Staff Perceptions of the School Bonding Strategies Employed at a Pennsylvania Urban
Charter High School as Part of a Federally Mandated School Turnaround and Race to the
Top Grant

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Abstract

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Between 2011 and 2015, K-12 education experienced an infusion of funds by the U.S. Department of Education going directly to school districts that implemented reforms in key areas to address truancy, dropout and achievement in our nation's most severely underperforming schools. There is limited research studying truancy reduction, relationship building and dropout prevention during this period. This study sought to discover how one high school undergoing a federal turnaround built relationships and bonds with students. Knowledge of how to best build student and staff relationships is necessary to inform leaders and districts the appropriate approaches to take to keep students engaged in the school day in today's competitive and accountability-driven environment. Therefore, these were the overarching research questions: (a) how did staff at an urban Northeast turnaround Renaissance charter high school describe the strategies and tactics the school utilized between 2011-2014 to support the formation of relationships, social bonds, and attachments and (b) how do school personnel perceive that these strategies and tactics support students in bonding with the school and its personnel?

After interviewing central office personnel, the principal, teachers, a dean, counselor, and an assistant principal, and after reviewing documents, this study found that five approaches were critical in the formation of bonds, attachments and relationships between school staff and students. Those approaches included:

(1) parent and community engagement

(2) a supportive approach to discipline

(3) school bonding activities

(4) professional development

(5) structured extracurricular activities

In addition to these strategies, it emerged that staff perceived that the school could have been less rigid at the beginning and more restorative in its discipline approach, to better address student truancy and dropout. From these themes, the following major findings surfaced: (a) initial face-to-face communication with parents coupled with other follow-up strategies supported stronger school-student relationships; (b) a supportive discipline system with a focus on staff-student relationships was essential; (c) school-wide bonding activities focused around postsecondary success and robust extracurricular activities were vital to relationship building.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

CHAPTER 4: Findings

CHAPTER 5: Interpretations, Conclusions and Recommendations

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

School bonding "refers to the connection" youth have with their schools (Maddox and Prinz, 2003, p. 1). Bonds between students and their schools and students and school personnel are important because they can have a direct impact on the future outcomes of students, as it relates to delinquency (Cernkovich & Giordano, 1992), substance abuse (Simmons-Morton, Crump, Haynie, Saylor, 1999), teen pregnancy (Danziger, 1995) and dropout (Crusto, 2000). The actions of teachers and other school personnel are critical when it comes to the building of bonds with students, as the school environment and students' experiences at school have been found to promote or inhibit school bonding (Pilgrim, Abbey, Hendrickson, & Lorenz, 1998). In light of the importance of school bonding and its unintended consequences, this research study examined recent school improvement strategies–turnaround models–that result in the severing and re-establishing of school bonds. These strategies were laid out in grant applications and recommended by the U.S. Department of Education in 2010 to support failing schools (Howell, 2015). As outlined in one of the four proposed federal turnaround models, schools had the option of replacing the principal and up to half, but not to exceed 50% of their teachers. Through the lens of school personnel, this particular study sought to understand what occurred at one a particular high school located in an urban district where staff were replaced, students remained and relationships were re-established.

Turnaround Schools

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, appropriating roughly $100 billion for education, $4.35 billion set aside specifically for the establishment of Race to the Top (RTTT) grants (Howell, 2015). Over the subsequent 5 years from 2010 to 2015 the U.S. Department of Education awarded over four billion dollars to states, some of which were to be used to turn around these states' most underperforming schools (Howell, 2015). The grants were competitive, and states had to apply. Point values were given to states promising to implement reforms in seven categories to include: (a) great teachers and leaders, (b) state success factors, (c) standards and assessments, (d) general (e) turning around the lowest-achieving schools, (f) data systems to support instruction, and (g) competitive preference priority two. These categories are listed in order of most points awarded to least points awarded ranging from 125 points to 15 points (Howell, 2015). In order to receive the 50 points awarded in category "e" for address underperforming schools, states had to agree to allocate funds to local education agencies (LEAs) within their state to turn around their lowest performing schools. According to Ed.gov, these were the turnaround models school districts had to choose from: (a) traditional turnarounds, (b) transformations, (c) restarts, or (d) closures.

An examination of the four models indicated that each model required varying degrees of leadership and personnel changes at schools accepting the funds. Meanwhile, current and past research supporting Social Bonding Theory (SBT) have suggested that relationships or strong bonds with school administrators, teachers, and school personnel

were critical to improving attendance and reducing dropout. In the case of a traditional turnaround or restart, a student may leave in June and return in the Fall to find a new principal and a building where the student recognizes half of the teachers. This study examined the restart model in particular, because the school in the state chosen for more intimate study used this method of turnaround.

Of the 830 schools across the United States receiving turnaround grants, 58 were located in Pennsylvania (Data.gov, 2016). Data.gov reported the amount of each grant and location of the 58 schools across Pennsylvania that received RTTT grant money, during the 2011-2012 school year. There were only 18 high schools, of the original 58 schools, after excluding elementary and middle schools, schools closed or reassigned during the 3-year period following receipt of the grant, and schools that received grant amounts of less than $500. These 18 high schools enrolled a total of 23,464 students in 2013 (USDE, 2016). Of the schools listed in Table 1.1, I selected King High for this case study.

In terms of school size, the 18 schools varied with regards to enrollment ($M_{enrollment}$= 1304, enrollment range: 445 to 2556 students). Two of the 18 schools serviced Grades 7-12, while the remaining 16 schools serviced Grades 9-12. All schools were traditional public high schools with one school designated a Renaissance public high school serviced by a charter network. Student-to-teacher ratios also varied (M_{ratio}= 15.47, ratio range: 13.23 to 18.60). The average percentage of students receiving free and reduced meals [FARMS] at the 18 schools included was 79%. The percentages of students at each school receiving free and reduced meals (FARMS) ranged from 49.44% to 99.51%.

Finally, these 18 schools all received federal RTTT grants (M_{amount}= $605,451, amount

range: $109,958 to $848,867) in 2011. King High, the school chosen for this case study

underwent a federal turnaround, which resulted in a new leader being placed over the

school and close to 50% of the teachers being replaced by staff new to the building. This

particular school's turnaround strategies and relationship building tactics may prove

important as we work to understand how relationships are built with students during the

school day.

Table 1.1 – *Pennsylvania Turnaround High Schools: 2014 School Profiles*

School	% FARMS	Student-Teacher Ratio	Grant Amount	School Size	Graduation Rate Change After 3 Years
HS1	67.88	15.62	$958,375.00	1174	15.59
HS2	77.68	14.06	$267,754.00	1416	5.65
HS3	52.93	13.18	$699,963.00	1364	2.66
HS4	76.19	18.21	$974,132.00	1302	20.56
HS5	99.77	18.6	$792,001.00	1348	10.57
King High*	73.78	16.11	$508,486.00	1335	30.93
HS7	99.72	16.62	$786,964.00	1066	10.25
HS8	86.42	17.42	$500,000.00	1716	4.62
HS9	80.96	13.64	$616,432.00	2542	11.8
HS10	49.44	14.39	$848,867.00	445	-3.1
HS11	50.93	14.24	$109,958.00	1445	-0.02
HS12	76.31	15.19	$626,150.00	1475	-5.67
HS13	68.6	17.56	$686,000.00	605	-14.33
HS14	99.51	15.05	$641,440.00	617	23.71
HS15	97.16	13.37	$579,958.00	1056	20.37
HS16	76.87	13.23	$280,500.00	1341	-4.59
HS17	99.55	12.96	$671,142.00	661	24.18
HS18	84.9	19.00	$350,000.00	2556	-0.19
Average	78.81	15.47	$605,451.22	1303.6	8.50

Statement of the Problem

Urban high schools are particularly challenged with high rates of truancy and later dropout (Deruy, 2015). Research has suggested that significant numbers of students residing in urban centers are not showing up for class (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Fox, 2007; Deruy, 2015; USDE, 2016). For example, in a large urban school district in the Northeast, researchers reported 21% of students having 25 or more unexcused absences in a single academic school year (Fantuzzo, Grim, & Hazan, 2005). Some 10 years later in 2015, there are still school districts in urban centers across the country facing similarly high numbers of truant students. A wealth of studies have focused on the causes of nonattendance. An abundance of studies have illuminated the perspectives of students, parents, and educational professionals on various truancy reduction tactics and strategies (Bailey, 2005; Attwood & Croll, 2006; Reid, 2006). Researchers, however, conducted these studies during other educational reform eras such as Goals 2000 and No Child Left Behind (NCLB), both of which included increased accountability measures for schools. Following these eras was our nation's newest reform era known as Race to the Top (RTTT), which maintained an emphasis on accountability, but also infused competition. Currently, there is a need for truancy reduction and dropout prevention research conducted during former President Barack Obama's RTTT era, the period from 2010-2015, which through competitive grants, continued the trend of turning schools around through teacher and principal reassignment.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to uncover the bonding strategies and tactics an urban high school employed after its 2011-2012 turnaround where the school replaced up to and not to exceed 50% of its teachers and the principal. This study examined school bonding and relationship building through the lens of Travis Hirschi's (1969) social bond theory, which identified attachment, commitment, involvement, and positive beliefs as critical to institutional relationship building. This study sought to understand how King High, with federal grant funding and new leaders and personnel, leveraged its priorities and tactics to enable the formation of new staff and student relationships.

Research Questions

The overarching questions are (a) how did staff at an urban Northeast turnaround Renaissance charter high school describe the strategies and tactics the school utilized between 2011-2014 to support the formation of relationships, social bonds and attachments, and (b) how do school personnel perceive that these approaches, tactics and strategies support students in bonding with the school and its personnel? To better tease out the trends within the first overarching research question, four sub questions were designed around the four elements of social bonding theory, and are as follows:

1. What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to build attachment as perceived by staff?

2. What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to commitment as perceived by staff?

3. What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to build involvement as perceived by staff?

4. What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to build positive beliefs as perceived by staff?

Potential Significance

The implications for this research study are significant, as this research will help shed light on for school leaders how to best build relationships with students after a major staff shift and school turnaround. Currently, certain strategies such as a change in principal, staff professional development and extended learning time are stipulated in federal RTTT grants (Howell, 2015). This study illuminates additional tactics and strategies school leaders can use to build attachment, commitment, involvement and positive beliefs to reduce high school dropout.

Theoretical Foundation Framework

Researchers apply various theories to explain delinquency and nonattendance. Social bonding theory is the best fit for this study, as I am interested in understanding how schools form relationships and bonds with students that keep students in school. Applied to education, social bonding theory ascribed both attendance and nonattendance to a student's sense of connectedness to the school and its personnel. Travis Hirschi (1969) presented four elements of institutional bonding, which impact youths' ability to connect with an institution: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Hirschi posited that the stronger these elements, the less likely students were to engage in deviant

activity including truancy while attending school. Attachment referred to students'

attachment to parents, peers, or staff at the school. Commitment referred to adolescents'

commitment to advancing their futures such as by getting an education or saving money.

Involvement referred to how involved students were in extracurricular and community

activities, lessening the opportunity for delinquent activities.

Hirschi's Social Bonding Theory
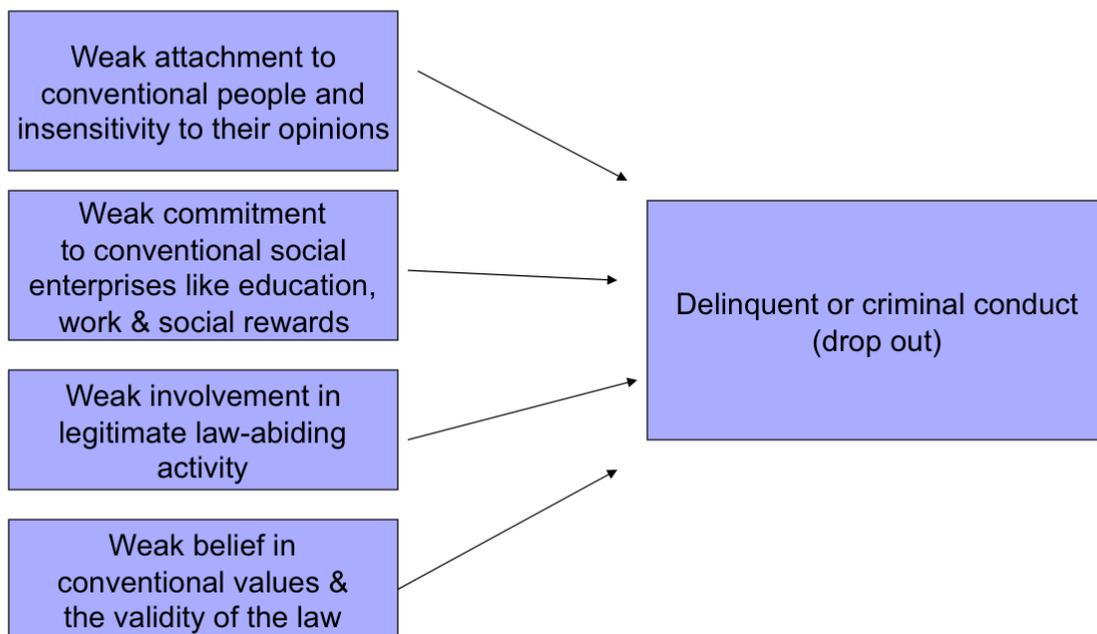
Figure 1.1 - Social Bonding Theory. Adapted from "Causes of delinquency" by T. Hirschi, 1969, Berkley: University of California Press.

Finally, Hirschi (1969) stressed the importance of a student's core values and

beliefs, understanding that the beliefs and values of those individuals around a student

provided a strong influence on the beliefs of this student and his or her feelings toward

school. These four elements taken together suggest that dropout is influenced greatly by

students' interactions with other individuals at school. School personnel's ability to

make school an inviting, supportive, positive, and enriching place is crucial to improving graduation rates.

Summary of Methodology

To better understand what occurred around relationship building inside a school that changed its staff, I conducted a case study at the high school labeled King High to hide its identity. I used semistructured interviews and supported those interviews with a document review to determine, through the perspectives of school personnel (teachers, staff, the principal, and the principal manager), how this school used tactics and strategies to build attachment, commitment, involvement and positive beliefs to build relationships with students. I used purposive criterion sampling to identify personnel to interview at the school site. I sought out school personnel that met the criteria of teacher, principal or principal manager willing to participate who were present during the period in question from 2011-2014. I asked participants for key documents and analyzed those documents.

Assumptions

1. Graduation data points reported to state departments of education are accurate and were calculated and reported the same way across schools receiving grants.
2. This study does not imply causation. Other factors are impacting graduation rates at the schools included in this study. Examples of these factors include and are not limited to the leadership style of each school's respective principal (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005) instructional methods employed by teachers (Wehlage, Rutter, & Turnbaugh, 1987) and various wrap-around programs to

support students (McMahon, Browning, & Rose-Colley, 2001) at each school. The presence or absence of these factors will be discussed through interviews and document review.

3. Participants were open and honest in their responses when interviewed.

4. Truancy reduction leads to a reduction in dropout as truancy is a known early warning sign of delinquency, social isolation, suspension and drop out (Huizinga, Loeber, Thornberry, & Cothern, 2000; Morris, Ehren, & Lenz, 1991).

Limitations

1. Findings from this study cannot be generalized to all high schools as this research study examined one public Renaissance high school in the Northeast region receiving a federal grant at the start of the 2011-2012 school year.

2. I only heard the voices of leaders, school staff and teachers. The voices of parents and students are missing.

3. I must rely on what participants can remember about the turnaround, which occurred 6 years prior to interviews.

4. The findings are limited to the perceptions of the study's participants.

5. I want to look back at what happened at this school six years ago. I can only conduct interviews and review documents, as observations of the school at this late stage are not feasible due to changes in staff and leadership at the school studied.

Delimitations

1. This research study confined the unit of analysis to a Renaissance high school where staff (principal and up to 50% of the teachers) were replaced as part of implementation of a school turnaround and receipt of a RTTT grant.
2. The unit of analysis was one school designated as a restart, defined as a school that closed and reopened under a different operator, while maintaining the same students and some of the same staff.

Definitions of Key Terms

1. Traditional Turnarounds – replace the principal and rehire no more than 50% of the staff; reform the curriculum; offer professional development for staff; provide extended learning time; adopt a new governance structure; other strategies (Howell, 2015).
2. Transformations – replace the principal with no additional staff replacement requirement; reform the curriculum; offer professional development for staff; provide extended learning time; other strategies (Howell, 2015).
3. Restarts – school closes and reopens operated under a new operator. New operator may or may not hire current staff (Howell, 2015).
4. Closures – school is closed and students are reassigned to other high performing schools (Howell, 2015).

5. Four Year Cohort Graduation Rate – the percentage of those students entering ninth grade that have graduated after four years; a transfer out that can be verified to have re-enrolled elsewhere does not count against graduation rates, as these students are excluded (NCLB, 2002).

6. Renaissance High Schools – high schools servicing neighborhood students that "operate independently from the existing school district structure." While exempt from many educational mandates, charter schools are not exempt from mandates around health and safety, special education, civil rights, student accountability, employee criminals background checks, open meetings, freedom of information requirements, generally accepted accounting principles, and other state provisions (PA Dept. of Education, http://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Charter Schools/Pages/default.aspx - tab-1).

