WHAT ROLE DO TEACHERS PLAY IN PREVENTING SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND 
HOW DOES COOPERATIVE LEARNING ENHANCE THAT ROLE? 
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Abstract
The purpose of this review of literature was to describe the effects of teacher-student relationships on problem behaviors in students and on the prevention of school violence. The literature reviewed included studies utilizing interviews, formal assessments, questionnaires, scales, inventories, surveys, and vignettes in urban, rural, and suburban settings in United States, Israel, Italy, and Belgium. Results and conclusions from the studies indicated positive student-teacher relationships reduced the rates of school violence. Recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the use of Cooperative Learning include expanding upon areas of further research in order to generalize findings across settings.
Chapter I: Introduction

Much has been learned over the last two decades of research about the factors contributing to school violence, but the exploration of the role of teachers in the prevention of student violence has been rather neglected (Somech & Oplatka, 2009). Much of the focus on the prevention of school violence centers on program interventions, building security, and student interactions. Teachers play a key role in preventing violence in schools and could provide key information about the value of violence prevention efforts (Marachi, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2007). Understanding how strong teacher-student relationships can affect or prevent school violence is of utmost importance.

Background

School violence affects school communities and has no easy solution. The severity of school violence has caused schools to search for ways to prevent violence. California school districts have even approved specific programs. For example, Los Angeles Unified School District requires a program called Second Step throughout its schools for violence prevention (Marachi, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2007). Many schools have authorized the use of school bullying prevention plans, but have had little discussion about teacher involvement in the prevention of school violence.

While students are generally reluctant to seek help or report being bullied or attacked at school, strong teacher-student relationships may reduce the number of students reluctant to seek help, as well as prevent the school violence from happening (Yablon, 2010). Educational research increasingly acknowledges the significance of trust as indicator of positive teacher-student relationships producing favorable outcomes for
student learning and teacher functioning (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). The importance of strong teacher-student relationships in preventing school violence needs to be explored.

**Statement of the Problem**

Studies have provided valuable and useful knowledge but have focused almost exclusively on students’ individual characteristics, peer groups, family, and community circumstances as risk factors. The exploration of variables in the school context that may predict student violence should be studied further, especially the role teachers play (Somech & Oplatka, 2009). The goal of this review is to research the effects of teacher-student relationships and teacher mediation strategies on school violence.

**Research Question**

- What are the effects of teacher-student relationships on problem behaviors in students and on the prevention of school violence?

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms and definitions are included to clarify concepts and vocabulary used in relation to school violence and the measures used to prevent it.

- *Teacher-Student Relationships* are interactions between a teacher and a student (Aultman, Williams-Johnson, & Schutz, 2009).

- *Strong Teacher-Student Relationships* are interactions between a teacher and a student, which create positive working relationships.

- *School violence* is an aggressive act by a person or persons against a member or members of the school community (Chen & Astor, 2011). These aggressive acts include threats, destruction of property, kicking, punching, insulting, humiliating,
seizing, shoving, use, or threat of weapons, gang threats, blackmail and group beatings of a person (Marachi, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2007).

- **Cooperative Learning** is a way of organizing the classroom for learning in which students work together towards a goal (Kirk, 2001).
- **Climate** is a general atmosphere of a school (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004).
- **Teacher bonding** is students’ general feelings about their teachers (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004).
- **Intergenerational bonding** is strong teacher-student relationships occurring between generations (Crosnoe, Johnson & Elder, 2004).
- **Participative management** is joint decision-making or dual control in decision making, by a supervisor and employee (Somech & Oplatka, 2009).
- **Job autonomy** is the extent to which a job allows the freedom, independence, and discretion to schedule work, make decisions, and select the methods used to complete tasks (Somech & Oplatka, 2009).
- **Social interdependence** is when the outcomes of individuals are affected by their own and others’ actions, which is a model on which Cooperative Learning Theory is built on (Johnson, & Johnson, 2009).
- **Positive interdependence** is the giving of a clear task and group goal so that students believe that they sink or swim together (Kirk, 2001).

