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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN MARCOS

Moving from the Utterances of Students into Action:
A Phenomenological Exploration of
Students' Perceptions of Teacher Behaviors

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Satisfaction of the
requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

by

Richard F. Lawrence Jr.

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Professor Lorri Santamaria, Chair
Professor Patricia Prado-Olmos

2010

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The Dissertation of Richard F. Lawrence Jr. is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego
California State University, San Marcos

2010

Dedication

I dedicate this page to my Lord and Savior and his angels who saw the best in me when others could only see the worst in me. These Angels include: My mother Mazie Lynn Foster who was deprived of an education but chose to end the cycle of illiteracy and hopelessness by instilling in me the value of education, as well as resiliency when times appeared hopeless. I dedicate this page also to my lovely wife Shelly who has had to endure my frustrations, attitudes, and mental and physical absence through the journey of this dissertation and through it all kept encouraging me and stood right by my side, what a blessing you are to me. To my son Nehemiah who had to endure my absence throughout this process of learning and never stopped loving me, and Nia who was another blessing created during this journey of learning. I am blessed by their presence in my life and pray that the new title that this dissertation will bring will prove fruitful to them in the time to come. I dedicate this also to my little sister Natasha Lawrence who has never failed to lift me up when my spirits were down and who remains a constant support in my life. I dedicate this to my seven older brothers and sisters and relatives in Jamaica for their support of me throughout the years. Lastly, I dedicate this page to George G. Bryant who spent countless hours with me on his kitchen table helping me throughout my years of schooling to reach my goals. Sadly, he passed a couple years shy of seeing this dream come to pass. To finish, I would be remiss if I did not dedicate this dissertation to the students in our schools that have been silenced into failure due to their past experiences. It is my hope that this work will evoke a passion for change that will bring voice to silence which in turn will create positive change.

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Acknowledgements

It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the hardwork, and support of a village individuals who have been instrumental in supporting me through my dissertation journey. I would like to thank and acknowledge my dissertation chair, Dr. Lorri Santamaria for her patience, guidance, support, and moreover her passion for serving the underrepresented groups of students in our higher learning institutions. It is my hope that she will continue to fight this good fight for equality. I would like to also acknowledge my committee members and mentors; Dr. Patricia Prado-Olmos for her support and strong example of educational leadership, Dr. Alan J. Daly for being a man of character and undying support for that which is right and for showing me how to do it through educational leadership, Dr. Jennifer Jeffries for being my foundation of support and voice of reason through this journey of learning, and Dr. Carol Leighty for trusting in me to lead a school and develop as an educational leader.

I would also acknowledge my course professors: Dr. Chrispeels, Dr. Hofstetter, Dr. Lindsey, Dr. Stall, Dr. Hayden, and Dr. Moineau, from each I have gleaned much that has enhanced my abilities as a researcher and educational leader.

To my Cohort 3 colleagues thanks for sharing your knowledge with me through this journey, and Dr. Jose Villarreal for lifting me up and being a true “brotha” through this experience of learning together.

I would like to acknowledge the support of Pam Thompson for telling me like it is and helping me not to dive off the deep end throughout career and educational journey,

Greg Cooke for providing me with the opportunity to learn and grow as a leader. I also would like to acknowledge the support of Charlene Edwards who has never failed to provide me with her support and encouragement.

Lastly and most importantly, I would like to acknowledge the students that I have had the opportunity to learn from throughout my career in education. It is through their journey, and triumphs that I have been inspired to conduct this research. I would like to thank them for not giving up on me when they could have.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Moving from the Utterances of Students Into Action:

A Phenomenological Exploration of
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by

Richard F. Lawrence Jr.

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

University of California, San Diego, 2010

California State University, San Marcos, 2010

Professor Lorri Santamaria, Chair

The purpose of this study is to examine how students' perceptions of teachers' behaviors impacts their success in school. This study stems from the achievement gap noticed in students of color or in situations that place them at risk of dropping out of school. In order to explore the achievement gap, much prior research has relied on statistical data taken from adults or outside agencies. These sources often negate the voice of the students that make up these gaps. This study will examine students' perceptions and connections to perceptions and student success in the classroom. The literature reviewed in this case study examines (1) the achievement gap as a phenomenon, (2) students' perspectives, and (3) student voice. An examination of these areas of

literature provides substantive support for research needed in the area of the impact of students' perspectives on their academic achievement. Participants in this study include 30 11th- and 12th-grade students attending an alternative high school in south Riverside County, California. Data for this research will be collected through student surveys, interviews, and student writing samples. A modified method of analysis of phenomenological data was used to analyze, group, and derive themes from the data provided from participants' responses. Research findings are presented in this study to inform present and future educators about ways to reach student groups that are most at risk of failing in school.

Chapter 1

Introduction

“Childhood teaches us that fairness is an important aspect of our daily living. Perhaps there is no easier way to disrupt a childhood game than to charge ‘That’s not fair!’” (Nichols & Good, 1998). When this occurs, the child who feels unfairly treated disengages and leaves the game or engagement with resentment. This occurrence is not unique to children at play. Teenagers and adults play it out similarly. What students perceive to be fair and just impacts the ways in which they engage in the learning process.

The educational achievement gap separating students that are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) from their mostly White and mainstream peers has been apparent in the United States educational system for many years. Sadly, past and current reform efforts have not made significant changes to this achievement gap. Consequently the gap affects society, as many of the students within the achievement gap drop out of school. In order to address student achievement, research is beginning to consider the voices of students and their perceptions of issues they perceive that disengage them from learning (Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Fielding, 2004; Fielding & Rudduck, 2004; Fine, 1991; Fordham, 1996; Mitra, 2004). As an educator, one often hears students make statements such as, “that teacher doesn’t like me,” “I do not like that teacher,” or “I do not want to go to his/her class.” Often when students voice these opinions their voices aren’t validated, heard, or met with further probing in order to consider the root issues.

This research seeks to examine the perceptions students have of teacher behaviors, which may impact their success in school. This disciplined inquiry supports the use of the phenomenological method. According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology is the *first* conceptionalization of knowledge because it begins with “things themselves” and is the final court of appeal (p. 41). Phenomenology, step by step, attempts to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgment; to set aside presuppositions; and to reach a transcendental state of freshness. Phenomenology embraces openness, acceptance, and a readiness to see the unfettered way, which is not threatened by customs, beliefs, and prejudices of normal science. It is neither threatened by the habits of the natural world nor by knowledge based on the unaltered everyday experience (Moustakas, 1994).

This research will provide recommendations and implications that will offer solutions to impact the dropout rate and achievement gap that continues to plague students as they enter into adulthood. Societal recommendations and implications will be included as well.

This chapter sets the stage for a process of disciplined inquiry. It provides an overview of the study, including its rationale, purpose, limitations, the statement of problem, and definition of key terms.

Background to the Study

Throughout the history of education, clashing perspectives have been a part of the

development of new approaches, as has pedagogy that has resulted in different schools of thought on education. Currently, there is debate about the best course of action to take to meet the needs of diverse students in urban schools. Even amidst this debate, schools continue to fail to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) and low-income students. In California, students are dropping out of school in increasing numbers. Statistics show that in 2006 graduation rates were at approximately 67%, while the number of high schools dropouts is attributed to the growth of people represented in our prison systems (Oakes, 2004). Unless this trend is dramatically reversed, we will continue to experience the effects of the achievement gap in our schools, prisons, and society as a whole.

The debate on how to best educate diverse students and address lower achievement rates, is rapidly spilling over and into suburban schools, where the population of diverse groups was once overlooked due to low representation. Addressing equity has now become a dilemma amongst suburban schools accustomed to having a clientele that represents the dominant race and class of people who originated in the area. Teachers in these communities now must consider alternative approaches to reaching diverse students. Many students of color in these schools fall into the achievement gap. Achievement failure has contributed to students dropping out as these students become discouraged. Their discouragement leads to disengagement and in some cases discipline issues. Unfortunately this results in many suburban schools pursuance of harsh expulsion policies, which appear to be disproportionately applied to CLD students (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

Past and current school reform efforts have been based on standardized test data, observations, and theories built on the analysis and input of adult researchers and practitioners. The problem with this approach is that it lacks the voice of the student directly affected by the actions of the reform. Shotter (1993) stated: “No matter how benevolent we may be towards those we study, no matter how concerned with their liberation, with their betterment, with preventing their victimization, etc., the fact is that we do not make sense of their lives in their terms” (p. 6). Knowing this it is important that researchers and educators understand that the learning of students cannot be supported if no one finds the time to listen to their voices (Fielding & Rudduck, 2003). If educators cannot hear their voices, we cannot benefit from student’s perceptions or perspectives.

Statement of the Problem

Even though current research findings urge our educational institutions to address the academic achievement gap amongst our Latino and Black student population, the problem continues to exist. Research on dropouts has shown that a host of negative school-related experiences serves as powerful precursors to the decision to formally drop out of school (Rumberger, 1995). The deleterious consequences for those students who drop out of school, according to Rumberger (1995) are an increased likelihood of health problems, engagement in criminal activities, and dependency on governmental aid.

What is the reason for the achievement gap between White and non-Asian “minority” students? As a researcher, this question sets the foundation for my research into where the gap begins amongst students. The United States Census Bureau and the

Justice Policy Institute's combined data revealed that 791,600 Black men were either in prison or jail, while there were 603,000 students in higher education (Justice Policy Institute, 2005). More than half the inmates in our nation's prisons are high school dropouts and have minimal literacy skills.

Thus, in response to this data what is clearly lacking are studies that investigate students' perceptions and experiences that attribute to a student's desire to drop out of school. Inquiries such as this may provide data that could assist in both closing the achievement gap, and a reduction in the dropout rate for our nation's high school students who are CLD.

Purpose of the Study

In speaking for children, there is a tendency to mistake or betray the realities and interests of those about whom we speak in favor of our own ideas or those to whom we defer. The problem of speaking for or on behalf of others compounds, rather than alleviates those same difficulties and dilemmas faced by students (Fielding, 2004). In order to address the issue of poor student achievement in students of diverse backgrounds, it will be essential to examine the following overarching research question as it relates to student voice: How do students' perceptions of teachers' behaviors influences their success in school? The specific co-research questions include:

1. In what ways does a student's cultural background influence their perceptions of another's behaviors?
2. In what ways does the student's background influence their perception in the

classroom?

3. How important is the teacher's perceived behavior to the student?
4. Which teacher behaviors positively impact the relationship and success of the student?
5. Which teacher behaviors turn students off from learning?

This study will qualitatively explore how students' perceptions of teacher behaviors influence their success in school. The purpose is to understand why students disengage from learning in classrooms where they feel they are less connected with the teacher. This qualitative phenomenological research study using a modified Van Kaam (1958) method was adapted by Moustakas (1994). The inquiry will use data—gathered from one-on-one interviews, surveys, and written narrative responses—to qualitatively “test” the stated research hypothesis. To successfully answer these questions, it is essential to examine the experiences and perspectives of students through multiple data sources.

Research Goals

This research will seek to accomplish research goals set at the theoretical, practical, and personal levels. The theoretical goals of this research are (1) to verify the findings of previous research on students' perceptions and student voice in order to bring awareness to the need for change in this area, and (2) to bring attention to the significance of students' perceptions as they relate to students' success in school. The goals set at the

practical level are to find out what behaviors students perceive that turn them off from learning. These are set to offer recommendations to the teaching practice on positively impacting students, which will add validity to the importance of including student voice in decision-making opportunities. Finally, the personal goal are to be part is to be a contributor to the rich body of emergent research that has the potential to inform practices that impact student success and bring to light issues that continue to plague students in our society. Together these research goals seek to address the issues that contribute to the educational achievement gap that affects historically underserved low achieving student groups.

Methodology

This phenomenological research study will explore the experiences and perceptions of students in the K-12 education system using a modified Van Kaam (1958) method as conceptualized and applied by Moustakas (1994). Moustakas stated that “in phenomenological studies the investigator abstains from making suppositions, focuses on a specific topic freshly and naively, constructs a questions or problem to guide the study, and derives findings that will provide the basis for further research and reflection” (p. 47). Phenomenological research methods are relevant to this research because “Phenomenology is a significant philosophical movement because it deals so well with the problem of appearances” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 3). Yin (2003) defined a case study as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). It is essential to gain as much insight from the subjects of the study in

order to yield tangible results. Using students' perceptions as a unit of analysis, this study will investigate teacher behaviors, student behaviors, and students' reactions as a result of the perceived behaviors of the teacher by using surveys, interviews, and personal narratives.

Conceptual /Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded within the theoretical boundaries of social cognition theory and sociocultural (or situational) perspectives (Fisk & Taylor, 1984; Greeno, 1989; Rowley, Burchinal, Roberts, & Zeisel, 2008; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Vygotsky, 1986). The situative perspective is defined as the approach that treats knowledge as a process, "an activity that takes place among individuals, the tools and artifacts they use, and the communities and practices in which they participate" (Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996). "Rather than thinking that knowledge is in the minds of individuals, we could alternatively think of knowledge as the potential for situated activity. On this view, knowledge would be understood as a relation between an individual and a social or physical situation" (Greeno, 1989, p. 1). This theoretical framework is important to this research, as it examines the knowledge that is gained by a student through the experience of school and their interactions with teachers. Through the engagement of learning one may assume students gain knowledge about his/her position within the school setting. The situative perspective emerged in learning and instruction in part from the attempts by cognitive anthropologists and psychologists to resolve some basic problems of cognitive theory, particularly with respect to the treatment of knowledge transfer (Vosniadou). Social cognition is defined as "the study of how people make sense of other

people and themselves” (p. 4). Social cognition is relevant to this research as it sets the basis as to why the examinations of students’ perceptions are important. A student’s social cognition shapes his/her understanding of their teachers, as well as their understanding of what they believe the teacher thinks about him/her. This understanding is coupled with a student’s situative perspective which shapes their perceptions of teachers in general, which in turn has the potential to evoke an action in the student towards the teacher. It focuses on how ordinary people think about people, and how they think they think about people (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). Social cognitions are the beliefs that underlie social perceptions, judgment, and behavior (Rowley, et al., 2008).

A major construct connected to social cognition is perceptual salience. Perceptual salience is defined as the belief that what one finds to be important is dependent upon experiences that have shaped the individual’s social viewpoint. Personality, expectations, needs fulfillment, feelings of competence, and control issues all have an impact on what an individual may find to be perceptually salient (McMillan, 1978). Perceptual salience has shown to determine the way in which the dimensions of a problem are processed for a solution through cognitive mechanism, such as decisions, rules, memory, and retrieval processes. Use of this theory will validate the inclusion of student voice and perception in terms of attending to the achievement gap.

This work is also grounded in sociocultural and situative perspectives, which operate under the premise that we learn and become who we are through interaction with others. Current conceptualizations of sociocultural theory draw heavily on the work of Vygotsky (1986). According to Tharp and Gallimore (1988), the sociocultural

perspective has profound implications for teaching, schooling, and education. One of those key implications is that higher order functions develop out of social interaction. Vygotsky argues that a child's development cannot be understood by a study of the individual. In order to understand the individual child we must also examine the external social world in which that individual or student life has developed. Kublin, Wetherby, Crais, and Prizant (1989) succinctly state that "Vygotsky (1934/1986) described learning as being embedded within social events and occurring as a child interacts with people, objects, and events in the environment" (p. 286). This study incorporates this theory by proposing to consider the perspectives of CLD students in the school setting.

Significance of Study

Our nation is in an educational crisis. For the first time the federal government is playing a major role in education. Educators are in a constant state of searching for solutions while living with a myriad of unfunded federal mandates which find us competing for and relying on funding sources such as Race to the Top. For the last decade the academic achievement gap has captured our attention as something that can be changes if teachers view students differently and deliver instruction according to student needs. However, researchers and educators have been slow to ask students how we can change or perhaps how teachers' perceptions actually affect students' performance. This study is significant in that it presumes student voice plays a major role in informing teaching practice in high school classrooms.

This inquiry is also significant in that it contributes to the dearth of literature on CLD students' perceptions as gathered by a CLD researcher (Fine, 1991; Fordham,

1996). As a researcher of Jamaican descent and the Principal of the school where the inquiry takes place, the researcher's duality and more so his multiplicity enables him to experience and recognize his "ways of knowing" as being different than those of the mainstream (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005; Lowe, 1996). It is precisely because of the researchers' personal, cultural, educational, linguistic, and professional background and experiences he is able to identify unique solutions to educational issues. The researcher's ability to "code-switch" fluidly moving in and out of different contexts enables him to engage in authentic relationships with staff, parents, and community members --- as well as peers and colleagues and this case, most importantly students (Santamaría & Santamaría, in press). In terms of conducting research, this perspective is timely and valuable.

Additionally, this work adds to evidence around the notion that teachers' perceptions shape students' experiences and potentially their academic achievement. Self-fulfilling prophecy is what got us where we are now, in terms of the ways in which teachers view students in the classroom. Adding to a conversation about how what teachers think about students plays out in students' perceptions of school is timely and provocative.

Some researchers have begun to collect data on what students who are culturally and linguistically diverse have to say about school in general in order to start a specific area of inquiry (Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Fielding, 2004; Fielding & Rudduck, 2004; Fine, 1991; Fordham, 1996; Mitra, 2004). Most findings indicate that when students express positive sentiments, students felt like they were empowered, connected, and

valued enough to be a part of the change they desired to see at their school. When students express constructive criticism, according to Chory (2007), they perceive grades, procedures, or communications given by the instructor as unfair and report a greater likelihood of indirect aggression toward their instructors. Unfortunately, there is minimal empirical research that examines which teacher behaviors students have experienced to be fair or unfair. This inquiry will provide added information to fill the gap demonstrated by these researchers and add to rich conversations taking place in schools, classrooms and academia as we begin to ponder what the students think and how their thinking might inform our practice.

Delimitations and Limitations of Research

A delimitation of this study includes the population sample selected for this study. The sample is limited to high school students enrolled in a south Riverside County school district; thus, the ability to generalize to the entire population of south Riverside County and beyond is limited. The sample, however, represents the demographics of students attending at-risk programs in Riverside and San Diego counties and can be generalized with respect to similar programs with like demographic groups.

There are three limitations to this study. The first limitation is that the students selected for this program are currently attending a school for at-risk students. This alternative school's structure and course design may have an impact on students' attitudes and behaviors that could have differed if the students were on a traditional high school

site. A second limitation is that the study included only high school students in grades 11 and 12. A third limitation is that the sample size is limited to the small population of students attending the school being studied.

Definition of Terms

Academic Achievement Gap

The “achievement gap” is the difference in performance among groups of students, especially groups defined by race/ethnicity and family income (United States Department of Education, 2002).

Credits

The basic unit of coursework measurement is the course credit. Course credits refer to standardized Carnegie units. (United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS, 2002).

Descriptive Case Study

A case study that presents a detailed account of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 1998).

Perception	The process and experience of gaining sensory information about the world (Helmholtz, 1977).
Perceptual Salience	The strong impression of an experience or object that creates a heightened sensitivity to experiences or objects similar to the originating experience.
Phenomenon	To bring to light, to place in brightness, to show in itself, the totality of what lies before us in the light of day (Heidegger, 1977).
Proficiency	Advancement in knowledge and skill (Merriam-Webster).
Self Efficacy	People's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. (Bandura, 1994).

Social Cognition

“To understand and explain how the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others.” (Allport, 1985).

Sociocultural/Situative Perspective

The perspective that a person holds is based on, “an activity that takes place among individuals, the tools and artifacts that they use, and the communities and practices in which they participate” (Greeno et al., 1996).

Stereotype-Threat

The threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype (Steele, 1999)

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Although research on perceptions of the schooling experience, achievement gap, and student voice exists; there is limited empirical research regarding students' perceptions of teacher behaviors. In order to gain insight into research findings related to students' perceptions of teacher behaviors and its relationship to student achievement, a variety of studies were considered. Following a brief overview of the use of phenomenology in the study, this review will consider literature and studies that explore the achievement gap for students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), the role of continuation high schools, students perceptions of school, and the lack of student voice in research. This review of achievement gap literature is included in order to establish a link between the characteristics found contributing to the gap and those found in studies related to students' perceptions. Studies involving the perceptions of CLD students were considered to determine whether a casual link had been established within the research of students' perceptions and academic achievement in school. Finally, research regarding student voice was explored in order to establish the impact that student voice can have on policies and interventions that seek to support the needs of students. Moreover, this area was included to support the use of student voice in research to strengthen the outcomes offered as solutions to the questions explored in the proposed study.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a term that has been used in philosophy as early as 1765. This term is defined “as knowledge as it appears to consciousness, the science of describing what one perceived, senses, and knows in one’s immediate awareness and experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). Phenomenological research was featured in the work of Edmund Husserl, who inquired about the discovery of meanings and essences in knowledge formed by individuals (1931). He asserted, “essence provides on the one side a knowledge of the essential nature of the Real, and on the other, in respect of the domain left over, knowledge of the essential nature of the non-real (irreal)” (1931, p. 45). The process, which transforms individual experiences into essential insights, occurs through a process Husserl calls “ideation” (Kockelmans, 1967). This process occurs when “the object that appears in consciousness mingles with the object in nature so that a meaning is created, and knowledge is extended” (Moustakas, 1994). This conceptualization led to Husserl’s concept of intentionality, referring to consciousness, or the internal experience of being conscious of something; thus, the act of consciousness and the object of consciousness being intentionally related (1931).

Included in an understanding of consciousness are important background factors, such as stirrings of pleasure, early shapings of judgment, or incipient wishes (Husserl, 1931). Intentional acts are objectifying while feeling acts are nonobjectifying (Moustakas, 1994). The following example illustrates this point. Consider the experience of excitement on receiving a new sports car from a wealthy family member. The car is the matter and also the object of the intentional act. The objectifying quality is the

actuality of the car's existence, as such, while the nonobjectifying quality is the excitement evoked by receiving the car. The object that appears varies perceptually in terms of when it is perceived, from what angle, with what background of experience, and with what orientation of wishing, willing, or judging; always from the vantage point of a perceiving individual (Gurwitsch, 1967). Another important characteristic of phenomenology is the notion of intentional suspension of judgment while relying on the intuitive grasp of knowledge, free of presuppositions and intellectualizing. As such, phenomenology occurs in the moment and depends precisely upon the observing or experiencing individual's interpretation of the event, act, or thing.

An understanding of phenomenology and the critical role it serves in this inquiry is significant. It serves as a theoretical framework, an epistemology, and as such a methodological way of discovering new knowledge. According to Maurice Natanson, "the radicality of the phenomenological method is both continuous and discontinuous with philosophy's general effort to subject experience to fundamental, critical scrutiny: to take nothing for granted and to show the warranty for what we claim to know" (1973, p. 63). In this inquiry, phenomenology allows greater understanding of how students' perceptions are formed and the significance it plays in their interpretations of events that occur within the classroom. Many students seek to be understood within the classroom, but many still are never heard. van Kaam (1966) states:

The experience of "really feeling understood" is a perceptual-emotional Gestalt: A student, perceiving that a person co-experiences what things mean to the students and accepts him, feels, initially, relief from experiential loneliness, and gradually, safe experiential communion with

that person and with that which the subject perceived this person to represent. (p.325-326)

This understanding shall serve as a rubric for the experiences shared by students in this research endeavor. This description will be kept at the forefront in order to determine what did and did not work, in terms of the phenomenological experiences experienced by the students throughout the inquiry.

The achievement gap is one of the most obvious features in the educational landscape of our great nation. Teachers are expected to know about and work hard to close it in a high-stakes assessment environment. As well, the gap affects every student in every school. Consequently, it is worthy of consideration in a study such as this one on student perceptions of their teachers' behaviors.

The Achievement Gap

Race and the achievement gap. The Black-White achievement gap has been well hypothesized, studied, and documented—and yet it persists as an educational issue (Lewis, Marlon, Hancock, Stephen, & Hill-Jackson, 2008). The data from research continues to show a wide and sometimes growing gap between CLD and poor students when compared to middle class White and Asian students. The implementation of interventions as a result of this data has made little change in the gap of achievement amongst these groups of students. Consequently, the repetition of the same data conclusions year after year has solidified the notion that there will always be an achievement gap for these groups of students (Plucker, Burroughs, & Song, 2010). These

conclusions offer limited solutions to those currently stuck or affected by those caught in the achievement gap.

In a statistical study conducted at the University of Minnesota, Meyers (2004) sought to determine whether poverty was the cause of poor performance for African American students who took the Minnesota Basic Standards Test. During the preliminary trial run of this research in 1996, 75% of African American students failed the math test, while 26% of White students failed. In addition, 79% of African American students failed the reading test, compared to 42% of White students. After further research, it was found that student test scores were not statistically related to poverty. They were more related to school placement. Findings indicated students of color were underrepresented in top ranking schools. In addition, CLD learners were found to attend schools ranked two or more times lower than their White peers in reading and math. These research findings indicated success on tests was correlated to the level of access that the students had to quality programs (Meyers, 2004).

When capable students of color fail to perform as well as their White counterparts, the explanation often has less to do with preparation or ability than with threat of stereotypes about their capacity to succeed (Steele, 1999). In a study conducted by Steele on stereotype threat, the researcher examined alternative reasons for the achievement gap in students of color. For his research he had Black and White students take a verbal test. Prior to testing, the respondents were given a long list of words with two letters missing. The research respondents were then asked to complete the words as fast as they could. The words were preselected by the researchers and included fragments

associated with stereotype-related words. The Black students that were told the test was related to ability level completed the fragments with more words linked to stereotype than those that were not. The White respondents to this study completed few stereotype-related fragments when given either situation. To further illustrate stereotype threat, participants about to take a test that was difficult in terms of content and grade level, were asked to tell the researchers their preferences in sports and music. Findings indicated that when Black students were expected to take a difficult test, they reported less interest in stereotypical interests (e.g., basketball and hip-hop). When a test was presented without reference to level of difficulty, Black students expressed strong stereotypical interests associated with African American culture. These findings suggest students' eschewed stereotypical interests only when preferring them would not affect their academic achievement. Thus encouraging stereotypic views of themselves might have negative affects on their academic achievement (Steele, 1999). When Black students perceive themselves through the lens of what they perceive to be negative stereotypes, they underperform. This research study offers another reason for the achievement gap. In addition, through this research possible solutions are offered.

According to Steele (1999):

Even though the stereotypes held by the larger society may be difficult to change, it is possible to create niches in which negative stereotypes are not felt to apply. In specific classrooms, within specific programs, even in the climate of entire schools, it is possible to weaken a group's sense of being threatened by negative stereotypes, to allow its members a trust that would otherwise be difficult to sustain. Thus when schools try to decide how important black-white test score gaps are in determining the fate of black students on their campuses, they should keep something in mind: for the greatest portion of black students- those with strong academic identities-

the the degree of racial trust they feel in their campus life, rather than a few ticks on a standardized test, may be key to their success. (p. 54)

In another study, Fairbrother (2008) explored programs offered to at-risk Latino students caught within the achievement gap. In this qualitative (descriptive) study, the researcher focused on three at-risk programs in a large city. This study was conducted over a semester in two high schools and one alternative school. The research involved the collection of three types of data: observation in English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms, interviews, and documents related to program literature. Findings indicated that the programs reviewed in this study strived to provide a caring and nurturing environment in some areas. This was seen more so in the alternative education site. However, it was clear these programs were not academically challenging.