Summary

There is a connection between staff and student relationships, truancy and dropout (Huizinga et al., 2000; DeSocio et al., 2007; Henry, Knight, & Thornberry, 2012). Subsequently, dropout can lead to major challenges down the road (Morris et al., 1991). I was compelled to investigate the challenge of student and school bonding in the context of an urban public high school because these schools are regularly being reformed using major staffing changes as a strategy (Howell, 2015), which is followed by the need to build new relationships. I established the theoretical and empirical foundations for my study, its significance, and my research questions connecting a school's perception of it employing the elements of social bonding theory to establishing relationships as a new

12

team. I included an overview of the actual methods I used to answer my research

questions. Finally, this chapter ends with a list of the study assumptions, limitations, and

delimitations and the definition of key terms.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Because there is an established link between school bonding and truancy (Hirschi 1969), this literature review begins with a section on the history of compulsory education, then, an overview of Goals 2000 and NCLB, followed by the connection between truancy and weak school bonds. This review discusses the different definitions of truancy. Then, it continues with a section on the impact dropout has on society, since truancy is a precursor to dropout (Huizinga et al., 2000; Morris, 1991). This literature review discusses additional factors known to impact school bonding. The first subsection of this section includes a discussion of the impact of parents, socioeconomics, and early childhood interventions, with this first set of factors less under the immediate control of schools and school officials. The next section continues with the impact of teachers, schools, the curriculum and extracurricular involvement, factors directly under the school's control. This literature review then follows with a subsection on the impact of peers and community interventions. Finally, this literature review concludes with a section on dropout prevention along with a section discussing the latest research on the role of restorative discipline practices and positive school culture building on student and school bonding.

History of Compulsory Education

While the U.S. first saw modern compulsory education laws in the mid 17th century with the Puritans of Massachusetts, compulsory education is a concept that has its origins in Europe. Our forefathers, when they settled the 13 colonies as early as the 16th century, already had ideas regarding compulsory education. The first semblance of

compulsory education in Europe goes back as far as 1494 when James IV of Scotland

ordered "all barons and freeholders to put their sons and heirs [in] school from 6 or 9

years of age and keep them there until they should have perfect Latin" (Perrin, 1896, p.

5). After that, students studied Philosophy and Laws for three years. Later, during the

16th century, Martin Luther, a strong voice during the Protestant reformation, advocated

for "universal education and urged [for] the establishment of schools for the masses"

(Perrin, 1896, p. 5).

In 1642, the General Court of the Massachusetts colony issued orders which

declared that "all children should be educated, that the parent or the community must

provide suitable education, and that the State may compel the establishment and

maintenance of schools and determine what these school should teach" (Hand, 1914, p.

8). Truancy had its early origins during this period when lawmakers saw the need revisit

laws in 1875 as a result of the reality that despite compulsory education laws, thousands

of young people were working in factories and not attending school. A government

report conducted in 1873 found that of 292,481 total school-aged youth, "one more than

one-third of all the children between five and fifteen in the state of Massachusetts were

nonattendants" (McNeil, 1875, p. 7). More recently, and despite pressure from parents to

exclude their children from school so that their children could work in factories, the

Supreme Court upheld that children had to attend school whether their parents supported

education or not in *Prince v. Massachusetts* (1944). Throughout our nation's history,

truancy or nonattendance has remained a key topic of interest among educators,

legislators, law enforcement, historians, and policy makers.

Goals 2000 and Standards-based Reform

Goals 2000 had its birth in Charlottesville, Virginia at the 1989 National Education Summit where governors came together and created the first-ever set of national goals (Robinson & Schwartz, 2000). Although the goals were birthed at this summit, President Bill Clinton did not sign the actual act into law until five years later in 1994. In sum, the goals were based on the premise that if more was expected of students, students would achieve more. The act described that by the year 2000, there would be increased parental partnerships, more professional development supports for teachers as well as drug-free and gun-free public schools across the nation. The U.S. would be number one in Math and Science, and all schools would have a high school graduation rate of at least 90%. These goals laid the groundwork for the George W. Bush years and No Child Left Behind (Robinson & Schwartz, 2000).

No Child Left Behind Era

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2002) required that all state departments of education track attendance and graduation as well as achievement measures for all schools receiving federal funds. To achieve adequate yearly progress, schools had to reach benchmarks around attendance, achievement, and graduation rates (No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB], 2002). By 2014, all schools were required to have an overall average daily attendance rate (ADA) of 92% and a graduation rate of 85%. The act also established participation requirements requiring that at minimum, 95% of students in each subgroup (African-American, Native-Americans, English Language Learners, special education students, students receiving free and reduced meals, etc.) were present for high stakes assessments. These requirements established by the federal government

held schools accountable and placed graduation and attendance rates on the national stage for all to see. According to the act, and during this era, if schools and school districts wanted to maintain local control, schools had to address truancy and meet rigorous standards for achievement and graduation.

Dropout as a Measure of Weak School Bonds

When staff and student bonds are weak, students turn to delinquency such as truancy and dropout (Hirschi, 1969; Huizinga et al., 2000; Morris et al., 1991) as indicated in Figure 2.1 below.

Hirschi's Social Bonding Theory

Weak attachment to conventional people and insensitivity to their opinions

Weak commitment to conventional social enterprises like education, work & social rewards

Weak involvement in legitimate law-abiding activity

Weak belief in conventional values & the validity of the law

Delinquent or criminal conduct (drop out)
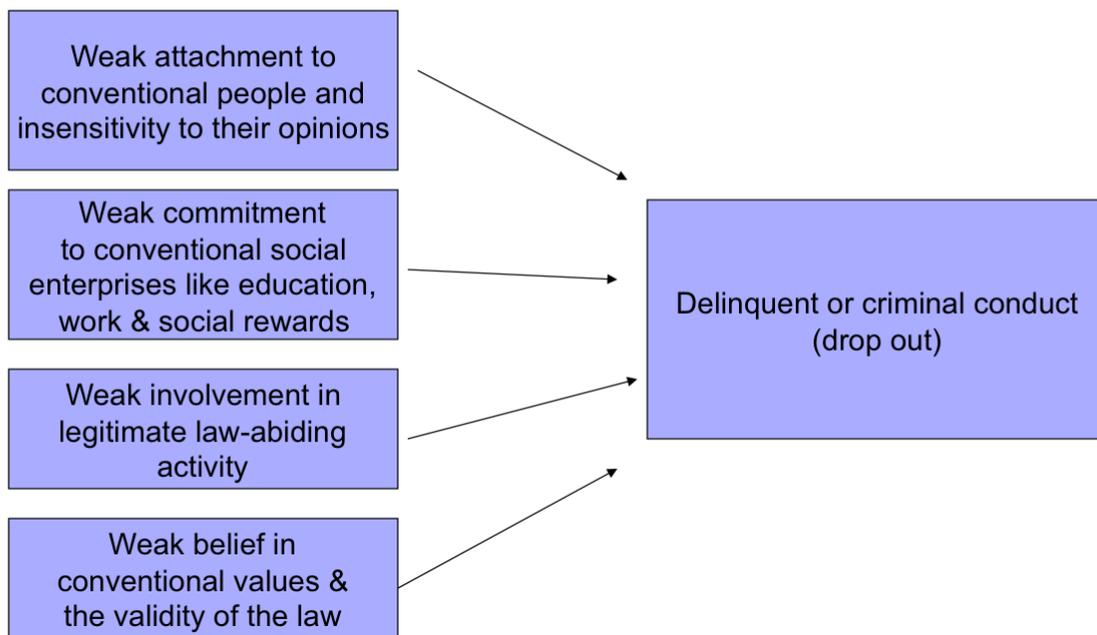
Figure 2.1 - Social Bonding Theory. Adapted from "Causes of delinquency" by T. Hirschi, 1969, Berkley: University of California Press.

The Alliance for Education (2011) reported the alarming statistic that half of minority students living in poverty drop out of school. Five years later, Balfanz et al.

(2013) reported that in many states, as many as a third of students classified as low-income were dropping out; meanwhile, there were no states where the graduation rate among white students was below 66%, and only four states where the graduation rate for white students was below 75%. To add to this concern, schools that serve low-income students of color have had persistent challenges providing a supportive school culture, lack resources, and have been found to ascribe to low academic expectations (Borman & Rachuba, 2001). Preceding dropout are years of disengagement including truancy, which studies trace back to as early as fourth grade (Balfanz et al., 2007). Truancy is well established as a known precursor to dropout (Huizinga et al., 2000; Morris et al., 1991). Building strong bonds should be a focus, particularly in low-income, minority schools with high dropout rates.

The Challenge Embedded in Calculating Truancy Rates

Although the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* required states to track and report student graduation rates and truancy, each state has continued to set its own parameters as it relates to attendance, and what constitutes truancy. For many years and prior to NCLB, defining and comparing graduation rates across schools and states presented challenges (Burdette, 2008). Recently, the U.S. Department of Education put forth regulations asking all states to report its adjusted cohort graduation rates. Meanwhile, nonattendance (truancy) continues to present challenges. Tennessee state law defines truancy as missing five or more days of school without an adequate excuse (Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3007, 2015). New Jersey state law defines a truant as any child between the ages of 6 and 16 years who shall repeatedly be absent from school (NJ Rev. Stat. 18A: 38-27, 2015). Virginia state law defines a truant or child in need of supervision as a child who is subject

to the compulsory attendance law yet remains habitually absent beyond the sixth day

after a parent is notified (Va. Code Ann.). Pennsylvania, the state where this research

study was focused, defines truancy in terms of "unaccounted absences" (PA Code Ann. §

11.24), and leaves it to individual school districts to adopt written policies concerning

district child accounting, attendance, admission, excusal and program procedures as

necessary (Pa Code § 11.41). States continue to vary in their legal definition of truancy,

and as seen with Pennsylvania, some states depend on LEAs to establish functional

truancy definitions. These varying definitions suggest that one might use graduation

rates rather truancy rates to quantify school bonding.

The Monetary Impact of Weak School Bonds

According to the American Center for Progress, in 2012, an estimated 7.5 million

students were chronically absent from schools nationwide (Deruy, 2015). Unexcused

absences have been linked to negative outcomes later in life for students (Baker, Sigmon,

& Nugent, 2001). The cost to society is huge, and truant students are at a greater risk

later in life of being involved with substance abuse, gang activity, and criminal activity

such as burglary, auto theft, and vandalism (Bell, Rosen, & Dynlacht, 1994; Dryfoos,

1990; Garry, 1996). Research also supports that adults who were chronically truant

during their school age years were more likely to have serious health problems, a reliance

on welfare support, and an increased likelihood of incarceration (Bell et al., 1994;

Dryfoos, 1990; Guagliardo, Huang, Hicks, & D'Angelo, 1998). Adults 25 and older who

had dropped out, reported being in worse health than the same group who received a high

school diploma (Pleis, Ward, & Lucas, 2010). The New York Times reported that New

York City spends more on its prison population than any other state or city, paying in

2012 an estimated $161,731 per year to feed, house and guard each of its prisoners (Santora, 2013). With taxpayers footing the bill, the burden on local and state budgets for incarceration alone is enormous, not considering the equally high cost to taxpayers for welfare, social services, and health care.

Parents and School Bonding

According to research, parents have a major impact on if their children attend school regularly or not. Travis Hirschi noted (1969) that the beliefs of parents have an impact on how students view and bond with an institution, such as a school. In support of Hirschi's SBT, a study (2001) found through surveying parents that many parents of truant students reported having negative experiences when they were in school themselves (McMahon, Browning, and Colley, 2001). While this study makes a link between parents' attitudes toward school and their children's interactions with schools, the respondents in this study were 77% white and 89% female. With only 23% of respondents being minority parents, racially, the population that participated in this survey is far from characteristic of the rest of the nation's urban high schools. Still, this study supported the aforementioned SBT, making the case that parent actions and attitudes impact whether a student bonds with the school or engage in deviant behavior such as truancy.

In addition to parents' attitudes, other researchers implicated parental drug use as being linked to higher rates of truancy among students. Flaherty and Sutphen (2012) found in their study that youth who tested positive for illicit drug use were also more likely to be accompanied by a caregiver who also tested positive. It is important to note that 53% of the truant families who participated in this study were white and 47% were

minority. Unlike in the McMahon et al. (2001) study, this sample is better representative of urban school districts. These findings linking parental drug use and truancy are less in support of SBT and more in support of Strain theory. Strain theorists believed that both drug use and truancy are influenced by social strains that exist among classes (Lawrence, 1998).

On another note, McNeal (1999) found a reduction in problematic behavior such as truancy when parents consistently had discussions with their children about school, and when parents participated in the parent teacher association at their child's school. The McNeal study looked at longitudinal data from 11,401 eighth grade students, and followed up with these students and families every two years to determine the impact of parental involvement on student achievement and student behavior. With its large sample size and quantitative methods, this study linked parental involvement to a reduction in student absenteeism and by extension school bonding. However, it did not establish from the perspective of students, specifically what caused students' increased attendance and engagement. A mixed methods study, which looked at students' perceptions of the school alongside their parents' regular presence would improve this study. While a number of studies have surveyed and studied parents, making the case that parents' actions were important, other research shows there are other variables to consider such as socioeconomics, preschool enrollment, teachers, the school's curriculum and peer influences.

Socioeconomics and School Bonding

As it relates to truancy and later dropout, socioeconomic status in general, is significant (Attwood & Croll, 2006). A study by Fergusson and researchers (2004)

supported the connection between low socioeconomics and high absenteeism. The

Ferguson study tracked 1,265 subjects born in 1977, from birth to age 21. Findings

indicated that increased socioeconomic disadvantage was linked to increases in school

problems such as truancy, suspension, and underachievement. In this same study,

subjects from the lowest socioeconomic groups were three times more likely to commit

crimes, actions which further impact their attendance, should students end up in the

juvenile justice system. In another study, Newcomb and researchers (2002) studied 754

eighth graders, examining the factors that predicted students' success or dropout by 12th

grade. Results of the study indicated a clear link between low socioeconomics and

student failure and drop out. In support of these two studies linking low socioeconomic

status and truancy, it would follow that students receiving free or reduced meals would

have a higher tendency toward truancy. Gage and researchers' (2013) study also

supported the link between low socioeconomic status and truancy in that their results

suggested that students receiving free or reduced meals and students who had

individualized education plans (IEPs) were more likely to be truant.

Early Interventions and School Bonding

Mann and Reynolds (2006) conducted a longitudinal study of 1500 low-income

youth who participated in a preschool intervention program. Their study found that youth

who received at least one year of preschool were less likely to participate in delinquent

behavior. The intervention reduced delinquency by 40-50%. The study included

extensive services for students in the experimental group such as: "half-day and full day

preschool programming, parental participation in the school, community outreach

services, and physical, medical, and nutritional services" (Mann and Reynolds, 2006, p.

157). The children in this study received up to "six years of total intervention, which included in addition to the preschool component, extended school-age services through age nine" (Mann and Reynolds, 2006, p. 157). While early interventions were a key part of this study, so many other services were provided that the impact of any one factor alone was not reported. With that said, the key to curbing juvenile delinquency may be early interventions that focus on identifying at risk students and following up with students and families afterwards with additional wrap-around services.

To further support the importance of early interventions, a Newland study found that a tendency toward truancy, authority problems, and substance abuse could be predicted as early as age eight (Fergusson & Horwood, 1998). Fergusson and researchers conducted a longitudinal quantitative study, where parents provided survey data in reference to their children's behavior patterns at age eight. Parents rated certain behaviors on a one to three scale such as stealing, temper tantrums, lying, aggression, destruction of property, etc. At age 18, the study surveyed subjects in regards to truancy, dropout, and unemployment. Researchers found that subjects who were in the top 5% in terms of having severe behavior problems at age eight, were 4.8 times less likely to graduate high school than those in the bottom 5%. These findings support a need to target at risk youth as early as possible with interventions to curb truancy. The challenge for this study was the reality that children who experienced conduct difficulties tended to experience other disadvantages such as having "less educated parents, coming from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds, living in a single-parent family, experiencing high residential mobility, experiencing greater parental change and parent conflict, poorer mother-child interactions, having lower IQ, and exhibiting higher rates of attentional

problems" (Fergusson & Horwood, 1998, p. 1105). When the study controlled for only three of these variables, the association was reduced, making them 1.8 to 2.2 times as likely to leave school without a diploma. Additional research would be needed to control for additional factors, solidifying the link between early behavior problems and drop out. Currently, the study can only boast "possible causal linkages" (Fergusson & Horwood, 1998, p. 1105).

Teachers' Impact on School Bonding

Students reported in a Chicago study that they liked school more when they felt that teachers cared about them, when teachers praised them, and when they felt teachers respected them (Hallinan, 2008). Likewise, another study conducted in the Northeast showed a significant decrease in truancy rates when students received mentoring from teachers (DeSocio et al., 2007). Researchers conducted this study in a high school, which enrolled 2,000 students of which 83% of students were minority. Families at the school had a 70% mobility rate, but the school still made significant strides in reducing truancy. Teachers were consistent in following up with students and parents when students were absent. School officials enrolled truant youth in a school-based health center for screening and services; the school also tracked and monitored student attendance frequently. By reaching out to families frequently and mentoring students, teachers built stronger relationships with students, improving attendance over time.