**Theoretical Framework**

Conflict resolution training is needed to ensure every child and adolescent can learn to manage conflicts constructively (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). To prevent destructive conflicts and violence from occurring, all persons involved in a school must
be committed to the goal of working together to build a respectful learning community. At the heart of a respectful learning community is collaboration. Cooperative Learning Theory is a basis for building trusting relationships and reducing conflicts and violence through cooperation. Cooperative Learning creates the necessary atmosphere for conflicts to be resolved constructively, and provides a venue for conflict resolution skills training, thereby reducing the reasons students are at risk for using violence, such as poor academic performance, poor relationship skills, and low self-concept (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). The five elements of Cooperative Learning groups are positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, social skills training, and group processing. If teachers have a role in preventing violence and resolving conflict, then all five elements of the theory should be present in the teachers’ relationships with the students.

**Summary**

The importance of understanding factors inhibiting school violence is critical for educators (Warner, Weist, & Krulak, 1999). Strong teacher-student relationships and teacher mediation strategies have not been the focus in many violence prevention programs. As schools search for ways to prevent school violence, conflict resolution via teacher-student relationships and teacher mediation strategies needs to be reviewed.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Teacher-student relationships are an everyday part of education, and assume great importance in the classroom. Teacher-student relationships are formed in a variety of school climates, but researchers are still looking at the importance of teacher-student relationships in relation to school violence. The elements in the creation of a good teacher-student relationship are vaguely defined although several factors appear to be of importance to researchers exploring the issue of school violence.

Teacher-Student Relationships

Conventionally, educational research has focused on areas of education such as best practices for student instruction, transferring knowledge, and developing skills (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004). Currently, a focus on teacher–student relationships is missing in school-based prevention efforts. Earlier research with aggressive children has focused more on factors such as classroom management issues, behavior contracts, or peer-mediated interventions (Hughes, Cavell, & Jackson 1999). Teacher-student relationships are the daily interactions between a teacher and student, no matter if they are high quality or low quality. Positive teacher-students relationships are the daily interactions between a teacher and student that result in positive outcomes (higher self-esteem, better grades, and low incidence of negative behaviors or violence) for the student. Understanding the impact of teacher-student relationships and teacher mediation strategies as conflict resolution in school violence warrants further attention. Further, positive teacher-student relationships are of particular interest because children exhibiting aggressive behavior are vulnerable to academic failure, substance abuse, and
delinquency, all of which are issues leading to school violence (Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003).

**Teacher bonding.**

Strong teacher-student bonds are associated with improved academics, stronger standardized test scores, improved social skills, and lower levels of delinquency, with each of these improvements associated with higher achievement (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Researchers sampled 179 children in the United States (98 boys and 88 girls) from kindergarten through eighth grade in a small city district. They found negativity in teacher-student relationships for children in kindergarten with behavior problems correlated to academic and behavioral outcomes through eighth grade, particularly in boys (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). The students were administered the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale-Revised upon entering kindergarten, while teacher completed the Teacher-Child Rating Scale and Student-Teacher Relationship Scale at the end of the kindergarten year to establish a baseline of academic and behavior performance. After establishing the baseline, researchers used math and language arts grades and standard scores of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills to monitor academic performance. Teachers recording work habits on students’ report cards in each grade after kindergarten charted behavior issues such as unexcused absences, use of weapons, drug use, class disruptions, fighting, and abusive language. The school district also maintained detailed records on each student’s disciplinary history (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Behavior issues in kindergarten appear to have negative effects behaviorally for students as they progress through to eighth grade, suggesting school violence issues as well as poor teacher-student relationships begin at the lower grade levels.
Teachers who create stronger, positive relationships can improve overall student achievement. Teachers can serve as role models and mentors to students, helping students through an important part of life’s education, while creating strong relationships to advance student success. A study of 10,991 students in urban and rural schools in grades 7-12 across the United States was designed to measure students’ bonds with teachers, students’ academic achievement, and students’ disciplinary issues (Crosnoe, Johnson & Elder, 2004). Research was based on data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, an ongoing nationally representative study of American adolescents (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004). The adolescents in this study made one In-Home self-report and one In-School self-report of their relationships with teachers, academic performance, and behavior for one school year. Students who had positive relationships with their teachers had fewer overall issues in school both academically and socially, while those with negative relationships did poorer and had greater instances of academic and behavior issues in school (n = 10,991, p < .001) (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004).

