CARE IN THE CLASSROOM: TEACHER AND

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES IN HIGH AND LOW CLASSES

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By
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife and family. Without their support, this document would not exist.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Tracking, or its most modern form, ability grouping (Lucas & Berends, 2002), can cause students to experience different levels of care and to have different opportunities to learn (Moller & Stearns, 2012; Oakes, 2005). Research (Diamond, Randolf, & Spillane, 2004) suggests that teachers' sense of care varies widely between the various academic classes and tracks found today in America's public schooling. This differing sense of responsibility and differential experience of care can cause the academic rigor, instructional quality, and the classroom climate to change dramatically per academic class (Diamond et al., 2004; Donaldson, LeChasseur, & Mayer, 2016; Moller & Stearns, 2012; Oaks, 2005). Thus, students in low and high tracked classes have widely different experiences. The purpose of this study was to understand if and how tracking leads to differences in student experiences related to care, and preparation in school within the academic tracks at the various levels. Also, we sought to understand how teachers understand their sense of care for their students. Results indicate that students do experiences care differently but these differences are intricate and multilayered. Furthermore, these differences are based on several factors such as level in school, track placement, gender of the teacher, years of teaching experience for the teacher. More importantly, differences in care are heavily due to teachers' varied understanding of what care is and how it should be presented to students in and, at times, outside the classroom. Results are further explained with quantitative and qualitative findings pieced

together and tied to related literature. Research implications, limitations

and conclusions are also discussed.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The combination of rapid technological advances, new state standards, and an ever-changing global economy has created a demand for students to exit high school college and career ready. However, a widening achievement gap between Latino, African American, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and white students (Riegle-Crumb & Grodsky, 2010) has had an impact on students' ability to graduate high school and be successful in college (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2011). Regarding this issue, scholars have suggested that structural factors, specifically, have had a profound impact on these concerning outcomes (Oakes, 2005). One structural factor often cited as contributing to this problem and one that is universally practiced from elementary through high school is known as tracking (Ansalone, 2010; Mayer, 2008; Oakes, 2005; Schmidt, 2009).

Tracking, according to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), is defined as "the assigning of students to a curricular track." When students are assigned to a curricular track, they are often assigned according to their achievement or needs. For many educators and school systems, tracking is a way that students are grouped according to their abilities and/or future goal orientations in order to most effectively teach them (Moller & Stearns, 2012) and to maximize resources. While some researchers have suggested that tracking has improved outcomes for students (Thomas Ford Institute, 2009), the vast majority of research indicated that ability grouping perpetuates inequalities in

schools and results in different experiences for students (Oakes, 2005). As a result, efforts to *detrack* have gained steam across the United States (Rubin, 2003) as educators debate the positive and negative aspects of tracking. In order to understand how tracking continues to be implemented today and its impact on students' abilities to graduate college and career ready, it is important to take a look at tracking through a historical lens to see how it has evolved over the years.

History of Tracking

In the mid-nineteenth century and until the beginning of the twentieth century, American schools consisted mostly of one-room schoolhouses and primarily served white European-American families. As immigrants began to pour into the United States and industrialization advanced, the structure of the American school system began to change. With a newly diversified population, American schools began educating not just white European-American students, but also immigrants from southern and eastern Europe and South America as well as African-Americans (Spring, 2015). This change in American schools, along with population growth and industrialization, led to a variety of needs emerging from different spheres of society. Colleges needed more uniform schooling for their potential students. Middle class families wanted free education, while immigrant families viewed education as a means to improving their children's future. For the marketplace, a skilled and literate labor force was desired (Oakes, 2005; Spring, 2015). In order to meet the differing demands of society and the needs of an increasingly diversified population, comprehensive secondary schools were built. These comprehensive secondary schools contained different programs, or *tracks,* that prepared students for different

occupations and different future opportunities. Such tracks included college preparatory programs that focused primarily on academics and vocational programs that focused primarily on training a skilled workforce (Oakes, 2005). With the creation of these new tracks, white European-American children were often favored for the college preparatory tracks, while immigrant and African-American children were mainly recommended for the vocational tracks (Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

This trend continued until the 1960s and the 1970s, when schools began to dismantle exclusive tracking for students (Lucas, 1999). The result was all curricular tracks were made available to all students, despite this effort, students were frequently organized into low, middle, and high-ability classes. This approach has sometimes been referred to as the "shopping mall" model (Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985 p. 122). Within this model, students could technically take whatever class they desired, but they were frequently directed by counselors (Riehl, Pallas, & Natriello, 1999) toward specific classes according to a concept known as *ability grouping*. This practice saw students divided up for instructional purposes according to their purported aptitude for learning (Gamoran, Nystrand, Berends, & LePore, 1995, p. 1). With this approach, the curriculum is modified to match students' perceived ability levels (Kelly & Carbonaro, 2012). This practice continues today in most elementary and secondary schools (Domina, Penner, & Penner, 2017; Hornby & Witte, 2014). For elementary schools, regular classes and higher-level classes are the norm (Moller & Stearns, 2012). In secondary schools, remedial classes, regular classes, and higher-level classes such as honors or Advanced Placement are frequently found on master schedules (Park & Datnow, 2017). With different ability groups or tracks existing

within the educational system, it is important to analyze how this approach has impacted the future opportunities of the students in these different groups. Because the end goal of the educational system is to educate the nation's youth and prepare them for the future, it is imperative to look at how these different groupings, and the actions taken by the teachers in them, has impacted a student's preparedness for the future.

Differences in Preparation for College

Various research shows that students in different tracks can experience very different preparation for life after public schooling. For example, many schools implement differentiated curriculum in the different classes at the secondary level with ability grouping (Lucas & Berends, 2002). Also, secondary schools can place students in different classes depending on the college orientation of the student (Moller & Stearns, 2012). Moller and Stearns stated, "College preparatory tracks are designed for college-oriented students, and they include a larger number of college preparatory courses" (2012, p. 1026). These classes tend to be more challenging than general level classes and are designed to prepare students adequately for the academic rigor of the collegiate world. Teachers teach at a faster pace, more academic language is used, and instruction is more engaging and challenging. Moreover, academic and college counseling is offered to students in college preparatory classes with the expectation that students in these classes will go to college.

On the other hand, students in regular or remedial classes are not exposed to the same amount of academic rigor as students within college preparatory classes or advanced classes. What can be found in these classrooms are basic literary texts, low-

level questioning, and an emphasis on mere functional literacy skills (Long, Kelly, & Gamoran, 2011). Also, there is a focus on basic skills in a variety of domains at the exclusion of high-level skills and higher order thinking. Consequently, research shows that students in college preparatory classes have a higher probability of applying to college, as well as being accepted to and attending college than their non-college preparatory peers (Moller & Stearns, 2012). Oppositely, lower-tracked students are not receiving adequate college counseling and instead are being directed towards a vocational or work-force route (Oakes, 2005).

This is important to keep in mind as research has shown that a good educational experience is likely to have a major impact on a student's future aspirations. In fact, Riegle-Crumb, Moore, and Ramos-Wada (2011) studied eighth grade students and their aspirations to pursue careers related to science and mathematics. The researchers were interested in determining if students begin to identify their career pathway at a young age dependent upon factors such as race, gender, parental education, self-concept, and levels of enjoyment in subject areas. The researchers found that both white and Hispanic females are less likely than white males to aspire to a career in a mathematics-related field (Riegle-Crumb et al., 2011). Furthermore, results showed that black and Hispanic males are just as likely as white males to aspire to a career in science and mathematics despite lower academic preparation. Most importantly, and for the purposes of this study, the researchers also found that level of enjoyment in subject area had the most impact on aspirations in comparison to other factors (Riegle-Crumb et al., 2011). Thus, even when a student of color may not perform at the level of his or her white peers, a good experience in

class may be enough to motivate this student to aspire to achieve beyond his or her current placement. This is a process that occurs early on and is one that educators must be conscious of at all levels of education because, as research shows, a good educational experience is likely to impact students' future aspirations. With the aforementioned research indicating that those in lower-tracked classes are receiving an overall subpar educational experience, it is easy to see why more of these students are not achieving beyond their placement and are not properly prepared to go to college.

Differences in Student Experiences

Research also supports the idea that tracking has an effect on teacher beliefs and actions, which, in turn, has an impact on student experiences. For instance, researchers have shown that students have different academic experiences within the various tracks. As stated before, students within higher-track classes are met with higher expectations by their teachers, more academically engaging content, and more academic rigor compared to their lower-tracked counterparts (Boser, Wilhelm, & Hanna, 2014; Diamond, Randolf, & Spillane, 2004). Moreover, students in higher level classes also experience a faster-pace and more academic language is incorporated into the curriculum (Moller & Stearns, 2012). In fact, one study stated that the quality of instruction that students experience in lower-track classes is of a lower degree compared to the quality of instruction in high track classes (Donaldson, LeChasseur, & Mayer, 2016). Research also shows that instruction in lower-track classes is less varied and more teacher guided than higher-track classrooms, and is less academically rigorous (Donaldson, et al., 2016).

Additionally, students may experience different classroom atmospheres and culture based on track. Nunn (2011) found that advanced and honors classes can become predominantly "white spaces," causing minority students to feel as though they are outsiders and, thus, hinder their participation in these classes. Racial tensions can arise due to this differential placement of minority students within various academic tracks, which Nunn (2011) stated, causes students to experience different atmospheres and cultures within different classes. Thus, whether it is due to the quality of instruction or the classroom atmosphere, tracking can have a major impact on student experiences in the classroom.

Differences in a Teacher's Sense of Responsibility

Another reason for students' varying experiences in the classroom may be due to the fact that teachers feel a different sense of responsibility for students within the various educational tracks or groupings. Research by Diamond and Lewis (2015) found that teacher expectations of students were often influenced by a student's ethnicity and socioeconomic status. This study revealed that teachers had lower expectations for students identifying as African-American and those identifying as low-income, while having higher expectations for students who came from middle-class families. Teachers also had higher expectations of students whom they believed had more resources to learn yet possessed lower expectations of students whom they believed did not possess as many resources. Overall, the authors found that tracking, or in their words, "de facto segregation" aided in these lowered expectations and a lowered sense of responsibility in teachers as well (Diamond, et al., 2004, p. 94).

What is particularly alarming about this practice of tracking is that research has shown that students of color and minority students are much more likely to be found in lower track classes than higher track classes (Long et al., 2011). In fact, students of color and minority students are disproportionately represented at high frequency within low track classes and are disproportionately represented at low frequency within high track classes as compared to their percentages within the school population (Oakes 2005). To quote Oakes (2005) directly,

> These findings are consistent with virtually every study that has considered the distribution of poor and minority students among track levels within schools. In academic tracking, then, poor and minority students are more likely to be placed in the lowest levels of the school's sorting system. (p. 67)

When considered together, these studies show that teachers of minority or low-income students, the students most likely to be found in lower-tracked classes, have lower expectations and a diminished sense of responsibility for their students.

Boser et al. (2014) reinforces this idea in their study which found that teachers of students of color, as well as students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, had lower expectations for their students in the classroom and also expected less when thinking about the life these students would pursue after public schooling. If higher expectations lead to more rigorous and academically engaging classrooms (Boser et al., 2014; Paige, Smith, & Sizemore, 2015), then lowered expectations can lead to less rigorous and academically engaging classrooms. In other words, teachers of students in regular or remedial classes may fail to create a highly engaging and

academically rigorous environment. Overall, the research shows that as expectations decrease, so does a teacher's sense of responsibility for their students' learning. Therefore, the poor and minority students often found in lower-tracked classes may experience a less robust academic experience compared to their higher-tracked counterparts as a result of their teacher's diminished sense of responsibility over their educational experience.

Differences in Teacher Actions

When teachers feel different levels of responsibility based on the students with whom they work, research shows that this affects the actions that they take in front of their students. Because differences in responsibility have an effect on teacher actions, researchers have looked the impact on student achievement. Studies show that a teacher's demeanor, teaching style, and actions have a deep impact on students' experiences within various academic classes (Garza, 2009; Pickens & Eick, 2009). In fact, teacher actions are so vital in the classroom that teachers who often raised test scores also raised the likelihood that their students will go to college and earn higher salaries (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014). While there is no cookie cutter formula for success in the classroom, researchers have found commonalities among certain teacher actions that lead to increased student achievement. For example, Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2007) discuss a study in which commonalities among highly effective teachers, those who taught high achieving students, were analyzed. Researchers found that highly effective teachers all acted in similar ways. They were engaged, wasted little class time, and taught students to think critically. As pointed out before, many of these actions were rarely found in lower-tracked classes. For

example, one common action among highly effective teachers was a focus on discourse in which teachers taught students how to ask questions, discuss ideas, and comment on statements made by their teachers and other students (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007, p.6). Discourse of this kind was rarely found in lower-tracked courses but was, instead, found in higher-tracked courses. This research suggests that teacher actions, which have a strong effect on student achievement, vary according to track.

Teaching and the Ethic of Care

The research also suggests that teacher actions must include a component of care if they are to be truly successful. In a report by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2016), the commission stated that student achievement *cannot* be attained without skillful and effective teaching. This skillful and effective teaching requires that teachers not only have content and pedagogical knowledge, but also "social-emotional competencies to build caring, respectful relationships in their classroom…" (2016, p. 9). Popularized by scholars such as Nel Noddings, this idea of care has been found to be essential in aiding student achievement. In fact, Noddings found that teachers demonstrating an ethic of care (Noddings, 2013) aided in students' positive experience of the classroom and increased academic achievement, in both lower-track and higher-track classes. However, due to the lack of a common understanding of what constitutes care, there might be varying levels of care found in different classrooms. Moreover, if there are varying levels of competencies found between high and low classes, as the literature

suggests (O'Shea, 2006), then there might be differences in the types of care experienced depending on the track.

Statement of the Problem

As stated previously, tracking, or its most modern form, ability grouping, can cause students to experience varying levels of care and to be prepared differently for college. This differential preparation can have deep effects in a student's adult life. Research (Diamond & Lewis, 2015 suggests that a teacher's sense of responsibility varies widely between the various academic classes and tracks found today in America's public schooling. As a result, students in lower tracks experience less care because, as the research shows, educators showcase a lowered sense of responsibility for poor or minority students who are often found in these tracks. This differing experience of care can cause the academic rigor, instructional quality, and the classroom climate to change dramatically from class to class. Thus, students in low and high tracked classes have widely different experiences of care.

We agree with Noddings (2013) that the goal of education is to properly care for students, not only emotionally and morally, but also intellectually. We also believe, like Prensky (2014) stated, that the goal of education is for, "our children [to] become the very best people they can be, capable of effective thinking, acting, relating, and accomplishing in whatever field they enjoy and have a passion for," (p. 1) as well as being college-and-career ready. If the goal of education is to properly care for every student emotionally, morally, intellectually, and educationally, as well as to make every student college-and-career ready, is the current system of education providing that?

Every student deserves an equal opportunity to be properly cared for, to become the best person he or she can be, and to be successful in college after 13 years of public schooling. With the different preparation for college within the various tracks, the varying levels of teacher actions, and the different experiences students face in each academic track, we must ask ourselves whether every student is truly getting the same opportunity to be properly cared for, to become the best person he or she can be, and to be successful in college.

Purpose of the Study

With the goal of education being to provide every student with an equal opportunity to become college ready while having care be central to that pursuit, the aim of this study is to understand how tracking affects the equity that the education system desires to perpetuate for its students. The purpose of this study is to understand if, and how, tracking leads to differences in student experiences, and preparation in school within the academic tracks at the various levels. Also, we seek to understand how teachers understand their acts of care in the classroom and how students experience care across the various tracks.

Significance of the Study

Despite the research suggesting that tracking contributes to inequitable educational outcomes, there is limited research on the experiences of students as well as teacher perceptions of their care from elementary school through high school. Most studies on tracking focus on the various effects of tracking at the secondary level. Our study seeks to address this gap in the literature by understanding the various effects of tracking at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. We will do this by

not just focusing on the secondary level of students' educational careers, but also by looking at the 13 years that a child is within the public education system. The level of college preparation, perception of care, and different experiences of students within various academic tracks will be examined in this case study at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. By examining a wide range view of students' educational experiences, we will better understand the differences that tracking can perpetuate within the educational system and beyond.

Limitations of the Study

Results from this study are limited to students who attend publicly-funded schools at the elementary, middle school, and secondary levels. Results from the study are not intended to be attributed to students in preschool, transitional-kindergarten, kindergarten through third grades, and post-secondary education, including, but not limited to, adult schools, technical career colleges, community colleges, and four-year universities. Further limitations related to the findings of this study are discussed in Chapter VI.

Research Questions

1. How do students' perceptions of their educational experiences differ across the tracks at the various levels?

2. What are students' perceptions of their educational experiences dependent on track placement, level in school, and demographic variables?

3. In what ways do teachers perceive their sense of care for their students?

   a. How do teachers' perceptions of their sense of care change dependent on level in school, track placement, and years of experience?

Our hypotheses were the following:

H1: There will be differences in student perceptions of their experiences based on track   placement, self-reported GPA, level in school, and ethnicity.

H2: There will be differences in teachers' perceptions of their sense of care based on   level taught, track placement, and years of experience.

Definitions

Ability. "The belief that students differ greatly in their academic potential and aptitude for schooling" (Oakes, 2005, p. 174).

Class. Refers to a variety of settings in the K-12 education system depending on the level. For elementary, this refers to the classroom setting. For the secondary level, this refers to a specific course on the master schedule.

High level class. Classes within the K-12 education system with titles such as Advanced Placement, Honors, Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), and International Baccalaureate.

Low track class. Classes within the K-12 education system with titles such as basic, remedial, intervention, Special Education, and English Language Development (ELD).

Regular class. Classes within the K-12 education system designated as college preparatory.

Responsibility. The sense of duty that a teacher feels in the emotional, moral, intellectual, and educational development of his or her students.

Tracking. A structural practice that consists of "the placing of students in any of several courses [classes] of study according to ability, achievement, or needs" (Free Dictionary, n.d).

Summary

This chapter began by outlining the history of tracking within the United States. It went on to describe the college preparation of students in high and low tracks. The various experiences of students within the differing academic tracks were reported as well. The purpose of this study is to understand if and how tracking leads to differences in student preparation for college. Also, this study seeks to understand how teachers understand care and how they show care to their students. Finally, in order to understand the reality of education, this study attempts to understand if and how the experiences of students differ within the academic tracks at the various levels. The three research questions to support this purpose were defined.

Chapter II will focus on the historical background of tracking and the differences within the various academic tracks. Past research, current research, and the study's theoretical framework will be defined. Chapter III will describe the methodology of the research design, which includes participants, instrumentation, methods, and data analysis. Chapter IV will report the results of teacher interviews. Chapter V will provide a summary of qualitative findings by factors as well as a summary of quantitative findings. Chapter VI will feature a research discussion based on the three main aspects of care in relation to the theoretical framework and will include implications and limitations for the research project.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The Rise and Fall of Tracking

As previously stated, in the 19th century the American school system moved away from the traditional one-room schoolhouse model in which many children of a community were educated together. This movement was a response to the large number of immigrant students coming into American schools. Soon, sorting students into different groups for instruction came to be seen as a viable way to teach the heterogeneous masses of students who were coming in. This, coupled with the popularity of testing, soon saw the proliferation of assumptions that still prevail today (Domina et al., 2017). Most notably, that intelligence is measurable, unchanging, and that students should be sorted into groups and given specific curriculum based on their intelligence level and future occupation (Mayer, 2008).

The results of grouping students based on ability, or tracking, have been mixed at best and the process as a whole has been the source of heated debates over the years. Proponents of tracking have argued that the process not only helps facilitate instruction by individualizing the educational experience, but also empowers instructors to alter strategies according to class level. Moreover, it encourages slower students to participate since they will not be overshadowed by more able peers; it also reduces the chances that said peers will be bored by the participation of slower students (Ansalone, 2010). Critics of tracking charge that classroom climate,

activities, teacher quality, and resources, are all superior in high track classes while inferior in low track ones. For example, in a national study of junior and senior high schools, Oakes (2005) found that more time was devoted to critical thinking and instructional activities in high track classes while memory, comprehension, and behavior management took up more time in low track classes.

In response to criticism that tracking was creating an inequitable educational climate, policymakers and national opinion leaders in the 1990s recommended that schools abolish the practice. A national detracking movement began by those who felt that school tracking was a form of segregation and groups of educators around the country began to rid their schools of the method (Davis, 2014; Losen, 1999). But tracking has made a resurgence in recent years, albeit sometimes in more subtle forms. For example, as opposed to having overarching programs that keep students in the same track across all subjects, some middle and high schools now differentiate *within* subjects (Schmidt, 2009). Another example is classes for the gifted, in which few are admitted based on their perceived ability. Ansalone (2010) calls these GATE programs one common and widely-accepted form of tracking at the elementary and secondary level. Moreover, Kelly and Price (2011) looked at tracking in today's schools and findings suggest that although education has steered away from tracking, course placement policies seem to be more complex with some subjects than others. For example, placement policies that result in grouping students by ability still exist and are now based on test scores and grades in nearly every subject (Domina, McEachin, Hanselman, Agarwal, Hwang, & Lewis, 2016). Furthermore, many schools have implemented prerequisite classes for high level classes. With a larger

number of class offerings and varying levels in each subject, barriers have been developed related to access for students looking to move from regular track classes to high track classes. In other words, despite efforts to move away from tracking, current practices have only managed to create a placement process that still restricts access for students who are trying to participate in rigorous classes. These are just a few examples of the myriad of ways in which tracking has found its way back into American classrooms.

College Preparation

With the topic of tracking and equity in education often comes the question of student preparedness after graduation. This is especially true for students who have been restricted to specific classes, such as the English Learner (EL) population. Research from Callahan (2005) illustrated this in a study regarding preparedness of students in EL programs compared to their peers in the college preparatory track. Callahan (2005) recognizes that although English proficiency is a necessary skill for education in America, "fluency in English is [not] the primary requirement for academic success" among EL students (p. 305). While EL programs have the potential to help students acquire the English language, results suggest that the college preparatory track was a predictor for students' grade point average, credits completed, and scores on both the Stanford Achievement Test 9 (SAT9) and California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) English and mathematics tests. On the other hand, EL placement was a significant predictor for only the English CAHSEE and English SAT9 test scores (Callahan, 2005, p. 316), meaning that while EL students are acquiring the English language, EL programs are not preparing students

for overall academic success. Relying on related research (Delany, 1991; Romo & Falbo, 1996), Callahan (2005) concludes that EL students find it difficult to navigate the educational system and make decisions about the classes that are available to them. Moreover, according to Oakes and Lipton (1999) and Stevens (1999), students in EL tracks may find school curriculum boring, disengaging, and unchallenging. These studies further conclude that when curriculum, such as that in EL programs, demonstrates to students that less is expected of them, student performance decreases. This phenomenon is known as the Golem Effect (Colman, 2009). The Golem Effect is a problematic trend because, as research shows, EL placement assigns students to environments of low expectations and leads them to graduate less prepared for college. In a similar study, Callahan's (2005) found that, of the 355 EL student participants, most students were in the EL track rather than the college preparatory track. This is evidenced by the fact that only 15% of the students in the sample had completed one or more college preparatory science class while the rest were in less rigorous and less demanding EL classes.

Shifrer, Callahan, and Muller (2013) examined longitudinal data to determine if there was a difference in academic preparedness for students who have a learning disability based on the course patterns they are provided in high school. Results indicated that the largest gap in academic preparedness was in science. Students with learning disabilities were 26% less likely to take the required classes for admission to a four-year university when compared to their peers (Shifrer et al., 2013). Also, 26% of students with a learning disability completed one year of a foreign language course in contrast to 79% of other students. Overall, only 4% of students with learning

disabilities completed all the college preparatory classes required for college admission compared to 38% of students without disabilities (Shifrer et al., 2013). This is further evidence to suggest that there is a discrepancy in preparedness for college for students in high and low track classes.

Riegle-Crumb and Grodsky (2010) used national data from the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 in their study. Specifically, they wanted to study differences in academic preparedness in rigorous mathematics classes for white students and students of color. The data indicated that white students have higher grade point averages in mathematics and higher 10th grade mathematics test scores (Riegle-Crumb & Grodsky, 2010). When considering social factors related to socio-economic status and parental education, the researchers found that family income and parent levels of education contributed to the test score gap between white and Hispanic students. In other words, students in Hispanic families with the lowest income had the largest gap in test scores when compared with their white peers. Social class was less of a contributing factor for the gap in scores between black and white students. Results also indicated that black students in schools with large populations of minority students also experienced lower test scores than their white counterparts (Riegle-Crumb & Grodsky, 2010). This led researchers to believe that both social class factors and school climate factors contribute to academic preparedness for students of color in rigorous mathematics classes. Therefore, there needs to be more focus on academic preparedness for students of color, especially in large schools or schools with students of color of low socioeconomic status. This research is evidence to the fact that students of color perform at lower levels than

their white peers. This lower performance also leads them to be less prepared for future endeavors such as college. Given the fact that students of color are often found in lower tracks (Oakes, 2005), it is important to understand how their educational experiences affect their future goals. Other research moves away from the topic of college preparation and instead focuses on the class placement practices that schools implement and their effects on students regarding access and academic success (Betts & Shkolnik, 2000).

Placement Practices

Research suggests that one reason that poor and minority students are often found in these lower tracks is due to school personnel's decreased sense of responsibility to establish a non-judgmental and merit-based criteria for sorting students into their various tracks. In fact, in their study of four high schools, Oakes and Guiton (1995) found that Latinos and African Americans who had comparable scores on standardized achievement tests were less likely to be enrolled in higher track classes compared to their Asian and white peers. One reason for this may be due to teacher expectations, which can often disadvantage minority students (Lucas, 1999). Glock, Krolak-Schwerdt, Klapproth, and Böhmer (2013) conducted two experimental studies on teacher expectation and found that less favorable judgments were made about students with an immigrant background compared to those without. In both studies, the researchers found that even when academic profiles were similar, students with immigrant backgrounds were at a disadvantage. Students with immigrant backgrounds were not only assigned to higher tracks less often by teachers, but also had lower probabilities of success attributed to them as well (Glock

et al., 2013, p. 560). In other words, teachers expected less of these students if they had an immigrant background. As a result, tracking tends to reinforce potential divisions through race, language proficiency, and socioeconomic status. In all, these studies shed light on how regardless of ability level, students of color are disproportionately placed into lower tracks and pre-existing divisions are often reinforced.