According to the body of research, the teacher impact is not limited to the relationships teachers build, but also includes the way teachers conduct their classrooms. Butroyd (2008) found that in classes with flexible teaching methods, students attended more and were more engaged in school overall. When teachers retreated to traditional

methods, student involvement in how lessons were taught was stifled, and student truancy rates increased. Essentially, when teachers forced a particular way of thinking or completing a task, removing students' ability to contribute to the activities or design and create their experiences, students became disengaged.

Schools' Impact on School Bonding

Truancy and dropout rates are most serious in schools located in large urban centers where the population is mostly minority and economically disadvantaged according to researchers. Balfanz (2007) and researchers at John Hopkins found majority minority high schools to be five times more likely to have weak promoting power than majority white schools. The same study reported that 50% of African-American students and 40% of Latino students attended schools where graduation was not the norm, and that urban schools made up the majority of low performing schools. To make matters worse, school districts often placed inexperienced principals at high-needs schools where there had been a tradition of high principal turnover (Loeb, Kalogrides, & Horng, 2010). Additionally, a study conducted in Finland found that unclear goals among staff at schools resulted in increased truancy among students (Virtanen et al., 2009). These studies taken together suggest that choices in leadership are critical to reducing truancy.

Another challenge for schools as they work to make students feel a sense of attachment to the school organization and its officials is the inherent impersonal nature of large schools. Cutshall (2003) reported that about 70% of students in the U.S. attended schools with more than 1,000 students while research has consistently supported that smaller is actually better in terms of student engagement and attendance rates. Weiss,

Carolan, and Baker-Smith (2010) found that moderately sized student cohorts and grade level groupings resulted in more student engagement. Many schools have adopted smaller schools models that support the Weiss study. These schools have instituted an initiative coined as Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) where school officials break a larger school into smaller schools, due to the financial strain associated with building more schools. School leaders provide teachers who all teach the same students with a common planning period, and situate these teachers geographically close in order to build relationships and address the specific needs of students (USDE, 2008). The establishment of schools within schools is necessary as smaller schools models promote teacher relationship building (Black, 2003). Additionally, further studies have supported that students who attended smaller schools were less likely to drop out than their counterparts in larger schools (Werblow & Duesbery, 2009). School size is one more factor contributing to rising truancy and dropout rates.

In support of the same premise of smaller schools for more personalized experiences for at-risk youth, the aforementioned Wehlage, Rutter, and Turnbaugh (1987) dropout prevention program and research study found that in order for its program to be successful, schools needed to not only implement the school within a school model, but schools also needed to provide individualized instruction and manage discipline effectively. The SLCs model has been adopted by federal policy makers as a means of addressing "national concerns about students too often lost and alienated in large, impersonal high schools, as well as concerns about school safety and low levels of achievement and graduation for many students" (USDE, 2008, p. 1). This same U.S.

Department of Education study reported preliminary data from the last three years

suggesting a downward trend in school violence after the implementation of SLCs.

The Curriculum and School Bonding

In addition to the impersonal nature of large schools (Lynda, 1994), other research

suggested the adoption of an inflexible curriculum contributed to the failure of districts to

meet the needs of individual students (Hoyle, 1998). When tackling more serious

psychological issues related to truancy such as school phobia and separation anxiety,

researchers found individually designed programs to be more effective than prescribed

programs (Elliot, 1999). These findings are in alignment with SLCs research (USDE,

2008) and the anti-gang JIPP initiative whose researchers found these programs to be

successful because of their ability to provide comprehensive services to address the

individual needs of the whole child (Koffman et al., 2009). In sum, schools that can get

to know students on a personal level, can offer specialized services, and can cater the

curriculum to the needs of students are doing a better job at building relationships.

Researchers have shown that an inappropriate curriculum is perceived to have a

negative impact on students' relationships with the school. In a study, which surveyed

the perceptions of social workers and paraprofessionals who dealt directly with truant

youth, social workers surveyed felt that the truant students they supported in particular,

preferred a vocational curriculum model over the traditional curriculum (Reid, 2006).

Still, it must be noted that 80% of these same social workers in the study believed that

parents condoning their children's absences was the most important factor contributing to

truancy. These findings suggest that curriculum is important, but from this group's

perspective, not as important as parental values and attitudes; still, other researchers disagree. In their dropout prevention model, Wehlage et al. (1987) presented key characteristics of school interventions that have resulted in success. This research found a curriculum that includes "individualization, clear objectives, prompt feedback, concrete evidence of progress and an active role for students" (Wehlage et al., 1987, p. 71) is key. These researchers applied this model at nine schools in Wisconsin and experienced positive results.

Another study conducted by Helper (1994) reported the success of an elementary school curriculum, which infused social skills into the daily program of fifth graders. After working with the curriculum integrating social skills, students originally identified as low status on the social spectrum began to interact more with their peers. These early interventions and socialization techniques could hold the key to curbing truancy in the upper grades, making schools in general a more positive place for students. Atwood and Croll (2006) reported the results of a study where students expressed positive opinions of their current curriculum, but still did not show up for class. These researchers suggest it may be more than the curriculum, which turns students off from school. Other factors such as teacher attitudes and school size may be more important than the curriculum.

Extracurricular Involvement and School Bonding

In their study, Maddox and Prinz (2003) found that students' involvement in extracurricular activities was important in the building of a sense of attachment to the school, supporting Hirschi's notion that school bonding is necessary to reduce truancy and ultimately, dropout. Also in support of this notion, a New England study found that involvement particularly in sports activities had the ability to assist with social inclusion

28

and had a positive impact on students' overall experiences at school (Bailey, 2005). Extracurricular involvement in school is a great way for students to develop an affinity for school. In another study, which looked specifically at high school students, not only did extracurricular involvement increase attendance rates, the study's findings also associated extracurricular involvement with improved educational status and civic engagement one year after high school (Fredrick & Eccles, 2006). The Fredrick and Eccles study collected surveys from 1,500 families starting when students were in seventh grade and followed subjects until they were in their early twenties. In addition to improved civic activity for all groups, the study found extracurricular involvement improved the externalizing behaviors of boys specifically, and the internalizing behaviors of the African-Americans students studied. In schools and districts with a large African-American or male only student population, these findings are significant.

Conversely, but in support of the same notion, researchers associated a lack of extracurricular involvement with a higher rate of delinquency and truancy. In line with Hirschi's (1969) social bonding theory where involvement was important, Hartnett (2008) looked at survey data from 776 students and found that unstructured activities and delinquent behavior were positively correlated. Therefore, schools can impact truancy by creating a structured path for extracurricular involvement, which may include making involvement in at least one organization or activity compulsory. Teachers and schools that encourage positive peer groups, according to researchers, are helping to curtail the problem of absenteeism (Hartnett, 2008).

Negative Peer Pressure and School Bonding

If attachment to parents or positive peer groups at school cannot be achieved, students often resort to gangs and negative peer groups in the community. Henry and Huizinga (2007) found involvement with delinquent peer groups to be one of the two most robust predictors of truancy. Researchers consistently associate gang affiliation with delinquency and an increase in absenteeism (Battin, Hill, Abbott, Catalano, & Hawkins, 1998). Researchers in this Seattle-based study compared the delinquency of three groups: current gang members, nongang members with friends who were gang members, and nongang members without friends who were gang members. Gang affiliation in each case, increased one's likelihood of engaging in delinquency. As a result of these findings, many schools and community groups work tirelessly to prevent student participation in gangs.

One such school district in Los Angeles, California initiated an anti-gang program called the Juvenile Intervention Prevention Program (JIPP) and reported gains in student achievement, an increase in attendance, a reduction in suspension rates and a reduction discipline referrals (Koffman et al., 2009). The systems theory approach to remediating high-risk youth set this intervention apart. Systems theory emphasizes that "no one factor is solely responsible" for the resulting outcome (Green, 2000, p. 189). Multiple factors work together. Researchers involved in the JIPP program approached the supports provided to students as a system and viewed truancy the result of the breakdown of one of the components of the system. The program sought to solve the problem by focusing on including truants' bio-behavioral health, their families, their academic success, and their psychosocial health (Koffman et al., 2009).

Students who participated were largely minority, mostly immigrants, low income, and influenced by notorious gangs in their communities. As a result of these factors, researchers considered them high risk for delinquency, antisocial behavior and emotional illness. The program consisted of a series of 6-week modules that taught students leadership, empowerment and resistance. The resistance module consisted of personal training, an attempt to address the entire student through Green's (2000) aforementioned systems approach. The final module included a session where the entire family attended, and parents of truants were given additional parenting classes on Saturdays. As a result of the intervention, the number of suspensions decreased by 90%, the number of students who fell into the normal range for depression increased from 35% to 66%; 56% of students showed improvements in English and 58% of students showed improvements in Math.

Community and School Partnerships and School Bonding

Like the JIPP initiative, another successful community partnership initiative in Pennsylvania made huge strides in reducing truancy. McMahon, Browning, and Rose-Colley (2001) reported a 75% reduction in truancy as a result of a successful parent, community, and school partnership. Fifty organizations participated in outreach to the parents of students at an at risk high poverty elementary school. In another study published in 2002, Epstein and Sheldon identified a number of successful strategies that lowered truancy rates, which included the involvement of community, schools, and families (Epstein, 2002). These researchers also reported a reduction in truancy when schools gave awards to students, school put afterschool community-based programs in place for students and schools used effective communication strategies.

31

Many school districts have also looked to community-established courts to curb truancy. Fantuzzo, Grim, and Hazan (2005) found the use of truancy court referrals and hearings with a community agency presence and follow up reduced truancy significantly. This study tracked 567 truants, some of whom received a traditional court hearing and others who received a hearing with a community-based follow up component. The study noted, by judges and school officials setting up community-based courts in school buildings throughout the district rather than in the city's center, they provided easy accessibility to truant students and their families. Research highlighted the presence of community agency support and follow up as essential to the initiative's success. In collaboration with the Department of Human Services, both social workers and community service organizations were present to support families and offer supports. The study saw a significant reduction in truancy after 30 days, 60 days, and even after 1 year. Data from this research suggest additional community supports may make all the difference, as they are able to support sustained results in lowering truancy.

In addition to supports from social services partners, another important community partner is the police. In his book *Truancy: Short and Long term Solutions,* Reid (2002) summarized his research stressing the need for schools and community police to work closely together to develop trust between high-risk offenders, parents, and the police (Reid, 2002). Reid saw success in truancy reduction when police participated in classroom activities and were viewed as partners in the community. While some researchers (Reid, 2002) feel law enforcement should take a proactive approach, other research indicate that truancy courts and additional interventions that involve law

enforcement only have an impact when used for severe truants (Hendricks, Sale, Evans, McKinley, & Carter, 2010), and should generally remain out of schools.

Restorative Discipline and School Bonding

Most recently, research is emerging on the impact of restorative discipline verses zero tolerance discipline measures on students' experiences, truancy reduction and improved graduation rates. Zero tolerance policies intended to hold students accountable may not produce the outcomes school officials had originally hoped for (Gage, Sugai, Lunde, & DeLoreto, 2013). Conversely, the restorative model focuses on the young person who has caused harm to another person or property within the school community, and repairing that harm (McGrath, 2002). This model allows students, teachers, families, schools, and the community to resolve conflict without students being excluded from school (Gonzalez, 2012). Rideout, Roland, Salinitri, and Frey (2010) saw a significant reduction in student absences among senior high school students when schools used restorative practices. While this study focused on all grade levels, the study saw a significant reduction in absences at the high school-level. This is a significant finding because it is at this age students begin to make personal choices regarding whether to attend or not and where truancy numbers are greatest. This research supports that by schools employing restorative measures rather than zero tolerance suspension and expulsion tactics, schools create more supportive environments and keep high school students in school. Conversely, zero tolerance measures have been cited as contributing to the alarming daily absenteeism numbers we are seeing across the U.S. (Skiba, 2000) and pushing students toward the school to prison pipeline (Monahan, Vanerhei, Bechtold, Cauffman, 2014).

Impact of the School Leader in Creating a Positive School Culture

School culture is identified as a critical factor in school turnaround that determines a student's level of confidence, level of aspiration, and level of motivation in how he or she approaches life events (Plata & Robertson, 1998). While school personnel play a key role in developing and maintaining school culture, the school leader drives the ship. This work becomes challenging for leaders as a result of organizational attention slips, new people, retirements, and waning awareness (Fisher, Frey, & Pumpiam, 2012). Fisher et al. (2012) suggested the following leadership practices for building and maintaining a strong culture:

1. Discuss the cultural pillars of the school during the hiring process with candidates.

2. Allow regular feedback between the leadership team and staff to determine what is going well, what needs support, or what needs to be changed, in order to engage everyone in the process of improving school culture.

3. Implement brief daily standing meetings to quickly get everyone on the same page each morning, building in symbolic gestures and celebrations.

4. Give recognition to and celebrate staff that are well prepared, dedicated, and committed individuals.

5. Design a staff development plan invested in a school culture that reflects a commitment to high academic performance among all students.

Other great minds in educational leadership agree with Fischer that school culture must be prioritized by leaders in order for a school to reach academic and cultural benchmarks (Sailes, Cleveland, & Tyler, 2014). Of the seven leadership levers

indentified by one major researcher as being important for school leaders, "a strong and positive student culture" is elevated as one of two "super-levers," meaning "where once failing schools experienced turnarounds, these levers were the game changers" (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012, p. 16). In sum, key to improving school performance and graduation rates is a commitment to making school a joyful and inclusive place for students.

Summary

In addition to employing individualized approaches to discipline, reducing the number of youth who drop out and end up in prison later in life can be accomplished by building stronger relationships. Because weak relationships between students and school personnel promote truancy, districts must be careful when choosing their method of school turnaround, paying close attention to the severing of relationships and being purposeful about the reforming of new school personnel and student relationships. There are multiple approaches that lead to stronger bonds between students and schools. School bonding strategies must involve open communication and positive interactions between students, parents, teachers, school leaders and the community. An initiative that involves one of these groups alone will not suffice.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This study examined the strategies employed by one urban high school that used RTTT grant money and a federally recommended turnaround model and built relationships with students. This chapter begins with a description and defense of the proposed methodology, which is a single-site case study employing four data sources. Those data sources include an interview with central office staff, an interview with the principal, interviews with other school staff (a dean, an assistant principal, a counselor and five teachers) and document review. This chapter continues with a description of the school district, the school site and the data collection and analysis methods the researcher employed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of trustworthiness, subjectivity and ethical considerations.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship building strategies employed at a particular high school, which underwent a school turnaround and replaced half its staff. The overarching questions are (a) how did staff at this urban Northeast turnaround Renaissance charter high school describe the strategies and tactics the school utilized between 2011-2014 to support the formation of relationships, social bonds and attachments, and (b) how do school personnel perceive that these approaches, tactics and strategies support students in bonding with the school and its personnel? To better tease out the trends within the first overarching research question, four sub questions were designed around the four elements of Social Bonding Theory, and are as follows:

1. What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to build attachment as perceived by staff?

2. What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to commitment as perceived by staff?

3. What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to build involvement as perceived by staff?

4. What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to build positive beliefs as perceived by staff?

Epistemology

Social constructivism is my epistemological lens for this study. Appearing publically in 1960 and developed by Vygotsky, social constructivism rejected Piaget's earlier assumption that it was possible to separate learning from its social context (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). Rather, the design of this study is grounded in Vygotsky's and Merriam's assertion that interpretive research "assumes that reality is socially constructed" (Merriam, 2009, pp. 8-9). Social constructivism is "the view that the subject constructs the cognitive schemes, categories, concepts, and structures necessary for knowledge" (Kitchener, 1986 p. 102). Crotty said it best defining social constructivism as the "view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and the world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). While SBT guided the ideas around school bonding, this study sought to understand the meaning-making process of school personnel as they experienced the process first hand of building bonds with students. Further, this study hoped to tease out the socially constructed understandings of staff at

King High (principal manager, principal, teachers, a counselor, and other administrators) during its turnaround from 2011-2014. I sought to hear staff voices as they described their work bonding with students. Because of my epistemology, the voices of personnel and how they experienced the turnaround are vital to my understanding of the intricacies involved in the work of school bonding.

Methodology

I attended to my research questions taking a qualitative approach to exploring the national crisis of high school absenteeism and dropout. Because the research design is based on social constructivism, an interpretivist paradigm, I employed methods that allowed me to retrospectively "get as close as possible to the participants being studied" (Creswell, 2007, p. 18). The school environment is complex and factors beyond my control as the researcher are always interacting with any experimental group I wish to control or manipulate. Of the various qualitative methods, and considering the research questions, I chose a case study. Yin (2008) defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2008, p. 19). A case study was appropriate because it studies the specific case and leaves room for me to describe all the additional factors impacting any experimental group. The case study "offers a means of investigating complex social units," such as schools, consisting of multiple variables (Merriam, 2009, p. 50). Additionally, because of the retrospective nature of this particular study (explores what occurred between 2011 and 2014), the "variables are so embedded in the situation" it would be challenging to tease out the

contributions of each variable separately (Yin, 2003, p. 13). In cases such as these, a case study is the appropriate research method.