Teacher-student relationships play an important role in the willingness of students to ask for help in regards to school violence. Yablon (2010) investigated the role of students’ relationships with their homeroom teachers in the students’ willingness to seek help from teachers. In this explorative study, 313 Israeli students studying in five state-run elementary, five state-run junior high, and five state-run high school classrooms were sampled. All homeroom teachers were women, while gender was represented equally among the students.

Vignettes, describing four forms of violence, measured students’ willingness to seek help from their homeroom teachers (Yablon, 2010). The vignettes were printed on
index cards, and participants indicated their willingness to ask for help from homeroom teachers on a seven-point Likert scale. The quality of participants’ relationships with their homeroom teachers was then measured using the Network of Relationship Inventory-Revised (NRI-R) scale. The participants answered the questions during the school day, and all schools were tested in the same week. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures for the four forms of school violence (physical, relational, verbal, and use of weapons) revealed significant differences in the students’ willingness to seek help from teachers for each of the violence forms, and a significant interaction between gender and grade level (Yablon, 2010). Students were more willing to seek help in dealing with a weapon attack than for physical violence, verbal violence, or relational violence ($F(3,306)=132.70; p < .001$). Girls were more willing to seek help than boys in the eighth, and tenth grade, but not in the sixth grade ($F(6,592)=3.18; p < .01$). Furthermore, perception of the teachers’ ability to help and relationship quality with the teacher accounted for 19–25% ($p < .001$) of the variance in the willingness to seek help for each violence form (Yablon, 2010).

Yablon deduced student-teacher relationships play an important role in the willingness of students to ask for help in regards to school violence, showing the importance of positive student-teacher relationships. Yablon (2010) concluded the higher quality the student–teacher relationships, the more students perceive teachers as being able to help and are more willing to seek help.

**Perceptions and Trust.**

Teacher perceptions of students’ teachability strongly predict teacher trust (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). Researchers gathered data from 2,104 randomly selected
urban and rural secondary teachers in Belgium using anonymous written questionnaires based on a five-point scale rating students’ benevolence, reliability, competence, openness, and honesty (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). The larger size of the school negatively affects trust in students \((c^* = -0.100; p < 0.01)\) while researchers found no statistical significance in the relationship between teaching hours and trust in students \((c^* = -0.042; p < 0.057)\), as the more hours teachers instruct, the less likely teachers are to trust their students (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). This suggests that instruction time does not equate to interaction time with students, especially in larger schools. Furthermore, teacher perceptions of their students’ teachability strongly relate to trust in students \((c^* = -0.695; p < 0.001)\). Teachers who feel the students are receptive to learning will have more trust in their students. Furthermore, teachers who exhibit trust in their students may face fewer behavioral problems and have higher quality relationships with their students.

In a study of 7,318 students in 291 urban and rural Virginia high schools, students were administered a two 8-item questionnaires on willingness to seek help and supportive school climate, rating the items on a five-point scale (Eliot, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2010). Students were chosen randomly via a randomly generated list, and completed the survey anonymously online at computers in their classrooms under teacher supervision during the school day under a set of standard directions. Students who perceived their teachers as caring, respectful, and interested in them were more likely tell a teacher when they thought themselves or a classmate were threatened with violence \((F(2, 291)=16.42, p<.001)\). Students who perceived a supportive school climate were also willing to seek help from teachers for school violence \((F(3, 291) =295.39, p<.001)\) (Eliot, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2010).
**Gender and Cultural Differences.**

Gender is an important factor in the creating of strong student–teacher relationships. In a study of student-teacher relationships, 1156 participants were randomly selected at birth from regions surrounding the ten United States cities of Little Rock, AK; Irvine, CA; Lawrence, KS; Boston, MA; Philadelphia, PA; Pittsburgh, PA; Charlottesville, VA; Morganton, NC; Seattle, WA; and Madison, WI. When the participants were four and a half years old, temperament was measured via a Children’s Behavior Questionnaire (CBQ) filled out by the mother, using a 7-point Likert-type scale with subscales of activity, anger/frustration, approach, and inhibitory control (Rudasill, Reio, Stipanovi, & Taylor, 2010). Student-Teacher relationship quality was measured using a 15-item Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) as reported from the participants’ 4th, 5th and 6th grade teachers (Rudasill, Reio, Stipanovi, & Taylor, 2010).