Regarding the effects of tracking on academic preparation for college, there are several researchers who have focused on EL populations in schools and the placement practices that impact their access to various classes. Callahan, Wilkinson, and Muller (2010) used data from the nationally representative Educational Longitudinal Study. The researchers suggested that although English Language Development (ELD) curriculum for students who lack proficiency in English is necessary for legal and ethical reasons, the results of their study show that students who receive EL services exit high school with less academic knowledge. These results are evident even when accounting for several factors such as proficiency, achievement, and time living in the U.S. (Callahan et al., 2010 p. 108). This is a concern because many students remain in lower tracked English classes, EL classes, until graduating from high school with the goal of mastering the English language. Moreover, many students find it difficult to exit EL programs once they are placed in them, causing them to be stuck in classes that are less rigorous and do not prepare them for college admission requirements. Although EL courses are necessary for students to acquire English skills, the reality is that these classes do not meet college preparatory requirements, and thus, create an environment that is less demanding and

not as rigorous as high track classes. The researchers conclude that placement policies must be analyzed to determine their impact on showing care for the overall student in preparing them to meet their post-graduation and higher education goals upon exiting high school.

Further research has been conducted in relation to EL students and English acquisition support services. Callahan, Wilkinson, Muller, and Frisco (2009) pulled data from several national sources to study academic preparedness for EL students. The researchers found significant differences in schools where there were smaller populations of immigrant EL students in comparison to schools where there are larger concentrations of immigrant EL students. In schools with less EL students, mainstream students performed at higher levels than their EL counterparts (Callahan et al., 2009). This was because EL students in these schools were less likely to be placed in challenging classes such as Algebra II and Chemistry, classes required for four-year university admissions. In schools with a higher concentration of EL students, results indicated an opposite effect on student academic preparedness. EL students in these schools were more likely to take challenging classes, be better prepared academically, and have higher grade point averages when compared to their mainstreamed counterparts (Callahan et al., 2009). The researchers suggest that their results have major implications for the development of EL programs in schools. They state that rather than focusing on keeping students in school, EL programs should focus on ensuring that classes prepare students for their futures in higher education programs and day-to-day life. The effect of class placement and availability of support services on student achievement goes far beyond the classroom, having major

implications for the paths available to students upon adulthood. Researchers have also focused beyond academic preparation and course placement to instead focus on the experiences of students within the various tracks. Studies related to student experiences will be discussed next.

Student Experiences

Classroom Environment

Among the many factors that influence student learning, the classroom environment is one of the most important. On the one hand, the learning environment has the potential to help students apply material, cooperate with peers, and communicate using academic vocabulary. It also has the potential to create a positive and nurturing environment where students feel they are cared for in regards to their academic and personal needs. On the other hand, a poor classroom environment can be detrimental to the success of a student. Gamoran (1992) states that while many studies showcase that greater achievement is found in higher tracks, these results differ depending on the school. Using data from a study of 108 eighth and ninth grade classes, the researcher located two examples of schools with effective instruction in low track classes. These classes saw students score higher than their expected achievement and were characterized by high expectations from teachers, abundant use of oral discourse in class, and no system of assigning inexperienced teachers to low tracks. However, Gamoran (1992) undercuts these findings by stating that "virtually every conceivable pattern of results favoring high achievers, favoring low achievers, favoring those in the middle, etc. can be observed in one study or another" (p. 2). In other words, research findings show very little consistency. Another concept

that will be explored below is that of student perception. Student perceptions are important because they guide students' attitudes and opinions of themselves and the education they receive within the various tracks.

Student Perceptions

Although studies suggest that students may not fully understand the process by which they get placed in certain tracks, they are aware of what it means to be assigned to a track. Yonezawa and Jones's (2006) group interviews revealed that students largely believed that tracking practices were unfair because students in lower tracks were assigned less attentive and caring teachers. One student even explained how one teacher would often come to school to teach her AP classes, but would get a sub when it came time to teach the lower track classes (Yonezawa & Jones, 2006, p. 18). Boaler, William, and Brown's (2000) study on students' experiences of ability grouping also discovered a wide range of negative experiences reported by the students themselves, which were substantiated through observations by the researchers. The students from low tracks reported to researchers that they were often concerned about their low levels of work and that their inexperienced teachers would often ignore their pleas for more challenging work. In many instances, students who finished the menial work in the first five minutes often sat silently in their seats for the remaining 55 minutes of class (Boaler et al., 2000, p. 638). Researchers have also analyzed the allocation of resources and teacher assignment as a result of tracking. As will be explained below, allocation trends among the tracks show why student perceptions are tainted in low tracks and why educational experiences differ.

Teacher Assignment and Resources

Researchers have focused on the availability of high quality instruction and resources that help in furthering student learning and achievement. Smith, Trygstad, and Banilower (2016) found that students placed in lower track classes have access to fewer resources such as well-prepared teachers, instructional resources, and quality of instruction (p. 22). Kelly's (2004) research found the following:

> For low ability students, who are often grouped together in low track classrooms, this means that more often than not, class is led by a relatively inexperienced teacher. Low track teachers are also less likely to have advanced degrees and have taken fewer classes in the subject matter they are assigned to teach. (p. 68)

Kalogrides and Loeb (2013) recently supported similar findings in their study on tracking within three large urban school districts. In it, they found that lower-track classrooms, often comprised of poor or minority students, were also more likely to have novice teachers. Of this phenomena they write, "sorting students by achievement level exposes minority and poor students to lower quality teachers and less resourced classmates" (p. 304). Moreover, students found in lower tracks are often the recipients of lower expectations and have limited mobility once they are placed (Weinstein, 1996, p. 17). Donaldson et al. (2016) found that students in low track classrooms were often provided significantly less instructional and organizational support. Shockingly, the researchers write that the instruction in lowest-tracked classrooms is often, "...characterized by negativity, insensitivity

toward students, and lack of regard for student perspectives" (p. 19). This research suggests low track students, who arguably need more experienced, caring, and emotionally supportive teachers, are more disadvantaged in this area compared to their high track counterparts. However, as negative as all of this seems, findings also suggest that tracking has had a positive impact in some instances.

Positive Impact of Tracking

As stated prior, tracking is a highly controversial topic in which there are numerous supporters and detractors. Almost from its inception, researchers have delivered conflicting reports as to the efficacy of tracking on student achievement and the relationship between student achievement and tracking is notably very complex and often difficult to discern (Hallinan, 1994). However, there have been a few pieces of research that outline the potential positive impact of grouping students based on perceived ability.

Positive impacts found by Hallinan (1994) show that assignment to a higher track increased the rate of learning generally, but that these track effects were stronger in some schools than others. For example, assignment to an honors English track produced higher achievement in one school than it did in another. Thus, the practice of tracking appears to be more beneficial in some schools than others. Overall, Hallinan (1994) argued that if tracking practices and policies were modified within schools, then educators would have a better chance at establishing a tracking system that benefits all students (p. 819). Nomi and Allensworth (2009) conducted a study of "double-dose" Algebra, in which struggling students were given a second support Algebra course in addition to their regular Algebra course. The study

revealed that students "learned more in homogenous low-ability classrooms when they were provided with additional coursework and their teachers received new curricular resources" (p. 37). Moreover, this approach had a positive impact on the test scores of those in high-ability classes.

Drews's (1961) study found that there were positive attitudes from students in lower tracks regarding ability grouping and that "slow learners" prefer homogeneous classes over heterogeneous classes. In a questionnaire of attitudes toward the two types of grouping, 83% of "slow learner" respondents in homogenous classes gave positive responses toward their classes as opposed to the 60% of students in heterogeneous classes with positive responses.

In other instances when tracking yields positive impacts on student achievement, the research is often hampered by meager results. Kulik and Kulik's (1984) meta-analysis of findings from 31 separate studies found that grouping students by ability did have a positive effect on the academic outcomes of elementary school students. However, the authors write that the benefits tended to be minor overall. In fact, the only cases in which benefits were clear and moderate in size were when gifted students were placed in special classes and received enriched instruction (Kulik & Kulik, 1984, p. 6). A recent study by Domina et al. (2016) had similar findings. Results suggested that only those placed in higher-tracked classes received benefits from ability grouping. They found that when students were grouped into various English Language Arts (ELA) classes based on their prior achievement, only those in high-achieving groups tended to see growth in their test scores while those in low-achieving groups continued to fall behind (Domina, et al., 2016, p.33). Similarly,

Cortes and Goodman (2014) found that placing students in mathematics classes that also included intervention classes had positive results for students long-term. While lower skilled students did not benefit as much as the more advanced students in the intervention class, research results have shown that intervention rather than traditional tracking, which would result in remedial mathematics placement, has had a positive impact for students.

Researchers analyzing tracking have shown how teachers impact student perceptions, classroom environment, and college preparedness among other things. Given the deep impact that teacher actions and inactions have on students, the section below will specifically explain how teachers directly impact overall student achievement. Student achievement has the potential to determine the paths that students' lives take. This is why we believe that it is important to understand the impact that teacher actions have on performance in the classroom.

Impact of Teacher Actions on Student Achievement

Research shows that similar teacher actions are common among those teachers who are most effective with students (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007). In other words, although there is no foolproof way of educating students, the most effective teachers often employ similar tools and characteristics while working with students in their classrooms. Furthermore, research has found that teacher actions and behaviors impact students' abilities to be academically and professionally successful (Chetty et al. 2014).

Research also suggests that teachers who build lesson plans that are well-developed and thought out also impact student achievement the most. Sullivan,

Mousley, and Zevenbergen (2006) found that mathematics lesson plans that included open-ended tasks, premade prompts that support struggling students, and extension tasks for students who finish early helped teachers maximize student learning. Moreover, researchers also found that when teachers set up explicit classroom processes or routines, students who struggle most are able to set expectations for themselves in their own learning and also know what to expect from their teacher in return when in need of support. In other words, pedagogy is just as impactful as the classroom environment and the teacher plays an imperative role in both.

Modeling Bandura's theory of triadic reciprocal causation and the belief that "collective teacher efficacy beliefs influence the level of effort and persistence that individual teachers put forth in their daily work," (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2017, p. 502) researchers developed an instrument that measured teacher efficacy and its impact on student achievement among students in one large midwestern district. The researchers found a statistically significant relationship between teachers who scored one unit higher on the efficacy scale and a more than 8-point average increase on reading (8.49) and mathematics (8.62) achievement scores for their students.

Klem and Connell (2004) studied student engagement and achievement in relation to supportive teacher actions. Researchers found that students who believed their teachers created caring classrooms environments were also more likely to report high levels of school engagement for themselves. High levels of engagement were associated with better student attendance and higher test scores, both of which increase the probability that a student will graduate from high school and pursue higher education. Specifically, elementary students with supportive teachers were

89% more likely to report high levels of school engagement. Furthermore, elementary students with high levels of engagement were 44% more likely to have high academic performance (Klem & Connell, 2004, p. 270). For middle school students, this figure jumped to 75%. Thus, teachers who act in ways that support students and create caring classroom environments increase student engagement and academic achievement.

Similarly, Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1994) analyzed the impact of various factors on student achievement. These factors were divided into 28 categories that ranged from classroom occurrences to district or community influences. Researchers found that direct influences to academic achievement included how much time a teacher spends on a topic and the interactions that a teacher has with his or her students. Additionally, Brophy (2010) found that regardless of track, low-achieving students will have academic success if the teacher works to maximize instructional time and also invests time in supervising students' task completion. Researchers found that, assuming instruction and assignments are at the right difficulty level to meet students' needs, active instruction, such as "clear statements of objectives and well-organized presentations and demonstrations" with feedback to clear student misconceptions equips students with tools to make them successful in the classroom (Brophy, 2010, p. 276). They claim that a teacher can affect student achievement in a positive way if he or she is willing to

> carry the key content to the students through active instruction rather
> than expecting them to learn mostly on their own from working
> through curriculum materials and assignments; actively circulate and

supervise progress during seatwork time; and ensure that students who

need help will be able to get it immediately. (Brophy, 2010, p. 278)

Therefore, teachers who wish to help students, especially those with the most

academic need, must consistently and actively participate in the education of their

students throughout the various components of every lesson. These research findings

further explain the impact that teacher actions have on academic achievement. As will

be explained below, like teacher actions, a teacher's sense of responsibility also has

an effect on students and their experiences in the classroom.

Teacher Sense of Responsibility

Tracking appears to have a negative impact on those students present in

lower-tracked classes. Moreover, poor and minority students are disproportionately

placed in low track classes which limits their access to rigorous instruction and

contributes to the achievement gap. One reason for this negative impact may be due

to the changing nature of an educator's responsibility toward the students in their

track. Diamond et al. (2004) examined how race and class composition can impact

teacher perceptions and how those perceptions can impact their sense of

responsibility for student learning. The researchers found that when students were

primarily African-American and low-income, which as noted prior, is a composition

that is likely to be found in lower tracked classes, teachers not only held more deficit-

oriented beliefs about these students compared to their white middle-class

counterparts, but they also demonstrated a lowered sense of responsibility for student

learning (Diamond et al., 2004, p. 93). When teachers expect less from their students,

it appears to have a direct impact on the sense of responsibility they feel for their

students' learning. This can have a powerful impact in the classroom. Boser et al. (2014) conducted a national 10-year longitudinal study and found that secondary teachers expected that their high-poverty and minority students were much less likely to graduate from college. These studies suggest that minority and high-poverty students—those often found in lower track—may likely be placed in the classrooms of educators who feel less of a sense of responsibility for their students.

While there appears to be a clear disadvantage toward those typically enrolled in lower track classes, the perceptions of teachers and students in their respective tracks have helped researchers better understand why disadvantages of this nature exist. It is difficult to assume that teachers would openly display their preference for higher track classes, but research has found teacher responses to indirectly reveal how they feel about various tracks. Worthy's (2010) study of 25 sixth grade teachers in both honors and regular classes found that teachers describing regular classes and the instruction that took place in those classes did so in a manner that was comparatively negative and lackluster. When talking of projects, honors class teachers would boast of the various PowerPoint presentations, posters, and dioramas that were completed by their students, while explaining that the students in the regular classes "can't handle" the material and instead "need" shorter material. In fact, multiple teachers often spoke about limiting the type of content used by regular classes because it was "what these kids need" (Worthy, 2010, p. 284). In another study featuring a survey of 600 educators in Florida researchers revealed negative attitudes regarding the efficacy of tracking itself. The results of the questionnaire found that a majority of educators disagreed with statements such as, "students learn better if they learn with others of

similar capabilities," "ability grouping is usually fair and equal," and "ability grouping increases student achievement" (George & Rubin, 1992, p. 43). In these cases, educators were not only setting lower expectations for students in lower tracks and showcasing a potential diminished sense of responsibility, but many educators did not even believe there were benefits to tracking at all.

Similarly, Caughlan and Kelly's (2004) work regarding tracking in schools showed that teachers identify themselves more with high track students. This leads them to make decisions about the presentation of content in class. Results showed "teachers in high track courses are more likely to implement more challenging [and] coherent [content], both intertextually and culturally" (p. 20). Teachers had different goals for students' learning across the two tracks and they believed that certain coursework for the high track students would not be appropriate for the students in low track classes. This shows that perception lead teachers to expect different things from students across tracks, shaping overall learning objectives and a teacher's sense of responsibility towards students as well.

Kelly and Carbonaro (2012) analyzed data from a national longitudinal study of the graduating class of 1992. The researchers were interested in studying teacher expectations of students. The researchers found that although most students believed they were going to attend college in the future (84.5%), teachers were less likely to have this expectation of their students (60.1%) (Kelly & Carbonaro, 2012). Moreover, academic track for students also determined the expectation of college attendance. Most students in high track classes believed they would attend college (96.4%) in comparison to students in regular track classes (74.8%). When comparing teacher

expectations for low track and regular track teachers, the percentage of teachers who believed their students would attend college more than doubled from 40.0% to 90.1%, respectively. The researchers also found that when a student has a mixture of classes from both the high and low tracks, teacher expectations vary from teacher to teacher regarding the same student. Teacher 'A' in the high track course showed a greater expectation for college attendance than teacher 'B' in the lower track for the same student (Kelly & Carbonaro, 2012, p. 286). The researchers recognized that their results also indicate that this finding could be due to the adjustment hypothesis, which shows "differences in students' achievement and behavior" across the two tracks (p. 286). In other words, students go through an adjustment of behavior and performance depending on the class that they find themselves in (Kelly & Carbonaro, 2012, p. 286). The results of this study and others cited above directly connect to research on teachers' sense of responsibility. Research results show that there seems to be a disconnected or lessened sense of responsibility for teachers in low track classes. Whether consciously or not, teachers in low tracks tend to communicate through their actions that the expectation for college attendance is not imposed upon students. Lastly, and perhaps more importantly, this expectation manifests itself in the lack of curriculum or lessons in low track classes that challenge students and prepare them for college admission and academic success upon entering college. Our theoretical framework for the project is explained below as the lens that we utilized in our own research.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Framework for the Ethic of Care

It is the ethic of care, popularized by feminist authors like Noddings (2013), that we believe provides an explanation for these differing teacher attitudes and student experiences in high and low tracks. This theoretical framework proposes that a teacher's care of the student is of utmost importance, even more so than a student's intellectual development. In fact, Noddings (1988, 2005, 2013) emphatically rejects the notion that schools should solely train intelligence, while leaving the church and home to train morality and emotional well-being. She argues that every educational institution should be focused on the maintenance and enhancement of caring and that parents, teachers, preachers, and every other member of a community should embrace this idea (Noddings, 2013). Through a caring teacher, a moral education should teach students not just on subject matter, but also how to be a caregiver themselves. Noddings (2013) states, "by conducting education morally, the teacher hopes to induce an enhanced moral sense in the student" (p. 179).

The reason this care-based moral education is so important is because, according to Noddings (2010), it is the foundation for our sense of justice. In terms of care, humans first learn what it means to be cared for. From there, they soon learn how to care about others. Echoing the ideas of John Rawls, whose theory of justice contains ideas of care and responsibility, Noddings explains, "caring supplies the basic good in which the sense of justice is grounded" (Noddings, 2010, p. 22). Therefore, for Noddings (2010), the ethic of care is of paramount importance in the

classroom because the process of caring is foundational to justice. It is from care that people begin to understand concepts of morality, righteousness, and equality.

To foster care and a sense of justice falls in line with what researchers such as Spring (2015) states has always been and continues to be a major goal of public education. Overall, he postulates that the goals of education are a product of what citizens believe schooling should do for the good of society. While there is no a commonly held understanding of educational goals due to a wide variation in people's beliefs, there have existed some goals that have persisted since the creation of public schools starting in the 1820s (Kumashiro, 2005). Spring writes these goals are that schools instill in students moral values and provide students with "...the equality of opportunity to succeed" (2015, p. 5). In other words, while not everyone in the United States agrees on every goal of education, there has existed throughout all the years the belief that schooling should not only provide a moral component, but also the just idea that all deserve an equal opportunity to succeed (Adams, 2016). Both of which, are fostered through Noddings's (2013) idea of an education centered on care.

The figure below outlines the six aspects of care that are described within this theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework: Ethic of Care

Mindset

Reciprocity

Both student and teacher need to contribute to the relationship or else caring cannot occur. Must be a response from the student.

Engrossment

When the carer attempts to really understand the needs of the cared for. When the carer tries to see, hear, and feel what the other conveys.

Motivational Displacement

When the concerns of the carer are displaced for the concerns of the cared for. The carer desires to help.

Actions

Confirmation

The act of confirming and encouraging the best in others. When we see what students want to become, and encourage that. Must know student's interests and abilities.

Dialogue

Talk that is truly open-ended where neither parties know the outcome prior to talking. It's a search for understanding, appreciation, empathy, and helps both parties arrive at a well-informed decision.

Modeling

When one does not tell students to care, but rather show them how to care by creating caring relationships with them.

(Noddings, 2013)

Figure 1. The six aspects of care outlined in the ethic of care theoretical framework.

Defining Moral Education

So, what does it mean to truly care for a student in the mind of Noddings? According to Noddings (2013), for care to take place there must be a symbiotic relationship between the carer and the cared for. In an educational setting, if the student denies that they are being cared for, then according to Noddings (2005) the student is not actually experiencing care. In other words, both the student and the teacher need to contribute to the relationship or else caring does not occur.

Moreover, Noddings (2005) states that the disposition of the carer—the teacher in the educational setting—must be characterized by *engrossment* and

motivational displacement. This idea of engrossment Noddings (2005) states is when the carer attempts to understand the needs of the cared for. Engrossment, in her words, is "When I care, I really hear, see, or feel what the other tries to convey" (Noddings, 2005, p. 16). This engrossment does not have to last very long or be particularly extraordinary. To illustrate this point, she gives an example of a stranger stopping to ask for directions. If a stranger stops to ask for directions and one listens attentively and responds in a way that he receives and recognizes, then a caring relationship has been produced. Applied to the classroom context, when a teacher responds to a student in a manner in which the teacher attempts to hear, see, or feel what the student needs, then the teacher can be said to have a mindset of engrossment.

Through this example of a stranger asking for directions, Noddings (2005) also explains that an individual's will to help the stranger in need is what she calls motivational displacement. While one might have had something on his or her mind prior to the event, the mindset of the carer has now shifted to the plight of the stranger. The carer's concerns have been displaced and replaced by the concerns of the cared-for. This results in the person who asked for directions feeling cared for. Noddings (2005) argues that the reason the stranger feels cared for is because the person who gave directions temporarily gave up his or her own motivations in order to help the stranger meet his or her goal. In the classroom, if the teacher neglects his or her own concerns for the concerns and goals of the cared-for (the student), then the teacher can be said to be practicing motivational displacement.

In addition to characterizing care in terms of foregoing one's own concerns to help another, Noddings (2005) believes motivational displacement goes even further than just simply helping another meet his or her goals. In fact, Noddings (2005) states that through motivational displacement, the carer now *wants* to help the cared-for. To use the directions example, not only would the carer give up his or her own motivations to help the stranger find their destination, but that the carer would also feel a desire, as if it were their own, to see them get to their destination. In education, to have motivational displacement would not only mean that the teacher gives up their own goals in order to focus on the students', but also that the teacher *wants* to help students achieve their goals. The teacher's motivational energy would flow toward the student and, in a sense, their desires would become fused together with both working on behalf of the student's goals.

Noddings's (2005) explanation of the disposition of the carer is important so as to understand that the act of care does not necessarily depend on the length or type of interaction. Her example of giving a stranger directions shows that it hinges more on the disposition of the carer toward the cared-for, as the act of giving directions can be a rather short exchange. Thus, for care to take place there needs to exist a symbiosis—or reciprocity as Noddings (2005) sometimes calls it—between the carer and the cared-for so that the carer can be engrossed in the life of the cared-for, even for a brief period, and be able to feel a sense of motivational displacement toward their goals. Care, therefore, cannot be begrudging or perfunctory, it may vary in length, and it must come from a deep sense of desire to help and be accepted by the cared-for. Beyond just having a caring disposition, a teacher must also act in

accordance with that disposition. For Noddings (1984, 2005), there are four major actions that demonstrate care which are: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. Each action will be further defined below.

Defining Modeling

According to Noddings (2005), modeling is showing--through our relationships with our students—how to care. Noddings (2005) states that we cannot be "sarcastic" or "dictatorial" toward those that we care for and expect them to be caring individuals themselves. To be in a caring relationship, Noddings writes, "we do not tell our students to care; we show them how to care by creating caring relations with them" (2005, p. 22). In other words, to care for a student, teachers must model what a caring relationship looks like by in fact creating a caring relationship with students.

To use an example, in Zakrzewski's (2012) study regarding one school staff's capacity to create caring student-teacher relationships, she writes of ways in which those in education modeled care in more concrete and tangible ways. According to Zakrzewski (2012), care was modeled through "personalized support for students with academic and personal issues" (p. 192). For instance, Zakrzewski (2012) wrote of a boy who had lost some limbs in an accident and how educators helped procure money in order to get the boy artificial limbs. The educators in this situation modeled care to the students by providing personalized support for this boy who had personal issues that impeded his academic success.

On a much smaller level, she notes that care was also modeled when teachers or administrators were very accessible when students or teachers needed their help.

Zakrzewski (2012) believes this is perhaps the most important modeling of care she observed. To this end, she uses an example of teachers who felt that their principal cared because they could, "go with their personal problems, just go there, let it out before her, [and become] calm and quiet after that (2012, p. 193)." Zakrzewski (2012) writes that this personalized support helped to establish trust between the carer and the cared-for. While this example is about teachers and their administrators, if teachers are very accessible to their students, then they can be said to be modeling care for them as well. In all, Zakrzewski (2012) shows that to model care is to offer the cared-for personalized support for academic or personal issues and to be able to be easily accessed when support is needed.

Defining Dialogue

When it comes to dialogue, Noddings (2005) states that this is not simply the act of talk or conversation. It is talk that is truly open-ended in which neither the carer nor the cared-for know what the outcome of the conversation will be in the beginning. Noddings (2005) states that, as teachers, we cannot engage in a conversation with children when our minds have already been made up. Truly caring dialogue is a search for understanding, appreciation, and empathy and helps both parties arrive at well-informed decisions. In her study, Sugishita (2000) wrote that in order to achieve this kind of dialogue, teachers need to be flexible, open-minded, and open to the ideas of their students. She also states that with a mindset of engrossment and motivational displacement, one could achieve this type of dialogue.