School District and Site Selection

I began this study by doing a national search of all schools across the U.S. that received a 2010 federal turnaround grant, which produced 830 public elementary, middle, and high schools across 50 states and the District of Columbia. To obtain the same data file, one can go to Data.gov, search "turnaround models" and select "school improvement 2010 grants." There were only three states across the U.S. with more than 50 unique schools receiving a RTTT turnaround grant in its particular state. I narrowed my focus to these three states in order to attend to sample size. North Dakota had the least number of schools with one school receiving a grant; California had the most schools receiving grants with 92 schools, followed by Florida with 71 schools. Pennsylvania, the state chosen for intimate study had the third most turnaround schools nationally with 58 schools receiving grants, and was most geographically convenient for me compared to Florida or California.

By solely focusing on Pennsylvania, I narrowed down the list of 830 schools across 50 states to 58 schools across one state in the Northeast. Excluding elementary and middle schools, a list of 18 high schools emerged across ten school districts. The high school chosen was situated in an urban district, which in 2013, enrolled 131,362 students, and during the 2014-2015 school year, was the eighth largest public school district in the nation (USDE, 2016). This high school has been given the pseudonym King High to hide its identity. In 2014, King had an enrollment of 1335 students and a 7-12 grade configuration (USDE, 2016). At the end of the 2010-2011 school year, it closed

and re-opened at the start of the 2011-2012 under a charter operator as a public

Renaissance charter high school. It retained the same neighborhood students, but

rescreened all teachers replacing close to, but not to exceed half. The school received a

turnaround grant in the amount of $508,486 at the start of the 2010-2011 school year.

The percent of students qualifying for free and reduced meals at King High was 73.78%

in 2014 (USDE, 2016).

Study Participants

I used network sampling to obtain research participants, a form of purposeful

sampling where I located "a few key participants who easily meet the criteria" I

established for participation (Merriam, 2009, p. 79), and then, asked these individuals to

refer me to other participants meeting the established criteria. I began by interviewing

the principal manager and the principal. The principal then sent an e-mail to the 18 staff

members (teachers, assistant principals, deans and counselors) who were still employed

at King High since its turnaround at the start of the 2011-2012 school year. Of the 18

staff members invited, eight additional staff members agreed to an in-depth interview. In

addition to the principal and principal manager, I was able to interview various types of

employees (five teachers, an assistant principal, a dean, and a counselor) in order to

triangulate my data sources to obtain a comprehensive description of what occurred in the

school (Tashakkori & Teddie, 1998). Criteria to participate were as follows: the

participant (a) voluntarily wished to participate in this study, (b) was on or joined the

school's staff during the 2010-2011 school year and remained at least through the 2013-

2014 school year, (c) held the title of teacher, counselor, dean, assistant principal,

principal, or principal manager.

Data Collection Methods

       Interview protocol.

       The interview questions I asked participants are included in Appendices A-C. I started by asking all candidates to "please tell me a little about your background and experiences in education." This question was the opening question to make participants comfortable answering questions and to help establish eligibility to participate in the study. I probed for content area, teaching experience, teacher leader experience and length of time in those roles. I then went into the second question with study participants to glean what King High was like prior to the turnaround from either personal account or second hand information. To obtain a rich description of the school, I asked "back in 2010, what were some of the challenges the school was facing, which led to it being deemed as persistently low performing and in need of turnaround (during the 2011-2012 school year)?"

       Next, I introduced the third question or topic for discussion as part of the interview protocol to garner general responses or recollections that addressed the first part of research questions 1-3, which spoke to the "approaches, tactics and strategies" the team employed to build relationships with students. I asked each participant to "tell me about the immediate changes you and the leadership team made when you took the reins of the school during the 2011-2012 school year." I followed these opening questions with questions four, five, six and seven, each focused on a specific tenet of Travis Hirschi's (1969) Social Bonding Theory (SBT), diagrammed in Figure 3.1 below. Those questions and their correlations to each of the four tenets of SBT are included in Table 3.1.

Hirschi's Social Bonding Theory
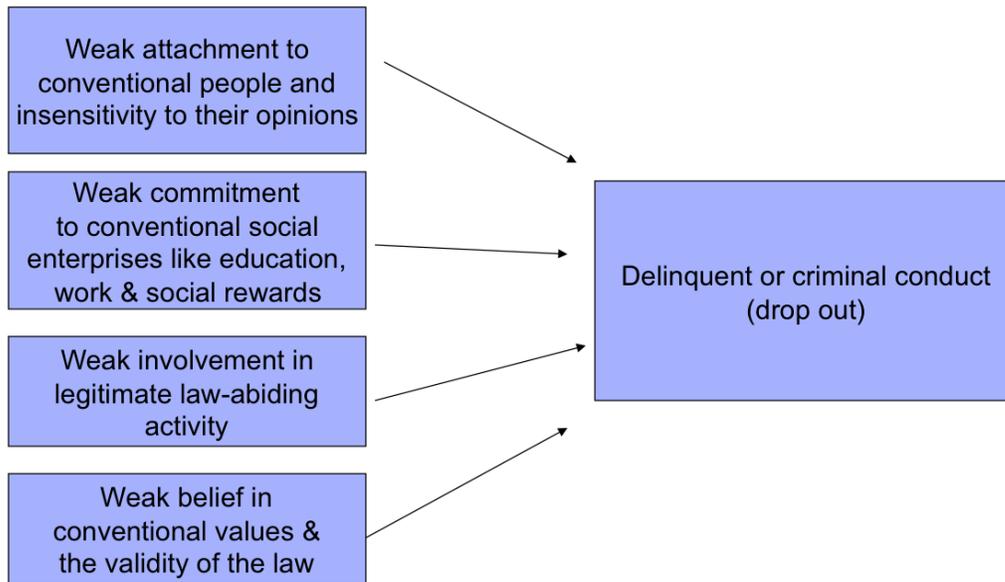
Figure 3.1 - Social Bonding Theory. Adapted from "Causes of delinquency" by T. Hirschi, 1969, Berkley: University of California Press.

Table 3.1 - Interview Protocol Questions, RSQs (Research Sub-questions) and Theory Correlation

Theory Tenet	RSQ No.	Interview Protocol Question
Attachment	1	As a turnaround team, how did you, other administrators, teachers and school personnel work to support positive relationships and a sense of connectedness between students, parents, peers, and school personnel?
Commitment	2	How did you and the team communicate if at all, a message highlighting the importance of getting an education and saving money?
Involvement	3	Was there a strategy in place to encourage students to get involved in extracurricular and community activities after school? Describe that strategy.

Table 3.1 - Interview Protocol Questions, RSQs (Research Sub questions) and Theory
Correlation (continued)

Theory Tenet	RSQ No.	Interview Protocol Question
Positive Beliefs	4	Were there any activities or strategies employed to engage parents, and challenge parent or guardians' beliefs about school (beliefs)?

The next question, question eight, asked participants to tell me about "any other

activities or events during the three-year period after the turnaround when you felt

students successfully bonded with the school or its personnel." This question was

included to garner responses outside of the theory tenets (attachment, commitment,

involvement and positive beliefs). Question nine asked participants "of all the strategies

the school implemented during the first three years after the turnaround, which do you

feel most contributed to the formation of relationships with students?" This question and

the next which asked if "you received the opportunity to engage in the same process

again at the same school, 'a redo,' as it relates to student and community engagement,

relationship building, dropout prevention, and truancy reduction, what would you do

differently," sought to tease out participants' perspectives on the turnaround work staff

had done, in order to address research question four. To get participants to speak to their

unique perspectives, I included the word most in question nine and asked participants to

reflect personally on what they would do differently in question ten. Again, I included

this wording in order to elicit responses that spoke to participants' perceptions of how

their approaches, tactics and strategies supported students in bonding with the school and its personnel.

Interviews.

I conducted 10 in-depth 30-to-90 minute interviews of staff members who agreed to participate in the study and met the aforementioned criteria. As part of the study, I asked school personnel to describe the approaches, tactics and strategies employed by the school, those things I could not "observe directly" because the phenomenon occurred in the past (Patton, 2002, p. 341). The interviews informed me how participants experienced the period from 2011 to 2014 when the school employed various turnaround and relationship-building strategies. I asked each participant the questions outlined in Appendices A-C using a semistructured interview protocol, after the research participants provided verbal consent (see Appendix E). Semistructured interview questions were designed to obtain facts and opinions from research participants (Yin, 2003). The interviews followed the semistructured interview guidelines laid out below by Merriam (2009).

1. Interview guide includes a mix of more and less structured interview questions.

2. All questions used flexibly.

3. Usually specific data are required from all respondents.

4. Largest part of interview guided by list of questions or issues to be explored.

5. No predetermined wording or order.

I used an i-Pad with the Nobility application installed to audio record all interviews. The audio files were provided to a professional transcription service, as

44

verbatim transcription of recorded interviews provides the best data for analysis

(Merriam, 2009). Once IRB approval was granted, I e-mailed participants. The e-mail

included an invitation to participate message that also contained an overview of the study

and the consent form. Next, I scheduled 45 to 90 minute interviews with willing

participants, and asked participants to provide verbal consent after reviewing the consent

form. Because interviews occurred during the summer when participants were on

vacation, I interviewed all participants at their time and location of preference.

Data Analysis

Interview Transcript Analysis

       To analyze the interview transcript, I complied with Creswell's steps for

qualitative analysis, which include the following:

1. Organizing and preparing data for analysis.

2. Reading through all of the data.

3. Beginning the coding process.

4. Using the coding process to generate categories or themes for analysis.

5. Advancing how the descriptions and themes will be represented in the qualitative

    narrative.

6. Giving the meaning of the data. (Creswell, 2007, pp. 150-154)

Table 3.2 – *Definition of Coding Terms Summary Table*

Term	Definition
Open or *in vivo* coding	the process of jotting down comments, thoughts, segments or units of data in the margins next to all potentially relevant items.

Table 3.2 – *Definition of Coding Terms Summary Table* (continued)

Term	Definition
Code or units	relevant comments, thoughts, segments or units of data from transcript.
Analytic coding	the process of grouping together those codes that seem to go together.
Categories or themes	a heading applied to a group of related codes.
Axial coding	the process of analyzing open, also know as *in vivo* codes.

Phase One Coding

Open coding. I gathered all transcripts and read through all transcripts once as a cold read. I began the *in vivo* coding process by doing a second read through the first interview transcript (principal manager), this time, jotting down comments, thoughts, segments or units of data in the margins next to all potentially relevant items that addressed my research questions. I put each "unit of data, which was a potential answer or part of an answer" to a particular research question against the Lincoln and Guba (1985) test to determine if it can be considered a unit. To be considered a unit, the data had to tell me something that was relevant to the study, make me think beyond what I already knew, and be understandable as a standalone (Merriam, 2009).

Analytical coding. After going through the entire transcript in this manner, known as "open coding" (Merriam, 2009, p. 179), I grouped together those units or codes that seemed to go together following a procedure known as "analytical coding" (Merriam, 2009, p. 180). This process was repeated for additional sets of data to include additional

transcripts from the principal, the teachers, the dean, the assistant principal and the

counselor, in that order, keeping in mind the codes that were extracted from the principal

manager transcript, and checking to see if those same codes were present in subsequent

interviews and sets of data (Merriam, 2009). I combined lists of codes into a master list,

which became an "outline or classification system reflecting the recurring regularities or

patterns" of the study (Merriam, 2009, p. 180). The aforementioned master list is

included as Appendix F. I then, created category or theme headings that spoke for all the

codes in each respective group; I sorted subsequent units of data or codes into those

theme headings. I retained and compiled those categories that held across more than one

interview. Additionally, as I analyzed more transcripts, I renamed some categories "to

more precisely reflect" what was in the data (Merriam, 2009, p. 182). I worked to limit

the number of codes to about 25-30 codes and narrowed those down into the five or six

most prevalent themes or categories, which happened to account for all or most of the

codes.

Phase Two Coding

Focus coding. Focus coding is the beginning of second cycle coding (Saldaña,

2009). According to Saldaña (2009), second cycle coding helps the researcher to

categorize and conceptualize previously established codes. Focus coding in particular

identifies, and reapplies significant and repeating codes (Charmaz, 2006). Focus coding

takes a holistic look at all the codes within a category. For example, the theme parent

and community outreach included the following codes: Home visits, parent & community

engagement manager (PCEM), Community BBQs, Marketing, Phone blasts, Staff calling

parents, Resources for parents, Parent feedback sessions, Financial literacy sessions and Back to school night.

Axial coding. Saldaña (2009) described axial coding as placing a theme or idea at the axis or center of a wheel and surrounding it with codes that provide deeper meaning. Axial coding followed open coding of an individual interview. Axial coding analyzed the two interviews together and provided additional context and deeper meaning (Saldaña, 2009) to what was identified during phase 1 coding. An example of this occurred when the first transcribed interview found that the parent and community engagement manager was essential while another interview added details regarding her role in marketing. Axial coding involved conducting my analysis in two phases. First, I treated each employee type (principal manager, principal and other school staff) as a separate comprehensive data source. After the within employee type analysis, I proceeded with the cross employee type analysis. I looked for common themes, across all employee types, looking for general explanations that fit all data sources (Yin, 2008) and added additional details to what was already found.

Document Review

A preliminary document that helped create the need for further investigation through interviews is public records data provided by the state of interest's department of education. After reviewing these data points, which included grant recipient data and turnaround data from data.gov, I continued with a more intimate method of data collection, such as interviewing (Patton, 2002, p. 294). After interviews occurred, I then obtained additional documents available online or supplied by participants, and analyzed those documents following the same steps outlined for coding and analyzing interview

transcripts. These documents were used to "corroborate and augment evidence from other sources," those sources in this case being my semistructured interview transcripts (Yin, 2014, p. 107). Additional documents obtained and reviewed included the organization's mission statement, King's 2011-2012 school improvement plan, the 2011-2012 school year calendar, and the student & parent handbook in play during the 2011-2012 school year.

These documents represented a "wide range of written, visual, digital and physical materials relevant to the study at hand," and supported details teased out during interviewing (Merriam, 2009, p. 139). As stated, I applied the same process of analyzing a transcript to analyzing additional documents, which included a cold read followed by second read while noting answers to research questions in the margins, and finally, narrowing down those codes in the margins into categories and themes.

Trustworthiness

Because the turnaround happened 6 years ago and some of the details may have been lost, by triangulating the data sources (principal manager, principal, staff/teacher interviews and document review), I sought to enhance this study's validity (Tashakkori & Teddie, 1998). According to Yin, triangulating data sources in this way reduces potential biases (2008), and provides a rich source of data filling in the gaps where participants' memories may fail. The ideal case study employs interviews, document review, and observation (Merriam, 2009). Again, I determined that interviews and document review had to suffice, as I missed the opportunity to observe the actual turnaround period from 2010-2014.

I also ensured that member checking occurred; I followed Merriam's recommendation, which praised member checking as a common strategy for ensuring internal validity or credibility where the researcher reports his preliminary analysis back to "the participants and asks whether [his or her] interpretation rings true" (Merriam, 2009, p. 217). After all interview transcripts were transcribed and coded, I reached out to all participants sharing the major themes extracted from the interviews and asked the participants "is there anything that you would like to add" and if my "themes and interpretations resonated?" This opportunity was provided to all interview participants. Three of ten staff members responded, and each participant separately shared that my five emergent themes resonated with them. The follow-up e-mail to each participant helped to limit misinterpreting the perspectives of participants teased out during interviews and helped to minimize my own biases during analysis.

Subjectivity

Case studies have been criticized for the inherent bias that is introduced by the subjectivity of the researcher (Merriam, 2009). To further minimize researcher bias, I included a subjectivity memo as Appendix D. Writing this memo was my attempt to explore my own assumptions, biases and experiences before beginning the study as recommended as standard practice for good qualitative research (Maxwell, 2005).

Ethical Considerations

Hewson, Yule, Laurent, and Vogel (2003) identified four issues that should be thought through when conducting research where data are obtained from the Internet. Because many documents for review were obtained from the internet, I considered the following four issues:

1. Obtaining informed consent.

2. Ensuring confidentiality and security of information.

3. Determining what is public and what is private.

4. Developing debriefing procedures.

I attended to all of these considerations by first ensuring that all participants agreed to the items outlined on the informed consent notice. The informed consent form again, is provided as Appendix E. Interview recordings were provided to a secure transcription company and placed in a fireproof safe along with other documents obtained for document review. Participants and the school were relabeled with pseudonyms. All files were kept on a password-protected computer. After the dissertation was defended, all documents, recordings and files were deleted or destroyed. The school and participants' identities were protected, and pseudonyms were used throughout the research.