Overall, male students had more conflict in relationships with teachers than did female students (.18, \(p<.001\)), while female students had closer relationships with teachers than male students (Rudasill, Reio, Stipanovi, & Taylor, 2010). Consequently, a chance of additional conflict in relationships for boys may occur, while females most likely will enjoy more closeness in teacher-student relationships (.36, \(p<.001\)) (Rudasill *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, those students at four and half years old who were rated as having a difficult temperament were also linked positively to student-teacher conflict in 4th, 5th, and 6th grades (.25, \(p<.001\)) (Rudasill *et al.*, 2010).

The quality of teacher-student relationships is important when addressing problems of school violence. 197 teachers from the United States of Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic descent rated their relationships with 840 urban and rural
children of Caucasian, African American and Hispanic descent. The children the teachers rated came from daycare, preschool, or kindergarten. The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) questionnaire was used by the teachers to rate their relationships with the students, which used a 5-point Likert Scale to assess a teacher’s feeling about the relationship with a student, the student’s interaction with the teacher, and the teacher’s beliefs about the student’s feelings toward the teacher (Saft & Pianta, 2001). Teachers who felt they had a positive relationship with children also had a teacher-student ethnic match ($F_{8, 831} = 5.03, p < .001$). Furthermore, teachers perceived more conflict in their relationships with students whose ethnicities differed from their own ($F_{8, 831} = 38.18, p < .001$) (Saft & Pianta, 2001). Teacher perceptions of the positive and negative traits of their relationships with students related to the age, gender, and ethnicity of the child, as well as to the ethnicity of the teacher ($F_{8, 831} = 4.92, p < .001$) (Saft & Pianta, 2001).

Enhancing teacher–student relationships is a huge challenge when students do not feel emotionally attached to the school they are attending. 140 second and third grade aggressive children from rural United States rated their teacher-relationships using a Network of Relationship Inventory (NRI) (Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003). Ratings were made on a 5-point Likert Scale. Students were rated aggressive based on their score on the Aggressive Behavior or Delinquency subscales of the Achenbach’s Teacher Report Form (Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003). Aggressive African American and Hispanic children in the early school years experience fewer positive relationships with teachers than aggressive Caucasian students ($F_{2, 132} = 3.10; p = .05$) (Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003). A strong focus on positive teacher–student relationships in the early years for African–American and Hispanic children may increase the sense of emotional
attachment to the school and its teachers, increasing the chances these children will have higher academic achievement and less risky behavior.

**Teacher Mediation Strategies**

Schools struggle with eliminating the problem of school violence and approaches to help schools cope effectively with the issue of school violence (Somech & Oplatka, 2009). Many interventions to prevent school violence center on students, but few programs focus on teachers and their functions to prevent school violence. For schools to benefit from violence prevention programs, teachers also must be trained to handle issues of school violence. Unfortunately, many teachers are not receiving violence prevention training.

**Teachers’ attitudes, participative management, and job autonomy.**

Issues of school violence will arise throughout the school day, but many teachers may not know how to address these issues. Teachers may also be unwilling to put themselves into harm’s way to stop the violence from happening. Teachers may also not fully understand the importance of preventing school violence, perhaps thinking school violence is a normal part of the school day. Marachi, Astor, and Benbenishty (2007) investigated relationships between school policy in preventing school violence, teacher action against school violence and rate of student victimization in a large-scale nationally representative sample. In this explorative study, data came from a subset of a large national survey of school violence in Israel, which included data from students, teachers, and principals from a random sample of 232 schools representing the public school system (Marachi et al., 2007). The study sample consisted of 898 homeroom teachers
who responded to surveys asking about problems associated with school climate and violence.