To use a more concrete example, Zakrzewski explains that caring dialogue "increases knowledge" of the participants in a caring relationship and "demonstrates a

caring act by one or more of the participants offering advice, concern, and/or support to one or more of the other participants (2012, p. 12). Zakrzewski (2012) uses an example of principals engaging in a caring dialogue with teachers by being available to listen to personal problems and learning more about those sharing their concerns. Speaking of teachers who come to them with concerns over their private lives, one administrator stated that, "I have to listen to them" and that "you can't just stick to the professional and not think of the personal front" (2012, p. 198). Again, while this example is between administrators and teachers, teachers can extend this caring to their students in a similar manner. In all, caring dialogue is an open-ended conversation which increases knowledge of the participants and allows for the offering of advice or support. Moreover, truly caring dialogue cannot stick to one realm of a person's life; it is open to all aspects of a person's life.

Defining Practice

A third component of care in the classroom is what Noddings (2005) calls practice. For Noddings, in order to be in a caring relationship with a student, one must provide students with opportunities to gain skills in being a caregiver. This aspect is seemingly an obvious one for Noddings as she writes, "if we decide that the capacity to care is as much a mark of personhood as reason or rationality, then we will want to find ways to increase this capacity" (2005, p. 24). This means that teachers should give students real experiences to care as much as possible, not minor or menial instances.

Sugishita (2000) points out that in fact the practice of caring in schools has been on the rise in recent decades. She cites Kohn's (1991) study which looked at the

first long-term project designed to help children become more caring individuals (as cited in Sugishita, 2000). During the study, students engaged in cooperative learning modules and were given literature-based instruction that focused on values, empathy, and caring behaviors (p. 53). Moreover, it featured components such as peer tutoring, community service, and parental involvement, all of which helped students practice the act of caring for themselves. The study showed that those students involved in the project not only exhibited better conflict resolution skills, but they also outscored their control-grouped peers in higher-order reading comprehension. From this study, Sugishita (2000) shows us that the practice of care can include cooperative learning, a focus on caring behaviors, and feature aspects such as peer tutoring and community service.

Defining Confirmation

The last component of a caring education is confirmation. Borrowing from Martin Buber, confirmation is described as the act of confirming and encouraging the best in others (Zakrzewski, 2012). Through confirmation, we see what students are trying to become and encourage their development. More specifically, Zakrzewski (2012) states that confirmation is a verbal or non-verbal response to a person that helps that person see the best part of him or herself. Zakrzewski (2012) elaborates that confirmation helps students act from their better selves. In order to do this, teachers must know their students' interests and abilities, and from there set realistic goals. Zakrzewski (2012) also suggests that teachers practice confirmation by always assuming the best possible motive for their students' behaviors, encouraging students to search for their own solutions, and by abstaining from techniques that may

stigmatize or isolate individual children. In other words, confirmation is a response--either verbal or non-verbal--that does not isolate a student and encourages that student based on their individual needs or aspirations.

The Research on Care in School

There exists abundant research showing how a caring teacher can have a significant impact on a student's academic experience. Pickens and Eick (2009) undertook an exhaustive study with interviews and observations of two teachers of differently tracked science classes. The study examined one teacher they call Mrs. Hatch from a lower track class who made a concerted effort to create an environment of care and support. Mrs. Hatch set high expectations and never treated her class as though they were inferior to those in other classes. In addition, the researchers noted that Mrs. Hatch never ignored her students' concerns and helped them to achieve the high expectations she set. Finally, she often provided relevant examples so that her students understood the meaning and relevance of each activity. This environment of care and support in which Mrs. Hatch clearly showcased responsibility over her students' academic achievement increased student motivation. Whereas the lower track classes suffered from low self-esteem and low self-confidence, 83% of her class ended up describing themselves as "good students." The study suggests that students in lower track classes respond well to a caring teacher who considers their reality, meets their concerns with positivity, sets high standards regardless of the class they are in, and takes responsibility over their learning by helping them meet those high standards. In other words, by giving herself over completely, non-selectively, and

having responsibility over their learning, Mrs. Hatch was able to have a positive impact on her students' self-confidence levels (Pickens & Eick, 2009, p. 358).

In Stronge, Ward, and Grant's (2011) study regarding what makes an educator effective, they used a hierarchical linear model and a cross-case analysis to measure teacher effectiveness in relation to student achievement. Overall, four areas of focus were discovered in the research and those teachers in the top-quartile, the most-effective teachers, fostered positive relationships with their students and encouraged them to take responsibility for their education, all of which, led to higher student achievement. In other words, what set the most effective teachers apart from the less effective teachers was not instructional differentiation or years of experience, rather a positive and caring relationship through which an educator took an interest in the welfare of the student.

Moreover, recent research has also shown that in urban settings with much cultural and linguistic diversity, teachers who combine culturally responsive teaching practices with care-centered approaches have the means to do "a far better job" of educating urban students (Shevalier & McKenzie, 2012, p. 1087). The authors state that these care-centered approaches include positive and personal relationships through which educators listen attentively to their students and respond in a manner that benefits them. Hattie's (2009) synthesis of over 800 analyses related to student achievement also supports this idea that a positive caring relationship has a strong impact on student learning. In fact, he writes that a caring relationship between a teacher and a student had a high impact on student achievement. Hattie reports that, in 119 studies, based on 355,325 students, there is a correlation between person-centered

teaching and more student engagement and higher achievement outcomes (Hattie, 2009, p. 119). In other words, a myriad of studies shows how person-centered teaching, which utilizes care strategies such as empathy and positive acceptance, has an impact on student achievement outcomes.

Roberts (2002) reports that schools in various parts of the country have seen success in student achievement with various educational levels and in groups largely composed of underprivileged minorities. Roberts (2002) postulates that an environment that is caring and allows students to be comfortable with themselves as they learn among their peers while developing critical thinking skills through rigorous coursework is what is ultimately beneficial for students. Similarly, Garza (2009) examined Latino and white student perceptions of teacher actions that show care. Through interviews, observations, and questionnaires from 93 white and Latino high school students, the researcher discovered that student participants felt a caring teacher provided scaffolding while teaching, possessed a kind disposition, made him or herself available to students, was genuinely interested in students' wellbeing in and outside the classroom, and provided academic support in the classroom that is centered around students' failure and success (Garza, 2009; Rutledge, Cohen-Vogel, Osborne-Lampkin, & Roberts, 2015).

What all of these studies have in common is that a caring educational experience, replete with positive engagement, motivational displacement, and a genuine sense of responsibility over the welfare of students, is linked to positive outcomes in student achievement.

Summary

Chapter II presented research studies related to tracking. First, the history of tracking in America's educational system was discussed. Differences in college preparation, placement procedures, teacher assignment, and allocation of resources were examined among high and low tracks. Student experiences related to classroom environment and student perceptions as a result of differences among tracks were also explored. Chapter II also focused on the impact of a teacher within the classroom on factors such as student achievement. Lastly, the study's theoretical framework of the ethic of care was explained. Noddings's concept of moral education was discussed as was Noddings's four major actions related to care: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation (1984, 2005). Chapter III will discuss the methodology for this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of students and teachers in different tracks from elementary through high school. This mixed methods study was designed to explore factors that impact student experiences in regular, GATE, honors, and AP classes. Additionally, this study attempted to explore how teachers understand care in the classroom. In this chapter we present the sample, methods, instruments, and data analysis.

Sample

The study took place in one TK-12 public school district in the Central Valley of California during the 2016-2017 school year. The California Department of Education (2016a) described the students in the county in which this district is located as follows: 24% English language learners (ELL), 67% socioeconomically disadvantaged (SED), 58% Latino, 28% white, and 3% African American. The percent of students who graduated high school was 84% (California Department of Education, 2016b). An exploration of United States Census Bureau (2015) data reported 16.5% of those 25 years or older who live in the county of this district obtained a bachelor's degree and a per capita income in 2015 of almost 22,000 dollars.

The district included just over 13,000 students, at nine elementary schools, two middle schools, two high schools, one continuation high school, and one K-12 charter school. As researchers, we aimed at selecting a district that allowed an

analysis of a case most common (Creswell, 2002) of districts in this county. The district's student demographics were 60% Socioeconomically Disadvantages (SED), 11% Special Education students (SPED), 27% ELL (English Language Learners), 56% Latino, 33% white, 2% African American, and 5% Asian. According to the California Department of Education (2016a), students were designated as ELL as determined by a home language survey where parents indicate that English is not the primary or home language. Students were considered SED if they were eligible for free and reduced lunch or both parents did not attain a high school diploma.

During the 2016-2017 school year, the district employed nearly 800 teachers and 800 classified staff. This included the following teacher demographic make-up: 68% white, 21% Latino, 1% African American, 1% Asian, 1% reported two or more races, and 6% declined to report their ethnicity (Ed-Data, 2016). According to Ed-Data (2016), the average years of teaching experience in the district was 13 years.

Three schools were purposefully chosen for this study to provide a range of teacher and student experiences from elementary through high school. These schools were identified by key district stakeholders as the most common path for students in the district kindergarten through twelfth grade and aligned with our research goals. These information rich cases aligned with our purpose of interpreting the lived experiences of teachers and students in different tracks on a continuum from a feeder elementary and junior high school through twelfth grade (Patton, 2002). Table 1 describes the percentage of students considered gifted in GATE, honors, or AP classes and those in regular classes for each school selected in this study.

Table 1

Students Being Served by Track in Each School by Percentage

School	Students	Served in gifted classes	Served in regular classes
Elementary	1123	18.0	82.0
Junior High	750	9.0	91.0
High School	2211	12.0	88.0

The initial phase of this study involved a quantitative phase. The quantitative phase provided us with data regarding students' perceptions of care. This phase occurred in the winter and spring of 2017 and began with site leaders being contacted to aid in the distribution of a survey to about 650 students from the three schools we selected. Of the selected schools, 18 teachers were contacted to help with student survey completion. Teachers who agreed to help were also asked to participate in an interview. Our primary goal was to select one teacher from a gifted class and one teacher from a regular class for each grade from fourth through twelfth. Our secondary goal was to select a variety of representation across subjects for grades seven to 12. We aimed to select a variation in the sample to allow for a greater range of the application of the findings (Merriam, 2002) and capture the heterogeneity of the sample population. We were successful in two key areas regarding our sample, which we believe contributed to more valid qualitative and quantitative findings. First, every teacher interviewed also had students complete the survey. Second, there was an even distribution of teachers interviewed and students surveyed based on track, grade level, subject, gender, and teaching experience as illustrated by Table 2 below. For example, we identified that Ricky taught five General Education courses

periods one through five and an AP course period six. Therefore, we had Ricky

survey his fifth period General Education class and his sixth period AP class. We did

that to contribute to a more balanced sample.

Table 2

Summary of Teacher Participant Demographics

Participant	Level	Pathway	Gender	Teaching Experience	Subject	Students Surveyed
Jacob	Elementary	GATE	Male	>25	Multiple	30
Jenny	Elementary	GATE	Female	11-15	Multiple	30
Serena	Elementary	GATE	Female	11-15	Multiple	30
Martina	Elementary	Gen.Ed.	Female	6-10	Multiple	33
Agnis	Elementary	Gen.Ed.	Female	1-5	Multiple	30
Troy	Elementary	Gen.Ed.	Male	>25	Multiple	30
Steve	Secondary	Honors/AP	Male	11-15	Math	60
Allyson	Secondary	Honors/AP	Female	6-10	Math	30
Jackie	Secondary	Honors/AP	Female	11-15	English	35
Deion	Secondary	Gen.Ed.	Male	1-5	History	60
Lisa	Secondary	Gen.Ed.	Female	1-5	English	30
Kristine	Secondary	Gen.Ed.	Female	1-5	English	30
Adrian	Secondary	Honors/AP	Male	6-10	Math	60
Ricky	Secondary	Gen.Ed./Honors	Male	11-15	Psychology	60
Joe	Secondary	Honors/AP	Male	6-10	Chemistry	90
Mickey	Secondary	Gen.Ed.	Male	>25	Math	30
Annika	Secondary	Gen.Ed.	Female	11-15	English	30
Venus	Secondary	Gen.Ed.	Female	11-15	English	30

District Track Structure

In this district, elementary students are either placed in the GATE program or

regular classes beginning in fourth grade. Eligibility for placement into GATE in

grades four through six was determined via scores on the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability

Test-Second Edition (NNAT2). The NNAT2 measures reasoning and problem-

solving ability using shapes and designs. This assessment was taken by all students in

the district during the fall of their third-grade year. Those students who are qualified

are offered enrollment in self-contained classrooms by GATE certified teachers in

grades four, five, and six. Those who do not qualify are enrolled in the regular classes offered at elementary schools in the district.

In grades seven and eight, students are placed in either honors or college preparatory (CP) classes. Honors eligibility is determined by multiple measures including teacher recommendations, parent requests, grade point average (GPA), and results from the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). The CAASPP is a computer-based assessment that is given to students in grades three through eight and grade 11 that measures academic ability in English language arts and mathematics. Using the same methods as described above, students are placed in Advanced Placement or CP classes in grades nine through 12. There are no basic or remedial classes offered for regular education students. Special Education students receive resource support or attended self-contained classes as determined by their Individualized Education Plans (IEP).

Method

Our research objective was to explore how teachers and students experience tracking and how they interpret these experiences (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, we employed a mixed methods design (Creswell, 1994) that began with a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase. This mixed methods approach aimed at gaining a more complete interpretation of our research goals than could have been developed by only using one method alone (Check & Schutt, 2011). Data from both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to get a broader understanding of the phenomena that occurs in schools related to tracking (Maxwell, 2013). Data was

collected from student surveys and individual teacher interviews over a 10-month period.

Immediately following approval from the California State University, Stanislaus Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct research, principals from each school were contacted via email to describe the goals and activities of this study to request their support. With help from teachers, surveys were then distributed to students via a Qualtrics survey link. Students who completed the survey consented to participating, via a form that was embedded at the beginning of the survey (see Appendix A). Due to the ages of the student participants, survey assent forms were sent to parents through which parents could indicate if they wanted their student to opt-out of the survey (see Appendix B). We were seeking a 60% response rate as suggested for organizational research (Fowler, 1984).

Once teachers agreed to participate in the study, they were asked to complete individual interviews. In the initial phases of data collection, these teachers were selected from various grade levels, tracks, and subjects to represent a maximum variation (Merriam, 2002) of the population. Individual interviews gave us access to the experiences of the teachers (Maxwell, 2013) and how they interpreted their roles in various tracks. Interview participants were contacted via email and telephone and were provided a copy of the interview questions that were going to be used for the formal interview (see Appendix C). Interviews lasted from one to two hours and were conducted in professional offices, classrooms, or public spaces. Prior to each audio recorded interview, we reviewed the informed consent form with the participants and described the purpose of this study (see Appendix D).

Instrumentation

Sections from the Panorama Student Survey (PSS) (Panorama Education, 2015) were used to measure students' perceptions of their experiences in different tracks. Scholars have suggested that the scales used in the PSS: Pedagogical Effectiveness, referred to by Hattie (2009) as "quality of teaching" (p.115); Expectations (Hattie, 2009, p. 121); Rigor (Blackburn & Williamson, 2009); Supportive Relationships, termed "teacher-student relationships" (Hattie, 2009, p. 118); Sense of Belonging (Faust, Ennis, & Hodge, 2014); Path to Graduation, termed "college-going culture" (Mayer, 2012); and Feelings About School (Valeski & Stipek, 2001) are significant and imperative in determining the experiences of students in school. We customized the survey by choosing scales from the PSS that most aligned with our research questions and theoretical framework (see Appendix E). Student surveys were 5- to 7-point Likert-type anonymous surveys, with responses ranging from 1 (not at all likely) to 7 (almost always). In the next sections, each scale is further explained with relevant literature. The purpose of this is to rationalize the use of each scale in our research.

Scales

  Pedagogical Effectiveness Scale. Because pedagogical effectiveness is often the focus of professional development for educators, it is important to include this scale in student surveys. Hattie (2009) refers to pedagogical effectiveness as quality of teaching. Hattie states that quality of teaching impacts student achievement because his research of 141 studies including five meta-analyses, was over the threshold at $d = 0.44$. Most of the research in Hattie's meta-analysis is based on

students' perceptions of teachers. Marsh (2007) states that this method is fairly reliable as a method of gauging quality of teaching. Hattie and Clinton (2008) analyzed "lesson transcripts, observations, teacher and student interviews, surveys, assignments, and student work" with the help of an independent evaluator (as cited in Hattie, 2009, p. 117). They found that nationally Board-certified teachers consistently and systematically challenged students more than teachers who were not nationally Board-certified. On the other hand, Sanders and Rivers (1996) found that ineffective teachers have a negative impact on student achievement scores, while even the teachers who were least effective influenced some gains in students' scores. These studies show the importance of professional development related to pedagogical effectiveness and how it can better prepare teachers with tools for effective instruction. This is why this scale was utilized for this research project.

Expectations Scale. Another scale used on the student surveys for this study relates to expectations placed on students. Hattie's (2009) meta-analysis of 674 studies shows that teacher expectations have a large amount of influence on student achievement ($d = 0.43$). These findings show the influence that teachers have on students to rise to the expectations that are set for them in the classroom. However, teacher expectations are set based on several factors (Dusek & Joseph, 1985; Jackson, Hunter & Hodge, 1995; Smith, 1980), such as labeling based on achievement and behavior, student attractiveness, and race and ethnicity. Some factors are related to academic concerns while others may seem trivial and completely unrelated to a student's ability to learn. However, as research shows, teacher expectations impact student achievement, academic success, and even the possibility of flourishing upon

adulthood. Because of this, the Panorama Student Survey scale for Expectations is necessary in studying tracking and its impact on experiences for students.

      Rigor Scale. The third scale that is used on student surveys is related to rigor in the classroom. Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines rigor as "harsh inflexibility in opinion, temper, or judgement. It also describes rigor as being "rigid" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). However, the definition that we have adopted for the purposes of this study is that rigor "encourage[s] students to think critically, creatively, and more flexibly" and is not "intended to be harsh, rigid, or overly prescriptive, but [rather] stimulating, engaging and supportive (The Glossary of Education Reform for Journalists, Parents, and Community Members, 2014). Blackburn and Williamson (2009) studied rigor in education. The researchers recognize that there is a push to help students graduate from high school but many are unprepared for the challenges of a college education, which leads to a need for remediation. In the job industry "employers say that high school graduates are lacking basic skills" (Blackburn & Williamson, 2009, p. 1). Researchers state that without implementing rigor in all classrooms for all students, youth will continue to be unprepared for their futures. Blackburn and Williamson (2009) postulate that rigor and higher order thinking must be presented to all students, regardless of future aspirations, while keeping in mind that proper supports must be in place to ensure the greatest chance for success. As previously mentioned, rigor in classrooms varies in low and high track classes. This directly impacts students' futures. Therefore, we believe the scale is an important piece for the surveys used in this study.

Supportive Relationships Scale. Another scale used in this study's surveys is Supportive Relationships. Hattie (2009) postulates that teacher-student relationships (or supportive relationships) is one of the most influential factors that impact student achievement ($d = 0.72$). His meta-analyses included 229 studies and over 350,000 participants. Hattie states that in order to influence student achievement, teachers must show genuine care for students' well-being and their learning. Cornelius-White (2007) found that when students dislike school or do not want to attend school, the attitudes and behaviors are mostly due to not liking their teachers. Thus, supportive relationships between students and teachers can compel students to enjoy school more, value their teachers, and want to achieve better in school. Because the supportive relationships scale is the most direct measure of student care within the PSS, this study included the scale in the surveys used.

Sense of Belonging Scale. Due to the important research regarding student sense of belonging in the classroom, this study was also included this scale in student surveys. Faust, Ennis, and Hodge (2014) investigated students' sense of belonging and student academic performance. Results indicated that positive student-teacher relationships increase "students' sense of belonging and satisfaction" (p. 52). Oppositely, researchers found that as student perceptions regarding relationships with their teachers declined, so did their "academic competence, and satisfaction throughout the school year" (p. 52). Utilizing the scale for Sense of Belonging in the surveys is imperative because a student's sense of belonging in the classroom directly reflects the level of care they perceive from their teachers.

Path to Graduation Scale. The primary and secondary education levels almost always include college-and-career readiness as a major goal of schools and districts. Moreover, attending college often becomes the main objective for students and their families. This goal of achieving college admittance and completion is often seen as the final feat within the path to graduation for students (Pitre, 2006). Because of the importance and impact that a classroom's college-going culture has on students' lives, the scale of Path to Graduation was used in this study. Mayer's (2012) research regarding International Baccalaureate programs found that teachers had a major impact on students' desires to take challenging classes that prepared them for college. Within this study, teachers often heard students state that they wanted to remain in classes that were more challenging even though it meant that they may have a lower grade. In Mayer's (2012) study, students told a teacher she "was more motivating, more entertaining, and there were more hands-on activities in her classes" (p. 65). Students felt that their teachers cared for them and supported them by building a sense of community full of peer communication and academic support. Margaret and Hidalgo's (2009) study regarding migrant education programs in high school found students' motivation and perseverance to succeed was often due, at least in part, to the services they received from the Migrant Program and, more specifically, to the relationships students had with their migrant resource teacher. Researchers concluded that these teachers have the ability to relate with students because they are role models of similar Mexican American backgrounds and humble beginnings. Moreover, these teachers often focused on teaching the whole child and ensuring that student needs were being met beyond the classroom. For them, a

holistic approach was imperative to their effectiveness with students. These two research studies are evidence of the impact a teacher's care and the classroom culture have on students along their path to graduation. Because of this, the Path to Graduation Scale was included in this study's student surveys.

Feelings about School Scale. From a very early age children begin to form their own opinions and feelings about school. There are a variety of factors that help shape a student's perceptions about school. These perceptions greatly influence a student's future achievements. Valeski and Stipek (2001) studied 225 kindergarten students and 125 first grade students. Using the Feelings about School measure, they found a correlation in first grade students between feelings about school and academic abilities in classroom assessments and teacher feedback. While kindergarten students demonstrated higher levels of negative feelings about school in "highly structured, teacher-directed classroom environments" first grade students indicated that they felt more negatively about school and "classrooms lacking structure and control" (Valeski, & Stipek, 2001, p.1198). These findings support the premise that student needs vary and that both teachers and students see the most success when educational settings are tailored to fit the specific needs of students. Similarly, Svavarsdottir (2008) found that preteen students with mental illnesses, learning disabilities, or chronic illnesses felt a greater sense of disconnectedness and less positive feelings about school. Moreover, like the previous researchers, Svavarsdottir (2008) suggests that positive student relationships with school personnel are essential to ensure that issues related to disengagement are averted as much and as quickly as possible. In a longitudinal study at the elementary level,

Hauser-Cam, Durand, and Warfield (2007) analyzed students' feelings about school in relation to their later academic achievements. Using a sample of 103 students living in poverty and who received special education services at the elementary level, the researchers found that early feelings about school predicted academic achievement in fifth grade. "Specifically, general positive feelings about school predicted higher fifth-grade literacy skills whereas feelings of greater competence in academics predicted higher fifth-grade math skills" (Hauser-Cam et al., 2007, p. 161). The researchers postulate that their findings are valuable for teachers and other educators alike. For example, it is important for teachers and counselors to know how students feel about school, and it is imperative that school leaders strive to build ample opportunity for students to remain engaged and connected to school in an effort to promote academic success for them in the present and future. Researchers believe that students must be heard and that their opinions should be valued and taken into consideration when making major school-wide decisions as their feelings about school have a large impact on their academic outcomes for years to come. Based on the findings of these studies, it is evident that students' feelings about school can be greatly influenced by teacher actions that showcase care for students and address their many needs. This is why this scale from the Panorama Student Survey was included in the student surveys and in this study.

Surveys

The Panorama Student Survey was developed using a six-step process suggested by Gehlbach and Brinkworth (2011) and included a literature review, focus groups and interviews, compilation of indicators, question creation, a review from

experts in the field, and pre-testing and interviewing using cognitive processes. At the

end of this six-step process, questions were revised, and the survey was subjected to

pilot tests from school districts in the southeastern United States with samples that

represented multiple grade levels, ethnicities, ELs, and native English speakers

(Panorama Education, 2015). Next, reliability was assessed using Cronbach's (1951)

alpha, which is commonly used to determine the reliability of rating scales. The

estimates for Cronbach's alpha were 0.70 or greater for every scale, indicating that

the reliability of these scales was adequate (Vaske, 2008). The validity of the scales

was tested during two pilot tests by randomly assigning students and teachers to the

PSS and other comparison scales that included the Measures of Effective Teaching

(MET) scale in the first pilot study and the University of Chicago's Consortium on

Chicago School Research (CCSR) in the second pilot study. A moderately strong

correlation was found between responses for the CCSR and PSS (r=.67) and the MET

and PSS (r=.63). Furthermore, a high correlation (r=.80) was found between

observations using Marshall's (2011) observation protocol and responses on the

Panorama surveys.

Interviews

A total of 18 individual interviews were conducted. We used a semi-structured

interview protocol developed according to our review of relevant literature and our

research questions. This method aided in consistency across each school site. Our

interview questions attempted to explore data that emerged from the surveys. Three

experts in the field of education analyzed the interview questions and provided us

feedback regarding the length, focus, and coherence of the research questions.

Interviewers took notes during each audio-recorded interview and included

descriptions of participant emotions and forms of nonverbal communication as well

as their own personal reactions, reflections, and perceptions that developed during the

interview. All interviews were conducted at school sites in professional spaces or in

agreed upon public spaces. Conversations were recorded and professionally

transcribed verbatim with the consent of the participants. All transcribed interviews

were uploaded into Dedoose software and emerging themes were coded.

Validity

Trustworthiness and credibility were facilitated through the triangulation of

interviews, surveys, and document analysis (Maxwell, 2013). We conducted post-

interview member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002) with participants,

whenever possible, and our peers involved in this research project to ensure our

interpretations reflected their intended meaning. Finally, we engaged in debriefing

conversations regarding our subjectivity as researchers as suggested by Glesne (2016)

and Merriam (2002) with co-researchers and supervisors throughout the research

process. This critical self-reflection of our positionality as researchers allowed us to

reflect on how our "theoretical perspectives, values, and commitments lead" (p. 153)

us to interpret the data in particular ways (Glesne, 2016).

