INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR OWN MOTIVATION IN SCHOOL: TOWARDS AN EXPANDED CONCEPTUALIZATION OF MOTIVATION IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

by

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ABSTRACT

In an attempt to create an expanded conceptualization of motivation in the school context, this qualitative study looked at students' perceptions of their motivation and engagement in school. Five grade seven students were interviewed and observed in the classroom, library, computer lab, and gymnasium over a three-week period. Analysis of data highlighted three main factors that influenced students' school engagement: individual factors (personal interest, goals, beliefs); contextual factors, (subject or classroom); and relational factors (with parents, peers, teachers). Simultaneous to these factors, other factors, such as grades and choice in task/subject also contributed to students' school engagement. Analysis of student interviews and observation data highlighted the fact that although each factor influenced the students' school engagement in some way, the level of influence one factor had on another factor and subsequently on students' school engagement differed across students. The importance of building positive relationships, setting up a classroom based on mutual respect with clear expectations, and providing choice whenever possible were the main implications for educators highlighted within this study.

This thesis is dedicated to the students who inspired me to find the answers. To those students who pushed me to want to know more about who they were, where they came from, and how I could help to make each day better, while pushing them to reach higher.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine a classroom with twenty-five students and one teacher. At any time of day you can walk in and observe some students fully engaged, excited and motivated as they work through the given task and others seemingly disengaged and unmotivated to do the task at hand. What makes one student motivated, at times regardless of the subject or task, and others unmotivated most of the time? As a classroom teacher, I continually asked myself this question. As I tried to get to know my students to figure out the factors that contributed to their motivation, I realized this would not be an easy task, as it seemed different for everyone. Thus, I turned to the research.

The research on motivation was broad and deep, so I began to delve into the achievement motivation research where I learned of a vast array of theoretical perspectives. Given the impossibility of addressing all these perspectives, I chose to focus on four main theories found in the psychology literature. One of these theories, Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1994), relates to whether students attribute their successes and failures to effort or ability, which in turn may influence their motivation to complete a task. Another is Social Cognitive Theory (Self-Efficacy) (Bandura, 1994), which suggests that students' past experiences contribute to their beliefs about their ability to be successful in similar tasks in the future. The third theory I addressed is Value-Expectancy Theory (Wigfield et al., 1997). This theory suggests that students' expectations regarding how well they will do on a task, often based on past experiences and the level of value they hold for the task, both contribute to their motivation to

complete the task. The final theory I considered is Goal Orientation Theory (Ames,

1992). Goal theory highlights that, to varying degrees, students hold performance and

mastery goals and these goals influence their motivation in school.

Each of these theories seems to potentially provide an answer to my initial

question concerning why some students are motivated and engaged in school and others

are not. However, it is not clear which of these theories applies at any given time? It

seems to me that it is difficult to distinguish one of these theories from another in practice

as the processes that each describe, may all be occurring within a student simultaneously.

It is plausible that the level of expectation and value a student places on a specific task is

based on her past experiences, thus her self-efficacy toward that particular task evolves.

Additionally, it is plausible that the effort a student puts into this task is based in part on

her past experiences. These experiences may have led this student to believe that either

effort or ability contributed to her success or failure in relation to this task, which in turn

could influence her efficacy and thus the goals she set in relation to this task. Thus, in

my opinion, none of the theories creates a clear picture of the student's motivation on

their own. One must look at each of these theories as describing potential contributing

factors not only to the student's motivation, but also to each other.

Additionally, each of the psychological theories of achievement motivation tends

to emphasize characteristics of the individual student. It is also important to consider the

contextual factors within the classroom when examining students' motivation in school.

Thus, I looked to the socially oriented research related to motivation as well. That

literature discusses students' need for affiliation within the classroom, which speaks to

their need to belong and to feel a part of the community. Engaged participation was one

theory within this literature that addressed this need. Lave and Wenger (1991) describe engaged participation as a process by which a student enters a community as a newcomer. Once the student has internalized the values and expectations within that community, she becomes an old-timer and she will be more engaged and more likely to participate within the community. Lave and Wenger suggest that members are more likely to internalize the values and expectations of the community if there is mutual respect among them.

Thinking about the other members in the community brought me to another area of research regarding the relationships students have within the classroom. The relationships students have with their teacher and peers are strong contributing factors to their motivation in school. Research suggests that these relationships can positively and negatively influence a student's participation and motivation in school (Murdock & Miller, 2003; Toohey, 2000; Wentzel, 1994).

Taking the research on achievement motivation, students' need for affiliation (Coleman, 2001), engaged participation, and the additional research on social factors into consideration, it was apparent that independently none of the theories provided a complete picture of student motivation in school. Therefore, in conducting this study, I made the decision to draw on each of these approaches in an attempt to understand intermediate students' motivation in the classroom. Additionally, as the vast majority of research on motivation has been quantitative in nature, using surveys and questionnaires, and typically focused within one theoretical perspective, I decided to take a qualitative approach. Although the information presented in the quantitative research provides much interesting information, it is based on researchers' understandings. What is needed is

qualitative work that focuses on students' perceptions. Thus, in this study I used

qualitative methods to investigate the perceptions of grade seven students regarding the

factors that influenced their motivation in school in hopes of developing an expanded

conceptualization of motivation in the school context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation underlies everything students do. The term motivation arises from the Latin verb movere, which means to move. The "Oxford Dictionary of Psychology" states that motivation is the "driving force or forces responsible for initiation, persistence, direction and vigor of goal-directed behaviour" (Coleman, 2001, p.464). Within education, goal-directed behaviour typically relates to academic and social goals. Achievement motivation research describes the processes that explain student motivation toward academic goals. Achievement motivation is the most commonly researched element of motivation within education. Fear of failure and hope for success are the two main components of achievement motivation (McClelland et al., 1953, cited in Saito, 2002). Social motivation research explores the social goals students have within an educational context, specifically the need for social acceptance within the classroom. Student participation within the classroom context is an important aspect of social motivation as well. In addition, there is a large body of research on the social factors including parents, teachers, and peers, which influence students' academic and social motivation goals. A discussion of achievement motivation, social motivation, and the social factors influencing motivation and their relevance to education will set the stage for the present study.

Achievement Motivation

Four theories of achievement motivation that are presented in the literature include: Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1994); Social Cognitive Theory (Self-Efficacy)

(Bandura, 1994); Value-Expectancy Theory (Wigfield et al., 1997) and Goal Orientation

Theory (Ames, 1992; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996; Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Pintrich,

2000). Clearly, achievement motivation is a multifaceted construct. Each theory

addressing achievement motivation plays a vital role; the theories are independent, yet

interrelated.

Attribution Theory

According to Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1994), individuals can evaluate their

performance on a specific task as a success or a failure. They can attribute this success or

failure to ability, which is relatively stable and uncontrollable, or to effort, which is

unstable and controllable. Weiner's (1994) findings suggest that when an individual's

failure is due to lack of effort, they are seen as responsible, may feel guilt, and may be

punished, however when an individual's failure is due to lack of ability, they are not seen

as responsible, may feel shame, and may receive no punishment.

Eccles and Midgley (1989) found that the focus of most middle schools and their

classrooms is on one's ability. Middle schools tend to define worth by characteristics

that focus on ability rather than progress in learning (Covington, 1992; Nicholls, 1989).

This can lead to a variety of negative outcomes. Students can develop a range of

strategies to avoid the feeling of failure. Covington (1992) found that students would use

strategies such as not studying to avoid the possibility of studying and failing anyway.

Attribution theory focuses on whether an individual attributes his or her success or failure

to either ability or effort. Motivation toward a particular task is subsequently impacted

by the kind of attributes people make about prior successes and failures. The attribution

of success or failure to either effort or ability will not only impact their motivation toward

a particular task but can also have an effect on a student's self-efficacy within a specific domain area.

Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1994) states that a key construct in the self-regulation of motivation is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is an individual's perceived capability toward the attainment of a specific outcome in relation to a specific task. Students' beliefs in their ability to regulate their own learning and to master academic tasks determine their level of motivation, academic achievements, and their ambitions. The greater the perceived self-efficacy people have, the higher the challenges they tend to set for themselves, and the stronger their perseverance when faced with difficulty.

Children's ability beliefs are evaluations of their competence in different areas. Ability beliefs can be used to positively predict student performance in different achievement domains (Meece, Wigfield, & Eccles, 1990). These beliefs can also predict outcomes in specific subject areas. Meece *et al.* (1990) found that seventh through ninth grade students' ability beliefs strongly predicted their expectancies for success in math, which strongly predicted their mathematics performance. Over time, students experience various academic activities, they begin to have expectations prior to engaging in such activities that are based on their past performance and efficacy beliefs and they set goals based on these expectations.

Value-Expectancy Theory

Value-Expectancy Theory asserts that students will set goals for themselves based on what they perceive to be realistic, based on their ability; attainable, based on their

effort, ability and perseverance; and desirable, based on whether they value the outcome

or not. Expectancy theory (Wigfield et al., 1997) holds that key factors in a student's

motivation are their competence beliefs, how well they expect to do on a task, and the

value they place in achieving the task. A student's competence beliefs and values are

based on their past performances on a particular activity and on the feedback they

receive.

Wigfield (1997) defined three different components of task values: (1) utility

value, (2) attainment value and (3) interest value. Utility value relates to the perceived

usefulness of the activity. Utility value is similar to the construct of extrinsic motivation,

relating to what the student will gain from completing the activity, rather than doing the

activity for its own sake. Attainment value relates to the importance of the activity to the

individual. If the student believes the activity is of great importance, he or she will be

more motivated to complete the activity. Lastly, interest value relates to how interested

the individual is in the activity. Interest value is similar to the construct of intrinsic

motivation, relating to an individuals personal interest in a topic or task. Each of the

latter discussed theories, Attribution Theory, Self-Efficacy, and Value-Expectancy

Theory, come into play when students adopt an achievement goal.

Goal Orientation Theory

An achievement goal (Ames, 1992) relates to the purpose of the achievement

behaviour. According to Goal Orientation Theory, one's beliefs, attributions, and affect

come together to form an achievement goal that in turn generates the intentions of

behaviour toward a specific task. This goal, guides the approach, response, and cognitive

processes used in completing the task. Research within goal orientation theory is

continually evolving in its understanding of goals. Past research in this area typically focused on two types of goals: mastery goals and performance goals. Mastery goals are thought to orient students to a focus on learning, mastery of content and tasks, and are related to a number of adaptive outcomes (high efficacy, task value, interest). Performance goals orient students to a concern for ability and performance relative to others, with a focus on doing better than others. Performance goals are considered less adaptive than mastery goals in terms of motivation, affect, and interest (Pintrich, 2000).

Recently, there was a move from the dichotomous structure of mastery and performance goals to a trichotomous structure, including mastery, and performance approach and performance avoidance goals (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). Shortly following this shift, Elliott and McGregor (2001) called for revision to the mastery and performance trichotomy. The results of three studies conducted with undergraduate students in psychology classes led Elliot and McGregor to the conclusion that the mastery goal orientation needs to be divided into an approach and avoidance construct, just as performance was within the trichotomous framework. Within a mastery-approach goal, students will focus on learning and understanding information, and within a mastery-avoidance goal, students will focus on avoiding a negative possibility (e.g., they will try not to forget what was learned). The researchers found that a mastery-approach goal and a performance-approach goal have positive effects and the focus of both is to approach success. A mastery-avoidance goal, although more positive than a performance avoidance goal, had negative effects and the focus was to avoid failure. Mastery-approach and performance-approach goals focus on demonstrating competence, and mastery-avoidance and performance-avoidance goals focus on not demonstrating

incompetence. Based on their research Elliot and McGregor (2001) designed a 2x2 achievement goal framework consisting of four main goal constructs: mastery approach goals, mastery avoidance goals, performance approach goals, and performance avoidance goals. Most research within goal orientation theory assumes that goals are intrinsic and arise from within the individual. However, some research suggests that classroom environments can influence goal adoption in students (Ames, 1992; Blumenfeld, 1992).

Summary

Each of the motivational theories presented above can explain aspects of student achievement in the classroom. Although each theory is typically researched in isolation from the others, one theory does not provide a complete picture of motivation in the classroom. Students' self-efficacy beliefs can influence the attribution of their performance to either effort or ability, which can, in turn, affect the expectancy of their competence in achieving a desired outcome, and finally, as a result of each of these beliefs, their goal adoption. This exhibits the interrelatedness of each of the motivational theories. The achievement goal adopted by the student is a result of his or her motivation toward a specific task, and can in turn influence their motivation toward the completion of that task. Motivation arises from within the individual. However, influences from the surrounding context are heavily implicated in the process. Additionally, academic success is not the only motivator for students in the classroom. There is a large social component to being a successful student in the classroom as well.

Social Motivation

Achievement motivation research focuses on academic goals in the classroom, but social goals are also a major part of a student's classroom life. Research on social motivation is not as abundant as the research on achievement motivation. In the following section, I will review the research on social motivation.

Need for Affiliation and Social Goals

The need for affiliation is a social form of motivation relating to the need to develop close, personal, and cooperative relationships with others (Coleman, 2001). In attainment of this need, students develop social goals, such as behaving in pro-social and socially responsible ways, within the classroom. Wenztel (1994) researched the social goals of sixth and seventh grade students to determine how these goals relate to teacher and student acceptance. She found that student pursuit of academic pro-social goals, such as helping another student with class work, related positively to peer acceptance. Student pursuit of academic responsibility goals, such as following classroom rules, related negatively to peer acceptance but positively to teacher acceptance. Student social goals directly related to their social behaviour in the classroom. Interestingly, there was more of a direct connection between peer acceptance and social efforts related to the classroom activities than efforts related to friendship formation and preservation, such as problem solving. Further, social goals specifically related to research conducted with high school students include: goals to have fun, to be dependable, and to be responsible (Wentzel, 1989). Successful students tend to pursue academic and social goals that are valued by others. The following discussion demonstrates how the values and

expectations in a community assist students in their pursuit of social goals, and in the development of their identity and motivation within a community.

Social Motivation and Participation within the Community

"Engaged participation" is at the center of the sociocultural research on social motivation. Engaged participation refers to the meaningful participation of the individual within a particular context or community where to-be-learned knowledge is valued and used (Wenger, 1998, cited in Hickey, 2003). The individual's understanding of the values and expectations within that community are also important aspects of their participation (Hickey, 2003). Students internalize the standards, values, and expectations within the classroom community via their participation and interactions with teachers and peers. Students are more likely to internalize these values if their relationships with the members of the classroom are based on mutual respect (Murdock & Miller, 2003). Students' perceptions of how their teachers and peers view them, and of the values and expectations in the classroom, impacts upon their motivation to participate, or not participate within the classroom.

Participation within the community is also a major focus of Lave and Wenger's (1991) research on situated learning. Lave and Wenger viewed situated learning as a social practice within a community where learning is one of the main characteristics. Their discussion revolved around the idea of legitimate peripheral participation where learners enter a community as newcomers and move toward mastery of the knowledge and skills of that community through participation, thus becoming old-timers. Within a classroom, the students would enter the classroom as newcomers and as they begin to internalize the values and expectations within the classroom, they become old-timers.

Students move through this process at different rates; while some students will quickly

become old-timers, others may never become old-timers.

Summary

As students pursue social goals within the classroom, they are attempting to fit in

and achieve acceptance within the community. Pursuit of these social goals will occur

while students are engaged and participating in the community. The ideas of engaged

participation and legitimate peripheral participation within a community contribute to an

understanding of how students' motivation develops within the classroom. As students

increase their participation within the classroom, they begin to master the knowledge,

values, and standards of that specific community. This mastery affects the formation of

students' relationships and their attributions, values, expectancies, and goals within the

community and thus their motivation to participate. This suggests a link between the

social motivation research and the achievement motivation research. To further explore

the connection between the students' social world and their motivation, a review of the

literature regarding the social factors that influence student motivation follows.

Social Factors That Influence Student Motivation

In education, the social factors that influence a student's motivation typically arise

from two different contexts: the family and the school. For the purposes of this paper, the

focus will be on the school context, most specifically on the classroom in which the

student participates.

Teacher Influence

Teachers have a prevailing influence over a student's motivation. Students who see their teachers as supportive and caring are more likely to value education, see themselves as capable, subscribe to the values expected in the community, set high goals, and avoid negative behaviours (Murdock & Miller, 2003). Students are more inclined to internalize the values and standards of their teachers when they perceive mutual respect and admiration to be key characteristics of their relationship. Murdock and Miller (2003) found that teachers' influence on students' motivation is cumulative from one year to the next. Moreover, the behavioural effects on a student's values are long term and may not be immediately visible.

Teachers have a lot of power over the motivation of students in their classrooms. Students react to teacher traits through participation in the classroom and they are good judges of teacher behaviour. Toohey's (2000) longitudinal study of children learning English as a second language in mainstream classrooms provides a clear example of this. The teacher organized the student seating based on their English speaking ability. Students believed to have a lower ability sat near the teacher whereas students with a higher ability sat at the back of the room and were able to work more independently. This arrangement reinforced specific identities of the students and thus the perceptions of their peers in the classroom. It is my belief, that these identities may have contributed to the students' motivation to participate, or not participate in the language activities in the classroom, thus demonstrating the potential influence a teacher has on students' motivation. In addition to the effect teacher behaviour and classroom structure may have on students' motivation to participate, the level of motivation students demonstrate in the

classroom also reflects their perceptions of the teacher (Murdock & Miller, 2003).

Although teachers are a powerful influence on a student's motivation in the classroom,

they are not the only influence. Peer relationships are also very influential contributors in

the formation of a student's motivation beliefs.

Peer Influence

Peer relationships have a great deal of influence over the development of one's

educational behaviours in both overt ways (e.g., by encouraging and rewarding specific

behaviours), and more subtle ways (e.g., through more discreet peer interactions, such as

befriending or excluding a student from group activities). This influence can be positive;

students receive positive reinforcement from their peers for behaviour that falls within the

classroom norms, or negative; students receive punishment for this same behaviour.

Research demonstrates that students realize there are often trade-offs between popularity

and school success. Ethnographic research also shows that more successful students seek

out friendships with academically supportive peers and separate themselves from peers

who may encourage behaviours that do not fall within the school norms (Juvonen, 1993,

1995; Farrell, 1990, 1994, cited in Murdock & Miller, 2003).

