



## Widening the view on teacher-child relationships: the Teacher Relationship Interview (TRI)

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Assessing teacher-child relationship quality using multiple methods and perspectives



## Need of multiple methods: why interviews?

- Mental representations / internal working models (Pianta et.al., 2003)
- Unconscious processes
- Indirect methods: interviews (e.g., Maier et.al., 2004)



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## Teacher Relationship Interview

(TRI; Pianta, 1999)

- Semi-structured interview
- Informant = teacher
- Relationship with a specific student
- 12 questions
- about 30 minutes



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## Questions TRI

Negative and positive experiences, and recent examples:

‘Describe a time in the last week when you and your child really clicked’

Teacher roles:

‘Can you tell about a situation when the child displayed serious misbehavior?’

Emotional states:

‘How did you feel in that moment / How do you think <name child> felt’



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## Three main dimensions of representational models:

- Content Area (*what*)
- Affective Area (*emotions*)
- Processing Area (*how*)



## Content Area

- Sensitivity of Discipline
- Secure Base
- Perspective Taking
- Intentionality / Agency





### Content Area

- Sensitivity of Discipline
- Secure Base
- Perspective Taking
- Intentionality

>> **Sensitive Practices**  
*Factor loadings > .72*  
*Cronbach's alpha = .86*



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### Affective Area

- Positive Affect
- Anger / hostility
- Helplessness



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### Processing Area

- Neutralizing Negative Affect
- Coherence



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### **Previous research TRI**

(*Stuhlman & Pianta, 2002*)

- Leading quality: negative affect (anger)  
Associations with observed teacher-child interactions

#### Unexplored questions:

- Role of perceived *externalizing behavior*?
- Associations with *relational conflict* (STRS)?



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## Present study

- Convergence TRI and STRS
- Role of *externalizing problems*:  
Teacher interviewed about two students:
  - an average child in class
  - most disruptive child in class



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## Research questions:

1. Does TRI reveal differences in t-c relationship quality for average versus disruptive children?
2. Are TRI-scales related to relationship qualities measured with STRS?
3. *Does TRI assesses (a) primarily teacher-characteristics, or (b) unique features of t-c relationship?*



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## Sample

- 45 teachers (one male)
- 90 kindergarten children (46 boys)

Two children per teacher:

- Average child & most disruptive child
- Same gender
- Below 1 *SD* on internalizing behavior



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## Procedure

- Teachers not informed about selection procedure
- Teachers informed about target child only just before start interview
- Interviews in random order
- Private setting



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## Instruments

Behavior Questionnaire for two- to six year olds  
(*BQTSYO-M; Thijs et.al., 2004*)

- Externalizing behavior ( $\alpha = .91$ )

Dutch STRS  
(*Koomen et.al., 2007*)

- Short version
- Closeness, Conflict, and Dependency ( $\alpha = .75-.86$ )



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## Instruments (2)

Teacher Relationship Interview  
(*TRI; version obtained from Pianta by e-mail in 2003*)

- Content area: Sensitive practices
- Affective area: Positive affect, Anger, Helplessness
- Processing area: Neutralizing Negative Affect, Coherence



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## Instruments (2)

### Coding TRI scales

- Scale 1-7 (Coherence: 1-5)
- Whole interview
- Random order
- Independent coders, not aware of behavioral status child
- Interrater agreement:  
.50 (neutralizing) - .82 (negative affect)



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## RESULTS



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## 1. Group mean-differences TRI

*Analyses: paired t-tests*

### Helplessness

- More helplessness for externalizing children
- $d = .50$

### Anger

- More anger for externalizing children
- $d = .70$



## 2. TRI-STRS

*Multilevel regression analyses:*

- Dependent variables: Closeness, Conflict, Dependency
- Between-group difference: dummy variable (externalizing group = 1)
- Predictors: TRI-scales (standardized scores)





	Closeness B (SE)	Conflict B (SE)	Depend. B (SE)
Externalizing (dummy)		1.64 (.12)	1.95 (.11)
Sensitive pract.			
Positive affect	.15 (.06)**		
Helplessness	-.19 (.06)**		
Anger		.30 (.09)**	
Neutralizing		.17 (.10)*	
Coherence		.30 (.09)**	



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### 3. Teacher of dyadic features?

*Analyses: IntraClassCorrelations*

Sensitive practices	.44**
Positive affect	ns
Helplessness	ns
Anger	ns
Neutralizing	.57**
Coherence	ns



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## DISCUSSION



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## Summary of main findings TRI

1. Role of externalizing behavior: more anger and helplessness
2. Affective Area and Processing Area:
  - Features of dyadic relationship
  - Moderate convergence with Closeness and Conflict
3. Content Area:
  - Features of teacher *and* relationship
  - Not uniquely related to STRS



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## Conclusion

- In comparison to STRS: TRI provides distinct but related information
- Highlights emotional processes



## Directions future research

- Replication in a large sample
- Predictive value TRI for well-being child
- Usefulness TRI for practice of consultation (Stuhlman & Pianta, 2002; Koomen et al., 2003)





Thank you  
for your attention!

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