Summary

This chapter described an overview of the methodology, which is a single site case study. This study sought to understand what was done around relationship building at King High, which underwent major staff changes (principal and half the teachers). I reached out to King High school officials and received permission to conduct semistructured interviews of central office administration, school leaders, teachers and other school staff. I collected and reviewed documents to support the responses shared by participants. I attended to the recommendations of great minds in qualitative research methods such as Yin, Creswell, Patton, Saldaña and Merriam to ensure that this study was conducted in an ethical, replicable and credible manner.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

  This chapter opens first, with a description of King High prior to the 2011-2012 school year turnaround. Data points on the previous conditions at King High were obtained from staff interviews as well as information listed on official state websites. Next, this chapter proceeds with a summary of the years of educational experience and roles of the research participants during the 2011-2012 school year, when the turnaround occurred. The section describing the participants is followed by a review of the research questions the study sought to answer using in depth interviews of central office administration, the principal, staff at the school and document review. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the major themes that emerged across multiple interviews, interview types and documents, relevant to the study's research questions.

King High Prior to the Turnaround

  According to Pennsylvania's 2010-2011 persistently dangerous schools list, King High made the 2010-2011 and the 2011-2012 lists, and was no longer on the 2012-2013 list (PA Department of Education, 2017). King High was one of 19 secondary schools listed on the 2010-2011 list and one of 12 schools on the 2011-2012 list. During the 2012-2013 school year, King High and six other schools dropped off the list, and there were no additions to the list. The Pennsylvania department of education's website states, this list is "for parents, students, teachers, school board members, school administrators and citizens interested in learning about the Unsafe School Choice Option (USCO) in Pennsylvania, (PA Department of Education, 2017). To provide more insight into what the school was like, David, a teacher participant said this:

King High was probably the worst school in Philadelphia. It ranked number one in school violence, number one in staff assaults, number one in robberies, it had one of the highest STD rates of schools in the city, but it also had one of the lowest scores and performance, which at the time was 9% in ELA and 11% in Math and at the time. It was qualified by the state as a persistently dangerous school, and it was consistently performing below most other schools in the district academically.

The principal manager, Alex, said,

So, the school was struggling. They had a lot of teacher turnover, principal turnover, violence, low academic achievement. It was in bad shape.

One teacher, Gale, said the following:

From what I understand from reading various news reports and everything else, it was persistently low performing because the standardized statewide scores were 9% and 11%. So, 9% of students were proficient or advanced on the literature assessment by the 11th grade; 11% of students were proficient or advanced on the math portion of the PSSA. There was also…they were previous to 2011 placed on…or by the end of the 2010-2011 school year, they had been listed on the, oh, my gosh, what's it called, the persistently dangerous list, which is like a federal list that lists schools that have high numbers of violent incidents within their school community. And so during our turnaround year, that was the first year that by the end of the school year we were no longer on the list, which was exciting. And so, from what I understand, prior to the turnaround year, it was a lot of – and this is also some anecdotal information from colleagues who had worked at King during…previous to 2011 and then continued to work at King – that it was…there was a lot…it was very unstructured. And so, there were some teachers who had really great rapport with students, and they consistently had all students attending their courses and doing work, but that there were a lot of classrooms that were mismanaged. And the school in general didn't have a support structure to ensure that students were going to all classes, whether they had a rapport with the teacher or not. And so, that was my understanding of King prior to the turnaround year.

Another teacher, Edward, mentioned poor attendance and said,

The other statistic that just jumped out was that the average daily attendance was like 60%. We're talking about a school of about 1,400 kids…I was just talking about the statistics around attendance, which was 60% of the students, on average, came to school daily. And what's staggering is that of those students, half of them actually went to class.

One of the school's counselors, Jared, said this:

Again, low performing test scores, kind of a bad cultural climate, not a lot of resources. The district really didn't have the resources to really provide students with the things that they needed. There was just a lot of school improvement issues. So, those things were kind of like the big reasons the school wasn't performing as well as it should have.

Participant Demographics

I conducted ten in depth interviews with staff members who worked at King High from 2011-2014. Table 4.1 provides each staff member's name, which is a pseudonym, total years of educational experience, years of teaching experience and his or her role in 2011 (the critical turnaround year). The school's principal manager, principal, an assistant principal, a dean, five teachers and a counselor participated in this study.

Table 4.1 - *Participants, Total Years in Education, Years of Teaching, Role in 2011*

Pseudonym	Total Years in Education	Years Teaching Experience	Role in 2011
Alex	14	4	Principal Manager
Brian	12	2	Principal
Iris	14	4	Assistant Principal
Fran	13	6	Dean
Carl	12	12	Teacher
David	8	5	Teacher
Edward	15	13	Teacher
Gale	7	7	Teacher
Helen	16	15	Teacher
Jared	7	2	Counselor

Research Questions

With the Obama administration's introduction of competitive RTTT grants in 2010, school districts continued to work to reform its lowest performing schools using

federally recommended turnaround strategies, which went into play during the 2011-2012 school year. Hirschi's Social Bond Theory (1969) suggested that if schools attended to four aspects of a student's experience—attachment, commitment, involvement and positive beliefs—the student would develop strong bonds with the school, be more likely to remain in school, attend regularly and graduate. This case study was designed to understand in retrospect, what occurred at a particular urban high school that experienced a change in its staffing during its 2011 turnaround. The overarching questions were (a) how did staff at this urban Northeast turnaround Renaissance charter high school describe the strategies and tactics the school utilized between 2011-2014 to support the formation of relationships, social bonds and attachments, and (b) how did school personnel perceive that these approaches, tactics and strategies support students in bonding with the school and its personnel? To better tease out the trends within the first overarching research question, four sub questions were designed around the four elements of Social Bonding Theory, and are as follows:

1. What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to build attachment as perceived by staff?

2. What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to commitment as perceived by staff?

3. What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to build involvement as perceived by staff?

4. What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to build positive beliefs as perceived by staff?

Emergent Themes

From research sub questions 1-4, five themes emerged. Those themes and the 35 categories that fell under those fives themes are provided in Table 4.2 below. Additionally, a breakdown of which participants and documents mentioned which responses is included as Appendix F.

Table 4.2 - *Themes and Open Codes from Interviews, & Supported by Document Review*

Theme/Category	Codes Included
Parent and community outreach	Home visits Parent & community engagement manager (PCEM) Community BBQs Marketing Phone blasts Staff calling parents Resources for parents Parent feedback sessions Financial literacy sessions Back to school night
A supportive discipline system	Consistency Culture systems Merits and demerits Alternative placements Security guards Mandatory parent conferences Large culture team
School bonding activities	Regular community meetings Staff attending sporting events ninth grade academy Loss (death) of students After school staff office hours Pep rallies Social emotional support classes

School year kick off meetings
Focus on post secondary
Field trips

Table 4.2 - *Themes and Open Codes from Interviews, & Supported by Document Review* (continued)

Theme/Category	Codes Included
Professional development (PD)	Wednesday PD schedule
	Opening of the year trainings for staff
	Teacher accountability
	Staff sessions on relationship building
Structured extracurricular activities (ECAs)	Role of the PCEM in ECAs
	Pass all classes requirement
	Faculty supported, student run ECAs

SRQ 1-4 - What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to build attachment, commitment, involvement, and positive beliefs as perceived by the principal manager, principal and other staff (assistant principals, deans and teachers)?

As summarized in Table 4.2, the themes which emerged from interviews and documents were: (a) parent and community engagement, (b) a supportive approach to discipline, (c) school bonding activities, (d) professional development and (e) structured extracurricular activities.

Parent and community engagement.

Travis Hirschi's emphasis in his (1969) theory on positive beliefs spoke to the importance of parents' beliefs around education being positive. In other words, the extent to which the school and its personnel were able to engage parents in a positive way could impact whether a student bonds successfully with the school. The theme—parent

57

and community engagement—included the following subthemes or categories: home visits, the parent and community engagement manager (PCEM), community BBQs, marketing, phone blasts, staff calling parents, resources for parents, parent advisory council, financial literacy sessions and back to school night.

Almost all (all but two) of those interviewed, mentioned the role of the parent & community engagement manager (PCEM) as important and impactful. While she had since moved on, and was unavailable for an interview, the effectiveness of this individual and her work pervaded all interview types (principal manager, principal, and other staff). The principal manager specifically, noted this employee's contribution as being major as it related to the new school and its team bonding with the community. The principal manager said this:

> She was very, very skilled in both building relationships with families and kids and staff and had a lot of leadership qualities. And so, she was able to really bring together a number of stakeholder groups to build that sense of community at King High. And so, she ran our parent association. She also had an alumni association, that she made sure there were lots of King High alums who, despite some of the negatives…the negative reputation of the school, there were lots of proud King High graduates who had a great experience at the school and felt very strongly about the building. So, she engaged alumni. She engaged local politicians and made sure that they were aware of what we were doing, and aligned resources, and then just also other community resources that she was able to bring in to the school. And I think she really served as a very important part of making sure that as [Charter Management Company X] came into this traditional public school that we didn't kind of abandon the community or abandon some of the positive history of King High, but, rather, we brought it all together. And I think she did a really nice job of kind of combining…kind of bringing together students and families and staff and the community.

In addition to noting the role of the PCEM in involving parents, more than half of those interviewed also mentioned home visits as a strategy they recall as noteworthy in terms of the school's efforts to engage parents. Home visits involved staff physically knocking on doors in the evenings and on the weekends when King High families were relaxed, and in

their natural element. Home visits were mentioned across two (principal and other staff)

of three interview types to include all interview types, except for the principal manager

interview. Jade, a counselor, said this:

> We had a community engagement manager that went out to the community to establish relationships with community organizations, as well as parents. We invited parents to come in. We started parent advisory councils.

David, the principal, said the following:

> The one thing I think that we did well in that area was the summer before…before like we picked so like June July early August of 2011, all leadership team members spent a lot of time doing home visits and canvassing the neighborhood and telling families the changes that were going to happen at King High.

Iris, an assistant principal emphasized this role as essential in messaging the school's

vision in the community when she said that,

> We had a community engagement manager. We still have that role. And that person's work started before the school year of year one to be in the community engaging families and partners around who we were, what we were there to do.

Gale, a teacher, acknowledged the positive impact of the PCEM, but felt efforts could

have been more authentic and genuine.

> [It] seem[ed] more of a put-on, as opposed to a genuine sentiment. And what I mean by that is we had a family communications engagement person…she was great. And she worked really hard with community members to do different events. And I think the way it came off to a lot of members of that community was almost plastic, like artificial, in that it – and this is what I know now, as someone who has connected with a lot of families – that that first year felt like, kind of like a – and this is a direct quote from a parent – but like "the white man coming down on a black community."

> Although Gale is the only participant to mention race as a concern, she is

speaking on behalf of a parents. Had this study interviewed parents directly, race may

have surfaced as an additional challenge as schools work to change parental mindsets in

order to build strong bonds with students. Certain schools may struggle building

relationships with staff who look different than them, which may explain why majority

minority schools such as King High struggle to deliver a high school diploma at equal

rates than majority white schools (Balfanz, 2007). Additionally, while home visits and

other face-to-face approaches employed by the PCEM surfaced the most during

interviews, those less personal tactics including phone blasts and general marketing in the

community using flyers and billboards, were the least mentioned. These less personal

engagement tactics were mentioned across less than a third of the interviews and never

across multiple interview types (principal manager, principal, and other staff). Carl, a

teacher described several of those less personal tactics when he said,

> We had phone blasts; we had the mailers that were going out. And, like I said, I
> mean, when the parents did come to parent conference night, there was always the
> emphasis on trying to get the parents involved in PTA and be active in the school
> community.

Likewise, offering activities at the school for parents to include financial literacy nights

for parents, back to school night and parent advisory council meetings, were not

mentioned at as high a frequency as home visits and the actions of the PCEM. These

findings would suggest that the less personal tactics and approaches were perceived by

school personnel as not as impactful. Still some of these approaches were significant

according to several staff members interviewed. Fran, a teacher, said this:

> There is a parent advisory committee; so any time a student was suspended and a
> parent had to bring them back, parents that were extremely vocal, whether they
> were negative or positive, were always invited to become a part of the parent
> association: Allow your voice to be heard. Your concerns are our concerns. A
> closed mouth won't get fed. So, I mean, that was definitely the initial request of
> the administration, was, you know: Don't talk about it, be about it. You know, if
> you're upset, your concerns are our concerns. So, that was the first line of defense
> that CMO X used at King to get parents involved and turn those, you know, irate

parents or parents that still questioned our existence to become a part of the process. And there are quite a few of them that definitely did.

A supportive approach to discipline.

This next theme consisted of the following subthemes or categories: consistency, culture systems, merits and demerits, alternative placements, security guards, mandatory parent conferences and a large culture team. Of the categories under this theme, the response that surfaced the most, and across all interviews and all interview types, was consistency. Consistency in the context of King High, spoke to how staff handled discipline incidents during the first three years. To encourage and support consistency across the school as far as how incidents were handled, Alex, the principal manager recalled,

> Teachers did a lot of practicing…like of a lot of practicing of the kind of like how to talk to students in a way that we can coach them (students) to handle themselves differently and behave differently.

To further support the idea of consistency, the principal, Brian, described a tiered system, which was implemented, that determined how behaviors were to be handled consistently by teachers and staff. Brian said this:

> So we had tier one violations, tier two violations, and tier three violations, and we really worked to have all adults in the building to follow up on these behaviors with said consequences. Tier 1 violations are simple things like, a student is cursing, or if a student is talking in class when he or she is not supposed to, students received a demerit; a student had a demerit card. A student could get let's say once a student got 6 demerits, they got lunch detention on Wednesday after school. So we really pushed to have all adults in the building, uniformly address these issues with students with demerits.

Like the principal, other staff spoke to consistency as being central to King High's success, and elaborated that consistency played itself out at King High through the use of merits and demerits. Holding students accountable using merits and demerits surfaced in

5 out of 8 of the other staff interviews (teachers, counselor, assistant principal and dean)

and the system was outlined in King High's 2011-2012 student handbook. David, a

teacher, said the following:

> Students would earn, through a token economy system…demerits based on in
> class behaviors, during the classroom discipline cycle, that teachers could utilize
> to manage low-level behaviors in the classrooms.

Because being consistent requires a good number of staff members to implement

the system, culture team overstaffing was a category under the supportive approach to

discipline, which was raised across both the principal manager and principal interviews,

as well as in the interviews of two of eight teachers and other staff. Edward, one of the

teachers who mentioned a large culture team, explained the hierarchy when he said,

> [Charter Management Organization X] also has this division of culture; so you
> have a cultural team that's led by an assistant principal of school culture. And
> then under that person, are the deans and so on. And so, you really…you're
> coming in with, first and foremost, just a structure, just from a hierarchy
> standpoint.

In addition to deans for each grade level, King High also staffed the building with

additional security guards. Alex, the principal manger, alluded to culture team

overstaffing when he said,

> We kind of overstaffed the school, in terms of leadership. Leadership, in terms of
> deans of students who handle…who work with school culture, disciplinary issues,
> things like that… our schools don't typically use any sort of security guards or
> anything like that, but for that first year, because King High had such a bad
> reputation for weapons and drugs and violence, we did have security guards in the
> building as well.

Another common response (category) under the theme, a supportive approach to

discipline was the use of alternative placement. The use of alternative placement

surfaced across all three interview types (principal manager, principal, and other staff),

but was discussed by only two of eight of the other staff. Alternative placement was also

included in King High's 2011-2012 Code of Conduct as an alternative to suspension or expulsion. Alex, the principal manager, alluded to King High's use of alternative placement when he said the following:

> We also ended up in that first year needing to find alternative placements for a number of students. I can't put the exact number on it, but there were a high number of students who were highly, highly, highly disruptive. In many cases, acting in ways that were really disrupting the educational environment, in some cases threatening, in some cases like assaults.

School bonding activities.

The theme school bonding activities consisted of the following subthemes or categories: regular community meetings, staff attending sporting events, ninth grade academy, loss (death) of students, after school staff office hours, field trips, pep rallies, social emotional learning (SEL) classes, school year kick off meetings and a focus on postsecondary success. Of these categories, all items with the exception of the final category—a focus on postsecondary success—are activities or events. I included the category—a focus on postsecondary success—under this theme, because four key components were noted in the literature, which build bonds between students and institutions, such as schools. Those four tenets of bonding were attachment, commitment, involvement and positive beliefs (Hirschi, 1969). Travis Hirschi's Social Bond theory suggested that schools and school personnel developing in students a "commitment" to advancing students' futures was central to students bonding with the school (Hirschi, 1969).

Promoting a commitment to all students experiencing post secondary success is central to students seeing the big picture and connecting their work at King High to success after graduation. Students at King High not only visited colleges, but their

student cohort teams throughout the building were named after colleges and universities. As such, students heard and saw reminders of the importance of college all throughout their King High experience. King High's mission statement also emphasized the importance of postsecondary success as it says, its mission is that

> all students learn the academic and personal skills they need to be truly prepared for postsecondary success and are able to pursue their dreams.

As an additional reminder regarding college, as indicated by the principal and teachers, staff members were encouraged to decorate their classrooms and offices with college gear and decor to promote a college going culture. Alex, the principal manager, said,

> I think early on we were saying things like: Our number one value is student achievement, above all, and our mission is to prepare students that they have the academic and personal skills they need to have postsecondary success. And so, we start from very early on making sure that there's a message of: the classroom is sacred, that we believe in you and that you can achieve whatever you want to achieve and be successful.