Surveys were sent to schools and teachers were asked to respond and return surveys to their school secretary, after which a research team collected the surveys from school. The survey had four areas of focus: severity of violence as a problem in their schools, victimization among teachers and students, fears about personal safety, procedures taken for self-defense and school violence training, while the primary method of analysis used in this study was Structural Equations Modeling with maximum likelihood estimation (Marachi et al., 2007). The analyses conducted show a strong correlation between an emphasis on violence prevention and lower levels of staff avoidance of violence $[\chi^2 (70, n = 898) = 232, p < 0.001, \text{NFI} = 0.95, \text{NNFI} = 0.95, \text{CFI} = 0.96, \text{RMSEA} = 0.05]$ (Marachi et al., 2007). Therefore, schools who emphasize and provide development to school staff on the prevention of school violence, will have staff that are more likely to step in and attend to acts of violence in the school setting.

Marachi et al. (2007) deduced when teachers see the importance of violence prevention in their school, those teachers are more likely to address violent actions as such actions arise. Cases of school violence and victimization decreased when teachers no longer avoided school violence, but rather became active participants in the prevention of school violence. These findings are important, because while many schools may have school violence prevention programs, these programs alone will not prevent school violence. Teachers must become vested partners in violence prevention programs in order to reduce the incidences of school violence.
1,512 randomly selected teachers from 110 urban and rural Jewish elementary schools in Israel completed survey questionnaires administered by research assistants using a 5-point Likert scale on Participative Management, Autonomy, Role Breadth, and School Violence (Somech & Oplatka, 2009). The more teachers felt coping with students’ violence was part of their job responsibility and were able to maintain a personal teaching identity and sense of autonomy, the lower the incidences of school violence ($r = .28, p < .05$) (Somech & Oplatka, 2009). Furthermore, better administrative practices allowed teachers to have a sense of control and ownership over school problems and encouraged teachers to get involved in their school community ($r = .25, p < .05$) (Somech & Oplatka, 2009). Better administrative practices such as increased job autonomy for teachers and participative management also encouraged teachers to take a stronger positive role in their profession in handling school violence, which lead to a violence reduction ($r = .45, p < .01$) (Somech & Oplatka, 2009).

**Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative Learning Theory is a process of conflict resolution, focused on solving problems together, versus competing with one another to create more conflict. Bertucci, Conte, Johnson, & Johnson (2010) studied 62 seventh grade students in Italy to investigate the effect of cooperative group size on individual achievement, social support, and self-esteem. The group consisted of an equal number of boys and girls, and the Wechsler Intelligence scale for Children, Revised (WISC-RL) was administered to all the students to verify they were of normal intelligence. Students were randomly assigned to different groups. Eighteen students were assigned to the individualistic learning condition, 20 students were assigned to the cooperative learning in pairs condition, and
24 students were assigned to the cooperative learning in groups of four condition (Bertucci et al., 2010). Students in the individualistic learning condition worked at their own desks and did not work with others in the class. Students in the cooperative learning condition worked either in pairs or in groups of four, depending on which group they were assigned.

The students participated in one instructional unit for 90 minutes for six instructional days for a period of six weeks (Bertucci et al., 2010). Achievement was measured at the end of the second, fourth, and sixth session using a test based on the content studies developed by teachers and researchers. Social support was measured using the Classroom Life Measure (CLM) at the beginning and end of the six-week session using a 5-point Likert Scale, while the Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (MSCS) measured self-esteem at the beginning and end of the six week session also using a 5-point Likert Scale.

