involve any of the following? *If YES to any of the questions in item 2.c, then the research activity is NOT eligible for EXEMPT review.*

Procedures subject to FDA regulations (drugs, devices, etc.)	Yes ☐ No ☒
Use of school records of identifiable students or information from instructors about specific students.	Yes ☐ No ☒
Protected health or medical information when there is a direct or indirect link which could identify the participant.	Yes ☐ No ☒
Collection of sensitive aspects of the participant's own behavior, such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior or alcohol use.	Yes ☐ No ☒

d. Does the study include deception? Requires limited review by the IRB* Yes ☐ No ☒

3. MARK the category or categories below that describe the proposed research. Note the IRB Reviewer will make the final determination of the eligible category or categories.

☐ **1.** Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices. The research is not likely to adversely impact students' opportunity to learn or assessment of educators providing instruction. 104(d)(1)

☐ **2.** Research only includes interactions involving educational tests, surveys, interviews, public observation if at least ONE of the following criteria. (The research includes data collection only; may include visual or auditory recording; may NOT include intervention and only includes interactions). **Mark the applicable sub-category below (I, ii, or iii). 104(d)(2)**

☐ **(i)** Recorded information cannot readily identify the participant (directly or indirectly/ linked);
OR
- surveys and interviews: no children;
- educational tests or observation of public behavior: can only include children when investigators do not participate in activities being observed.

☒ **(ii)** Any disclosures of responses outside would not reasonably place participant at risk; **OR**

☐ **(iii)** Information is recorded with identifiers or code linked to identifiers and IRB conducts limited review; no

children. **Requires limited review by the IRB.***

☐ **3.** Research involving Benign Behavioral Interventions (BBI)** through verbal, written responses including data entry or audiovisual recording from adult subjects who prospectively agree and ONE of the following criteria is met. (This research does not include children and does not include medical interventions. Research cannot have deception unless the participant prospectively agrees that they will be unaware of or misled regarding the nature and purpose of the research) **Mark the applicable sub-category below (A, B, or C).** 104(d)(3)(i)

☐ **(A)** Recorded information cannot readily identify the subject (directly or indirectly/ linked); **OR**

☐ **(B)** Any disclosure of responses outside of the research would not reasonably place subject at risk; **OR**

☐ **(C)** Information is recorded with identifies and cannot have deception unless participants prospectively agree. **Requires limited review by the IRB.***

☐ **4.** Secondary research for which consent is not required: use of identifiable information or identifiable bio-specimen that have been or will be collected for some other 'primary' or 'initial' activity, if one of the following criteria is met. Allows retrospective and prospective secondary use. **Mark the applicable sub-category below (i, ii, iii, or iv).** 104 (d)(4)

☐ **(i)** Bio-specimens or information are publicly available;

☐ **(ii)** Information recorded so subject cannot readily be identified, directly or indirectly/linked investigator does not contact subjects and will not re-identify the subjects; **OR**

☐ **(iii)** Collection and analysis involving investigators use of identifiable health information when us is regulated by HIPAA "health care operations" or "research" or "public health activities and purposes" (does not include bio-specimens (only PHI and requires federal guidance on how to apply); **OR**

☐ **(iv)** Research information collected by or on behalf of federal government using government generated or collected information obtained for non-research activities.

☐ **5.** Research and demonstration projects which are supported by a federal agency/department AND designed to study and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (i)public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or (iv) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or service under those programs. (must be posted on a federal web site). 104.5(d)(5) (must be posted on a federal web site)

☐ **6.** Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives and consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The research does not involve prisoners as participants. 104(d)(6)

**Limited IRB review – the IRB Chair or designated IRB reviewer reviews the protocol to ensure adequate provisions are in place to protect privacy and confidentiality.*

***Category 3 – Benign Behavioral Interventions (BBI) must be brief in duration, painless/harmless, not physically invasive, not likely to have a significant adverse lasting impact on participants, and it is unlikely participants will find the interventions offensive or embarrassing.*