Although our subjectivity was not something that Peshkin (1988) claimed

could be eliminated altogether, we aimed at directing our attention away from

ourselves and being aware of the possibility of our assumptions impacting the

research process (Madison, 2012). Our interest in this research originated from our

experience as advocates for historically marginalized groups of students. Authors

Reid Volk and Justin Woodbridge are males of European descent from middle class backgrounds. Volk has taught a variety of subjects to a diverse body of students in various school settings such as public, private, and online. Moreover, he has served on various site and district committees in order to provide support to both teachers and students in need. Woodbridge has experience teaching Special Education students in elementary through high school and has served on various site, district, and community committees serving students with the highest needs. Authors Karla Ceballos-Lopez and Alyssa Souza are both female, one from European and the other from Latino descent. Ceballos-Lopez has experience as a school counselor and head counselor and has participated on committees resulting in changes to school policies and services to further help students with the highest need. Souza is of Portuguese-American descent and has been teaching in the field of Special Education for the past six years. She has experience teaching and working with elementary, middle-school, and high-school students in a variety of settings.

Data Analysis

This study was conducted using a mixed methods design and included a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase (Greene, 2007). The quantitative portion of this study consisted of student surveys administered using the Qualtrics online survey platform. The survey was administered in March and April of 2017. Survey responses were entered into the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), v. 24.0. An alpha level of .05 was used for all analysis. Response frequencies and percentages of responses were examined. Chi Squares, ANOVAs, and multiple regressions were used in the analysis of data. Two-way contingency table analyses

were conducted on each survey question based on class track for both the elementary and secondary levels. ANOVAs were conducted on each of the scales of the Panorama Student Surveys that were used.

At the elementary level, the scales included: Classroom Expectations, Classroom Rigor, Student/Teacher Relationships, and Feelings About School. Also, for the elementary survey, multiple regressions were used to evaluate how well various demographics predicted outcomes on the four survey scales. The demographics we focused on were class type, gender, ethnicity, race, self-reported grades, and highest education of the mother. To evaluate variables within the Classroom Rigor scale, a 2 X 2 ANOVA was used to evaluate the effects of class type and grades.

For the secondary level, the scales were: Pedagogical Effectiveness, Expectations and Rigor, Supportive Relationships, Sense of Belonging, and Path to Graduation. For the secondary level survey, multiple regressions were used to evaluate how well various demographics predicted outcomes on the five survey scales. The demographics we were interested in for the secondary level were class type, gender, ethnicity, race, self-reported grades, and highest education of mother. To further investigate the Sense of Belonging scale, a 2 X 2 ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the effects of gender and grades.

The qualitative phase was conducted following survey analysis. In-person individual interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were coded twice using an "open coding" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 58) technique with Dedoose software. The initial codes were developed from a line by line micro-

analysis with the purpose of identifying more relevant data that could be further defined through a second layer of coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). We then conducted a second phase of theme coding at a more macro level, in an effort to create more general themes connected to our theoretical framework.

We created a categorical coding matrix (Maxwell, 2013) to further develop and analyze the interview data and to capture data that did not fit into the original categories or themes that were created during the second phase of coding. The matrix provided us with a formal organizational system that effectively displayed relationships between the interview data and the theoretical framework we used in this study. Each category was listed with a heading related to the theory. Under each heading we included quotes and researcher notes of the coded data that were related to each theoretical category.

We looked at the data across grade levels and based on track, years of experience, and gender. For the purpose of this study, track included either General Education or Gifted and Talented Education (GATE)/Honors/Advanced Placement (AP). Level taught was described as either elementary school, including fourth through sixth grade or secondary school, including seventh through twelfth grade. Years of experience are consistent with the quantitative variables and are presented as a range consisting of one-five, six-10, 11-15, 16-20, and more than 25 years. Lastly, we defined gender as either male or female.

The first phase of this study involved the collection and analysis of interview data from eighteen semi-structured teacher interviews. Our participants included elementary and secondary teachers from a range of demographics. This study had a

longitudinal focus across grade levels and included various demographics and pathways (see Table 1).

Summary

This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine students' experiences in the classroom, factors that contribute to their perceptions, and investigated how track placement influenced student and teacher perceptions. Chapter IV will present the results of teacher interviews used in this study.

CHAPTER IV

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to understand the views of teachers and students regarding their perceived levels of care in the classroom. In order to make sense of the perspectives of our participants, we conducted interviews with 18 teachers and administered surveys to around 600 students from one school district in the Central Valley of California. The data presented in this chapter provide a description of the findings from the interviews arranged in qualitative findings. The qualitative section begins with a thematic description of the interview data based on key variables that scholars (Deiro, 1994; Hattie, 2009; Noddings, 2013) suggested were important factors regarding care. These key factors helped inform how we analyzed interview data to understand if there were differences in the perceptions of teachers and included level taught, track, years of experience, and gender.

Qualitative Findings

The purpose of these data was to understand how teachers perceive caring for their students. First, we will discuss the general themes that emerged from our analysis. While all teachers described engaging in various acts of acts of caring behaviors, the overarching themes we discovered that distinguished one kind of teacher from another were: classroom context, time, and communication. All of these themes included actions done on behalf of students in the hopes that they would find success personally and academically. When it came to classroom context, educators frequently spoke of creating a sense of safety, being flexible, and setting expectations

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as ways in which they showcased care for their students. In terms of time, teachers spoke of gifting their time, spending time at extracurricular events, using their time to reach out to families, and taking time to provide resources to families and students. Finally, in regards to communication, dialoguing with students, being authentic, honest, and transparent, and validating students through communication were all viewed by teachers as important ways in which they showed their care for their students.

Classroom Context

The first major theme that emerged from our data related to care had to do with the context of the classroom. We found, inside the classroom, teachers often spoke about being able to help create a sense of safety, being flexible depending on the situation, and setting both behavioral and academic expectations. Data suggest all of these teacher actions were the result of their desire to show care to students within the classroom context.

Classroom Context: Creating a Sense of Safety. Through a careful analysis of the interview data we found most teachers noted that creating a safe classroom environment for students, both physically and emotionally, was an important element of care. Some of the ways in which teachers discussed creating a sense of safety for students included a pattern of transparent interactions which encouraged acceptance and fair treatment while discouraging negative behavior. According to teachers, all of these actions provided a safe classroom climate in which students experienced a sense of safety. In fact, Jackie (Grade 7, Honors) expanded on her beliefs on creating a safe space when she stated:

Unless a kid is being violent or belligerent in a way that disrupts the class, I don't want to shut a kid down. If you're being violent I want to shut you down, if you're being belligerent and you're disturbing my class, I'm going to shut you down; otherwise, I want you to want, as much as any kid wants to be at school, I want you to want to be here, I want you to feel comfortable in this space, I want this to be a place where you feel that you can come and be treated fairly and that you can be accepted. That this is a safe place for you to be...being able to laugh together and joke together and feel comfortable enough to tease one another. To build the classroom into a community, that this is a place that all of us can come and we're all safe. No one is going to be humiliated or embarrassed, nobody is going to be mocked, nobody is going to be put down.

Jackie used her classroom management practices to provide students a place to feel safe and respected. By acting in a manner that helps kids feel safe, Jackie seems to believe her students will want to be in school. Jackie wasn't the only teacher who saw care in terms of building a safe climate through the discouragement of disruptive behaviors and the encouragement of fair and kind behaviors. However, other teachers felt as though they fostered a sense of safety more through their classroom management practices. .

For instance, Venus (Grade 10, General Education) stated the following regarding safety when asked how she showed care to students through her instructional approaches:

My objective is for everyone to come into this classroom and feel it's okay to make mistakes, it's okay to learn, it's okay to fail, because everything is going to lead to learning. You cannot get better unless you try. There was an example with one kid that would do and say stuff. And nobody said a thing because the real thing in [this classroom] is that we do not laugh at other people. I had another kid who always talked a lot. He has ADHD and the other kids hated him. They treated him so poorly. Every time he opened his mouth they were like, 'Shut up, we don't want to hear it.' And I stopped it. I told this student, 'Okay, if you write down your questions and at the end of class I'll let you ask whatever questions you want as long as they're relevant.' He got to the point where he felt like if he said anything in class he was going to get laughed at. So, we got down to that. We did the court reporter. So, if we're reading and there [are] questions that people have, they'll put them on a little piece of paper and then they'll hand them to the court reporter. At the end the court reporter will either answer the questions they can and ask me the ones that they can't.

Like Jackie, Venus stated that she wants her students to feel safe. In this case, Venus stated that she wants to make sure her students knew it was acceptable to fail and make mistakes, which can only be accomplished if students feel safe to do so. Moreover, she used her classroom management practices to foster a sense of safety, especially in cases where students might be most vulnerable. Rather than let the

student with ADHD continue to be ridiculed by his peers, Venus found a way to make sure that he still had the opportunity to ask questions in a manner that did not lead to being scorned by his fellow classmates. These classroom management techniques directly helped to foster a sense of safety for all students. While teachers such as Jackie and Venus utilized management practices in order to cultivate a sense of safety for students, other teachers used acts of sensitivity and acceptance in order to make students feel safe.

Ricky (Grade 12, General Education and Honors) spoke at great length about fostering a sense of confidentiality and sensitivity in his classroom that provided both him and his students the assurance that it was safe to share information about their lives without being mocked or judged. On this, Ricky said:

> [Students] need attention, and they need kindness and love, and they need to know that they're okay. That when they're sad, it's okay. When they get broken up with, it's okay. If they fought with their parents, it's okay. If they come from poverty, it's okay. There [are] kids [who] have personal issues. I have a kid this year, [with traumatic experiences]. He shared it out loud in front of everyone...He just felt safe. The class hugged him. I thanked him for being so honest.

Ricky spoke of making sure that students feel accepted regardless of what personal issues they were experiencing. This was done with the purpose of having students feel a sense of safety in the classroom, which Ricky felt was an important way to care for his students. Overall, these educators believed that whether it was through classroom management techniques or modeling openness and acceptance, establishing a sense of

safety was a vital aspect of how they cared for their students. Teachers felt that without this sense of safety, not only would students not want to attend school, but they might experience ridicule and possibly miss out on some personal healing as well.

We found another way in which teachers cultivated a sense of safety was by holding high expectations both behaviorally and academically. In regards to behavioral expectations, teachers often saw this as an opportunity to ensure that students act respectfully and safely with one another within the classroom setting. On setting high behavioral expectations and how doing so relates to the care of students, Agnis (Grade 6, General Education) stated:

> All of our classroom rules are student-created, however, they're my rules. I had them during the first week of school. They wrote down all of the rules. It was crazy. Hundreds of rules. 'You should not kick your neighbor. You should not poke someone's eye out.' Just all these crazy things. So, my three rules were: be respectful, be responsible, be safe.

Agnis defined care through these behavioral expectations, all of which served the purpose of making each and every student feel a sense of safety and respect in the classroom. She perceived her care for students in terms of clear classroom rules and providing students with continuous reminders of appropriate classroom behavior and consequences for their negative behavior. Agnis's behavioral expectations, and her actions, which ensured that expectations were met, all worked toward creating a respectful and safe environment. This creation of a sense of safety, whether it be

through classroom management, instructional strategies, or behavioral expectations, is a vital component to how these teachers discussed how they care for their students.

Classroom Context: Being Flexible. While many teachers talked about creating a sense of safety, each and every one of the 18 participants talked of demonstrating care inside their classrooms through their flexibility with actions such as grading and student discipline. Merriam-Webster defines flexibility as being "characterized by a ready capability to adapt to new, different, or changing requirements" (n.d.). In our research, we utilized this definition as teachers who are flexible indicated that they adapt to the needs of students in their classrooms. For example, Ricky (Grade 12, General Education and AP) stated:

> I'm really flexible. I don't baby them. I don't go check their homework. The grade they get is the grade they earned. But I will, if a kid does terrible on a test and comes to me and says, 'Man, what can I do?' I'll come up with something so that they can relearn all that information from, 'Here's the test. Take it home. Tell me why you got the answers wrong. Then, explain to me why the answer is the right answer.'

So, while Ricky explained that he does hold students accountable for the material with test grades, he also flexibly adapts his grading strategies to meet the needs of students as they arise. Rather than just giving them a grade that they got based on one assessment, Ricky adapts it to their needs. Should the student wish to change their grade, then it seems Ricky is open to a different method of assessment—such as allowing a student to take the test home and explain his or her incorrect answers.

To this end, Ricky believed that his ability to be flexible and adapt meets students'

needs, and as a result, exhibits care.

Venus (Grade 10, General Education) also discussed flexibility when it came

to grading as an example of her care. On this, she stated:

> Am I going to give the kid a D who comes in every single tutoring
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> session? Am I going to give the kid a D who rewrote the paper three
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> times? But the first one was a D and that's the one that I'm supposed to
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> grade, right? No, I am not.

This is evidence of Venus's flexibility when it comes to her grading as she takes into

account student circumstances and the context surrounding her students' outcomes.

Much like Ricky, Venus doesn't feel like care is anchoring a student to his or her

initial grade, but rather being flexible so that students are rewarded for exhibiting

further efforts. While Ricky and Venus showed that accommodating students

regarding their grades was an important factor in their expression of care, other

teachers spoke more of their flexibility when it came to student discipline.

For example, Agnis (Grade 6, General Education) described this flexibility

with behavior when she said:

> Someone called, and I went to go answer the phone. He [a student]
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> flipped me off. Definitely not a student you would expect this from,
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> but I was like, 'Man I can't send him [to the office]' and that's hard too
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> because you want to have the same expectation for everyone. I was
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> like, 'I can't let him like get suspended for this one thing because it's so
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> uncharacteristic.' So, I said, 'You know, I think we need to talk to

> your dad after school,' because his dad picks him up. He was crying. It
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> took probably 15 minutes, to even get it out of him. That kid
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> understood. He was so apologetic for days. He would say, 'what can I
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> help you with? I'm so sorry. Do you still like me?'

Agnis saw her care for students as understanding their experiences when determining how to respond to negative behavior. Instead of practicing a more rigid kind of discipline, Agnis displayed her ability to remain flexible and be open to non-punitive solutions to correct her students' behavior. Much like Ricky and Venus, Agnis considered student circumstances as an important factor when responding to students. For Agnis, Ricky, and Venus, flexibility, which included taking into account student circumstances, was central to how they cared for students in terms of both grading and discipline.

Classroom Context: Setting Expectations. Our analyses also suggest teachers saw that to care for students in the classroom was to set and hold them to high expectations. For some, these high expectations could be in terms of good behaviors such as staying on task and demonstrating appropriate social and emotional decorum.

Serena (Grade 4, GATE) discussed behavioral expectations when asked about ways she cares for her students:

> I think the consistencies that I keep with the kids. It's very, very clear
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> to the kids from day one what the expectations are. We have them
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> written down, and it's very clear. Every year it's different because
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> every year it's a different group of kids. As long as they know the

expectations, when there's a negative consequence for it, they realize

that they made a mistake. We just have to come back and fix it. It's

okay to make mistakes. It doesn't mean you're a bad person, but it does

mean you need to try harder.

For Serena, high behavioral expectations are an important element of how she cares

for her students. By clearly stating what the expectations are and holding students to

those high expectations, Serena feels as though she is helping students to more easily

understand what is and is not acceptable behavior. It is through this approach that

students can discern when they have made a specific mistake. Serena felt that this

ability to locate when a mistake is made and not take it personally, is a form of care

as a student can rectify a specific mistake as opposed to just believing he or she is a

"bad person." While Serena's process is a way to empower her students, other

teachers spoke plainly about expecting students to be on task at all times. Jacob

(Grade 6, GATE), spoke about how he shows care through his discipline. On this he

stated:

I have no patience for ridiculous behavior. I really don't...When I'm

trying to teach, you better be listening. If you're going to tell a joke, it

better have something pertinent to do with what we're doing. You

better not be messing around, you know, playing with something in

your desk, that kind of thing.

Jacob believes that a student's behavior and energy should be directed solely toward

educational purposes inside the classroom. Jacob cares for students by ensuring they

are focused on learning, because in order to care for a student they must not be off

task and instead should focus completely on what Jacob is teaching.

Similarly, Lisa (Grade 8, General Education) took a rather inflexible approach when it came to her high behavioral expectations. In fact, Lisa described herself as showing care through what she referred to as a "tough love" approach. She shared, "I am a tough teacher, and so I do care about them....I think I show it with how tough I am on them by not letting them skate by." She went on to say, "I mean, I know, I know I'm hard on them, I know, I, [say things like], 'No, you're not [going to] do this. You're [going to] do this.'" According to Lisa, her rather demanding behavioral expectations are evidence that she cares for the students. She reasoned that if she didn't have these high expectations, if she didn't explicitly and bluntly tell students what she wants them to do,   she would be letting them skate by and consequently not fully caring for them. While she described herself as utilizing "tough love," it seems as though for Lisa, the most uncaring thing she could do for her students is to let them get through their schooling without adhering to rigid behavioral expectations.

Classroom Context: Academic Expectations. In addition to high behavioral expectations, some teachers also expressed holding students to high academic expectations. These academic expectations often resulted in a high standard of rigor, which according to the literature is a teacher's effort to "strive to help students develop the capacity to understand content" (Paige et al., 2015, pg. 3). Adrian (Grade 10, AP) spoke on these rigorous academic expectations as being an element of his care when he commented:

> My weakness is I expect way too much of those kids. I'm very...I
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> remember how I was in high school and I was quite the opposite of a

good student and I had no problem telling the kids that. Hopefully they'll learn from my example, but I'm very [much] about pushing them to strive to do their best and take pride in that, and [I] push them to their limits to their highest potential. Even my students see that I believe. My students every year come back and be like, 'Why was first semester so hard?' 'Well because I was so hard on you first semester that second semester was breeze, I didn't change anything, you guys changed.' But that could be a bad thing because it's very intimidating with students but that's how I coach, it's part of the athlete that kind of upbringing too. That can be hard for students to swallow. I've had to tone back quite a bit since I started teaching, each year I keep dialing it back, dialing it back.

Adrian discussed his belief that all students have the potential to reach high levels of academic success. This belief motivated him to continue to move students forward by the rigorous expectations he holds for students. Adrian explained that his high expectations for students contributed to an increase in student's ability and perseverance. He stated that his students perceived his class to be progressively less difficult as time went on even though his expectations did not change throughout the year. An important element of expectations for Adrian was patience and an understanding for the growth and development of his students, which he demonstrated when he stated "I remember how I was in high school." Adrian characterized his care for students as having an effective balance of high expectations and the patience to facilitate growth. Overall, the rigor that he practices in class helps

students develop the capacity to understand the material, take ownership, and have pride for their work.

Other teachers also expressed their care in terms of rigorous academic expectations that helped students take ownership of their academic work. For example, Joe (Grade 11, AP) said:

> I always tell [students], 'I want you to be successful. I'm not here to fail you, you know.' They know that from day one that I'm like, 'I don't give you anything. You earn your grade,' but I will always help them out so there's lots of extra credit to be had. They just have to be paying attention in order to get it and I always tell the kids, 'If you come in here talking to me throughout the semester, you're going to ask me, 'Oh what can I do here? What can I do?' I'll give it to them. I'd tell them, 'If you come the day before the semester ends, you're not getting anything you know,' and they all know that.

Joe perceived that he cares for his students because he did not just give them grades. Rather, he made them earn those grades. He made it clear that he wants his students to be successful, that he is there to see them succeed, but that they have to earn it. It appeared that Joe's lofty academic expectations help students develop their own capacity and take ownership for their work. Joe felt as though he is caring for a student more so than if he just gave them a passing grade. Joe mentioned that he is always there for them if they need it, but at the end his students needed to do the work. Jacob (Grade 6, GATE) held similar academic standards for his students when he said, "I can be empathetic and I understand how they might feel, but it doesn't

change what has to happen. '[I] totally understand that you don't feel like doing this, but it is what it is.'" Much like the teachers in our study who exhibited a type of "tough love" towards their students in regards to behavioral expectations, these teachers believed they were caring for their students by holding students to rigorous academic expectations in order to not only increase student ability and capacity, but also to help students take ownership of their grade and prevent them from simply skating by.

Not only did teachers believe that rigorous academic expectations help to develop student capacity and ownership, but they also felt that students are owed this type of rigor. Teachers believed that it was their responsibility to ensure that students received this type of rigor. For example, Jacob (Grade 6, GATE) spoke about his responsibility to meet every student's needs in relation to comprehension of content when he stated, "I'm interpreting caring as ensuring that my students get the best education that they can. It's absolutely part of my job to get her [a student who struggles academically] to realize that she *can*, even when it's hard." For Jacob, his words show that he believes rigor, making sure every student develops the capacity to learn the content, is his responsibility. Also, when he stated that he tries to ensure that his students get the "best education that they can," Jacob implied that each student is owed or deserves this rigorous expectation. Finally, Jacob drove home his point about responsibility when he said it is "absolutely part of my job." With this, he emphatically stated that when it comes to student success, it is absolutely his responsibility to ensure all students are successful. These sentiments were also echoed by Martina (Grade 5, General Education) when she stated:

> I honestly feel that every child deserves a really great education. I'm
> not the best teacher ever but I feel that I have to give it the best that I
> have. I think they all deserve to have a good education. If they're going
> to come to my classroom, I can't be on my computer all day and give
> them a worksheet.

Again, much like Jacob, Martina had rigorous expectations and believed that all children need to have a good education and that they all deserve to have an equal opportunity to learn the content. In addition, Martina felt a sense of responsibility for this type of rigor so much so that it pushed her not to just simply give students busy work, but rather give them all of her instructional energy. Annika (Grade 9 and 10, General Education) expressed a similar need to provide students with a kind of rigor that would help ensure that all students are able to understand the content. On this, Annika said she cares for her students:

> By trying to meet all of their learning styles, not just my teaching
> style, whether it's with visuals or if they're an auditory learner...just
> giving them as much scaffolding and support [as] they need that meets
> their individual needs and in general, but also just on individual days.
> Sometimes they might need a little extra support.

In these instances, caring meant that rigorous expectations were the norm not only for all students but also that it is owed to all students. Teachers were responsible for providing a type of rigor that would develop the capacity of all students, regardless of how difficult a venture it was.

In sum, when it came to setting expectations, many teachers expressed that

having high expectations, both behavioral and academic, was key to how they showcased their care. For some teachers, having high behavioral expectations helped students empower themselves by helping them understand what is acceptable and unacceptable and by preventing them from simply being apathetic. Moreover, rigorous academic expectations helped to develop student abilities and provided a sense of ownership over their work. Additionally, many teachers commented that students deserved rigorous expectations and teachers were responsible for maintaining these expectations so that each student could develop his or her own capacity and obtain the good education each of them deserved. While many of these educators felt certain actions within the classroom context were able to demonstrate their care, other teachers mentioned that the ease or difficulty of providing care was dependent on the amount of time available in a given day. Because of this, time is further explored below.

Time

Teachers described time as both an asset and a challenge when it came to understanding how they care for their students. One thing that became clear during the interviews was the idea that certain teachers used time as an asset by spending extra time with their students. For example, while some teachers gave time for intimate meetings in or outside of school hours, others attended after school events, or took time to reach out to the families of students. This idea of giving one's time on behalf of the students is what we refer to as *gifting time*. Another thing that became clear is that not all teachers felt as though they had time during the day to give and

that this prevented them from fully caring for their students in this way. In fact, some teachers felt that time was an obstacle to providing care.

Time: Gifting Time. One commonality related to gifting time that emerged was when teachers mentioned spending time with students in an intimate one-on-one or small group setting outside of instructional hours as an example of their care. For example, Mickey (Grade 12, General Education) indicated through his statements that his care often came outside of normal instructional hours and in these more intimate situations. This twenty-five year-veteran explained that he once had a student who was very ill and was about to be placed on Home and Hospital, a home-based educational program due to medical necessity. In response to the parent's objections over their son going on Home and Hospital, Mickey worked out a situation where he could provide instruction for the ill student three evenings per week. On this he stated, "It was only for like a half an hour, but I'd come down here and I'd pretty much reteach my lesson, that's what I [would] do." Mickey, in this case, went above and beyond to meet the needs of this student and gifted a large amount of his personal time so that the student could learn in a one-on-one setting outside of normal instructional hours.

Annika (Grade 9 and 10, General Education) also spoke of providing one-on-one time to students outside of normal classroom hours as a way to show care. Talking about caring for her students she stated, "If they want to come early, if they want to stay late...I'm there 'til three, four, five. Whatever. They can stay. If I'm there, they can stay." Annika showed through her words that if a student wants to have some one-on-one help, then she was willing to gift time before or after school to meet

their needs. Venus also spoke of providing a similar type of care for her students and even for some students who were not in her class. In this case, Venus (Grade 10, General Education) commented that she held a late-night study session for students who were not in her class and described the particular situation as

> an 11th grade historical analysis and some of the kids don't have internet at home. They don't have a computer at home. And so, I stayed here until 11:00 at night. We bought pizza and we read everybody's essay aloud and I had this room packed the next room packed and people sitting out on the lawn just writing, rewriting, editing, asking questions.

Again, in these instances teachers saw time as an asset and gave a significant amount of their personal time outside the school day in order to provide academic help to students in a one-on-one or intimate setting.

Time: Spending Time at Extracurricular Events. Another theme that emerged during our interviews was that when it came to gifting their personal time, some teachers preferred to use that time to be seen by students at larger school events as opposed to working with students in an intimate manner. The school events mentioned ranged from school fairs to sporting events. For example, Allyson (Grade 7, Honors) stated, "...we just had a fair. I love going out there and they say, 'Miss [Allyson], you're here.' They see me out there." For Allyson, the act of taking the time to be seen at activities outside of the classroom exhibited care for her students. Deion (Grade 7, General Education) reflected a similar belief when he talked about

his students, "...if they're involved in sports, I'm out there watching and supporting. I involve myself in a lot of staff-student engagement here on campus."