The research found that students participating in these programs were assigned less homework and they easily accumulated credits. The English classes observed in these programs were taught as developmental English classes. In addition, a lack of rigor was prevalent throughout the programs observed. This research provides insights into the current forms of remediation offered to students who fall within the achievement gap. The concern with these programs is that they offer students a differentiated approach toward graduation, yet do not address the issues of educational achievement that have created the achievement gap in the first place. To this end Fairbrother (2008) states:

Teacher educators should be preparing teachers to work in diverse classrooms without continuing to perpetrate the injustice of low expectations and unchallenging work. As we raise these issues of schooling equity and social justice in the classroom, we need to unpack these remedial models. It is ones hope that hearing the students' voices, poignant and defeated, hopeful and determined, will compel us to do our

part in the academy to challenge the hegemony of who gets what kind of education: what is taught in schools, to whom, and why? (p. 609)

The impact of the achievement gap on society is what often creates a shift in purpose for legislatures, policy makers, and researchers. This push shifts from perceiving the individual student as victim to perceptions that “these” students are being victimizing by society. Consequently, the students that are caught in the achievement gap are popularly perceived to be the originators of criminality in our society.

In “The Flat Earth and Education: How America’s Commitment to Equity Will Determine Our Future,” Linda Darling-Hammond (2007) discusses research conducted around the disparities in our educational system that contribute to the achievement gap amid White and non-Asian “minority” students. In this study, Darling-Hammond clearly highlights the social implications with data from both the United States Census Bureau and the Justice Policy Institute. This combined data revealed that 791,600 Black men were either in prison or jail, while there were 603,000 students in higher education (Justice Policy Institute, 2005). She provides additional support, which asserts that more than half the inmates in our nation’s prisons are CLD high school dropouts with minimal literacy skills. This data makes a strong argument for the need to transform our schools in order to ensure a strong educational foundation.

Darling-Hammond (2007) uses articles and studies conducted by other researchers to support her arguments with regard to the achievement gap. She cites an earlier study in which she compares the resources used in a particular school district with student achievement. In this research, she conducted an analysis that examined the effects

of poverty, race, and school resources on the proportions of students failing the high-stakes test. She found that school resources matter to the achievement of students. She asserts that if more student resources are provided in our schools then the failure rates of students of color would show a decline. The data provided to support this conclusion is based off of her analysis of Massachusetts and South Carolina resource allocations. The strengths of this research are that the data supports the need for more resources in schools to close the achievement gap.

Since the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka 1954* decision more than 50 years ago, schools have struggled to address the issues of equality and equity in the education system. This is evident through the existing achievement gap separating CLD students from their often White and Asian peers. In addition, the issue of segregation is another force that has kept students of particular racial groups from rising to the standards of proficiency. Segregation is still present in schools where tracking is used and students feel they must resegregate themselves to be with familiar peers. Desegregation has caused “White Flight” in some public school districts, where White families leave cities for the suburbs or rural areas. Despite these trends, there has been a rise in the amount of minority students attending college in comparison to the 1960s. Zirkel and Cantor (2004) conducted a study, which suggested multicultural environments can promote better interracial relationships and reduced levels of racial prejudice among students. Researchers also found that for students of color, making social connections and developing meaningful friendships at school was an important ingredient to “taking on an academic identity.” The article concludes that there is a clear need for more cultural

inclusiveness in our schools. It was found that when carefully thought out plans for creating more interethnic contact is implemented, prejudice and discrimination on campus is lessened and achievement for all students improves (Zirkel & Cantor, 2004). These findings sheds light on possible solutions to promote a more culturally aware and responsive climate on our school campuses.

Continuation High School

An alternative education school is defined as “a public elementary/secondary school that addresses needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school, provides nontraditional education, serves as an adjunct to a regular school, or falls outside of the categories of regular, special education, or vocational education” (U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p.63). What constitutes an alternative school varies from state to state, as do the policies that regulate and fund them (Foley & Pang, 2006). Warren (2007) authored a report to California legislators analyzing alternative education in California. He described three types of alternative schools: continuation schools, community schools, and community day schools. Independent study programs are also considered alternative education, and can be incorporated into alternative or traditional schools. Each type of school has different policies governing operations. The current inquiry will take place at a continuation high school, which warrants a closer consideration.

Continuation high schools serve high school students pushed out of traditional high school settings for factors such as attendance, discipline, and inability to make up enough credits to graduate in time. Incidentally, these students experience social and

emotional reactions. Due to the high concentration of these students on such a campus, the perception to the community is that students who attend continuation high schools are given a second-class education (Kim & Tylor, 2008). The continuation high school is mandated as an option for students who attend traditional high schools. Continuation high schools do a good job drawing students in and getting them back on track to graduate. Programs like these provide interventions that help save students who would otherwise add to the dropout rate.

Now that consideration has been given to the continuation high school, a closer look at literature on student perceptions may further inform research findings related to the achievement gap. The next section of this review will consider research findings on what students perceive to be happening in their schools and how these perceptions relate to their teachers.

Student Perceptions

Perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge in phenomenology research. Intentions, united with sensations, make up the full concrete act of perception (Husserl, 1970). Despite this acknowledgement, student perceptions of teacher behaviors have been minimally considered in educational research. This is unfortunate since the student perceptions of teachers can either motivate or cause a student to discredit or dismiss the work of the teacher altogether. This, in turn, results in students eventually dropping out of school. Finn's (1989) identification-participation model indicates that unless students identify well with their schools (i.e., feel welcomed, respected, and valued), their education participation will be limited (Xin, 2003). Corroborating these

findings, Burnett and Walz (1994) concluded that gang-related problems increase when students do not have a sense of belonging to their school. Schlosser (1992) reported that students whose teachers created a sense of belonging were more likely to accept their teachers' educational values and to continue school. This is in contrast to those who did not have teachers that emphasized a sense of belonging. In order to understand how students' perceptions in action further connect to students' success, it is important to examine the literature around students' perceptions.

Anthropologist Signithia Fordham (1996) conducted research in a Washington, D.C., public high school that focused on how the hidden and explicit curriculum shapes student aspirations and achievements. In addition, this research examined how students of differing racial, cultural, and social backgrounds respond to the schooling experience (Berlak, 2001). From her research she concluded that African American students' patterns of academic success and underachievement are a reflection of processes of resistance that enable them to maintain their humanness in the face of a stigmatized racial identity (Fordham, 1996). A high-achieving African American student who participated in this research stated the following about his view as it relates to the underperformance of African American students in school:

“Well, we supposed to be stupid...we perform poorly in school cause we all have it thought up in our heads we're supposed to be dumb so we might as well go ahead and be dumb,” he said. “And we think that most of the things we learn [at school] won't help us in life anyway...What good is a quadratic equation gonna do me if I'm picking up garbage cans?”

One study that examined students' perceptions of teacher behaviors was that of Marcus, Gross, and Seefeldt (1991). A critical component of the teacher-student relationship is how students perceive the ways in which their teachers treat them. To explore this issue, these researchers consulted 40 Black and 40 White fifth-grade students in an affluent suburban mid-Atlantic public school system. The students participating in this study completed the Teacher Treatment Inventory (TTI) (Weinstein, 1984). This inventory consisted of 30 items made up of three scales constructed on the basis of factor analysis: Scale 1) Negative Feedback and Teacher Direction; Scale 2) Work and Rule Orientation; and Scale 3) High Expectations, Opportunity, and Choice. Research findings suggest that Black males perceive that their teachers treat them in ways that differ from their White peers. In general, Black males perceived their teachers gave them more negative feedback than that of their peers, which includes Black females. This research is significant in that it supports the conclusion that students' perceptions begin to form about teachers' behaviors early in life (Weinstein, 1984).

Researchers have found that teachers overestimate the achievement of high achievers, underestimate that of low achievers, and predict least accurately the responses of low achievers (Gottfredson, Marcinak, Birdseye, & Gottfredson, 1995). In a study of teachers' attributions for student performance, Peterson and Barger (1984) found teachers attributed the success of perceived high achievers to ability and that of perceived low achievers to luck, making it difficult for perceived low achievers to change their teachers' expectations through their own efforts (Gottfredson et al. 1995).

Good (1987, as cited in Gottfredson et al., 1995) identified the behaviors that teachers exhibit toward students perceived to be low achievers: giving general, insincere praise; providing less frequent and less informative feedback; requiring less effort; more frequently interrupting student speech; paying less attention to the student; offering fewer opportunities to respond in class; reducing wait time; giving more criticism; making less eye contact; giving fewer smiles; having fewer public and private interactions; monitoring and structuring activities more closely; making less of student ideas; providing fewer cues to improve responses; rewarding more incorrect answers or inappropriate behavior; and assigning seats farther from the teacher. Understanding how these identified behaviors are interpreted by students may help to support students' conclusions of teacher behaviors they feel turn them off from learning.

Nichols and Good (1998) conducted a study on students' perceptions of fairness in the school setting. The researchers surveyed 358 students in a junior high school and 373 students in a high school. They further analyzed responses of male and female participants to determine whether there was a difference in perceptions with regard to gender. Students in the study were given a questionnaire that aimed to identify participants' level of fairness related to their experiences of fairness in high school.

Findings revealed that female students experience a higher level of fairness when related to teachers' treating them with fairness and teachers' showing a genuine concern for their learning. In this area, the male respondents indicated that this almost never happened for them (Nichols & Good, 1998). This data is important to review as it relates to how perception affects the success of students who are linguistically and culturally

diverse. It will be essential to examine whether gender also plays a role in the perceptions held by students.

In school settings where students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) are the minority, these groups often form perceptions shared by members of their minority group (Steele, 1999). These perceptions often cause these groups to come together and form opinions of the nonminority group in order to cope with being a part of an environment that is not initially inviting. In a study conducted by Carter (2005), she examined Black student achievers in a predominately White high school. Her research draws attention to the social stress that a predominately White school environment can have on a student of color. Datnow and Cooper (1997) posited that formal and informal same-race peer networks for Black students in a predominately White school not only facilitated their adjustment to an environment where they were outsiders, but also supported these students' academic success and created opportunities for them to affirm their racial identities. This research highlights the evidence presented in past research, which suggests predominantly White learning environments are often perceived as hostile to many Black students.

In one study, high-achieving Black students in grades 10 through 12 in Lenox, Massachusetts, were solicited for participation in a study. The study had a total of nine students who participated in face-to-face semi-structured interviews. This research sought to examine the reasons why minority students use physical space within a school to cluster together for support. Often the physical space that minority students occupy on a

school campus is perceived as a grouping of negative intentions. Tatum (1997) further describes this space, which is often found in the cafeteria:

When a group of Black teens are sitting together in the cafeteria, school administrators want to know not only why they are sitting together, but what can be done to prevent it. We need to understand that in racially mixed settings, racial grouping is a developmental process in response to an environmental stressor, racism. Joining with one's peers for support in the face of stress is a positive coping strategy. (p. 62)

The physical space that Black students may occupy as a means of support may vary. Some researchers have termed these spaces “counter spaces.” In learning environments where Black students are the demographic minority, these counter spaces counter the hegemony of racist and other oppressive ideologies and practices of the institution and its members (Carter, 2005).

This research study found that students used counter spaces to cope with their daily experiences with racial hypervisibility and invisibility—primarily in the classroom. It was found that these participants engaged in counter-space opportunities as a way to self-initiate their own racial spotlighting in ways that do not denigrate them. The participants in Carter's (2005) study used the stairs as their counter space. One of the participants stated in her interview:

Yeah, like, beginning of each school year, you sit down and count how many kids...you know? I don't know. For me, I'm just sitting there and I realize, “Damn. I'm the only kid in here.” I think for Black kids that's just a little bit bigger, you know? Being surrounded by so many White kids, like, so many days out of the year, you know? It's something, like, on the mind. [DC: So then after you're setting there and you're like ‘dang! It's

just me', what do you think?]) I' got to get out of here! (Carter, 2005, P. 156)

The data from this study is important to include in this literature review as it provides insight into possible perceptions based solely on the school's demographics. This understanding leaves room for further considerations when researching the perceptions in play as influenced by teacher behaviors and are further supported by the school's demographics or social makeup. They also demonstrate the power and importance of the inclusion of student voice, which is covered in the following section of this literature review.

Student Voice

In a study published in the Harvard Educational Review, researcher William Marinell (2008) described his research on the personal and pedagogical challenges experienced by a teacher trying to bring voice to the experiences of the students in her classroom. In this work, there is considerable overlap with the concepts of perception and student voice, validating the complementarity of the constructs. Marinell interviewed teacher Mary Guerrero who works as a high school teacher in Lawrence, Massachusetts. The area where she works is described as heavily populated with crime and poverty. Mary's pursuit to capture and inspire students to express their feelings about their experiences captured the attention of the researcher. Over a period of two years and five interviews, Marinell was able to qualitatively document her effort to inspire students to capture their personal experiences through photojournalism projects (2008).

One of the dilemmas noted in this research was that Mary's colleagues' perceptions of the students and her efforts to reach out to them. Mary recounted in this inquiry the reactions of her colleagues when she once tried to get prominent Hispanic residents to speak to her students about their experiences:

I remember trying to schedule all of their people to come into my classroom, and [my coworker] said, "Why do [the students] have to think about being these things?" She was actually upset that I was encouraging my students to think that they could become doctors or college presidents. She was a white, older woman [who] didn't really like the idea that these kids might be successful (Marinell, 2008, p. 6).

Marinell (2008) further noted that Mary noticed that even teachers who intended to encourage students seemed to inadvertently contribute to this problem by labeling student work that focused on the negative aspects of the city as braver, bolder, or more perceptive than other work. "When I hear teachers say, 'Oh wasn't that the best piece?'" Mary explained, "It's usually the one that's about violence. Was it the best piece because of the way it's written, or was it the best piece because it's what you expected to hear?" (Marinell, p. 7).

This research offers additional support for research into the perceptions that students have of teachers' behaviors. The teacher perspective captured in the research offer strong support for the need for further examination of behaviors that students experience and which they perceive as turnoffs. Students may in fact be experiencing teachers' perceptions of students as they are acted out in the classroom. One of the ways

to determine this will be through giving voice to student experiences that have caused them to form perceptions of their teachers.

Mitra (2004) conducted a study at a northern California high school that focused on the impact of student voice. This school is comprised of a diverse student population, of which half qualify for free and reduced lunch. Only 57% of the school's 1,750 students graduated. Researchers created two groups that engaged in student voice activities: Pupil School Collaborative and Student Forum. As a result of participating in either of these groups, students felt like they were empowered, connected, and valued enough to be a part of the change they desired to see at their school.

According to Chory (2007), when students perceive grades, procedures, or communications given by the instructor are unfair, they report a greater likelihood of indirect aggression toward their instructors. Unfortunately, empirical research examining which teacher behaviors students find fair or unfair is limited. This research will provide added information to fill the gap within this subject area of research.

Kozol (1999) wrote "the voices of children...have been missing from the whole discussion of education and educational reform. Instead of treating school students as voices crying in the wilderness, we would be far better served if we asked the voices' owners what they think and listened actively to the answers" (p. 5).

Carl Rogers (2006) addressed the issue of attending to student voice through descriptive feedback on learning and teaching. He described descriptive feedback as a reflective conversation between teacher and students, wherein students have the

opportunity to describe their classroom learning experience in a nonjudgmental or evaluative way. This conversation, in turn, provides the teacher with feedback and insight into ways to improve and achieve the goals of learning set in the classroom.

“How teachers engage in descriptive feedback is through posing to students such questions as: What did you learn? How do you know you learned it? What got in the way of your learning? What helped your learning? and how did you feel?” (Rodgers, 2006, p. 219). A critical component of descriptive feedback is the understanding that the feedback is about students’ learning versus teachers’ teaching. A misconception could occur that students are evaluating the teacher if the meaning and purpose for these questions is not clearly established. Descriptive feedback offers a structure that disciplines one to listen to students and thereby to see them and their learning more clearly and fully, and in more complex, nuanced, and differentiated ways (Rodgers, 2006).

Much of the limited research on employing student voice as a means of decision-making has focused on its use in the classroom. However, student voice is important to consider for school administrators as well. Alison Cook-Sather (2007) discussed a project that allowed for high school principals to form collaborative relationships between members of the school communities and teacher-education programs. The program allowed students to develop a voice to discuss their experiences, as well as the experiences they desire in the future.

The program, Teaching and Learning Together, is premised on the convictions that young people have unique perspectives on learning, teaching, and schooling; that

their insights warrant not only the attention but also the responses of adults; and that they should be afforded opportunities to actively shape their education (Cook-Sather, 2007). The program has four essential components. The first is a weekly e-mail exchange among pairs of student-teachers and 10th through 12th grade public suburban high school students near Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania. The topics discussed are based on the preservice teacher's college seminars. The second component is a weekly discussion facilitated by a teacher. The discussions are based on topics explored in the college seminar classes, topics the students generate, or topics of interest to the students. The third component is that preservice teachers discuss the exchanges they have had with students and make changes accordingly. The last component is a paper written describing preservice teachers' experiences as they relate to their own exchanges with students. The student perspectives offered in this program have impacted the preparation and teaching practices of the program's preservice teachers. As a result of this program, one teacher noted:

There were times in conversation with colleagues when I was able to reference the students and their perspectives- I call the project my "educational forum"- and I could she light on things that student were thinking about and share those perspectives with both faculty and colleagues (Cook-Sather, 2007).

This type of access to student voice offers administrators a way to partner with key stakeholders—both in the lives of students and within school organizations—to inform necessary changes, which must be acknowledged and enacted based on the contributions that students desire in the success of their organizations. Partnering with

students to identify school problems and possible solutions reminds teachers and administrators that students possess unique knowledge and perspectives about their schools, which adults cannot fully replicate (Mitra, 2004).

In the study conducted by Mitra (2004), the significance of student voice was examined as a means of strengthening youth development. In this study, three concepts were examined in order to understand student voice: agency, belonging, and competence. Agency was defined as acting or exerting influence and power in a given situation. Belonging was defined as developing meaningful relationships with other students and adults and having a role at the school. Competence was defined as “developing new abilities and being appreciated for one’s talents” (Mitra, 2004, p. 655). This research examined the strong efforts that Whitman High School made to integrate student voice on campus. Whitman High School is located in Northern California, and is comprised of first generation immigrants from Latin America and Asia as well as working class African American and European Americans. Whitman High School has a graduation rate of 57% and has a revolving door of teachers. The primary groups at Whitman engaged in student voice activities were the Pupil-School Collaborative (PSC) and the Student Forum.

The examination of the two groups for this research through an embedded case study allowed for group comparisons. Both groups had a common goal of improving the educational process. The PSC chose to focus its efforts on meeting the needs of newcomer Latino students through translation services and tutoring. The tutors would wait for teachers to contact them for assistance. The student forum focused on academic

success at the ninth-grade level. Student Forum sought to inject student voice in the decision-making, but narrowed its voice to one school-wide issue—building communication and partnership school wide between students and teachers. This study of the two groups relied on qualitative data collection in the form of interviews, observations of meetings, conversations, and written documents from both groups.

PSC's student growth occurred in the area of individual interactions of students with adults and peers. This was in contrast to Student Forum, which showed growth in interactions with organizations, as well as authority on a larger scale when compared to PSC. The research found that these groups helped (1) to instill agency in students, or belief that they could transform themselves and their institutions that affect them, (2) to acquire the skills and competencies to work toward these changes, and (3) to establish meaningful relationships with adults and the peers that create greater connections to each other. The data further indicates "how we structure student voice efforts greatly influences the ways in which youth development occurs" (Mitra, 2004, P. 681).

The research considered within this literature review supports the need for further research in the area of students' perceptions from three distinct areas of related and complimentary research. Research on students' perceptions suggests their perceptions have the ability to shape understanding and motivation in the classroom. Research on students' achievement considers issues related to students most represented on the lower range of the educational achievement gap. Research findings on student voice provide details on the power and impact that student voice has on a school or program. Combined, research findings in these areas suggests a research agenda that addresses the

achievement gap through students' perspectives as a means of forming conclusions, which would inform the work to decrease the educational achievement gap. This newly informed research agenda will be enhanced with student voice as the primary means of critical data in order to generate a viable research agenda.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

Introduction & Purpose

Educational research continually pushes educational institutions in the United States to address the academic achievement gap separating Latino and Black student populations from their mainstream peers in U.S. schools (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Plucker, et al., 2010). Research on student dropouts indicates that a host of negative experiences serve as powerful precursors to the decision for students to formally leave school (Rumberger, 1995). Some identified consequences for students who drop out of school are the increased likelihood of health problems, engagement in criminal activities, and dependency on governmental aid.

The data gleaned from this research will provide information that will support the work of changing the forecast for many at-risk students of color. In this study, the qualitative phenomenological research method directs the work of this study, focusing on high school students in a particular school and exploring their perceptions of teachers' behaviors.

Phenomenology was selected for its epistemological complement to the inquiry as the approach allows greater understanding of how students' perceptions are formed and the significance it plays in their interpretations of events that occur within the classroom.

This understanding will serve as a rubric for the experiences shared by students during the data collection. The phenomena –the study-- an event in of itself, will inform the data collection process which will serve to objectively capture students' subjective perceptions of their teachers' behaviors.

The purpose of the research is to explore how students' perception of teacher behaviors impacts their success in school. The purpose of this study is three-fold: (1) to examine the perceptions that students have of teacher behaviors, (2) to determine the impact that these perceptions have on students' academic success in class, and (3) to identify the themes presented through this research that identify the phenomenon that disengages students from learning. By identifying the behaviors that trigger students' perceptions of teacher behaviors through students' own voice, teachers may be provided with the evidence and purpose needed to change that which has negatively impacted students' desire to learn.

In order to address the issue of low student academic achievement in students who are culturally and linguistically diverse, it is important to consider the following overarching research question: How do students' perceptions of teachers' behaviors influence their success in school? Particularly, the research seeks to answer the following questions. In what ways might students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds influence their perceptions of the behavior of others? What might be some of the teacher behaviors that may positively impact the academic success of students and, consequentially, their relationships with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse? What might be

some of the teacher behaviors that contribute to decreased academic performance in students who are culturally and linguistically diverse?

These research questions are significant as there are numerous studies confirming the prevalence of academic achievement and other gaps among students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. There are few that consider student voices and perspectives to inform solutions that remedy the issue. This study will answer these questions by asking students how they perceive teacher behaviors as contributing to their academic performance via (a) surveys, (b) interviews, and (c) student essays.

This study will further expand current research conducted on the academic achievement gap from the perspective of students, many CLD, using their voices as a means of data. The results of this study will be useful in finding ways to decrease the academic achievement gap and dropout rates that exist for culturally and linguistically diverse students who are counted as part of the academic achievement gap.

Context of the Study and Participants

The students that were selected to participate in this study attended a California continuation school containing grades 10 through 12. This school's primary focus is to give students an alternative means toward earning a traditional high school diploma. Sadly, this type of school is often deemed a school for "bad students" by society because of a lack of understanding about what happens within the walls of its classrooms. This population was selected as the primary focus of this research as they represent a group of students that did not find success in the traditional high school setting. Their perspectives

provide a view that may provide an indication as to why some students do not thrive within the traditional high school setting. The continuation high school used for this study has been negatively perceived as a school for rejects by those not part of this community of learning. Perhaps this is due to students being placed in these schools because they did not successfully make it in the traditional high school for several possible reasons. These reasons include lack of credits, issues related to discipline, desire for smaller setting, or other social-psychological explanations. Approximately 95% of the students are far below the necessary amount of credits needed to graduate high school. The students that attend this school represent both high and low income levels.

The students that were selected to participate in this study attended a California continuation school containing grades 10 through 12. This school's primary focus is to give students an alternative means toward earning a traditional high school diploma. Sadly, this type of school is often deemed a school for "bad students" by society because of a lack of understanding about what happens within the walls of its classrooms. This sample size is appropriate for a qualitative phenomenological study according to Creswell (1998), "a typical sample size is 5 to 25 individuals, all of whom have had direct experience with the phenomenon being studies" (p.185). The participants in this research were teenagers in grades 11 and 12; ages range from approximately 17 to 19. Participants under the age of 18 were required to obtain parental consent, as well as their own assent to participate. This represents 11% of the population of the students who attend this school. Their ages range from 17 to 19, comprised of equal representations of male and female students. Most of the students in this study included students of

Mexican, African, and European descent. This is reflective of the major populations represented on this campus of study. These groups of students were solicited because this research examines the perspectives of students most vulnerable for dropping out of high school. This school was chosen because a concentrated number of students who are underperforming in the traditional high school setting are in attendance and they are at a greater risk of dropping out as a result of attending a continuation high school.

Students selected to participate in this research came from the culturally and linguistically diverse school population. They were invited to participate based on their academic profiles and discipline records. Volunteers for this project were randomly selected from a list of students at least 30 credits behind. Initially, 30 students were selected for this research. The final population of participants who met the identified criteria was 22.

Data Collection

This qualitative research case study included student surveys, personal narrative statements, and one-on-one interviews. The surveys and narrative statements were administered in a classroom setting to create a normal classroom feeling. In this way, data collection was more akin to collecting student assignments for a regular high school class. In addition, a research assistant was used to administer the one-on-one interviews. This would allow for the students to feel comfortable about speaking openly about their school experiences.

Procedures

Week One. The data was collected from participants over an eight-week period. The data collection began and participants were identified during the first week. Thirty participants were selected randomly from a list of students that were at least 30 credits behind, and represented the culturally and linguistically diverse student populations. In addition, students had to have at least two documented discipline referrals within one year. After all pertinent forms were secured, students' names were randomly drawn from a container to participate in the project. A total of 30 participants were given the opportunity to participate and received permission forms. However, in the end a total of 22 students were selected.

Week Two. Consent forms were distributed to each student and their families—in both Spanish and English when necessary. Consent and assent forms included all pertinent information: name of researcher, time line for research study, explanation of the instruments (survey, essay, and interviews), and the guarantee of confidentiality for their child.

Week Three. Twenty-two of the 30 randomly selected students who returned the signed consent and assent forms were administered the Student Perception Survey in the classroom setting as part an eight-session academic achievement advisement course taught by the researcher. The students were given 30 minutes to complete the survey. The following day the students were given a personal narrative essay prompt to complete (See appendices). The students were given an hour to complete the prompt.