A focus on post secondary success was a major theme as it was mentioned across all interview types; it surfaced during all but one interview as well as in King High's 2011-2012 student handbook and in King High's mission statement.

Another category under the theme, school bonding activities is the category— regular community meetings. Community meetings were raised during seven of interviews and across all interview types (principal manager, principal and other staff). Community meetings were not meetings between school staff and community members as the name might imply; rather, they were meetings where members of the King High community (students, teachers and staff) came together to celebrate one another, discuss important issues and bond. Community meetings were a time to build a sense of

community between students and teachers, among teachers and between school staff.

Alex, the principal manager, described community meetings this way,

> All of the 11th grade students at King High, all the juniors, would come to the auditorium. We would do shout-outs. Teachers would give awards to students. We would do shout-outs to students. We'd do some chants and cheers. We'd highlight student athletes, if there was a game coming up, or if they had performed well the previous week. But it was really an opportunity for all of us to kind of…for students and staff to really celebrate one another and build a sense of community.

Brian, the principal said this:

> community meetings are one of those routines that really stuck out to me and were one of the most joyful times in the first three years. The community meetings were like I said, a time to celebrate students and invest them in their education. We also did fun things, like teachers would get on stage and dance and sings songs and work with students on a skit

Iris, a King High assistant principal recalled this:

> community meetings…are grade-specific [meetings] that were held each week to build grade-wide identity, celebrate teachers, celebrate kids, kids celebrating teachers, kids just feeling like part of a collective group. And each year we worked to kind of make that better, specifically by having more student voice, both in what their grade looked like, what community meetings looked like, and longer-term, even like what they wanted their larger school community to look like.

Carl, a teacher said the following:

> The community meetings were, I think, a good way for students to bond with the staff. I mean, it was an opportunity for them to get out of the classroom.

Another category that surfaced across half of interviews and two (principal manager and other staff) of three interview types was pep rallies or spirit weeks. Gale, a teacher described spirit week and its contribution to school-wide bonding as such,

> Spirit week was one of the biggest things that we have done in the school, in the sense that it…that first year in particular, when we had kids from neighborhoods that do not normally get along, it really helped kids…like forced kids into developing relationships with each other, like whether they were from

"community A" or "community B" And so, it created a lot of rapport between those students, but, also, teachers were super-involved in that process. And so, I was a homeroom teacher of the University of Texas cohort. And so, all my kids got…like we made different T-shirts and banners and all kinds of stuff to develop…for "Spirit Week" …to show pride. And kids had to engage with each other, and they had to basically compete on a grander scale than they had before. That caused a lot of unity between students, and then it also pushed teachers to bond with students, as well.

Other bonding activities seen across less than half of the interviews, but were noted as special moments recalled by individuals interviewed included office hours after school, field trips, staff turnout at sporting events and the unfortunate loss of students. One teacher, Carl, described his recollection of losing students. He said,

we lost so many students every year through violence, through homicide, that we always…we use those moments to find out how to help students. So, we have circles, we have Social Emotional Learning (SEL) classes. SEL classes were, I think, like a 35 or 40-minute class in which we kind of like had a study hall, but then addressing any major issues. So when there was an issue like a student getting killed, then we had circles and we had that bond between ourselves and those students. So, it was a really good opportunity to talk about things outside of our content areas.

Alex the principal manager confirmed Carl's recollection and said this in his interview:

we've probably lost somewhere in the neighborhood of 11 students to gun violence in the neighborhood; nothing at the school, but gun violence in the neighborhood. And each time that happens, it's tragic and it really doubles down on the importance of our work. And I also saw at every one of those times that it happened the community, the school community, really come together in support of one another. There was rarely conflict around it, which sometimes, you know, violence can breed violence. I never saw that. I saw a group of students and staff members really come together during difficult times like that, and I think that was a real testament to the work that was done.

Professional Development (PD)

Categories which fell under this theme included the opening of the year trainings for staff, the Wednesday PD schedule, teacher accountability and staff sessions around relationship building. Teacher accountability came up across all three interview types

66

(principal manager, principal and other staff) and is defined as teacher training, modeling

and follow up, which consisted of supervisors or coaches ensuring that strategies were

actually implemented. Brian, the principal, described it best when he said this:

> We had a lot of new teachers that year at King High, and we assigned as many
> teachers as we could an instructional coach, which would be their assistant
> principal at King or a coach from our central office. I think probably by the end of
> the year, 80% of our teachers had been coached and the coaching consisted of a
> coaching plan. The coach would observe the teachers, talk to the teacher, talk to
> students, come up with really clear goals for the teacher and really clear goals for
> the students of the teacher, and then the coach would observe a couple times a
> week and meet with the teacher a couple times a week to coach them…they
> would do things like teach an example lesson for the teacher or do real time
> coaching, you know, give the teacher feedback in the moment. We just saw a lot
> of our teachers really really grow from this intensive coaching, growth in terms of
> classroom management, but also in terms of instructional effectiveness.

Alex, the principal manager, supported Brian's description of King High's teacher

accountability model when he said,

> Our administrators spend a lot of time making sure that teachers have those skills,
> but also making sure that we're holding folks accountable to actually being
> prepared and utilizing those skills every day.

Alex went on to describe the impact of the contrast between the level of instruction and

teacher preparation students were used to experiencing at King, and the level of

instruction they were receiving after the 2011-2012 school year turnaround. Alex

believed that students could easily identify "that our teachers were prepared every day,

cared about them, and held a high bar." Iris, an assistant principal, spoke to leaders

through PD and follow up, expecting adults to consistently hold students accountable

when she said this:

> I would say process and systems were really important, in terms of like school
> culture. So, like identifying a set of expectations for kids, and then really pushing
> to hold kids accountable to those expectations, and adults accountable to holding
> kids accountable.

The Wednesday PD schedule was mentioned by the principal and a teacher during their interviews as being critical to the building of relationships. As such, the Wednesday PD schedule was another category, which fell under professional development. Students had a half-day every Wednesday, which allowed teachers to meet and receive targeted professional development from school leaders based on the needs of the school. Brian, the principal, described the importance of the Wednesday PD schedule this way:

> Every Wednesday, the kids left at 1 o'clock. Then from 2 to 4 pm, we would have professional development for our teachers, which the assistant principals would get together, talk about the biggest need for our teachers and then train teachers on certain pedagogical practices. Either if it was rigor or classroom management. Those sessions were often practice based, so they would have specific actions they were working on and they would actually practice those skills in the professional development. Whether they were planning a skill or executing a skill.

The Wednesday PD schedule also created space for PD specifically around relationship building, which was another category falling under professional development. When I asked Alex which strategy he believed most contributed to the building of relationships, he said that,

> You know, I would say staff professional development on how to engage with students. So, very specific, like training of teachers on: here is how you build rapport and a strong classroom culture; how do you talk to students; how do you redirect them when they've done something wrong; how do you…you know, when you walk down the hallway, you see a kid doing something they're not supposed to but you don't know the student, how do you handle it?

A teacher, Carl, described Wednesday professional development sessions as being positive, supporting teachers in building bonds with students. Carl said this:

> We had grade team meetings on our Wednesday PD days, and I think that was important because we really…when I first started, I was a grade team leader for the ninth grade, and so we were a close-knit group of teachers and we were able to identify issues that were going on with students. And so, it was a great opportunity on a weekly basis for us teachers to really discuss what was going on with your students and finding ways to deal with some of the problems that they

had. And so, I think that was a great opportunity to bond and build that relationship between teachers and students.

A final category under professional development was the opening of the year trainings. One teacher, David, recalled the value of this professional develop opportunity when he described this:

> All of the teachers went through pretty rigorous teacher training the summer before, just for training on basic classroom maintenance, how to use your teacher tool belt and all of the things that were needed.

For this teacher, this opening PD opportunity was beneficial to the success of the turnaround as it ensured everyone was starting on the same page, and everyone possessed some strategies to attack challenges, should they arise.

Structured Extracurricular Activities (ECAs)

Recall Hirschi's four tenets of bonding were attachment, commitment, involvement and positive beliefs (Hirschi, 1969). Involvement, the third tenet specifically spoke to a student's involvement in school activities. Categories that fell under this theme included the role of the parent and community engagement manager (PCEM) in organizing ECAs, the "pass all classes" requirement and the impact of faculty supported, but student run ECAs. The role of the PCEM as it related to ECAs was summarized by Alex, the principal manager who said the following:

> this same woman who served as the family-community engagement manager also played a role as the extracurricular coordinator. And so, she played a pretty critical role in making sure that we had more extracurricular programs. We also received a 21st Century grant, which gave us some additional funding so that we could run some more after-school programs. So, the 21st Century grant helped a lot. She managed it. …she managed that, those extracurriculars, very tightly. And she would do rounds nearly every day to check attendance, make sure that the folks who were running the extracurriculars were prepared and that there was some reasonable structure to it. And she also kept very close attendance data, which helped us, just in terms of reporting for the grant, but also saw how many students were participating in extracurriculars.

While the offerings were numerous and designed to attract and engage students, students had to maintain eligibility requirements to participate. The school's 2011-2012 handbook included an entire section on extracurricular participation eligibility. The student handbook stated this:

> Participation in extracurricular clubs, activities, and team sports is a privilege open to all, but students are expected to be in good academic standing and must meet the behavioral expectations for all King students in order to remain active participants. The Academic and Culture teams at each campus may remove a student from extracurricular programming if they have not met established academic requirements or behavioral expectations, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.

One teacher, David, appreciated these requirements as they motivated students to take their studies seriously. He said the following:

> I do feel like the extracurricular part did play a role because…you had to be passing all your classes to participate in any of the extracurriculars or any of the sports. So, it was an added benefit to make sure that students were at minimum, passing their courses.

> Another category under the theme structured extracurricular activities was the impact of teacher supported and student run after school activities. Half of the interviewees discussed how student-selected clubs supported buy-in and motivated students to participate. One of the counselors at King High said this:

> We had a lot of clubs and had kids trying to figure out what type of clubs they wanted to be involved in. So, that kind of helped, as well. But just letting them get kind of their ideas across and just letting them know that, you know, we were here, we were doing something…and that they had access to certain things, as well. And we really kind of took their ideas and their thoughts into consideration with anything that we did.

Helen, a teacher, recalled this:

> A ton of people…devoted enormous amounts of time creating clubs, creating safe spaces for students within the walls of the school.

RQ 2 - How do school staff, the principal and the principal manager perceive that their approaches and tactics support students in bonding with the school and its personnel?

Need for Less Rigidity

A theme that pervaded all interview types and emerged during more than half of the interviews was the perception that the school could have been less rigid at the beginning and been more restorative in its discipline approach. This final theme emerged when I asked participants what they would do differently if they had the opportunity to engage in the process of turning around King High again. One teacher, Gale, said,

> I think the emphasis on compliance is…is very emblematic of prison culture, and I find that to be really problematic, particularly in a low-income school that is predominantly children of color. I think it sends the wrong message. So, I think that I would personally change the way discipline was handled the first few years.

Another teacher Fran said the following:

> Like, everything can't be so punitive, like you come to school, you go to class, and if you're late to class you get a demerit. I spent this summer, there's something that I've implemented right now, and the staff has totally bought-in to it, but more community service events. Like right now we're working on suicide prevention, and the number of students who have gotten involved and asking, "How can I get involved" is huge. So, the summer was spent connecting with the Lucas Foundation, suicide prevention, just giving students a purpose outside of in addition to that, giving students an alternative.

The principal agreed and said this:

> So really in the few three years, we really relied on a supportive charter model where we suspended students too often and probably relied on our alternative placements too often for students who did cause problems, or did disrupt the culture of the school…and then in 2014, we adopted a restorative culture when we relied much, much less on suspension and alternative placements and we also…whenever a teacher and student had any type of issue or discipline infraction between them, the teacher and student would sit down and have a restorative conference rather than just a consequence.

Likewise the principal manager said this:

> In more recent years, we've implemented a restorative practices model and we've done more training around cultural context, which that has…that has had a far greater impact than anything else we've ever done, but we didn't do that in the first three years.

Summary

This chapter described an overview of the study's findings. Six themes and 35 categories emerged across ten in-depth interviews, and these themes and categories were supported by document review. As perceived by school personnel, these themes were raised as important tactics and strategies addressing overarching research question one: (a) parent and community engagement, (b) a supportive approach to discipline, (c) school bonding activities, (d) professional development and (e) structured extracurricular activities. The theme that emerged in response to overarching research question two was less rigidity and an overall desire to have been more restorative from the start.

Chapter 5: Interpretations, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to understand how administrators, teachers and other school staff at an urban charter high school, leveraged the building of new relationships with students as part of its implementation of a federal school turnaround and receipt of a federal RTTT grant. The overarching questions are (a) how did staff at this urban Northeast turnaround Renaissance charter high school describe the strategies and tactics the school utilized between 2011-2014 to support the formation of relationships, social bonds and attachments, and (b) how do school personnel perceive that these approaches, tactics and strategies support students in bonding with the school and its personnel? To better tease out the trends within the first overarching research question, four sub-questions were designed around the four elements of Social Bonding Theory, and are as follows:

1. What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to build attachment as perceived by staff?

2. What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to commitment as perceived by staff?

3. What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to build involvement as perceived by staff?

4. What tactics and strategies did this school and its leadership team employ to build positive beliefs as perceived by staff?

As one examines the four federal school turnaround options—restarts, closures, transformations and traditional turnarounds—it is important to note that each option

resulted in, to differing degrees, the severing and reestablishing of student and staff

relationships (Howell, 2015). The restart method—school closes and reopens under a

new operator where the new operator may or may not hire current staff—was employed

at King High, the site chosen for this case study. As part of this study, school staff

described King High's strategies and tactics as they built relationships with students and

families. This chapter will discuss and highlight the study's major findings while

revisiting and extrapolating from themes that emerged in chapter 4. Those findings were

that at a similar urban turnaround school: (a) initial face-to-face communication with

parents coupled with other follow-up strategies supported stronger school-student

relations; (b) a supportive approach to discipline with a focus on staff-student

relationships was essential; (c) school-wide bonding activities focused around

postsecondary success and robust extracurricular activities were vital to relationship

building. After discussing each of these major findings separately, I discuss larger

implications for practitioners, policy makers and researchers.

Summary of Emergent Themes and Major Findings

Travis Hirschi (1969) presented four tenets of institutional or social bonding,

which were attachment, commitment, involvement and positive beliefs. All four of these

areas surfaced in the findings that emerged from interviews and documents. Hirschi's

Social Bond Theory suggested that if schools attended to four aspects of a student's

experience—attachment, commitment, involvement and positive beliefs—the student

would develop a stronger bond with the school, be more likely to remain in school and

attend regularly (Hirschi, 1969). *Attachment* related to students' emotional connection to

parents, peers or school staff. *Commitment* referred to students' devotion to advancing

their futures. *Involvement* referred to students' participation in clubs, school activities

and athletics, and *positive beliefs* referred to the values and thinking of parents and

guardians around education (Hirschi, 1969).

Hirschi's Social Bonding Theory
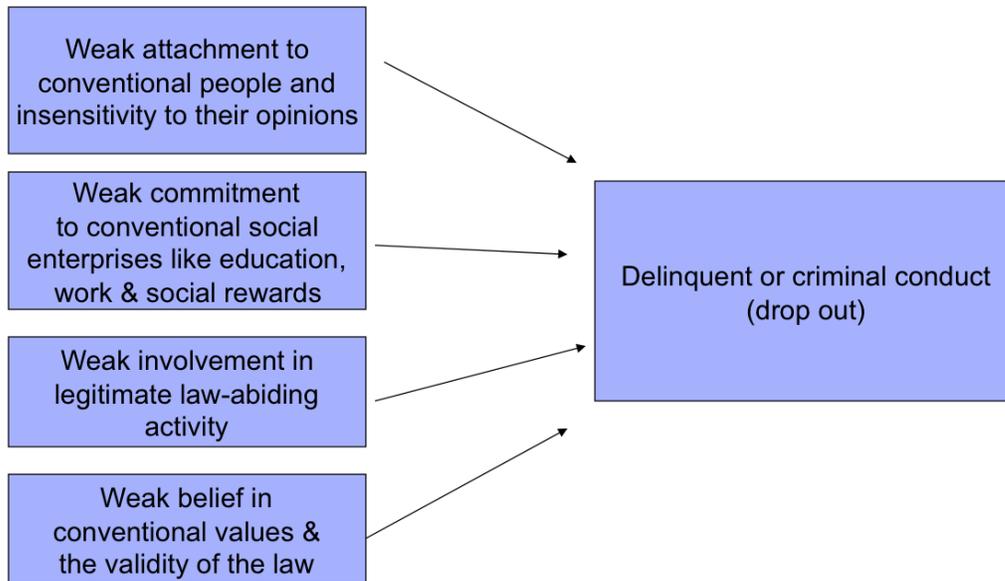
Figure 5.1 - Social Bonding Theory. Adapted from "Causes of delinquency" by T. Hirschi, 1969, Berkley: University of California Press.