Mickey (Grade 12, General Education) spoke the most regarding gifting time in this manner. He elaborated:

> Well, I'm very involved with stuff on campus, it doesn't matter whether it's plays, sports, ag, and kids see that. I make it a point. They'll have some kind of ag thing going on, on a Saturday or something. I'll come down here; it's only for like an hour maybe. I'll come down and talk to them and everything else. That very next Monday, Tuesday, they'll come in and they'll be like, 'Hey Mr. [Mickey], I saw you at the deal.' 'Yeah, I saw you down there too, yeah.' That's the kind of stuff... Because when you're in a classroom, and that's what I said whenever I was younger, I got to see a side of teachers that most people don't get to see. I want the kids to see that. I mean even kids whenever I was coaching, I'd be out there [at practice], and I'd be out there in my shorts, and I'd be running with them and stuff like that. They see that, and it's kind of cool because it's one of those things where they don't see a lot of their other teachers doing stuff like that. That brings us closer in the classroom and it brings us closer as just people.

Mickey's sentiments coincide with Allyson and Deion's thoughts that making the time to be present and seen at extracurricular events is important in showing care for students. Not only does it allow the students to see a side of the teacher that they

don't normally see, but it also increases the connection between the student and teacher.

While Mickey didn't elaborate on how exactly this brings the teacher and student closer, the length of which he spoke on this act showed that he believed it is very important. Moreover, Mickey stated that being seen at events brings him and the student closer "in the classroom" and "as just people." This statement seemed to suggest that this creates a bond in two ways. First, it connects him to his students in the classroom in an academic sense where he and students can work more closely to achieve the instructional goals. Secondly, Mickey also stated that this brings he and the student together "as just people," which connotes a more holistic connection to the student where the whole student is being understood beyond what that student can achieve in the classroom. Because Mickey included both of these aspects, it appears as though he believed that being seen outside of the classroom helps him bond with all types of students who come into his classroom. For instance, if a student is not performing well in the classroom, Mickey may feel a need to connect with that student in a manner that goes beyond just academics. When students are performing well in class, Mickey interprets this as caring for students because their successes can be attributed to his efforts in class. Oppositely, if a student is under-performing, and Mickey can be seen outside of the classroom and in a manner that tells students that their teacher is present and supports their extracurricular events, then Mickey feels as though that he is able to reach them and make connections with them that will have an effect on the classroom student-teacher relationship. Making connections with all students is imperative for teachers to ensure that students are successful in achieving

their own goals and in increasing achievement individually and in group situations within the classroom. Ultimately, the motivator for educators is to make an impact in students' lives in a way that affects their futures in a positive way. Our data suggests that, for Mickey, and other educators who believe in donating their own time to benefit students, that this is the motivation that drives them to do what they do for students.

Time: Time for Families. Also, in the realm of gifting time, another prominent way in which teachers gifted their time was to reach out to parents and families of students in their classes. All teachers, in one way or another, discussed attempting to reach out to families whether it was via telephone, e-mail, conferences, etc. For example, Lisa stated, " I do a lot of calls home. I always make sure they know how to email me." Mickey also stated that he proactively reaches out to families and explained, "I try to communicate, I probably email...every Friday, I have about 15 parents on my list of emails, and they want to know, 'How are things going this week?'" Jenny was also very enthusiastic about reaching out to families and explained that she really enjoys "calling parents to recount a positive experience" and that she also tries "to send e-mails and texts to parents who have asked for them." These examples all showcase how teachers gifted little pieces of time periodically to reach out to families.

One teacher in particular felt that reaching out to families was so important that he was willing to bend the rules in order to establish a relationship with parents. Ricky, explained:

I make Back to School night homework, which is against Ed Code

again. It's on my syllabus, but I'm like, I tell them, 'It's important that I

meet your parents. It's important. I'm going to spend 180 days with

you. I believe it's important that we meet.' I have 100 kids' parents

show up.

While Ricky is required to be at Back to School night, he believes that taking the time

to reach out to families is so important that he is willing to go against California

Education Code to establish a relationship with families. If they can't make it, Ricky

says he explains that it is ok if parents simply email him even though he doesn't like

emails, which he openly states, "I get 30 or so emails, which totally sucks to email all

those parents back; it's a pain in the ass and I don't like it." The lengths that Ricky

goes to in order to establish a relationship and carve out a significant amount of his

personal time to reach out to families through email shows how much he values

reaching out to families. The fact that he openly admitted how much he dislikes

responding to so many emails, yet still did so in order to communicate with families,

showcased his belief that reaching out to families in this manner is essential in caring

for students.

All of these situations are examples of teachers gifting their own time outside

of regular work hours with the goal of being present for their students and families.

Whether it be using that time for intimate gatherings to work on assignments, to go to

extracurricular activities, or to reach out to families, these teachers view gifting time

as a vital aspect to caring for their students.

Time: Taking Time to Provide Resources. While the examples above of gifting time were ones in which teachers gifted something immaterial to their students, there were a few teachers who spoke of caring for their students by using their personal time to acquire and provide material resources for them when needed. For example, Venus spoke of a situation in which she found creative ways to address the material needs of a student. Regarding this student she stated:

> I had a student, [John], came in, he's wearing jean shorts and white tee shirts every day. I know that's because that's the two cheapest things you can buy at Family Clothes. So, what I'll do? I go to Family Clothes. I buy sweats and jeans in his size... socks, shoes, put it all in a backpack, put the receipt in the bottom of it and then had it delivered to his classes.

In this specific instance, Venus noticed that this student may have been in need of material items and used her personal time to gather material resources as a way to care for him. Martina also spoke of a time in which she cared for her students in need using material resources. In fact, when speaking of what makes her a caring teacher, Martina used material resources as an example of what specifically makes her a caring teacher. Regarding this, she said "I feel like I'm a caring teacher because I've actually provided snacks for the kids that I know are super hungry, even with the school breakfast." Ricky, also explained how he cares for students with material resources. On this, he said:

> If I see a kid [who's] cold, I give him a blanket. If a kid is coughing, I offer him some of my water. I share my food. I just make my

classroom their home. Which is sometimes inconvenient, but I'm also getting emails sometimes, 'Get your mail, Ricky. Your mail's [been in the office] all week.' But when I get to school, the kids are my priority, not my mail. Not turning in attendance, or all this bureaucratic nonsense.

Like Martina, Ricky views helping students acquire material resources as his priority. Caring for students in this way, more so than things like keeping track of attendance, is of paramount importance to him. As teachers discussed, some of them are gifting their personal time to go out and buy clothes and snacks for students, while others such as Ricky are just happy to share their own. Regardless, for many teachers using their time to provide material resources is a vital aspect of how they care for students.

All of this begs the question, why were teachers enthusiastic about providing material resources to students? For Venus, a teacher who as we previously mentioned, gifted plenty of time toward late night study sessions, this didn't sound like one care in lieu of another type. This act of providing material resources seems to be a type of care that she does in addition to gifting time for intimate meetings. As for Martina and Ricky, they seemed to put a premium on providing resources and appeared to prefer this type of care over other types. For example, Martina explicitly stated that what makes her a caring teacher is that she "actually provided snacks." Her use of *actually* seemed to place a value judgement on this type of care as being most important. It implied that students should be given snacks, but that she is the one who has actually stepped up to do so. Ricky spoke similarly when he stated at length about providing food and water for students all while he is being asked by the office to

complete his attendance and other things that he dismisses as "bureaucratic nonsense." Even though attendance and the other things he disregarded may be vital in keeping tracking of students and keeping them in schools where they might be the recipient of other types of care, Ricky appeared to be saying that the physical act of providing something to students who are *in* class is more important and should be the focus of his time.

An explanation for this type of thinking might be that the physical act of handing out resources is just that, a physical and tangible act that yields instant and visual results. If the student is thirsty, then their thirst can be quenched by a simple physical act. Whereas the effects of things such as paperwork and attendance are much more amorphous and difficult to measure in terms of impact. Whatever the case, some teachers felt that using their time to provide physical resources was either an important element in caring for students, or possibly *the* most important element in their care.

Time: An Obstacle to Care: While several teachers spoke openly about providing intimate care outside of school hours, there were educators who spoke about trying to provide care for students within normal school hours. However, for those teachers who wanted to provide a more intimate educational experience within normal school hours, they often stated that it was too difficult to do so. In fact, many teachers felt that time itself, coupled with the number of kids in each class, was a barrier to being able to gift enough time to create these more intimate educational experiences. For example, Steve (Grade 8, Honors) explained "I think there's sometimes just not enough time to show that you care about everybody, to have that

personal touch with [the student]. I have 39 kids in one class." To Steve, the lack of time within in the roughly fifty-minute instructional period caused this veteran teacher to feel as though he wasn't able to have a more personal experience with the students in the room. This sentiment was echoed by several other teachers such as Allyson, an AP math teacher, who explained, "we teach six periods a day, so fast. We barely have any time to be [caring]... everyone is rushing." Jackie resonated with this as well when she said, "I don't have as much time to get to the kids. I don't have as much time one-on-one with looking at their papers, having conversations." These examples suggest that for those teachers who would like to provide care through an intimate one-on-one or small group experience during the instructional period, the time they are allocated for a class period simply isn't enough to show the one-on-one type of care that they desire to show.

Other examples of time as an obstacle appeared often as teachers spoke of reaching out to the families of their students. For example, Steve (Grade 8, Honors) not only spoke about not finding the time for a "personal touch" with each student but also spoke about the obstacles in connecting with a student's family. Steve stated, "I had a parent call me, and I was talking to her about her kid, and it was like, I needed to kind of go. But I was like, you know what? She made an effort to call me. I got to make it my effort to give her what she values and stuff." In this example Steve showed that in the midst of a call from a concerned parent, during other non-instructional hours, his mind was preoccupied with the other things he had to tend to. But knowing that it was important, Steve had to talk himself into making an effort to give this parent "what she values and stuff." Steve's words and his urgency to end his

phone call with the parent suggest that reaching out to parents impacted his personal time. Moreover, it seemed as though he was lacking enthusiasm and spoke to the parent out of obligation as opposed to having a true desire to do so. The enthusiasm he might otherwise have for connecting with a parent, which he clearly values, had been overcome by a concern over time and what remained was a begrudging sense of duty.

Steve wasn't the only educator who lacked enthusiasm for reaching out to families. In fact, there were some teachers who were content to simply make themselves available if families would like to reach out to *them*. For example, when asked about how she reaches out to parents, Jackie responded:

> I don't. I don't see a lot of parents. We have back to school night at the beginning of the year and, generally, I will get somewhere between 40 and 60% of parents that come to back to school night. We have [an event] at the end of the first quarter [where] parents can come and pick up the report card and we have a parent conference night. Probably 20% of parents show up. Usually kids [who] are getting straight As.

After admitting that she doesn't see a lot of parents, Jackie clarified that she makes herself available to parents if they need to contact her. About this, she stated: "I give them my school email, I give them my home email, I give them my cell phone number." Thus, for Jackie, giving her information out showed that she does recognize the importance of connecting with families if it was needed. However, she was transparent about the fact that she wasn't proactively gifting her time to reach out to families. This suggests that maybe Jackie, who previously complained that there was

so little time to care for students, feels that her time is very precious and that she can't dedicate anymore of it herself to connect with families. It's almost as if she trusts that, should a situation arise in which she is needed, then those parents will make contact with her. Again, it appears that due to time constraints, Jackie's enthusiasm for reaching out to families has been reduced to merely fielding calls or e-mails should the parents have any pressing concerns.

Putting the onus on the parents to make contact was also echoed by Joe, an AP teacher with over five years of experience, who stated that reaching out to parents is very difficult due to time constraints. On this, he stated:

> It's almost impossible. We have our back to school night so they'll come in, you'll meet them, and then I'll never see them again. I think I've met with one parent all year, the entire year. Again that [shows] I'm not one that seeks them out. It's always them seeking me out but I think that's my MO with my students too. I'm the nicest person to the parents. If they seek me out, I will help them, no problem, but I just tell them like, "I [have] 150 students. Like, I don't have the time to seek out every single parent."

Much like Jackie, Joe appeared to be fine with giving his time to families if they need it. In fact, he seemed somewhat boastful about how good he is with parents with phrases such as "I'm the nicest person to parents" and "if they seek me out, I will help them." However, he was open about the fact that he had so many students and not enough time to connect with all of them. This suggests that Joe recognizes that connecting with families is important, and that he is happy to do so, but just simply

doesn't have time to do so. Therefore, the responsibility is imposed on the parents if they would like to have a personal connection. In all of these situations these educators shared their belief in the importance of connecting with families. However, due to the obstacle that a lack of time presents, they are often unable to connect with families in the manner in which they might otherwise prefer.

Communication

Communication was the final theme that was identified in our interviews with teachers. From the interviews, communication could be understood in four different sub themes. Dialogue, which included getting information from and getting information to students, was one subtheme. Another subtheme was monologue, the process of giving information to students. Being authentic, honest, and transparent was one type of subtheme identified by the teachers we interviewed. Finally, using communication for the purpose of validating students was the last type of communication identified by teachers as it pertained to previous research. All of these functions achieved by communication were seen by teachers as a vital component to how they showed their students care.

Communicating with Dialogue. One prominent theme that arose during the interviews regarding communication was that of teachers dialoguing with students. Consistently, teachers expressed that caring, for them, meant that they spoke, or had a back and forth dialogue, with students regularly. However, dialoguing took on a slightly different meaning from teacher to teacher. Some teachers relied on exchanges allowing them to get information from students while others used dialoguing as a way of giving information to students. Most of the time this information was related to

personal issues that helped foster a sense of understanding.

First off, when commenting on how they care for their students, many teachers spoke of using dialogue as a way to get information from students, especially ones who were troubled or being disruptive. In these exchanges, some teachers mentioned feeling comfortable with a more back and forth type of dialogue in order to better understand or connect with their students. While others preferred a more one-sided type of conversation in which teachers could instead direct the student to someone who could provide the type of support needed. For example, Martina (Grade 5, General Education), a veteran teacher, talked about confronting one student who was posing a behavioral challenge and was showing up in shorts and an old tee shirt in the middle of Winter. Martina discussed how she approached him and described how she said to him:

> 'Can I talk to you in private? I really care about you. I'm worried about you. Talk to me.' He broke down. And he's one of my tough boys. Charlie. He was a tough cookie like, 'No one's going to break me.' I'm like, 'I'm worried about you. I notice that you don't have a jacket. I'm freezing and I have this coat. What's going on at home?' I don't know. They feel comfortable. I should have been a counselor. Then he broke down [and said], 'My mom didn't wake me up on time and she didn't wash my coat.' Horrible situation.

When Martina sensed that a student was experiencing trouble, her approach was to pull them aside in a quiet manner and have a back and forth dialogue with them about what the source of their trouble was. She sensed that there may be a need and felt

comfortable with approaching the student in order to gather information from the student in order to understand what the issue was.

Venus (Grade 10, General Education), another veteran teacher, had a similar approach when confronting troubled students and dialoguing with them about their issues. In speaking about how she cares for her students who are experiencing discipline issues, Venus talked about a student named Gavin who was posing a disciplinary issue. After a day of bad behavior, Venus gave him a detention in which Gavin had to come to her room after school so they could dialogue. Speaking of this, Venus said:

> So, after school I'd find a project [for students to help me with], and there are all kinds of projects and we'll sit there and do it and we'll talk. And we'll just connect as human beings. Then it always comes to the question of, "Honey, why are you doing this?" [Gavin's] big thing was he didn't have very many friends. At home he was a primary caretaker for his elderly grandmother and he had to pick up the kids every day after school...So he didn't have time for friends or sports or anything else. So, he just needed the attention. He needed other people to like him. And he wanted to talk to his peers and he took up my education time to do that.

Again, in this situation, the teacher took the time to have a dialogue with a student who was experiencing trouble. Venus mentioned that the student and her just sat and talked, and through this dialogue, would "connect as human beings." It was through this connective dialogue that Venus was able to understand the source of Gavin's

troubles. While some teachers used their communication skills to have a dialogue with students in order to better understand or connect with their students, other teachers utilized more of monologue in which they got students in touch with someone else who could help provide support.

  Communicating with Monologue. For example, Adrian (Grade 10, AP) stated that when he sensed that a student is having a hard time, he will often address the student privately. He explained that he will, "...call them out, not out in front of the class, but 'Hey, [do] you want to step outside real[ly] quick? You want to take a walk? Why don't you go to the bathroom?'" Adrian said sometimes he will set up a system with students who are having issues so that way they can get up and use the restroom when they want in order to clear their heads or reset their attitude. About this particular student, Adrian stated that, "it was a kid that was going through a lot and I made sure I set him by the door so if [he] had to take off, [he] just took off." In this instance, Adrian appeared to have used some sort of dialogue with a student in order to understand more of what he was going through. After he had learned the student was "going through a lot," Adrian helped set up a supportive system in which the student could quickly clear his head in order to come back and be focused inside of the classroom.

  He used more of a monologue approach, however, when discussing his experience with students who had more serious issues at home that may have a larger negative impact on their classroom behavior. For situations like this, he stated that he would call the student outside but would instead direct them to a professional who would engage in a more in-depth dialogue as opposed to dialoguing with the student

himself. On why he doesn't participate in more in-depth dialogue at that point, Adrian stated:

> I don't want to know sometimes due to the fact that if you know too much you got to report everything. So, I say, 'Hey first off, do you need to talk to the counselor?' I always make that an option because that's not my realm, that's what they get paid for. I get paid to spot things....

Unlike Venus, Adrian doesn't appear to use dialogue as a means to connect with a student. Rather, he appears to first use a brief dialogue as a way to gauge whether he can help them or not, and if the problem might be bigger than what could be fixed by taking a brief break, then he utilizes a monologue in order to tell students where to go to get more support. Again, if it is support he can offer the student, then Adrian seems adept at creating systems, such as the one set up for the student to clear his head, in order to help directly support his students. However, should the issues be significant, Adrian stated that he will direct them to someone who *can* provide a dialogue on a deeper level and provide them the support needed.

Adrian's reasons for this appear to be time related. Adrian stated that by dialoguing, he may learn too much and, consequently, might have to make a report to child welfare agencies. Mandatory reporting appears to be a burden for Adrian as the fear of having to report more complex issues, informs his decision to dialogue on a deeper-level with students. He seems to believe that problems that are not fixed by a small break, might involve reporting, which might consume more of his time. Given that many teachers perceive they have limited time as it is, it is something that they

cannot see themselves wasting. Moreover, Adrian doesn't appear to see this level of dialoguing as his personal responsibility as he explicitly stated that this type of connection is not what he gets paid for. For him, other professionals, such as counselors, get paid for a deeper level of dialogue, meaning that this type of communication isn't in his purview. Whatever the exact reason, Adrian's words show that he doesn't feel as though he should, nor does he seem compelled to be, responsible for an in-depth dialogue with his students.

While Adrian used a bit of dialogue to assess whether he could help a student without an in-depth dialogue, Jackie (Grade 7, AP) used a much more straightforward monologue approach in order to let students know that should their behaviors persist, then there will be negative consequences. On this, she shared that she is not afraid to pull aside students who are disruptive or are off task in order to have a quick word of communication with them. Like the other teachers, Jackie mentioned she likes to pull students aside to not embarrass them in front of their peers. However, unlike the previous examples, Jackie doesn't dialogue in order to understand, connect, or to provide support. Instead, Jackie's approach is more one-sided and is a way to inform students that they are not behaving in an acceptable manner. On this, she stated her first approach is to give students "the look," but, should that fail, Jackie says that she will speak directly to them. She went on to say:

> If I have to have a conversation I will ask them to step outside so it's private so that everybody is not witnessing the dressing down. I let them know at the beginning of the year, "If I ask you to step outside we are not actually having a conversation. This is one way. I am

telling you, 'Here is what I perceived. Here is why I had a problem with what I perceived. This is what I anticipate will happen in the future. When I get done telling you that, your job is to say, "You're right Ms. [Jackie]. I apologize. It won't happen again." You're not arguing with me. You're not telling me how it's not your fault.

This example explicitly reveals that Jackie isn't interested in hearing what a student has to say or understanding what he or she is going through. In fact, she tells the students exactly how to reply. Jackie's approach with communication appears to be geared more toward letting students know in a more private manner that they currently are not performing in an acceptable manner and should they stay on their current course, then they might experience negative consequences. It appears that through this approach, Jackie feels as though by doing this she is helping her students realize that their behavior needs to be corrected. She does this outside of the classroom so as to avoid embarrassing them and instead is giving them a private course correction. While both teacher and student are talking, this communication isn't meant to be connective but rather instructive. It is a monologue in which a student is simply told of his or her negative behaviors, rather than a dialogue to try and understand the roots of said behaviors.

Many teachers spoke of using communication with students as a means to understand, connect, provide support, or instructs students about their performance, and many also spoke of using communication with students as an important means to caring for students by being real, honest, and authentic.

Communicating by Being Authentic, Honest, and Transparent. In several interviews many teachers alluded to the importance of communicating with students about what life would be like for them in the future or issues that they have to handle now, as young adults. Many teachers felt that caring for their students meant that they opened up to students through being authentic and honest. For example, regarding how he cares for students, Joe (Grade 11, AP) said:

> Just talking to them, asking them questions, and I guess trying to be authentic. I don't think you can fake it. You definitely can't fake it. The kids know if you're faking it. When I talk to students I'm genuinely interested in what they're saying.

For Joe, to really care for kids and meet them where they are at, you cannot feign interest. Only by authentically reaching out to students and asking them questions about themselves can one really truly show care for a student.

Similarly, Annika (Grade 9 and 10, General Education) echoed that being authentic and honest is important in showing students care in the classroom. On this she stated that she cares, "by being truthful...I'm always trying to be honest with them and not sugarcoat things." Much like Joe, Annika felt that students can sense when teachers "fake it" and that it is important to be as authentic and honest as possible. For these teachers, students need caring teachers who are honest with them in conversations. Caring means ensuring that students feel that interactions with their teachers are authentic and real.

In addition, in the interviews it was apparent that the majority of teachers relied on being transparent and using personal examples when it came to

communicating and caring for students. Teachers felt that by being transparent, they were making themselves relatable to students which helped to build rapport and promote supportive student-teacher relationships. Teachers also felt that transparency was important as the act of sharing their experiences in turn helped students to share experiences and parts of themselves that they might otherwise not have shared. For example, Ricky (Grade 12, General Education) stated:

> I find the best way to show them care is to share who I am, but just with this idea of them feeling safe to share themselves. I do these projects, and it's the three events that have changed your life. I've done, this is my 14th year there, or 13th, or something like that. Over the years, I've had kids share the worst thing that you could ever think of happened to them as a kid to the greatest, happiest. I'm in the back, tearing up for happy things and sad things.

For Ricky, the act of sharing and being transparent about who he is, allows students to feel safe to share parts of themselves. This apparently is so effective that students in the past have shared some very personal experiences that they most likely would not have shared had Ricky not set that precedent through his own communication.

He expounded on the importance of authenticity when he stated that teachers have a certain "responsibility" in sharing with students that teachers are just regular people. Ricky finds that this act of transparency, where teachers show their students their humanity, is what allows students to open up and be more transparent with themselves. On this, he stated that "once I started sharing my imperfections or 'weaknesses,' I find that they open up so much more easily." This act of transparency

and showing their humanity allows students to more easily open up and share pieces of themselves, which Ricky found as an important factor in caring for students.

Deion (Grade 7, General Education) also spoke on the importance of transparency in caring for students. On this he stated:

> First off, I have to open myself up. They have to know about me. They have to know that I didn't get here through following a golden brick road. Those kids that were in foster homes, I can relate to that. Those kids that were homeless, I can relate. Those kids that may be getting bad grades, I can relate. I am no better. I am very truthful on how I got here. Is it embarrassing? Yes. Is it sad? Absolutely. But the main message is if I can do this, you can too. Don't let because you slept at grandma's house last night something to identify who you are because that's not you. I did that.

Similar to Ricky, Deion felt that in order to build a relationship and care for a student, a teacher must be transparent and willing to share their humanity: that they did not just arrive in their job on an easy path and that they had struggles of their own. By being so open with his students, to the point of embarrassment, students can see their humanity. However, unlike Ricky, who used transparency so that students would themselves feel comfortable to share more pieces of their own humanity, Deion seems to do it as a way to empower his students. To let them know that struggles do not define them. Because if Deion, who suffered through many tough moments, could do it, then students might feel empowered to feel like they can achieve their dreams as well. In both of these cases, teachers used communication to reveal their humanity

in either the hopes of getting students to share more of themselves or to empower their students to not let their troubles define them.

Communicating by Using Validation. Another component that surfaced in interview data suggests that in teachers' communication with students, they utilized kind words to validate students' feelings or thoughts as a tool to show students care. Whether it be commenting on a student's' appearance, personal life, progress in the classroom, or involvement in extracurricular activities, these educators felt that the kind words communicated to students needed to be specific and consistent. For example, Annika (Grade 9 and 10, General Education) stated that when using her words to demonstrate care, "I try to focus on specific positive praise. Not just, 'Good job,' but being really specific." To use an academic example, Annika stated that she might tell a student, "You know what? You haven't written a period all year and you're in 10th grade. You did periods on every sentence. There's complete sentences." For Annika, the specificity of her comments show care because they are tailored to a student's individual problem. It suggests that if students feel as though teachers are in touch with the minutia of their academic progress, then they must care for them more. On the flip side, if a teacher just gave general feedback to all students, then a student might not feel as though the teacher cares for them as much.

While Annika mentioned specific positive feedback on academic matters, Ricky used this type of feedback when it came to things such as a student's appearance. On this Ricky stated:

> I compliment them nonstop as much as I can, from, 'Oh man, I like
> your jacket,' to, 'Oh man.' I notice when they cut their hair. All these

little stuff that really doesn't matter, but it matters. 'Oh man, you look

handsome. You look beautiful.' I give them hugs and I shake their

hands.