Integration of Achievement Motivation and Social Motivation

The research on achievement motivation focuses on academic goals whereas the

social motivation research focuses on social goals. Researchers typically treat

achievement motivation and social motivation separately. Recently, however,

researchers have begun to suggest that motivation research would benefit from studies

examining how the different theoretical models relate to each other (Pintrich, 2003). In

fact, Wentzel (2000) asserts that students do not pursue either academic or social goals, but that there are multiple goals students pursue simultaneously in the classroom. Pintrich (2003) suggests, "...we still do not understand how this "binding" of goals and values occurs or ... how students may regulate toward multiple goals and the different strategies that they may use to achieve social and academic goals simultaneously" (p.675). In order to begin to develop an understanding of this binding of theories, an integrative examination of the current research within both areas of motivation would be beneficial.

Social Motivation, Social Factors, and Attribution Theory

The social influences within the community have an effect on whether students attribute their success or failure to either effort or ability. Feedback from the teacher, the criteria of the task, and the values expressed in the classroom affect this attribution. Teachers who show students that effort and hard work are valued and ensure the environment reflects this belief can influence student attributions. If the teacher provides the students with instructional strategies and tools that will assist their learning, the students are more likely to see that they can achieve success through consistent effort. Teachers can also pass their views and perceptions of the value of effort on to students through their actions and how they organize the classroom (Ames, 1992; Church et al., 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Toohey, 2000). Through continued participation in this type of environment, students will realize that their effort has a direct relation to their success, which may influence their motivation.

Social Motivation, Social Factors, and Self-Efficacy

Classrooms can foster self-efficacy beliefs through a focus on effort and hard work, which provides students with the confidence to persist with difficult tasks and take on new challenges. Through meaningful participation in the context and positive experiences with peers and teachers, students may increase their self-efficacy, which could in turn give them the confidence for continued participation. Positive, specific, realistic feedback from teachers and peers also contributes to the development of high self-efficacy beliefs by focusing on the development of competence and skill, which can also affect a student's goal orientation (Pintrich, 2003; Van de Walle et al., 2001). This belief may influence the student's motivation beliefs within the community thus influencing their participation in various community activities.

Social Influence and Value-Expectancy

The context in which students participate can encourage or discourage them from attending to the values and beliefs within it. "Modern motivation theories generally characterize context as a source of expectancy-related and value-related information" (Hickey, 2003, pp.407). In the case of the classroom, the environment can reflect the specific values and expectations it would like the students to adopt. As stated previously, students are more likely to adopt the values and standards set by the teacher if they have a relationship based on mutual respect. Whether or not a student values a specific task and how well they expect to do on the task will affect their participation. Providing tasks and activities within the classroom that are relevant and useful to the students will allow them to make personal connections and see the utility of their work.

Social Influence and Goal Orientation

The motivational theories, Attribution, Self-Efficacy, and Value-Expectancy, all identify factors that contribute to the types of goals a student may choose to adopt within a particular context. Various social factors, including teachers, peers, and the environment, influence which goals students adopt. A classroom environment can be set up to elicit either performance or mastery goals from students. The teacher has a great influence on this as the teacher typically sets the expectations within the classroom. If the classroom is one where students are compared to one another and grades are posted or the highest grade is rewarded, students are more likely to develop goals that focus on performance and competition with their peers. This could affect their participation within the classroom as students would be less likely to collaborate with their peers and would be more individualistic in their work effort. This could in turn affect their friendships and thus their social goals. Toohey's (2000) observations in a grade one classroom found the focus of the classroom was for students to do their own work and that helping each other was a forbidden practice. This type of environment encouraged an individualistic attitude within the students, which in turn may have led to the development of performance-oriented goals.

A classroom that provides choice in learning, opportunities for collaboration and discussion, and values different learning styles will elicit a mastery goal orientation in students (Ames, 1992). As research demonstrated that mastery goals orient students to a focus on learning, mastery of content and tasks, and are related to a number of adaptive outcomes - high efficacy, task value, interest - (Ames, 1992) students with a mastery goal orientation are more likely to demonstrate increased participation within the community.

As students learn their ideas are valued, they may in turn value the ideas of others. This engaged participation within the community could be very motivating for students as they begin to internalize the values, expectations, and standards of the classroom. This love of learning might affect their motivation within the classroom community.

Summary of Integration

Having an understanding of the influence of social factors on student motivation is valuable in understanding students' behaviour in the classroom. Students' motivation may vary as they move from being newcomers to old-timers within the community and as they create and maintain relationships within the classroom community. Thus, to gain a comprehensive understanding of classroom motivation, we need to consider the whole child including both their social and academic lives.

The Present Study

Taking into account the achievement and social motivation research, this study resides within the belief that it "is not whether separate domains of academic and social motivation exist, but ... what happens when social and academic domains "collide" and compete for students' psychological resources and energy" (Wentzel, 1999, pp.77). The focus of the present study was on intermediate students' perceptions of their own motivation in school, including the goals they set for themselves each day, and if and how their teachers and peers affected their motivation and school engagement. This qualitative study worked toward developing an expanded conceptualization of motivation in the school context beginning with these research questions:

1. What are students' beliefs about motivation?

2. What types of goals do students set for themselves at school each day, if any?

3. What effect does the teacher have on a student's motivation and goals?

4. What effect do peers have on a student's motivation and goals?

      For the purposes of this study, the definition of motivation provided to the students needed to be simple and easy for them to understand. The academic and social theories of motivation, the Oxford Dictionary of Psychology (Coleman, 2001), and the Collins Canadian English Dictionary definition of a motive as "that which makes a person act in a particular way" (Drysdale, 1991, p. 270), all contributed to the "student-friendly" definition of motivation used in this study. Therefore, for this study, the definition of motivation was: "Motivation is what prompts you to do the things you do and behave the way you do in the classroom."

METHOD

Setting

This study took place at Meadow Creek Elementary School (all names are pseudonyms) in Lakeview, a mid-sized community in the lower mainland region of British Columbia. The school had a transient population that fluctuated between 280 and 300 students and was located in a low socio-economic area of the city. Within the school, there was a high population of students with a variety of identified special needs including autism, Tourettes Syndrome, severe behaviour disorders, hearing impairments, and a variety of other behavioural and learning disabilities. At the time of this study, there were 15 classrooms in the school ranging from Kindergarten through Grade 7. The teaching staff in the upper intermediate classrooms was relatively transient as well, with new teachers moving into the school each year.

The Grade 7 classroom in which the present study took place had 27 students. Three students in the classroom were ministry identified. One student had autism, one student was coded severe behaviour and one student had a learning disability. Additionally, there was a student who was school identified as he did not fit the criteria for ministry identification but required support for his behaviours. There was also one English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) student and two Aboriginal students within the classroom. The teacher in this classroom was new to the school, with two years of previous teaching experience. This was the first year she taught from September until June in one classroom. She was in her late twenties and graduated from a university in

British Columbia in 2000. She attended Meadow Creek Elementary School when she was child and had been a resident of Lakewood for her entire life.

Participant Selection Process

The participants in this study included five Grade 7 students from one grade seven classroom. Random purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) was used for this study. Five students were chosen from a sample frame, the class list, using a random sample procedure. Each student was numbered and five numbers were randomly selected. Students with special needs and the ESL student were removed from the sample frame, as these students may not have been able to participate in the interview and journaling process independently without assistance from a student education assistant. I felt that such assistance could alter the student data in a way that could not be accounted for.

Random purposeful sampling was used to avoid the pitfalls of other methods. For example, with maximum variation sampling (Patton, 1990) students would be chosen according to the teacher's selection of students who were motivated or unmotivated. In this case the teacher's perception of motivation would have set the stage for the study. If stratified purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) was used, choosing below average, average, and above average students based on academic standing, then academics may have become the underlying focus of the study. As the purpose of the study was to explore the students' perceptions of their own motivation in school, using academics as a basis for sample selection could have altered the results. Purposeful random sampling provided the most effective means to select a relatively unbiased sample of participants. As most classroom configurations within the school were a balance of all different types of

students, at different levels, with different strengths and weaknesses, a purposeful random selection was likely to provide a broad range of students within the small sample size.

A limitation to this method was the possibility that all academically inclined and motivated students could have been chosen, thus creating a slanted look at the overall motivation beliefs of students. However, if the students were chosen based on fitting specific characteristics to ensure a difference of participants, this would have set the stage for a specific type of result. Thus, five students were chosen from the class list using a purposeful random sampling procedure. Four of the original five students were used in the study and one of the students selected was exchanged for a different student. The reason for this decision was that I had taught the student in previous years and I was concerned this student may alter her interview responses or behaviour during observations because she had a prior relationship with me. In the end, two girls and three boys were selected for this study.

Before meeting with the students, I telephoned their parents to give them a brief description of the study and request permission to interview their child. Following verbal permission, a written permission form was sent home. Additionally, each child gave verbal permission before any interview or observation occurred.

Participants

Brad was new to the school at the beginning of the school year. He lived with his mother, Aunt and seven other people. He saw his father every second weekend. It had been "8 months and 14 days" (B Int. 1, 3/9/04, p.17) since he had lived away from his father. Brad did not think his family had any effect on his performance at school. He

viewed himself as artistic, outgoing, and funny and he liked to make people laugh. In Brad's words, he was "an average student, like one of the kids you would find in every class that joke around and will bug someone all the time" (BB Int. 1, 3/9/04, p.22). He believed that everyone in his class liked him. When asked to describe himself as a student in the class, Brad said he got his work done, did the basics that he needed to do, could do well in his subjects if he studied, and that grades were important to him. Although he hated Math and French, he believed that if he studied, he could do well. Brad said he was able to accept responsibility when he had done something wrong and he was willing to accept the consequences if they were fair and he was not the only one that received them. He thought it was important for his teacher to know he was suspended seven times in the past and that being suspended did not make him want to change his behaviour. He said most of his suspensions were related to fighting and "not smart decisions" (BB Int. 1, 2/9/04, p.3). Brad defined motivation as, "What keeps you going. What drives you to do things" (BB Int.1, 2/9/04, p.1).

Brenda had attended Meadow Creek School since Kindergarten. She lived with her mother and had no brothers or sisters. She described herself as a student who was always talking and passing notes in class. She said she got along with everyone and would talk to whomever she was sitting beside, which often lead to the teacher moving her desk to different places in the classroom. Brenda believed that her behaviour was the same with all teachers and that she just acted the same as all other students in the class. Although she thought grades were important if you wanted to go to university, she thought effort and trying your best was more important than the grade you got in the end. Brenda preferred to work with a partner if she was able to choose who it would be.

However, she loved to spend time alone too and she went home for lunch every day so she could watch TV and relax on the couch. Brenda was unable to define the term motivation.

Sara was a grade seven student who demonstrated strength in academics (she applied to advanced Math and English classes for her Grade 8 year), sports (Basketball team, running etc.) and social skills (School President, leadership team in school). She lived with her mother and father and was an only child. When describing herself she said she always behaved, raised her hand, listened, and handed her work in on time. She believed everyone had high expectations of her and expected her to get high marks. She believed her teacher, friends, and parents all expected her to do well in everything she did. This included both school and sports. Sara set goals for herself that included always paying attention, trying her best, working without being distracted, aiming for A's in all subjects, and completing work that would be accepted at a high school level to get ready for next year. Sara said that she put her best effort into all that she did. She could not provide a definition of motivation.

Brett was a grade seven student who had been at Meadow Creek School for two years. He lived with his mother and father and had no siblings. He described himself as a funny, helpful, and good student (BK Int.1, 2/9/04, p.3). Brett said math was his favourite subject because he was good at it. He reported that he had not always been good at Math and he did not know why he was good at it now. He thought Math was the most important thing he learned in school for the future. Brett considered himself good at drawing, especially at "fine tuning" things. He wanted to be an architect when he was older. He liked to get good grades and thought he was a hard worker. Brett reported

having "lots of friends". He liked to be helpful so he joined the student council. He

believed he was not good at writing because he could not keep his ideas straight and he

liked to be neat but this was difficult because he usually rushed things. Brett said he

found it hard to get his work done on time but wanted to be better at finishing his work at

school. Brett described motivation as "… something like keeps you going…" (BK Int.1,

2/10/04, p.1) like grades or your parents.

Derek was a grade seven student who attended Meadow Creek School since

Kindergarten. He reported that he was the "weird" one in his family and that he was

different from his family members. He loved physical activity, especially Physical

Education, sports, and exercising. Derek lived with his mother, stepfather, and younger

brother. He liked writing when he could choose what he wrote about and he enjoyed

writing fantasy stories, specifically about knights and dragons. Although he loved to

write and thought he was good at it, he did not like other people reading his writing

because he did not want any negative feedback. Derek thought spelling was easy and

math was hard and boring. He did not believe he was good at French and he thought he

worked best on his own because he had more choices and control over his work. Derek

said he was a hard worker but needed reminders from his teacher to keep working and

stay on task. His definition of motivation was that "it is something that makes you want

to do something" (DF Int.1, 2/10/04, p.1).

Data Collection

A variety of data collection methods were used in this study. A pilot study,

conducted prior to beginning the data collection for the present study, assisted in

determining the best methods to answer the research questions. The purpose of the pilot

study was to look at social factors, such as family, peers, and teachers and how they may influence student motivation. Two students were interviewed in the pilot study, one whom the teacher perceived to be motivated and the other whom the teacher perceived to be unmotivated. The pilot study influenced three main aspects of the present research study. First, the pilot study highlighted the fact that choosing students based on teacher perception might influence the results of the study, thus the previously described random sampling procedure was used. Second, the results of the pilot study provided the main topic areas used in the interview guide (See Appendix A) for the present study and finally, it was apparent the interview alone would not provide a clear picture of the students' motivation in school, thus alternate methods of data collection were used in this study. The methods were each selected with specific purposes in mind.

Interviews

Each of the students participated in two 30-45 minute interviews. The first interview took place at the beginning of the process of data collection and the second interview took place three weeks later at the end of data collection. Each interview was audio taped. I did not take notes during the interviews in order to create a more natural conversational atmosphere for the student. As was discovered during a pilot study, taking notes created awkward silences and breaks in the interview. Thus, I wrote field notes immediately following each interview, and the interviews were transcribed from the audiotapes.

The first interview used an interview guide approach (Patton, 1990). With the interview guide approach, an outline of the topics and issues of the interview was established in advance. Lead questions and possible follow up questions regarding each

topic and issue were preset (See Appendix A), however the sequence and exact wording of the questions evolved as the interview unfolded. Responses from the participants guided the questioning format. This interview style is beneficial for students as it is fairly conversational and situational. The interview guide for this interview included the main topics and issues that arose within the pilot study.

The second interview took place at the end of the three-week data collection period. This interview also used the interview guide approach. The topics and issues that arose from within the first set of interviews and the observations became the topics and issues of focus in the second round of interviews. There was a general interview guide used for each interview (See Appendix B), however specific questions were asked to individual students based on any contradictions that were evident between the student interviews and the observations, or where more specific details were required.

Journaling

The students wrote five journal entries throughout the data collection period. The purpose of the student journals was to see if the students focused on social or academic aspects of the school day in their journals. Additionally, the journal entries provided an alternate method of collecting information about the students' motivational beliefs. They wrote their journal entries on a variety of days within the week. Many of these times were based on the class schedule and what was convenient for the classroom teacher. The journal entries were completed on alternate days from the observations. This was done in the hope that the observations would not influence the students' journal responses in any way. The students had anywhere from one to three questions in their journal each day. These questions are presented in Appendix C. Where the students

completed their journals was an individual option. Students completed their journals

either at their desks, in the hallway, or in a small room where they could work

independently. The students were instructed to complete the journal in independently

and were able to use point form, sentences, drawings, or any form they saw fit. The first

journal entry was completed prior to the students' first interview and the last journal entry

was completed following the second interview. The student journal entries were

collected each day, analyzed, and compared to the students' interview responses.

Classroom Observations

      Eight observations of various lengths occurred throughout the three-weeks of data

collection. The purpose of the observations was to see the students within the classroom

environment in order to provide a context for the interview and journal responses. The

observations were at different times of day, and had been conducted on each day of the

week by the end of the three-week period. Most of the observations took place in the

students' classroom, with portions conducted in the library, the computer lab, the

gymnasium, and the activity room (See Appendix D). The reason for the different

locations was due to the realization that different contexts needed to be observed to

determine if contextual factors influenced student behaviour. The observations focused

on different aspects of school, including the physical environment, the social

environment, the individual student's behaviours, and student interactions with the

teacher and peers within the classroom. Appendix D outlines the general focus of each

observation.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing throughout the research period. Researcher notes were taken following each interview to record the students' demeanor, the physical environment, and any pertinent information related to interruptions or other relevant information. All the initial interviews were transcribed before the second round of interviewing began. A review of each interview transcript was conducted in order to code and organize the student responses.

Initially, I read the interviews and came up with very general codes, such as "Academic", "Social", and "Teacher Relationship". As I continued to read, I realized there was a need for sub codes within these areas. Thus, for example, "Social" became "Social Friends", "Social Free Time", and "Social Academic" and "Academic" became "Academic Negative" and "Academic Positive", and a "Positive" and "Negative" sub code was also added to the "Teacher Relationship" category. This sub-coding occurred for most of the major codes used in the analysis. Additionally, as I analyzed one interview and then another further codes came up leading me to reanalyze previously coded interviews. In the end, the same codes were applied to each of the five interviews, however not all students had responses under each code heading.

Following the coding of each of the five first interviews, I organized the interviews into a table alphabetically by code. For example, all responses coded "Academic Negative" were listed together, followed by all responses coded "Academic Positive". Additionally, I created a table including all five student responses organized alphabetically by code. This allowed me to analyze the interviews both individually and across the group.

Analyses of the second interviews followed the same process. However, in analyzing the second interviews it became apparent that although some codes applied to these interviews, new codes were also required because the questions addressed different areas than those in the first round of interviews. For example, in the second interview students were asked about expectations they might have prior to an assignment and their thoughts on letter grades. These questions led to many responses related to effort, which had not come up in the first set of interviews. Thus, a new code, "Effort" was necessary. This code was then applied to the first interview as well. This process occurred with all new codes that arose during the analysis of the second round of interviews.