This study found that at King High, five approaches, tactics or strategies were

critical in the formation of bonds, attachments and relationships between school staff and

students. Those approaches included: (a) parent and community engagement, (b) a

"supportive" approach to discipline, (c) school bonding activities, (d) professional

development and (e) structured extracurricular activities. As summarized in Table 5.1

below, all of the emergent themes supported or advanced a particular tenet of Travis

Hirschi's Social Bond Theory (SBT).

Table 5.1 - *Emergent Themes and Associated Tenet of Social Bond Theory (SBT)*

Theme	Tenet
Parent and community engagement	positive beliefs
A "supportive" approach to discipline	attachment
School bonding activities	attachment, commitment
Professional development	attachment
Structured extracurricular activities	involvement
Less rigid, and more restorative*	attachment

*Emerged from research question 4 when participants were asked what they might do differently.

The six themes that emerged from interviews and documents were all in play at King High to aid in staff-student relationship building. After examining all participant voices from their various vantage points, I further examined categories under each theme or took multiple themes together, resulting in the three major findings listed below in Table 5.2. I explain each major finding in the subsequent interpretations section.

Table 5.2 - *Major Findings and their Contributing Theme(s)*

Major Finding	Contributing Theme
1. Initial face-to-face communication with parents coupled with other follow-up strategies supported stronger school-student relations.	(a) Parent and community engagement
2. A supportive approach to discipline with a focus on staff-student relationships was essential to staff and student bonding.	(b) Supportive approach to discipline
	(c) Professional development

Table 5.2 - *Major Findings and their Contributing Theme(s)* (continued)

Major Finding	Contributing Theme

	(d) Less rigid, and more restorative
3. School-wide bonding activities focused around postsecondary success and robust extracurricular activities were vital to relationship building.	(e) School bonding activities
	(f) Structured extracurricular

Interpretations

      Initial face-to-face communication with parents coupled with other follow-up strategies supported stronger school-student relationships. Parent and community engagement was identified by this study as a notable tactic, approach or strategy to build relationships with students during school turnaround. The importance of parent and community engagement is supported by SBT, and also, identified in other literature (Gonzalenz-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Harris, Andrew-Power, & Goodall, 2009) as important to student attendance, achievement and students ultimately dropping out or remaining in school. SBT stated that the beliefs of parents impacted their students' ability to bond with the school and school personnel (Hirschi, 1969). Other studies also supported the importance of addressing parents' beliefs about school, finding that parents of truant students reported having had negative experiences when they were in school themselves (McMahon, Browning, and Colley, 2001). Changing negative perceptions about King High was a priority when CMO X took the reins in 2011. The school and its staff began their turnaround by immediately connecting with parents and community members, even before meeting students. Outreach included the entire community in order to change the narrative in the neighborhood about King High and the services and opportunities attending and graduating afforded students. The organization's marketing

efforts in the community, the work of the parent and community engagement manager, teacher phone calls to parents, regular community-wide phone blasts, home visits, school meetings and parent and school collaboration opportunities, taken together, may have caused parent perceptions about the school to change, particularly when those practices may not have been as robust prior to the turnaround. The school and its personnel understood that parental buy-in would lead to student buy-in, and ultimately, a reduction in truancy and dropout.

Face-to-face opportunities. While the staff at King High recalled and provided a menu of parental involvement strategies and initiatives, as discussed, those face-to-face efforts were noted by King staff with more frequency. Face-to-face opportunities such as home visits, back to school night, community BBQs at King generally occurred at the start of the year or during the summer, prior to the year beginning. Less personal approaches such as phone blasts and flyers may have been used for follow up and reminders in between events. Like other researchers (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005), this study found it challenging to determine which specific type of involvement actually had an impact; however, taken as a group of strategies, staff mentioned face-to-face strategies with rich descriptions and more frequency. These strategies set the stage for the year and should be prioritized early on.

A supportive approach to discipline with a focus on staff-student relationships was essential to staff and student bonding. The school's weekly schedule included 90 minutes of professional development, where students were released early and staff remained. During this time, school leaders provided guidance and

direction around the discipline system and routinely provided professional development specifically around how staff build and sustain relationships with students.

Professional development. King High leaders described professional development topics as routinely addressing staff and student relationship building. In other words, teachers and staff were learning at various points throughout the year, how to best develop strong ties and bonds with students and how to manage their classrooms in a positive way. Stronger bonds between students and staff equated to stronger bonds between students and the school. Most important, students who developed a stronger affinity for the school and its personnel were less likely to engage in deviant activity (Hirschi, 1969) such as truancy or dropout. Additionally, because PD opportunities were prior to the year beginning and then, every Wednesday, with topics determined based on the school's needs, teachers were constantly developing the skills needed to effectively bond with students. These staff trainings likely had a positive impact on the school's aim to bond with students and reduce dropout, but not without a heavy focus on discipline.

Supportive discipline system. Although most staff at King High supported a hard line approach to discipline, some participants and research studies alike, have suggested that all aspects of King High's strategy were not helpful in building relationships and addressing truancy and dropout. According to some studies, zero tolerance policies did not work (Nelsen, Escobar, Ortolano, & Owen-Sohocki, 2001) and actually promoted truancy and dropout (Gage et al., 2013). Conversely, and in contrast to SBT, there is also research to support the importance of firm, consistent and fair rules for students in order for students to feel safe, respect school personnel and develop an affinity for the school (Boynton & Boynton, 2005; Sprick, 2006). Following this thought

process, King High's structured approach to discipline coupled with its strategies to build relationships may have led to a net positive rather than negative result. Studies have supported that when teachers work systematically to build relationships with students, there are fewer discipline problems (Swick, 1991). Less discipline challenges as a result of intentional student and adult relationship building, may have resulted in a reduced need for punitive discipline approaches, which have been found to improve attendance (Rideout et al., 2010).

Many staff described King High's discipline policy as structured and easy-to-follow. Policies and procedures were laid out in a detailed Student Code of Conduct and followed in a systematic way by staff. The policies involved merits for positive behavior, demerits for negative behaviors and alternative placements for those students with severe behavioral challenges. The school's approach to discipline was intricate and required a large team of adults to maintain the system. As repeatedly noted during interviews, its approach relied greatly on consistency among the adults enforcing the policies.

Restorative practices. While school staff at King High felt it was important to be strict and rigid to set the tone at the beginning, in hindsight, most school staff felt a rigid discipline approach should have been coupled those beginning years, with actions that restored any damage that was done. This could look like a student who engaged in a physical altercation with another student still receiving a consequence such as time away from the environment, detention or loss of privileges, but the offender would also be required to provide a public apology to the students in the cafeteria where the altercation occurred for making the environment unsafe and chaotic. The students involved in the altercation might also be required to participate in an anger management session.

Although King High leaders and other staff members were effective at building bonds with students and increasing their cohort graduation rate, staff sentiment was that had they coupled what they did with more restorative practices early on, they may have been even more effective at building relationships with students.

School-wide bonding activities focused around postsecondary success and robust extracurricular activities were vital to relationship building. As shared, one of the themes that surfaced in interviews and documents was the value of structured school-wide bonding activities. At King, these events were a routine part of the school calendar. In the time between school-wide events, students had regular opportunities to bond with teachers after school during clubs, sporting events and office hours.

School-wide bonding. Bonding activities such as pep rallies, social emotional learning classes, class meetings and Spirit weeks promoted staff and student bonding, further supporting students in developing an affinity for the school. Research supported that when students knew they had one adult in the school that knew them, cared about them and checked on them, they were less likely to drop out (DeSocio, 2007). School-wide bonding activities were a regular occurrence at King High and set the stage for more intimate interactions between staff and students. These structured school-wide activities were followed up with office hours after school, field trips and teachers attending sporting events. King High's success at addressing dropout may have been partly the result of its focus on intentionally and systematically building close personal bonds with students with purposefully planned bonding activities.

Postsecondary success. School-wide bonding activities at King routinely included a positive message around college and post secondary success. Activities such

81

as senior signing days, college tours and cohort competitions where each cohort was named after a college or university may have helped develop in students a commitment to working hard and being successful. School staff organizing events at King High themed those events around topics such as character, responsibility, and the importance of college and postsecondary planning. These activities supported students in developing a commitment to their futures, which according to Hirschi (1969), facilitates students bonding with their school.

Structured extracurricular activities. Structured extracurricular activities surfaced also, as an important theme in this research study. Structured extracurricular activities was also identified in the literature as important to student attendance and students' decision to remain in school. Researchers found a correlation between unstructured activities and delinquent behavior (Hartnett, 2008). Social Bond Theory stated that participation in clubs, school activities and athletics helped students to bond with staff and peers (Hirschi, 1969). Another study, in support of Social Bond Theory found that students' involvement in extracurricular activities was important in the building of a sense of attachment to the school (Maddox & Prinz, 2003). The idea is that structured activities serve as a positive deterrent to deviant behavior and gang involvement, making it more likely students will graduate. Moreover, King High's emphasis on involving students in the selection of after school clubs, and its commitment to ensuring that ECAs were structured and appropriate, very likely resulted in additional bonding opportunities for troubled students who may have otherwise dropped out.

Implications and Recommendations for Practitioners

Despite the infusion of federal dollars into troubled schools, only two of 18 schools saw growth over 24% after three years. Most alarming, six schools saw a decline in graduation rates after three years. King High's cohort graduation rate in 2011-2012 was 58.16%. Three years later, the cohort graduation rate was 89.09%, up 30.93 percentage points as outlined in Table 5.3 below. This particular school's turnaround strategies and relationship building tactics may prove important as we work to understand how relationships are built with students during the school day.

Table 5.3 – *Pennsylvania Turnaround High Schools: 2014 School Profiles*

School	% FARMS	Student-Teacher Ratio	Grant Amount	School Size	Graduation Rate Change After 3 Years
HS1	67.88	15.62	$958,375.00	1174	15.59
HS2	77.68	14.06	$267,754.00	1416	5.65
HS3	52.93	13.18	$699,963.00	1364	2.66
HS4	76.19	18.21	$974,132.00	1302	20.56
HS5	99.77	18.6	$792,001.00	1348	10.57
King High*	73.78	16.11	$508,486.00	1335	30.93
HS7	99.72	16.62	$786,964.00	1066	10.25
HS8	86.42	17.42	$500,000.00	1716	4.62
HS9	80.96	13.64	$616,432.00	2542	11.8
HS10	49.44	14.39	$848,867.00	445	-3.1
HS11	50.93	14.24	$109,958.00	1445	-0.02
HS12	76.31	15.19	$626,150.00	1475	-5.67
HS13	68.6	17.56	$686,000.00	605	-14.33
HS14	99.51	15.05	$641,440.00	617	23.71
HS15	97.16	13.37	$579,958.00	1056	20.37
HS16	76.87	13.23	$280,500.00	1341	-4.59
HS17	99.55	12.96	$671,142.00	661	24.18
HS18	84.9	19.00	$350,000.00	2556	-0.19
Average	78.81	15.47	$605,451.22	1303.6	8.50

This study's findings have major implications for school leadership teams, as leadership teams are constantly working year after year to improve their schools. Even the highest performing schools reflect each year and look for approaches that they can incorporate to continue to move their schools forward. This research study identified five approaches elevated by the staff at King High as central to building relationships with students. This study encourages leadership teams to place effort around involving parents, establishing and enforcing rules, planning school-wide bonding events, developing the staff's capacity to build relationships with students and offering structured school-wide bonding and after school activities. The extent to which a school team addresses these five areas could result in its ultimate success or failure addressing truancy and graduation rates.

This study's findings also have implications for turnaround leaders, specifically. A major role of the turnaround school leader is to develop and steward a positive school culture (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012). As it relates to the day-to-day work of a principal in establishing and stewarding a positive culture, turnaround leaders in particular, must model the behavior they expect to see in teachers and other staff (Herman et al., 2008; Leithwood, Harris & Jantzi, 2010). Because attendance and achievement are particular challenges at turnaround schools, relationship building must be a key part of the leader's work. The findings of this study suggest that school leaders must be visible in the school community building those initial face-to-face relationships, work that she/he expects teachers and staff to continue. Parent involvement should involve a massive face-to-face outreach approach, initially. Parents should be informed like parents in the King

community of the school's philosophy, the school's mission and any upcoming parent engagement opportunities. The best way to do that is through face-to-face community events with ongoing communication and follow-up throughout the year.

Additionally, to sustain a positive culture, the turnaround leader should be heavily involved in modeling the enforcement of the rules, while also implementing those relationship-building strategies and approaches shared during professional development and expected of school staff. Because the principal at King High noted that its professional development opportunities included opportunities for staff members to practice and role play during the PD sessions, it is evident that the turnaround approach the leader was utilizing was closest to the Theory O approach of Leithwood and researchers' two approaches for organizational change. Theory E is the economic approach and focuses on control and compliance, while Theory O focuses on capability and capacity building (Leithwood et al., 2010). In sum, recommendations for school leaders include modeling rule enforcement and relationship building strategies for staff, giving staff the opportunity to role play use of the strategies with peers and finally, the leader continuing to model what she/he wants to see by demonstrating the use of the strategies during regular interactions with actual students. In order to implement a supportive discipline system that does not lose sight of the importance of staff-student relationships, the aforementioned PD approach is recommended for the turnaround school leader.

There are also implications for teachers and other school staff. Because schools are human organizations and teachers are involved more heavily with enacting reforms, their experiences and mindsets have a notable impact on organizations' success or failure

(Craig, 2012). Teachers must be willing to continue the work modeled by their principals both in the community building relationships with families and also, in the school implementing rules and building relationships with students. Leithwood and researchers argued that in successful turnaround schools, "teachers and other staff are expected to lead innovation and actively try new ideas" (Leithwood et al., 2010, p. 220). Therefore, teachers and other staff members should serve on committees to develop school activities that both promote staff-student bonding, and also have a postsecondary focus. Teachers should continue actively participating in the sponsoring of extracurricular activities, clubs and trips. Sponsoring clubs and activities allows teachers to follow up in a more intimate setting on the positive messages and bonding that occur during larger school-wide events. As noted in the literature, staff-student bonding on multiple levels is critically important as students consistently report that they liked school more when they felt that teachers cared about them, when teachers praised them, and when they felt teachers respected them (Hallinan, 2008).

Implications and Recommendations for Policy Makers

While current policy around school turnaround emphasizes academic reforms such as professional development, curriculum changes, adjustments in instructional staff and additional class time (Howell, 2015), this research study uncovered the importance of nonacademic considerations such as parental involvement, extracurricular activities, school bonding activities and the school's discipline approach as key considerations to reform failing schools. An emphasis on parent involvement was already pervasive in the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, in Goals 2000 and in NCLB (Gonzalenz-DeHass & Willems, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Meanwhile, the Brady (2003)

study, through the Fordham Foundation, reported that no intervention strategy outlined in NCLB showed success higher than 50%. Therefore, strategies and policies in NCLB need to continue to be refined to promote success.

While the federal strategy prior to the Obama administration's 2010 RTTT grants was for the federal government to tie funding to compliance, this new approach—competitive grants—gave schools and LEAs more flexibility. The new approach allowed competing grant recipients to get points in various categories, which would result in a total score to determine eligibility rather than an all or nothing approach (Howell, 2015). Grants were awarded based not just on if recommended approaches were followed, but how closely a school or district's strategies aligned to those strategies deemed highest leverage by the federal government. It is important to note that points were not assigned particularly for parent engagement reforms. In determining point values, policy makers are valuing certain reform strategies over others. Supported by additional case studies, this research study may provide insight into which reform strategies policy makers should assign more points to on the rubric used to score schools. For example, if case studies continue to suggest that parent involvement is critical in the turning around of schools and for reductions in dropout, those policy makers developing grant criteria might assign points to schools addressing parent engagement as part of their grant applications.

Following NCLB and Obama's 2010 RTTT grants, in 2015, Congress passed the Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA), giving states even more leeway as it relates to accountability plans, accountability goals, accountability systems, low-performing schools, school interventions, testing, standards, school choice teacher evaluations, English language learners and special education (Every Student Succeed Act, 2015). The

act asked states to present peer-reviewed plans and offered hearings to states if their plans were not accepted. States could pick their own goals, but must address proficiency rates, English-language acquisition and graduation rates, and set expectations that sub-groups furthest behind see progress in achievement. Accountability systems that included three academic indicators and one additional indicator such as student engagement, educator engagement, school climate safety, etc. needed to be in place, with the states determining the weights of each indicator. As part of the act, states would have to intervene in schools performing in the bottom 5% or high schools where the graduation rate is 67% or less. States must adopt a set of rigorous standards but they do not have to be the Common Core State Standards. Finally, states would no longer have to tie teacher evaluation to student outcomes (Every Child Succeeds Act, 2015).

In light of these changes, the new legislation included a sustained focus on parent and family engagement. ESSA asks LEAs to "involve parents in activities of the schools, which may include establishing a parent advisory board comprised of a sufficient number and representative group of parents or family members" (Every Child Succeeds Act, 2015, p. 129 STAT. 1870). Additionally, the act encourages programs that "reach parents and family members at home, in the community, and at school" (Every Child Succeeds Act, 2015, p. 129 STAT. 1870). States, LEAs and individual schools have the flexibility to implement parent engagement strategies they feel are appropriate. Findings from this research study encourage boards of education to enact policies and approve school year calendars that encourage and make space for educators to build those initial face-to-face relationships with families, and then, support those early efforts with ongoing less personal reminders and communication. The language in the act is in

alignment with best practices around parent engagement and particularly this research study's finding as it relates to parent engagement.