Much like Annika, Ricky focuses on validation in order to show care for his students.

To these teachers, the specificity of the words communicates attentiveness to the

students' individual personalities, which the teachers feel really "matters" to the

students. Whether it is through dialogue, monologue, being authentic, honest, and

transparent, or validation, these teachers all utilized communication as a way in which

they showed care to their students.

Summary

Chapter IV presented the qualitative findings from the 18 teacher interviews

that were used in this study. Chapter V will follow-up with a summary of the

qualitative findings by factors of interest in this study, such as education level, track,

years of experience, and gender. A summary of quantitative findings will also be

presented.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

As previously stated, the main purpose of our study was to understand the views of teachers and students regarding their perceived levels of care in the classroom. The data presented in this chapter provides a description of the main findings from the interviews and surveys. This was arranged into qualitative main findings, quantitative results, and then quantitative main findings. The qualitative section begins with a coding matrix used to explore the relationships between concepts, and then focuses on differences that emerged based on level, track, teaching experience, and gender. The quantitative section beings with a focus on the demographics and equity analysis of the student population. This is followed by an analysis of the survey data and then a discussion of the main findings by survey questions, survey scales, and demographic variables.

Qualitative Main Findings

In addition to exploring concepts that emerged in our qualitative data using open and axial coding, we also developed a coding matrix, Table 3, to explore the relationships between the concepts that emerged and teachers' characteristics (Miles and Huberman, 1994) to help us explain patterns we saw in the data.

Table 3

Qualitative Data Coding Matrix

Code	Gender	Level	Track	Experience
Classroom Context	Both males and females described providing a sense of safety as important to their care	Secondary focused on maintaining a trusting and safe environment. Elementary teachers did not mention this.	Regardless of track, teachers spoke about "tough love" when it came to student expectations.	Regardless of teaching experience, teachers spoke about "tough love" when it came to student expectations.
Time	Both genders felt as though there wasn't enough time to show care for all students	Secondary spoke more of attending extra-curricular events. Not spoken of by elementary.	Teachers who taught higher tracked course on the whole felt time was a barrier to care when compared to lower tracked teachers.	More experienced teachers took time to call parents. Less experienced teachers took less time to call teachers.
Communication	Female teachers focused using kind and positive words. Males focused more on	Secondary teachers spoke of having to set boundaries in their communications with students. Elementary teachers did not	Lower Track focused more on dialogue. Higher Track focused more on monologue.	The interviews didn't yield any discernible differences in how teachers communicate based on their years of experience in education.

Differences

This part of our research describes the differences that emerged based on

level, track, teaching experience, and gender. These groups were determined based on

a large body of research examining factors that influence how teachers perceive their

care for students (Faust et al., 2014; Hattie, 2009; Noddings, 2013; & Sugishita, 2000) and are related to the quantitative variables in this study. Overall, there seemed to be a variety of differences based on level and track, but a surprising lack of differences were found when it came to experience and gender.

Classroom Context

The first theme that we analyzed by factor was classroom context. In this theme, teachers often spoke of providing care for students inside the classroom context. This included creating a sense of safety inside the classroom, being flexible with students, and setting expectations. These expectations were both in the academic and behavioral sense. The first factor that we looked at as it pertained to this theme was gender.

Gender. When it came to gender, the data revealed that both male and female educators stressed the importance of providing a sense of safety for the students in their classrooms. For example, Agnis (Grade 6, General Education) stated that creating a sense of safety was a big reason she was drawn to education in the first place. On this she said, "[school] was the one place when I was growing up, that I felt safe." As a result, she said she went into education so that she could provide her students with the same kind of safe space. So, for this female teacher, creating a sense of safety played a big role in the way in which she showed care for her students inside of the classroom.

This idea of the importance of creating a sense of safety was also echoed by male teachers as well. To use one example, Adrian (Grade 10, AP) spoke about the importance of creating a safe environment inside of the classroom. When asked about

his personal beliefs about teaching, Adrian responded that while teaching the material is important, he tries to make kids feel as though school is their time away from whatever problems they are dealing with in their personal lives. He said he wants his students to feel as though somebody cares about them and you do that through the "safe environment you try to create in your classroom." So, for Adrian, much like Agnis, creating a safe environment in the classroom context is very important in terms of how they care for their students. These are just a few examples of how both male and female teachers see the importance of the classroom context in how they care for their students.

Level. Next, the data revealed that teachers described care in the classroom context very differently based on the level taught. Our analysis of the data seemed to suggest that level was a factor when determining how the participants expressed their acts of care towards students in terms of classroom context. More specifically, secondary teachers more consciously focused on establishing and maintaining a trusting and safe environment when compared to elementary teachers. For example, secondary teachers such as Annika (Grade 9 and 10, General Education) spoke often about maintaining a safe and trusting environment. Annika explained that she showed care to her students by creating trusting relationships in which she trusted them and they trusted her. She said that this trust is created and maintained by, "keeping my word and keeping it consistent and always following through with what I say I am going to do, so that they can trust me." Overall, Annika and many other secondary teachers spoke of creating a safe and trusting environment as a way in which they

showed their care to their students. Rarely did elementary teachers specifically discuss their care in terms of a trusting relationship with students.

Track and Years of Experience. Another unique finding when it came to classroom context was that across track and years of experience, all teachers spoke of a "tough love" approach when it came to setting behavioral and academic expectations. In other words, when trying to find a through line, it appeared that setting expectations with a "tough love" approach defied any specific grouping when it came to track or experience.

Kristine (Grade 8, General Education), for example, is a teacher who had less than five years of experience. Throughout her interview, she spoke of how hard she worked on trying to foster a positive connection with her students. She would try to figure out what was going on at home, she would ask them about their interests, and tried to use her knowledge of their interests in their ongoing conversations. While she worked hard to communicate to show her care, she spoke of the fact that students still needed to be held to a high standard and that their personal situations did not excuse them from working hard in class. Even with the knowledge that the students may be experiencing a tough time at home, she made sure that they knew they had to perform. If they didn't then they were stuck with the grade that they got. Kristine summed up this idea when she said, "I may really like [the student] and I may, we may have lots of heart-to-heart conversations, but if you're not putting the effort in your work, then that's the grade that you get."

Lisa (Grade 8, General Education) explained a similar sentiment by explicitly stating that she utilizes a "tough love" approach, similar to that expressed by Kristine.

Similar to Kristine, Lisa states that she tries to make sure that she knows something personal about each of the students. That way, if they need any sort of help, she can try to provide that for them. However, she said that she is tough on them with her expectations and that she expresses her care through these expectations by not letting her students "skate by." To Lisa, not letting students *skate by* meant that she didn't let students make excuses for getting poor grades. She explained that she wants to ensure that all students understand the material, even if that means being tough on students and saying things such as, "No, you're not going to do this. You're going to do this." In both situations, these secondary General Education teachers with less than five years of experience explained that while they tried to understand each student's personal issues, they did not let this prevent them from setting high expectations from their students.

A similar sentiment was found in different tracks and years of experience as well. To use an example, Jacob (Grade 6, GATE) has over 25 years of experience but spoke similarly to Kristine and Lisa. Jacob explicitly stated that he has a "tough love attitude." For him, this was for both his academic and behavioral expectations of students. In terms of academics, Jacob spoke of things such as telling his students "there's no excuse for having missing homework." As for behavior, Jacob spoke of high behavioral expectations such as "I have no patience for ridiculous behavior" and "when I'm trying to teach, you better be listening...you better not be messing around, you know, playing with something in your desk, that kind of thing." Jacob also stated that he gets to know his kids very well through the various special GATE activities. Not only does he get to know the students and what they are capable of, but also, like

Kristine and Lisa, he doesn't let that knowledge deter him from having very high expectations.

Time

The second theme that we analyzed by factor was time. In this theme, we found that teachers all spoke of gifting their time for meetings with students, attending extracurricular events, reaching out to families, and providing resources. Moreover, we also found that some teachers felt that they had little time to gift and that time was more of an obstacle when it came to caring for their students. The first factor that we looked at as it pertained to this theme was gender. When it came to the factor of care based on gender, the idea that there wasn't enough time to show students was discussed frequently for both males and females.

Track. Moreover, teacher track did appear to show differences in how teachers viewed the idea of time when it came to student care. As a result, these factors have been put together to show that both genders spoke of time as being to barrier to care, but that it was only those teachers who taught in the higher tracks that felt this way. To use an example, Serena (Grade 4, GATE) spoke at length about working really hard to get to know her students on a personal level. She did so because she believed that this helped them feel safe and respected, which in turn, helped feel cared for and that this feeling resulted in students working harder in the classroom. However, when discussing how she gets to know her kids on this personal level, Serena lamented that she doesn't always feel like there is enough time to do so. In fact, she stated she often wished that she was closer with her students but stated "we're so busy." She followed this up by saying that in terms of showing care to

students, "the barrier is time." Serena feels that getting to know her students personally is of paramount importance when showing care for her kids, but that she isn't able to do this because of a lack of time. Jenny (Grade 5, GATE) echoed Serena's feelings when she stated, "Teachers do care. But they are overworked. We have so many things on our plates. We are always on the go. It would be nice to have a little less to do so we could just be present with our students and their families." In these examples, females from higher tracked classes spoke specifically about time being a barrier to caring for students.

Another male teacher who taught a higher tracked class, Steve (Grade 8, AP), expressed similar sentiments to his female counterparts. Throughout his interview, he spoke about time as being the main reason he is unable to care for students in the intimate manner in which he might otherwise wish to act. On what he believes is one of the largest hurdles present in providing care for students, he stated that there is, "just not enough time to actually get to really talk with everybody and build up a rapport with everybody and spend enough time." These examples show that both genders felt that there just simply wasn't enough time in the day to show care to all of their students. However, this belief seems to resonate mostly with higher tracked teachers considering lower-track teachers didn't mention this as much.

Level. In terms of gifting time and being seen as extracurricular activities, it was only secondary teachers who expressed this sentiment. Perhaps this is due to the absence of many extracurricular events at the elementary level compared to the number of events at the secondary level. Our data reveals that educators at the secondary level seem to be more preoccupied with this idea than their elementary

school counterparts. Examples of this were outlined in Chapter 4, where Mickey, Allyson, and Deion—all secondary teachers—spoke of showing care for their students by taking time to attend extracurricular events.

Another example that illustrates this point, was when Adrian (Grade 10, AP) stated that he does his best to be present at extracurricular events. In fact, he stated that he attends extracurricular events because not every student has someone in their life that demonstrates care for them. So, Adrian and his wife do their best to attend events outside of the classroom so students can experience that feeling. On this he stated, "we're always trying to go to different events and try to show the kids that we're trying to be at their events." To explain why he does this, Adrian stated "we try to show interest in them by doing that, and they show interest in our class, which then trickles into their grade." So, for Adrian, not only does he attend these events to show kids that he cares about them, but also because he believes this type of care has a positive effect on academic outcomes. All in all, secondary teachers compared to their elementary counterparts were much more vocal about using their time to attend extracurricular events in order to showcase their care.

Years of Experience. Years of experience was another important factor that emerged in the ways in which teachers gifted their time as a way to show care for students. For example, more experienced teachers appeared to be more proactive when it came to using their time to reach out to families, while teachers with less experience seemed to be less proactive. More experienced teachers we interviewed spoke of using their time to reach out to families. For example, Troy (Grade 4, General Education) spoke directly about how he cares for his students through his

parental communication skills. Troy also has more than 25 years of experience and when speaking about students who were having a difficult time, Troy stated that he does his best to make sure that he uses his time to connect with parents so that students start off the year in a positive way. He said that he tried to call parents about positive things early on, so that way it was easier if he ended up having to call about negative things later on. He admitted that he wasn't perfect in this regard, but summed up his efforts by saying, "...that's one thing that I've tried to do is call parents early, not all, but many, and just get off on the right foot as touching base with parents."

This is in contrast to those less-experienced teachers who seemed less proactive about communicating with families. For example, Kristine (Grade 8, General Education) has less than five years of experience and stated that, overall, she has a hard time with communicating with families. On this topic she noted that she is "kind of more of a, uh, like, reserved person" and knows that communicating with families is an area that she wants to "grow" in. She stated that if she calls and doesn't get an answer, then it makes her apprehensive to contact certain families. When Kristine doesn't get her calls returned, she stated that " after a while, I'm like, I just don't want to bother them anymore" and that she can have "awkwardness with the parents." On the whole, while Kristine certainly tries, her words showcase that she does not seem comfortable nor proactive about pursuing parents.

Agnis, another teacher with less than five years of experience, also spoke of a kind of lack of comfortability with reaching out to parents. Although her awkwardness appeared to have less to do with being a reserved person, and more due

to a lack of a clear understanding about the role of the teacher when it comes to family communication. When speaking of the ways in which she communicates with families, Agnis stated that "it might be because I'm new [but] I feel like there's a little bit of confusion for me." She went on by saying, "I think that in other districts it's way more common for teachers to do things with families, and there's a lot more family involvement" and that "none of those things happen here." Agnis went on to say "I think that that's really uncommon. I feel like there's this line of 'Okay, now what are we liable for?'" In this example, Agnis showed that there does seem to be some awkwardness when it comes to communicating with families. However, the awkwardness doesn't come from her, but rather a lack of a clear understanding of whether she should be communicating with families or in exactly what ways. Agnis appears to be saying that the other teachers in the district don't appear to be too involved in the lives of their students' families either, and this has led to a lack of teacher and family interaction, leaving Agnis unsure of how best to communicate with parents. Therefore, this is evidence to the fact that more experienced teachers seem comfortable with gifting their time to reach out to families, while less experienced teachers, whether due to personal reasons or a lack of understanding of parent-teacher communication culture, seem less comfortable and proactive regarding their communication with families.

Communication

The final theme that we analyzed by factor was communication. When it came to communication, we found that teachers often related their care to how they communicated with their students. This came in the form of dialoguing,

monologuing, being authentic, honest, and transparent, and validating. Like the other themes, the first factor that we looked at as it pertained to this theme was gender.

Gender. When looking specifically at how communication differed based on the factor of gender, there emerged some clear differences in teachers' perceptions of care. For example, of those teachers that often relied on using kind and positive words while dialoguing with students, most of these teachers were females. For example, Jenny (Grade 5, GATE) explained that she shows her care through her communication by using kind and positive words. She does so mostly through the use of their classroom note service, what she called "Mail Pal." Jenny says through these kind notes she likes to send comments "remarking on the positives I see." Moreover, she said that she also likes to use kind and positive words verbally with students as well. She illustrated how she might communicate using kind and positive words by using an example of a fictional girl in her class that she called Nancy. Jenny said that she would approach her when she sees something the girl is doing correctly and remark , "Nancy, I see how quickly you transitioned from math to reading. Why, you already have your reading book. Thank you for caring about our class time." In situations such as these, Jenny equated caring communication with using kind and positive words. This sentiment was echoed by other educators as well, but only those who were female.

In contrast to the kind words spoken by female teachers, male teachers often focused on garnering "respect" with their students as a way in which they communicated their care. In fact, this idea of respect was often cultivated through conversation. For example, Deion (Grade 7, General Education) explicitly stated that

before you can teach a student, there must exist a level of respect between the teacher and the student. In order to do this Deion stated that you need to get to know what kids are interested in. From there you can talk to them about their interests and from there, Deion says that is when you begin to earn their respect and then learning can begin.

This is idea of respect is huge in Deion's class and he stated that as a class, they "have really, really good conversations about respect." Deion's reasoning for this is that students are going through a lot of changes and this causes students to want respect. Deion expanded on this by saying, "they want to be treated respectfully, they want to be treated fairly, uh, and a lot of kids feel like they are not." One way in which he does this is by not speaking rudely to students, but rather speaking to them in a calm and controlled tone.

Deion also emphasized that while he makes sure to give students respect they feel they deserve, he expects a level of respect in return. This was also emphasized by other male teachers such as Steve (Grade 8, Honors). When talking about a student who was giving him a difficult time, Steve said he approached the student to ask him why he was disrupting the class. After asking the student "what's going on," Steve follows this question with, "I know I've treated you with respect. I would just like the same in return." From these two examples, it appears that males, more so than their female counterparts, put a premium on giving respect to their students and getting it in return.

Level. Looking at how care through communication varied based on level taught, there emerged in the data a sense that teachers at the secondary level felt less

comfortable with fully open conversations compared to their elementary peers. Most likely due to the more complex nature of personal matters for students at the secondary level, secondary teachers spoke about not wanting to get too personal with students. Elementary teachers did not express this sentiment. For example, Steve (Grade 8, AP) felt that when it came to communicating with his students, there was a line that he felt he could not cross for fear that this type of communication might be seen as inappropriate by others. He said that while he builds up a good rapport with his students through conversation and asking them about their personal lives, he has to remind them that it is a business relationship. Steve went on to say that it hurts their feelings sometimes, but that it is important to remind students that "I'm not your friend." Teachers need to keep boundaries on student relationships because as Steve explains, "if we showed we cared too much, people take that as you're stalking, and you're getting weird." He summed up this feeling by saying, "In this day and age, it's almost scary to be too nice." Overall, Steve feels that it is important to have good communication with students, but that it needs to be conducted in a business-like manner for fear of how others might perceive it. This sentiment was echoed by other secondary teachers, who all felt that while an open dialogue was good for student care, professional boundaries also were necessary. Elementary teachers did not express this concern.

Track. In regards to teacher dialogue with students, data showed that only General Education teachers showed care through conversation with students. Oppositely, teachers at the AP or Honors level appeared to be more comfortable with either a one-sided conversation such as expectation-setting or directing the student to

someone who will engage in a dialogue. For example, at the elementary General Education level, (Martina, Grade 5, General Education) said that she does her best to have open dialogues with her students. Regarding one particularly troubled student, Martina said she approached him and asked, "Can I talk to you in private? I really care about you. I'm worried about you. Talk to me." She then proceeded to ask the boy about what was going on at home. This example shows that Martina is in no way afraid of having an open-ended dialogue with her students in order to understand them better.

On the other hand, Jackie (Grade 7, AP) shared examples that showed that she was not as comfortable with having an open dialogue. In fact, it appears that she preferred more a monologue-like approach and this was echoed by other advanced track teachers. In one example, Jackie talked about a similar situation to Martina when she approached a troubled student. Regarding talking to students like this, Jackie said, "If I ask [a student] to step outside we are not actually having a conversation. This is one way. I am telling you, Here is what I perceived. Here is why I had a problem with what I perceived. This is what I anticipate will happen in the future." Unlike Martina, Jackie explicitly states that she isn't interested in having an open dialogue. This appears to show that between the lower and high tracks, there is a different approach to their care through communication.

Quantitative Results

The purpose of this part of our research was to understand how students perceive care from their teachers and to gauge how educational experiences differ based on high and low tracks, elementary and secondary levels, student ethnicity, and

student gender. In our mixed-methods study, quantitative data were collected via the Panorama Student Survey at both the elementary and secondary levels. All of the students surveyed as a part of our study were the students of the teachers we interviewed. Students in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade were given the elementary version of the survey, and students in seventh through twelfth grades were given the secondary version of the survey. Two different versions of the survey were utilized due to the developmental level of the student participants. Elementary students were given a shorter version of the survey in order to match their development level. Secondary students were give a longer and more detailed version of the survey.

There was a total of 110 valid elementary surveys utilized within the study, with a total of 64 accounting for General Education students, and 47 accounting for GATE students. There was a total of 11 surveys eliminated from the study, seven General Education surveys and four GATE surveys. These surveys were eliminated because they were incomplete. Of those who completed the elementary survey, 70.8% of the students identified as Hispanic, and 29.2% of the students identified as Non-Hispanic. There were 56 males and 54 females in the elementary survey group. As for grade level, there were 31 fourth graders, 38 fifth graders, and 40 sixth graders. The percentages for each demographic within each class track can be found in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Demographics of Surveyed Elementary Students by Percentages

	General Education *N*=64	GATE *N*=47
Class Type	57.7	42.3
Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	80.6	56.8
Non-Hispanic/Latino	19.4	43.2
Race		
White	74.6	80.6
Asian	0.0	6.5
Black or African American	13.6	6.5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	6.8	3.2
American Indian or Alaskan Native	5.1	3.2
Gender		
Female	48.4	48.9
Male	51.6	51.1
Self-Reported GPA		
Mostly 1s	4.7	2.1
Mostly 2s	17.2	6.4
Mostly 3s	50.0	70.2
Mostly 4s	28.1	21.3
Maternal Education		
Elementary	28.1	10.9
Middle School	6.3	6.5
Some High School	6.3	0.0
High School	20.3	19.6
Some College	17.2	23.9
College	7.7	28.3
Some Graduate School	1.6	0.0
Graduate School	12.5	10.9

Grade Level

	Fourth	31.7	23.4
	Fifth	31.7	40.4
	Sixth	36.5	36.2

For the secondary survey group, there was a total of 501 secondary surveys utilized within the study, 277 General Education surveys and 224 Honors/AP surveys. There was a total of 27 surveys eliminated from the study, 17 from General Education and 10 from Honors/AP. The surveys were eliminated due to being incomplete. For the entire secondary group, 51% identified as Hispanic/Latino, and 45.7% identified as Not Hispanic/Latino. There were 219 males and 277 females identified in the secondary survey group. As for grade level, there were 107 seventh graders, 171 eighth graders, 18 ninth graders, 89 tenth graders, 73 eleventh graders, and 43 twelfth graders. The percentages for each demographic within each class track can be found in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Demographics of Surveyed Secondary Students by Percentages

	General Education $N=277$	Honors/AP $N=224$
Class Type	55.3	44.7
Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	60.1	44.3
Non-Hispanic/Latino	39.9	55.7
Race		
White	37.6	58.2
Asian	4.9	6.4
Black or African American	6.8	3.6

Hispanic or Latino	46.2	29.5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	4.5	2.3
Gender		
Female	50.0	63.1
Male	50.0	36.9
Self-Reported GPA		
Mostly Ds and Fs	8.8	.4
Mostly Cs	21.2	2.2
Mostly Bs	39.8	17.9
Mostly As	30.3	79.5
Maternal Education		
Elementary	5.5	4.1
Middle School	11.6	5.4
Some High School	7.6	4.5
High School	25.1	14.0
Some College	15.3	20.7
College	22.2	28.4
Some Graduate School	3.3	3.6
Graduate School	9.5	19.4
Grade Level		
Seventh	18.1	25.4
Eighth	36.1	31.7
Ninth	6.1	.4
Tenth	11.9	25.0
Eleventh	20.2	7.6
Twelfth	7.6	9.8

Equity Analysis

Given that the purpose of this project was to analyze the experiences of students within high and low tracks, an analysis of the sample demographics provides another level of investigation. This analysis was informative because our hypotheses

postulated that students in different tracks have different educational experiences which, in turn, may lead to differences in future life opportunities. Moreover, educational equity has been, and continues to be, a controversial topic among educators and policymakers. Historically, students of color have been under-enrolled in high level classes even when these students are the majority in a given school or district (Handwerk, Tognatta, Coley & Gitomer, 2008; Witenko, Mireles-Rios & Rios, 2017). It is important that historically underrepresented students be fully represented within high track classes according to their same ratio within the school population. To that end, an equity analysis is outlined below. This analysis was modeled after Skrla, McKenzie, and Scheurich's (2009) model for equity audits. When the equity analysis was conducted, we desired to see students of various demographics within high track classes at comparable percentages to those percentages within the entire school and district population. This desire was grounded on the expectation that proper representation is important in achieving the opportunity for all students to succeed.

Table 6 below shows the school district's demographics for ethnicity and gender. This table serves as a comparison tool for the sample used in this study, as reported by Ed-Data (2016).

Table 6

District Demographics in 2016-2017		
Race	Number	Percentage
American Indian or Alaskan Native	100	0.70
Asian	701	4.94
Black or African American	297	2.00
Filipino	42	0.70

Hispanic or Latino	8,036	56.6
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	81	0.57
None Reported	147	1.04
Two or More Races	181	1.27
White	4,616	32.5
Gender		
Female	6,856	48.28
Male	7,345	51.72
Total	14,201	

*Displays the number of student in each ethnicity and gender category as well as their percentages on the total population of the school district.

African American students made up about 2% of the district's population. However, Table 4, representing elementary students surveyed in this study, shows that there were more than twice as many African American students in General Education (13.6%) when compared to those in GATE (6.5%) at the elementary level. Also, Asian students made up about 5% of the district's population but our sample showed that all Asian students surveyed were currently receiving GATE services in the elementary setting. According to Table 5, for the secondary level, only 44.3% of Hispanic/Latino students surveyed were in the Honors/AP track but they were 56.6% of the district's overall population. White students made up more than half of the students in Honors/AP at 58.2% while only accounted for less than a third of the district's population at 32.5%. This showed discrepancies in the number of students of color receiving GATE and Honors/AP services and indicated that high tracks were not representative of the district's overall population.

Additionally, as reported earlier, the United States Census Bureau (2015) reported that the district is in a county where 16.5% of individuals who are 25 years old or older receive a bachelor's degree. The sample data in Table 4 showed that a

combined 63.1% of parents of elementary students in GATE have completed at least some college. This total was much higher than the 39% of parents of elementary students in General Education who have completed at least some college, indicating that students with parents who have completed more schooling seemed to have a higher probability of being placed in the higher track. Similar to the elementary level figures, Table 5 indicates that a combined 72.1% of parents of secondary students in the Honors/AP track have completed at least some college, while only a combined 50.3% of parents of secondary students in General Education have completed at least some college. These demographics may be evidence of an inequitable situation as true equity exists when students receive educational support and services based on their individual need (Handwerk, et al., 2008; Witenko et al., 2017). Because educated parents have at least some familiarity with navigating the system, it led this research group to believe that their children would need the least amount of support in school and that the home environment provides further support and guidance. However, the demographics of the district compared to our sample seem to indicate that the opposite is occurring. This is a trend also seen in the research (Welton & Martinez, 2014; Wright, Ford, & Young, 2017).