Following this coding process it became apparent that the coded interviews were overwhelming and given the length of the documents it was difficult to analyze the findings at a deeper level. Thus, the interviews were organized into another form with hopes that students' beliefs related to motivation would be easier to identify. A re-analysis of each interview occurred using a paper and pencil webbing process. Thus, each student had two webs, based on the initial un-coded interviews.

The categories that arose during the webbing of the first interview became the starting categories for the second interview as well. As the need for new categories became apparent, the webs were adjusted accordingly. The categories that arose during the webbing process became the headings on a chart combining the information from both webs. This process occurred for each of the five students. The categories that arose during this analysis included: Motivation, Rewards, Consequences, Goals, Self Perception, Teacher Relationship (Positive and Negative), Grades, Effort, Learning/Work, and Social (Family and Classmates). These webs and charts helped me

develop a fuller understanding of the students and their various beliefs about motivation and school.

In order to begin the next stage of analysis, I created a chart collating the common responses of all five students within each of the categories. This process provided a clear overview of the major themes that arose from the data. As a result of this process it became evident that although there were some similarities among the students, there were also many differences in their beliefs. Thus, the rest of the analysis consisted of an investigation of each of the category areas and the students' beliefs within each of these areas.

Next, I analyzed the students' journal entries to determine whether students referred to social or academic aspects of school in their responses to the questions I had posed. Following this, I wrote brief notes on how the students' journal responses connected with the interview responses and observation.

Analysis of the observations took place in chart form. On the chart, I created a column for each student. Within this column, I included all notes from the observation transcripts relating to that student. I made brief notes on any commonalities and differences between the student interviews and the observation notes on each individual student beneath the student columns. Then, I wrote a brief profile of each student highlighting their beliefs about themselves, school, work and motivation. Finally, a more detailed write-up of each student, outlining his or her beliefs within specific areas was written.

During this process, it was apparent that the term motivation might not be the most accurate term to describe what was found. Motivation encompasses various

constructs within the individual, including goals, self-efficacy, attributions, values and expectancies and touches on some social aspects as well, but each of these theories are researched independently. During this study, it seemed that the term motivation was not providing the broad picture required to adequately understand what was represented in the data. After reflecting on this and analyzing the data, the term "school engagement" seemed to be more fitting as it brings the individual and the context together. Engagement in the context of this analysis refers to the perceived interest and effort the students put into school activities within a variety of contexts.

As I am a teacher at the school in which the research project was conducted, the students knew me as a teacher in the school. I did not interview students whom I taught in the past and I assured the students that any information they share in their interviews and their journals would only be seen by myself and would not affect their school marks in any way. As the students were in Grade 7 and would be leaving the school the following year they would not have me as a teacher in future years at this school.

ANALYSIS

As I conducted the analysis and explored different ways to write up the analysis section, it became apparent that although a number of common factors influenced the students' engagement, there were enough differences among them that the most valuable way to explore the students' perceptions of their motivation and engagement in school was to look at each student on an individual basis. Following this, a closer look at the commonalities and differences between them is presented.

Brad

Throughout the two interviews a number of topic areas arose which seemed to bear on Brad's engagement in school. Choice and his relationship with his teacher were the most powerful factors for Brad, however, his grades, goals and rewards and consequences also influenced his engagement in school.

Choice

Right from the start of the first interview with Brad, it was apparent that having choice within his learning influenced his engagement in school. This excerpt from the first interview demonstrates this belief.

A.H. So, what do you like about school?

B.B.: Umm… getting to see my friends and occasionally projects and being like able to write and art.

A.H.: So what kind of projects?

B.B. Like we are doing Socials right now and it is pretty fun.

A.H.:   What makes it fun?

B.B.: We get to do a report. Like a ancient Egypt graph chart and I am finding it pretty fun because I get to learn new stuff and then art, like do drawings.

A.H.: So, why do you think you find it more fun learning stuff about your socials project than other things?

B.B. Because I get to choose in this project what I want to write about. So that makes me want to read and write more stuff. (BB Int.1, 2/9/04, p.2).

When prompted to explain further, Brad said:

> Like when we get assigned things, like go study on the Nile. A certain subject like gifts of the Nile, if it was something like go choose something like a topic on the Nile that you would prefer to study on. If it was that, it would be more like engaging cause you would be able to pick if it was something interesting. (BB Int.1, 2/9/04, p.2).

Brad added that he was able to choose whom he would work with. He chose a partner based on the fact that they were friends, his partner was smart and Brad was artistic. Brad felt this would make a good pairing for this project (BB Int. 2, 3/11/04, p.13). Having choice in this project made it more engaging for Brad as he felt that he could research what he was interested in and find ways to implement what he believed were his strengths, specifically his artistic ability.

In addition to suggesting that having choice within his Social Studies project made it more interesting, Brad expressed that he loved writing in school because he could be creative and make up his own characters (BB Int. 1, 2/9/04, p.19). He discussed the Writer's Workshop assignment where the students had a number of writing assignments to complete, including poetry, short stories, and informational paragraphs but he could

decide what to write about and when to complete them. Brad spoke positively about the Writers' Workshop assignment and said that he enjoyed the Poetry Café where students shared their writing from this assignment. He liked being able to share what he wanted and he appreciated the positive feedback he received from his teacher and other students.

Later, in the first interview when asked what a teacher could do to make the subjects that he does not enjoy more interesting, his response was to let students choose their own topics (BB Int. 1, 2/9/04, p.26). Additionally, during the second interview, Brad suggested that when a choice of topic or subject was not an option, choosing the order in which work was completed would help him be more motivated (BB Int. 2, 3/11/04, p.13). This reinforced Brad's claim that having choice in school made it more interesting and thus more engaging for him. However, having choices in school might not have as much of an effect on Brad's engagement if his relationship with his teacher were not a positive one.

Teacher Relationship

Throughout both interviews, Brad expressed strong opinions about his relationships with his teachers, past and present, and the effect they had on his school life. During the first interview, Brad recounted an extremely negative relationship that he had with a teacher at a previous school. He believed this teacher was a "jerk" who treated him disrespectfully and made him feel stupid in front of the class. Brad described a situation in which the teacher used him and another student as an example in Math:

> "...he would say it in front of the class. Make jokes like, if we got a
> stupid kid and a smart kid and then ah oops sorry an idiotic kid. Lets pick
> [Brad] and Bruce and then he would pick two of the smart people. And so

I just, I got bad grades because I wouldn't talk to him like or do my work if it was something stupid like math" (BB Int.1, 2/9/04, p.5).

Brad also described an incident in the gymnasium where he believed the teacher choked him by closing the door on his head. This situation escalated as Brad hit his teacher and as a result was suspended. Brad believed that the principal sided with the teacher and did not respect him either. Overall, he did not feel that the school supported him in any way.

The relationships he had in his previous school influenced Brad's opinion of teachers in general. Brad says, "If they respected me I wouldn't have disliked teachers as much as I do right now" (BB Int.1, 2/9/04, p.7). When he changed schools this negative attitude carried with him, however, throughout the interviews and observations it seemed as though the current relationship with his teacher was much more positive. Although Brad described his past relationships with teachers very negatively, his perspective was much different when he described his current teacher.

Brad described his teacher this year as understanding, respectful, and helpful. He said he had a comfortable relationship with her and he could go to her for help with his problems. He explained that she would not yell at him or get him in trouble and that she would try to talk to him first before going to the principal if a situation happened. Brad said he could talk to her about anything and she would listen to him and would do anything to help him. He also said he believed she helped him learn more and get better grades (BB Int. 1, 2/9/04, p.7, 8, 17, 24).

The positive relationship between Brad and his teacher was evident during classroom observations as well. During one observation, the teacher altered the amount

of work typically done in a reading assignment as per a "student request", and she later shared with me that Brad was the student who made the request. He requested that the class do two written responses instead of one and she agreed and had the class do this for this week. She did not tell the class who made the request, only that it had come from a student. I could see from the expression on Brad's face that he was pleased that his teacher had listened to him. When asked about this situation during the observation, he explained that the reason he wanted to do more of this reading work was that it was his opinion and he could not get the answers wrong which made him feel good (Obs.3, 2/12/04).

Throughout the observations, the teacher spoke to Brad very respectfully, often walking over to talk to him individually. As he sat right in front of her desk I witnessed them having conversations frequently throughout the day. He raised his hand to respond to questions and the teacher's responses to his answers, right or wrong, were respectful and positive. During a discussion on the reading pages Brad said that the advantage of being a spy is that you have gun, but the disadvantage is that you could get shot. The teacher said that this might be true, but that talk about violent issues was not appropriate at school. Later in this same conversation, Brad made a comment about Iraq and another student said that he was racist, and the teacher said that you couldn't call someone racist without backing it with facts (Ob. 3, 2/12/04, p.7). In both instances, the teacher responded to Brad's comments with respect, and in the second instance, even though she may not have agreed with his comment about Iraq, she defended him and did not allow the situation to turn into a negative discussion.

Not only did the observations in the classroom reveal the positive relationship Brad had with his teacher, but they offered a view of the type of student Brad was with his classroom teacher, which was quite dissimilar to the type of student he was with other teachers. Observations in other teacher's classes showed Brad in a very different light. In the library (Ob. 8, 3/2/04) for example, Brad's behaviour and attitude were very different right from the start of the class. The library teacher made a seating arrangement based on the past behaviours of the students in the classroom and Brad was sitting at the back of the room, with three other students. Within the first five minutes of class the teacher gave Brad a warning about his behaviour, and five minutes later, she wrote his name on the board. I did not notice any overt behaviour at this time. The more the teacher tried to control him, with verbal and non-verbal cues, the more negative Brad's behaviour became. He spent the class making faces at other students, talking to a friend, playing hockey across the table with a pencil and an eraser, and folding paper airplanes. It was apparent from the start of this class that a negative relationship between Brad and the library teacher already existed as she seemed to be more on top of him than other students in the class. When asked about himself as a student in the library in the second interview, (BB Int. 2, 3/11/04, p.5) Brad said he was very social and he did not get much work done while in Library. He also said that Library was boring and if they could choose what to do and where to sit it would be much better.

This difference in Brad's behaviour in the library could be due to the negative relationship he had with the library teacher but there are other possibilities as well. It could be due to negative experiences he had in Library in the past leading to preconceived notions of what the library experience would be, thus influencing his

attitude. However, Brad had a negative view of teachers before coming to this school and yet he developed a positive relationship with his classroom teacher. It is also possible that, unlike the classroom where students had many choices in their learning, which were engaging to him, the Library was a more controlled environment, which was not engaging to Brad. Regardless of the reason, Brad behaved differently in the Library than he was in the classroom, but the Library was not the only example of this different behaviour in Brad.

It was also seen during an observation in the computer lab with a teacher-on-call (Ob. 5, 2/23/04). From the start of this computer class, Brad's behaviour was very different from his regular classroom behaviour. Throughout the 45-minute class, the teacher had to ask for his attention a number of times. At first, he refused to complete the assignment, regardless of the fact that he could choose a partner and topic for the assignment. He talked back to the teacher, laughed at her when she asked him to sit down, ignored her instructions when she told him not to print something, and in the end he walked out of the lab saying, "What the fuck was that?" (Ob. 5, 2/23/04). This was very different from any of the behaviours I witnessed in the classroom with his regular teacher. It seemed that although Brad spoke of choice as a motivating factor, in this case, choice was not enough to influence his engagement in the task. It is possible the lack of relationship with the teacher-on-call and a potential desire to please his peers, had a stronger influence on Brad's behaviours.

In sum, it was apparent, from the interviews and the observations that Brad behaved in different ways in different contexts. The differing relationships Brad had with his teachers may have influenced his engagement and behaviour in school. For instance,

the relationship with the teacher at his previous school and with the librarian and the teacher-on-call in his present school resulted in less engagement in his academic work and an increase in negative behaviours. When asked about his relationship with the library teacher Brad said that he would be better in Library if she let him sit where he wanted and if they did not have to do so many worksheets (BB Int. 2, 3/11/04, p.1). His comments were connected to choice within the classroom rather than with the relationship with the teacher. He did not have any negative comments to say about the teacher, just about how the class was organized and what the students had to do.

In contrast with his behaviour in the library and with a Teacher-on-Call, with his classroom teacher, Brad wanted to learn and complete his work, and he listened and talked respectfully. Not only did this positive relationship seem to influence his behaviour in the classroom but it also may have influenced his willingness and desire to do well and try his best on his assignments. When asked about the expectations his classroom teacher had for him Brad said that she wanted him to work hard, be respectful of others and property, and try his best. He worked to live up to these expectations when he was in the classroom with her. The fact that the classroom teacher had a democratic classroom approach, where she listened to student requests and implemented them whenever possible and provided choice in student learning, demonstrated the respect that she had for the students. Brad responded well to this approach and demonstrated a completely different attitude with the classroom teacher than with the library teacher who had a more directive, authoritarian approach with the students.

Goals

Brad discussed the goals that he sets for himself in both interviews. The goals he discussed were associated with both behaviour and grades. In relation to behaviour Brad said his main goal was to "not get in trouble so much" (BB Int. 1, 2/9/04, p.20) by trying to avoid situations that get him angry, like people calling him or his friends names. In an attempt to achieve this goal, Brad said when situations made him angry he just tried to ignore them and not react so he would not get in trouble.

The other goals Brad set for himself related to behaviour were connected to his goal of getting better grades on his next report card. When asked how he would try to achieve this goal Brad suggested that he would put more effort into his work, study more, and listen more in class. Brad said he would increase his effort in his work by going "above and beyond" the expectations and always trying his hardest (BB Int.2, 3/11/04, p.3). He said he needed to study more for tests by studying a few days before, at home and at school, and by studying the specific information that he needed to know for the test. He did not expand on his goal of listening more, but during observations, it was noted that Brad sat in front of the teacher's desk, against a wall, facing the front board. He was placed there by the teacher and he did not object to this seating arrangement because Brad said that he could be more focused and get more work done if he was not by his friends. In this location, Brad was not able to talk to his closest friends, who were sitting on the other side of the room, and other than fiddling with items on his desk, he seemed to be listening and participating in class discussions.

Another goal Brad set for himself each day was to get all of his work done during the day so he did not have homework (BB Int.2, 3/11/04, p.3). He said he tried to use all

the free moments he had during the day to finish his work so he could have free time after school. Brad did not feel his teacher had any effect on the goals he set in school. However, when he talked about his report card in the second interview he said he liked meeting with his teacher about his report cards because she told him what he could do to get better marks for the next term.

When asked about his goals for high school Brad expressed that he wanted to get to class on time, get his work done, try to get good marks, and do the best he could. Brad believed that getting a higher mark in personal planning this year, by keeping a neater binder, focusing more on his work, getting his tests signed by his parents, and doing a project for extra marks, would help him with his goal for the following year (BB Int. 2, 3/11/04, p.6).

Grades

Grades were another topic that came up several times in both interviews with Brad. When asked why he chose the partners he did for the social studies project, Brad said that he chose partners who were smart and whom he worked well with so he could get a good mark. In the end, although he expected a "B" for this project he received an "A" and was very happy (BB Int.2, 3/11/04, p.9). Brad said that good grades made him feel good about what he did at school and that he liked to get better grades than his best friend because otherwise his friend "rubs it in his face" (BB Int.1, 2/9/04, p.23). From this statement, it is unclear whether the grade or his friend was the main motivation for Brad's positive feelings regarding good grades. When asked to think about something that made him feel good this year Brad's response was, "When I got a 93% on my math test…because I got the highest score ever this time" (BB Int.2, 3/11/04, p.2). In both

interviews, Brad relayed that grades had a large impact on how he felt about himself and the work he did at school. He believed that effort had a direct connection with the grade he would receive on something and suggested that if he did not do well on an assignment or a test he could always put more effort in to bring up his mark. Brad mentioned that his teacher was always willing to give him suggestions to improve his work and when he did improve his work it "heightens expectations" that he has for himself in the future (BB Int.2, 3/11/04, p.5). When asked to further explain this Brad said that if he could bring his mark up to an "A" once, then he could get good marks again.

One specific grade-related goal Brad set for himself, during the semester of data collection, was to improve his mark in Personal Planning. He believed he could do this by doing neater work, having his parents sign his tests, and being ready for binder inspections (BB Int.2, 3/11/04, p.6). Brad seemed unaware that a large part of his Personal Planning mark was related to his behaviour and attitude both in and out of class. Thus, this was not one of the strategies he believed would improve his mark and the behaviours that he demonstrated outside of the classroom could have affected the mark he ultimately received. In this case, Brad's efforts were misdirected and he would likely be disappointed and confused if his mark did not improve in this subject area.

Although in both interviews Brad said grades were important to him and expressed that they made him feel "good", he also suggested in both interviews that he did not think students should be marked with letter grades. In his words,

> I do not think that there should be grades or anything cause that is just pushing kids to either feel bad of themselves or good of themselves. And think highly. I think that it should just be an award that they get. Like no A's no B's or anything, just good work, or try harder or something. Like I

think that in class if isn't like A or B or 100% it should be like more of a positive thing (BB Int.1, 2/9/04, p.5).

This excerpt from the second interview further explains Brad's views on grades and report cards:

AH: How do you feel about report cards?

BB: I don't feel good about them because I don't think you should be marked by A's and B's and that.

AH: So, what do you think would be better?

BB: I think the N's and S's and G would be better.

AH: So, a letter grade but just not A's and B's.

BB: Yeah.

AH: So, why do you think that that would be better?

BB: Because then there won't be, like say I got a C+ in math and Cody got a C-, it would be both an S on the report card and then he wouldn't feel down and I wouldn't feel down if he did better than me (BB Int.2, 3/11/04, p.4).

Even though Brad did not agree with letter grades in their present state, his suggestions for alternatives were also a grading system. This could be because he has always been graded in one form or another and he could not think of another effective way to evaluate or respond to student learning. However, he could have suggested a different letter grade system because over time the letters A, B, C have elicited specific positive or negative feelings in Brad and G, S, N have not elicited these same feelings. Brad also suggested that one reason letter grades are not good is that they set up a comparison between him and other students.

Brad obviously had conflicting views of grades in school. Regardless of whether he agreed with them or not it was apparent that grades effected his engagement, specifically regarding the expectations he had for himself and the goals that he set for himself in school.