Week Four. The names of all participants were written on slips of paper and inserted into a container from which six names were randomly drawn to be interviewed. The six students selected were interviewed by a research assistant, who used an interview protocol sheet to structure the interview and avoid leading the student's responses. Each student was asked a list of interview questions with varied prompts to solicit a greater response. Their responses were audiotaped and transcribed by the researcher.

Because the survey was anonymous and taken on an individual basis, there was no individual debriefing given to the participants. Student narratives were analyzed and a report was provided. The anonymous nature of the data collections did not permit an opportunity to discuss individual results with each participant. Interviews were conducted with the six students selected randomly. Their anonymity will be protected in the assessment and report shared with participants. The participants were given an opportunity to respond to the findings of the research through an appointment with the researcher. A complete report was made available to the participants and their parents at the conclusion of this research report.

Data Analysis

The modified van Kaam (1959) phenomenological method of research is a qualitative methodology chosen as the most appropriate method for data analysis for this research. This method was selected because it captures the "essence" of the participants' experience with the researched phenomenon. This is necessary within research that seeks to capture the voice of students whose views or voice are often overshadowed by the views of adults. van Kaam defined his methodology as "a method in psychology which

seeks to disclose and elucidate the phenomena of behavior as they manifest themselves in the perceived immediacy” (p. 295). One of the advantages of this research approach is that “this method leads, ideally, to the type of descriptions and classification of phenomena which can be affirmed by experts in the same field” (van Kaam, P. 15). Cresswell (2003) describes phenomenological research as research in which the researcher identifies the “essence” of human experiences concerning certain phenomenon, as is described by participants in the study. This method of analysis reveals student experiences for those who have experienced K-12 with teachers and formed perceptions of teacher behaviors that turn them off from learning.

In order to determine the relevant themes presented through the data of this research, the Van Kaam (1959) method of analysis was used. Steps 1 through 4 of the modified Van Kaam’s method of analysis were used to analyze the data collected in this inquiry (Moustakas, 1994). This process required using the complete transcription of each participant’s written or spoken responses:

1. Listing and Preliminary Grouping: The researcher listed every expression relevant to the experience (Horizontalization).

Table 3.1 Listing and Preliminary Grouping

Survey Statement	Survey Response
Teachers turn me off from learning when they:	1)Start teaching and go off into another subject 2) Say stuff that is offensive 3)Make me feel disrespected

2. Reduction and Elimination: The researcher determined the Invariant Constituents through testing each expression to determine a moment of the experience that is necessary to understand and label.

Table 3.2 Reduction and Elimination

Survey Statement	Written Expressions	Emerging Themes
Teachers turn me off from learning when they: Test questions: 1) Does the expression contain a moment of the experience that is necessary and sufficient for understanding it? 2) Is it possible to abstract and label it?	1) Start teaching and go off into another subject 2) Say stuff that is offensive and they aren't aware of it. 3) Make me feel disrespected 4) Give the class a negative feeling 5) Talk a lot 6) Do not listen to me, kick me out of class, talk loud to me, and is disrespectful 7) Participate in favoritism, single students out 8) Ignore me or if they are busy w/others or others work they need to take care of.	1) Focus 2) Respect 3) Respect 4) Tone 5) Eliminate 6) Voice, Respect 7) Favoritism 8) Feeling Ignored

3. Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents: The data was disaggregated into themes.

Table 3.3 Clustering and Thematizing

Respect	Voice	Favoritism	Grudges
“A teacher made me feel like I’m not smart as the other kids in class, and I felt disrespected. She then told me to sit down and I said, “no” and asked to talk to the principal. She said she’ll give me a pass, then was like never mind I’ll give you a referral.”	“An experience I had with a teacher was when I didn’t understand something. It was like the teacher got frustrated because I was asking questions. It made me feel dumb, like I didn’t get what he was teaching me. For a long time I didn’t ask teachers any questions on what we were learning, even if I didn’t get it. It hurt me in the long run.”	“Favoritism it just causes more problems. And so that-- now that teacher has a reputation for favoritism. And so they don’t want to be in that class because they feel they have to get on the teacher’s good side.”	“Some of the teachers, they’re, like, real cruel, like, they hold grudges. Say if you got in, like, a little disagreement with a teacher and they hold that grudge against you through the whole year and they just treat you poorly .”

4. Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application: A final synthesis of the themes to determine whether the essence of the phenomena was captured and employed during this analysis (Moustakas, 1994).

Table 3.4 Final Identification of Invariant Constituents

Respect	Voice	Favoritism	Grudges
“A teacher made me feel like I’m not smart as the other kids in class, and I felt disrespected. She then told me to sit down and I said, “ no” and asked to talk to the principal. She said she’ll give me a pass, then was like never mind I’ll give you a referral.”	“An experience I had with a teacher was when I didn’t understand something. It was like the teacher got frustrated because I was asking questions. It made me feel dumb, like I didn’t get what he was teaching me. For a long time I didn’t ask teachers any questions on what we were learning, even if I didn’t get it. It hurt me in the long run.”	“Favoritism it just causes more problems. And so that-- now that teacher has a reputation for favoritism. And so they don’t want to be in that class because they feel they have to get on the teacher’s good side.”	“Some of the teachers, they’re, like, real cruel, like, they hold grudges. Say if you got in, like, a little disagreement with a teacher and they hold that grudge against you through the whole year and they just treat you poorly .”

Potential Risks

The potential risks that were associated with research included students' concerns about confidentiality and privacy. Students completed the survey, and personal narrative responses without listing their names. This was done to ensure that students' responses were anonymous. In addition during the one-on-one interviews students spoke to a research assistant instead of the Researcher to avoid issues of positionality. The second area of potential risk for student participants was strong emotional reaction to questions. Many of the questions had the potential of creating an emotional reaction for students by bringing up experiences of their past which could have caused an emotional reaction. Although this was not displayed by the students in this research, the researcher was prepared to address the emotional concerns that could have been evoked by the questions. The researcher had a counselor available to provide emotional support to the students should an emotional instance occur. Some of the students in this research had initial fears about how they may be perceived by their peers for their participation. The researcher spoke to those students about their concerns which alleviated their initial concerns about being perceived as being "in trouble" or "special".

The potential risks with regard to confidentiality included a risk for students' thoughts to be exposed in the event that the survey data was lost. This threat was minimized as students' written and oral responses were anonymous and stored in a locked cabinet.

Positionality

Risks associated with the researcher as the principal school administrator of the participants included:

1. Concerns that participants' responses or refusal to participate may negatively impact the grade or behavioral record.
2. Concerns that participants may confuse the role of the researcher with that of the researcher's role as school administrator.
3. Concern that students participating in this research may feel that they have a closer relationship with the researcher and may discredit rule enforcement when the researcher moves back into his role as a principal.
4. Concern that school employees may feel that data from this research will be used against them.

Assurances

In order to address these concerns prior to starting this research, a meeting was conducted with all participants that highlighted the researcher's role within the context of this research, which is separate from his role as principal. During this meeting, students were given the assurances that their participation or refusal to participate would not negatively impact them in any way. Prior to starting this research, the school district superintendent and her cabinet were informed of this research. The staff at the school where this research took place was given information on this research and the assurances that this research was not being used to evaluate or judge them.

It is important to note the potential risks that this research may pose to the researcher. One of the potential risks includes that of the researcher's role. The researcher's role may compromise his role as a school administrator. This may be due to participants engaging in such a relaxed relationship with the researcher that they may wish to continue when the researcher is active in his primary role as a school administrator. In addition, the researcher's role as the school administrator has the potential of causing participants to feel as though the information gleaned from their responses may be used against them. To address this issue, ground rules were established between participants and researchers to outline the rules of this research. In addition, a research assistant was used to allow for students to freely and comfortably express their experiences.

Although there are risks associated with any study, these risks can be minimized effectively. The benefits of this research outweigh the risks. Realizing the need for closing the achievement gap in students of color and those that are at risk of dropping out for various reasons, understanding the perceptions that attribute to these disparaging statistics must be addressed. The information gleaned from this research can help educators to identify and adjust behaviors that have historically caused students to disengage from learning.

The benefits from this study will be used to inform current and perspective teachers and administrators of the practices that have been found to disengage students from learning. The outcomes have the potential of creating a change in the way that students are heard and are addressed within our school system. The benefits of this

research far exceeded the risks as this research has the potential to save the futures of other students.

CHAPTER 4

Results and Discussion

Introduction

To determine how students' perceptions of teachers' behaviors affect their success in school, a final group of 22 students in the 11th and 12th grades were selected from a student population of 189 students who comprise the continuation high school in a southern suburban California school district for this study. This high school setting was selected as the students attending the continuation high school represent a population of students who were academically or socially unsuccessful in the traditional high school setting. Retrieving information about their experiences may provide data linked to reasons why underserved students choose to drop out of high school. Participants completed a student perception survey, which included a personal narrative. Six of the 21 students were randomly selected to participate in a one-on-one interview for this study. Each section of the data was analyzed and will be presented within this chapter using Moustakas's (1994) data analysis methodology.

The first section of this chapter provides the results of the data analysis, which reveals the results of the reduction and elimination analysis performed on the results of the survey questions after the Horizontalization process (Appendix F). The phenomenological reduction and elimination process can be described as a process of

looking at the rich descriptions, phrases, and words regarding the phenomenon, and identifying the invariants (Wheat, 2007). The invariant constituents derived from the survey questions are themes derived from the level of responses to survey questions. In order to derive themes from the survey questions, open-ended follow-up questions were asked of the survey respondents. Their responses went through the cluster and validation process in order to create a thematic presentation of invariant constituents or emerging themes. These emerging themes led into the textural and structural analysis of the core themes derived from the analysis of student responses to the one-one-interviews and personal narratives.

The second section of this chapter is intended to convey the diversity of participant accounts, capturing each participant's unique voice, and the themes derived from the open-ended survey questions, personal narratives, and one-on-one interviews through describing the textural and structural analysis of themes derived from these data sources. It is hoped that this approach to presenting results will clarify precisely how students' perceptions of teacher behaviors impacts their success in school.

The two sections of the present chapter distill the accounts of the experiences of high school students in a continuation school setting through a phenomenological lens. The survey statements describe the responses derived from the participant's account and provide supporting evidence in the survey response of the participant. The responses of these survey statements are analyzed and presented with tables to describe trends found through the responses of the participants. The tables have been included to present the nuances and details of perceptions of the participants in relationship to the survey

statements. The transcripts are included within this research to give merit to the perceptions of the students within this research. To remove the content of the phrases would devalue the words of the students in this research. “ In the horizontalization of perception, every perception counts” (Moustakas, 1994, P.53). Patton (2002) states that creative synthesis is the bringing together of the pieces that have emerged into a total experience, showing patterns and relationships (p.487).

Section 1: Survey Data

A survey was given to 22 students who comprised the junior and senior high classes of a small continuation high school. Students under the age of 18 were only given the survey after receiving signed permission slips from a parent or guardian. Students were instructed not to omit their names on the surveys in order to ensure anonymity. The results of each survey question were recorded and the percentage of each scale response was calculated for each question as it compared with the total number of responses for each question. The percentages of responses for each question are provided in tables 4.1 through 4.17, as well as the total number of responses. Therefore, the percentages were calculated based on the total number of responses for each question rather than the total number of students taking the survey. The results of the survey instrument items are summarized and the research questions that related to each survey instrument are provided.

The survey questions were designed to provide information to support the research question: How do students’ perceptions of teachers’ behaviors influence the success of students in school? In order to find data that may provide support for the

research question, subquestions were created to provide some conclusive data and offer reasons why this phenomenon occurs in our schools. The survey questions seek to provide data that supports these research questions from the point of moving from the broad spectrum to specific reasons.

Research study subquestion 2 seeks to determine how students' backgrounds influence their perception in the classroom. Survey question 1 was included to provide baseline data about the respondents' initial feeling toward schools. This would then provide data to support the background of frame of reference these respondents held as they completed the survey. Table 4.1 provides the results of this survey item and the reasons why the respondents cited their response.

Table 4.1 Survey Statement: "I like school."

Total number of responses = 22

	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Disagree	4	18%
Agree	17	77%
Strongly agree	1	5%
Why: education, social, prepares for future, knowledge is power		

Survey statement 1, "I like school," yielded responses from 22 students. The results as provided in table 4.1 reveal that more than 82% of the respondents like school. Approximately 18% do not like school.

Survey statement 2, “I wish I didn’t have to go to school,” continued to explore basic feelings students have as related to their experiences in school. Table 4.2 reveals the results of this survey statement.

Table 4.2 Survey Statement: “I wish I didn’t have to go to school.”

Total number of responses = 22		
	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Strongly disagree	6	27%
Disagree	10	45%
Agree	5	23%
Strongly agree	1	5%

Survey statement 2 required respondents to respond to the statement, “I wish I didn’t have to go to school.” This survey statement revealed that of the 22 students who responded, 72% disagree with the statement, while 28% agree. This would suggest that there are a number of factors as to why participants responded in this manner, which is noted under the “Why” section of the table.

Survey statement 4.3 asked students to respond to the statement, “I’m often bored in school.” Survey statements 3 and 4 attempt to determine a potential cause for the opinions expressed by the students in survey statements 1 and 2. The responses to this question are revealed in table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Survey Statement: “I’m often bored in school.”

Total number of responses = 21		
	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Disagree	6	29%
Agree	12	57%
Strongly agree	3	14%

The responses to survey statement 3 reveal that 29% of the students surveyed did not get bored in school. However, 71% of the respondents indicate they do become bored in school. This data is significant as a majority of respondents state they are bored in school, which reveals a significant level of disengagement from learning that occurs at school for these students.

Survey statement 4.4, “I am often bored in school because:,” involved exploring why students are bored in school. This relates to the initial research question in that the options given to the respondents are perceptual references, which they feel are reasons why the phenomena of boredom occurs. The data from this statement are revealed in

Table 4.4 Survey Statement: “I am often bored in school because:”

Total number of responses = 21

	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
I am not challenged	2	10%
The topics are boring	3	14%
The teacher is boring	11	52%
I’m not interested in school	0	0%
This question doesn’t apply to me	5	24%

The data from this survey statement yielded 10% of students were bored because they were not challenged, 14% were bored because the topics presented in class were not stimulating, 54% became bored because they found the teacher boring, and 24% did not think school was boring. This data reveal that the majority of the students surveyed felt the teacher is main reason for boredom in the classroom. This data revealed a correlation between students’ perceptions of teachers and learning outcomes within the classroom.

Survey statement 5 explored students’ background experiences related to their experiences with teachers. This question was included in order to determine the background experiences students have had with teachers and determined what type of impact this caused for students, which are reflected in succeeding survey statements 7, 8, 10-14, and 17-18. The data from this survey statement is shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Survey Statement: “My experiences with teachers have caused me not to like school.”

Total number of responses = 22

	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Strongly disagree	3	14%
Disagree	8	36%
Agree	9	41%
Strongly agree	2	9%

Statement 5, “My experiences with teachers has caused me not to like school,” explored a potential reason students drop out of school. The data revealed that 50% of students surveyed disagreed with the statement, while 50% agreed. The reasons given as to why students cite their experiences with teachers caused them to not like school is based on their experiences with the teaching styles and personalities of teachers who initially provided students with a negative experience or view of school.

Statement 6 was presented to students in order to explore how students’ visceral experiences caused unfavorable perceptions to school as an institution. This statement sought to determine whether the experiences of students with teachers impacted them in a manner that is ‘at a point of no return.’ That is why the word “hate” is used in survey statement 6. The data revealed for this survey statement is within Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Survey Statement: “I hate being in school.”

Total number of responses = 22

<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>	
Strongly disagree	4	18%
Disagree	15	68%
Agree	2	9%
Strongly agree	1	5%

Statement 6, “I hate being in school,” revealed that 86% of the students surveyed disagreed with the statement, while 14% agreed. This data would suggest that students do have a desire to come to school to learn; however, this motivation can wane based on the students’ current and prior experiences in the classroom.

Statement 7 was asked as a follow up to statement 6, in order to determine why a student would hate coming to school. Statement 7 asked respondents to finish the statement “I hate being in school because” using one of five written statements.

Table 4.7 Survey Statement: “I hate being in school because:”

Total number of responses = 22

	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Teachers do not respect me	6	27%
I do not get along with my peers	1	5%
I am always in trouble	2	9%
I do not feel welcomed	1	5%
This question doesn't apply to me	12	54%

The data in Table 4.7 reveals that 54% of the students do not hate being in school. However, 27% do not like being in school because the teachers do not respect them, 5% because they do not get along with their peers, 9% because they feel they are always in trouble, and 5% because they do not feel welcomed. This is significant and reveals a level of dissatisfaction even though most respondents do not report “hating” school.

Survey statement 8 examines the relationship between students and teachers to determine whether this is a factor that influences students' perceptions. The statement, “Teachers and students do not really care about each other,” given to the students surveyed revealed the responses of the students in Table 4.8 and reasons why they selected their responses.

Table 4.8 Survey Statement: “Teachers and students do not really care about each other.”

Total number of responses = 22

	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Strongly disagree	8	36%
Disagree	8	36%
Agree	5	23%
Strongly agree	1	5%

The data in table 4.8 reveals that 72% of respondents feel there is a relationship of caring between students and teachers. However, 28% of the respondents feel there is no caring relationship. This would suggest that there may have been prior experiences in schools, which have impacted the views that respondents had in order to respond in the manner they did for this statement. A summary of reasons why these student respondents selected their individual response is listed on the table 4.8 of the perceptions of the respondents.

Statement number 9, “My school is like family,” was included in the survey to examine how strong a connection the respondents feel they have with school as a whole. This statement sought to examine whether the institution of school would spark a connection to family. The data for this statement is shown in table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Survey Statement: “My school is like family.”

Total number of responses = 22

	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Strongly disagree	5	23%
Disagree	6	27%
Agree	11	50%
Strongly agree	0	0%

The data in table 4.9 reveal that 50% of respondents relate school to family at some level, while another 50% see the relationship as separate. This is perhaps related to individual experiences that the respondents had at home and at school. This statement causes one to compare the experiences in order to determine if one experience is likened to the other. Not addressed by this statement is whether this relationship is negative or positive.

In order to determine the level of trust that respondents have with teachers, respondents were asked to respond to the statement, “I feel like I can talk to my teachers about things that are bothering me.” The answers to this statement are reflected in table 4.10. The responses indicate that 59% of the students surveyed feel as though they can talk to their teacher about things that are bothering them. However, 41% feel as though they cannot talk to their teacher about personal issues or concerns. This indicates a level of trust that does not exist between these students and their teacher due prior experiences the respondents have had with teachers.

Table 4.10 Survey Statement: “I feel like I can talk to my teachers about things that are bothering me.”

Total number of responses = 22

	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Strongly Disagree	5	23%
Disagree	4	18%
Agree	11	50%
Strongly Agree	2	9%

The application of ‘fairness’ is something that is cited by students as a desire beginning in elementary school and extending through high school. To understand how fairness factors in the shaping of students’ perspectives, fairness was examined by asking participants to respond to the statement, “Teachers treat students fairly.” Table 4.11 reveals 68% of respondents felt teachers treated students fairly to some degree. The other 32% felt as though teachers did not treat students fairly to some degree.

Table 4.11 Survey Statement: “Teachers treat students fairly.”

Total number of responses = 22

	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Never	0	0%
Rarely	2	9%
Sometimes	5	23%
Often	14	63%
Always	1	5%

In order to take a closer look at how the effects of students’ perceptions impact students’ decision to learn, the statement “Teachers turn me off from learning” was posed to the respondents. Table 4.12 reveals that only 9% of the respondents were never turned off from learning by their teacher. However, 91% of the respondents have been turned off from learning to a certain degree. A majority of the students cited that they are turned off sometimes; however, this data is significant as it indicates the strength and potential for a teacher’s action to cause a student to disengage from learning and potentially contributing to student drop out rates.

Table 4.12 Survey Statement: “Teachers turn me off from learning.”

Total number of responses = 22

	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Never	2	9%
Rarely	6	27%
Sometimes	10	46%
Often	4	18%
Always	0	0%

In order to determine the perceptions that students have toward the attitudes of their teachers, the statement “Teachers have negative attitudes towards me” was included for respondents to answer. The results of this statement in Table 4.13 reveals that 23 % of respondents did not feel that teachers had a negative attitude toward them. Another 36% felt teachers rarely had a negative attitude toward them, 32 % felt they experienced negative attitudes from their teachers sometimes, and 9% felt they never faced negative attitudes from their teachers. This information shows that negative attitudes of a teacher are real in the classroom and that they are experienced at varying degrees by students. How teachers’ attitudes affect students overall is not answered by this statement.

Table 4.13 Survey Statement: “Teachers have negative attitudes towards me.”

Total number of responses = 22

	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Never	5	23%
Rarely	8	36%
Sometimes	7	32%
Often	2	9%
Always	0	0%

It is common to hear a student indicate they feel teachers plays favorites. The utterances of such statements are frequently heard in the K-12 system. In order to see if this is an overall perception of students or a view held by students at the moment of the occurrence, statement 14 asked participants to respond to the statement, “ I feel that teachers play favorites.” Table 4.14’s data reveals that to a large degree this occurs in our schools at some level. A majority of the respondents, 59%, indicated that this happened sometimes, while 32% felt that this occurred more frequently. The impact that this may have on a student is not known by this data; however, this data indicates that it is recognized by students and perhaps can be a trigger that causes for a student to disengage from learning.

Table 4.14 Survey Statement: "I feel that teachers play favorites."

Total number of responses = 22

	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Never	0	0%
Rarely	2	9%
Sometimes	13	59%
Often	4	18%
Always	3	14%

To examine whether students are influenced more by their peers to stay in school or their teachers, statement 15 was given to the respondents. The data revealed that 63% of respondents did not feel that their peers had a greater influence over their teachers as to why they stay in school. A smaller percentage, 37%, felt that peers did have a stronger influence over them staying in school than their teachers. This information would suggest that students' peers do have an influence on them staying in school to some degree; however, teachers have a greater influence on a student staying in school than their peers.

Table 4.15 Survey Statement: “My peers influence my decision to stay in school more than my teachers.”

Total number of responses = 22

	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Strongly disagree	2	9%
Disagree	12	54%
Agree	5	23%
Strongly agree	3	14%

To determine how students perceive they are valued the statement “Teachers value my opinions” was asked of respondents. This statement was included to determine whether students felt they had a voice in the classroom and whether they felt valued by their teachers. The data revealed in table 4.16 show that 81.5% of respondents overwhelmingly felt that their opinions were not valued in the classroom.

Table 4.16 Survey Statement: “Teachers value my opinions.”

Total number of responses = 22

	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Never	1	4.5%
Rarely	5	23%
Sometimes	12	54%
Often	3	14%
Always	1	4.5%

In order to determine whether students felt they had the opportunity to make a fresh start with a teacher after prior history of issues, respondents were asked to react to the statement, “Teachers hold my past against me.” The data in table 4.17 revealed that most of the respondents, 54%, felt that their teachers did not hold their past against them. However, 46% felt like teachers held their past against them to some degree of frequency. It is important to note that if students felt they would not be granted an opportunity to redeem themselves, the likelihood of giving up is high.

Table 4.17 Survey Statement: “Teachers hold my past against me.”

Total number of responses = 22

	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Never	12	54%
Rarely	1	5%
Sometimes	3	14%
Often	2	9%
Always	4	18%

Statement 18 was given to determine whether respondents experienced a period of time in their K-12 education where they felt most supported. This statement revealed that 45% of respondents felt they were most supported by teachers in their current setting of the continuation high school. The next highest setting was at a traditional high school, where 23% felt most supported. This information is striking in that one would assume that high numbers would have been represented in the elementary school setting. Perhaps students' educational setting at the time of taking this survey skewed their responses, which may overshadow their elementary school experiences. What is important to glean from this data is that continuation high school is providing the respondents with an experience that makes them feel supported.

Table 4.18 Survey Statement: “I felt most supported by teachers when I attended.”

Total number of responses = 22

	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Elementary School	4	18%
Middle School	3	14%
High School	5	23%
Continuation High School	10	45%

To look at how students perceive their behavior in the classroom, survey statement 19 was included in the survey. This statement asked students to respond to the statement, “I am disrespectful to my teachers.” It is revealed in Table 4.19 that a majority of respondents did not perceive they were disrespectful to their teachers. The frequency of this occurrence is cited at most as being an occurrence that happened only sometimes. Perhaps these respondents see their level of disrespect as a possibly warranted reaction to an expression made by the teacher.

Table 4.19 Survey Statement: “I am disrespectful to my teachers.”

Total number of responses = 21

	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
Never	7	33%
Rarely	10	48%
Sometimes	4	19%
Often	0	0%
Always	0	0%

It should be noted that although the sample size for the quantitative data was not numerically significant, it is included as the respondents represent 11.7% of the population of students who attend the continuation high school where this research was conducted. Not including this data would not adequately provide voice to the data revealed by these student respondents. Furthermore, the data revealed in the survey further support the themes brought out in the narrative sections of the survey and the interviews conducted, which are analyzed in the qualitative section of this study.

Section 2: Textural and Structural Analysis

A majority of the surveys distributed to the student respondents included follow-up questions in order to derive research data to support the conclusions made by previous survey statements. Qualitative research questions were included within the survey to derive stronger conclusions from the research statements presented. These particular survey statements will be included within this section. In addition to the qualitative

survey questions, the personal narratives and one-on-one interviews will be discussed in this section using van Kaam's (1959) modified method of phenomenological analysis to analyze these qualitative data sources.

The themes derived from the qualitative analyses and subsequent results are divided into three parts: 1) six open-ended student survey statements, 2) students' personal narratives, and 3) one-on-one interviews, these data sources were analyzed using a phenomenological data analysis method described in chapter 3.

Themes Derived From Survey Statements

Students were asked to respond to the statement, "I feel like I can talk to my teachers about things that are bothering me." The students' responses reflected their perceptions of their experiences with teachers. A strong theme derived from the frequent responses of the students was that of **trust**. Many of the students' responses were related in some way to the element of trust, whether negative or positive. Other themes that emerged were that of caring, experience, guidance, and no opinion. The frequencies of the themes are shown below in table 4.20. A full list of participants' responses and associated themes are included in Appendix F.

Table 4.20 Themes derived from survey statement 10

Total number of responses = 19

<i>Derived Themes</i>	<i>Frequency of Themes</i>
Boundaries	2
Caring	2
Experience	1
Guidance	1
No Opinion	1
Trust	12

Students were also asked to respond to the statement: “Teachers turn me off from learning when they:” The most frequent theme that emerged from this statement was that of ***disrespect and excessive talking***. These themes were found throughout the responses to the survey statement. One student stated that teachers “do not listen to me, kick me out of class, talk loud to me, and *are* disrespectful.” Additional themes that emerged were that of teachers being off topic, negative, dismissive, overly strict, boring, showing favoritism, and not interested. The frequencies of the themes are shown below in table 4.21. A full list of participants’ responses and associated themes are included in Appendix F.