Bertucci et al. (2010) found students assigned to individual and cooperative learning in pairs conditions performed better in achievement that students who were assigned to the cooperative learning in groups of fours condition ($F_{62} = 3.330; p = .043$). In regards to social support, students assigned either the pair of group of four cooperative learning condition displayed a higher perception of peer academic support than students assigned to the individual learning condition ($F_{62} = 17.09; p < .001$) (Bertucci et al., 2010). For self-esteem, students working in pairs displayed a higher social self-esteem than students assigned to the other two learning conditions ($F_{62} = 5.92; p = .018$) (Bertucci et al., 2010). The results of this study suggest teachers who wish to promote self-esteem may wish to have students work in pairs, while teachers who wish to promote
social support, such as social and positive interdependence, among students may wish to have students work in pairs or groups of four.

Woody (2001) studied 55 students at a rural United States high school over a two-year period to determine if a more cooperative school atmosphere could be created using a conflict resolution program. Students’ ability to apply conflict resolution skills was measured pre and post conflict resolution training using the Children’s Action Tendency Scale (CATS), a standardized measurement in order to maintain reliability and validity in the study (Woody, 2001). Students were asked to respond to ten conflict scenarios and circle the answer that most reflected how they would behave. The total number of aggressive, submissive, and assertive responses determined the scores (Woody, 2011). Scores ranged from zero to twenty-six, with higher scores indicating higher levels of aggression, assertiveness, and submissiveness. Results indicate aggressive responses declined, while assertive responses increased (-8.38, \( p < .01 \), 5.8, \( p < .01 \)) as students chose more assertive and less aggressive responses representing how they would respond in conflict situations (Woody, 2011).

Quinn (2002) studied 30 boys from a rural school near Phoenix, Arizona to determine the effectiveness of using a structured cooperative learning approach to increase the behaviors of inappropriate young boys. Teachers using the Teacher Report form, consisting of 25 items with descriptions of students’ characteristics (Quinn, 2002), identified students as being antisocial. Researchers used the Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD) to verify teacher ratings of students.

The students participated in twenty-six structured cooperative learning lessons designed to teach all the students interpersonal problem solving strategies, which took
place over a period of six weeks (Quinn, 2002). The lessons were taught daily for 15-20 minutes in a structured cooperative learning format. Students were measured before and after the cooperative learning lessons using Externalizing Antisocial Behavior, Academic Engaged Time, and Total Negative Behavior. Quinn (2002) found the students showed a significant difference on their level of academic engagement time ($F_{30} = 19.89; p = .000$), but little to no significance in lower rates of externalizing antisocial behavior ($F_{30} = 4.03; p = .055$) or negative playground interactions ($F_{30} = .40; p = .54$).

**Summary**

Teacher-student relationships occur in a variety of schools all across the world, but researchers need to continue to investigate at the importance of teacher-student relationships in relation to school violence in the United States. Several of the studies cited in this review were conducted outside of the Untied States. In order to confirm the findings in those studies, the studies need to be replicated in the United States. Once further research is complete, the findings could be generalized into other settings.
Chapter III – Results and Analysis Relative to Problem

Vast arrays of ideas have been studied regarding how teachers and schools can reduce school violence. Many of these ideas emphasize a similar set of ideas, such as increasing positive relationships between teachers and students through mediation strategies, bonding, building of trust, and cooperative learning.

Teacher-Student Relationships According to Gender and Culture

Gender and culture play an important part in student-teacher relationships. Rudasill et al. (2010) found male students had more conflict with teachers than female students. Saft & Pianta (2001) found teachers and students felt they had more positive relationships when the students and teachers were from the same ethnicity. Furthermore, Saft & Pianta (2001) found teachers and students had positive relationships when they were the same gender. Meehan, Hughes & Cavill (2003) found aggressive students whose ethnicities were African-American and Hispanic experienced fewer positive relationships with students than aggressive Caucasian students. Yablon (2010) found girls with positive relationships with teachers in the eighth and tenth grade were more willing to seek help for school violence than were boys.

In examining these studies, the importance of gender and culture in education is apparent. Teachers and students feel most comfortable and develop more positive relationships with each other when the teacher and student are the same ethnicity and gender. Furthermore, the results of Rudasill et al. (2010), Saft & Pianta (2001), and Meehan, Hughes & Cavill (2003) do seem to generalize over the entire United States from preschool-sixth grades, as teachers and students from rural and urban areas from all across the United States reported similar outlooks. Yablon (2010) focused on students’ in
Israel, and the findings were not reported in Rudasill et al. (2010), Saft & Pianta (2001), or Meehan, Hughes & Cavill (2003). This suggests an area of research needing further study, to see if girls with positive teacher relationships are more willing to report school violence, and if they are more willing to report school violence to a female teacher of the same ethnicity.