View of Others

It was clear that Brad cared about what others thought of him. This was apparent in the behaviours he demonstrated with his classroom teacher and in his comments regarding grades. Brad mentioned that his teacher had high expectations of him, which he worked to meet, and he felt good when she complimented him. He also cared what other students in the classroom thought of him, specifically in relation to the grades he received. Brad relayed that the potential of getting a low mark made him uncomfortable, especially if other students knew about it. Additionally, he mentioned that receiving higher marks than his friends made him feel "good".

Although he did not want others to know his grades, Brad believed that his classmates respected him. He suggested that the fact that other students did not call him names, even though they called other students in the class names, was evidence of their respect (BB Int.1, 2/9/04, p.9). Although he believed his classmates respected him, in the second interview Brad expressed that when working in a group he would like to work with his friends because they would not make fun of him if he did something wrong (BB Int.2, 3/11/04, p.11). Brad said that his friendships were very important to him "because if I didn't have friends I probably wouldn't be who I am. I would be a totally different person" (BB Int.1, 2/9/04, p.9). When asked how his friends affected who he was Brad was unable to come up with an answer. However, further in the interview, Brad

mentioned that he liked to be funny and make jokes because his friends liked that and he wanted to make them laugh (BB Int.1, 2/9/04, p.10). It seemed as though Brad used humour because he believed his friends liked it, and the reactions he received from the students, such as laughter, may have encouraged him.

Although Brad believed his classmates liked his sense of humour and respected him, in the second interview Brett mentioned that he would never want to work with Brad because he fools around too much and he would not get much work done (BK Int. 2, 3/8/04, p.11) and Derek said that he did not like Brad and he thought he was noisy, fooled around too much, and he never wanted to work with him (DF Int. 2, 3/8/04, p.12). Although it was unclear whether Brad considered Derek and Brett to be his friends, he ate lunch with Derek and other boys in the coatroom during observations, and was evidently unaware of the negative perceptions Derek and Brett had of him as he thought all of his classmates respected him.

Rewards and Consequences

Brad spoke about the consequences of his behaviour in the first interview when he recalled his memories of his past schools. He described that he had been suspended seven times, with the first time being in grade three (BB Int. 1, 2/9/04, p.3). Brad said his suspensions were a result of "not making smart decisions" and for the most part, he believed they were justified. However, during the year he was with the teacher that he believed treated him so horribly he did not think the consequences he received were fair or just and he did not think the consequences changed his behaviour.

Brad also described a consequence that he received for inappropriate behaviour this year. He got three strikes against him for misbehaviour and he could not go to Outdoor Education Camp with the rest of the Grade seven students. When asked to describe the misbehaviours that caused him to receive the strikes he said he could not recall what he did. Brad said that he was mad that he could not go to camp but he was also "relieved because I did not have to worry about not being myself and being extra good and special" (BB Int.1, 3/9/04, p.15). He said he did not regret his behaviour because even though sometimes he made stupid decisions at least he could be himself and he did not have to act like a different person. In this instance, the consequence of not going to camp did not affect Brad's behaviour. It is also possible that in thinking about the situation this way Brad was rationalizing away his disappointment about missing the camp with his classmates.

As the discussion continued Brad expressed that not only was he glad that he did not have to pretend to be someone else to go to camp, but because he was not going to camp he was able to spend the weekend with his Dad. Brad mentioned it was his Dad's birthday that weekend, and he did not want to miss it. Thus, it seemed that the reward of seeing his Dad that weekend had more of an effect on Brad's behaviour than the so-called reward of going to camp with his classmates. Brad did not have any negative comments to say about his teacher regarding this instance.

In addition to Brad's conversations about consequences in school, he also talked about rewards. Brad mentioned that each month the teacher rewarded the students who completed all of their homework with a movie and he found that motivating (BB Int.2, 3/11/04, p.7). He also described a point system in class where rows could earn points for

good behaviour. He did not like this system because he believed the students all acted "cheesy", sitting up straight with fake smiles in order to earn points and he did not want to do that (BB Int.1, 2/9/04, p.11).

It was apparent that the respect and positive reinforcement he received from his teacher were rewards for Brad. When asked to recall a time that his teacher made him feel good Brad said that she congratulated him on a math test which made him feel good (BB Int.2, 3/1/04, p.8). Additionally, as Brad suggested that he wanted to complete his work quickly so he had time to read fantasy books during the day and have less homework after school, free time was also a reward for Brad. As these examples demonstrate, Brad seemed to be much more motivated by positive means, such as reward from verbal reinforcements, positive relationships, or free time, than he was by negative consequences (BB Int.1, 2/9/04, p.21).

In sum, Brad's engagement and behaviour in school appeared to be directly related to both contextual and relational factors. The relationships in Brad's life seemed to have a powerful effect on his engagement in school. The positive relationship with his teacher this year had a positive influence on his engagement in school and his belief in himself. The influence of this relationship did not, however, cross contextual lines, as Brad's behaviours and engagement changed drastically when he was in the library or with a teacher-on-call. His relationship with his father also had an effect on his behaviour and engagement in school as well, as was seen with Outdoor Education Camp example.

Additionally, rewards had more of an effect on Brad's engagement and behaviour than punishments did. However, not all rewards motivated Brad. He was motivated by

free time, where he could choose to play video games or read, and by the time that he had to spend with his Dad, which were very personal for him, but he was not motivated by the class points system which he did not consider fair.

Brad had a relatively positive opinion of himself. He came across as a confident person who believed he could accomplish whatever he set his mind to. He believed that his effort had a large effect on the outcomes of his assignments and he thought he had the ability to reach the goals he set for himself. Although Brad did not agree with letter grades, he believed they were important and he worked to improve his marks and made choices based on his desire to receive high marks.

In keeping with Brad's definition of motivation as something that drives you and keeps you going, it seemed that the biggest drive for Brad was the relationship he had with his teacher which influenced other aspects of his engagement in school. Contextual factors, such as the options and choices Brad had within his classroom reinforced the positive and respectful relationship he had with his teacher, as he perceived himself as having more power and control over his learning and environment. Additionally, this might have given him more confidence when it came to setting realistic goals and expectations for himself. In turn, Brad's increased confidence may have contributed to his motivation to complete his classroom work to the best of his ability, thus influencing his school engagement.

Brett

Brett was a student who enjoyed helping others and who believed his classmates liked and respected him. Both extrinsic and intrinsic factors influenced Brett's school

engagement. His grades and the effort he chose to put into his work, the goals he set, the social aspects of school, and the relationships he had with his teachers all had an effect on his engagement in school.

Grades and Effort

Brett believed grades were important for his future because if he had good grades he could get a better education, which was essential because he wanted to be an architect (BK Int.1, 2/10/04, p.8). Brett thought he was somewhat of a perfectionist and he set high standards for himself. He talked about how his grades had gone down a bit in the second part of the year, which he attributed to spending too much time playing video games on the computer. Brett believed he needed to put more effort into his schoolwork and spend less time on video games in order to bring up his grades.

Brett also knew when he worked on his own he earned higher marks than when he worked in groups. When he had the choice, he chose to work alone. He talked about a social studies project where he had to work in a group. The group received a C+ on the project, which he believed was a "good mark in some people's eyes" (BK Int.2, 3/8/04, p.9). Brett was sure if he worked on his own, he would have received a higher mark. He thought he did his best, but his partners rushed their work and did not colour neatly, which he believed brought down the mark. Brett thought presentation was very important when you handed in your work and if he were able to he would have fixed the assignment before it was handed it in to get a better mark.

Brett made a direct connection between the effort he put into his work and his grades. He said if he got a "bad" grade on an assignment he knew it was because he did

not put enough effort into it. Brett talked about his social studies and science tests, which

he did not study for. He said, "I didn't do good on some of the social studies tests, so I

don't feel good about that because I never really studied and so I guess it was just a waste

of paper" (BK Int.2, 3/8/04, p.4). On the other hand, Brett felt good about his writer's

workshop this year. He reported,

> ...I felt good about that because I did a really hard job on it and I think
> that I am going to get a really good grade on it. So far the teacher likes it,
> just the presentation, it took me a really long time, not to mention it looks
> nice and I worked on it until late in the night (BK Int.2, 3/8/04, p.2).

Brett felt good when he put effort into his work and when he knew he tried his

best on an assignment. Although he previously stated grades were very important for his

future and he set high standards for himself, he later reported that the effort he put into

his projects was more important than the mark he received. In his words,

> BK: More important to me is how I feel about it cause there might be a
> project that I don't really like but I get a really high mark on it and I don't
> feel good about it anyways, but then there's ones that I feel good about
> and then I get a low mark but I still feel good about it.
>
> AH: So what makes you feel good about those ones do you think?
>
> BK: Just because of the effort and time that I put in, like more than others.
> So the longer it takes for me, it makes me feel more better.
>
> AH: If you didn't feel good about something but you got a good mark,
> how come you don't feel good about that mark?
>
> BK: Well, it's just that the project, maybe I did it really quick and I got a
> good mark for it, but really it's not something that I put my full effort and
> stuff into so I don't really feel as good about it (BK Int.2, 3/8/04, p.2).

Although Brett said grades were important to him it was also evident from his

comments that the effort he put into his work and how he felt about it was also important.

However, in contradiction to his statements in the first interview, in the second interview Brett suggested that even if he felt good about an assignment before he handed it in, if he got a low mark he would feel bad. When asked to expand on this Brett suggested he might have received a lower mark because he did not put enough effort into the assignment in the first place (BK Int.2, 3/8/04, p.2). Even though Brett believed he had put enough effort in before he handed an assignment in, in this case the grade he received had a more powerful effect on his feelings.

Brett also suggested that he felt good when he got a high mark because he knew grades were vital for his future. Brett believed math was the most important subject in school and he wanted to keep his math grades higher than his other subjects. The improvements Brett made in math throughout the year were one reason for the value he placed on math. Brett said, "I guess from a long time ago I used to be really bad at it and now I have gotten really good at it so now I can always be good at it and stay good at it" (BK Int.1, 2/10/04, p.9). The success Brett saw in math influenced his engagement in the subject and contributed to his desire to maintain the higher level he achieved. Brett seemed to have a good balance between the value he placed on his grades and the value he placed on his efforts and this value had some influence on the goals Brett set.

Goals and Personal Interest

When asked about report cards Brett said he believed the first and second report cards of the year were important because the teacher would suggest things he could do to improve his work for next time. He also thought the final report card was useful because it was a review of what he was good at and what he needed to work on and from this he could set goals for the following year (BK Int.2, 3/8/04, p.4). As previously mentioned,

Brett had high expectations related to grades, particularly in math. Thus, he set goals for himself each morning to work hard on his projects so he could get good grades. Other than grades, his goals typically connected to the neatness of his handwriting and his schoolwork and to completing his work in class so he would have less homework. Brett tried to remind himself not to "rush, rush, rush" and to take his time to make his work neat. He said he got frustrated sometimes because "the project is nice but the handwriting is awful" (BK Int.1, 2/10/04, p.10). Additionally, Brett set goals while completing his homework. For example, he would watch a show on television, then turn the television off and do some work before he would allow himself to watch television again. Brett said sometimes he "loses his goal from fooling around with his brother", but that was why he tried to finish as much of his work at school as possible (BK Int.2, 3/8/04, p.7).

In addition to setting goals related to work, Brett also set goals related to learning. Brett found it motivating when his teacher taught him new things. In his words,

> The best thing she does that motivates me is by teaching me. The more she teaches the more I get motivated to work to learn new things.... Say if we came to a new chapter in math that we have never learned about. I want to be the one, one of the ones who get a good grade on the test and have a good grade for that chapter of Math (BK Int.1, 2/10/04, p.9).

Brett also described the water unit in science and the social studies unit on Egypt. He liked learning about both of these topics because he had not studied them before and he thought they were interesting. In the first interview Brett said he enjoyed the project in social studies because he thought it was a fun activity and he wanted to get a good grade on it (BK Int.1, 2/10/04, p.9). As previously mentioned however, in the end he was disappointed with the mark he received because his goal was to get a higher grade. In this case Brett's interest in the subject and his goal of getting a high mark were not

enough to guarantee him the mark he wished to receive. As mentioned Brett believed he did not achieve his goal on this project because he was required to work with a partner, whom he thought did not put in enough effort which resulted in a low grade.

Brett's goals and personal interest in a subject seemed to influence his school engagement. In math, he did well and began to enjoy doing the work. Thus, he set a goal to continue working at the high level he achieved, and was very engaged during math lessons. This engagement was seen during class observations as well. Brett had his hand up for every question the teacher asked during math class and seemed to be very focused on the discussion. Additionally, Brett was able to choose the topic he researched in social studies, which assisted him in being motivated to complete the project with his partner.

Social Aspects of School

Brett described himself as an outgoing student who liked to help others. He joined the student council as the class representative because he enjoyed planning social activities and going around the school conducting surveys and contests. As Brett only came to Meadow Creek Elementary in grade six, it took him time to make friends. He believed by grade seven, he was pretty much friends with everyone. In the classroom, Brett thought his classmates liked and respected him. He considered himself to be funny and he liked to make jokes and make people laugh. He mentioned two good friends, Craig and Cory. Brett talked about how Craig introduced him to computer games and helped him with all of the tricks. He sat with Craig in class and he was proud of the fact that when other students were moved for being too social, he and Craig were still able to sit together. He said they talked a lot but no one ever noticed (BK Int.1, 2/10/04, p5). He

liked sitting with Craig because even though he taught him the computer games that distracted him from doing his work, Craig worked hard in class and it motivated Brett to work hard too.

During observations, Brett socialized with Craig most of the time and he did not socialize often with other students in the class. When he did, his other classmates did not always treat him respectfully. During one observation in particular one student said, "Brett, I smell you. You must be pretty bad if someone can smell you. Just kidding". Derek called him a "freak" and Brett ate his lunch with Craig while all of the other boys in the classroom ate lunch in the coatroom (Obs.2, 2/9/04). Brett did not respond to either student about their disrespectful comments. In fact, even though Brett's first interview was the day following this observation, he did not say a negative comment about any of his classmates, nor did he relay any situations where he felt left out or treated disrespectfully.

Brett relayed that if he had a choice he would like to sit in groups as opposed to rows. He suggested he would like to sit with two close friends and two other students whom he was not good friends with so he would not get too distracted when he tried to work (BK Int.1, 2/10/04, p.6). During group projects, Brett liked to choose his partners. Most of the time, he preferred to work with someone who was not a close friend because he could be more focused. He said,

> I like it if she gives us a choice because there is some people I like to work with because they are good maybe at research and I am good at like drawing and fine tuning stuff and then there is some projects I just like to do by myself because I like certain things to be done (BK Int.1, 2/10/04, p.5).

However, in the second interview Brett suggested choosing to work with Craig on his socials project was not such a good idea because they did not do as well as he hoped to. The social aspects of Brett's school life seemed to have some influence on his school engagement. He knew what worked for him and tried to make choices to help him stay focused and reach the goals he had set. Brett seemed to have a high self-image and if the comments by his classmates affected this, he did not show it.

Teacher relationships

Brett described his teacher as someone who was nice, did not yell at students and was always willing to help students when they needed it. He was comfortable asking his teacher for help with his schoolwork and he relayed a specific example of this regarding his writer's workshop project. In the first interview, Brett reported writing stories as the most challenging part of school, as he found it difficult to keep all of the ideas straight and to finish the story so it made sense (BK Int.1, 2/10/04, p.2). It seemed his teacher had an influence on his engagement and ultimate success in his writer's workshop project because he relayed how she helped him come up with thoughts for his stories (BK Int.1, 2/10/04, p.4). In the second interview, Brett said the writer's workshop was one of the projects that made him feel good this year, which was quite contrary to his previous comments about writing being challenging (BK Int.2, 3/8/04, p.2). Overcoming the challenge of writing stories and the assistance from his teacher both seemed to have an effect on his engagement in this project and the positive feelings Brett had about his writing project when it was completed.

Brett also appreciated how his teacher tried to help him reach his goals. She tried to help him get his work done by reminding him when his work was due and offering to

help when he needed it (BK Int.2, 3/8/04, p.7). His expectations for himself were in line with the expectations he believed his teacher had for him. He said,

> She expects me to like get good grades, but to also be doing good in my subjects, to keep them not failing. She wants me to keep in line, she thinks I am a good student and she wants me to just make sure I do not fail (BK Int.1, 2/10/04, p.4).

He also believed his teacher thought he would always be a good student for other teachers and he would grow up to be smart.

In addition to the positive relationship Brett had with his grade seven teacher, he described his grade three teacher as his favourite teacher. He was also in her class for grade four so Brett knew her very well. Brett said she did not yell at the class when they were in trouble, she would just give them a consequence. When students did something good, she gave rewards. Brett also discussed how she taught the class Braille which he enjoyed and he mentioned that she liked to challenge the students. For example, she challenged the class to count the number of pebbles on the playground and Brett said he worked hard on that and he and his best friend tried to come up with ways to figure out the problem. They got half way through and the school year ended (BK Int.1, 2/10/04, p.3). It seemed that the respect he felt from his grade three and four teacher was similar to the respect he received from his grade seven teacher and in both instances Brett was challenged and engaged by many of the projects and activities the teachers provided.

Although Brett described his relationships with his teachers in a positive way and it seemed they contributed to his school engagement, his behaviours with the library teacher and the teacher-on-call were the same as those with his classroom teacher. Brett talked about the library teacher and said she yelled at the class and did not let the students

sit where they wanted. He also talked about how the class got in trouble for how they acted in the library sometimes (BK Int.2, 3/8/04, p.1). Even though he described the teacher in a negative way, during observations Brett's behaviour in the library was similar to his classroom behaviours. He listened respectfully, contributed to the discussions, and completed the required work. Likewise, with a teacher-on-call Brett's attitude and behaviour did not seem any different from that with his classroom teacher. In fact, when asked about working with a teacher-on-call Brett said that sometimes it was fun because the teacher-on-call did different things that made the day interesting, like sharing riddles or playing games. He also mentioned that at times, the class got in trouble from the classroom teacher because they did not do everything the teacher-on-call wanted, but sometimes he believed the class deserved it (BK Int.2, 3/8/04, p.6). Regardless, Brett believed his behaviours were the same whether the classroom teacher, the library teacher, or a teacher-on-call was teaching and the observations confirmed this belief.