Table 4.21 Themes derived from survey statement 13

Total number of responses = 15

<i>Derived Themes</i>	<i>Frequency of Themes</i>
Boring	1
Difficult	1
Dismissive	1
Disrespect	3
Excessive Talking	3
Favoritism	1
Off Topic	2
Overly Strict	1
Negativity	1
Not Interested	1

Students were asked to respond to the statement: “My peers influence my decision to stay in school more than my teachers.” The responses from this statement yielded a high frequency of the students’ responses reflecting a theme of ***no influence*** by their peers. The associated themes for this statement are included in table 4.22 and Appendix A.

Table 4.22 Themes derived from survey statement 17

Total number of responses = 14

<i>Derived Themes</i>	<i>Frequency of Themes</i>
Not Influenced	6
Motivated by Peers	1
Trust Peers	1
Desire to be w/Peers	2
Influenced by Peers	4

As part of the survey, students were asked to list the specific behaviors teachers exhibit that turn them off from learning or listening to their teachers. This statement yielded several themes derived from the listing of students' responses. The theme that was most frequently cited was that of ***negative attitudes***. The full listing of results is included in table 4.23.

Table 4.23 Themes derived from survey statement 22

Total number of responses = 22

Emerging Themes

Teacher has the Voice

Not being Heard

Teacher's Display of Negative Attitudes

Not Feeling Respected

Boring Subject Matter

Disrespectful

In order to provide recommendations to correct the issues that students have cited within the survey, students were asked to list positive behaviors exhibited by teachers, which have caused them to want to learn from them. The students frequently cited a theme of being *fun* as being an attribute that has caused them to want to stay in school. The full list of emerging themes and responses are included in table 4.24.

Table 4.24 Themes derived from survey statement 23

Total number of responses = 22

Emerging Themes

Fun

Open-minded

Treats you as an adult

Respectful

Good personality

Students were asked to respond to the statement: “I am disrespectful to my teachers when:” The students’ responses were frequently associated with a theme of ***disrespect*** in the context that students felt they became disrespectful when they felt their teachers were. This was consistent with most responses to this statement.

Table 4.25 Themes derived from survey statement 25

Total number of responses = 21

<u>Derived Themes</u>	<u>Frequency of Themes</u>
Disrespectful when they are	17
I'm not disrespectful	3
Do not mean to be	1

Students' Personal Narrative Responses

In addition to filling out a survey, students were asked to write a short, personal narrative based on their prior experiences in the classroom. One of the prompts asked students to write about a negative experience they had with a teacher. Another prompt asked the student to write about a more positive experience they experienced with a teacher. The length of the student responses varied from one sentence to a short paragraph. The themes that emerged from the first prompt about personal narratives were feelings of ***disrespect, not being heard/understood, discrimination because of race/appearance, and embarrassment.***

Student A: Theme: Disrespected

A teacher made me feel like I'm not smart as the other kids in class, and I felt disrespected. She then told me to sit down and I said, "no" and asked to talk to the principal. She said she'll give me a pass, then was like never mind I'll give you a referral. When I went up to the principal he said it

was to minor to sit in the office then took me back to class. The teacher then added more to the referral adding things that I didn't say. I was mad and said that I was done with school and I was going to drop out. One of my teachers told me she will at least help me to get a GED. Another teacher told me and convinced me to stay in school.

Student B: Theme: Not Being Heard

An experience I had with a teacher was when I didn't understand something. It was like the teacher got frustrated because I was asking questions. It made me feel dumb, like I didn't get what he was teaching me. For a long time I didn't ask teachers any questions on what we were learning, even if I didn't get it. It hurt me in the long run.

Students C& D: Theme: Discrimination Because of Race/Appearance

Student C:

At my old school my teacher or old teacher says a racial word. I got mad, so I told the old man to go back to Jerusalem. We then started talking a lot of stuff towards each other. He disrespected me and my people.

Student D:

One time this one sub asked me to read and then she told me to stop reading because I sounded too BLACK. So I just walked out of the classroom to tell the Dean, but then I got a referral.

Student E: Theme: Embarrassment

My fourth grade teacher Mr. P was so mean to me deliberately so much so that I still hold a grudge against him to this day. I wouldn't say a word and he would say I was talking and send me to the hallway by myself. He put me in the corner of the classroom for a majority of the year and wouldn't move me with anyone else no matter how much I asked. For back to

school night, he would put my stuff with a name tag on it just so everyone can see where I sat. My teacher in the 7th grade was very similar.

The themes that frequently emerged from the second prompt are that of the teacher being ***fun, motivating, and willing to help***. The level of responses for this prompt was noticeably less than that of the first prompt. Some students left this prompt blank and others cited that they did not have a positive memory.

Student F: Theme: Fun

I had a great memorable moment with a teacher before. This teacher motivated me to come to school everyday, because he made class fun while also teaching new things. Everyday he had a positive attitude, and kept us positive and tried to do things everyday.

Student G: Theme: Motivation

When I said my last words to Mr. F before he left to the Marines, he told me not to get caught up in 4 years of my life when you are going to live to be 100! He basically told me that a person like me would do well and that I should just fly through this corrupt educational system and get on with making a difference.

Student F: Theme: Willing to Help

“I don’t really have a moment I’m going to remember. But there are going to be teachers I will. Like Mr. W and Mrs. F. Mrs. F may be boring but she will do almost anything to help you graduate. Mr. W has such a personality of achieving, how can you not! These are two teachers I’ll never forget.

Students' One-on-One Interviews

From the group of 22 students that completed the survey and personal narrative responses, 6 students were randomly selected for interviews. The students were asked questions included on the interview protocol sheet in the Appendices. The responses of the students reflected a high frequency of feeling or noting the experiences of ***injustice, being misunderstood, giving up, feeling prejudged, trust, and having no voice, being hurt*** as negatively impacting them in some form. As a result, students stated they reacted to these feelings in negative ways, such as displaying a desire to live up to the perception that the student felt the teacher had of them, or displaying similar behaviors as those shown by the teachers. Students were also able to identify possible solutions that would cause a student at risk of dropping out to stay in school.

The theme of feeling misunderstood was frequently expressed in the survey. An excerpt of an interview with student 2 illustrates such an experience and the reaction it caused for the student. In order to show the data as interpreted from the voice of students, it is necessary to show the interview transcript with some detail. The full transcript is included in appendices to give voice to the issues expressed by the students in this study.

Core Themes

Theme: Misunderstood

Interviewer: Okay. All right. Can you tell me about a negative experience you've had with a teacher in class or outside of class?

Student 2: I felt that the teacher, the way she said something sounded like she was going to try to get me kicked out of school so I didn't like that.

Interviewer: When did that happen?

Student 2: This year.

Interviewer: This year?

Student 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Tell me a little bit more about that.

Student 2: She had a student in the same class as me and she was talking to him. He's 18 and everything and he kept getting in trouble and then she was, like, basically told his mom and told him that, because he is 18, it's here to start doing his work or she's going to get him kicked out of school. Then, like, two days later, she pulled me out of class and was, like, she was, like, I was talking and she was, like, if you don't stop talking, you know, you're going to be 18 soon and they're not going to want to keep you there if you keep getting in trouble so it made me feel like she just said that to one student now she's saying something along the same lines to me.

Interviewer: Kind of threatening?

Student 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: How did that make you feel when she said that?

Student 2: I was mad. I didn't even go back in that class. I think I left and I came in the office. I wouldn't talk to her.

Interviewer: Any other things that teacher did? Did she do that repeatedly?

Student 2: Not the same thing but, yeah, me and her aren't real good.

Interviewer: What are some other things she would do in class?

Student 2: She says—we just had a project that was due and we were supposed to turn it in on a Friday and I went to turn it into her and she was, like, you can't leave the class until I've seen it and I had it on a flash drive because I did PowerPoint and then she was, like, "Okay, it's there, I don't need to actually look at it." And then called my mom and told my mom that I didn't turn it in at all but I did.

Interviewer: The same teacher?

Student 2: Yeah. Same teacher.

Interviewer: Yeah. So when that situation happened when she said you're turning 18 and all that, did that change your opinion of that teacher?

Student 2: It did a lot. Now it's, like, I react negatively when she says something.

This interview provides data to support the conclusion that a student is affected by the behavior of a teacher when the behavior of the teacher is perceived to be negative. In this instance, the student felt as though she was being misunderstood and being placed into a situation that she witnessed by the teacher. As a result of this experience the student reacts negatively toward the teacher.

Students in the interviews also noted instances of being judged as a negative experience they had in school. This was found to be a theme throughout the responses of the students included in these interviews. To illustrate the effects judgment had on students who participated in the interviews, the transcript of the interview is included below to strengthen this conclusion.

Theme: Being Judged

Interviewer: Have you ever felt in school that you've been judged for being different from your peers?

Student 2: Mm hm. Like, I had gotten in trouble, like, a couple times at the beginning of the year and, before I even had this teacher, she was, like, already saying, "Oh, I know you're going to get in trouble all the time" and, like, I got in trouble, like, two times and now you're saying I'm just a troublemaker and I'm not, like, I don't, like, disrespect teachers or anything and I have the most respect for them when I start their class but if they do something that I feel is disrespectful, then I do tend to lose respect for that person and I can get rude and have a attitude.

Interviewer: So you feel judged by this teacher from the beginning?

Student 2: Mm hm.

Interviewer: Why do you think she prejudged you?

Student 2: Because I have been—I, like, have gotten in trouble for talking a lot. I don't talk to much people any more so I don't do it as much. I fixed the problem. I knew I had a problem and then I fixed it and she still says that I talk and I'm a troublemaker...

Interviewer: Have you ever felt that because of that or anything that is you, that you're being judged by that?

Student 3: Probably. A lot of people assume like because of the way I am they probably assume that I'm probably gonna act crazy because maybe I'm black or something, or I'm probably gonna like be the one that's just gonna start slipping out, you know, stereotype. And so that happens a lot here. A lot of people stereotype.

Interviewer: Who do you perceive that from? Would that be from teachers?

Student 3: Sometimes from teachers. Yeah, a lot of times from teachers but the students, no, not too much.

Interviewer: How would you perceive that? How do you know they're doing that?

Student 3: By how they respond to me or probably the way they react, like if—they may talk to me differently or they may...

Interviewer: Like what?

Student 3: Like they may—like when other students acting crazy I'm just—and I'm sitting back, they expect me to act crazy. They're—they—they act more mature about the situation. So a lot of the students here, they probably like show out because there's other teachers that teacher's nerves, but then the ones who don't show out, it's just like okay, they—or they'll have to watch them probably, you know.

Interviewer: For teachers that you would perceive that, would that change your attitude towards the class?

Student 3: No, because the learning is still the same. I just—I do what I gotta do and then just get out the and then not pay too much mind towards it.

In excerpts provided for this theme, examples of students feeling judged by past behaviors or skin color by teachers, are noted in the students' responses. These responses show that students have a desire to change the negative perceptions that they feel teachers may have of them based on prior experiences. The issue cited by the students is that they are not necessarily given the opportunity to prove they are different. In the instance of student 3, she notes issues of judgment based on race and overall appearance. Although she does not provide great detail as to the issue this brings for her, it is important to note that she cites this as an issue and notes the expectations that she perceives that both her teachers and peers have of her based on her appearance.

Many students cited a link between the relationships students have with adults on campus and the ability to help a student stay in school. This is significant as schools struggle to address the issue of students dropping out of high schools. The interview data is included to further highlight this data derived from the voices of students on this theme.

Theme: Relationship as a Factor

Interviewer: Okay. You know some decide to stay in school and some decide to drop out. How do you feel the relationship that a student has with adults in the school has an affect on them dropping out or staying in school?

Student 2: Well, if someone didn't like the school, like, anything about a school and they don't want to be there, it would be way easier to drop out but if they like their teachers or they can talk to their teachers or the principal, then it's, like, they can talk to them and convince them how big of a mistake it is.

Interviewer: So a big effect?

Student 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: A lot of the times for students in high school the decision comes to either stay in school or drop out of school. How do you feel that the relationship that students have with staffing affects that position?

Student 1: Well, it is really important. I mean if you like me and Mr. Lawrence, we're good friends. Like if you had a bad relationship with someone that's just gonna bring you down the hill because it's like why have a bad relationship with someone and try and like see them daily, like five times a week. And it's like it's not gonna work because they're in a mad mood around you, you're in a bad mood around them, and it's like why. Like that's always the question to ask, is why, because if you have a bad relationship with someone then it's like it's stupidity. It's just basically pointless to be here then 'cause if you're not gonna do anything, do any work, I should take my own advice sometimes, but if you're not gonna do any work and like deal with them and deal with life, then why would you be here, why would you try and even try and like not do anything. It's stay home, drop out. Like if you're really not gonna do anything or have a bad relationship with someone, there's no point. There's no point at all.

Interviewer: How do you think your relationship with Mr. Lawrence supports you in school?

Student 1: It—I don't know. It just helps me out, 'cause knowing that I can come up here and I can even talk to him about things, like it's always good to have a really good relationship with your principal because if you get into trouble then he can like talk you out of situations or like, you know, and you can listen to them, like you're willing to listen to that person. But if you had a bad relationship you're like F U, like I don't want to have anything to do with you, like why would I listen to you, you know. So I don't know. It's always good to have that one or a few...

Interviewer: Connection?

Interviewer: For a lot of students in high school there comes that time where they have to make the decision to stay in school or drop out. How do you think that the relationships that they have with teachers affects that decision?

Student 3: Because maybe if a teacher doesn't—if the child comes to school with the attitude like nobody cares and they don't have that extra encouragement, it turns into them just giving the it just turns into them just

saying, you know, forget it, nobody cares so I might as well just drop out. But if they have a teacher that's on them, that's actually encouraging them, they have a reason to stay in school, to know that they can, because maybe their parents aren't doing it, their guardian's not doing, something. So they find it at school.

Interviewer: Have you ever had any friends that have been in that situation?

Student 3: I've had a lot of friends in that situation but they dropped out of school or they probably just said forget it and just gave up.

Interviewer: Would you say that they had some kind of connection to the school with the teachers?

Student 3: Yeah. But they didn't want to take the help. They just decided to do their own thing and let themselves just...

Interviewer: Drop out.

Student 3: Yeah, drop out.

It is important to note from the interviews that students note that relationships with adults on campus are important. Moreover, a relationship that is positive has the potential of keeping a student from dropping out as indicated in the responses of the students in this interview.

Theme: Assumptions

Assumptions as a theme came up as an area of concern through students interviews. Students perceived the assumptions that teachers were making of them as being negative and caused them to feel as though the teacher didn't care for their feelings. This data is shown in the interview below.

Interviewer: So the first question is I wanted to ask you to tell me a little bit of some of your experiences that you had in classroom where a teacher has done something or acted a certain way that has turned you off from his class.

Student 6: One thing that really turns me off for a teacher is when they assume that you know certain things about a subject and they will just jump into the lesson plan, assuming you know all these things but kind of it works the other way, too, where the teacher, like, assumes you don't know anything so she teaches you everything. There's got to be kind of, like, a perfect medium, like a balance. I think a lot of teachers don't take enough care in trying to figure out, like, how they are going to go about teaching students some things. They kind of just—it seems like they don't really care. They just do their part and not really care whether or not someone gets it or not and they don't try to make it as easy to understand as possible, I don't think, and that's one thing I really—

Interviewer: What are the things they do in class that make you think that they don't care? That they're not just going through the motions?

Student 6: Oh, they'll just spit out their lesson plan. They're, like, okay, I've been a teacher for this many years, I have an effective lesson plan, they'll look at, like, okay, my grades, my students do good but really, like, I'll sit there and listen and I'll have no idea what a teacher's talking about just because of how she presents it. I think teachers could do a lot better job just preparing and trying to make something as easy to understand as possible. I don't think a lot of teachers do enough to do that.

Student 6: Teachers that will set an opinion of you just from the get-go and stick with that opinion throughout the whole year, especially if it's a really bad one and they clearly treat you bad. That really bugs me but, again, I mean, I realize a teacher's job is to be mean sometimes so, I mean, I don't really care but I don't appreciate it at all.

Interviewer: So you tend to be very understanding of the teachers but how have you felt in those situations where you felt prejudged? How do you know that? How do you perceive that?

Student 6: You can normally tell just by how the teacher will treat one student yourself.

Interviewer: Right. Okay. And what are some of those differences?

Student 6: I've noticed a teacher in middle school who treated girls a lot better than she treated guys. That irritates me but there's not much you can do about it.

Interviewer: Right. So what would he do for example with guys...

Student 6: Well, it was a female teacher. She would be much more lenient with the girls on, like, assignments being late or quality of assignments versus guys, she would demand much more. It was pretty obvious.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt that a teacher might have a preconceived idea of how you are?

Student 1: Yeah, I walk into classes and they're like—as soon as I open my mouth they're like uh oh, there's a loud one. There's another little turd that we're gonna have to work with.

Interviewer: How do you feel about that?

Student 1: I mean it's fine, go ahead and think what you want to think, but I'm who I am and you're gonna have to get to know me if you want to start making judgments.

Interviewer: Say that that teacher who you felt that from teaches history or science, whatever, what do you think that teacher will have in how interested you are in the class?

Student 1: What do you mean?

Interviewer: Say you come into, let's say, history class and you feel that a teacher is prejudging you, how would that make you feel about learning history?

Student 1: Oh, I'd be like oh, well you want to think this about me, then let me live up to that, let me show you that I can do that. But then again I'm just like—for the time being, yeah, I would do that, but then I can show them that I am different. I do show them. I don't let that—set that like goal, like my thing is I'll show you that I can be that and I can live up to what you say for a couple of weeks and then it can change. Like look at me, I'm not what you think I am, you know, to prove them wrong. That's what I tend to do a lot is prove a lot of people wrong.

The data derived from these interviews show students who react strongly to the assumptions made by teachers of them. The affects of these assumptions have caused these students to disengage from their learning in some way. This would further support that there is a correlation between students' perceptions of teacher behaviors and its affect on their success in the classroom.

Students have also indicated—at a high frequency—feeling as though they have no voice in the matter they feel they have experienced injustice. This is better illustrated through the interview included within this section. This data support the need for students to be heard within the classroom.

Theme: Feelings of Having No Voice

Interviewer: Right. Have you ever felt, in your school, in middle school and high school, a time where you had a concern or a problem that you wanted to voice that you had actually communicated to someone in the school that had an effect?

Student 6: Yeah, I was kicked out of APEX, which is a credit recovery program at CB and I really did not think that I deserved to be kicked out but the teacher in charge of it kicked me out. I was pretty frustrated with that and that ruined my chance to graduate CB, that's why I'm here, because of this incident. I was super mad. I talked to everyone I could talk to, like, principal, everyone, principal down and everyone agreed with me but no one could do anything about it. I never got a result out of it. Everyone heard my story and they were, like, yeah, that sounds messed up, you should probably get back in that program but the two people who were in charge of me getting back in that program were two people who didn't agree with me.

Interviewer: So after that incident, you talked to several people, right?

Student 6: Many people. Many advisors. I think the vice principal. I didn't get a chance to talk to the principal but I talked to plenty of teachers...

Interviewer: What would they do?

Student 6: Oh, they all said, "Oh, maybe I'll write a letter or talk to this person to see what we can do." My mom even talked to them and they said sorry.

Interviewer: All right. Can you tell me a little bit about your experiences with teachers in high school that have displayed some behaviors or actions that turned you off from learning?

Student 4: Yeah, I think that, when teachers, like, have attitudes, it, like, pulls kids from learning, you know, when they be mean to the kids, like, you know? Teachers, they're human, too. They come in with bad days. It's

just like if those have, like, attitudes, write you up for no reason, you get in trouble for no reason, then you get suspended for something that it was partially the teacher's fault, too, that takes away your learning, too, now that you're suspended but the principal only can believe so much what a student says. The teacher's an adult so he's going to take their word over the student's. The students don't, like, have too much say so.

Interviewer: How would describe the attitudes of those teachers that you just described?

Student 4: Some of the teachers, they're, like, real cruel, like, they hold grudges. Say if you got in, like, a little disagreement with a teacher and they hold that grudge against you through the whole year and they just treat you poorly and, like, every time you say something, like, I remember I had a teacher who held a grudge against me and I would just, like, give him my opinion about something and she'd just, like, look at me like I'm crazy, she was still holding a grudge. And she calls me to, like, get written up and kicked out of class.

In these interviews, students reveal data to suggest they feel a sense of injustice when unheard by their teachers. As a result, students hold these experiences as reference points, which causes students to believe they will not have a voice in matters that they feel are unjust. This conclusion is supported by the interview exchange above.

In addition to citing instances of negativity, students suggested solutions they felt would better support their peers. The data derived from this interview provides possible solutions to consider when addressing the dropout rate. One of the key solutions discussed by the students interviewed is that of the relationship between the student and teacher.

Theme: Solutions

Interviewer: You know some students have more of a difficulty in going up to teacher and saying what they think or coming up to the principal or, like, Mr. Lawrence and saying what they're going through. Is there any advice, any solutions you would have to form some better relationships between teachers and students?

Student 6: I really don't think there's anything that, like, any programs or something that, like, the school can do. I think it all comes from the heart, really, like, to build a relationship with students. It's got to be an individual effort. It's not something the school can be, like, okay, we are going to institute 15 minute teacher/student relationship time every day. That's not going to work. It's just it's all individual effort. If a teacher really wants to have a good relationship with their students, it's up to her or him. So I think, if you're looking for better student/teacher relationships, you should maybe look for more charismatic teachers versus who's got the best degree, I mean, smart teachers but look for charisma and attitude...

Interviewer: Okay. For a lot of students in high school it comes to, no matter what their circumstances, do they stay in school or drop out of school, how do you feel that the connections a student might have or the relationship that a student might have with a principal, with a teacher might affect that decision to stay in school or drop out?

Student 5: How would the staff affect...

Interviewer: Yeah. Like, if the student, the relationship that you have with teachers and the principal, how does that affect their decision to stay or go?

Student 5: Oh, it's, again, about the care thing because if they were okay, if they never talked to you about going to college or how it was or how to get there and what you'll get out of it, you're not going to have any interest in it. But if they speak to you constantly about it, like, bringing in class speakers from colleges and all that, then you kind of think about it twice and, okay, I'm going to get my work done and I'm going to try to go for it.

Interviewer: So thinking about teachers, maybe teachers that you had a problem with or maybe you're not engaging in class, not just you but your peers, and thinking about your peers and how you guys relate to teachers and the school staff, are there any solutions, any advice you would give them to form better relationships?

Student 5: Peers?

Interviewer: Mm hm.

Student 5: Probably, well, again, be yourself but try not to start the class on a negative note because if the teacher sees the students are kind of down and droopy then they feel the same way we do when they look like that. So I think, if they come into the classroom, like, looking just happy, like they wanted to go through the day, then I think that helps the relationship with the teachers.

Interviewer: Right. Okay. What about the teacher? What would you advise the teacher who wanted to have a better relationship with his students?

Student 5: Advise the teacher? Like, the opposite, like, to have a teacher come in on a positive note and just cooperation goes both ways.

Student responses indicate students' perceptions of teachers' appearances plays a significant role on their attitude and outlook on what may occur in the classroom for the day. This data would further indicate that there is a connection between the behaviors of teachers and interpretation by the student. Often cited within this research is the attitude and interest displayed by the teacher as being a factor that turns students off from learning. This is further illustrated in the interview below.

Theme: Attitude and Interest

Interviewer: Okay. What about in high school? What are some of the things, thinking about the teachers, that you were getting engaged to much in class, what would they do that would make you not want to listen to the class or not connect to those teachers?

Student 5: What would they do? Well, it would probably have to do with more their, like, how their day started, like, whether it's a good or bad note. Like, the way they look at you, how they speak, if you see negativity in them, it's, like, I don't really want to be here but if they have a happy feeling, and you see a happy face, I want to learn today.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are some of the things that the teacher—you were saying how they look at you and the way they behave towards you, what are some of the things that will tell you about their mood and how they would feel about you?

Student 5: Probably I'd say you had a bad grade, probably how much interest they put into your grade and, like, if they really want to help you. Like, if they came up to you personally or told you, if you could stay after class, it's just how much interest they would put in you that would make me want to learn.

Interviewer: What are the things that they say that...

Student 1: When I like—when I get mad, the best things for you to do is just not say anything and let me calm down on my own. Don't kick me out, don't like—I mean you can kick me out but just let me be. And it's like—but she doesn't like doing that. She likes to keep running her mouth. So then I go back and I say something and that gets me in more trouble because I talk back to a teacher, a senior, like an older person, you know, my elders. So it's like that comes back on me and that was my fault because I opened my mouth. It's just hard for her to keep her mouth shut.

Interviewer: What are the type of things that they say that...

Student 1: Anything. I mean it was a lot worse, like I went and got help, but I was a lot worse. Like anything you can say, like me sitting here with you right now I can get pissed off and just be like oh, you know. I used to get like really aggravated, really irritated, really easily, but now it's just like she hits some—like she hits my nerves. Like she'll like put me down or something like in front of the whole class. She'll put me on, like she'll say something and it's just like why did you have to say that. Like it hurts like—or it pisses me off, either way. Like you say something and you shouldn't have said it. So that puts me in the position to get back at you. And then that puts me up here.

Interviewer: Has that happened with different teachers?

Student 1: Yeah, I mean there's always gonna be that one or two teachers throughout high school or any type of school that you're just like [sound affect] and I've always had that. I tried not to make it that way, especially with her, she's my art teacher. Art is my favorite thing to do. But I mean it just happens, like you're always gonna but heads with someone.

The data from the interviews and personal narratives indicates that students have had experiences of being judged for reasons of appearance, race and past experiences.

This feeling of being judged has been shown to cause strong negative feelings for the student featured. To illustrate this point the interview excerpt is included below.

Theme: Being Judged

Student 5: From peers? A lot. Being judged just by appearance. But, I mean, everyone probably judges you off your appearance but, once they get to communicate with you, they don't think of you as how you look, they know how you are. So with teachers, I've been judged by a few, like, just by appearance but then, after awhile, they got used to me, know who I am.

Interviewer: So in that initial impression, when they're just meeting you and looking at you, how would you know you were being prejudged?

Student 5: How would I know? Probably just—it's just like a certain look they give you as soon as you approach them. I remember the first week of school. I was sitting in class and I was new to the school and all the teachers looked at me like—I'll catch them during classes looking at me, giving me a glance here and there, like, why is he here? It looks like he did something bad. But I just came here to make it.

Interviewer: What about when you're in school, in the classroom, have you ever felt like you're being judged from being different from your peers?

Student 4: Yeah, I've felt that way, like, teachers look at you different, you know? They might talk to you different because, you know, you look a certain way. You dress a certain way so, yeah, I've felt that a couple of times.