**** Exemption categories 7 and 8 require broad consent. The AU IRB has determined the regulatory requirements for legally effective broad consent are not feasible within the current institutional infrastructure. EXEMPT categories 7 and 8 will not be implemented at this time.*

4. Describe the proposed research including who does what, when, where, how, and for how long, etc.

a. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the degree to which young adults with ADHD reported that relationships with their teachers influenced their decision to complete high school or leave school early.

b. Participant population, including the number of participants and the rationale for determining number of participants to recruit and enroll. Note if the study enrolls minor participants, describe the process to ensure more than 1 adult is present during all research procedures which include the minor.

All participants, 19-28, will have been diagnosed with ADHD and may or may not have graduated from high school. I expect to recruit 15 participants. The minimum number of participants to validate this study is 3. I will not include more than 10 participants in this study due to amount of time required for multiple interviews and coding. A self-report of an ADHD diagnosis by a medical professional will be sufficient.

c. Recruitment process. Address whether recruitment includes communications/interactions between study staff and potential participants either in person or online. *Submit a copy of all recruitment materials.*

I will use a snowball method to find young adults with ADHD who have graduated or left high school recently. I personally know some of these individuals and will ask them to refer other possible participants. We will schedule to meet online via Zoom at a specific time that is conducive to the participant. The second strategy will be the snowball technique where one participant recommends additional participants. I will give my email address to the original participants granting them permission to share my email address with possible participants. Upon receiving contact from the new participant, we will schedule to meet online via Zoom at a specific time that is conducive to the participant. My third strategy includes Facebook. I will post a shortened version of the flyer. The willing participants may contact me by my email that is given. After having contact via email, we will schedule to meet online via Zoom at a specific time that is conducive to the participant. If needed at all, I will ask for some psychologists and therapists to help distribute flyers. The willing participants may contact me by email. After having contact via email, we will schedule to meet online via Zoom at a specific time that is conducive to the participant.

d. Consent process including how information is presented to participants, etc.

Upon receiving notification that a participant is interested; I will email a copy of the Information Consent Letter to the potential participant. The information consent letter will explain the purpose of the study and that the interview will be audiotaped. Participants, all of adult age, will be told that they can withdraw at any time. The information letter explicitly states that their involvement and participation is completely voluntary and they may choose to answer some, none, or all questions. A contact is included so that if participants have questions, they may ask the principal investigator. The contact will include email address and telephone numbers. The next contact will

consist of setting up a time for the first interview. At the very beginning of the Zoom call before I start to record it, I will review the Information Consent Letter with the participant and ask them to choose a false name. After we have discussed any questions, the participant will either agree to continue and the interview will begin OR the participant will decline participation and the interview will be over. Before each interview, I will remind the participant that they can stop and remove consent for participation in the study with no penalties to them.

e. Research procedures and methodology

This is a qualitative narrative study that will allow silenced student voices to be heard. Research interviewing will be used to hear the world from the students' point of view and find out why students reacted to student teacher relationships as they did. Upon IRB approval, I will start scheduling, conducting, and audio recording the semi-structured interview sessions that will be transcribed to collect data. All of this will require me to interact with my participants of ages 19-28. Multiple data sources (interviews from a wide range of participants, memos, and a research journal) will be used to triangulate findings and provide corroborating evidence. Peer review and member checking will be used as validation strategies.

f. Anticipated time per study exercise/activity and total time if participants complete all study activities.

Each participant will complete a minimum of three story-telling interviews of 30-90 minutes each online. We will arrange the interview for a time convenient for the participant and no more than four follow-up interviews will occur. These interviews will be as close together as possible given the participant's schedule and preference. The total time if a participant completes all interviews is 120 minutes – 360 minutes.

g. Location of the research activities.

The interviews will take place via ZOOM. This will allow the participant to choose a location that they feel comfortable to speak.

h. Costs to and compensation for participants? If participants will be compensated describe the amount, type, and process to distribute.