It was evident through the interviews and the observations that Brett thought highly of teachers and he appreciated it when teachers did not yell at students, when they were willing to help him reach his goals and when they challenged him to learn. Brett's teachers seemed to have some influence on his school engagement, particularly when it came to challenging himself. This was seen with the writer's workshop project where Brett found success in a project that he initially found extremely challenging and he attributed this success to his hard work and his teacher's assistance. When asked at the end of the interview process what a teacher could do to help him be motivated in school, Brett responded, "Maybe have more conferences like this and just like talk about how

like I can do better in class" (BK Int.2, 3/8/04, p.12). This reconfirms the value Brett

placed on his teachers.

Brett's school engagement seemed mostly influenced by individual factors, such

as the goals he set for himself, the goals he believed his teacher had for him, and the

grades he hoped to achieve. His relationship with his teacher was a positive one and she

provided him with the challenges and the support he needed to be more engaged in

school. Although from observations it seemed the social aspects of Brett's schooling

might have had a negative influence on his school engagement, he did not think so. In

fact, he believed his relationships at school were positive and that at times his friends

helped him to be more engaged. When he knew his friends would distract him, Brett had

enough confidence to work independently. Individual factors, such as the goals Brett set,

and the effort he put into his assignments seemed to have just as much of an effect on his

school engagement as the external factors, such as grades, and relational factors, such as

his teachers and classmates had. In actuality, Brett's perception regarding his efforts, his

goals, his grades, his classmates and his teachers seemed to have the most influence on

his school engagement.

Sara

Sara was academically oriented, athletic, outgoing, friendly with all teachers and

students and the president of the student council. Her dad was the assistant basketball

coach and her parents were very involved with the school. Throughout both interviews,

Sara came across as a well-spoken, confident girl who was very goal oriented. When

asked what she thought about school Sara said, "It's really fun, I like doing work cause I

like a challenge in school" (SP Int.1, 2/9/04, p.1). Many of her comments focused around

academics and the high standards she set for herself in academics and athletics. Sara set

a variety of goals for herself each day, which seemed to guide much of her school life.

Goals

The goals Sara set for herself related to her physical activities, her future, and her

grades and schoolwork. When asked what she liked about school, the first thing Sara

mentioned was physical education (PE). Sara enjoyed physical activity and one goal she

set this year was to get better at sports (SP Int.1, 2/9/04, p.4). Sara had played on the

school volleyball and basketball teams since grade four and participated in track and field

and cross-country each year. Sara received a school award for running in grade five and

she played basketball not only with the school, but in summer basketball camps as well.

Between PE classes, morning runs with her class, and playing basketball at recess and

lunch, physical activity was a big part of Sara's day and she believed it was an important

part of her life. Thus, she set a goal to continue working hard at sports. Sara reported

that sports were important because, "I learn to have a great attitude, winning or losing. I

learn to be aggressive and stuff like that" (SP Int.1, 2/9/04, p.11). Sports were only one

part of Sara's school life. She also worked hard on her academics, while always keeping

her future in mind.

Sara believed the purpose of school was to help you learn for the future (SP Int.1,

2/9/04, p.2). She set a goal related to her immediate future, high school. Sara believed

the teachers in high school would have different expectations therefore she decided she

should start doing work this year that would be at a high school level so she would be

prepared (SP Int.2, 3/9/04, p.8). She planned to take two exams at that end of the school

year. One to get into honours English and the other for honours Math in grade eight.

Sara believed this would be a challenge and a great experience for her to take honours

classes and she hoped to get in (SP Int.2, 3/9/04, p.7). In the end, Sara took both exams

but did not get into either honours programs. As results were unknown until the end of

this school year, it was not possible to get Sara's feelings about them.

Sara also thought the grades she got in school were very important for her future.

She said,

> "If you get good grades then you can almost accomplish more. If you get
> a better degree in college or something than the better job you can get and
> it can be better than just working at a fast food restaurant. Like being a
> doctor is better than a waitress" (SP Int.1, 2/9/04, p.8).

Since grade four, Sara's goal had been to get B's and A's on all her report cards.

When asked why she thought it was important not to get anything lower than a B she

responded,

> SP: Um, because a C+ is good, like it is a good mark but on my report
> card, I have always been getting higher marks than that, and so if I stick to
> that I might do better. So if I get a C+ I might start slacking off more so I
> won't care if I get such a good grade.
>
> AH: So you think that the grades you get effect what you do?
>
> SP: Yeah, cause if you get an A, it almost inspires you to do more work
> and if you get a really bad mark, if you totally fail a test then it will make
> you feel bad and you will just want to stop it (SP Int.2, 2/9/04, p.3).

Grades had an impact not only on the effort Sara put into her work but also on

how she felt about herself. Sara said, "I feel good if I get a really good mark on my test

or something, or do a really good job on something" (SP Int.1, 2/9/04, p.8). She set high

expectations for herself and believed her teacher had high expectations for her as well.

Sara said her teacher had seen her work and knew what she was capable of doing and her

teacher expected her to get high marks (SP Int.1, 2/9/04, p.4). She thought that grades would tell teachers and students what they were good at which would help decide what their career might be. Sara saw grades and the future as interconnected and this view influenced her goal of achieving high grades, thus effecting her engagement in school.

During observations, Sara seemed to work hard and to be very self motivated. She worked independently on many assignments and specifically on an independent Math program. Additionally, she was very organized, with a divider for each subject in her binder, a planner to record her homework each day, and a very neat desk. This organization seemed to contribute to her school success. For example, with a long-term social studies assignment, Sara handed her assignment in a week early. Before handing in her poster, she double-checked to ensure she had met all of the criteria, which she had written on the back. While other students who finished their social studies assignments were socializing, Sara worked on her Math (Obs. 4, 2/16/04). She was already working at her own pace in Math and worked ahead of the rest of the class, yet when she had free time she chose to continue working on her Math. Sara liked the challenge of Math and she enjoyed working independently.

Sara worked hard to achieve the goals she set for herself. Her goal to get better at sports seemed to influence the choices she made at recess, lunch and after school. Her goals for her future affected the effort she put into her work each day and the high standards she set for herself regarding grades and work completion.

Challenge and Personal Interest

Sara reported, "I like doing work cause I like a challenge in school. So it's fun to do stuff I don't like doing sometimes, like math" (SP Int.1, 2/9/04, p.1). Sara worked at her own pace on an independent math program. She said, "I have been acing all my Math tests and so my teacher knows that if I get held back I won't be learning as much" (SP Int.2, 3/9/04, p.2). Sara liked this because when she had free time or when it was raining and nobody wanted to go outside to play sports, she would choose to work on math. She thought she was lucky because other students could not work ahead because they had to stay with the class (SP Int.2, 3/9/04, p.2). Sara said she did not always like math but although at times she found it hard, that is what made it fun. Sara hoped to get into the math honours class in grade eight and she studied and practiced to prepare for the entrance test. She said even though she heard the honours class was hard and most people did not like it, she thought it would be interesting and fun, so she wanted to try it anyway. She knew she could go back to regular math class in grade nine if she did not like the honours class (SP Int.2, 3/9/04, p.7).

In addition to a challenge, Sara's personal interest in a subject influenced her engagement. Just as with math, which Sara chose to do on her own time because she liked the challenge of it, she loved sports and always tried her best in PE and while playing sports at recess or lunch. Alternatively, Sara reported social studies as her least favourite subject. Sara did not think social studies was important for her future like math was and she did not find it that interesting. When asked if there was anything that would make social studies more interesting for her, Sara responded, "I don't think so, just like for reading, I like reading mysteries and if someone makes me read a biography or

something, I wouldn't like it at all. It's just not my thing" (SP Int.1, 2/9/04, p.2). Even

though Sara said she could not think of anything that would make social studies more

interesting, in one of her journals she wrote that social studies was the most important

thing she had done that week. When asked about this in the second interview, Sara

responded,

> "...the Socials, it was really fun because we got to draw and write about
> our favourite facts about Egypt and I did mine on Egyptian art. It was
> really fun to see what people drew and what info they came up with. I
> found out that Queen Aphrodite, her son in law was King Tut. Like, I
> never knew that before" (SP Int.2, 3/9/04, p.11).

Even though Sara did not like or value social studies, she was very engaged by

this project. It seemed that having a choice within this project to research something she

was interested in effected her engagement.

Sara knew her personal interest had an impact on her engagement in school. She

relayed an example where she only studied for five minutes for a test and she got 100%

on it. She attributed this to the fact she had a great interest in that subject (SP Int.2,

3/9/04, p.3). Sara said if she was not interested in a subject or a topic she had to study

harder for tests because she still wanted to do well. She always tried her best and worked

hard because her goal was to always receive good grades. Sara said, "I do my work when

it's needed and I always hand in my assignments" (SP Int.1, 2/9/04, p.9). Although

personal interest in a topic made it easier for her to do well, it seemed Sara did well no

matter what because she was motivated to always do her best and to achieve the high

standards she set. When asked what motivated her, Sara said she did not know but when

she got an assignment, she just started it right away and did not know why. She guessed

that she motivated herself.

The Teacher and Class Consequences

When asked to describe her teacher Sara responded,

> "She is really nice. She said she is old and haggard but she is not...She has a good attitude when she gets mad at people, she expresses it in a different way than other teachers do...And she just makes learning fun, by doing interesting assignments and stuff...She doesn't yell and point her finger. She just tells them to go in the hall and talks to them in a minute or something" (SP Int.1, 2/9/04, p3).

Sara thought her teacher had high expectations of her and expected her to do well and get good marks. When asked to describe a time her teacher made her feel good, Sara could not provide an example. However, when talking about the Poetry Café Sara said she read part of her story because her teacher said it was good and Sara said it made her feel good that her teacher liked her story (SP Int.2, 3/9/04, p.12). Even though Sara did not like talking in front of groups, she was happy to share her story because her teacher liked it and she hoped others would like it too. During the observation of the Poetry Café Sara seemed very confident, reading clearly and making eye contact with the audience. She was one of a few students that shared two pieces of writing, an excerpt from her story and a poem (Obs. 6, 2/26/04). Even though Sara did not like reading in front of groups, it seemed that the positive feedback she received from her teacher and her classmates influenced her engagement and her feelings in the Poetry Café reading.

Although Sara had a positive relationship with her teacher, this specific relationship did not seem to have much of an effect on her school engagement. Sara reported that she was the same student with all teachers. When asked to describe herself as a student she said, "...an average kid. Well I don't really call out, I raise my hand you know. I do my work when its needed and I always hand in my assignments" (SP Int.1,

2/9/04, p.9). She did not believe she acted any differently with her classroom teacher than with the library teacher or a teacher-on-call. During observations, Sara worked hard and was respectful with all teachers. For example, during the observation in the computer lab, with a Teacher-on-call (TOC), Sara worked very hard on her computer assignment (Obs.5, 2/23/04). In fact, she was away the day the class started the assignment and she completed the entire assignment during this computer class. The presence of the TOC did not seem to alter her engagement in her assignment.

Although Sara had a good relationship with her teacher, she did not always agree with the way she dealt student behaviour in the classroom. One example Sara discussed during her interview was when the teacher gave the class consequences for their behaviour with a Teacher-on-call. The whole class had to have a "waste of a day" where they did nothing fun and just did "busy" work all day. Sara said that even though she behaved for the TOC, she understood everyone had to have a consequence because the class was a community. She was fine with this every once in a while, but she did not think it was fair every time. Sara began to get frustrated as the year progressed as the people in the class continued to misbehave with TOCs and even though she was good, she still had to do the consequence (SP Int.2, 3/0/04, p.8). Another situation Sara discussed was the seating arrangement in the classroom. The teacher said if students were good they would be able to change seats, but some students in the class asked the teacher every day if they could change seats and the teacher got aggravated and gave in. Sara did not think this was fair because she tried to be good and did not ask to move and as a result had to sit beside someone she did not want to (SP Int.2, 3/9/04, p.10).

Sara also talked about how some students in the class who struggled with their work, like math, were able to play games to help them learn. She did not think this was fair and suggested the teacher should find a way to have all of the students play games to help them learn. She did not understand why, when she worked hard and completed her work the way the teacher assigned it, other people could do their work differently and still get credit for it. Additionally, Sara mentioned she was confused about her marks on her report cards because she kept track of her grades and should have received an 'A' in Language Arts. When she asked her teacher about this the response was that the teacher did not like to give many 'A' grades out in the first term. Sara did not agree with this and did not think it was fair but because another student had the same situation with her report card she decided she would just work harder next term to get an 'A' grade (SP Int.2, 3/9/04, p.6).

Regardless of Sara's beliefs about the classroom, including the negative aspects she discussed such as the class consequence she perceived as unfair, she demonstrated high levels of engagement. The goals and standards Sara set for herself seemed to have more of an influence on her engagement than the classroom environment or her relationships. Thus, the contextual and relational factors of Sara's education did not seem to have as much of an influence on her school engagement as individual factors, such as the goals and personal beliefs she had about her schooling.

Brenda

Throughout the two interviews, Brenda portrayed herself as a student who was willing to play the "school game" and do what she needed to do to get by but no more. Of all of the students in the study Brenda appeared to be the least engaged in the classroom.

However, she was very quiet about her disengagement and often, during my observations, it seemed as though Brenda was working, when in actuality she was writing notes, or doodling in her binder. The social aspects of school seemed to be the biggest factor influencing Brenda's motivation and engagement. The goals she set for herself and her future had a minor influence on her school engagement as well.

Socialization and Work Completion

Brenda referred to social aspects of school, such as being with her friends, talking with her classmates, and finishing her work to spend more time with friends frequently throughout both interviews. She described herself as a student who did some work but was mostly talking to other students (BE Int.1, 2/9/04, p.5). She said, "I guess I'd rather talk than do work" (BE Int. 2, 3/8/04, p.7). Brenda said that she would talk to anyone, even if she were not a good friend with him or her. As a result, her teacher moved her desk a number of times a week. Brenda said she did not mind having her desk moved because she could work with anyone, although she would prefer to work with her best friend Jayleen. When asked what she liked the most about school Brenda said that seeing her friends was the best part of school (BE Int. 1, 2/9/04, p.2), however she relayed that most of her friends were in high school and she had a couple of friends in the other grade seven class.

Brenda mentioned that in order to see her friends in the other class she would work quietly for 15 minutes and then ask the teacher if she could work in the hall. Initially, this strategy worked, however Brenda believed that her teacher caught on to her "hallway work" strategy as she did not let her go in the hall that often any more (BE Int.1, 2/9/04, p.9). During the period of data collection, Brenda only saw her friends in

the other class at recess and lunch. She was fine with this because she still had enough time to "hang out" and make plans for after school.

Although Brenda described herself as a student who talked all the time, during observations Brenda seemed to work quietly at her desk, typically with her binder on her lap. Furthermore, when asked about the subject she liked best in school Brenda said none of them but if her teacher said she could choose something to work on it would be Math because she could work on it alone (BE Int.1, 2/9/04, p.12). As Brenda stated earlier in the interview that Math was a subject she hated and found frustrating, (BE Int.1, 2/9/04, p.3) it seemed the only reason she suggested Math as her choice of subjects to work on was because she did not have to work with others. When Brenda did talk with other students, she was quiet and subtle and she did not seem to disturb others while doing it. One way Brenda communicated with other students during class time was by passing notes. During one observation, Brenda passed a note back and forth with another student at least 7 times during a 30-minute period. The note passing was quiet and the classroom teacher did not seem aware that it was occurring. If she was aware of the note passing, she did not say anything to Brenda or the other student (Obs. 4, 2/16/04).

While Brenda was quiet about the ways she socialized with other students, it was evidently an important part of her school day. During both interviews she stressed the importance of friendship and during observations the only times she seemed engaged were when she was trying to subtly pass notes to other students or when trying to be quiet so she could go into the hall to meet with her friends. Brenda seemed disengaged from much of the work. For instance, during class discussions she often looked down at her book in her lap and did not make voluntary contributions. Further, Brenda rarely offered

responses to any questions posed by the teacher. She almost seemed to disappear in the classroom setting.

Interestingly, although Brenda described herself as a social person who would talk to anyone, during two observations where time was built into the day for students to share their work with others, Brenda was unprepared and left her work at home, which led to her working independently. The action of leaving her work at home contradicted the goal Brenda set for herself each day of having her work ready. Thus, it seemed that although Brenda claimed to be very social, she was not comfortable sharing her academic work with others as she typically left her work at home.

Goals

When asked if she set goals for herself each day Brenda said her main goal was to get to school on time and to have her work ready (BE Int.1, 2/9/04, p.9; Int. 2, 3/8/04, p.3). When asked why she thought getting to school on time was important Brenda responded, "So I don't get in trouble at home for my report card when it has a bunch of lates on it" (BE Int. 2, 3/8/04, p.5). It seemed that Brenda's motivation for setting this goal in the first place was tied to consequences received at home. Only when asked if there were any other reasons for getting to school on time did Brenda suggest it was to get started on her work right away so she would not have as much homework.

Brenda seemed to struggle with her goal of having her work ready each day. During the first interview, Brenda mentioned that she misplaced a major writing assignment, which contained a number of written works she accumulated throughout the term. She stated she was "mad" at herself for losing the work and she knew she would

"not get that good of a mark on it" because she rushed when re-doing the assignment (BE Int. 1, 2/9/04, p.9). This was a major project for her to lose, and given the goal Brenda had, to have her work ready, and the fact that she kept all of her work in a binder that she took back and forth from school each day, it was unclear why the assignment was lost. Brenda said she had "no clue" what happened to the assignment.

Later, during observations of the Poetry Café, Brenda shared one of her poems from the re-done writing assignment (Obs. 6, 2/26/04). It was called "Black" and it was about 5 lines long. She looked down at the floor and spoke very softly during the reading. During the second interview with her, Brenda mentioned that she did not want to read the poem in front of the group, as she hated talking in front of people. As a result, she chose the shortest piece she had written because the teacher made her read something. It was possible that Brenda misplaced her writer's workshop assignment because she did not want to read one of her poems and she hoped that misplacing her work would get her out of this requirement. In the end Brenda had to redo her writer's workshop assignment and share a poem anyway. This was not the only instance during the period of data collection that Brenda did not have her work ready.