Interviewer: How do you perceive that? Why do they do that makes you think they have a preconceived idea of who you are?

Student 4: It's just, like, the vibe that you get from them sometimes. Some of them, they give you, like, bad vibes.

Interviewer: Yeah. How does that make you feel when you were going to a classroom and a teacher has that vibe?

Student 4: It makes me, again, feel like I don't have the need to be there. I hate coming. This is my place of learning. I don't have to be judged here, you know? Like, it's disrespectful, like, it makes people don't want to come to school.

The results of the data presented through both descriptive statistics and phenomenological analysis were directly related to the experiences of the students who participated in this study. The results of the research indicate that students' perceptions of teacher behaviors have an impact on a student's decision to engage in learning. The survey responses, narratives, and one-on-one interview transcripts conclusively indicate a connection between the perceived experiences of the students and the reactions formed by students as a direct result of their previous experiences with their teachers. Figure 4.1 illustrates the chain of perceptual events that occurs at each learning experience a student participates in with a teacher. This figure reflects the responses of the students in the survey. The figure illustrates the initial student perceptions of the teacher based on prior experiences; once a student enters the classroom, the student examines the behaviors of the teacher. Students in this inquiry reveal this is done at the start of the class in initial teacher behaviors. Once a student has completed the initial assessment, the student will begin to engage in the experience; however, a point of disengagement may occur at any time due to triggers caused by behaviors exhibited by the student that are perceived as negative. The end result is either a connection formed by the student or the student will drop out of the experience.

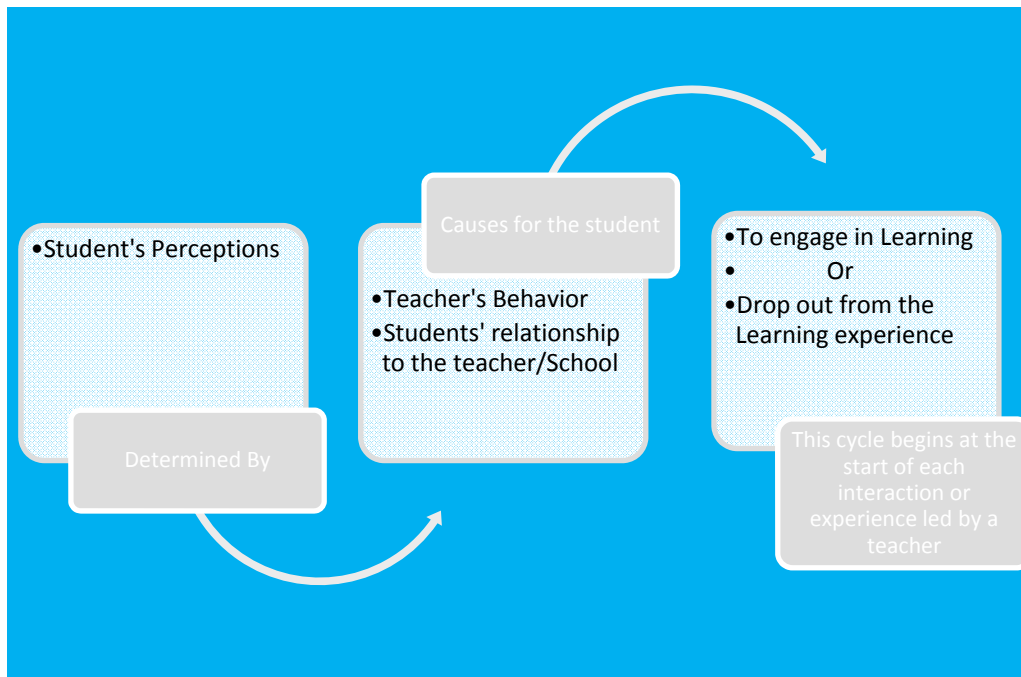


Figure 4.1 Chain of perceptual events.

The themes derived from the students illustrate student experiences in the classroom setting that have caused them to disengage from learning. In addition, the findings revealed in this section support the theories presented within the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 1. The situative perspective applies to the experiences revealed by the students in this study. The students revealed through their experiences that their understanding of teachers' behaviors was formed and their reactions are a manifest of this understanding. In addition, it can be asserted that perceptual salience is another theory in action that has emerged through the data in this research. Through their responses in the one-on-one interviews, the students revealed what they have found to be important in school as a result of their experiences in school. This is in line with the

conceptual framework of perceptual salience, which asserts that we learn and become who we are through interaction with others. It can be argued that students have learned to become students as a result of their experiences in school and respond according to their experiences.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion and Implications

The purpose for this disciplined inquiry was to identify the specific behaviors exhibited by teachers that students' perceive as impeding their achievement in school. Chapter 4 presented the results and discussion for the students' responses to the open-ended survey questions, short personal narrative written responses, and one-on-one interviews. These responses were analyzed with respect to the initial research questions and subquestions presented in Chapter 1 and are described in the conclusions section of this chapter. This chapter includes: conclusions, implications, student recommendations, recommendations for future practice/research, and summary.

Conclusions for Research Questions

This chapter presents the conclusions obtained from surveys and interviews conducted with 22 students enrolled in a continuation high school setting. These conclusions are discussed within the context of the study's six research questions and the emerging themes identified through phenomenological analysis of students responses to the research questions.

Research Question 1: How do students' perceptions of teachers' behaviors influence their success in school?

The students that participated in this study completed survey questions detailed their experiences with specific teacher behaviors they determined to thwart or inspire

their success in school. Specific questions were included in the survey, interview, and personal narrative exercise, which provided supporting data to this question.

The students perceived teachers' behaviors as negative when teachers exhibited one or more of the following: disrespected students, did not listen, played favorites, made judgments, displayed a negative attitude, looked down on students, lacked enthusiasm, were closed minded, discriminated, were not genuine, were unfair, went off-topic, talked too much, were boring, acted irrationally, or did not make the subject matter interesting. These behaviors were reoccurring themes that emerged throughout the qualitative research analysis process. Participants perceived teachers' behaviors to be positive when teachers exhibited one or more of the following: made learning fun, had a positive mood, listened, worked to improve student weaknesses, connected lessons to life, and had a great personality.

It is important to note that students—when addressing behaviors they found to be positive in teachers—often cited attributes related specifically to the teaching profession. This differs from the attributes most cited by students when describing the negative attributes that turn them off from learning. For the most part, the students cited specific attitudes and characteristics possessed by the individual teacher that may be independent of the teaching profession when citing perceived positive behaviors. When students cited negative behaviors that attribute to them disengaging from learning, they often cited characteristics associated with judgments made by the teacher and the specific characteristics that deal with the personality traits of the teacher. This connects with the theoretical framework situative perspective which asserts that knowledge is gained as

result of a person's relationship between an individual and a social or physical situation. In this case the knowledge gained by students' past experiences has determined the level of engagement or disengagement the student has within the classroom. This also supports the perceptual salience theory which supports that notion that what one student finds important is dependent upon the social experiences that have shaped the individual's social viewpoint.

The specific ways in which the behaviors cited by the students affected them include the following: a desire to quit or give up, feeling voiceless, feeling apathetic, a lack of respect for the teacher, and forming generalizations of teachers. These experiences caused students in this study at times to disengage from learning or even give up on learning from a particular teacher. It is important to note the students attending this continuation school were placed at the school because they failed to pass their classes in traditional high school settings. It can be inferred that their presence at this school could be linked in part to their experiences in the classroom, which could have led to their disengagement of learning in the classroom.

Research Question 2: How does a student's cultural background influence their perceptions of another's behaviors?

The focus of this research was not on the influence of culture on students' perceptions. As result, specific questions were not written into the survey or interview questions that would give specific data related to this research question; however, in students' brief personal narrative statements, some indicated experiences which were

perceived as being directly related to students' cultural or racial background. It can be inferred that this was an impacting event in the lives of the students who selected this particular experience out of several negative experiences they could have cited. It also appears as though students were sensitive to the ways in which their teachers perceived them based on their cultural or racial background. As a result, some students may have been more critical of the treatment they received from the teacher and disengaged from learning, which could have been perceived as a threat (Steele, 1999).

Research Question 3: How does the student's background influence the way they are perceived in the classroom?

Students participated in answering survey questions, one-on-one interviews, and writing brief personal narratives related to this research question. Student believed that their backgrounds influenced their experiences in the following ways: they felt judged, singled out, looked down upon, and felt like their past was held against them to some degree. It seemed as though students in this school setting were predisposed to knowledge that they would be judged based on their placement within a continuation school. As a result, they felt as though their past experiences traveled with them to this setting, not allowing for them to have a chance at redemption. It can be inferred that for the students there was a stigma attached to the continuation school setting and, as a result, they felt stigmatized as a result and are not given the opportunity for redemption. Stigmatized individuals, such as the students in this study, possess a "spoiled identity" (Goffman, 1963). These students have an attribute that has placed them in a continuation school setting, which marks them as different and leads them to be devalued and

marginalized in the eyes of others (Major & O'Brien, 2005). As a result, these students experience more negative outcomes than their nonstigmatized peers in the traditional high school setting. This stigma can lead to "attributional ambiguity," which is an uncertainty about whether one is being judged because of personal deservingness or the prejudices held against one's group this is further evidenced in the one-on-one interview responses provided by the students (Crocker & Major, 1989). In addition these findings support the theoretical framework of the sociocultural perspectives of students which operates under the premise that we learn and become who we are through interactions with others. Students have learned to become who they are as result of their previous experiences in school and those perhaps of their parents. This in turn has resulted in a higher number of negative experiences for the students in this study.

Research Question 4: How important are the teachers' perceived behaviors to students?

The survey questions, one-on-one interviews, and personal narrative responses provide importance data to show that this is important to students. All of the responses related to this question revealed that students place heavy weight on the behaviors they perceive to be either positive or negative displayed by teachers, past and present. These experiences often serve as rubrics for students as to what they perceive teachers should be like, are like, or are not like. As a result, students then respond in a manner that reciprocates the behavior that they perceive to be displayed by the teacher. This response is what either engages or disengages the student from the learning that is happening in the classroom. Some students indicated that, as a result of the behaviors of their teacher, they just fell back from the teacher and became introverted. Some students indicated that they

had even decided to drop out of school due to the behaviors they had experienced with multiple teachers through the years. However, many also noted that they stayed because of teachers that displayed behaviors that showed they cared.

Research Question 5: What teacher behaviors positively impact the relationship and success of the student?

The students in this study consistently indicated in their responses that they felt that the levels of positive trust, respect, and motivation displayed by teachers who ‘care,’ positively impacted their success and the relationship they had with particular teachers. These teachers were often cited as being open-minded, made learning meaningful, helpful, and displayed a passion for teaching. It is inferred that students not only desire a teacher they can form a relationship with, but also one from who they can learn content in a meaningful manner. Students cited they learned best when the teachers connected the lessons presented to them to things that knew, eliciting background knowledge. This would support the need for schema building in lessons taught in order for students to better understand and connect the subject in a manner that will both hold their attention and remain part of their memory.

Research Question 6: What teacher behaviors turn students off from learning?

The survey questions, one-on-one interviews, and brief personal narrative responses answered this question in multiple ways. The researcher sought to glean information from student respondents, which would identify the specific behaviors that turn students off from learning. The students frequently cited teacher behaviors that turned them off from learning, such as acting irrational, disrespectful, and not listening.

In addition to these behaviors, students frequently cited specific teaching styles that turn them off from learning as well. The students cited additional factors that turn them off from learning, including teachers who were boring in their lesson delivery, not engaging students in interaction, talking too much, and not making the subject matter interesting.

It appears as though student experiences as they progressed through the K-12 learning experience made an indelible impression, which heightened perceptions of teacher behaviors. This sensitivity to teachers' behaviors resulted in varied student reactions. The experiences and reactions of students expressed through their survey, narrative, and one-on-one interview responses created emerging themes that remained consistent throughout the research.

Emerging Themes

The emerging themes that came out of this research are prevalent within the data used to answer the research questions. The stories shared by the students in the interviews and the responses given by the students in the short answers highlighted these six themes. The themes derived from the findings support the theoretical frameworks written in chapter 1 of this research. These theoretical frameworks serve as a foundation of support for understanding the students included within this research.

Respect: Theme 1

The first and most frequently emergent theme was that of respect. Students cited numerous experiences where they felt disrespected by the teacher. As a result, they began to give up or reflect back an attitude of disrespect toward the teacher. The experiences of

disrespect were often perceived to have been enacted toward students for no apparent reason. Some of the students perceived they were being disrespected because they were alleged to be a problem student from the time they entered the classroom. The students hinted that at times they felt like they were being disrespected based on their race or ethnic origin. These student experiences related to respect have caused this researcher to rethink how we interact with students in the classroom. What is apparent is that in the high school setting students have strong desires to be respected and treated like young adults. This may call for a simple fix or implicit understanding; however, the data from this research suggests this is not always occurring in our high schools. What seems to still prevail is the notion that the teacher is always right in actions, beliefs, behaviors, and teaching styles and students are to be seen and not heard within the classroom. This understanding and behavior of understanding has shown to turn off some students from learning. When students do not feel respected in the classroom, they do not have a sense of belonging.

Schlosser (1992) reported that those whose teachers emphasized a sense of belonging with their students were more likely, compared with those whose teachers did not emphasize belonging, to accept their teacher's education values and to continue in school. Routt (1996) asserted that students perceive teachers who are attentive, respectful, and helpful as caring and concerned about their social and academic well-being, which gives the students a sense of belonging and fosters their academic engagement.

Voice: Theme 2

One of the most compelling themes that emerged from this research was voice. Throughout this research, students cited experiences where they felt teachers were not listening to them, or that when they spoke up they were not heard. As a result, they withdrew from learning and remained silent and, consequently, degraded to the point of failure. Through short personal narrative responses and interviews, students shared how they were silenced by their experiences and misunderstood when they tried to self-advocate for what they desired to learn from the person they sought for help. Many students cited that when teachers listened, they learned the most and had higher respect for the teacher. It becomes an issue of injustice when a student feels they cannot speak in a classroom of learning. As a result of these experiences, they perceive the next teacher to desire the same of them, which creates a problem of participation, content knowledge mastery, and the student's internal will to keep going when the content becomes unmanageable to conquer alone.

Many of the students included in this research are at the continuation school because they gave up on being heard within the traditional high school setting. As a result, they failed many of their classes and were sent to continuation school because they were at risk of dropping out. The students in this research indicated that they found the smaller school setting to be beneficial for them, because they had more of an opportunity to work one-on-one with their teacher, this would support the notion that they were being heard. Rudduck and Flutter (2004) assert "the traditional exclusion of young people from the process of dialogue and decision making...is founded upon an outdated view of

childhood which fails to acknowledge young people's capacity to take initiatives and to reflect on issues affecting their lives" (p. 133-134). This is an important concept, yet the voices of students are consistently being silenced due to factors that go beyond the scope of the research. One can speculate that time, size, and individual teacher personalities play a major role in who is being heard in the classroom.

Acceptance and Understanding: Theme 3

One of the emergent themes found in this research was that of acceptance. In their responses, many students displayed a need or desire for acceptance by teachers they perceived did not like them. They often cited experiences when they felt teacher assumptions about the students caused them to have a hard time being accepted by the teacher. As a result, their actions were misunderstood and thought of as negative when that was not the students' intention. This caused students to display their own attitudes, which further hindered the process of being understood by the teacher. Just as adults desire a level of acceptance by others, students also require this from a teacher they will spend approximately 90 days with. To spend this amount of time with someone who doesn't understand or want to accept you becomes a type of punishment. This, in turn, makes for a relationship that breeds detest versus success for the student. These findings support research that maintains students who drop out of school have less social engagement and commitment at school and have not developed the social bonds with adults that allow them to sense themselves as members of the school community (Finn, 1989). By the time they drop out of school, many students believe the school has rejected them (Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). One student in this study states:

If the child comes to school with the attitude nobody cares and they don't have that extra encouragement, it turns into them just saying, 'you know, forget it,' nobody cares so I might as well just drop out. But if they have a teacher that's on them, that is actually encouraging them, they have a reason to stay in school.

Through their one-on-one interviews, students revealed they had to accept a level of responsibility for their actions in the classroom. They acknowledged their actions had often caused them to fail in the classroom as a result of their behavior. This allowed for some the students to be understanding of the behaviors at times displayed by their teachers in the classroom toward other students. One student stated:

I think the teachers did their jobs. I think it was me who didn't do my job. I didn't do my homework everyday like I should have. I didn't do all this stuff. ...It's all up to the student and parents and I think it starts at home versus starting at a bureaucratic level.

Fairness: Theme 4

The theme of respect resonated repeatedly with the students through their survey responses. Many students cited experiences of favoritism displayed in the classroom, teachers singling out particular students, and teachers acting irrational in their responses to students. It was clear from these findings that students desire to be treated fairly in the classroom. The students do not like when they experience instances of favoritism in the classroom. This was cited several times throughout student responses. In addition, the students felt the teacher nagged and singled out particular students in the classroom that were vulnerable to getting in trouble. As a result of nagging, these students were sent out of class at a higher rate than other students. This resulted in students having a low success

rate in the classroom and a higher rate of suspension. For high school students, being treated fairly and with respect is of great need for them in order to begin to learn from the teacher providing the instruction; without this the student will focus on the behaviors of the teacher.

Redemption: Theme 5

One of the most unanticipated and surprising themes that emerged was that of the notion of redemption. Based on the responses of the students, they have a strong desire to be forgiven. In survey responses, personal narratives, and one-on-one interviews experiences, students cited they felt as though their pasts were being held against them. They show a strong desire to have the opportunity work in an environment where this does not occur; unfortunately, this had not been the case for these students. These students cited different layers of experiences where they could not escape their pasts. This begins with teachers sharing experiences with particular students, which cause the teacher to prejudge the students and act accordingly. In addition, some of the students acknowledged that their current school placement puts them in a position where they are vulnerable to judgment, being designated bad students, or students not worthy of learning. As a result, some students feel they have limited abilities and academic prowess, so the way they are treated by teachers comes as a natural consequence. This false sense of reality has led some students to become frustrated and display a strong desire of wanting to give up. One student recalled an experience he had with a teacher. He stated:

I remember I had a teacher who held a grudge against me and I would just like, give her my opinion about something and she'd just, like look at me like I'm crazy, she was still holding a grudge. She then called me to like get written up and get kicked out of class....well in like honestly, it made me like not want to go to class and just like I didn't care and because she had an attitude I felt like I didn't need to be there.

Many students cited that they did give up, but were pulled back into the fold by those teachers who did not judge them and took the time to encourage them. Findings indicate students can reach a potential point of no return when they feel they do not have the option of redemption, or acquiring a clean slate in the school setting.

Time and Relevance: Theme 6

An additional theme that emerged from the findings was the pair: time and relevance. Many students indicated through their survey and interview responses the desire for teachers to use classroom time more effectively. These students indicated that they became disengaged from the learning experience when their teachers went off topic and did not make the learning relevant. As a result, the students were not motivated to stay engaged while the teacher taught. In addition, the data revealed students had a higher respect for those teachers who took the time to make the subject matter meaningful and did not focus on irrelevant content. Perceptions of supportive, orderly, and positive classroom environments are strongly associated with students' academic achievement (Fraser, 1991).

Conclusions for Students' Experiences Shared in the Research

The students in this research represent a population of students who are at the brink of dropping out. These students were selected because their experiences in the

traditional comprehensive high school setting initially amounted to experiences of failure. Their voices and perspectives indicating why they experienced levels of failure was critical in getting closer to finding ways to combat the dropout rate that plagues our nation's high schools. The students featured in this inquiry have encountered both internal and external barriers to success in school; they are placed in a school for students who need an alternative means of earning a traditional high school diploma. While enrolled in the K-12 educational system, these students experienced the joys and woes of being a student. These students also had some experiences that included supports and barriers from their teachers that often predetermined their success in school. It appears that these students experienced reoccurring cycles of failure, which left many without a voice to advocate for themselves. As a result of this disciplined inquiry, these students were able to identify qualities in a teacher that makes for successful students who have a hard time seeing success as a reality inside the brick-and-mortar classroom setting. The data gathered from the experiences of these students provide implications and recommendations that will be shared later in this chapter to better support the needs of high school students.

Implications

The results of the present study suggest student perceptions of teacher behaviors—as they relate to students' classroom success—are significantly related. The research findings provide evidence that when students perceive teachers' enacted behaviors as negative, students then reacts in a manner that disengages them from the learning experience. These predictable and frequent interactions result in academic

failure for the students involved. This is consistent with earlier research, which states the need of belonging has to be satisfied before others can be fulfilled (Maslow, 1962). Finn (1989) indicated that unless students identify well with their schools (i.e., feel welcomed, respected, and valued), their education participation will always be limited. In addition, case studies conducted by Fine (1991) indicated that lack of a sense of belonging was a direct cause of dropping out of high school.

The findings of this research and that of supporting research indicate the relationship a teacher forms with a student has a profound impact on the direction of learning the student will take in the classroom or within the schooling experience. This was evident in the experiences and results derived from the research study. This relationship is one that teachers should not take for granted in the classroom, as it can result in a student dropping out of the course intellectually or physically, or dropping out of school entirely based on the number of previous experiences of disengagement the student has faced. The implications of a positive relationship experienced by students with limited successful experiences can prove to be life changing. As indicated by the experiences of the students in this research, when students experience a teacher perceived to be positive the student can experience a level of success in the teacher's classroom and a renewed motivation to continue to succeed. This then transfers into other curricular and academic pursuits for the student, thus changing their academic direction from dropping out to one of success. It must be noted that the students' level of self-determination would determine how long this would last. Findings also revealed students desire to learn from teachers perceived to be knowledgeable about the content taught and has the strategies to

make the content meaningful and relevant to students' lives. This would indicate that through the years students are able to pick up on teaching styles that mark teachers as effective, or ineffective. Although this research did not examine the area of effective teaching, it is important to note that students refer to teaching as part of their experiences.

The results of this study implicate stages that a student goes through as they make the decision to connect or disengage from the learning being administered by their teacher. These stages are referred to as "The Stages of Engagement" (Figure 5.1) As students begin to engage in the process of learning they filter their learning through their past experiences before engaging in learning from their teacher. This engagement is dependent on their relationship with the teacher. At each stage a student can disengage from learning. The relationship and method of instruction being administered by the teacher can limit the student from disengaging from learning which could eventually lead to the student dropping out of the learning experience entirely.

The level of engagement experienced by the student in a classroom is dependent upon the student's level of resiliency. The level of resiliency that a student has is built upon their situative perspective and social cognition. Together these perspectives form a student's understanding of people and the entities by which they associate their experiences with particular kinds of people. This forms a reality for students that either allows for engagement to occur in flux depending on the depth of their perspectives as experienced by the students in this research.

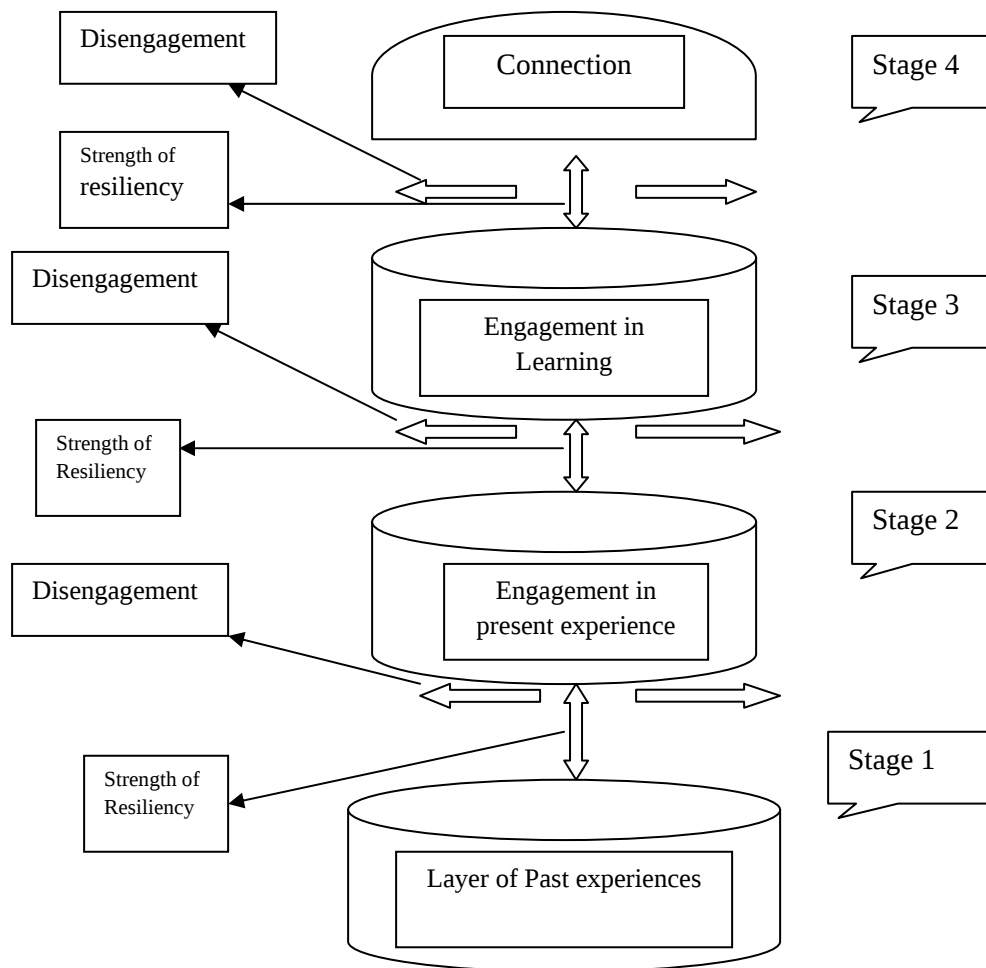


Figure 5.1 Stages of Engagement

Implications for Professional Practice

Student Recommendations.

Through the sharing of their experiences, students expressed recommendations for improving relationships between students and teachers. These recommendations include: (a) getting to know students one-on-one, (b) taking time when presenting lessons, (c) connecting content to things that are meaningful to students, (d) never assuming a student knows what should have been learned in a previous class, (e) offering encouragement, and (f) listening to students. These suggestions are derived from survey results, interviews, and brief narrative responses, suggesting desired recommendations, which students desire to see happen in the classroom. These findings are consistent with earlier research, which asserts that, “Students depend on the nurturing and positive instruction of classroom teachers to sustain a healthy sense of self-esteem and, and thus, a positive personal identity. Oversimplified, students ‘resist’ when they do not receive this nurturing, and they conform when they do: when the curriculum is perceived as relevant to their needs” (Miron & Laura, 1998, p. 190). These recommendations are as much about the importance of the academic strategies as they are about the relationships that allow the process to occur.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research featured students’ experiences in the K-12 educational system in order to identify research findings that would provide specific recommendations to lower the percentages of students silenced into dropping out of high school. In order to arrive at conclusions to inform the practice of educators, researchers, and superintendents, more

research is needed across the K-12 educational system in order to fully grasp the experiences of students at risk of dropping out of our nation's schools. More specifically, research is needed within traditional high schools to examine behaviors that students perceive turn them off from learning and the experiences they have encountered, which have led to their experiences of failure in our schools. This research should closely examine student views not only from the student perspective but also from a racial/ethnic perspective. Research in this area could give voice to that which has not been brought to the attention of policy makers and educational reformers due to a heavy focus on the needs of those in authority.