N/A

i. Non-AU locations, site, institutions. *Submit a copy of agreements/IRB approvals.*

N/A

j. Describe how results of this study will be used (presentation? publication? thesis? dissertation?)

This project will be used for the purposes of a dissertation, professional presentation, and future publications.

k. Additional relevant information.

Teens with ADHD are less likely to graduate on time and 1/3 of students with ADHD drop out of school (Breslau, Miller, Chung, & Schweitzer, 2011). Researchers have shown that student-teacher relationships are important for students at risk of academic failure to be successful (Hamre & Pinata, 2001; Eisenhower, Baker, & Blacher, 2007). Healthy student teacher relationships can have a positive effect on academic and behavioral outcomes for

students with behavioral, academic, or social risk factors (Eisenhower et al., 2007); characteristics of students with ADHD (Strine, et al., 2006). The data from this study will give educational leaders insight about how one can facilitate and maintain healthy relationships with their students that have ADHD in hopes of decreasing the dropout rate.

5. Waivers
Check applicable waivers and describe how the project meets the criteria for the waiver.

☐ Waiver of Consent (Including existing de-identified data)

☐ Waiver of Documentation of Consent (Use of Information Letter, rather than consent form requiring signatures)

☐ Waiver of Parental Permission (in Alabama, 18 years-olds may be considered adults for research purposes)
https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/orc/irb/IRB 1 Exempt and Expedited/11-113 MR 1104 Hinton Renewal 2021-1.pdf

a. Provide the rationale for the waiver request.
Click or tap here to enter text.

6. Describe the process to select participants/data/specimens. If applicable, include gender, race, and ethnicity of the participant population.

All participants, 19-28, will have been diagnosed with ADHD and may or may not have graduated from high school.

7. Risks and Benefits

7a. Risks - Describe why none of the research procedures would cause a participant either physical or psychological discomfort or be perceived as discomfort above and beyond what the person would experience in daily life (minimal risk).

There is minimal risk involved, but none above and beyond what the person would experience in daily life. Breach of confidentiality is a risk. Psychological risk is another risk that may be encountered. Some participants may have negative feelings about former teachers and therefore there is a risk of bringing up negative feelings.

7b. Benefits – Describe whether participants will benefit directly from participating in the study. If yes, describe the benefit. And, describe generalizable benefits resulting from the study.

There are no direct benefits to participants.

8. Describe the provisions to maintain confidentiality of data, including collection, transmission, and storage. Identify platforms used to collect and store study data. *For EXEMPT research, the AU IRB recommends AU BOX or using an AU issued and encrypted device. If a data collection form will be used, submit a copy.*

I will use a password protected cloud storage site, AU Box, for the digital data files to be stored until they are transcribed. The digital files will be deleted. All of the transcriptions will be stored on the password protected cloud storage site, AU Box. In addition, the recording device will have the auto-upload feature disabled. The consent forms will be in a separate password AU Box protected folder.

a. If applicable, submit a copy of the data management plan or data use agreement.

9. Describe the provisions included in the research to protect the privacy interests of participants (e.g., others will not overhear conversations with potential participants, individuals will not be publicly identified or embarrassed).

I will use a password protected cloud storage site, AU Box, for the digital data files to be stored until they are transcribed. All participants will have selected their pseudonym prior to recording the interview. Therefore, all of the interview recordings and transcripts will be pseudonyms only. The digital files will then be deleted. All of the transcriptions will be stored on the password protected cloud storage site, AU Box and the consent forms will be stored in a separate folder on AU Box.

10. Does this research include purchase(s) that involve technology hardware, software or online services?

☐ **YES** ☒ **NO**

If YES:

A. Provide the name of the product Click or tap here to enter text.
and the manufacturer of the product Click or tap here to enter text.

B. Briefly describe use of the product in the proposed human subject's research.
Click or tap here to enter text.

C. To ensure compliance with AU's Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Policy, contact AU IT Vendor Vetting team at vetting@auburn.edu to learn the vendor registration process (prior to completing the purchase).