During an observation where the students were reading and editing each other's speeches Brenda worked on re-doing her writer's workshop instead. When asked why she was not working on her speech with her classmates Brenda said her speech was at home so she worked on her writer's workshop as an alternative to participating in the group editing process. Given that both the writer's workshop assignment and her speech required Brenda to share her work with other students, the fact Brenda did not like talking in front of others could be the reason for the lack of motivation to have the assignments

ready. However, as previously mentioned, this contradicts Brenda's earlier statements that she would talk to and work with anyone. Even though socially she felt comfortable with her classmates, it seemed that when academics were involved she was less engaged and hesitant to share her work. In both cases, it seemed social factors had more of an effect on Brenda's engagement, or lack of engagement, in the activities than the goal of having her work ready.

Grades and the Future

Brenda had conflicting ideas about grades. On the one hand, she said she was fine with getting C+ grades because she knew she tried her best. On the other hand, she said if she decided to go to university she would need to try harder to get better marks (BE Int.1, 2/9/04, p.10). Brenda expressed, "Well, if you want to go to university you should probably put a lot of effort into it to get good marks, but you still put effort into it anyway even if you're not. But I still think it's more important if you're going to university than if you're not" (BE Int.1, 2/9/04, p.14).

Brenda referred to grades and the future as two aspects of school that were closely connected. She mentioned that deciding if you wanted to go to college or not was the most important part of school. When asked if she thought grades were important, Brenda responded, "Well, I guess if I want to go to University I've got to try hard to get really good grades and stuff, but other than that not really" (BE Int.1, 2/9/04, p.13). Although Brenda said that she did not really think grades were important, when asked to recollect something she did this year that made her feel good she recalled a time when she passed a math test after failing three or four tests earlier in the year. She said this made her feel good because she did not want to receive an 'I', Incomplete, on her report card (BE Int.2,

3/8/04, p.1). Of all of the aspects of school that could of made her feel good this year Brenda chose to share one related to grades, and Math, her most frustrating and hated subject. When asked why she thought she passed this test Brenda said that the topic was just easier than the others were and she did not feel that she did anything differently.

It seemed that Brenda was only engaged enough to do the minimum that needed to be done to pass and achieve satisfactory grades on her report card. It would be interesting to see how Brenda's engagement changes when and if she decides to go to university. Regarding her immediate future, Brenda said she did not want to go to high school next year because it would be too much work and there were too many teachers to worry about (BE Int.2, 3/8/04, p.4).

Teacher Relationship

Brenda did not seem to be as reliant on her teacher as Brad was. She liked her teacher and thought she was nice, energetic, and happy but when asked if she could think of a time when her teacher made her feel good, Brenda said she could not (BE Int.2, 3/8/04, p.7). Brenda felt comfortable with the teacher and was willing to talk to her if she had a problem with people in the classroom, but she did not like going to her for help with schoolwork. Brenda said she did not talk to her teacher that much, but when she did talk to the teacher about social issues Brenda believed she had good suggestions and sometimes the teacher would talk to the whole class to try to help them. Brenda said, "well, she talks to the class about it and tells us what she might do and stuff to help us to keep it from happening again" (BE Int.1, 2/9/04, p.13). In relation to schoolwork, Brenda said she would ask a friend for help before her teacher because her teacher would just ask her why she was not paying attention. Additionally, Brenda suggested that her teacher

just made things more confusing when she tried to help her, specifically in Math where she suggested alternate ways of doing the problem, which confused Brenda more (BE Int.1, 2/9/04, p.3).

During observations, Brenda's behaviour and engagement seemed the same with all teachers. In the library, Brenda sat with her friends and seemed to be listening and doing the required work. With the Teacher on Call Brenda worked hard on her computer assignment and in fact, she seemed further ahead than many of the other students. However, she listened to her CD player while working, which she would not do in the classroom (Obs. 5, 2/23/04).

Although Brenda did not feel her teacher had any effect on her school life, she did talk about how much more she liked her teacher this year than last year. Brenda said the teacher last year yelled at the students, asked them to be quiet all the time, and had them write paragraphs when they misbehaved, which Brenda did not think changed her behaviour (BE Int.1, 2/9/04, p.2). Additionally, when talking about high school, one of Brenda's biggest concerns was the fact that she would have so many teachers to get used to. Brenda said that there were too many things to remember with so many teachers, which made her nervous (BE Int.2, 2/9/04, p.4).

In sum, Brenda was a student that just seemed to go through the motions each day. She was disengaged from much of what was happening in the classroom. She did not contribute to class discussions unless called upon, she completed the required work while meeting the minimal expectations, and she walked around the school with her head down most of the time. Brenda seemed to blend into the background. She did not get in trouble or call attention to herself in any way. She did not seem motivated by grades,

rewards, relationships, or even the goals she set for herself. She was minimally influenced by consequences she received from home when it came to getting to school on time. The only true engagement witnessed during any observations was during computer class when she worked with two other students and listened to her CD player, while she passed notes during class time without getting caught by the teacher, and when she tried to work quietly so she could go in the hall to be with her friends. The only academic project that Brenda seemed engaged by was the Social Studies project where she chose her partner and her topic. Brenda worked with Jayleen and she did her project on Egyptian fashion, which she reported choosing because they had the most information on it and she found it interesting (BE Int.2, 3/8/04, p.8). This is yet another example, as with some other students in this study, where choice seemed to have an effect on student engagement.

All in all, it seemed that Brenda just wanted to get through each school day so she could focus on the social parts of her life, which seemed to be outside of school, or at least, outside of the classroom. When asked what motivated her each day Brenda's response was "Finishing my work in the day so I can go home. To make the day go faster so I can get it over with so I can hang out after school" (BE Int.2, 2/9/04, p.9). In the second interview she further summed up her sentiments in this simple sentence, "I just wait until the end of the day so I can go out" (BE Int.2, 3/8/04, p.7). Overall, relational factors, such as spending time with her peers seemed to have the most influence on Brenda's school engagement.

Derek

Derek was a student motivated by grades, positive reinforcement and relationships with others. His parents seemed to have a large influence on his engagement due to the reward system they tied to grades, which Derek believed were important. He liked to make others proud and valued the opinion of his parents and teacher. Although he believed his friends were important and contributed to his school success, for some reason he was not willing to publicise his friendship with Brett nor was he willing to share his passion, writing, with others for fear of criticism.

Grades and Positive Reinforcement

Derek believed grades were very important. When asked why he felt this way he said if he got a good grade his father would buy him a CD, his mother would respect him more and good grades would lead to a better future (DF Int.1, 2/10/04, p.15). Derek relayed that he did not like doing any of the assignments in school but he did them because he had to and his parents would give him a "consequence" if he didn't. In the second interview, he described a goal he set for himself his grade seven year,

> To learn as much as I can in school and make sure that everything that is told to me in school stays in my brain. So I study it every night and a little bit every day at school to keep it in there and remind myself how it's done.... Because then I know that when it comes to tests that I know that I have a really good chance of getting good marks and that, then I just know that I'll do good, and I'll have people that will be very proud of me (DF Int.2, 3/8/04, p.12).

Derek also loved to write. When asked to describe something that made him feel good this year he said, "The writer's workshop... because the teacher said that my stories were really good" (DF Int.2, 3/8/04, p.2). Derek knew he would get a good mark on this project because other students in the class liked his stories and he thought they had

surprises and unexpected events in them that made them interesting to read. Although, Derek expected to do well on this project, when the class edited each other's stories he told his editors not to make any comments about his work unless they were positive. This further demonstrated the influence of external factors on Derek's school engagement and beliefs about his work. When asked about his favourite subject this year Derek said science because he studied hard and he knew he would get an "A" on his report card. Derek did not put forward any reason for science being his favourite subject related to enjoyment or interest, only to the grade he would receive.

Although Derek did not discuss his enjoyment or interest in subjects as a reason for doing well, he did make a connection between his interest in a subject and the poor marks he received. Derek said he did not like French because he thought it was boring so he did not pay attention, did not study for tests and did not get good grades (DF Int.2, 3/8/04, p.3). Thus, the more engaged Derek was in class the higher grades he received and the more reinforcement he got from his classmates and parents. He believed his effort had a direct connection to the grades he received and if he got a low mark than he could get a better mark next time if he tried harder. Overall, Derek wanted to get good grades to make his parents proud, which ultimately earned him privileges, gifts, or pride from his parents (DF Int.2, 3/8/04, p.4). In order to get higher grades, Derek made certain decisions in school, specifically related to whom he worked with on projects.

Social Aspects of School

Derek's discussions of the social aspects of school related to the influence his classmates had on his behaviour and his academic work. Derek believed friends were very important and without friends, he would not want to go to school. He said,

> If I am not in a good mood, they cheer me up, they make me laugh, they make me feel special...they do nice things for me...help me with my homework...they force me to study, then I get good marks (DF Int.1, 2/10/04, p.5).

When asked what memories of school came to mind when he thought about Kindergarten to grade seven, Derek mentioned playing Lego with his friends in Kindergarten and having free time in grade seven to play Risk with his friends. Of any memory Derek could have mentioned, he recalled two social memories.

Derek mentioned three students as his best friends during the first interview, one of them being Brett, another student in the study. During observations however, Derek did not always treat Brett in a friendly manner. It was seen that at lunchtime Derek ate lunch with all of the boys in the coatroom except for Brett and one other student who were at their desks. During another observation, Derek called Brett a "freak" and then walked away. During the same observation another student said a rude comment to Brett and Derek laughed and did not respond (Obs.2, 2/9/04). The interview where Derek mentioned Brett as one of his best friends was the day after this observation. In contrast with the way Derek treated Brett in earlier observations, during a later observation Derek gave Brett half of his cinnamon bun before he went to the coatroom to eat and on another occasion he chose to work with Brett on a class project. Derek also mentioned in the interview that he did not like hanging out with Brad because he was loud and annoying, yet Brad was one of the boys he ate lunch with in the coatroom. It is possible Derek struggled with the balance between popularity and friendship. Although Derek believed friendship was important, he seemed conflicted with who his friends were, or how to treat them.

Derek mentioned his friends helped him get better grades however when given a choice he preferred to work on his own. He believed in a group he was never given anything to do, which made him feel left out, but if he worked on his own he could do "basically everything" (DF Int.1, 2/10/04, p.13). Based on Derek's earlier comments that he only did work because he had to one may assume Derek would rather work in a group because he would have less work to do. When asked about this contradiction Derek said,

> Ok it may sound confusing but it's really not cause if you work on your own then you can get all the work done and then your group doesn't give you extra assignments that you don't want to do. Cause if you work on your own than you can choose what you want to do with the work, like if you want to do extra for extra marks. (DF Int.1, 2/10/04, p.13).

Thus, the freedom and choice Derek had when he worked on his own seemed to have an influence on his preference to work alone. When he had no choice but to work with a group Derek preferred to work with his friends because they had the same interests. In addition to choosing friends, Derek suggested he would consider choosing group members with whom he could get a better mark. Ideally, Derek would like to work with a friend that would help him get a better mark (DF Int.1, 3/8/04, p.10). But given the choice, he would choose to work alone because he would have more choices and he could get more work done without distractions.

His preference for working alone was also consistent with where Derek liked to sit in the classroom. He wanted to sit on his own, in the corner because he believed he would be more focused but he had to sit in a row. Derek sat in the third desk of a row on the right of the room. He had a student in front of him, behind him, and on his right side. When asked about his desk location Derek said he liked it because, "it's sort of quiet over there. The side I work on is sort of the more quiet working area, I can work more quieter,

harder…" (DF Int.2, 3/8/04, p.9). During observations, Derek did not socialize often

with the students around him. He spent much of his time fooling around with items at his

desk and he did not talk with those around him other than to turn around and ask the

student behind him to stop tapping his pencil or to stop humming. Although he appeared

not to be paying attention to what was happening in the classroom, Derek participated in

the discussions and was able to offer valuable responses when called upon. Derek knew

he was more engaged when he was on his own, thus when given a choice he worked

alone. Throughout the interviews, it seemed friendships and the social aspects of school

were very important to Derek, however during observations a different picture emerged.

It could be that although Derek valued his friendships, the pressures of his classmates and

the fact he wanted to receive good grades for his parents, had more of an influence thus

he chose to work independently whenever possible.

Teacher Relationships

Derek's relationship with his teacher did not seem to have as much of an effect on

his school engagement as it did for Brad, but his behaviour and attitude toward his

classroom teacher was different than his behaviour with a TOC. With his classroom

teacher, Derek was typically respectful and willing to listen to her suggestions. When

asked to tell about his classroom teacher Derek said, "She's a nice teacher, she talks a lot,

she likes to laugh, and she teaches us" (DF Int.1, 2/10/04, p.3). In the second interview,

Derek said his teacher complimented him a lot, which made him feel good. When asked

what she complimented him on he responded, "My story writing and that I do well in

Math, that I am keeping up with the class, and that I listen well so that I know what I am

doing" (DF Int.2, 3/8/04, p9).

Not only did his teacher compliment him, but also it was evident during observations that she spoke to him respectfully and she listened to him when he spoke in class. The teacher often called on Derek during class discussions, and the responses she gave following his answers were positive and Derek often seemed pleased. At times though, when he was 'fiddling' with his items at his desk she would respectfully ask him to put them away and Derek would put the item away when asked but a minute later the same or a different item would come out. For example, during one observation Derek played with magnets during math class and was asked to put them way, which he did, but a moment later he was flicking his ruler on the desk and the teacher had to ask him again to put that away as well (Obs.3, 2/12/04). It seemed that even though it appeared Derek was not paying attention as he was continually 'fiddling' with items throughout the lesson, he was actually engaged. Although Derek continued to play with items at his desk when asked to put them away, he never talked back to his classroom teacher in a disrespectful way. This was not the case when a TOC was teaching the class however.

When asked to describe himself as a student with a TOC Derek responded,

DF: I'd say I probably act maybe a little different. Since it's somebody I don't know I probably act a little different, like I'm really good with the teachers I know in the school, but if it's with a TOC I might be a little worse.

AH: Describe what you mean by that.

DF: I mean, refusing to do work and having big hissy fits and stuff.

AH: Why do you think that is?

DF: Because it's somebody different and... it's just somebody different.

When the TOC taught the class computers Derek's behaviour was different. He completed the required work but he would call out or say rude comments at times. For example, when the TOC described the assignment at the start of class Derek continued talking with a friend and did not seem to listen. When the TOC finished he said, "What in the hell are you talking about?" The TOC ignored this comment and did not respond to him. Derek talked to a friend to get the instructions and began the assignment (Obs. 5, 2/23/04). Another example of this attitude was when the high school councillor made a presentation to the class about what to expect in grade eight. While the councillor was talking, Derek said "you betcha" a couple of times and he asked unnecessary questions. One question was, "What if our teacher gives us a detention and we can't take the Math X test?" (Obs. 4, 2/16/04). The councillor responded, "Try not to get a detention that day then" (Obs. 4, 2/16/04). Derek laughed following these comments and did not seem to have much respect for the councillor. His classroom teacher did not say anything about these comments during the presentation or following it.

There seemed to be a mutual respect in the relationship Derek had with his classroom teacher, which took time to develop. In the situation with the TOC and the school councillor, neither Derek nor the teachers had the time to develop a relationship and as a result, Derek did not edit his comments. In addition to the positive interactions Derek had with the classroom teacher, he expressed his appreciation for the help she gave him. Derek mentioned, "If I'm having trouble with a concept, in say math, she will let me stay after school for some extra help before a test, so that I get it and will do well on the test" (DF Int2, 3/8/04, p7). The teacher never made him stay, it was always a choice, and she was available if he needed help and he liked that. When asked if he could think

of anything his teacher did that he did not find motivating he did not have an example. However, he shared that his grade three and grade six teachers always yelled and told the class to stop what they were doing which he did not like and thus he found it difficult to work in those classes and was less engaged.

Although Derek's relationship with his teacher did not seem to have as much of an effect on his engagement as it did for Brad, it obviously had a positive influence on his schooling. When asked what a teacher could do to help him be motivated in school Derek said, "basically just say that I can do what I want to do with my life and I can do things the way I choose to do things, I can do anything I put my mind to or something like that" (DF Int.2, 3/8/04, p.14). Earlier in the same interview Derek mentioned that his teacher often told the class they could do anything they put their mind to and he often told himself that when he needed to be more motivated (DF Int.2, 3/8/04, p.8).

It is difficult to determine whether Derek's engagement in school was influenced more by individual, contextual, or relational factors. Pressure from his parents influenced his engagement, as he wanted to get better grades to earn their pride and extra privileges. His friends encouraged him to study more, but they also distracted him from doing his work so he preferred to work alone in order to be more engaged in what he was doing. His relationship with his teacher was positive and she encouraged him and the class with inspiring statements, which he also used for himself, but when she was not there, he did not seem as engaged. Ultimately it seemed Derek's school engagement was more effected by relational and contextual factors, like his parents, teachers, or seating, than by individual factors. However, Derek knew what worked best for him, such as 'fiddling' to

stay focused and working on his own, thus he made choices that influenced his school

engagement as well.

Summary

    Throughout the individual analysis of each student, it was apparent that although

individual, relational, and contextual factors influenced their school engagement, the

specific influence each of these factors had on the students' engagement differed within

each student. For example, although relational factors, such as the relationships the

students had with their teacher, had some influence on their engagement, whether this

influence was positive or negative and how much of an influence the relationship had,

differed across students. Figure 1 provides an overview of the factors that contributed to

the students' engagement in school. Individual, relational, and contextual factors all

influenced the students' school engagement, while simultaneously, the students' grades

and choices in tasks and working groups also contributed to their school engagement.