Lastly, in regards to the gender demographics of the district, the breakdown was almost even with females at 48.28% and males at 51.72%. At the secondary level, Table 5 shows discrepancies in gender in the Honors/AP track based on this study's sample. Males only made up about 37% of the sample in comparison to the 63.1% of females in the same track, meaning that male students in the Honors/AP track were also not representative of the district's population overall. Because track

placement and educational rigor have implications for students' future life events, such as college attendance, college completion, and employment attainment (Blackburn & Williamson, 2009), it is important to analyze access to higher tracks based on factors such as ethnicity and gender (Moller & Stearns, 2012).

Although this study's sample was composed of about 600 students and was only about 4% of the district's overall population, we postulated that an equity analysis was useful in informing educators about how much access students of color and other marginalized groups have to the best opportunities available within a school district. Furthermore, this analysis can

serve as a good start for further investigations related to equity and access.

Quantitative Analysis

We analyzed responses from the surveys using the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences, v. 24.0. The following analyses were conducted: Chi Squares, ANOVAs, and multiple regressions. Our hypothesis for the student survey data was that there will be differences in student perceptions of their experiences based on track placement, self-reported GPA, grade in school, and ethnicity.

Elementary Survey Question Data

We conducted two-way contingency table analyses on each survey question based on class track at both the elementary and secondary levels. These analyses were conducted to determine if there was a difference in overall perception of care based on class track. Student perceptions of care were determined by five Likert-type scale responses ranging from least to most positive. For the elementary survey, we found significant differences in responses between GATE students and General Education

students in seven of the 21 survey questions. Significant differences indicated that

GATE and General Education students had significant differences in responses in

their perception of care from their teachers. See Table 7 below for results.

Table 7

Comparison of Elementary Student Survey Item Responses Based on Class Type

Survey Item	N	χ^2	p	Cramer's V
How much have you learned from this teacher?	110	8.34	.08	.28
How much did you learn from this teacher that you didn't know before taking his or her class?	108	14.57	.01 *	.38
How good is this teacher at helping you learn?	110	7.73	.10	.27
How good is this teacher at teaching you in the way you learn best?	108	4.23	.38	.20
When you need extra help, how good is this teacher at giving you that help?	110	8.70	.03 *	.28
How clearly does this teacher present the information that you need to learn?	109	5.75	.22	.23
How interesting does this teacher make what you are learning in class?	109	11.88	.02 *	.33
When you feel like giving up, how likely is it that this teacher will make you keep trying?	109	4.64	.32	.21
Overall, how high are this teacher's expectations of you?	108	12.10	.02 *	.02
How much does this teacher encourage you to do your best work?	110	5.33	.26	.22
How often does this teacher make you explain your answers?	110	15.71	.00 *	.38
How often does this teacher take time to make sure you understand the material?	108	6.96	.14	.25
When your teacher asks, "how are you," how often do you feel that your teacher really wants to know your answer?	109	7.15	.13	.26
How much does this teacher want to learn about what you do when you are not in school?	109	2.07	.72	.14
How interested is this teacher in what you want to be when you grow up?	110	2.69	.61	.16
If you had something on your mind, how carefully would this teacher listen to you?	110	9.55	.05 *	.30
Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?	110	10.35	.04 *	.31
How accepted do you feel by other people?	110	6.91	.14	.25

How well do people at your school understand you as a person?	107	5.51	.24	.23
How much support do the adults at your school give you?	109	6.24	.18	.24
How much respect do students at your school show you?	109	4.15	.39	.20

*p < .05

When significant differences were found at the elementary level, GATE students responded more favorably on the questions than their General Education peers. Table 8 provides a frequency distribution of each significant survey question response, indicating what percentage of students chose each answer option.

Table 8

Frequency Distribution by Percent Comparing Elementary General Education and GATE Students among Survey Items with Significantly Different Responses

| Survey Item | Response Options from Least to Most Positive [A] | | | | |
	1	2	3	4	5
How much did you learn from this teacher that you didn't know before taking his or her class?					
General Education	6.6	13.1	26.2	32.8	21.3
GATE	2.1	2.1	8.5	61.7	25.5
When you need extra help, how good is this teacher at giving you extra help?					
General Education	6.3	0.0	6.3	49.2	38.1
GATE	0.0	0.0	10.6	29.8	59.6
How interesting does this teacher make what you are learning in class?					
General Education	11.3	11.3	12.9	29.0	35.5
GATE	0.0	2.1	10.6	27.7	59.6
Overall, how high are this teacher's expectations of you?					
General Education	3.2	8.1	22.6	32.3	33.9
GATE	0.0	0.0	6.5	43.5	50.0
How often does this teacher make you explain your answers?					
General Education	3.2	9.5	27.0	25.4	34.9
GATE	0.0	2.1	10.6	59.6	27.7

If you had something on your mind, how carefully would this teacher listen to you?					
General Education	4.8	12.7	14.3	23.8	44.4
GATE	0.0	0.0	12.8	31.0	55.3
Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?					
General Education	9.5	4.8	17.5	30.2	38.1
GATE	0.0	0.0	8.5	44.7	46.8

A Response choices varied based on appropriateness for item stem

Table 8 indicates the frequency distribution of each answer option of each question where significant differences were found between General Education and GATE responses. Answer options ranged from least to most positive; some answers ranged from "not at all" to "extremely," "almost never" to "almost always," and "not at all high" to "extremely high." (See Appendix E for the survey). Higher numbers indicated a higher percentage of participants chose that answer option for the specific question. For example, the question, "Overall, how high are this teacher's expectations of you," answer option percentages indicate that GATE students answer more favorably. A total of 50% of GATE students chose the most positive answer, and 43.5 percent of GATE students choses the second most positive answer option, "Extremely high," and "Quite high," respectively. This is compared with General Education students, of which 33.9 percent chose the most positive answer and 32.3 percent chose the second most positive answer. For the question, "If you had something on your mind, how carefully would this teacher listen to you?" answer option percentages indicate that GATE students answered more favorably. For GATE, 55.3 of the students chose the highest answer option, "extremely," and 31 percent chose the second highest answer option, "quite." This compares with General

Education students, 44.4 percent chose the highest answer option, and 28.3 percent chose the second highest answer option. Another question to note is, "When you need extra help, how good is this teacher at giving you extra help?" A total of 59.6 GATE students chose the most positive answer option, and 29.6 chose the second most positive answer option. For General Education students, 38.1 percent chose the most positive answer option, and 49.2 percent chose the second most positive answer option.

Secondary Survey Question Data

For secondary survey data, we also conducted two-way contingency table analyses on each survey question based on class track. These analyses were conducted to determine if there was a difference in overall perception of care based on class track. Student perceptions of care were determined by five Likert scale responses ranging from least to most positive. For the secondary survey, significant differences in responses were found between class type in 12 of the 31 survey questions. Significant differences indicated that Honors/AP and General Education students had significant differences in responses in their perception of care from their teachers. See Table 9 for the overview.

Table 9

Comparison of Secondary Student Survey Item Responses Based on Class Type

Survey Item	N	χ^2	p	Cramer's V
Overall, how much have you learned from your teachers?	499	6.24	.18	.11
During class, how motivating are the activities that this teacher has you do?	501	5.70	.22	.11
For this class, how clearly does this teacher present the information that you need to learn?	501	24.81	<.001	.22
How interesting does this teacher make what you are learning in class?	498	16.28	.00*	.18
When you need extra help, how good is this teacher at giving you that help?	495	9.99	.04*	.14
How comfortable are you asking this teacher questions about what you are learning in his or her class?	499	.481	.98	.03
How often does this teacher give you feedback that helps you learn?	500	15.61	.00*	.18
How often does has this teacher taught you things that you didn't know before taking this class?	501	2.99	.56	.08
When you feel like giving up on a difficult task, how likely is it that this teacher will make you keep trying?	497	5.41	.25	.11
Overall, how high are this teacher's expectations of you?	497	4.34	.36	.09
How often does this teacher make you explain your answers?	501	3.85	.43	.09
How often does this teacher take time to make sure you understand the material?	501	13.36	.01*	.16
How often does this teacher encourage you to do your best?	500	10.03	.04*	.14
When you teacher asks how you are doing, how often do you feel that your teacher is really interested your answer?	499	2.98	.56	.08

How interested is this teacher in what you do outside of class?	500	8.54	.07	.13
How interested is this teacher in your career after you finish school?	499	.616	.96	.04
If you walked into class upset, how concerned would your teacher be?	498	6.08	.19	.11
If you came back to visit this class three years from now, how excited would this teacher be to see you?	498	10.06	.04*	.14
If you had something on your mind, how carefully would this teacher listen to you?	497	11.19	.02*	.15
At your school, how accepted do you feel by the other students?	498	2.02	.73	.06
How well do people at your school understand you?	498	2.33	.68	.07
How connected do you feel to the adults at your school?	497	4.88	.30	.10
How much do you matter to others at this school?	500	3.30	.51	.08
Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?	497	10.68	.03*	.15
How much respect do students in your school show you?	500	1.26	.87	.05
How much do you agree with the following: At my school, teachers work hard to make sure that all students are learning.	500	7.92	.10	.13
How much do you agree with the following: At my school, all students are encourage to go to college.	499	5.29	.26	.10
How much do you agree with the following: At my school, teachers pay attention to all students, not just top students.	497	10.62	.03*	.15
How much do you agree with the following: At my school, teachers work hard to make sure that students stay in school.	499	10.48	.03*	.15

How much do you agree with the following: At my school, my friends in school will attend college after high school.	498	13.26	.01*	.16
How much do you agree with the following: At my school, the students in my school will attend college after high school.	498	1.86	.76	.06

*$p < .05$

When significant differences were found at the secondary level, General

Education students responded more favorably on the questions than their Honors and

AP peers. Table 10 provides a frequency distribution of each significant survey

question responses, indicating what percentage of student choose each answer option.

Table 10

Frequency Distribution by Percent Comparing Secondary General Education and Honors/AP Students among Survey Items with Significantly Different Responses

	Response Options from Least to Most Positive [A]				
Survey Item	1	2	3	4	5
For this class, how clearly does this teacher present the information that you need to learn?					
General Education	1.4	6.5	9.7	36.8	45.5
Honors/AP	5.4	9.8	20.1	34.8	29.9
How interesting does this teacher make what you are learning in class?					
General Education	4.4	13.1	24.4	36.4	21.8
Honors/AP	13.5	13.5	19.3	28.7	25.1
When you need extra help, how good is this teacher at giving you that help?					
General Education	4.4	5.5	13.9	34.8	41.4
Honors/AP	8.1	9.0	17.1	35.6	30.2
How often does this teacher give you feedback that helps you learn?					
General Education	4.3	10.1	16.2	44.8	24.5
Honors/AP	5.8	15.7	25.6	37.7	15.2
How often does this teacher take time to make sure you understand the material?					
General Education	2.9	8.3	17.7	39.4	31.8

Honors/AP	5.4	15.2	21.9	36.2	21.4
How often does this teacher encourage you to do your best?					
General Education	3.3	6.2	12.0	26.4	52.2
Honors/AP	7.6	6.7	17.4	26.8	41.5
If you came back to visit this class three years from now, how excited would this teacher be to see you?					
General Education	13.8	13.8	28.3	24.6	19.6
Honors/AP	23.0	16.7	22.5	23.4	14.4
If you had something on your mind, how carefully would this teacher listen to you?					
General Education	9.1	12.0	17.1	28.7	33.1
Honors/AP	12.2	16.7	23.4	25.7	22.1
Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?					
General Education	12.4	13.1	24.5	22.6	27.4
Honors/AP	9.0	9.9	22.9	35.4	22.9
How much do you agree with the following: At my school, teachers pay attention to all students, not just top students.					
General Education	8.4	15.3	34.5	25.8	16.0
Honors/AP	8.6	20.7	42.3	18.9	9.5
How much do you agree with the following: At my school, teachers work hard to make sure that students stay in school.					
General Education	3.6	11.2	35.9	28.6	20.7
Honors/AP	4.9	5.8	37.2	37.7	14.3
How much do you agree with the following: At my school, my friends in school will attend college after high school.					
General Education	2.9	6.2	33.6	34.3	23.0
Honors/AP	2.7	3.6	23.2	34.8	35.7

A Response choices varied based on appropriateness for item stem

Table 10 indicates the frequency distribution of each answer option of each

question where significant differences were found between General Education and

Honors/AP responses. Answer options ranged from least to most positive; some

answers ranged from "not at all" to "extremely," "almost never" to "almost always," and "not at all high" to "extremely high." Higher numbers indicated a higher percentage of participants chose that answer option for the specific question. For example, the question, "How often does this teacher encourage you to do your best," answer option percentages indicated that General Education students answered more favorably. A total of 52.2 percent of General Education students chose the most positive answer. This is compared with Honors/AP students, of which 41.5 percent chose the most positive answer. For the question, "If you had something on your mind, how carefully would this teacher listen to you?" answer option percentages indicated that General Education students answered more favorably. For General Education, 33.1 of the students chose the highest answer option, "extremely," and 28.7 percent chose the second highest answer option, "quite." This compares with Honors/AP students, 22.1 percent chose the highest answer option, and 25.7 percent chose the second highest answer option. Another question to note is, "When you need extra help, how good is this teacher at giving you extra help?" A total of 41.4 General Education students chose the most positive answer option, and 34.8 chose the second most positive answer option. For Honors/AP students, 30.2 percent chose the most positive answer option, and 35.6 percent chose the second most positive answer option.

Survey Scale Analysis

We conducted a series of ANOVAs on the specific scales into which the Panorama Student Survey organized the various questions. For the elementary survey, scales included: Classroom Expectations, Classroom Rigor, Student/Teacher

Relationships, and Feelings About School. The survey questions were organized into four scales through factor analysis. The analysis we used then determined if, as a whole, there were significant differences in responses to survey questions within that scale based on class track. Significant differences in scales were found between class track in three of the four scales; these scales were Classroom Rigor, Classroom Expectations, and Feelings About School. Higher means per scale indicated more favorable responses on the questions for the scale than lower means. Students in GATE answered more favorably on the three significant scales (Classroom Rigor, Classroom Expectations, and Feelings About School) than their General Education peers. See Table 11 for an overview.

Table 11

Comparison of Scales among Elementary General Education and GATE Students

Scale	N	M	SD	F	p	η^2
Classroom Expectations				14.86	<.001	.13
General Education	58	27.90	5.07			
GATE	47	31.11	2.90			
Classroom Rigor				7.82	.01*	.07
General Education	60	20.20	4.26			
GATE	46	22.09	1.90			
Student-Teacher Relationships				3.43	.07	.03
General Education	62	13.86	3.81			
GATE	46	15.09	2.80			
Feelings about School				6.31	.01*	.06
General Education	59	18.41	5.05			
GATE	46	20.52	3.02			

*p < .05

For the secondary survey, the following scales were identified as significant: Pedagogical Effectiveness, Expectations/Rigor, Supportive Relationships, Sense of Belonging, and Path to Graduation. The survey questions were organized in five scales through factor analysis. We then used a series of ANOVAs on the specific scales to determine if significant differences in responses were found based on class track for all of the questions within the scales. Significant differences in scales were found between class type in two of the five scales. The significant scales were Pedagogical Effectiveness, and Expectations and Rigor. A higher mean per scale indicated that students had more favorable responses relative to the scale. Students in General Education answered more favorably on the two significant scales (Pedagogical Effectiveness, Expectations and Rigor) than their Honors/AP peers. See Table 12 for the results.

Table 12

Comparison of Scales among Secondary General Education and Honors/AP Students

Scale	N	M	SD	F	p	η²
Pedagogical Effectiveness				8.80	<.001*	.02
General Education	271	30.50	5.74			
Honors/AP	220	28.86	6.45			
Expectations and Rigor				8.81	.00*	.02
General Education	271	19.13	4.08			
Honors/AP	223	18.01	4.25			
Supportive Relationships				3.34	.07	.01
General Education	272	19.01	6.27			
Honors/AP	219	17.94	6.63			
Sense of Belonging				.47	.49	.00
General Education	272	19.59	5.52			
Honors/AP	221	19.93	5.35			
Path to Graduation				.18	.68	.00
General Education	272	21.02	4.20			
Honors/AP	220	20.86	4.18			

*p < .05

Multiple Regressions on Elementary Survey Responses

For the elementary survey, multiple regressions evaluated how well various demographics predicted outcomes on the four survey scales. The demographics included class type, gender, ethnicity, race, self-reported grades, and highest education of the mother. The linear combination of predictors was significant for two of the four survey scales. These scales were Classroom Expectations and Classroom Rigor. See Table 13 for a summary of the models. For Classroom Expectations, $F(6, 76) = 3.09$, $p = .01$, the sample multiple correlation coefficient was .44, indicating approximately 20% of the variance on Classroom Expectations could be accounted for by the linear combination of these measures. For Classroom Rigor, $F(6, 79) = 2.85$, $p = .02$, the sample multiple correlation coefficient was .44, indicating approximately 18% of the variance on Classroom Rigor could be accounted for by the linear combination of these measures.

Table 13

Summary of Multiple Regression Models for Elementary Students by Scale [A]

Scale	R	R^2	R^2_{adj}	F	p
Classroom Expectations	.44	.20	.13	3.09	.01*
Classroom Rigor	.44	.18	.12	2.85	.02*
Student-Teacher Relationships	.18	.03	-.04	.43	.86
Feelings about School	.26	.07	-.00	.94	.47

[A] Independent variables in model included class type, gender, ethnicity, race, grades, and highest education of mother
*$p < .05$

Table 14 presents the contribution of each variable in the regression models. For Classroom Expectations, class type was the only statistically significant

contributor to the regression model. For Classroom Rigor, both class type and grades

were statistically significant contributors to the regression model.

Table 14

Contribution of Each Variable in the Regression Model

Scale	β	p	r	r_p
Classroom Expectations				
Class Type	.38	.00*	.36	.34
Gender	-.01	.94	.01	-.01
Ethnicity	-.04	.75	.18	-.04
Race	.16	.15	.09	.17
Self-Reported Grades	.21	.06	.23	.21
Highest Maternal Education	.03	.77	.14	.03
Classroom Rigor				
Class Type	.31	.01*	.28	.29
Gender	-.07	.53	-.02	-.07
Ethnicity	-.10	.41	.11	-.09
Race	.20	.08	.12	.20
Self-Reported Grades	.28	.01*	.28	.28
Highest Maternal Education	.02	.85	.13	.02

*$p < .05$

To further explore the statistically significant variables within the Classroom

Rigor scale, a 2 X 2 ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the effects of class type and

grades on the Classroom Rigor scale. The ANOVA indicated a significant interaction

between class type and grades, $F(3, 98) = 3.91$, $p = .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .11$, and a

significant main effect for class type, $F(1, 44) = 14.19$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .13$.

There was no significant main effect for grades, $F(3, 44) = .54$, $p = .65$, partial $\eta^2 =$

.02. Figure 2 displays the interaction between grades and class type on perception of

classroom rigor. The interaction appears to occur most significantly with students in

GATE, who receive mostly 1s and 2s. Students in GATE who receive mostly 1s and

2s have a higher perception of classroom rigor than their General Education peers who receive the same grades.

Estimated Marginal Means of ClassroomRigor
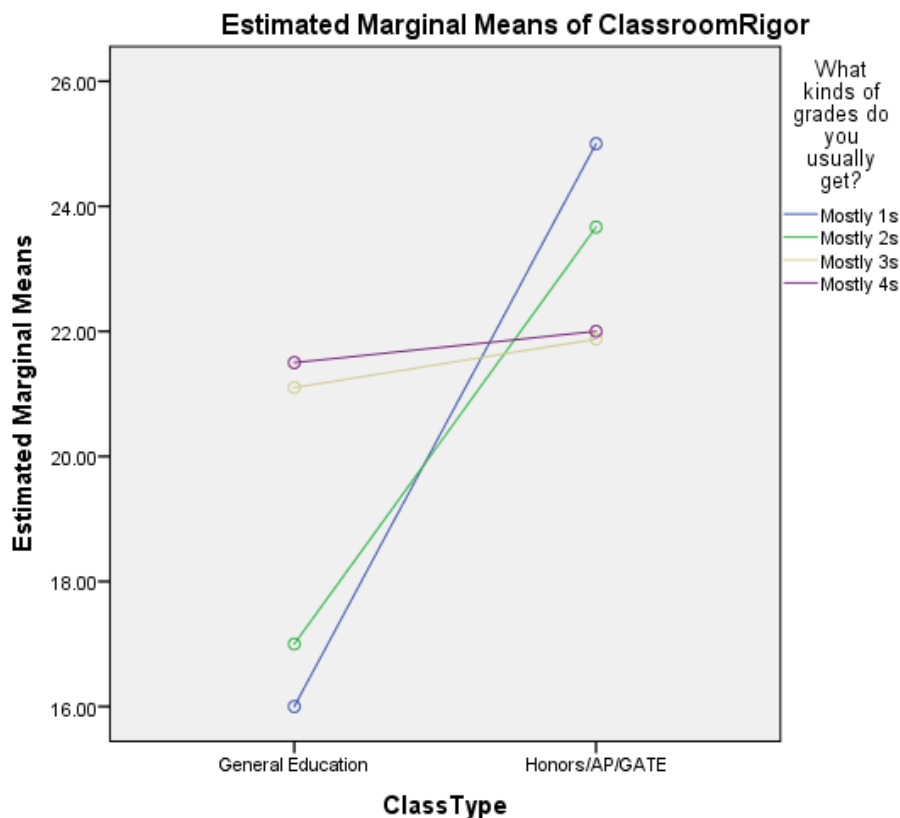
Figure 2. Interaction between grades and class type on perception of classroom rigor.

Multiple Regressions on Secondary Survey Responses

For the secondary survey, multiple regressions evaluated how well various demographics predicted outcomes on the five survey scales. The demographics included class type, gender, ethnicity, race, self-reported grades, and highest education of mother. The linear combination of predictors was significant for one of the five survey scale; the significant scale was Classroom Expectations. See Table 15 for model values. For Sense of Belonging, $F(6, 452) = 3.62$, $p = .00$, the sample

multiple correlation coefficient was .21, indicating approximately 5% of the variance on Classroom Expectations could be accounted for by the linear combination of these measures. Table 16 presents the contribution of each variable in that regression model. Gender and race were the only statistically significant variables in the regression model, indicating these two variables were the only variables that had a significant effect on the model.

Table 15

Summary of Multiple Regression Models for Secondary Students by Scale [A]

Scale	R	R^2	R^2_{adj}	F	p
Pedagogical Effectiveness	.13	.02	.00	1.25	.28
Expectations and Rigor	.16	.02	.01	1.87	.09
Supportive Relationships	.13	.02	.00	1.21	.30
Sense of Belonging	.21	.05	.03	3.62	.00*
Path to Graduation	.08	.01	-.01	.43	.86

[A] Independent variables in model included class type, gender, ethnicity, race, self-reported grades, and highest education of mother
*$p < .05$

Table 16

Contribution of Each Variable in the Regression Model for Sense of Belonging

Variable	β	p	R	r_p
Class Type	.01	.83	.06	.01
Gender	-.13	.01*	-.11	-.13
Ethnicity	-.10	.11	-.07	-.08
Race	.02	.71	.04	.02
Self-Reported Grades	.15	.01*	.12	.13
Highest Maternal Education	.06	.19	.07	.06

*$p < .05$

To further explore the statistically significant variables within the Sense of Belonging scale, a 2 X 2 ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the effects of gender and grades on the Sense of Belonging scale. The ANOVA indicated no significant

interaction between gender and grades, $F(3, 477) = 2.1$, $p = .10$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$.

There was a significant main effect for gender, $F(1, 477) = 5.47$, $p = .02$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$, as well as a significant main effect for grades, $F(3, 477) = 3.34$, $p = .02$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$.

Quantitative Main Findings

Survey Questions

There were differences in the significance of survey results when viewing the survey data based on level of school, and when viewing the survey data based on class track. There was such a difference in the survey results between the levels of schools that the data should be viewed separately to fully understand the significance of the results.

Our first research question focused on whether the experiences of students differed within the tracks at the various levels. If differences did exist, we desired to understand why. With our quantitative survey data, we ran a variety of analyses to understand the wide range of dynamics that could have influenced the results. Using two-way contingency tables analyses on each survey question on both the elementary and secondary surveys, we wanted to identify significant differences in responses between General Education and either GATE or Honors/AP students. Within the elementary survey, seven of the 21 survey questions had significant differences in responses based on class track. In each of these questions, GATE students answered more favorably than their General Education peers. Elementary GATE students felt that they learned more from their teachers, they received an increased amount of help from their teachers, their teachers made their classes more interesting, and they had

higher expectations of them compared to their General Education peers. GATE students also felt that their teachers both made them explain their answers more and listened to them more; GATE students as well had a higher sense of belonging at their school than their General Education peers. When viewing each individual survey question, when significant differences were found in responses, GATE students answered more favorably than their General Education peers.

At the secondary level, survey results differed from those at the elementary level. For junior high and high school, General Education students had a more favorable view of their school experiences than their Honors/AP counterparts. For the secondary survey, significant differences were found between class type in 12 of the survey questions. In 10 of the 12 statistically significant survey questions, General Education students answered more positively than their Honors/AP peers. Students in General Education at the secondary level felt that their teachers presented information more clearly, made the class more interesting, gave increased extra help, and gave feedback more often. Also, General Education students felt that their teachers took more time to make sure they understood the material, encouraged them to do their best more often, and listened to their students more intently. General Education students also felt that their teachers would be happier to see them after three years, and General Education students had a greater sense of belonging at their school. Honors/AP students felt that their teachers worked harder to make sure students stay in school, and their friends were more likely to attend college as compared to their General Education peers. When viewing each individual survey question, when

significant differences were found, General Education students primarily answered more favorably than their Honors/AP peers.