D. Include a copy of the documentation of the approval from AU Vetting with the revised submission.

11. Additional Information and/or attachments.

In the space below, provide any additional information you believe may help the IRB review of the proposed research. If attachments are included, list the attachments below. Attachments may include recruitment materials, consent documents, site permissions, IRB approvals from other institutions, data use agreements, data collection form, CITI training documentation, etc.

Once I am satisfied that I have adequate transcriptions, I will delete the audio files. By December 1, 2024, I will have destroyed the audio files.

Trust directly impacts schools. By learning more about how students perceive trusting relationships with their teachers, educators can learn what is important to students and use that information to help create more trusting relationships with all students. By doing so, more students will benefit from the advantages of trusting relationships which should ultimately decrease the number

student dropouts.

Appendix A - References
Appendix B - Flyer Invitation for Experiment
Facebook Invitation for Experiment
Recruitment Script
Appendix C - Semi-Structured Interview
Appendix D – Information Latter

Required Signatures *(If a student PI is identified in item 1.a, the EXEMPT application must be re-signed and updated at every revision by the student PI and faculty advisor. The signature of the department head is required only on the initial submission of the EXEMPT application, regardless of PI. Staff and faculty PI submissions require the PI signature on all version, the department head signature on the original submission)*

Signature of Principal Investigator: Christie M. Broom **Date:** 1/16/24

Signature of Faculty Advisor (If applicable): [signature] **Date:** ____________

Signature of Dept. Head: William Murrah **Date:** 01/17/2023

Version Date: Click or tap to enter a date.

Appendix D

Participant Consent Form

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS AN IRB APPROVAL STAMP WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN APPLIED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

INFORMATION LETTER
for a Research Study entitled
"ADHD Student Teacher Relationships"

You are invited to participate in a research study to explore your experience with teachers. The study is being conducted by Christie Broom, a doctoral candidate, under the direction of Professor Dr. Lisa Kensler in the Auburn University Department of Education. You are invited to participate because you reported that you have been diagnosed with ADHD by a medical professional and are age 19 or older.

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to participate in a minimum of three interviews via Zoom, a virtual meeting platform. Each interview will last no more than 90 minutes, but can be broken down into shorter time periods if needed. Your total time commitment will not exceed 5 hours.

Are there any risks or discomforts? There is minimal risk involved, but none above and beyond what you would experience in daily life. Breach of confidentiality is a risk. To minimize this risk, I will use a password protected cloud storage site for all digital data. Nor will I discuss participants outside of the research context. Psychological risk is another risk that may be encountered. Some participants may have negative feelings about former teachers and therefore there is a risk of bringing up negative feelings. To minimize this risk, I am using procedures that are consistent with sound research design. You may choose to take a break at any time during the interview as well as answer some, none, or all questions, and/or withdraw from the study as well.

Will you receive compensation for participating? You will not receive compensation from participating in this study.

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Protocol # 23-624 EX 2312

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the Department of Education or Christie Broom.

Any data obtained in connection with this study will remain anonymous. We will protect your privacy and the data you provide. I will use a password protected cloud storage site, AU Box, for the digital data files to be stored until they are transcribed. Prior to recording the interview, I will ask for you to choose a false name. Therefore, all of the Zoom interview recordings and transcripts will be false names only. The digital files will be deleted following transcription and the video recordings will not be saved. All digital data files will be deleted by December 1, 2024. Information collected through your participation may be used for the purposes of a dissertation, professional presentation, and future publications.

If you have questions about this study, *please ask them now or* contact Dr. Lisa Kensler at 256-844-3020 or at lak0008@auburn.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, THE DATA YOU PROVIDE WILL SERVE AS YOUR AGREEMENT TO DO SO. THIS LETTER IS YOURS TO KEEP.

____

Investigator's signature Date

____

Print Name

Version Date 12/20/2023

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