Figure 1:   Factors Influencing School Engagement

Individual Factors
(Personal Interest, Goals, Beliefs) ⟶

SCHOOL

⟵ **Choice**
(in task; working groups)

Relational Factors
(Teachers, Parents, Peers) ⟶

ENGAGEMENT

⟵ **Grades**

Contextual Factors
(Classroom, Subject) ⟶
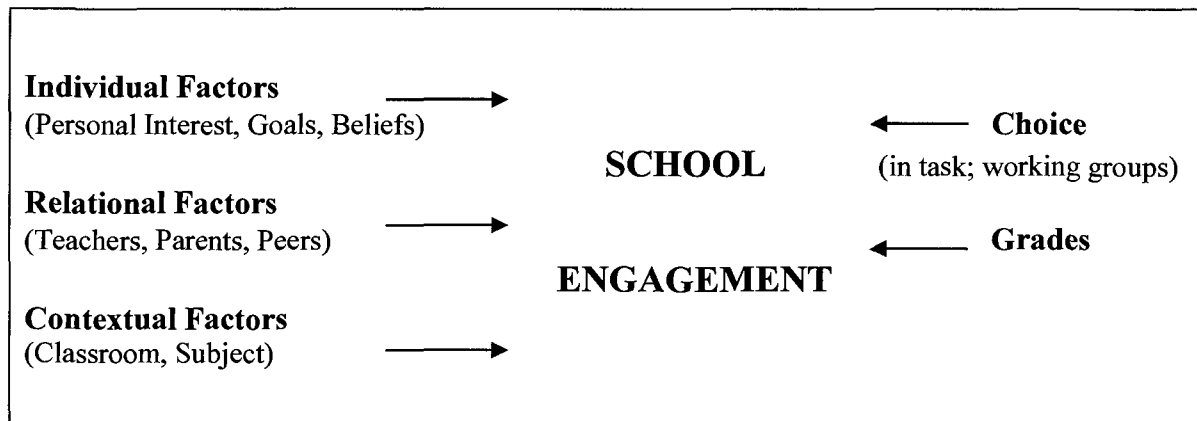
In an attempt to demonstrate the interconnectedness of each of these factors and

the influence they seemed to have not only on school engagement, but also on each other,

Figure 2 illustrates the factors that influenced Brad's school engagement. The intent of

the diagram is to highlight the depth of the connections between the various factors that

influenced Brad's school engagement. Using the elements of Figure 1, Figure 2

represents the factors that influenced Brad's school engagement. The arrows represent the

connections between factors. The solid arrows represent the direct connection between

the main factors and Brad's school engagement with the size of the arrow indicating the

level of influence the specific factor seemed to have. The dotted arrows represent the

influence the factors seem to have on one another.

Figure 2:   Factors Influencing Brad's School Engagement
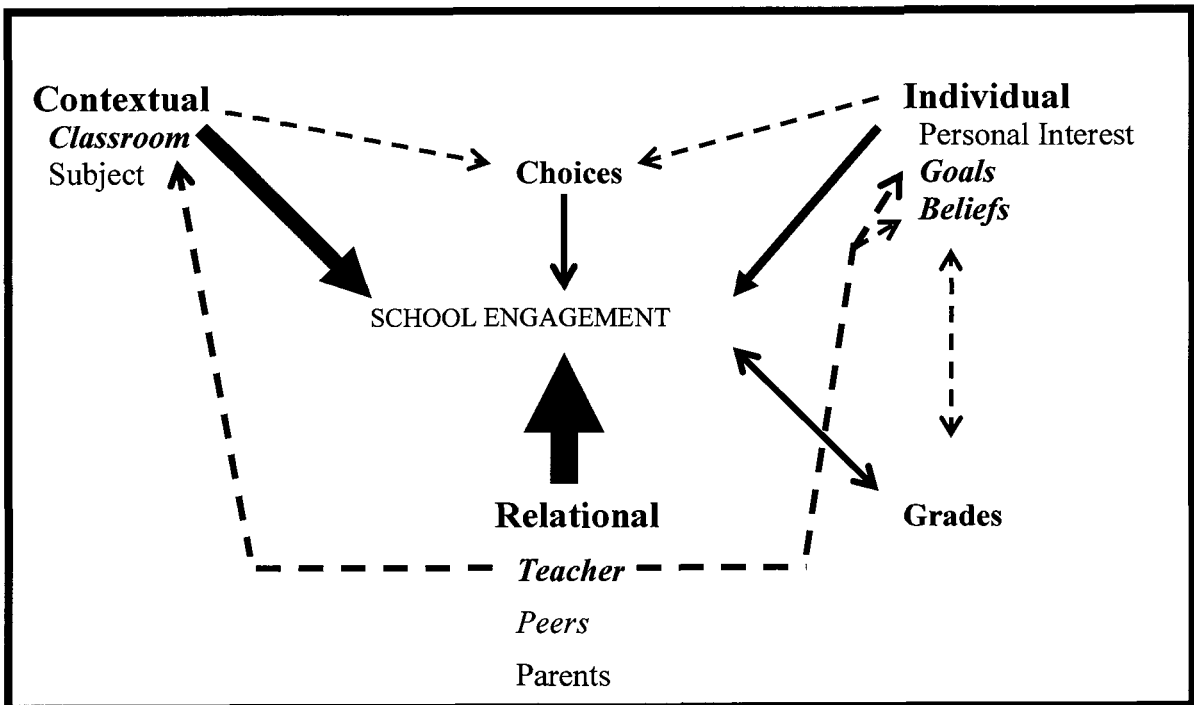
As can be seen in Figure 2, while the contextual, individual, and relational factors all seemed to influence Brad's school engagement, relational factors, specifically the relationships he had with teachers, had the biggest influence. The positive relationship Brad had with his classroom teacher during the year of this study, influenced his beliefs in himself, the goals he set and ultimately his level of school engagement overall. Additionally, the teacher set the expectations and guidelines within the classroom, providing the students with choice within assignments and group or partner work, which allowed Brad to choose assignments based on his personal interest and goals. Brad's peers also influenced his engagement, both positively and negatively, and his parents seemed to have some influence, but the level was unknown. Grades also seemed to contribute to Brad's engagement and his beliefs about his ability to achieve good grades with more effort influenced the grades he received. However, as was demonstrated in the analysis of Brad, when faced with the negative relationship he had with his teacher in the past, the impact of his personal desire for good grades diminished. Thus, it seems that relational factors, specifically with his teacher, were the biggest contributing factors to Brad's engagement in school.

If a similar picture were created for the remaining four students in the study, each would look quite different. Although the factors would be the same, the size and direction of the arrows would vary across students, as the level of influence each factor had differed across individuals. As well, one factor may have influenced another factor in different ways, just as Derek's parents seemed to influence his opinion about the importance of grades, therefore influencing his personal beliefs and the choices he made regarding assignments and whether to work individually or with a group.

It is difficult then, to come up with a theory of how the factors that influenced the students' engagement in school related to each other because a number of factors seemed to work simultaneously, with some factors having more power than other factors on particular students. In sum, it is apparent that relational, contextual, and individual factors all influenced the students' school engagement in some way, as did choices, grades, and their future aspirations. The following discussion will further explore these findings and how they fit with prior research on motivation and school engagement.

DISCUSSION

As discussed in the introduction to this study, the research on achievement motivation to date has looked almost strictly within the individual, taking into account attributions, values and expectancies, goals, and self-efficacy. The social or contextual factors that are present within schools have often been overlooked within the achievement motivation research. This study resided within the belief that in order to understand student motivation in school, one should look within the individual at his or her goals, beliefs, and perceptions, and outside of the individual at the context, including the classroom, teacher, and peers simultaneously. The purpose of this study then was to gain a deeper understanding of intermediate students' perceptions of their own motivation in school, including the goals they set for themselves each day, and how their teachers and peers affected their motivation, if at all.

As I analyzed the interview transcripts, it became apparent that student perceptions of motivation were complex, and included individual, relational, and contextual factors. Much of what the students said in response to my interview questions about their motivation seemed to fall somewhat outside the traditional realm of both achievement and social motivation research. Each of the student responses related to several theoretical perspectives and did not fit neatly within only one. In order to make sense of these data, I searched for a term that better captured what the students seemed to be reporting on. The term I came up with was "engagement". I initially used engagement as a layperson would, as I was unaware of the literature on the construct. A

look into the research literature however, revealed a body of work guided by the

engagement construct that I found was relevant to the results I obtained.

School Engagement

For the purposes of this study, 'school engagement' refers to the self-perceived

interest and effort the students put into school activities within a variety of contexts.

Once my coding was complete, I researched the term engagement and found it in a

number of articles. Motivation and engagement are often used synonymously by

researchers,. Indeed, the differences between theories of engagement and theories of

motivation are subtle, which can be challenging when trying to differentiate the two

concepts. Currently there does not seem to be one clear definition of school engagement.

Kenny et al. (2006) suggest, "school engagement involves positive attitudes toward

school, teachers, classmates, and academic learning" (p. 272). Newman et al. (as cited in

Fredericks et al., 2004) define engagement in academic work as the "students

psychological investment in and effort directed toward learning, understanding,

mastering the knowledge, skills or crafts that the academic work is intended to promote"

(p.63). The first definition relates to social and academic aspects of school, whereas the

second definition relates only to academics. In Fredericks et al.'s (2004) review of the

literature three main theories of engagement are outlined: (1) behavioural engagement,

(2) emotional engagement, and (3) cognitive engagement.

Behavioural engagement relates to student participation in classroom activities,

including social, academic, and extracurricular activities. Cothran and Ennis (2000, as

cited in Kenny et al., 2006) discuss the relationship between behavioural engagement and

student dropout rates. They suggest that high behavioural engagement contributes to a

lower dropout rate in schools. Emotional engagement relates to the positive and negative reactions of students to their teachers, peers, academics and school in general. Research demonstrates a potential link between a strong emotional connection and increased engagement and willingness to do the work (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Cognitive engagement refers to students' willingness to complete challenging tasks and master new skills. As is evident in these three components of engagement, both academic and social aspects are considered. However, just as within the motivation research, these three concepts are typically researched separately, yet in a classroom situation, it is difficult to differentiate one type of engagement from another.

Although research on engagement is typically focused within one of these three distinct areas, Fredericks et al., (2004) believe that engagement is "a multidimensional construct that unites the three components in a meaningful way...[and that] engagement can be thought of as a meta construct (p.60)". In fact, they go on to state,

> the fusion of behaviour, emotion, and cognition under the idea of engagement is valuable because it may provide a richer characterization of children than is possible in research on single components.... In reality, these factors are dynamically interrelated within the individual; they are not isolated processes. (p.60).

This line of thought is similar to my beliefs at the start of this study, which led to the qualitative look at student motivation in school I attempted to undertake. In addition, Fredericks et al. (2004) suggest that "considering engagement as a multidimensional construct argues for examining antecedents and consequences of behaviour, emotion, and cognition simultaneously and dynamically, to test for additive or interactive effects" (p.61) which is exactly what this study attempted to do.

As was evident in the analysis of students' interview responses and behaviours in this study, each of the factors that contribute to student engagement were interconnected and influenced each other in a way that would be difficult to separate. Thus, as Frederick et al. (2004) suggest, it is useful to see engagement as inclusive, combining each of the constructs that are typically studied separately. Engagement is flexible and is a function of both the individual and the context. This was evident within this study, as the students' engagement was simultaneously influenced by individual factors, such as their personal beliefs and interests, as well as contextual factors, such as the classroom, peers, and teachers.

The Connection: the Research and the Students

Once analysis of the data occurred with the term school engagement in mind, it was evident that a simple model of school engagement might not exist because student engagement and the factors that seemed to contribute to it looked different across individuals. However, some common factors were evident within each student: relational factors, evident in the student's relationships with teachers, peers, and family; contextual factors, such as the classroom or subject the student participated in; and individual factors, such as personal interests and beliefs, which all influenced student engagement in school. In addition to these factors, some external elements, such as choice within tasks and working groups and grades also contributed to their school engagement, or lack thereof. Although each of these factors were present in one-way or another in each student's story, how they influenced each student's engagement differed across individuals. All of the factors that arose within this study are present within the current research on motivation and engagement. However, to date a single coherent

conceptualization of all the factors that may influence students' engagement is not present in the literature. A closer look at how the findings of this study, specific to the relational, contextual and individual factors that seemed to influence the students' engagement connect with the current research on motivation and engagement is presented.

Relational Factors

As previously discussed, in the motivation research the need for affiliation is seen as a social form of motivation relating to the need to develop close, personal, and cooperative relationships with others (Coleman, 2001). In the emotional engagement research, a similar concept, referred to as a sense of relatedness, exists. Both relate to a students need for belonging and connectedness among members of the classroom. Furrer and Skinner (2003) suggest,

> feelings of relatedness tapped by measures of school climate and quality of teacher-student relationships, as well as feelings of belonging, inclusion, acceptance, importance, and interpersonal support, have been linked to important academic outcomes, including self-efficacy, success expectations, achievement values, positive affect, effort, engagement, interest in school, task goal orientation, and school marks (p.149).

Interestingly, relational factors, particularly with the teacher seems to influence many outcomes addressed in the motivation research as well. Students in this study demonstrated this need for affiliation and relatedness. This was evident in the relationships they developed with their teachers and peers; however, the influence these relationships had on their school engagement was both positive and negative. In the following sections, a deeper exploration of the influence of both teacher and peer

relationships on school engagement and how the research connects with the students in this study is presented.

The Teacher

Fredericks et al. (2004) discussed the influence a classroom teacher can have on a student's school engagement. They state: "in classrooms where teachers created respectful and socially supportive environments, pressed students for understanding, and supported autonomy, students were more strategic about learning and had higher behavioral engagement and affect (Stipek, 2002; Tumer, Meyer, Cox, Logan, DiCintio, & Thomas, 1998)" (p.75). Not only is this consistent with the findings of this study, particularly in Brad's case with the supportive relationship he had with his classroom teacher the year of this study versus that with the librarian or classroom teacher from the previous year, but it also parallels the motivation research previously discussed (Murdock & Miller, 2003; Toohey, 2000; Wentzel, 1989; Wentzel, 1994).

In the present study the students were more likely to work for teachers they valued and respected, as was particularly evident with Derek and Brad who demonstrated very different behaviours with the classroom teacher, librarian, and teacher-on-call. Additionally, the teacher relationship seemed to take precedence over the peer relationships. This was apparent in the struggle some of the students demonstrated when trying to gain the respect of the teacher and peers simultaneously. For example, in the library Derek and Brad seemed more easily enticed into behavioural antics with their peers than in the classroom. This could be due to the fact they had greater respect for the classroom teacher than they had for the librarian, thus in the library the peer relationship took precedence. This parallels Murdock and Miller's (2003) research suggesting

students are more inclined to internalize the values and standards of their teacher when they perceive mutual respect and admiration to be key characteristics of their relationship. In the case of the students and the teacher-on-call then, Brad and Derek may not have had enough time to develop this relationship, thus they did not necessarily internalize the values the teacher-on-call may have had. However, as Brad was new to the school at the start of the year of this study, he had known the librarian and the classroom teacher for the same length of time. This brings to light the question: What other factors may have contributed to his lack of respect for the librarian?

Connell (as cited in Fredericks et al., 2004) explored the connection between behavioural engagement and classroom structure. He found that teachers who were clear and consistent with their expectations have students who are behaviourally engaged. It is possible then that Brad and Derek may not have perceived the structure of the library class as clear and consistent, thus leading to behavioural disengagement. This is only one other explanation for Derek and Brad's change of behaviour.

It is interesting to note that not all students in the study demonstrated different behaviours with the librarian or the teacher-on-call than they did with their classroom teacher. What may account for this difference? It is my belief that students with a strong self-efficacy and self-concept, such as Sara, have internalized their own set of values and beliefs regarding school and no matter which teacher was present; their personal beliefs had more of an influence on their school engagement than any other factor. It would be necessary to conduct a deeper study to determine if this is in fact the case.

Following this line of thinking then, Brad and Derek, who may not have as high of a self-concept as Sara, demonstrated different behaviours and engagement from room

to room and teacher to teacher thus highlighting the importance of relational factors on their engagement. In the classroom, for example, the relationship each of the boys had with the teacher seemed to have a powerful influence on their engagement, whereas when a teacher on call was present, their peers seemed to have more of an influence on their engagement.

Peers

Just as with the teacher relationship, the influence of peers on a student's school engagement differed from student to student. In Brenda's case, the social aspects of school were very important to her and she seemed more engaged when talking with her friends or passing notes than when completing her work. Thus, her peers seemed to have a negative influence on her school engagement. Sara and Brett seemed to recognize the influence their peers might have on their school engagement and tried to make choices accordingly. They chose to either work alone or with friends whom they believed would have a similar work ethic or help them to reach their goals. This is in line with the ethnographic research showing that more successful students seek out friendships with academically supportive peers and separate themselves from peers who may encourage behaviours that do not fall within the school norms (Juvonen, 1993, 1995; Farrell, 1990, 1994, cited in Murdock and Miller, 2003). This was evident with all of the students in this study who stated in their interviews that they would not want to work with Brad because he fooled around too much.

Although others felt Brad was a bad influence on them in the classroom, Brad knew he needed to make particular choices regarding seating and work partners in order to be more engaged in school as well. However, at times he found the desire to be with

his friends too strong. He struggled with this desire a number of times throughout this study period, particularly outside of the classroom walls. In the Library, Brad threw airplanes with his friends and in the computer lab he fooled around and swore at the teacher, but in the classroom, he chose to sit alone in order to better focus on his work. This again supports the finding that the relationship Brad had with his classroom teacher seemed to have a more powerful influence on his engagement than his peers in the classroom, but outside of the classroom his peers seemed to have a stronger influence. Murdock and Miller (2003) stated that peer influences could be both positive and negative, as students can be reinforced by some peers for behaviours that fall within the school norms and in other instances by behaviours that are not within the norms. In Brad's case, the laughter and support he received from his peers in library and computer lab seemed to reinforce the negative behaviours, thus leading to his lack of engagement. In the classroom however, the positive reinforcement from his teacher seemed to override that of his peers, thus leading to increased school engagement.

Therefore, although peers do seem to have an influence on a student's school engagement, the level of influence depends on a number of other factors, specifically relational and contextual. Additionally, although not covered specifically within this study, an individual's self-concept and personal beliefs, may also determine the level of influence peers can have on a student's school engagement. Further research would need to be conducted to determine the influence a student's personal self-concept may have.

Contextual Factors

It is also necessary to look at the context the students are working within when trying to determine the factors that may influence their school engagement. As Hickey

(2003) stated, context can be viewed "as a source of expectancy-related and value-related information" (pp.407). Thus, for the purposes of this study, the context included external factors, such as the classroom structure, representing the values and expectancies of the teacher and students within it; the subject students participated in; and the grades for which they strove. The main factor within the classroom and subject areas that affected the students in this study was choice.