One weakness in each of the three studies addressing gender and culture is the information on teacher-student relationships was based on questionnaires, scales, and inventories. While the questionnaires, scales, and inventories used were valid and reliable instruments, subjective measures were being evaluated, which means the questionnaires, scales, and a range of factors that are hard to control can influence inventories. Teachers and students may or may not have been telling the truth when participating the study or their perception of their relationships with students may have been skewed based on the events of the day, rather than assessed over a period of time. Another weakness was the authors of the studies did not continue their research in to high school. While teachers and students in the younger grades reported positive teacher-student relationships in regards to gender and ethnicity, the same may not be found for those teachers and students in the secondary grades.

Mediation Strategies and Teacher Attitudes in Preventing School Violence

Marachi et al. (2007) found schools in Israel who trained teachers of all grades in mediation strategies in school violence and had teachers become active participants in addressing school violence had fewer cases of school violence. Somech and Oplatka (2009) found elementary teachers in Israel who felt addressing school violence was part of their responsibility and had administrative practices which encouraged teachers to
have a sense of ownership over school violence had fewer incidences of school violence. Teachers were able to take on a stronger, more positive role in the handling of school violence, helping to reduce school violence.

In looking at these studies, evidence suggests the direct involvement of teachers as active participants in school violence is a major factor in reducing school violence. Administrators in school districts need to include teachers as part of the violence prevention process, rather than using a top-down approach in which teachers are merely the facilitators. Involving teachers as stakeholders in reducing school violence gives teachers stronger roles in the prevention of school violence, as well as gives teachers some autonomy in how to address and prevent school violence in their day-to-day classrooms.

Both Marachi et al. (2007) and Somech and Oplatka (2009) performed their studies in Israel, which may mean the results might not be easily duplicated in schools in the United States. Culture influences the way teachers and students participate in education, and what is “normal” school behavior in one country, may not be “normal” school behavior in another. Therefore, the definition of school violence in Israel may differ from the definition of school violence in the United States, which may skew the findings reported in both studies. Furthermore, the influence of culture on beliefs about education, such as the roles of the teacher and the student, may also have an effect on the findings of the study, especially in regards to teacher participation in the reduction of school violence.

While Marachi et al. (2007) and Somech and Oplatka (2009) focused on schools in Israel, administrators can still generalize valuable information found in the studies to
school in the United States. Involving teachers as stakeholders in the prevention and management of school violence increases the teachers’ sense of community as well as independence when addressing school violence on a daily basis. Teachers who are confident and knowledgeable in the issues of school violence have greater autonomy in the classroom as they are able to handle issues as they arise. Teachers are at the forefront in the issue of school violence, and increasing their participation in the prevention and management of school violence can only be helpful to school districts across the United States.

**Teacher Bonding and Trust**

Hamre & Pianta (2001) found students in the United States who had negative relationships with teachers in kindergarten had negative relationships with teachers in eighth grade, as well as academic and behavioral issues. Crosnoe, Johnson & Elder (2004) found students who had positive relationships with their teachers had fewer academic, social, and behavioral issues. Yablon (2010) found students in Israel who had good relationships with teachers were more willing to seek out help in issues of school violence. Eliot, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan (2010) found students in Virginia who perceived their teachers as caring and respectful were more likely to tell a teacher about school violence. Van Maele & Van Houtte (2011) found teachers in Belgium who teach in larger school have less trust in their students and less interaction time to develop relationships and trust in students. However, teachers in larger schools who feel students are receptive to learning will have more trust in their students.

After the reviewing, the findings of these studies, positive bonds, and the creation of trust between teachers and students reduced negative behavior, social and academic
issues, all of which could lead to school violence. In addition, students who reported having positive relationships with teachers were willing to report school violence to their teachers. School size seems to play a part in developing trust and positive teacher-student relationships, which could negatively affect the behavior, social, and academic issues a student has, possibly resulting in school violence.