With goals in ESSA being tied to high school graduation rates, policy makers and boards of education should heed the other two recommendations as well, giving special attention to policies that promote structured extracurricular and school-wide bonding activities as well as supportive discipline systems that include a relationship building component. While this new legislation definitely emphasizes the need to "reduce the overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom," it does not speak specifically to the need for supportive discipline policies and procedures (ESSA, 2015, p. 129 STAT. 1854). A modification or addition would be to add to the legislation language that encourages a supportive discipline approach, in the same way reducing suspensions was encouraged.

Implications and Recommendations for Researchers

In order to gain a deeper understanding of what is occurring in turnaround schools as it relates to relationship building, truancy and dropout, a series of case studies from different school contexts is needed (Yin, 2003). For example, this particular case looked at a restart that closed as a traditional public school and opened as a Renaissance charter high school. A case study at a school that remained a public school, and followed the same model could yield some of the same or a different set of results. When results from various case studies overlap, we can begin to truly understand which strategies and tactics were meaningful. Another possible modification to this study could involve a case study at a successful school that solely changed the principal while the rest of the staff remained the same. This model would fit the requirements laid out by the federal

government for a turnaround labeled a transformation. Research questions might revolve more around how teachers and staff described the principal's strategies, tactics and approaches led to students bonding with the school.

In addition to the need for more case studies, and because multiple parent and community engagement strategies were employed in this study, generalize-able quantitative research is also needed to predict the impact of each type of parent engagement from those that are more face-to-face, like home visits and community barbeques, to some of the less personal tactics, such as flyers, text alerts or phone blasts. Additionally, this study looked at the issue of truancy and dropout through the lens of social bonding theory, ascribing a student's willingness to attend school or not to the student's ability to bond with the organization and its personnel.

There is also a wealth of research to support addressing truancy through the lens of Strain Theory. Strain theorists explain low attendance and high delinquency as the result of social strains that exist between socioeconomic classes at schools and in communities, and as a "response to the frustration of limited opportunities to attain desired goals" (Lawrence, 1998, p. 98). Because many schools in large urban districts may be asserting middle class norms and values, the student body, largely economically disadvantaged, may feel a sense of frustration due to students interpreting certain opportunities as outside of their reach. Students whose cultural characteristics are more consistent with the culture, norms, and expectations of the school have greater opportunities for academic success (Milner, 2010). Conversely, students who come from communities where norms and values differ greatly from the school's are often less successful (Klotz, 2006). Research that looks more deeply at the impact of

socioeconomics and investigates truancy and dropout through the lens of these "strains" is needed.

Additionally, as discussed briefly in Chapter 4, and raised by Gale (a participant), some parents expressed apprehension regarding the school's turnaround approaches, as a result of the feeling that the "white man" was coming in telling them what is best for their kids. Had this study interviewed parents directly, race may have surfaced as an additional challenge to school bonding, and this topic could have been explored deeper. The thought is that certain communities may initially find it more challenging to build relationships with staff who look different than them. Exploring this issue could shed light on the reasons why majority minority schools such as King High struggled initially to deliver high school diplomas at equal rates than majority white schools (Balfanz, 2007). Shifting parental mindsets around race could prove critical to getting all schools to perform similarly, despite race. A noted shortcoming of this study that can be explored by other researchers then, is this study's inability to question school personnel deeper regarding the voices of parents. This study did not capitalize on the opportunity to amplify the voices of parents through the voices of school personnel.

Lastly, because this study took a retrospective approach to investigating a school turnaround, which happened 6 years ago, it limited the data collection methods to interviews and document review. To make the results of this case study more plausible, a follow up longitudinal study that allowed the researcher to visit, observe and experience firsthand what was occurring over a 3-year period around relationship building from start to finish should be conducted. Since this researcher would be onsite and experiencing the actual phenomenon with participants, it is likely data collected during the turnaround

would yield more rich descriptions and deeper understandings. Additionally, the researcher would be afforded the opportunity to conduct focus groups with teachers, students and parents after key bonding activities and events, allowing the researcher to hear the critical voices of students and parents directly, which are missing from the current research study.

Conclusion

The key strategies, approaches and tactics raised in this study were those that were perceived by staff as important in the building of bonds with students and their families. The five approaches raised in this study are important as school officials in urban centers continue to look for ways to bond with students, keep students in school and possibly, improve cohort graduation rates. This study uncovered that parent engagement that focuses on face-to-face outreach initially is critical, followed up with other engagement strategies. A supportive approach to discipline that incorporates a restorative component is also important. Staff development around intentional relationship building, and school-wide discipline systems that occurs before as well as during the school year is essential. Organized and intentional school-wide bonding activities that emphasize postsecondary success are important. Finally, holding structured activities after school, and giving students choices in those activities may promote positive relationships with the school and school staff.

Prior to this study, the research had already raised multiple factors, tactics and strategies that were critical to relationship building and truancy reduction. Punitive zero tolerance discipline approaches, large schools, a nonflexible curriculum and

socioeconomics were noted as contributing factors (Attwood & Croll, 2006; Cutshall, 2003; Elliot, 1999; Gage et al., 2013). Multiple staff perspectives (principal, teacher, counselor, assistant principal, dean and principal manager) from an urban predominantly low-income public high school, uncovered those tactics and strategies this particular team of staff members deemed noteworthy and significant. The voices included in this study have added to the current literature on truancy, dropout, school turnaround, relationship building and school bonding.

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Appendix A: Principal Interview Protocol

School:

Date of Interview: Start Time: End Time:

Interviewer's Name:

1. Please tell me a little about your background and experiences in education. [Probe for content area, teaching experience, teacher leader experience, principal experience, length of time in these roles.]

School Turnaround

2. Back in 2010, what were some of the challenges the school was facing, which led to it being deemed as persistently low performing and in need of turnaround (during the 2011-2012 school year)?

3. Tell me about the immediate changes you and the leadership team made when you took the reins of the school during the 2011-2012 school year.

4. As a turnaround team, how did you, other administrators, teachers and school personnel work to support positive relationships and a sense of connectedness between students, parents, peers, and school personnel (attachment)?

5. How did you and the team communicate if at all, a message highlighting the importance of getting an education and saving money (commitment)?

6. Was there a strategy in place to encourage students to get involved in extracurricular and community activities after school? Describe that strategy (involvement).

7. Were there any activities or strategies employed to engage parents, and challenge parent or guardians' beliefs about school (beliefs)?

8. Tell me about any other activities or events during the three-year period after the turnaround when you felt students successfully bonded with the school or its personnel.

Attendance and Graduation Rates

9. Of all the strategies the school implemented (researcher reads back strategies) during the first three years after the turnaround, which do you feel most contributed to the formation of relationships with students?

10. If you received the opportunity to engage in the same process again at the same

school, "a redo," as it relates to student and community engagement, relationship building, dropout prevention, and truancy reduction, what would you do differently?

11. Is there anything additional you would like to add regarding your experiences building relationships with students?

Appendix B: Teacher/Staff Interview Protocol

School:

Date of Interview: Start Time: End Time:

Interviewer's Name:

1. Please tell me a little about your background and experiences in education. [Probe for content area, teaching experience, teacher leader experience, length of time in these roles.]

School Turnaround

2. Back in 2010, what were some of the challenges the school was facing, which led to it being deemed as persistently low performing and in need of turnaround (during the 2011-2012 school year)?

3. Tell me about the immediate changes you and the leadership team made when you took the reins of the school during the 2011-2012 school year.

4. As a turnaround team, how did you, other administrators, teachers and school personnel work to support positive relationships and a sense of connectedness between students, parents, peers, and school personnel (attachment)?

5. How did you and the team communicate if at all, a message highlighting the importance of getting an education and saving money (commitment)?

6. Was there a strategy in place to encourage students to get involved in extracurricular and community activities after school? Describe that strategy (involvement).

7. Were there any activities or strategies employed to engage parents, and challenge parent or guardians' beliefs about school (beliefs)?

8. Tell me about any other activities or events during the three-year period after the turnaround when you felt students successfully bonded with the school or its personnel.

Attendance and Graduation Rates

9. Of all the strategies the school implemented (researcher reads back strategies) during the first three years after the turnaround, which do you feel most contributed to the formation of relationships with students?

10. If you received the opportunity to engage in the same process again at the same school, "a redo," as it relates to student and community engagement, relationship

building, dropout prevention, and truancy reduction, what would you do differently?

11. Is there anything additional you would like to add regarding your experiences building relationships with students?

Appendix C: Principal Manager Interview Protocol

School:

Date of Interview: Start Time: End Time:

Interviewer's Name:

1. Please tell me a little about your background and experiences in education. [Probe for content area, teaching experience, teacher leader experience, principal experience, principal management experience, and length of time in these roles.]

School Turnaround

2. Back in 2010, what were some of the challenges the school was facing, which led to it being deemed as persistently low performing and in need of turnaround (during the 2011-2012 school year)?

3. Tell me about the immediate changes you and the leadership team made when you took the reins of the school during the 2011-2012 school year.

4. As a turnaround team, how did you, other administrators, teachers and school personnel work to support positive relationships and a sense of connectedness between students, parents, peers, and school personnel (attachment)?

5. How did you and the team communicate if at all, a message highlighting the importance of getting an education and saving money (commitment)?

6. Was there a strategy in place to encourage students to get involved in extracurricular and community activities after school? Describe that strategy (involvement).

7. Were there any activities or strategies employed to engage parents, and challenge parent or guardians' beliefs about school (beliefs)?

8. Tell me about any other activities or events during the three-year period after the turnaround when you felt students successfully bonded with the school or its personnel.

Attendance and Graduation Rates

9. Of all the strategies the school implemented (researcher reads back strategies) during the first three years after the turnaround, which do you feel most contributed to the formation of relationships with students?

10. If you received the opportunity to engage in the same process again at the same school, "a redo," as it relates to student and community engagement, relationship

building, dropout prevention, and truancy reduction, what would you do differently?

11. Is there anything additional you would like to add regarding your experiences building relationships with students?

Appendix D: Researcher's Identity Memo

As the researcher in this study, I am a former classroom teacher at a large urban traditional public high school (over 2000 students) who experienced great successes with students who showed up to class regularly. Meanwhile, I was consistently unsuccessful addressing the needs of the bottom quartile of my classroom, students who I noticed accumulated 20 or more absences in a single school year. Despite being the district-wide teacher of the year, I found it challenging to adequately move students in their learning who did not show up regularly to class. I love challenges and sought out strategies to get students in class, but was minimally successful. My inability to tackle this challenge led to my desire to make truancy reduction the topic of my dissertation studies.

I majored in Biology and Spanish Literature as an undergraduate at the George Washington University and received a Life Sciences Master's degree from the University of Maryland College Park soon after. As a scientist by education, my background supports the more objective and experimental type of science producing results that can be generalized, associated with quantitative research. On the other hand, my work experience supports more of a qualitative approach to research as well. I inspired students in the classroom for 8 school years, teaching Spanish for 4 years and biology for 4 years. Because my initial exposure to teaching was from the perspective of a language teacher, I taught Biology with engaging strategies that included songs, discussion, and digital technology. Despite my physical science background, I quickly understood that teaching could not be mechanical and rudimentary like a factory that produced products. For true learning to occur and to be effective, I would have to build on the lived experiences of the students I taught and situate myself within the context of my students' lives. Likewise in

my research approach, it would be natural for me to sway toward qualitative research where the researcher attempts to "get as close as possible to the participants being studied" (Creswell, 2007, p. 18). Still, my qualitative research study, like that of Creswell will be grounded in postpositivism. Like other qualitative researchers with theoretical perspectives grounded in postpositivism, my research approach is likely to be described as "reductionistic, logical, an emphasis on empirical data collection, cause-and-effect oriented, and deterministic" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20).

Finally, of my 14 years in education, 12 have been in traditional public schools with two years at a Renaissance Charter High School. My time working with a charter school was eye opening and rewarding. My passion though is reforming our traditional public schools to ensure our nation's most vulnerable students (special education students, low SES and English language learners) receive equitable opportunities to realize their dreams.

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

Principal Investigator: Kelly Sherrill

Investigator/researcher: Keith Miles

Research Study: Staff Perceptions of the School Bonding Strategies Employed at a Pennsylvania Urban Charter High School as part of a Federally Mandated School Turnaround and Race to the Top Grant

I am 18 or older, and I am consenting to participation in a research study of principal managers, principals and teachers whose schools received a Race to the Top Turnaround grant in 2011, and who worked at the school site of interest from 2010-2015. Please read the following information and sign below if you agree to participate in the study.

Purpose of the study:

1. I volunteer to participate in a dissertation research study conducted by Keith Miles (the investigator) as part of the requirements for completion of a doctorate in educational leadership from The George Washington University. I understand that the project is designed to gather information from turnaround principal managers, teachers and principals who worked at schools that were most successful at raising graduation and attendance rates 3 years post receipt of a federal grant, and federally recommended turnaround. I will be one of approximately 8 individuals being interviewed in this research study.

Procedures and Time Required:

2. I am aware that if I participate, I will take part in a 45 to 90 minute individual interview. I understand that this interview will be recorded and transcribed for the sole purposes of collecting data for this study. I understand that I will be asked to share my experiences turning around a school. I understand that notes will be taken during this conversation for use in the study.

Risks/Benefits:

3. I understand that I will be financially compensated for my participation in this study ($50 gift card for teachers). I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to stop participation in the interview. I understand that while there may be no direct personal benefit to participating in the study beyond the gift card, the study may

contribute to the accumulation of knowledge on school reform and turnaround schools.

Costs for participation:

4. Participants will incur no costs for participation in this project.

Confidentiality and Disclosure:

5. I understand that information obtained for this research will be kept confidential by the researcher. I understand that the researcher will not identify me or my school or district by name in any reports using information obtained during my participation, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.

Right to refuse/end participation:

6. I understand that I may refuse to participate in this study or withdraw at any time. I understand that if I withdraw from the study that all data collected in connection with my participation will be destroyed.
7. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Studies Involving Human Subjects: Behavioral Sciences Committee at the George Washington University.
8. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
9. I have been given a copy of this consent form.
10. Participation is voluntary.
11. Employment of participants will not be affected whether or not participants choose to participate.

For further information, please contact researcher:	Keith Miles 200 Buckingham Court Williamstown, NJ 08094 keithmilesjr@gmail.com 301-325-4548
Or the principal investigator at:	Kelly Sherrill Linkous 44983 Knoll Square, Suite 147 Ashburn, VA 20147 sherrill@gwu.edu

Appendix F: Coding & Category Matrix

Codes	1 Alex	2 Brian	3 David	4 Carl	5 Ed	6 Fran	7 Jared	8 Gale	9 Helen	10 Iris	Student Hand-book	Mission State-ment	School Improvement Plan
9% and 11% proficient	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Students not attending classes	X	X			X	X		X		X			X
Persistently dangerous schools list	X		X	X				X		X			X
Consistency	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Focus on Postsecondary success	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Community meetings	X	X	X	X		X	X			X			
Supportive approach		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		
Culture systems		X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X
Merits and Demerits		X	X	X	X	X		X			X		X
Home visits		X	X			X		X	X	X			X
Large culture team (deans)	X	X	X		X						X		X
Parent engagement manager	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X			X
BBQs		X		X			X	X					
Security Guards	X		X										
Alternative placements	X	X	X		X	X					X		
Marketing		X			X	X							
Phone blasts				X		X	X						
Staff calling parents			X	X				X		X			
Resources for parents			X				X						
SEM Classes	X	X						X					X
ninth grade academy	X			X									

Mandatory conferences			X			X			X		X	
Financial literacy (parents or students			X			X	X	X				
Wednesday professional development time		X		X						X		X
PD - Opening of the year trainings for teachers		X			X							X
Role of the parent engagement manager ECAs	X	X	X	X								
Required to pass all classes to participate in ECAs			X							X		
Faculty supported and student run after school ECAs			X		X	X	X		X			
Teacher accountability, strong lessons	X	X			X				X			X
Parent feedback sessions	X		X		X		X					
Field trips					X	X				X		
Staff turnout at games		X			X		X					
Office hours				X		X	X					
School year kick off meetings	X		X									
Back to school night				X		X						
Death of students (coming together)	X			X				X				
Pep Rallies/ Spirit	X		X			X	X	X				

weeks													
Staff PD around relationship building	X	X		X	X								X

Part 2 - What would you do differently?	

More of a restorative approach from the start		X			X	X		X	X				
More parent engage-ment	X							X		X			
Nix homogeneous groupings		X						X					
Offer more electives		X			X								
More PD around culture at the start of the year	X		X		X								
Have entire school participate in individual family meetings	X												
Allow community manager to focus on the community	X				X	X							
More trusting, less rigid at the beginning			X		X			X	X				
More training around cultural competency	X		X		X								

124