Choice

The research on motivation and school engagement speaks of choice as a motivating factor for students in the classroom. Ames (1992) found that choice in learning and opportunities for collaboration and discussion will elicit a mastery goal orientation in students, which in turn is said to orient students to a focus on learning, mastery of content and tasks, and is related to a number of adaptive outcomes such as high efficacy, task value, and interest. The engagement research also highlighted autonomy, characterized by choice, democratic decision-making, and absence of external rewards, as a classroom characteristic that enhances school engagement (Fredericks et al., 2004). In their review of engagement research, Fredericks et al. (2004) cited two studies, (Turner, 1995 and Perry, 1998) which found when students were provided with choices about which literary tasks to perform and when to perform them, they worked more strategically and demonstrated persistence when faced with difficulty, which are two aspects of cognitive engagement. Choice was a motivating factor in the present study as each of the students discussed having choices in tasks, such as which topic to research in social studies, or choices in groups, such as whether to work alone, as Sara often did, or

with a group, as Brad preferred to do.   When the students were able to choose a topic, they were more interested and thus more engaged in their work.

Further research on school engagement also supports the use of choice as a motivating factor for students in school. Ryan and Connell (1989) believe this is due to an individuals need for autonomy, or desire to do things for personal reasons, rather than doing things because their actions are controlled by others (as cited in Fredericks et al., 2004). Connell and Wellborn (1991) state "the need for autonomy is most likely to be met in contexts where students have choice, shared decision making, and relative freedom from external controls. When individuals' autonomy needs are met, it is assumed that they will be more engaged" (as cited in Fredericks et al., 2004, p.81).

In the present study the classroom teacher provided students with choice whenever possible and the students shared their appreciation for this, as they each mentioned the importance of choice to their engagement in the interviews. However, having choices does not guarantee a student will be more engaged in an assignment, as Brenda demonstrated in this study. Although she could choose the topic she wrote about in her speech, her disinterest in sharing her speech with others seemed to have more of an influence on her desire to complete the speech. Thus, although providing choice in the classroom meets the students' need for autonomy, potentially leading to increased engagement, there is no guarantee that students will be more engaged when choices are provided when it comes to working with individual students who, as Wentzel (1999) states have a number of social and academic factors competing for their psychological resources and energy.

Grades

Each of the students in this study discussed grades in relation to their motivation in school. The students' desire for a particular grade influenced the decisions they made regarding assignments and working groups. For example, Brad chose his partners for the social studies project based on who he thought he would work well with and who would help him get a good grade. As discussed in the analysis, each of the students had different views of what they considered a 'good' grade and the goals they set for themselves were based on this belief. How the students determined what they believed to be a 'good' grade is unknown, however, the students' parents, peers, and teachers seemed to have some influence. This was evident in Derek's case where his parents rewarded him for 'B' and 'A' grades, thus setting a precedent for what a 'good' grade might be. This highlights a possible connection between relational factors and grades, thus strengthening the influence relational factors can have on a students' school engagement.

The students' plans for their future also seemed to have an impact on their beliefs about letter grades and thus their school engagement. This was particularly true for Brenda, who said she was happy with C+ grades but if she decided to go to University after graduation, she would need to set goals for higher grades in high school. In order to achieve higher grades Brenda believed she would need to work harder and make sure to get to school on time. Brenda's story is an example of a performance or performance-approach goal (Ames, 1992; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996; Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Pintrich, 2000) to achieve higher grades, potentially influencing her school engagement. Additionally, the belief Brenda had in her ability to achieve higher grades if she put in more effort is reflective of the attribution theory previously discussed (Weiner, 1994).

Attribution theory seemed to accurately account for many of the students' beliefs in this study, as each of them attributed their success or failure, as represented by the grades they received, to the effort they put forth. However, as mentioned in the introduction, attribution theory alone cannot account for the students' school engagement.

The students' grades also contributed to their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). For example, Brad described how getting a high grade on a math assignment led to heightened expectations as he knew he was capable of getting a high grade in the future. Therefore, Brad's self-efficacy toward his math skills increased due to his beliefs surrounding the high grade he received. Derek had a low self-efficacy when it came to French, as he had poor grades in the past, thus leading to a decrease in effort on future assignments. This decrease in effort may have allowed Derek to feel better about his marks in French because he could ascribe the low grade to his lack of effort. Although Derek seemed to have a high self-efficacy in writing, this was not enough to overpower his concern for how his peers might react to his writing, leading him to choose not to share his writing with his peers. This again testifies to the strong role of relational factors in a student's school engagement. Thus, self-efficacy seems to have both a positive and negative influence on students' school engagement and again, cannot be looked at in isolation.

Individual Factors

It is difficult to discuss the individual factors that influenced the students' school engagement as a completely separate factor as the relational and contextual factors could influence a student's personal beliefs and goals. As the scope of this study did not allow for a clear map as to where the students' interests, beliefs, and goals arose, the discussion

will focus solely on the influence an individual's beliefs and goals may have on their school engagement.

It is useful to look toward some of the motivation research when examining the individual factors that influenced the students in this study. The previous discussion on attribution theory and self-efficacy in relation to grades also fits within this discussion. A student's self-efficacy for example is not high or low across the board, but is subject or task specific (Bandura, 1994). Therefore, a student, such as Derek, may have a high self-efficacy in one area, such as writing, thus influencing his interest and goals in the subject area, but a low one in another, such as French. It is difficult to determine all of the factors that may have led to this high or low efficacy as a number of factors could have contributed along the way. For example, in French, Derek may have had a bad experience in the fourth grade where he was embarrassed in front of his peers, thus influencing his interest in French, leading to poor grades, and ultimately to his lack of effort and low efficacy toward the subject. Therefore, it is necessary to look at both relational and contextual factors to determine where one's individual beliefs derived.

The goals students set each day are also very important when it comes to school engagement and can also be reflective of an individual's beliefs, attributions, and expectancies. As we saw in the discussion about grades, performance goals seem to take precedence over mastery goals for the students in this study. It is difficult to determine why, and if this will change over time for any of the students, but I suspect that as individuals decide what they want to do for their future careers, mastery will become more of a goal.

Implications for the Classroom

There are a number of findings in this study that teachers can take into account when setting up their classrooms and interacting with their students. As Fredericks et al. (2004) state,

> ...engagement can result from a variety of antecedents in the context, both social and academic, at both the school and classroom levels, allowing for a wide range of intervention targets (p.83).

The main finding that stood out for me, as a teacher, was the power of the teacher-student relationship on most students' school engagement. Regardless of the assignment or task, the relationship with the teacher seemed to have a significant influence on students' engagement. The computer lab should have been an exciting and engaging place for students, but the fact there was a teacher with whom the students had no relationship seemed to override the contextual factors for some of the students. This finding suggests that it may be helpful for a teacher-on-call to take a few minutes at the start of the day to get to know the students, to let them know you respect them, and to ask the students for help and support throughout the day.

Establishing an engaging and motivating environment should be a goal for classroom teachers. The first few days and weeks of school are imperative in building positive relationships with and between students, thus finding ways to build a sense of community and ownership in the classroom is essential. Additionally, research demonstrates that teachers who are clear in their expectations from the start and provide consistent responses have students who are more behaviourally engaged (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Skinner & Belmont, 1993 as cited in Fredericks et al, 2004). Thus, taking time to ensure expectations are clear and perceived as fair by the students and

constructing a classroom environment that allows for student choice could go a long way in promoting school engagement in students.

In addition, providing choices wherever possible will give students a sense of autonomy and allow them to meet the goals of the school while still feeling a sense of control. Involving students in decision-making in the classroom from the start of the year will go a long way in creating an engaging environment for students. The students in this study all talked about the fact their teacher listened to them, and many of the examples the students shared demonstrated the democratic nature of the classroom, as well as the fact the teacher was "human". She laughed and joked with the students and although the students had a lot of power within the classroom, the teacher always maintained control and a mutual respect was evident. Building positive relationships with students, creating an environment where positive relationships with peers are encouraged, and providing students with choices allowing for individual needs and interests to be met all contribute to their school engagement.

Additionally, although not discussed within this study, remembering that each student in the classroom comes from a different family background, with different beliefs about schooling and life in general, is invaluable. Accepting students for who they are is the first step in building a positive relationship. It is vital to remember that although a positive student teacher relationship is optimal to increase student engagement, it is important to establish boundaries and set high expectations for students in the classroom. Additionally, teachers should be aware that many factors contribute to a student's engagement, thus, there is no clear path to follow, and one must be open and flexible to meet the needs of all students. Perhaps, the best way to increase student engagement is to

know yourself as a teacher, to know your students as individuals and to know there is not one recipe that will work for every student in the classroom

Limitations and Future Research

There are two major limitations with this study. First, as this was a qualitative study, requiring observations and interviews, the number of students I was able to include was limited. As a consequence, it is not possible to generalize the results to the broader population. However, of note, the findings of this study were in keeping with many of the findings from the other research conducted in this area. Second, as I was a teacher at the school where this study was conducted, it is possible this influenced what the students chose to share in their interviews. Although I had not directly taught any of the students in the study, I had taught at the school for five years prior to the study and had interacted with the students in this study during assemblies, on the playground, or during clubs or team events.

Future qualitative research looking at both students and their classrooms simultaneously would be beneficial, as it would allow for a realistic picture of a student's school engagement and all of the factors that might contribute to it. Due to the scope of this study, the family was an area that was not researched. Just as it is difficult separate an individual from the classroom, it is also difficult to look at individuals without also looking at where they come from. Thus, research examining the influence culture and family have on students' school engagement, in addition to the factors looked at within this study, would be beneficial in order to create a more complete picture of the factors that influence school engagement. It would also be valuable to conduct a longitudinal study to determine how students' perceptions and school engagement shift over time,

specifically between elementary and secondary school. It would be particularly interesting to see how the relational factors in secondary school, given the increase in peer pressures and the increase in the number of teachers students work with, may influence their engagement. Also, as students in secondary school may have a clearer vision of what they want to do for their futures it would be interesting to see if the goals they set for themselves related to grades and effort may differ. Overall, qualitative research driven by the students' perceptions of their motivation and engagement in school would be beneficial in developing a deeper understanding of the multitude of factors influencing students as they work their way through the education system.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide - First Interview

Opening Statement:
The purpose of this interview is to get information about how you feel about school, what is important to you at school, and what motivates you at school. I will be interviewing four other students in your class for their beliefs about school as well. In addition, I will spend some time observing in your classroom over the next three weeks. This will give me a chance to see how your classroom is organized and what kinds of things you do there. You will also be telling about some of your experiences in class in a journal that you will fill out twice a week over the next three weeks. Your teacher will give you time in class to do this. The interview, observations, and journals will all give me information so I can try to get to know you as a student and learn what is important to you at school. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Definition of motivation if requested: 'Motivation is what prompts you to do the things you do and behave in a certain way in the classroom.'

Synonyms for prompts: influences, encourages, and leads

1. General Beliefs about School

Lead Question:
    Tell me about school.
Possible follow up questions:
    How is school going for you this year?
    What do you like about school?
    What do you like the least about school?
    What do you think the purpose of school is?
    Think about your school life from Kindergarten until now. Tell what stands out in your mind from your past school experiences.

2. Beliefs about the Teacher

Lead Question:
Tell me about your teacher.
Possible follow up questions:
    What do you think about your teacher?
    What kinds of things do you talk about with your teacher?

What do you think she expects of you?

If you could tell your teacher something you think she should know about you, what would it be?

What do you think your teacher thinks of you?

3. Social Beliefs

Lead Question:

Tell me about your classmates.

Possible follow up questions:

How important are your friendships to you?

How do your friends affect your life at school?

Think about an average day at school. What part do your classmates play in this picture?

4. Classroom Perceptions

Lead Question:

Describe for me what I would see if I walked through the doors into your classroom.

Possible follow up questions:

What do you think about your class this year?

What would you change in the class if you could?

Think about this year so far. What stands out in your mind about your experience in this class so far?

5. Motivation in School

Lead Question:

Tell me what motivates you at school.

Possible follow up questions:

Tell me what does not motivate you at school.

What is an important part of school for you?

What kinds of goals do you set for yourself at school?

Describe a time when you really feel good in class.

What makes you do the things you do at school?

What makes you feel good about what you do at school?

6. Classroom Behaviour

Lead Question:

If I followed you throughout the day at school, what kinds of things would I see you doing?

Possible follow up questions:

How would you describe yourself as a student in the classroom?

What influences your behaviour in class?
What makes you act the way you do in the classroom?

7. Academic Beliefs

Lead Question:
Tell me about the work you do at school.
Possible follow up questions:
What activities do you like to do?
What subject or activity do you think you are good at?
Why do you think you are good at this activity?
How do you feel about your school grades?
What importance do your grades play in how you feel about school?
Think of all of the things you learn at school. What do you believe is the most important to your life?

8. Communication

Lead Question:
What is the best way for you to find out what you need to know during the school day?
Possible follow up questions:
Whom do you typically ask for help from in your classroom?
How do you get your teachers attention in class?

9. Final Question

Think about the perfect school day. Describe what this day would be like.

Appendix B: Interview Guide – Second Interview

Purpose of Research Study/Focusing questions:

What are students' beliefs about motivation?

What types of goals do students set for themselves at school each day?

What effect does the teacher have on a student's motivation and goals?

What effect do peers have on a student's motivation and goals?

Perceptions of Self

1. Describe yourself as a student in your classroom
... in the library;
... with a Teacher on Call.
2. Describe something that you did at school this year that made you feel good about yourself.
...Why did it make you feel good?
3. Think about something that you did well on in school. Why do you think you did so well?
4. Think about something that you did not do well at in school. Why do you think you did not do well on it?
5. When you complete an assignment at school, do you have expectations about what you will be able to accomplish?
...What kinds of expectations do you usually have?
...What are these expectations based on?

Possible Further Questions

6. What makes you feel good about the work you do in school?
7. If another student in the class were to describe you, what do you think they would say?
8. Tell me something about yourself that you feel good about. Why did this make you feel good?

School Goals

1. If you were to set a goal for yourself each morning, what would your goal be?
...Why would you choose this goal?
2. How do you feel about report cards?
...Why do you feel this way?
...What do you expect from your report card this week?
3. If you complete an assignment and you feel good about it, but you do not get the mark you thought you would, how does this make you feel?
...What might you do about it?
4. Now that you have had the meeting about high school next year, what do you think about it?
...What are you planning to take as your elective? Why?

...What goals will you set for yourself next year?
...What do you think you need to do this year to get ready for next year?

Perceptions Of Teacher

1. Describe your teacher.
    ...Tell me about the kinds of things your teacher does that help you in school.
    ...Tell me about the kinds of things your teacher does that you do not find helpful.
2. Does your teacher have an effect on your motivation in school? How?
3. Does your teacher have an effect on your goals in school? How?
    Possible Further Questions:
4. Tell me about a time that your teacher did something that made you feel good.
5. Tell me about a time that your teacher did something that made you feel not so good.
6. If your teacher were to tell me about you, what do you think she would say?
7. How do you feel about your teacher? Why do you feel that way?

Perceptions Of School Activities

1. What do you think about when you arrive at school in the morning?
2. Tell me about the seating arrangement in your classroom.
    ...What do you think about the system?
3. How do you feel about the seating arrangement in the library?
4. You wrote in your journal that you felt the social studies assignment was important.
    ...Tell me about this assignment and why you felt this way.
5. You were able to choose your own topic and your own group. How did you arrive at this decision?
    ...How do you feel your group did?
6. What did you think about the mark your group received on this project?
    Possible Further Questions:
7. Tell me about the poetry café.
    ...How did you feel about it?
    ...Why did you feel that way?
    ...What did you choose to share at the poetry café?
    ...Why did you choose to read what you did?
8. Tell me about your writer's workshop.
    ...How did you feel about it when you handed it in?
    ...How did you feel about it when you got it back from your teacher?
8. Tell me about something in school that you find frustrating.

Perceptions Of Peers

1. You said you were going to take _____as your elective next year. Are any of your friends taking this elective?
    ...How much did that play in your decision?
2. Do your classmates have an effect on your motivation in school? How?
3. Whom do you feel comfortable working with in class? Why?

4. Whom would your prefer not to work with? Why?

5. You had your classmates read and edit your speeches.

   ...How did it feel to have someone else review your speech?

   ...How did it feel to have to read and review someone else's speech?

   Possible Further Questions:

6. If you are doing something in class, for example talking to another student or playing with something at your desk, and a classmate asked you to stop, what would you do?

7. If one of your classmates were to tell a friend about you, what might they say?

8. If someone in your class wanted you to do something that you did not feel comfortable with you, what would you do?

Final Question:

1. If I were to be your teacher, what could I do to help you be motivated in school?

Appendix C: Student Journal Questions

Journal #1
What do you think was the most important thing that happened at school today? Explain why you think so.
What was the most challenging thing for you at school today? Explain why you felt it was challenging and how you dealt with it.
What did you try the hardest at school today? Describe the situation or activity.
Journal #2

Write about school today. Please include as much detail as possible.
Journal #3
Write about something that happened this week that you feel good about.
Write about something that happened this week that you do not feel good about.
Write about anything else that you would like to write about.
Journal #4

Write about something that the teacher did in the classroom today that you found very helpful.
Describe an assignment or a project that you enjoyed doing this year and why you enjoyed it.
Journal #5

Write about the Poetry Café.
How do you feel about this project? Describe why you feel that way.

Appendix D: Observation Schedule

Observation #1   - Physical Environment
              - No students in classroom
Observation #2   - Tuesday, 11:00 – 12:00 pm
                        - Math, Class Discussion, Lunch
Observation #3   - Friday, 8:25-10:00 am
                        - Warm up Game, Spelling, Comprehension Activity
Observation #4   - Monday, 12:40-2:50 pm
                        - Read Aloud/Catch up period, High School Counsellor visit,
                        Social Studies
Observation #5   - Wednesday, 9:00 am – 9:40 am
              - Computer Lab – Teacher on Call
Observation #6   - Thursday, 9:00 am – 9:40 am
                        - Poetry Café – presented in Activity room with parent and student
                        audience
Observation #7   - Friday, 8:30-10:00am
              - Spelling, Jump Rope for Heart (in gym), Read Aloud/Catch Up
Observation #8   - Monday, 8:30-11:45am
                        - Warm up Game, Newspaper Responses, Public Speaking, Recess,
                        Library, Math