In addition, a longitudinal study of students at risk of failing the fourth grade as they progress through the educational study is needed. The study of their progression through the educational system would provide important information on the critical experiences and times when students' perceptions shift from child's reactions to teacher behaviors to that of young adults. This would provide important recommendations that would have implications for addressing the behaviors that teachers experience with students who have had higher levels of failure than others.

A study on the perceptions that teachers have of at-risk students would be an important piece to finding a solution to students' disengagement. This research would examine teachers' perceptions of this group of students and determine whether their perceptions in action contribute to students' negative receptions of displayed behaviors. This would compare the perceptions of both students and teachers and derive a

comparative analysis, which would provide conclusions to further strengthen the level of research in the area of the effects of student and teacher perceptions within the classroom.

Finally, studies that focus on the positive and negative aspects of students within alternative school settings are suggested. It might be suggested researchers examine how perceptions of the alternative environment affects the level of success and motivation experienced by students and staff. This research would provide information on how perception of an entire institution of learning impacts the level of success and motivation experienced by those within the institution.

Study Limitations

This study was limited in terms of the participant sample. The participants of this research were students attending the continuation high school setting being considered. These students were selected as a result of their previous experiences in the traditional high school that led them to the continuation high school setting. The inquiry assumption was the students would express their experiences through the K-12 educational system and reflect on past failures that brought them to the continuation high school setting. It could be assumed that students within the traditional high school setting could have provided the same amount of information. However, their level dropout risk may not be the same as those included in this research. Students in the traditional high school setting will need to be examined in future research.

The scope of this research was limited to only the voice of students. This study examined the perceptions of students. In doing so, the voices of students were the

primary focus and target of this research. This could be classified as a limitation as the teachers' perspectives were not included; their perspectives would have provided insight as to the perceptions teachers hold of students. However, the voice of the teacher could have limited student voices in this research.

The researcher limited the number of students included in this study to just over 11% of the student population of the school site where the research was conducted. This was done to protect the confidentiality of a population of students who are marginalized and easily identifiable due to their placement in the district's only continuation school. Having more students participate in this research would have provided quantitative data to support the qualitative data derived from this research. In addition, more students would have provided substantive data to support conclusions associated with race and ethnicity issues brought out by student responses in this research.

Summary

The perceptions of teachers' behaviors may be individually experienced by students in our nations' schools, it is important that teachers and educational leaders are aware of the impact of their behaviors on the success of students. Educators can be engrossed in the behaviors of students due to a focus on raising the achievement levels experienced by students. Sadly, what is not being heard is the voice of the students and the behaviors displayed that have turned many students off from learning and resulted in their dropping out of school altogether. What is revealed in these research findings is that students have a strong desire to form relationships with their teachers built upon mutual respect and understanding. The effects of a strained relationship in the classroom could

prove to be devastating to the spirit and motivation of a student already at risk of failing. Moreover, the efforts of teachers to increase levels of student academic proficiency can in turn into an effort that creates failure. The effects of such failure have the potential of creating a chain effect, which begins with students affected by the failure, then those who become impacted as a result of actions. This, sadly, is played out in our society today, which is representative of a population of people represented in our nation's penal systems.

The students in this study were able to identify their roles and take responsibility for some of the failures they experienced in their K-12 schooling experience. However, they displayed a strong desire to have the opportunity to redeem his or herself after suffering a setback as a result of their actions. This clearly shows that students are able to differentiate between the responsibilities of the teacher and student within the process of learning. In addition, they suggest relationships formed in the classroom are critical to student success in the learning experience. Giving the student voice merit and respect within the classroom is critical toward strengthening the student-teacher relationship.

Closing Comments

If people want teachers to change their practice, pertinent evidence must, in some way, be related to teachers' existing beliefs. Only when available knowledge is presented so that teachers can use it to inform their own actions will significant and positive change occur (Eisenhart, Shrum, Harding, & Cuthbert, 1988).

The findings of this research have the potential of giving another perspective and voice to educators who seek to make a difference in the lives of students at risk of dropping out. Although the findings of this research suggest that more in-depth research is needed to fully capture the weight of this subject of students' perceptions in the classroom, the findings are nonetheless significant as they provide a message to educational leaders that student perceptions of teachers can significantly impact students' success. Not paying close attention to the relationships that are formed in the classroom can, in turn, create another student dropout as a result of being silenced from the learning experience. Not taking the information presented within this research to a point of action would hinder the process of change within our schools. It is the hope of this researcher that this will be a topic that will continue to be researched, and closely considered when instructing students. By doing this, we begin to address the social justice issues that are silently attacking our nation's students who are at risk of failing.

Appendix A

Interview # 1

Interviewer: How old are you?

Student 1: I am 16.

Interviewer: Are you a junior?

Student 1: I'm supposed to be a junior. I got held back. I'm a sophomore.

Interviewer: Tell me about some experiences that you've had with teachers, things that they've done in the classroom that made you tune out from what they were saying?

Student 1: Well when teachers are really slow and like they just drag things along basically, or just like wow, I'm really sick of listening to this monotone teacher and she's like—and especially if they're not like enthusiastic, like about what they do. If they're not into what they're doing then it's just like wow, my teacher's awesome. I really want to do the work. And it's just—I don't know, basically if you're not into what you're doing and like wanting to teach or like you're just not enthused by what you have to do, then it's like okay, well then good night, like I'm gonna go to sleep.

Interviewer: What are the things that tell you this teacher's not into what he's doing?

Student 1: They're really slow. They sit at their desk. They are on the computer. They're just talking really slow and just trying to do things really slow, and just not giving a crap what they do.

Interviewer: What are their interactions like with students, those type of teachers?

Student 1: Hold on, like I'll be there in a minute, or just dragging things along basically. She's like oh I'll be there in a second, after I'm done writing this down. And they're like not even doing anything.

Interviewer: Has that happened recently?

Student 1: Yes.

Interviewer: What was that like?

Student 1: Well I'm not gonna name names but...

Interviewer: You don't need to name names.

Student 1: Okay, well one of my teachers, my math tutor teacher, I don't know what you want to call her, but she—like she—you can tell she likes her job but half the time she just gets really annoyed. But today she got really annoyed 'cause we talk but we get our work done, like that's just how we are. Like you can't expect us to shut up and not talk to anyone. And she's just like—she sat at her desk—I mean she helps us, she likes her job, but she's like really slow about things and she's just old basically. She's really slow.

Interviewer: What _____?

Student 1: Just—she likes to sugarcoat things and beat around the bush instead of just getting to the point.

Interviewer: Does that happen when you're in class or in your one on one interactions with her?

Student 1: Basically just the whole class. When she's there like with you, like she pays attention, she's like on the work, on the dot. Like it's weird 'cause she—like it can change, but normally when I'm working with her she's on it, like she'll try and help me.

Interviewer: Are there any other experiences where you...

Student 1: I'm sure there's plenty but honestly there's not one fresh in my mind like this one.

Interviewer: So you're in high school now, right?

Student 1: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Thinking about your middle school and high school experience, have you ever had a negative experience with teachers?

Student 1: All throughout my whole life. It's just—it becomes a habit when it first happens. You're just like—you try and get away with things but then they like start to catch up to you. But yeah, my whole life I've gotten into bad stuff with teachers, kicked out and...

Interviewer: Tell me about one of them. What does that feel like?

Student 1: Hell, because it just puts that records behind me. I don't know. Like yesterday I got kicked out of my fifth period because that teacher's crazy. She's just annoying, like everyone knows—like she'll say things like that don't even make sense, or she'll sit there and make noises, and it's like...

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Student 1: Like she'll just like. Like randomly. It's weird. And like I'll say something back and she'll get all like up-the-butt hurt and just kick me out and stuff. She has it out for me I swear.

Interviewer: Why do you say that?

Student 1: Because I'm always getting in trouble in that class. But like I said, it does become a habit, getting in trouble, and just—I don't know.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Student 1: It just—you get stuck on it, always getting in trouble. You're just like oh, this is nothing new so...

Interviewer: Is there anything that you see teachers do that reinforce that habit?

Student 1: What do you mean, like reinforce it?

Interviewer: That make that habit become stronger.

Student 1: Yeah, some of the teachers don't know how to keep their mouth shut.

Interviewer: What are the things that they say that...

Student 1: When I like—when I get mad, the best things for you to do is just not say anything and let me calm down on my own. Don't kick me out, don't like—I mean you can kick me out but just let me be. And it's like—but she doesn't like doing that. She likes to keep running her mouth. So then I go back and I say something and that gets me in more trouble because I talk back to a teacher, a senior, like an older person, you know, my elders. So it's like that comes back on me and that was my fault because I opened my mouth. It's just hard for her to keep her mouth shut.

Interviewer: What are the type of things that they say that...

Student 1: Anything. I mean it was a lot worse, like I went and got help, but I was a lot worse. Like anything you can say, like me sitting here with you right now I can get pissed off and just be like oh, you know. I used to get like really aggravated, really irritated, really easily, but now it's just like she hits some—like she hits my nerves. Like she'll like

put me down or something like in front of the whole class. She'll put me on _____, like she'll say something and it's just like why did you have to say that. Like it hurts like—or it pisses me off, either way. Like you say something and you shouldn't have said it. So that puts me in the position to get back at you. And then that puts me up here.

Interviewer: Has that happened with different teachers?

Student 1: Yeah, I mean there's always gonna be that one or two teachers throughout high school or any type of school that you're just like.. And I've always had that. I tried not to make it that way, especially with her, she's my art teacher. Art is my favorite thing to do. But I mean it just happens, like you're always gonna butt heads with someone.

Interviewer: Her attitude and the way she conducts a class, has that had any effect on how you do in art?

Student 1: Yeah, because it's something that—like if I let it get to me then I don't want to do anything, I just—whatever, I'm not gonna do anything. But I don't know, lately, it's just like art is what I keep my mind on to keep my mind off of other like worser things. I just need to focus on something. And it's like the thing is, I'd rather listen to like an iPod and be able to do it, because it helps me focus and like tune out everything else, and that's what I normally do. I don't know. Art is one thing I do love doing so I focus on that a lot.

Interviewer: Looking back on those experiences, was there anything that you would hope that they would've done differently?

Student 1: Yeah, keep their mouth shut, just let me be. Like I said, I calm down on my own. You don't need to put any words into my head, like I've had enough. Like my whole life I've been to—in and out of counseling, like I know what I needed to do, I just gotta do it. I gotta put myself to do it. Just like keep your mouth shut, let me be, I'll be fine.

Interviewer: Can you think of anything that they could've said that would've been positive?

Student 1: I don't know. A lot of my teachers tell me that I am smart but I just need to put my mind to it. Like that's another thing, like I don't put my mind to a lot of things. But I know—I know I am and they know I am and like they compliment me all the time, like even the bad ones. But it's like I don't think it's a heart from the bad ones because they've already said all this negative and they try and back it up with a positive. It doesn't work that way, like—'cause I've—throughout my whole life I've been _____ negative instead of positive. So that's what I'm prone to hearing and what I'm prone to thinking. So it's like—it's more like this than like this so...

Interviewer: Have you ever felt that you've been judged for being different from your peers?

Student 1: Not really, actually. I don't care what people think about me. I'm the one that stands outside of the box instead of being like everyone else. Like if you knew me, I'd be—I'm the most randomest, weirdest, craziest, loudest, short little girl you'd ever meet. Like I don't like being the same and people know that, like you can try to compare me to someone but I can fight you on that because I'm not, like I have things that I can back up on the way I am and you want to—like if you want to call me oh you're just like everyone else, like how, like can you give me a good reason why. And they can't because I have more to back up than what they have. So I'm not—I—yeah, I'm not gonna lie. I have felt it in the past, like it's never gotten to me though, to where I cared.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt that a teacher might have a preconceived idea of how you are?

Student 1: Yeah, I walk into classes and they're like—as soon as I open my mouth they're like uh oh, there's a loud one. There's another little turd that we're gonna have to work with.

Interviewer: How do you feel about that?

Student 1: I mean it's fine, go ahead and think what you want to think, but I'm who I am and you're gonna have to get to know me if you want to start making judgments.

Interviewer: Say that that teacher who you felt that from teaches history or science, whatever, what do you think that _____ teacher will have in how interested you are in the class?

Student 1: What do you mean?

Interviewer: Say you come into, let's say, history class and you feel that a teacher is prejudging you, how would that make you feel about learning history?

Student 1: Oh, I'd be like oh, well you want to think this about me, then let me live up to that, let me show you that I can do that. But then again I'm just like—for the time being, yeah, I would do that, but then I can show them that I am different. I do show them. I don't let that—set that like goal, like my thing is I'll show you that I can be that and I can live up to what you say for a couple of weeks and then it can change. Like look at me, I'm not what you think I am, you know, to prove them wrong. That's what I tend to do a lot is prove a lot of people wrong.

Interviewer: What about the flip side of that which is the behaviors or actions, the things that teachers do, that make you respect them?

Student 1: The teachers that—well—I'm so lost I did not catch that at all.

Interviewer: You talked about things that teachers do that turn you off, what do teachers do...

Student 1: To make you want to...

Interviewer: That make you want to engage in their classes.

Student 1: Put forth effort, put—like it's—I don't always—as you give me respect I'll give you respect. That's basically how it is. Like if you want to be the biggest b word to me then hey, that's what I'm gonna be back to you, because why give you something when I'm not receiving it. Just like my parents say, I'm not gonna give if I don't receive. And I don't know, when someone who has like the tendencies to walk over to me or ask me for help if I need help, then that shows that they care, like it shows they want me to do

good. Like there—like a couple of our teachers here, they're always worried about my grades. Like they'll try and help me, try and have me do better and what not. And it's just like wow, that person really does care, like I need to help them out by helping me out. So yeah.

Interviewer: Show they care.

Student 1: Yeah. Show them that they care and respect me.

Interviewer: In what other ways do teachers show respect to students?

Student 1: _____ just helping them out, like even if you have to be a counselor for a day. Like that's why I go to the librarian 'cause I talk to her all the time. She helps me out all the time. And just like if someone acted like word vomit to you, you know, just like say what I have to say and she won't judge me about it. And like that's another thing like that brought up something else, like when teachers judge you, that does affect a student 'cause some—a lot of students, I'm probably one of them, I do let certain things that they say get to me, for the most part. But then like it's like why. Like I always ask myself why on everything.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Student 1: Like someone'll be like oh, she's, excuse my language, but she's a bitch. Like why do you think I'm a bitch? Like back it up and I'll back mine up, like I said before.

Interviewer: Have you ever had a time where you had a concern, a problem, something that you wanted to say to a teacher or principal, and that your voice has been heard?

Student 1: That it has been heard?

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Student 1: Not completely, no. It all depends. Once I get going there's no stopping me. It's—I'm a redhead, like there's no way to stop me. Once I start yelling it's like you're

gonna have to like throw me in another—like another building to be able to not hear me. And it's like I do get my point out there but I don't get my point across.

Interviewer: Why do you think that that's happened like that?

Student 1: Because it gets really bad _____. Like some of my teachers have earned the wrath, like not as bad as it used to be but they're still driving in me.

Interviewer: So you feel like sometimes you have the opportunity to express what you're thinking, but you...

Student 1: I hold back.

Interviewer: Oh, you hold back.

Student 1: I hold back. Yeah, I don't—I don't let anyone get the full wrath of me because...

Interviewer: What do you mean by that?

Student 1: Like I don't go off like all the way on someone like—'cause once I start going off I get louder and louder and louder and louder, and it's like windows start shaking and it's—it gets scary. _____ I scare myself when I do it, too, because I just don't stop.

Interviewer: So you try to hold back?

Student 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you think holding back makes them not act on what you're asking?

Student 1: I don't know.

Interviewer: Have you ever had a time when you had a concern about how a teacher's acting and something was done to accommodate that concern?

Student 1: I'm still lost.

Interviewer: Maybe you were having a problem with a teacher and you went to someone in the school to say this is the situation, please do something about it. Has that ever happened?

Student 1: Yeah, it has. It has, yes. I mean it depends on the situation. Like if I'm mad, I'm mad. Like you can't change that. But if I go to someone and talk to them about it and like word bomb it and I just let it out, and then they go and do something about it, then yeah, it has happened.

Interviewer: It has happened.

Student 1: It has happened, yes.

Interviewer: Who are those people that you can go to?

Student 1: Well I have my sister. I mean we're sisters. We don't get along all the time but when we do it's like we're sisters, like you can tell we're like sisters, like we always together, always doing stuff, always talking about everything. Like I can trust her with my life. And the issues—I go to her a lot. Even if we're fighting. I'll have—like she'll help me like bail myself out of stuff.

Interviewer: Has there ever been a person in the school that you've been able to do that with?

Student 1: Yeah, the librarian. Miss T. yeah. I go to her all the time. I'm in there all the time.

Interviewer: Is she able to help you with some of those things?

Student 1: Yes, like if I'm mad, like if I get kicked out of class and get sent to the library, she calms me down. I can go in there and I can tell her—like I tell her anything and everything, too, for the most part. And it's like if you have to call CPS or whatever then she would, like she's like my mom basically. And yeah, I can trust her more than my mom actually.

Interviewer: A lot of the times for students in high school the decision comes to either stay in school or drop out of school. How do you feel that the relationship that students have with staffing affects that position?

Student 1: Well it is really important. I mean if you—like me and Mr. Lawrence, we're good friends. Like if you had a bad relationship with someone that's just gonna bring you down the hill because it's like why have a bad relationship with someone and try and like see them daily, like five times a week. And it's like—it's not gonna work because they're in a mad mood around you, you're in a bad mood around them, and it's like why. Like that's always the question to ask, is why, because if you have a bad relationship with someone then it's like—it's stupidity. It's just basically pointless to be here then 'cause if you're not gonna do anything, do any work, I should take my own advice sometimes, but if you're not gonna do any work and like deal with them and deal with life, then why would you be here, why would you try and even—try and like not do anything. It's stay home, drop out. Like if you're really not gonna do anything or have a bad relationship with someone, there's no point. There's no point at all.

Interviewer: How do you think your relationship with Mr. Lawrence supports you in school?

Student 1: It—I don't know. It just helps me out, 'cause knowing that I can come up here and I can even talk to him about things, like it's always good to have a really good relationship with your principal because if you get into trouble then he can like talk you out of situations or like, you know, and you can listen to them, like you're willing to listen to that person. But if you had a bad relationship you're like F U, like I don't want to have anything to do with you, like why would I listen to you, you know. So I don't know. It's always good to have that one or a few...

Interviewer: Connection?

Student 1: Yeah, a good connection.

Interviewer: Thinking about the relationships between students, teachers, the principal, what is some advice you would give to students and teachers to form better relationships with students?

Student 1: Just hold back, like keep your mouth shut, like let that person cool down. Like if they want to go sit alone, let them go somewhere alone. Let them go on a walk or something around the school because it just—it helps them think. Like let them go and think about what they just did or something. Like when you're little you get the time out, and you never wanted it but now like growing up you're like maybe I need it, maybe I need that time to myself. But like if you're a student like talking to a teacher about something, like basically just give them respect and maybe you'll receive it. If not then just hold back, but don't hold back too much because then that'll create problems. Just—I don't know, just don't put forth too much effort and have nothing come back to you because then you'll get hurt about it and then end up making them feel bad because you feel bad so you want someone else to feel bad. Basically that's...

Interviewer: That's what you would tell students.

Student 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Anything else?

Student 1: No. I can't think of anything.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Student 1: All right. Thank you.

Interview # 2

Interviewer: Hi. How old are you?

Student 2: I'm 17.

Interviewer: 17. Okay. Can you tell me a bit in your experience in high school, middle school, some behaviors or things that teachers have done in class or outside of class with you that have turned you off from learning or from their classes?

Student 2: They don't, like, all the time ■ if I don't have time, I don't do something or someone's talking or they ask you a question and they yell at you and you get in trouble for it, like, stuff like that makes me where I get mad at the teacher. I just don't

Interviewer: Yeah. So when they assign blame on you that you don't deserve?

Student 2: Mm hm.

Interviewer: Things like that?

Student 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. When does that happen?

Student 2: Happens a lot, like...

Interviewer: Give me an example of that, one time it's happened.

Student 2: We were doing presentations in one of my classes and everyone's talking throughout the whole presentation. They're done and they're going to sit down and I asked him to repeat something and then she started on at me for talking and I'm, like, but the whole time, everyone else was talking and I wasn't so...

Interviewer: Okay. So what other things do teachers do that turn you off from their classes?

Student 2: The way they teach. If they go too fast and I don't get something and then they don't stop to help me, I won't do nothing. I'll just sit there.

Interviewer: Do you raise your hand when you don't get it?

Student 2: Well, I raise my hand and I'll be, like, I don't understand and they don't want to, like, explain so that way I get then they move on. It's, like, okay, I just put my pencil down and I sit back.

Interviewer: Yeah. Is there anything ☐ what about, like, things you know how teachers _____ the behaviors in class that turn you off from them?

Student 2: Not really.

Interviewer: Okay. All right. Can you tell me about a negative experience you've had with a teacher in class or outside of class?

Student 2: I felt that the teacher, the way she said something sounded like she was going to try to get me kicked out of school so I didn't like that.

Interviewer: When did that happen?

Student 2: This year.

Interviewer: This year?

Student 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Tell me a little bit more about that.

Student 2: She had a student in the same class as me and she was talking to him. He's 18 and everything and he kept getting in trouble and then she was, like, basically told his mom and told him that, because he is 18, it's here to start doing his work or she's going to get him kicked out of school. Then, like, two days later, she pulled me out of class and was, like, she was, like, I was talking and she was, like, if you don't stop talking, you know, you're going to be 18 soon and they're not going to want to keep you there if you keep getting in trouble so it made me feel like she just said that to one student now she's saying something along the same lines to me.

Interviewer: Kind of threatening?

Student 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: How did that make you feel when she said that?

Student 2: I was mad. I didn't even go back in that class. I think I left and I came in the office. I wouldn't talk to her.

Interviewer: Any other things that teacher did? Did she do that repeatedly?

Student 2: Not the same thing but, yeah, me and her aren't real good.

Interviewer: What are some other things she would do in class?

Student 2: She says■we just had a project that was due and we were supposed to turn it in on a Friday and I went to turn it into her and she was, like, you can't leave the class until I've seen it and I had it on a flash drive because I did PowerPoint and then she was, like, "Okay, it's there, I don't need to actually look at it." And then called my mom and told my mom that I didn't turn it in at all but I did.

Interviewer: The same teacher?

Student 2: Yeah. Same teacher.

Interviewer: Yeah. So when that situation happened when she said you're turning 18 and all that, did that change your opinion of that teacher?

Student 2: It did a lot. Now it's, like, I negatively when she says them.

Interviewer: Are you still in class with her?

Student 2: Mm hm.

Interviewer: What is that like?

Student 2: I just don't talk to her at all anymore.

Interviewer: Did it change your perception of the school?

Student 2: Not really, not a lot, no.

Interviewer: How do you feel about your school?

Student 2: I actually like the school. All the schools I've been in before never really worked so I was, like, getting, like, 1.09 or 0.0 like, I was getting Fs, I was failing all my classes and I went from it was, like, a 1.90 or not even 90, it was real low and I went from that to a 2.5 grade point average just coming here because the classes are smaller, it's easy for me to pay attention.

Interviewer: What about the teachers? Are the teachers any different?

Student 2: The teachers are different than the teachers I had, like, it's just because they have more time to work with a student when they need help. The classes are smaller so they have less students.

Interviewer: But this other teacher kind of stands out in that she's not like that?

Student 2: Yeah. I don't ask her for help. I don't get something, I just don't do it.

Interviewer: Do you see anything else different from her from your other teachers?

Student 2: She acts like she says she cares all the time but then, if she cared, she wouldn't constantly kick us out of class for things we don't do. I don't like that.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt in school that you've been judged for being different from your peers?

Student 2: Mm hm. Like, I had gotten in trouble, like, a couple times at the beginning of the year and, before I even had this teacher, she was, like, already saying, "Oh, I know you're going to get in trouble all the time" and, like, I got in trouble, like, two times and now you're saying I'm just a troublemaker and I'm not, like, I don't, like, disrespect teachers or anything and I have the most respect for them when I start their class but if they do something that I feel is disrespectful, then I do tend to lose respect for that person and I can get rude and have a attitude.

Interviewer: So you feel judged by this teacher from the beginning?

Student 2: Mm hm.

Interviewer: Why do you think she prejudged you?

Student 2: Because I have been I, like, have gotten in trouble for talking a lot. I don't talk to much people any more so I don't do it as much. I fixed the problem. I knew I had a problem and then I fixed it and she still says that I talk and I'm a troublemaker...

Interviewer: Right. Is that still going on? Yeah?

Student 2: Yeah, with her.

Interviewer: Okay. What about the other side of coin, right? What are some behaviors, actions and things that teachers do that you really respect, that makes you respect them?

Student 2: Just if you don't understand something and you ask them then they explain it. It's, like, okay, they actually really do want you to learn so I can ask them questions if I need help. They break it down and make it as easy to understand as possible. Me, I don't get things real quick and it takes me longer than most people so when they take the time out to help me then...

Interviewer: Has that happened?

Student 2: Mm hm.

Interviewer: Where they take some special attention to you?

Student 2: Yeah, that has happened and I like those teachers.

Interviewer: How does that happen? In class, outside of class, do you approach them?

Student 2: Sometimes it happens in class, like, if we have time, if she's finished the lesson, they'll help me or, like, I can come after school or before school to get help from them.

Interviewer: Are there any other things those teachers do that you like?

Student 2: They're not just always just saying, like, they don't have the same routine every day. They change it up. They do different things.

Interviewer: You mean in class?

Student 2: Yeah. They teach you different ways instead of just one way. Or they teach you everything, like, it's just different. It's not the same exact way, like...

Interviewer: Are there any personal characteristics of these teachers that you like?

Student 2: There has been some teachers, not a lot, just a couple, but yeah.

Interviewer: That are like that?

Student 2: Mm hm.

Interviewer: In what ways do you feel like, when you speak up, that your voice is heard in your school or by your teachers?

Student 2: When, like, if you're having a problem, with me, I get attitude real easy and real quick. If they say something that I don't like, I will be mad. I won't work. I don't do anything and then they'll try to talk to me. I won't talk back. Tough questions.