Both Yablon (2010) and Van Maele & Van Houtte (2011) performed their studies outside of the United States, which may mean the results might not be easily duplicated in schools in the United States. Culture again plays a significant part in generalizing the results of these studies in the United States. Cultural perceptions of positive teacher-student relationships and the amount of time teachers spend interacting with students may vary across countries. However, as class sizes increase in schools in the United States, positive teacher-student relationships may suffer, and incidences of school violence may rise. Administrators in school districts in the United States need to be cognizant of larger class sizes and teachers’ ability to develop positive relationships with larger numbers of students.

**Cooperative Learning**

Woody (2001) found high school students in rural United States who took part in Cooperative Learning via conflict resolution responded less aggressively in situations involving violence. Therefore, students who are taught conflict resolution through a cooperative learning process are able to work together and solve problems together. Quinn (2002) found the students showed a significant difference on their level of academic engagement time but little to no significance in lower rates of externalizing antisocial behavior or negative playground interactions. Bertucci *et al.* (2010) found
students assigned to individual and cooperative learning in pairs conditions performed better in achievement than students who were assigned to the cooperative learning in groups of fours condition. Furthermore, students assigned either the pair of group of four cooperative learning condition displayed a higher perception of peer academic support than students assigned to the individual learning condition and students working in pairs displayed a higher social self-esteem than students assigned to the other two learning conditions.

Weaknesses in these studies are the small sample size, location, and grades of the students. Generalization of conflict resolution to urban areas and lower grades may not occur, as the settings between urban and rural school are drastically different, as are high school to elementary school settings. Continually, Bertucci et al. (2010) performed their study in Italy, which raises questions in regards to culture, sociology, and school function, meaning the results of the study may not be duplicated in the United States. The findings of all three of the studies should be replicated with different populations using a variety of measures. The findings of all three of these studies are tentative, needing further research and replications in order for generalization of these findings.

**Summary**

Very few of the studies referenced in this review contained the specific language of the elements of Cooperative Learning Theory, (positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, social skills training, and group processing). Most of the studies, however, point out the importance of social relationships with either teachers or peers, positive face-to-face interactions with teachers, and classroom interactions.
Chapter IV: Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendation

While Cooperative Learning Theory was not mentioned specifically in many of the studies used in this review, the components of Cooperative Learning can be influential in creating strong teacher-student relationships. Positive teacher-student interactions influence students’ ability, relationships with peers and adults, achievement, as well as educational goals (Yablon, 2010). The elements of Cooperative Learning are present in strong teacher-student relationships, but teachers and students do not appear to be aware of the importance of the elements of Cooperative Learning in positive relationships, including how such relationships may prevent school violence.

Areas for Further Research

Further research is needed to investigate the effects of school size, grade levels, socioeconomic status, strategies for secondary teachers to strengthen teacher-student relationships, class size, increased teacher workload, increased teacher autonomy, teacher perceptions and expectations, teacher identity, classroom climate and early interventions on the level of school violence.

Cooperative Learning in the prevention of school violence still needs further investigation. A study of the use of Cooperative Learning in elementary, middle and high schools across the United States in urban, rural, and suburban settings needs to be conducted. School should be selected randomly, and participants should include teachers and students, also conducted a random. Data should be collected before, during and after the trial, and the instruments used should be valid and reliable, measuring incidences of
school violence before during and after the trial. Data should be analyzed to see if the incidences of school violence decreased because of Cooperative Learning.

**Summary and Conclusion**

The importance of positive teacher-student relationships and the use of Cooperative Learning should not be overlooked as schools search for ways to prevent school violence. Furthermore, conflict resolution and teacher medication strategies can provide valuable means to addressing incidence of school violence. Researchers must continue to examine at the importance of teacher-student relationships in relation to school violence in the United States. Once further research is complete, findings could be generalized into other settings and used by school administrators in the creation of programs to prevent school violence.
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