Interviewer: Have there been any times where you sort of spoke up and you were heard?

Student 2: If I want to talk to a teacher about a problem that, like, I would always get yelled at for every little thing. It's, like, I went and I talked to them and I was, like, I don't like that when you tell me I'm real bad constantly, it makes me feel bad. Then it ended up ending and stopping so...

Interviewer: Okay. When did that happen?

Student 2: That was, like, a year ago.

Interviewer: Okay. And was that a teacher that you felt that you could talk to? Or was it really hard for you to approach that teacher and say that?

Student 2: It was a teacher I didn't really like. It was hard for me to approach them.

Interviewer: But you found that things changed after you talked to her?

Student 2: Mm hm, yeah.

Interviewer: All right. What about the other side, which is sometimes where you voice your concerns, something that you're thinking about and no one's heard you and the school, the teacher hasn't responded?

Student 2: I just, like, I just forget about it. I quit, basically, whatever I, like, wanted to say, I just ignore it.

Interviewer: So has that happened, that you go and talk to the teacher and then no change occurs or a teacher just rejects listening to you?

Student 2: Yeah. There has been and I just go I got switched out of the class.

Interviewer: You feel that it would have been better for you to be able to speak up at those times?

Student 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Was it hard to do that?

Student 2: Yeah because...

Interviewer: Why?

Student 2: I don't really _____ just yeah.

Interviewer: Have you had the opportunity to talk to the teacher?

Student 2: The teachers were just, like, busy and I could never talk to them. I just didn't feel like talking to them because I'm kind of really shy so yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. You know some decide to stay in school and some decide to drop out. How do you feel the relationship that a student has with adults in the school has an affect on them dropping out or staying in school?

Student 2: Well, if someone didn't like the school, like, anything about a school and they don't want to be there, it would be way easier to drop out but if they like their teachers or they can talk to their teachers or the principal, then it's, like, they can talk to them and convince them how big of a mistake it is.

Interviewer: So a big effect?

Student 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you have some connections here with some of the teachers? Some of the staff?

Student 2: Mm hm, like, a couple, yeah.

Interviewer: How do they help you? What do they bring to you?

Student 2: I just like to talk to them whenever I need to. I just can walk in here, like, I don't even have to, like, warn them, I can just walk in and have a real big problem and just talk to them and they actually listen and they try to help.

Interviewer: What kind of things do you talk to them about?

Student 2: A lot of the times it's personal so, like, they helped me with that and then school-wise, problems I'm having with the teachers and things like that, they might help me fix the problem.

Interviewer: How do they help you?

Student 2: They help me with, like, if I don't understand a word and a teacher's not helping me at all, they'll help me or if I have a problem with a teacher, they'll have me sit down with the teacher and just help a lot.

Interviewer: Okay. Some students probably don't have some of the relationships that you have right here in school. Maybe you would want to have more, maybe, some

relationships with other teachers, better relationships with other teachers, right? What do you think are some solutions to forming better relationships between the students and the teachers and the staff?

Student 2: Well, like, if you like that teacher but you feel like you like the teacher but you don't talk to them really, just start talking to them about the work more and just, like, don't be afraid to talk to them and try to be friends with them.

Interviewer: That's what you would say to students, right?

Student 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. So they should be more open?

Student 2: Mm hm.

Interviewer: To approach teachers more, is that kind of what you're...

Student 2: Yeah, like, if you want to talk to them, don't be afraid to suck it up if you're just do it. Ask for help. If you think you can be close or _____ try as much as possible. Don't just ignore it.

Interviewer: What would you tell the teachers? That's what you would tell students. What would you tell teachers to have better relationships with their students?

Student 2: Like, just if you care, show them that you do care, don't just tell them. Actions speak louder than words. If you tell them something then follow up with what you tell them, don't just say something and then not do it.

Interviewer: Okay. What are the things do you wish teachers would do differently?

Student 2: Just the way, like, they teach the class. If you have a lot of students complaining about the way you teach class, at least try to change it up to where it's easier

for them instead of keeping it the same thing, oh, well, I don't care. If you get it, you get it. If you don't, then you don't. That's how it makes me feel when I think about that.

Interviewer: Okay. So for teachers to vary more their classes.

Student 2: Mm hm.

Interviewer: All right. Is there anything else you would like to add about teachers, about students?

Student 2: Not really.

Interviewer: About things that you would like teachers to do or not do?

Student 2: Just listen to us. If a student has an idea about something or the way they teach or something, just listen, like, just listen to them.

Interviewer: To listen to the students.

Student 2: Yeah. Or try to listen and try to make it happen or something.

Interviewer: All right. What about students?

Student 2: A lot of students, work on attitude maybe, just work on social skills and everything.

Interviewer: Great. Thanks.

Interview #3

Interviewer: How old are you?

Student 3: I'm 16.

Interviewer: Are you a junior?

Student 3: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: Couple more years?

Student 3: No, next year.

Interviewer: Next year you'll be done? What do you want to do after?

Student 3: Either modeling and cosmetology _____.

Interviewer: Are you doing some of that?

Student 3: Mm-hm, yes.

Interviewer: Tell me about your high school career, your experience with teachers that have displayed behaviors or actions that have turned you off from learning in their classes.

Student 3: Favoritism, some teachers who probably pick on certain students, a lot of them picked on before the rest of the teachers. They probably—they single out sometimes.

Interviewer: Do you mean in a positive way or a negative way?

Student 3: In a negative way, by like kind of getting—because they may know something personal about that person and probably use it against them. Or something that just has nothing to do with like class, like just getting off chat or something. Yeah. And let's see. Or probably just like making that child feel as if like they're below average, you know. Yeah.

Interviewer: You talked about favoritism in the beginning. That was in a positive way.

Student 1: No, favoritism in a negative way as well, like they probably will use that student and probably—like you have to be on a teacher's good side in order to get a good grade _____. And favoritism as in a good way as well, as like they have that one student in the class that just, you know, like they get all the special privileges that no other students get or they get to like listen to their iPod and nobody else gets to listen to their iPod or like, you know, special privileges like that.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel?

Student 3: It just makes me feel like why would the teacher do something like that, like, you know. It kind of—and then everybody else sees it too and so it just causes more problems. And so that—now that teacher has a reputation for favoritism. And so they don't want to be in that class because they feel they have to get on the teacher's good side.

Interviewer: What about things that they say that would happen in class, does that change your relationship with the content, with the class itself?

Student 3: Not really 'cause I don't really pay it too much mind. I just continue to just do what I have to do and just get—I don't really make it too big of an issue. But I see it and I'm aware of it going on but I just don't really pay it too much mind.

Interviewer: Does it change your perception of the teacher when they do that?

Student 3: Sometimes it might because I'm thinking like okay, what if I—what happens if I am the student that a teacher don't like, will I get a lower grade? Or what if I am on their good side. So if I am on their good side will they give me—and if I don't try will they still give me a good grade, you know. Like they give—like sometimes a teacher will

give a child that doesn't try a better grade than someone who does try, and so that's also part of favoritism or singling somebody out.

Interviewer: What are some of the reasons that you've seen where a teacher would pick on somebody?

Student 3: But it's like if they had a personal—like if they had a personal talk with the teacher and that child is acting up in the class, they'll use it against them and be like oh yeah, I'm gonna tell your mom or your mom already told me, you know, kind of use it against them to bring that person _____. Yeah.

Interviewer: Has that happened to you?

Student 3: Yeah, _____ teacher before but I didn't—I almost got out of my position, almost, kind of when I saw myself, but I had _____ myself and know that okay, I can't let this get in the way. So...

Interviewer: Did that change your relationship with that teacher?

Student 3: Yeah it did because it made me just be like—well it made me just kind of fall back from the teacher and, you know, and just made me be more to myself and not be too much outspoken in class and just don't say too much.

Interviewer: Can you share another negative experience that you had with a teacher?

Student 3: I had a negative experience with a teacher where a teacher would be discussing a situation that's gone on with me to another class and I didn't feel comfortable about it. And I went to the principal about it and I got it settled instead of me having a one-on-one confrontation, because if I did do that she may not have liked the way I came at her and she probably would've lowered my grade or it would have been a personal issue. So.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt that you're being judged differently from other people in the school?

Student 3: Well because of the way I dress they probably—a lot of people are intimidated by the way I dress, you know, ‘cause I’m kind of different, but I don’t believe in paying too much mind because I know that I do it on purpose. I know the way I look when I come out so I know that I’m gonna get a lot of attention. But it’s not more like the negative attention it’s more positive attention. So it’s based on how that person carries their self. So I carry myself pretty, you know, pretty high so people are gonna get the respect from people.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt that because of that or anything that is you, that you’re being judged by that?

Student 3: Probably. A lot of people assume like because of the way I am they probably assume that I’m probably gonna act crazy because maybe I’m black or something, or I’m probably gonna like be the one that’s just gonna start slipping out, you know, stereotype. And so that happens a lot here. A lot of people stereotype.

Interviewer: Who do you perceive that from? Would that be from teachers?

Student 3: Sometimes from teachers. Yeah, a lot of times from teachers but the students, no, not too much.

Interviewer: How would you perceive that? How do you know they’re doing that?

Student 3: By how _____ they respond to me or probably the way they react, like if—they may talk to me differently or they may...

Interviewer: Like what?

Student 3: Like they may—like when other students acting crazy I’m just—and I’m sitting back, they expect me to act crazy. They’re—they—_____ they _____ act more mature about the situation. So a lot of the students here, they probably like show out because there’s other teachers that _____ teacher’s nerves, but then the ones who don’t show out, it’s just like okay, they—or they’ll have to watch them probably, you know.

Interviewer: For teachers that you would perceive that, would that change your attitude towards the class?

Student 3: No, because the learning is still the same. I just—I do what I gotta do and then just get out the _____ and then not pay too much mind towards it.

Interviewer: Does it affect you in any other way?

Student 3: No, not really.

Interviewer: What about the flip side, things that teachers do that make you want to learn from them?

Student 3: The style of the way that they're teaching. They may like—they encourage—like if they see a student that's not—that's behind, they still give them a chance, you know, to think enough, to get back on track with the rest of the students. They just let you know that you can still, you know, it's not too late, you can still keep going and keep going, and just not let you stop right there and let you limit yourself to what you're doing.

Interviewer: What about personally? Is there anything teachers do that make you say this teacher's okay.

Student 3: They probably set you aside and talk to you, have a one on one conversation with you and just kind of try to feel you out and see how they can help the situation or whatever's going on.

Interviewer: Has that happened?

Student 3: Yeah. That's happened to me before, like I probably had a bad day or something, the teacher pulled me to the side and be like, you know, is everything okay and I said I'm okay, everything's okay, and this, you know,
_____.

Interviewer: Is it always the same teachers that would do that?

Student 3: No, some teacher's don't care. Some teachers let the child act out. And there's some teachers that really do care about what they're doing and they try to do what they can.

Interviewer: Have you ever had a time where you had a concern or problem that you were worried about and that you were able to voice that concern to someone and that something was done about it?

Student 3: I _____ a problem with a teacher?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Student 3: Yeah, I had a issue with a teacher where I was being singled out, where I felt like she was making me work too hard. And she felt that—I guess she felt that she wanted me to do more and I guess my—she—'cause she seen it in me but I just wasn't giving my full potential. So she was just on me all the time _____. And so I had to tell my mom because I felt like—that she was picking on me, you know. But what she really was trying to do was just trying to get me, you know, get on track.

Interviewer: How did you find that out?

Student 3: I had to go through a lot of frustration at first because at first I thought she was singling me out just because I thought she was just being mean, but she just really wanted me to be back on track and she just wanted me to push myself.

Interviewer: How did you go from thinking she was singling you out to she wanted to help you?

Student 3: Because eventually I just came to my senses, like she really wants me to get this.

Interviewer: For a lot of students in high school there comes that time where they have to make the decision to stay in school or drop out. How do you think that the relationships that they have with teachers affects that decision?

Student 3: Because maybe if a teacher doesn't—if the child comes to school with the attitude like nobody cares and they don't have that extra encouragement, it turns into them just giving them it just turns into them just saying, you know, forget it, nobody cares so I might as well just drop out. But if they have a teacher that's on them, that's actually encouraging them, they have a reason to stay in school, to know that they can, because maybe their parents aren't doing it, their guardian's not doing, something. So they find it at school.

Interviewer: Have you ever had any friends that have been in that situation?

Student 3: I've had a lot of friends in that situation but they dropped out of school or they probably just said forget it and just gave up _____.

Interviewer: Would you say that they had some kind of connection to the school with the teachers?

Student 3: Yeah. But they didn't want to take the help. They just decided to do their own thing and let themselves just...

Interviewer: Drop out.

Student 3: Yeah, drop out.

Interviewer: What would you say to teachers on how to approach students to get better relationships with them?

Student 3: I would say more like be patient and like when it's time to give them their distance, just give them their distance, and to know that, you know, just kind of keep—stay on them but just give them that...

Interviewer: Why do you think that that distance is important?

Student 3: Because if you stay on a child too—like if you have too much pressure, if you give them too much pressure, then they're gonna get overloaded. It's gonna cause other

problems. But if you just give them distance they get time to grow and they get time to know that this is not right and this is right. I gotta stay on myself or I choose to do the wrong thing.

Interviewer: Anything else that you would advise teachers?

Student 3: Just be patient. That's all they need is patience, because a lot of kids, they feel that because teachers don't have patience with them, and it wears out really fast and so it just causes them to just crash.

Interviewer: What would you tell other students on how to establish better relationships with teachers?

Student 3: Just be 100% with the teachers. There's no need to show out, just come as is. Don't—just because somebody's around you don't have to act a certain way, just if you need the help, ask the teacher for help. If you _____ with the teacher, ask for it. I mean it's not that difficult.

Interviewer: Do you wish that, in your academic history so far, that teachers would have done anything differently?

Student 3: Could you read the question?

Interviewer: Thinking about the classes that you've gone through so far, is there anything that you wish the teachers would do differently?

Student 3: No, they're doing everything they need to be doing, you know. They're trying to hear—I mean they don't have to be here. This school kind of has a bad reputation so but they're doing what they need to do.

Interviewer: You mean in other schools before this?

Student 3: Oh, other schools besides this? There's some teachers that actually have some issues.

Interviewer: Like what?

Student 3: Like they have issues, like they may have issues that's going on with them, like they probably don't like kids. They don't want to be there. They feel like somebody's forcing them or they're just there for the money or they just like begin to get lazy with their job and they just begin to just act as if the students are their own kids. And so they just start losing it, and that's the problem _____ problem between the teacher and the student.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Student 3: You're welcome. Thank you.

Interview # 4

Interviewer: Hi, how old are you?

Student 4: 18.

Interviewer: 18. Are you a junior?

Student 4: Senior.

Interviewer: A senior.

Student 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: All right. What are you doing after you graduate?

Student 4: I plan to go to community college, JC.

Interviewer: Okay. What would you like to do at community college?

Student 4: I'd like to study criminal justice.

Interviewer: Criminal justice?

Student 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do they have it in _____?

Student 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: All right. Can you tell me a little bit about your experiences with teachers in high school that have displayed some behaviors or actions that turned you off from learning?

Student 4: Yeah, I think that, when teachers, like, have attitudes, it, like, pulls kids from learning, you know, when they be mean to the kids, like, you know? Teachers, they're human, too. They come in with bad days. It's just like if those _____ have, like, attitudes, write you up for no reason, you get in trouble for no reason, then you get suspended for something that it was partially the teacher's fault, too, that takes away your learning, too, now that you're suspended but the principal only can believe so much what a student says. The teacher's an adult so he's going to take their word over the student's. The students don't, like, have too much say so.

Interviewer: How would describe the attitudes of those teachers that you just described?

Student 4: Some of the teachers, they're, like, real cruel, like, they hold grudges. Say if you got in, like, a little disagreement with a teacher and they hold that grudge against you through the whole year and they just treat you poorly and, like, every time you say something, like, I remember I had a teacher who held a grudge against me and I would just, like, give him my opinion about something and she'd just, like, look at me like I'm crazy, she was still holding a grudge. And she calls me to, like, get written up and kicked out of class.

Interviewer: So is that from the looks that they give you. Were there any other things she would do that would tell you, you know, that she's holding a grudge or that she has a...

Student 4: Well, other than the attitude, they'll just be, yeah, just attitude.

Interviewer: Attitude?

Student 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is there something specific that they sometimes say in class, you know, when they have that attitude?

Student 4: Well, it's just, like, she'll just be, like, just real rude, you know? Like, even tell her she's just being rude on purpose, like, for instance, I would, like, say a comment, she'll just, like, roll her eyes and act like I'd never said it. Just be rude.

Interviewer: How often has that happened to you with teachers?

Student 4: A couple of times.

Interviewer: A couple of times.

Student 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Has that changed your perception of that teacher when they start doing that?

Student 4: Yeah, it did.

Interviewer: What about your attitude in class? How's that changed?

Student 4: Well, in, like, honestly, it made me, like, not want to go to class and just, like, I didn't, like, care any more because she always has attitude so I didn't feel the need to be there.

Interviewer: What about the school? Did it make you think differently of the school?

Student 4: Not the school. You can't blame the whole school for one person.

Interviewer: All right. Aside from that, or maybe you can tell me a little more about that experience, about a negative experience that you've had with a teacher that has had an impact on you in school?

Student 4: Yeah, like, it's just, like, when I don't know. I don't really think of that but there have been more times when, you know, sometimes it's my fault, sometimes it's their fault. Other than that, I can't think of nothing right now.

Interviewer: All right. If it comes to mind, you can just spit it out.

Student 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: What about when you're in school, in the classroom, have you ever felt like you're being judged from being different from your peers?

Student 4: Yeah, I've felt that way, like, teachers look at you different, you know? They might talk to you different because, you know, you look a certain way. You dress a certain way so, yeah, I've felt that a couple of times.

Interviewer: How do you perceive that? Why do they do that makes you think they have a preconceived idea of who you are?

Student 4: It's just, like, the vibe that you get from them sometimes. Some of them, they give you, like, bad vibes.

Interviewer: Yeah. How does that make you feel when you were going to a classroom and a teacher has that vibe?

Student 4: It makes me, again, feel like I don't have the need to be there. I hate coming. This is my place of learning. I don't have to be judged here, you know? Like, it's disrespectful, like, it makes people don't want to come to school.

Interviewer: Yeah. So it makes you feel disrespected from them prejudging you.

Student 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: All right. Why do you think that happens?

Student 4: I don't even know.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Student 4: I don't know why it happens but it's wrong. That's all I have to say about it.

Interviewer: When it's happened, when you've found out that that's happened, you know, that a teacher is kind of, like, looking at you a certain way, does that happen right away, like, in the first class?

Student 4: It takes, like, a little time but you know when you're, like, being judged. It's like the vibe, you know? Sometimes I tell my mom about some teachers here at the school won't believe me and then once that happened, like, what can I do about it, you know? So I just sit there and just have to take it and try to get my grades up and get done with the class.

Interviewer: Do you find yourself doing poorly in those classes with those teachers?

Student 4: Yeah, sometimes, yeah.

Interviewer: Sometimes.

Student 4: Sometimes that happens.

Interviewer: It's harder to do well in those classes?

Student 4: Yeah. I know some teachers, like, they gossip a lot about other students. It's, like, I know a teacher who does it but I'm not going to put their name out but they gossip a lot about the students on the campus and, like, every student here knows about it and, like, it's just messed up, to put everyone's business out like that. Teachers should just keep it, you know, like, if they want to help with someone, you know, just talk to them about something but don't put their business out there. It's kind of messed up.

Interviewer: How would you notice when a teacher has been, like, putting your name around or saying something about you?

Student 4: Oh, you would know, like, people on campus would tell you, “Oh, Miss so and so said this” and the word will be around.

Interviewer: What does that make you feel like when someone comes up to you and says, “Hey, did you hear...”

Student 4: I feel that it’s not cool at all.

Interviewer: Yeah. What about, like, the opposite of that, which is teacher’s behaviors or actions, things that they do in the class that actually make you feel respected and make you feel like you want to...

Student 4: Oh, when they acknowledge you, right, it’s a good thing. There’s some good teachers on the campus who will acknowledge you, just show you respect, you know, don’t treat anyone different. Just be there basically.

Interviewer: Right. How would you say a teacher shows you respect in the class?

Student 4: When they, like, don’t always have a attitude, like, positive, always smiling to the students, you know? Don’t hold grudges, just showing that they care, basically.

Interviewer: Have you had that experience?

Student 4: Yeah. I’ve had that experience. I have a couple of good teachers. Yeah.

Interviewer: So in your school experience, high school, was there a time where you had a concern, where you were worried about something, something was bothering you in school?

Student 4: Mm hm. Interviewer: Were you able to...

Interview # 5

Interviewer: How old are you?

Student 5: I'm 16, I just turned 16.

Interviewer: Are you a sophomore?

Student 5: I'm a junior.

Interviewer: A junior. All right. Couple more years to go.

Student 5: Yeah.

Interviewer: What are you planning to do after graduation?

Student 5: Hopefully _____ at MSJC for summer classes for audio production. So hopefully go to college for that.

Interviewer: Is that in _____?

Student 5: Yeah, it's right here in _____.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Great. So can you tell me a little bit about some experiences that you've had with teachers in your middle school or high school that have turned you off from listening to them or from their classes?

Student 5: Off in middle school would probably be probably because the classes are too big so maybe, like, if the individual student needed help, that the teacher wouldn't get to him unless the student goes up. But, as young kids, I don't think, like, we had the confidence to go up one on one, to go up with them. I think mainly it's just the big class issue, like, too big a class that would probably be the turnoff.

Interviewer: Right. So access to the teachers.

Student 5: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. What about in high school? What are some of the things, thinking about the teachers, that you were getting engaged to much in class, what would they do that would make you not want to listen to the class or not connect to those teachers?

Student 5: What would they do? Well, it would probably have to do with more their, like, how their day started, like, whether it's a good or bad note. Like, the way they look at you, how they speak, if you see negativity in them, it's, like, I don't really want to be here but if they have a happy feeling, and you see a happy face, I want to learn today.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are some of the things that the teacher you were saying how they look at you and the way they behave towards you, what are some of the things that will tell you about their mood and how they would feel about you?

Student 5: Probably I'd say you had a bad grade, probably how much interest they put into your grade and, like, if they really want to help you. Like, if they came up to you personally or told you, if you could stay after class, it's just how much interest they would put in you that would make me want to learn.

Interviewer: So the opposite is when they don't show that interest?

Student 5: Yeah.

Interviewer: Have you noticed that?

Student 5: Yeah, I've noticed that, too, but when they don't show interest and I know I'm doing it and I'll try but it makes you more you get more confidence out of it if you see that they're willing to pick you up on their own time.

Interviewer: Yeah, and approach you?

Student 5: Yeah.

Interviewer: All right. How does it make you feel when a teacher doesn't approach you personally?

Student 5: On a good note or a bad note?

Interviewer: If you were not doing so great in a class and a teacher doesn't approach you personally like you would hope, how does that make you feel?

Student 5: I think that it would probably make me feel like they don't care so then with that being said I probably wouldn't care that much, either and there'd be a habit just one after another.

Interviewer: Yeah, like a cycle.

Student 5: Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about a specific negative experience you've had with a teacher?

Student 5: A specific negative.

Interviewer: Is there any kind of negative...

Student 5: I can't think of any.

Interviewer: All right. That's okay. If you think of any, you can just bring it up. Think about some teachers that maybe you didn't get along with or classes that you didn't do so hot in and your relationship with the teacher, what comes to mind keep thinking about it.

Student 5: Okay.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt in school that, like, teachers or principals, staff in schools, have you ever felt judged by somebody in the school for being different from peers?

Student 5: From peers? A lot. Being judged just by appearance. But, I mean, everyone probably judges you off your appearance but, once they get to communicate with you, they don't think of you as how you look, they know how you are. So with teachers, I've been judged by a few, like, just by appearance but then, after a while, they got used to me, know who I am.

Interviewer: So in that initial impression, when they're just meeting you and looking at you, how would you know you were being prejudged?

Student 5: How would I know? Probably just—it's just like a certain look they give you as soon as you approach them. I remember the first week of school. I was sitting in class and I was new to the school and all the teachers looked at me like—I'll catch them during classes looking at me, giving me a glance here and there, like, why is he here? It looks like he did something bad. But I just came here to make it.

Interviewer: Right. Yeah. And have you found that your relationship has changed with those teachers?

Student 5: Oh, big time. It helps a lot because the classes are smaller. It's, like, they get to communicate more individually with the students and you see the same people every day so it's, like, not like family but...

Interviewer: They get to know you.

Student 5: Yeah.

Interviewer: What other things do you talk about with teachers so that they find out how you really are, who you really are?

Student 5: Well, I think just cooperating more in the class and maybe here and there joke a little bit so show them how I am. During lunch, you know, say hi to them, just walking

by. If the teachers out here gave me the opportunity to come up after class, show up and show them I care, stuff like that.

Interviewer: All right. What about on the flip side of the negative experience. What about some positive behaviors that you had from teachers in the class?

Student 5: Positive things that they've done or...?

Interviewer: Yeah, they've done, that the teachers have done.

Student 5: Well, just getting opportunities or letting you know before class, "Can I speak to you after class?" like that. Little things like that.

Interviewer: All right. Have you ever had a time when you were in high school where you had a concern, you had a problem, something was going on that was making you uncomfortable or you were worried about in school and you were able to voice that concern, tell a teacher, tell a principal, somebody in the school and you felt that that concern was heard?

Student 5: I don't think I've ever. I probably did have a concern but I never told anyone. I just keep it in. I don't think I've ever shared that with anyone.

Interviewer: Looking back, those concerns you might have had, do you wish you would have been able to talk to somebody about it?

Student 5: I think if I did, I would have been a lot more. how would I say? I wouldn't worry about it afterwards.

Interviewer: If you would have said it?

Student 5: If I would have said it.

Interviewer: Right.

Student 5: I wouldn't worry as much about it. I probably would have done a little better, too.

Interviewer: Okay. Who would you have talked to in those times when you had a problem or concern?

Student 5: At a regular high school, like, a big high school, I probably would have talked to the teacher that, like, I'm closest to that knows me the most. If I told a teacher that I didn't even know, they'd probably look at me, like, "Okay, well, if it happens again, just let me know and I'll do something about it." But if I knew the teacher and I told them, they would do it right away.

Interviewer: Okay. For a lot of students in high school it comes to _____, no matter what their circumstances, do they stay in school or drop out of school, how do you feel that the connections a student might have or the relationship that a student might have with a principal, with a teacher might affect that decision to stay in school or drop out?

Student 5: How would the staff affect...

Interviewer: Yeah. Like, if the student, the relationship that you have with teachers and the principal, how does that affect their decision to stay or go?

Student 5: Oh, it's, again, about the care thing because if they were okay, if they never talked to you about going to college or how it was or how to get there and what you'll get out of it, you're not going to have any interest in it. But if they speak to you constantly about it, like, bringing in class speakers from colleges and all that, then you kind of think about it twice and, okay, I'm going to get my work done and I'm going to try to go for it.

Interviewer: 'So thinking about teachers, maybe teachers that you had a problem with or maybe you're not engaging in class, not just you but your peers, and thinking about your peers and how you guys relate to teachers and the school staff, are there any solutions, any advice you would give them to form better relationships?

Student 5: Peers?

Interviewer: Mm hm.

Student 5: Probably, well, again, be yourself but try not to start the class on a negative note because if the teacher sees the students are kind of down and droopy then they feel the same way we do when they look like that. So I think, if they come into the classroom, like, looking just happy, like they wanted to go through the day, then I think that helps the relationship with the teachers.

Interviewer: Right. Okay. What about the teacher? What would you advise the teacher who wanted to have a better relationship with his students?

Student 5: Advise the teacher? Like, the opposite, like, to have a teacher come in on a positive note and just cooperation goes both ways.

Interviewer: All right. Is there anything that you wish that teachers would do differently in class?

Student 5: Do differently. I would probably say elaborate more on ■ I would say do less bookwork because bookwork is kind of helpful in some cases but probably elaborate a little more with them speaking and trying to get students interested in listening to whatever it is they're trying to teach because bookwork does not ■ I mean, it's still good but it's not always the answer. I think teachers, if they orally speak about the subject and make it more interesting, I think students would be more interested.

Interviewer: So there's a lot of bookwork in the class turns some people off?

Student 5: Yes. And then, at the same time, they might not get as much out of it. With the teacher orally presenting it, I think it would be a little more helpful.

Interviewer: Okay. Great. Thanks.

Interview # 6

Interviewer: So the first question is I wanted to ask you to tell me a little bit of some of your experiences that you had in classroom where a teacher has done something or acted a certain way that has turned you off from his class.

Student 6: One thing that really turns me off for a teacher is when they assume that you know certain things about a subject and they will just jump into the lesson plan, assuming you know all these things but kind of it works the other way, too, where the teacher, like, assumes you don't know anything so she teaches you everything. There's got to be kind of, like, a perfect medium, like a balance. I think a lot of teachers don't take enough care in trying to figure out, like, how they are going to go about teaching students some things. They kind of just it seems like they don't really care. They just do their part and not really care whether or not someone gets it or not and they don't try to make it as easy to understand as possible, I don't think, and that's one thing I really _____.

Interviewer: What are the things they do in class that make you think that they don't care? That they're not just going through the motions?

Student 6: Oh, they'll just spit out their lesson plan. They're, like, okay, I've been a teacher for this many years, I have an effective lesson plan, they'll look at, like, okay, my grades, my students do good but really, like, I'll sit there and listen and I'll have no idea what a teacher's talking about just because of how she presents it. I think teachers could do a lot better job just preparing and trying to make something as easy to understand as possible. I don't think a lot of teachers do enough to do that.

Interviewer: What about in your personal interactions, you know, how they act in class...

Student 6: Oh, it's just...

Interviewer: ...what are some of the things that...

Student 6: It's just that in particular, really. I don't really have problems with teachers except when I don't understand something so many times, I _____ the teacher.

Interviewer: Okay. So it's basically the way that they teach more than...

Student 6: Yeah, the way someone describes something to me or tries to teach me something. If I'm not getting the help, if I ask questions, I'm not getting, like, the right answers or stuff, that's the only times I get frustrated with teachers.

Interviewer: So do you see, like, in all the teachers that you have, you're in high school now, right?

Student 6: Mm hm.

Interviewer: There's some variation, right, in how teachers interact with you or you interact with some teachers, right?

Student 6: Mm hm.

Interviewer: So what are some of those differences? Some ways that some of those interactions with teachers you don't really follow or that you don't...

Student 6: Like, behavior-wise? Like, how...

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Student 6: Pretty much I listen to what teachers say. I mean, I respect. I really don't have any problems. Like, I don't care. If the teacher's an A-hole or whatever, I really don't care. I mean, it's their job to be an A-hole. I'm indifferent about it.

Interviewer: So those kind of factors don't affect how you're engaging in class?

Student 6: Right, so it's more about the content and how they teach it.

Interviewer: Can you share with me a negative experience you had with a teacher?

Student 6: Teachers that will set an opinion of you just from the get-go and stick with that opinion throughout the whole year, especially if it's a really bad one and they clearly treat you bad. That really bugs me but, again, I mean, I realize a teacher's job is to be mean sometimes so, I mean, I don't really care but I don't appreciate it at all.

Interviewer: So you tend to be very understanding of the teachers but how have you felt in those situations where you felt prejudged? How do you know that? How do you perceive that?

Student 6: You can normally tell just by how the teacher will treat one student _____ yourself.

Interviewer: Right. Okay. And what are some of those differences?

Student 6: I've noticed a teacher in middle school who treated girls a lot better than she treated guys. That irritates me but there's not much you can do about it.

Interviewer: Right. So what would he do for example with guys...

Student 6: Well, it was a female teacher. She would be much more lenient with the girls on, like, assignments being late or quality of assignments versus guys, she would demand much more. It was pretty obvious.

Interviewer: Right. It was inconsistent...

Student 6: Yeah.

Interviewer: Any other negative experiences you have with teachers in high school as far as learning or interactions with them?

Student 6: Not really.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you ever felt, in class, outside of school or in school, on the school grounds, that a teacher or any other adults or students have judged you for being different from your peers in any way?

Student 6: I don't think so. I don't get that.

Interviewer: Things that teachers do, their behaviors or actions, the way they conduct themselves in their class. Are there any that you really respect, that make you engage in their class?

Student 6: When a teacher puts a lot of their effort into helping their students understand something the easiest way.

Interviewer: Okay.

Student 6: If I can learn it, the teachers that I learn the most from always end up being my favorite teachers.

Interviewer: Okay. What are some examples of how they do that?

Student 6: They'll take time with their lessons. I had a teacher named Mr. F., he's my science teacher. He took tons of time for every assignment, every assignment had a purpose, every assignment related to the test, everything was really easy and well thought out. He was just an excellent teacher. I learned so much in his class.

Interviewer: How long ago was that?

Student 6: That was two years ago, junior year, sophomore year.

Interviewer: It sounds like he was very explicit in what he was doing in class. That attention to students, would that happen in his class, outside of his classes or both?

Student 6: He was my neighbor so I kind of knew him outside of classes.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Right.

Student 6: I really didn't talk to him outside of class. I don't know how he acts.

Interviewer: So it was mostly inside of the class?

Student 6: Yeah. He was a great guy. I'd see him when I'd be walking my dog, he'd be outside and I'd say hi to him, talk to him.

Interviewer: Right.

Student 6: He's a nice guy.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Student 6: If the teacher can be sociable and really, like, nice to get along with, that's another thing that can help.

Interviewer: Right. Have you ever felt, in your school, in middle school and high school, a time where you had a concern or a problem that you wanted to voice that you had actually communicated to someone in the school that had an effect?

Student 6: Yeah, I was kicked out of APEX, which is a credit recovery program at CB and I really did not think that I deserved to be kicked out but the teacher in charge of it kicked me out. I was pretty frustrated with that and that ruined my chance to graduate CB, that's why I'm here, because of this incident. I was super mad. I talked to everyone I could talk to, like, principal, everyone, principal down and everyone agreed with me but no one could do anything about it. I never got a result out of it. Everyone heard my story and they were, like, yeah, that sounds messed up, you should probably get back in that program but the two people who were in charge of me getting back in that program were two people who didn't agree with me.

Interviewer: So after that incident, you talked to several people, right?

Student 6: Many people. Many advisors. I think the vice principal. I didn't get a chance to talk to the principal but I talked to plenty of teachers...

Interviewer: What would they do?

Student 6: Oh, they all said, "Oh, maybe I'll write a letter or talk to this person to see what we can do." My mom even talked to them and they said sorry.

Interviewer: So who were these two people that were...

Student 6: Mr. F and Mr. B.

Interviewer: They were teachers?

Student 6: Mr. Blair, I think, is one of the assistant principals and he is in charge of the APEX program himself and he had the final decision on it.

Interviewer: Right. Did they hear you out?

Student 6: Oh, yeah. He said he understood but there was nothing he could do about it. It was such a small thing that I shouldn't have lost my chance to graduate from it, you know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Student 6: But I said something, spoke up, didn't get my result, ended up here but at least I'm graduating.

Interviewer: Okay. Anything before that? Any other incidents?

Student 6: If I feel like a serious injustice has been done to me, I'll say something but, other than that, I keep quiet.

Interviewer: But have you had anything in the past that has had an effect?

Student 6: For whatever problems that were going on?

Interviewer: Yes.

Student 6: Well, the majority of the time, I'm wrong, I guess. I don't want to admit it but, like, technically I was wrong and I deserved whatever I got. But, at the time, I felt injustice so, no, really nothing has actually happened for me. It's bull crap.

Interviewer: You're about to graduate now?

Student 6: Yes.

Interviewer: How old are you?

Student 6: 18.

Interviewer: What's your plan?

Student 6: Air Force.

Interviewer: The Air Force?

Student 6: Yep.

Interviewer: Where do you want to go?

Student 6: Somewhere far away, anywhere they'll take me. Both my parents are Marines so I'm used to people being gone all the time so if I have to leave my family I'm not going to be all broken up. It's pretty normal for me to be away from family.

Interviewer: You're doing that right after you graduate?

Student 6: Mm hm.

Interviewer: The next question is about the relationships that students have with the teachers and the principals and any other adults in the school. A lot of times, a lot of students decide, it comes to a decision for them, right, to stay in school or to actually drop out. How do you think the relationship between students and teachers, principal, staff in the school has an impact on that decision to either stay or leave?

Student 6: It depends on the attitude of the student and I think a lot of it has to do with how I think it mostly has to do with the student itself because the system, the educational system I don't think has that many flaws. It's pretty efficient. It does its job and it just depends on the student. If the student was raised in a family where his dad dropped out, his mom dropped out, he will grow up thinking, yeah, it's okay for me to drop out or maybe his parents didn't and still, hey, you are not dropping out, which my parents did that, like, dropping out has never even been an option for me. So it all depends on the student.

Interviewer: You think it's more on the student.

Student 6: But when it comes down to the teachers, yeah, they can have a more positive attitude. They can talk to students, get to know them. Mr. Lawrence has done a great job, just getting to know me, talking to me a lot so I really appreciate that about him.

Interviewer: So those relationships do matter?

Student 6: Mm hm.

Interviewer: Thoughts to whatever you need to but you know some students have more of a difficulty in going up to a teacher and saying what they think or coming up to the principal or, like, Mr. Lawrence and saying what they're going through. Is there any advice, any solutions you would have to form some better relationships between teachers and students?

Student 6: I really don't think there's anything that, like, any programs or something that, like, the school can do. I think it all comes from the heart, really, like, to build a relationship with students. It's got to be an individual effort. It's not something the school can be, like, okay, we are going to institute 15 minute teacher/student relationship time every day. That's not going to work. It's just it's all individual effort. If a teacher really wants to have a good relationship with their students, it's up to her or him. So I think, if you're looking for better student/teacher relationships, you should maybe look for more charismatic teachers versus who's got the best degree, I mean, smart teachers but look for charisma and attitude...

Interviewer: Right. The teachers you mean, right?

Student 6: Yeah.

Interviewer: You're about to graduate, right? You've been to middle school, high school, elementary. Is there anything you wish the teachers would do differently in your academic career?

Student 6: Future or, like...

Interviewer: In the past.

Student 6: I mean, I would say yeah because I haven't always had the greatest grades but really I think the teachers did their jobs. I think it was me who didn't do my job. I didn't do my homework every day like I should have. I didn't do all this stuff. I think the teachers are fine. I really do. I think the system is great, it's a great public education system. It's all up to the student and parents and I think it starts at home versus starting at a bureaucratic level.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to add? What about students? What would you say to students in their academic career?

Student 6: Try hard. It's pretty important. You don't realize how important it is until you get to, like, the end of the road and you're just scraping by the skin of your teeth. You have to instill the discipline in yourself at an early, early age. I remember in third grade I

didn't even have that discipline to sit down and do my multiplication tables. It's got to be established early and then maybe you can carry that on for the rest of high school.

Interviewer: All right. Start from the beginning.

Student 6: Yeah.

Interviewer: All right. Great. Thanks for your time.



PARENTAL CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Invitation to Participate

Richard F. Lawrence Jr., is a researcher who is a joint doctoral graduate student at California State University San Marcos and University of California San Diego. He is conducting a study on the impact of students' perceptions. Your son/daughter is invited to participate in this study because he/she represents the student group needed for this study.

Purpose

This study has three objectives:

1. To understand how students' perceptions of teacher behaviors impacts their success in school.
2. To better understand how students' perceptions are formed.
3. To create solutions derived from the results of this study that will reduce the achievement gap. This gap is defined as the gap between the success of students in racial/ethnic minority groups and those of lower socio-economic status when compared to racial/ethnic/socio-economic groups that have historically maintain a higher level of success.

Description of Procedures

Your son/daughter may be interviewed individually. The conversational style interview will take approximately forty-five minutes to one hour and, with your permission, he/she will be audio or videotaped. In addition to the interview, your son/daughter will be asked to complete a survey and write a personal narrative about his/her perceptions of aspects of school. The interviews will take place in a classroom on campus.

Risks and Inconveniences

There are minimal risks attached to this study. The potential risks of participation include:

1. Concerns about confidentiality and privacy
2. Concerns about how results will be used
3. Fear of emotional reaction from researcher based on student's responses
4. Strong emotional reaction to questions
5. Boredom, mental fatigue, embarrassment if he/she perceives his/her performance to be poor, frustration
6. Fear of being judged by peers

Your son/daughter's interview and survey responses will be kept confidential; available only to the researcher for analysis purposes. If the length of the interview is inconvenient for your son/daughter, he/she may stop the interview at any time without any consequence to your child.

Benefits

Although there is no direct benefit to son/daughter for participating in this study, your son/daughter's participation will likely benefit future students and teachers. The information gleaned from this research can help educators to identify and adjust behaviors that have historically caused students to disengage from learning.

Confidentiality

Interview tapes will be locked in a safe place. Only the researcher will listen and transcribe the information son/daughter give to him.

Interview responses will not be linked to your son/daughter's name or address, and there will be no follow-up sessions.

Voluntary Participation

Participation is voluntary. Your son/daughter does not have to participate in this study if he/she does not want to. If you grant permission for your son/daughter to be in this study, you or your child can still choose not to participate at any time. There are no consequences of any kind if you or your son/daughter decides not to participate. If your child is permitted to participate, his/her

status in school will not be affected. Students are free to stop the interview and/or skip questions at any time as well as their overall participation in the study without any consequences to him/her.

Questions

If you or your son/daughter has any questions about this study please contact the researcher Richard Lawrence, rlawren@ucsd.com. or his faculty adviser, Dr Lorri Santamaria,. If you or son/daughter has any questions about your son/daughter's rights as a research participant, you may contact our California State University San Marcos's Institutional Review Board at 760.750.4029.

Check each box below if you agree:

☐ I agree to my son/daughter's participation in this research study.

☐ I agree to allow for my son/daughter to audiotaped.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Participant's Name

Date

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Students' Perception of Teacher Behaviors Survey

Circle Grade: 10 11 12

☐ Native American ☐ Asian Indian ☐ Guamanian ☐ Hispanic/Latino

___ Japanese ___ Cambodian ___ Tahitian ___ White (not Hispanic)

___ Vietnamese ___ Hawaiian ___ Filipino ___ Other_____

1. I like school

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

Why?

2. I wish I didn't have to go to school

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

Why?

3. I'm often bored in school

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

4. I am often bored in school because:

- ☐ I am not challenged
- ☐ The topics are boring
- ☐ The teacher is boring
- ☐ I'm not interested in school
- ☐ This question doesn't apply to me.

5. My experiences with teachers has caused me not to like school

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

Why?



6. I hate being in school

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

7. I hate being in school because:

- ☐ Teachers do not respect me
- ☐ I do not get along with my peers
- ☐ I am always in trouble
- ☐ I do not feel welcomed
- ☐ This question does not apply to me

8. Teachers and students do not really care about each other.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

Why?

9. My school is like family

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

Why ?

10. I feel like I can talk to my teachers about things that are bothering me.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

Why?

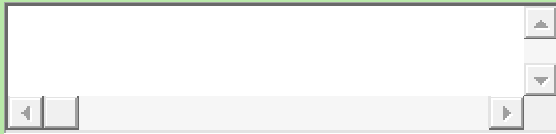
11. Teachers treat students fairly

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always

12. Teachers turn me off from learning

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always

Why?

13. Teachers turn me off from learning when they:**14. Teachers have negative attitudes towards me**

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always

15. I feel that teachers "play favorites"

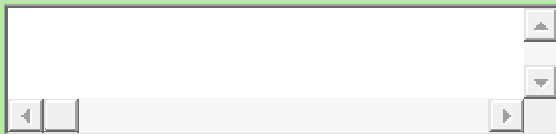
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always

16. My peers influence my decision to stay in school more than my teachers.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

*

17. My peers influence my decision to stay in school more than my teachers because:



18. Teachers value my opinions

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always

19. Teachers hold my past against me

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always

20. I felt most supported by teachers when I attended

- ☐ Elementary School
- ☐ Middle School
- ☐ High School
- ☐ Continuation High School

21. Teachers value my opinions

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often

☐ Always

22. List the specific behaviors teachers' exhibit that turn you off from learning or listening to them.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

23. List the positive behaviors that teachers exhibit that cause you to want to learn from them.

1.

2.

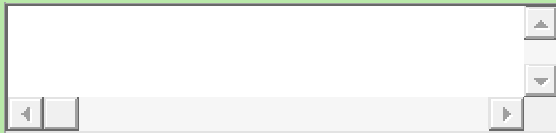
3.

4.

5.

24. I am disrespectful to my teachers

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Always

25. I am disrespectful to my teachers when

Appendix D

Student Interview Questions

1. Share your perceptions about the behaviors you have seen displayed by teachers that have turned some of your peers off from learning.
2. Share your perceptions about the behaviors exhibited by your teachers that have made you feel like dropping out of class.
3. Share your perceptions about the behaviors exhibited by a teacher that you really respected.
4. Have you ever felt like you have been judged for being different from your peers? Why do you think this?
5. In what do you feel like your voice is heard on campus by adults?
6. What do you think the biggest problem for students are?
7. Do you think that the relationships students have with the adults on campus contributes to their decision to stay or drop out of school? How so?
8. What are some solutions you have for forming better relationships between students and teachers?
9. Do you feel like you are judged because of your ethnicity or race?

10 What do you wish teachers would do differently?

11. What else would you like to say or add?

Appendix E

Personal Narrative Prompts

Prompt 1:

Please write about a negative experience that you have had with a teacher or adult staff member in a school. Include the actions of the individual, your response to the actions, any feelings you had or still carry as a result of this experience.

Prompt 2:

Please write about a memorable experience that you have had with a teacher or adult staff member in a school. Include the actions of the individual, how you felt as a result of the actions of this person, be as detailed as possible

Appendix F

Horizontalization Charts

Survey Statement	Participant Accounts	
	Participant Responses (Horizontalization)	Experiential Themes
I feel like I can talk to my teachers about things that are bothering me.	1) Because they listen and understand me. 2) Some teachers I feel like that with , but not most 3) They don't need to know my problems. If its not affecting my work. It would be to personal when a student and teacher talk like that. 4) Teachers can not only teach, they can also give guidance. 5) Only one of my teachers not all of them 6) They are adults and they've been through whatever I talked to them about. 7) I have no clue 8) Sometimes and not all of them. 9) If I don't speak with my teachers about things that are bothering me then it will cause confusion between my learning and my teacher 10) I keep my problems to myself 11) Only some 12) Some I trust can give me advice 13) Some teachers 14) Only some teachers 15) They are interested in what is bothering me, and if I don't get it out it will affect my studies. 16) There are only 1 or 2 I can talk to.	1. Trust 2. Trust 3. Trust/Boundaries 4. Boundaries 5. Trust 6. Experience/Trust 7. Eliminate 8. Limited Trust 9. Understanding 10. Personal 11. Limited Trust 12. Trust 13. Limited Trust 14. Limited Trust

Survey Statement	Participant Accounts	
	Participant Responses	Experiential Themes
Teachers turn me off from learning when they:	1) Start teaching and go off into another subject 2) Say stuff that is offensive and they aren't aware of it. 3) Make me feel disrespected 4) Give the class a negative feeling 5) Talk a lot 6) Do not listen to me, kick me out of class, talk loud to me, and is disrespectful 7) Participate in favoritism, single students out 8) Ignore me or if they are busy w/others or others work they need to take care of. 9) Talking long 10) Are very strict, uptight, and give more work then they teach 11) Make it difficult 12) Act like it is just their job, act with little enthusiasm, treat students like a process 13) Get off topic for extended periods of time 14) Stand and talk for hours 15) Boring	Focus Disrespect Disrespect Tone Eliminate 6. Voice 7. Favoritism 8. Voice 9. Eliminate 10. Rigid 11. Eliminate 12. Not Genuine 13. Focus 14. Voice 15. Eliminate

Survey Statement	Participant Accounts	
	Participant Responses	Experiential Themes
My peers influence my decision to stay in school more than my teachers	They don't, I would stay in school not matter what because I want to learn They let me know that I have a few more weeks left. I can talk to them about things Sometimes they do because of a family feeling Because I want to graduate with them They don't Not really, they ignore school They just do not in such a horrible way. I look forward to them My peers care more They don't They don't They don't Most of my peers are screwed up.	1.Desire to Learn 2. Support 3. Support 4. Influential 5.Determination 6. Eliminate 7. Indifferent 8. Indifferent 9. Eliminate 10. Supportive 11.Eliminate 12. Eliminate 13. Eliminate 14. No Influence

Survey Statement	Participant Accounts	
	Participant Responses	Experiential Themes
List the specific behaviors that teachers exhibit that turn you off from learning or listening to them	Talking of other things besides school work, being nosey, trying to act like a teenager Playing favorites, book work all of the time never hands on Ignoring, choosing other students, not explaining their answer, listening to everything, rudeness Attitude Attitude, blaming me for something that I didn't do, holding grudges, judging me, making negative comments Moody at the entrance of class, too much book work, a negative look on their face Boring speaker, too much work, not enough interaction, constant talker Not listening, talking too loud, disrespectful Favoritism, single out, attitudes When they look down on you, treat you like little children, drag on about boring topics, constantly nagging at students, singling out students Talk too much, slow, boring, no energy when speaking, too much work given Boring subjects, not interesting Being strict or irrational, being uptight, when they act like it is teachers vs. students, when they have no clue why students are acting out, when they deliberately being mean out of pure hatred. Boring, far to much work in a short period,	1.Focus/Off-topic 2. Favorites/not differentiating 3. Ignoring/no clarification/not respecting privacy/rude 4) Eliminate 5)Attitude/Judging/grudges 6) Attitude/Not differentiating 7) Not engaging/No interaction/ 8) Voice/Respect 9) Favoritism 10) Respect/Engagement

	learning things too quickly, not being organized Playing favorites, being unfair, treating me like a 5 year old Close minded, not accepting, blaming, assuming I'm bad due to my looks Lack of enthusiasm, discrimination of age, degradation, implication of supremacy, inferiority complex Boring, disrespect me Going off topic for too long Swearing, fake, two faced, instigators Holding things against Boring, talk too much, don't know how to teach.	11) Voice/Engagement 12) Engagement 13) Rigid/limited interaction/no collaboration 14. Engagement 15. Unfair/Respect 16. Close minded/False assumptions 17. Enthusiasm/inferiority 18. Eliminate 19. Engagement 20. Respect 21. Grudges 22. Teaching Style
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Survey Statement	Participant Accounts	
	Participant Responses	Experiential Themes
List the positive behaviors teachers exhibit that cause you to want to learn from them.	Helping in class, will do whatever it takes for me to graduate Compare lessons to other things we know, open for discussions, answer questions and explain Explanations, having one on one conversations w/students, listening to all stories, ask the same question in different ways so other students can understand, talk more and use examples Them having fun Making jokes while teaching Help when I need it, take the time to really explain things, friendly, nice Positive mood at entrance of class, excited to be there, a fun lesson plan for both students and teacher Charismatic speaker, interaction with the whole class, helps through all work Listen, talk the same way I am talking to them, calmly Encouragement, positive attitude Work with your weaknesses, treat you as an adult Ecstatic when teaching, creative w/ work they give you, works one-on-one w/you, gives praise, talks you through step by step Interesting, fun to learn, if in need of future times When they're funny, down to earth, open minded, understanding and know how to blend work with school Work in groups, is specific on the work they want,	1.Helpful/determined 2. Engagement/Listen 3.Personalization/listening/ Differentiation 4.Eliminate 5. Fun 6. Helpful/Personalization 7.Positive/engagement 8. Charismatic/interaction/ Supportive 9. Listen/respectful

	good work ethics Make learning fun, make it somewhat entertaining Being accepting, letting me speak my mind, truly teaching(school/life) lessons Kindness, respect, willingness to bend curriculum, a “buddy buddy” mindset Graduate, good grades Bring in food Having a great personality, listening from a student’s point of view, trying new things Helpful, caring, smart, funny, fun to be around	10 Encouragement 11. Respectful 12. Engaging/Praise/Creative 13. Engaging/supportive 14. Open-minded/engaging 15. Engagement/Clear 16. Engaging/Fun 17. Open-minded 18. Open-minded, respectful 19 . Eliminate 20. Eliminate 21. Personality/Listening 22 Fun/ Caring
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Survey Statement	Participant Accounts	
	Participant Responses	Experiential Themes
I am disrespectful to my teachers when:	1) They disrespect me 2) If I am disrespectful I don't mean it and I apologize 3) Disrespect me 4) I feel disrespected 5) I respect until disrespected 6) They disrespect me in front of my peers 7) I'm disrespected or feel I'm being disrespected 10) They disrespect me 11) I'm not in a good mood or if I feel as though they are mean to me 12) I am always respectful 13) When they are being irrational 14) Say bad words, leave without asking 15) They disrespect me 16) I'm not 17) They disrespect me 18) They are disrespectful to me 19) Never 20) When they are disrespectful to me 21) They are disrespectful to me	1. Disrespect 2. Eliminate 3. Disrespect 4. Disrespect 5. Disrespect 6. Disrespect 7. Disrespect 8. Disrespect 9. Disrespect 10. Disrespect 11. Mood 12. Disrespect 13. Irrational 14. Eliminate 15. Disrespect 16. Eliminate 17. Disrespect 18. Disrespect 19. Eliminate 20. Disrespect 21. Disrespect

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