When viewing the statistically significant results for each individual survey question, students at the elementary level had a lower percentage of statistically significant survey questions than their secondary counterparts (See Tables 7 and 9). With seven of the 21 survey questions significant, the 33% significance rate was lower compared with a 38% significant rate (12 of 31 questions) at the secondary level. Many of the significant findings at the elementary level focused on the role of the teacher, such as the teacher instruction, teacher expectations, or the help provided by the teacher. Similarly, at the secondary level, many of the significant results focused on aspects of the teacher as well: teacher help, teacher expectations, and teacher encouragement. In fact, four of the same survey questions were statistically significant in both the elementary and secondary responses. When viewing survey results with both school level and class track in mind, elementary GATE students viewed their teachers and school experiences more favorably compared to their General Education peers. Yet, at the secondary level, General Education students viewed their teachers and school experiences more favorably than their Honors/AP peers.

Our secondary research question goes beyond differences in student experiences based on class track at the various levels and focuses on student perceptions of their own educational experience. Because the data differs at the elementary and secondary level, each level will be focused on separately.

At the elementary level, when viewing questions (seven of 21 survey

questions) with a statistically significant difference, GATE students have a more favorable perception of their educational experience compared with their General Education peers. Yet, when examining the cross tabulations of all survey questions, even when significant differences were not found, GATE and General Education students had positive responses to questions about their classroom experiences. Both GATE and General Education students believed that they had learned quite a bit or a lot from their teachers, that their teachers were good at helping them and teaching them in the ways that they learned best, as well as presented the information clearly to their students. In all of the related questions, the majority of responses on the Likert-type scale were 'quite a bit' or 'a lot.' Most students felt that their teachers would make them keep trying if they wanted to give up, that they were encouraged to do their best work, and that their teachers made sure they understood the material. Most GATE and General Education students felt supported by adults at their schools and their teachers really wanted to know how they were doing.

Both GATE students and General Education students had mixed responses on the questions concerning whether teachers were interested in their lives outside of school or what the students wanted to be when they grew up. Mixed responses for these questions were evenly distributed among the answer options, ranging from "not much at all," to "extremely." All students also had mixed responses on whether they felt respected at school or if people at their school really understood them. Answer responses to these questions at the elementary level leaned towards the more favorable end of the Likert scale, but still showed answer options across the spectrum.

At the secondary level, when viewing questions (12 of the 31 survey

questions) where there was a statistically significant difference, General Education students had a more favorable perception of their educational experience compared with their Honors/AP peers on most questions. Yet, when looking at the cross tabulations of all survey questions, even when significant differences were not found, both General Education and Honors/AP students had positive responses in the following areas: both General Education and Honors/AP students felt that they had learned "quite a bit" or "a tremendous amount" from their teachers and that they were taught things they did not know before taking their classes. Both General Education and Honors/AP students believed their teachers had high expectations of them. Moreover, both General Education and Honors/AP students had mixed responses regarding how motivating the activities were in classes, how comfortable they were with asking their teachers about what they are learning in class, and if teachers would make them keep trying on a difficult task. These answer options leaned towards the middle and favorable end, with most answer options consisting of "somewhat" and "quite" but were fairly spread across the spectrum. All students had evenly distributed responses to the question pertaining to if teachers make them explain their answers. Both General Education and Honors/AP students had mixed responses regarding if their teachers are really interested in their responses to the question, "How are you doing," if teachers are interested in their lives outside of class, as well as teacher interest in the student's career after high school. All of these answer options were evenly distributed, and ranged from "not at all," to "extremely." All students also had mixed responses to whether their teachers would be concerned if they walked into class upset, how accepted they felt by other students, and how well people at their

school understand them. Once again, these answer options were evenly distributed across the scale and ranged from "not at all," to "extremely." All students also had mixed responses to how connected they felt to adults at their school, how much they matter to others at their school, and how much respect do students at their school show them; for these three questions, most responses consisted of "some" and "quite a bit," which was in the middle of the answer options. As for questions pertaining to agreement on whether teachers work hard to make sure all students are learning, students are encouraged to go to college, and students at their school will attend college after high school, most responses were between "somewhat agree" and "agree;" these answers were also in the middle of the answer options.

According to survey data, students at the elementary level and the secondary level appeared unsure on whether their teachers really wanted to know how they were doing when they asked, "How are you," as well as unsure about whether their teachers were interested in what they did outside of school, or what they wanted to become after finishing school. Both elementary and secondary students also had mixed responses on whether they felt accepted by other students and how well people at their school understand them.

For the most part, students in both General Education and GATE/Honors/AP, had favorable perceptions of their educational experiences. Even for survey questions where significant differences in responses were found, most responses, according to a 5-point Likert-type scale, were within the three to five-point range. Both elementary and secondary students believed that they had learned a lot from their teachers, that they were taught things they did not know before taking their classes, and that their

teachers had high expectations of them.

Survey Scales

There were differences in the statistical significance of scales between the elementary and the secondary level. At the elementary level, these scales included: Classroom Expectations, Classroom Rigor, Student/Teacher Relationships, and Feelings About School. In three of the four scales, significant differences were found based on class type. For the Classroom Expectations, Classroom Rigor, and Feelings About School scales, where significant differences were found, GATE students had higher mean scores compared with their General Education peers. These higher mean scores indicate that, as a whole, GATE students had more positive experiences related to classroom expectations, classroom rigor, and feelings about school. The secondary survey scales were Pedagogical Effectiveness, Expectations and Rigor, Supportive Relationships, Sense of Belonging, and Path to Graduation. In only two of the five scales were significant differences found between class type. General Education students had higher mean scores on Pedagogical Effectiveness and Expectation and Rigor. These higher mean scores indicated that General Education students at the secondary level believed that their teachers had greater pedagogical effectiveness, and that the expectations and rigor of their classrooms were greater compared with their Honors/AP peers. Though both levels agreed about the significance of Expectations and Rigor in the classroom, neither elementary nor secondary results revealed that the Student-Teacher Relationships and Supportive Relationships scales were statistically significant.

It must be noted that the difference in ratings between General Education and Honors/AP at the secondary level were not as substantial compared with the differences between General Education and GATE students at the elementary level. As for scale results at the elementary level, GATE students had a higher mean on each scale compared with their General Education counterparts, yet standard deviations were more varied. At the secondary level, General Education students had higher mean results on each scale except one, but standard deviations for both General Education and Honors/AP students were more consistent.

Demographic Variables

Analyses were conducted on the survey scales to determine how well various demographics predicted outcomes. These demographics included class type, gender, ethnicity, race, self-reported grades, and highest education of the mother. The linear combination of predictors was significant for two of the four survey scales at the elementary level, and one of the five survey scales at the secondary level. For the elementary level, the following scales were significant: Classroom Rigor and Classroom Expectations. For the secondary level, the only scale that was significant was Sense of Belonging. At the elementary level, the statistically significant contributors were class type and self-reported grades. This indicated that class type and self-reported grades were significant contributors to how elementary students answered to the Classroom Rigor and Classroom Expectations scales. This finding related to expectations and self-reported grades for elementary students may be due to the Pygmalion effect, something that has been mentioned previously and has been researched in several educational settings. According to Friedrich, Flunger,

Nagengast, Jonkmann, and Trautwein (2015), teacher expectations have the power to influence students' academic progress because students will act in the way that is expected of them in class. This phenomenon is often referred to as the Pygmalion Effect. Thus, if a teacher has low expectations for his or her students, it is likely that student academic outcomes, such as grades and test scores, will be negatively impacted.

At the secondary level, the statistically significant contributors to the model were gender and self-reported grades. This indicated that gender and self-reported grades were significant contributors to how secondary students answered on the Sense of Belonging scale. Santos (2014) reported similar findings and explained that sense of belonging was strongly predicted by a student's self-reported grades because students who possess high academic motivation also positively related to their school and feel that they are an integral part of their campus. In the linear combination of predictors for both elementary and secondary, race and ethnicity was never a statistically significant contributor to the regression model.

Summary

Chapter V featured the study's main findings of the quantitative and qualitative data. It also summarized findings as they pertain to specific factors of interest in this study, such as education level, track, years of experience, and gender. Chapter VI will feature a research discussion as it pertains to the three aspects of care based on the theoretical framework of this study and includes implications and limitations for the research project.

CHAPTER VI

RESEARCH DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

Introduction

Our primary research goal was to investigate teachers' perceptions and students' experiences in different tracks using the lens of care as research suggests both have a significant impact on student achievement (Waterhouse, 2007; Beck & Cassidy, 2009). First, we have suggested how important care is to the foundation of positive relationships between students and teachers. Research has found that relationships are an important element to student development and achievement (Hattie, 2009) and require teachers to care for their students through everyday interactions. When teachers demonstrate care for students, and have that care reciprocated, students have been shown to improve behaviorally (Borich, 1999), socially (Deiro, 1996), and academically (Mercado, 1993). Literature on tracking suggests that students' academic track is predictive of the qualification level of teachers, the level of engagement in the coursework (Oakes, 2005) and the elements of care present in the classroom (Mayer, Le Chasseur & Donaldson, 2018). If teachers have a different understanding of care, student experiences and educational outcomes may vary. To ensure students receive an equitable and effective education, care needs to be understood. We summarize our findings in Table 17 below.

Table 17

Literature Themes with Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Literature	Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings
Confirmation: Care in the classroom involves teachers using their knowledge of students to encourage them to become the best version of themselves, referred to as confirmation (Noddings, 1988)	**Elementary-** High track students felt that teachers were more willing to give them extra help, as well as high expectations of them. **Secondary-** Low track students felt that their teachers were more willing to give them extra help, gave feedback more often, and encouraged them to do their best more often.	Elementary teachers would use their knowledge of students to encourage them more consistently. While secondary teachers more frequently guided students towards what they believed was important.
Dialogue: Getting to know students through dialogue is an element of care (Noddings, 1988; Mayeroff, 1971).	**Elementary-** High track students felt that their teachers made them explain their answers more often and would listen to them more carefully if they had something on their mind. **Secondary-** Low track students felt their teachers gave them feedback more often and would listen to more carefully if they had something on their mind.	Many elementary teachers and only a few secondary teachers discussed talking with students as a way to get to know them as a form of care. Elementary teachers would talk with students. While secondary teachers would talk at students.
Engrossment and Motivational Displacement: Caring includes a complete dedication to a student, known as engrossment and motivational displacement , requiring a time commitment by the teachers (Noddings, 1988;	**Elementary-** High track students felt they had learned more knowledge from their teachers that they did not know before and that their teachers made what they were learning more interesting. High track students also felt that their teachers	Most elementary teachers took time during class and were engrossed in the lives of students. Few secondary teachers discussed motivational displacement and engrossment

| Tarlow, 1996). | would listen more carefully to them if they something on their mind. High track students had a greater sense of belonging at school. | congruent to the literature. Those that did discussed taking time outside of class to be in the presence of students. |
| | **Secondary-** Low track students felt that what they learned in class was more interesting and that their teachers took more time to make sure they understood the material. Low track students also felt that their teachers encouraged them more often to do their best, listened to them more carefully, and paid attention to all students. More high track students felt that their teachers worked hard to make sure all student stayed in school. | |

Student Experiences Based on Track

One of the initial purposes of our study was to understand how student experiences differ across the tracks at the various levels. We sought to understand if students in high and low tracks experienced the various elements of care differently. Along with this, we desired to better understand student perceptions of their educational experience. Our survey findings on the differences of student experiences of care based on track as it pertains to confirmation (Zakrzewski, 2012), dialogue (Noddings, 2005), and motivational displacement/engrossment (Noddings, 2005) are outlined below and in Tables 18 through 23. Moreover, observations about student

perceptions overall are explored here in order to paint a more complete picture of student experiences and their perceptions of these experiences. Significant questions are identified and we interpret the results in what follows.

Elementary Student Experiences Based on Track

Confirmation. Research suggests that higher track teachers have higher expectations of their students compared with teachers of low track students (Harris, 2012). Expectations, according to the literature on care, included using a deep knowledge of students to encourage them to be the best versions of themselves (Noddings, 1994). In our study, elementary GATE students perceived that teachers held higher expectations of them compared to lower track students, as well as provided an increased amount of help to reach those expectations. One elementary GATE teacher we interviewed explained that he only accepts students' best work and nothing less. Another stated that she cares for students by ensuring they understand the content being delivered in class. Elementary high track teachers focused primarily on holding high academic expectations of students, and this was supported by high track student responses on the elementary survey. Although high track elementary students perceived higher levels of confirmation, overall elementary students from both tracks perceived confirmation more positively.

High expectations according to the literature, also includes getting to know students through frequent and sustained personal interaction (Noddings, 1988). Although high track students at the elementary level perceived that their teachers held higher expectations of them compared to their lower track peers, they felt that their teachers did not get to know them on a personal level as well as their lower track

peers. Confirmation, according to Noddings (1988), is not complete unless the teacher actively attempts to get to know students. This might be explained by elementary teacher data that suggested it was difficult to build confirmation-based relationships with students as they had little time to get to know students because they had so much curriculum to get through. Elementary high track students did not perceive that their teachers really tried to get to know them, an important element of confirmation, yet they still felt that their teachers cared through confirmation at higher levels compared to their lower tracked peers.

Table 18

Elementary Student Survey Questions Related to Confirmation

Survey Item	p
When you need extra help, how good is this teacher at giving you that help?	.03*
When you feel like giving up, how likely is it that this teacher will make you keep trying?	.32
Overall, how high are this teacher's expectations of you?	.02*
How much does this teacher encourage you to do your best work?	.26
How much does this teacher want to learn about what you do when you are not in school?	.72
How interested is this teacher in what you want to be when you grow up?	.61

*$p < .05$

These findings seem to confirm recent research that says high track students, due to teachers' perceptions that they are different from their peers based on structural labels like *gifted* or *honors*, may deliver care to students in terms of curriculum and academics as opposed to relationships (Giddens, 1984). For example, Coleman, Micko, and Cross's (2015) synthesis on 25 years of research regarding the lived experiences of gifted and talented students confirms that when gifted students are met

with a demanding academic experience congruent with their academic needs they feel accepted and happy. For example, one student from their study described the feeling of being in a more academically rigorous setting as, "being in Utopia because everything is just right." In other words, when gifted and talented students felt as though they were challenged and experienced a faster-moving curriculum, they felt more accepted and cared for. These findings relate to the higher-tracked elementary students in our study who admitted that their teachers did not try very hard to get to know them personally, but reported they still felt more cared for compared to their lower track peers. We suggest that this may be due to higher-track teachers holding higher expectations, which as the research points out, may lead GATE students to have positive feelings of being cared for shown in Table 18 above. However, research also suggests high track teachers could benefit from incorporating more confirmatory practices of getting to know their students in order to show care to those students who may not feel as though they are getting their academic needs met (Mikami, Gregory, Allen, Pianta, & Lun, 2011).

   Dialogue. Zakrzewski (2012) suggests that dialogue is an important aspect of a caring relationship and demonstrative of a caring act. Noddings (2005) defined dialogue as a search for understanding and empathy. Our survey results indicated that elementary high track students felt cared for through dialogue at higher levels compared to their low track peers. These students were required by their teachers to explain their answers more often, which is indicative of arriving at a common understanding. Also, high track students felt that their teachers listened to them more carefully if they had something on their mind, indicating open communication on the

part of the teacher. This is interesting because interview data of high track teachers indicated they had an understanding of dialogue that was not aligned to the literature on care. Instead of a two-way communication between a teacher and a student as literature suggests, high track teachers discussed talking at students as opposed to with them. Although elementary high track teachers did not emphasize the importance of dialogue in our interviews, surveys results suggest high track students did feel cared for by their teachers through dialogue. One high track elementary teacher spoke of this when he explained that when it comes to school, it is very important that students are able to simply sit and listen as opposed to engaging in a dialogue. It appears that although high track students were not engaged in dialogue congruent to the literature students still perceived their teachers cared for them through dialogue. This finding also seems to align with previous research that found gifted students may experience feelings of acceptance and care if they are in an academic environment that meets their needs (Coleman et al., 2015). In addition, similar to our findings on confirmation, our data suggested that although high track students perceived higher levels of dialogue, students from both tracks perceived dialogue positively.

Table 19

Elementary Student Survey Questions Related to Dialogue

Survey Item	p
How clearly does this teacher present the information that you need to learn?	.22
How often does this teacher make you explain your answers?	.00*
When your teacher asks, "how are you," how often do you feel that your teacher really wants to know your answer?	.13
If you had something on your mind, how carefully would this teacher listen to you?	.05*

Motivational Displacement/Engrossment. Our survey results showed that high track elementary students experienced more indicators of motivational displacement and engrossment from their teachers compared with their low track peers illustrated in Table 19 above. The literature suggests that students in higher tracked classrooms experience educational environments more conducive to development (Mayer, 2008). For example, higher tracked classrooms have been shown to have more rigorous instruction (Donaldson et al., 2016). Because this study utilizes Noddings's (2005) definition, which states that the carer should attempt to understand the needs of the cared for, we suggest that students need and deserve a rigorous classroom environment if they are to reach their future goals and aspirations.

Table 20

Elementary Student Survey Questions Related to Motivational Displacement/Engrossment

Survey Item	*p*
How much have you learned from this teacher?	.08
How much did you learn from this teacher that you didn't know before taking his or her class?	.01*
How good is this teacher at helping you learn?	.10
How good is this teacher at teaching you in the way you learn best?	.38
How interesting does this teacher make what you are learning in class?	.02*
How often does this teacher take time to make sure you understand the material?	.14
How much does this teacher encourage you to do your best work?	.26
How much does this teacher want to learn about what you do when you are not in school?	.72
How interested is this teacher in what you want to be when you grow up?	.61
When your teacher asks, "how are you," how often do you feel that your teacher really wants to know your answer?	.13
If you had something on your mind, how carefully would this teacher listen to you?	.05*
How much support do the adults at your school give you?	.18

Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?   .04*

p < .05

Although rigor can also be seen as an aspect of setting high expectations for students, motivational displacement requires the carer to understand and address the needs of the cared for. In a classroom setting rigor is essential to the student's success and we believe that it is also an aspect of motivational displacement. Similar to Donaldson et al. (2016), we found that elementary high track students felt that their teachers provided more rigorous instruction compared to their low track peers as Table 20 above shows. Elementary high track students also felt that the content of their classes was more interesting. This finding aligns with our data from teacher interviews, as most of the elementary high track teachers explained their care for students as ensuring they focused heavily on content and academics. One high track elementary teacher spoke of this when she shared that challenging students with difficult material was her goal for how she showed care for students.

Noddings' (2005) theory of motivational displacement and engrossment is also characterized by hearing and seeing the needs of the other individual. We found that high track elementary students felt that their teachers listened more carefully to them compared with their General Education peers. Yet, our interview data of high track elementary teachers suggested that their energy was moved towards students with an emphasis on academics not relationships. An important element of motivational displacement and engrossment missing from high track elementary teachers in our study's conceptualizations of care included a teacher thinking about students in an effort to gain a better understanding of them (Noddings, 2013). A 6th

grade GATE teacher illustrated this when he shared that he can be empathetic towards students who may be experiencing something but it does not change the academic standards that he sets for students in his classroom. Our data suggested that although high track elementary teachers did not demonstrate an understanding of motivational displacement and engrossment aligned to the literature on care, students still perceived their teachers to care for them in this way. This again confirms the aforementioned literature that gifted students may experience feelings of care if they are in an academic environment that meets their needs (Coleman et al., 2015). So, while these high track teachers in our study focused more on academics as opposed to better understanding their students, this academic focus may be the reason why their students still felt as though they were cared for. But while high track students perceived higher levels of motivational displacement and engrossment, it is important to note that overall students from high and low tracks reported a positive experience overall for this element of care.

Sense of Belonging. The literature suggests that high track elementary students feel a greater sense of belonging in school. Vidergor & Azar Gordon's (2015) study found that in the case of self-contained classrooms of gifted and talented students, students had stronger feelings of belonging than if they were in a standard General Education classroom. Based on student surveys, the researchers put forth the idea that since all of the students in this type of classroom were similarly gifted, they were more likely to feel more like they belonged there. It was in that kind of setting that they didn't feel like outsiders, but rather, as one student put it, "at home" (Vidergor & Azar Gordon, 2015, p.155). With some of our sample being a self-

contained gifted classroom as well, it makes sense that our findings confirm the literature. Overall, we found that high track elementary students had an overall greater sense of belonging at school. One high track teacher discussed how a sense of belonging is strong in her GATE classroom since all her students feel as though they are different from the other kids at their school. Because they all feel different, they are more accepting of each other's differences in the GATE classroom. It appears that being in a classroom of similarly-minded peers goes a long way in making students feel as though they belong.

Secondary Student Experiences Based on Track

  Confirmation. Survey data indicated that secondary low track students experienced confirmation at higher level than low track peers. Research suggests that confirmation helps students become a better version of themselves (Zakrzewski, 2012). Secondary General Education students experienced a greater level of support and help from their teachers as compared with their high track peers. General Education students also felt that their teachers paid attention to all students, and not just top students. These aspects of care were confirmed by our teacher interview data. One low track secondary teacher explained that she exerted a great deal of effort getting to know her students personally. This teacher also explained that she expected all her students to get their work done and provided the support after school to ensure they did.

Table 21

Secondary Student Survey Questions Related to Confirmation

Survey Item	p
When you need extra help, how good is this teacher at giving you that help?	.04*
How comfortable are you asking this teacher questions about what you are learning in his or her class?	.98
How often does this teacher give you feedback that helps you learn?	.00*
When you feel like giving up on a difficult task, how likely is it that this teacher will make you keep trying?	.25
Overall, how high are this teacher's expectations of you?	.36
How often does this teacher make you explain your answers?	.43
How often does this teacher encourage you to do your best?	.04*
How interested is this teacher in what you do outside of class?	.07
How interested is this teacher in your career after you finish school?	.96
If you walked into class upset, how concerned would your teacher be?	.19
How connected do you feel to the adults at your school?	.30
How much do you agree with the following: At my school, teachers work hard to make sure that all students are learning.	.10
How much do you agree with the following: At my school, all students are encouraged to go to college.	.26
How much do you agree with the following: At my school, teachers pay attention to all students, not just top students.	.03*

*$p < .05$

The importance of these student experiences and teacher perceptions is

supported by the study of Ferreira and Bosworth (2000). Their research indicated that

teenage students perceive care more in terms of the help their teachers provide and

how much teachers understand students. Zakrzewki's (2012) research also suggested

that teachers practice confirmation by helping students to find appropriate solutions

and by encouraging their development. As Table 21 shows, secondary General

Education students in our study supported this finding. Secondary low track students

reported that they experienced greater levels of feedback from their teachers that aided in their learning. These students also reported that they experienced a greater level of encouragement from their teachers as compared with their high tracked peers.

Our teacher interview data echoed previous research and our survey data. Most secondary low track teachers discussed building relationships with students and taking their personal time to help students with anything they needed. In contrast to our findings at the elementary level, students in General Education at the secondary level felt greater levels of confirmation by their teachers when compared with their high tracked peers. Furthermore, although low track students experienced higher levels of confirmation at the secondary level, secondary students on the whole perceived confirmation at low levels. It appears that secondary students from both tracks perceived their teachers to care for them through confirmation less than elementary students.

Dialogue. Zakrzewski's (2012) work implies that dialogue is an important aspect of a caring relationship and demonstrative of a caring act. Noddings (2005) defined dialogue as a search for understanding and empathy between the carer and cared for. Literature states that students in high track classes have access to more effective teachers than their low track peers who may be better equipped to handle and facilitate dialogue. In fact, Siegle, Rubenstein, & Mitchell (2014) found that higher tracked teachers were more adept at fostering in-depth discussions and dialogue due to their strong grasp of the content. As a result, the literature suggests that high track students experience higher levels of dialogue compared to low track students. Our findings did not align to the literature on track as shown in Table 22

below. We found that secondary low track students perceived higher levels of dialogue compared to their higher tracked peers. These students were required by their teachers to explain their answers more often, which is demonstrative of coming to a common understanding. Also, low track secondary students felt that their teachers listened to them more carefully if they had something on their mind, indicating responsiveness on the part of the teacher. Secondary General Education teacher interview data suggested teachers stressed the importance of dialoguing with students in their classes and coming to common understandings. These secondary teachers sought dialogue in order to connect with their students. It appears that when secondary low track teachers in our study focused on maintaining open and non-judgmental dialogue with students, students perceived that they were cared for.

Low track secondary teachers in our study relied on dialogue with students more often than their high tracked counterparts. This may have impacted student survey results by making them feel like teachers conversed with them more often or required them to explain their answers more thoroughly. Although literature claims that low track students experience lower levels of dialogue, when teachers focus on talking with students and making sure that they reach a common understand with them it appears to make students feel more cared for. On the whole, our survey data indicated that secondary students experienced lower levels of dialogue when compared to elementary students.

Table 22

Secondary Student Survey Questions Related to Dialogue

Survey Item	*p*
How comfortable are you asking this teacher questions about what you are learning in his or her class?	.98
How often does this teacher give you feedback that helps you learn?	.00*
How often does this teacher make you explain your answers?	.43
How interested is this teacher in what you do outside of class?	.07
When you teacher asks how you are doing, how often do you feel that your teacher is really interested your answer?	.56
If you walked into class upset, how concerned would your teacher be?	.19
If you had something on your mind, how carefully would this teacher listen to you?	.02*

*p < .05

Motivational Displacement/Engrossment. Noddings's (2005) theory of

motivational displacement and engrossment is characterized by hearing and seeing

the needs of the other individual. Noddings (2013) also claimed that motivational

displacement includes helping students meet their goals and includes a symbiotic

relationship between the carer and cared for. At the secondary level, we found that

low track students experienced greater amounts of motivational displacement and

engrossment from their teachers compared to their high tracked peers. Survey results

indicated that students felt that their teachers took the time to ensure they understood

what was asked of them and that teachers took the time getting to know them as Table

23 illustrates. Secondary low track teachers discussed spending considerable effort

getting to know students personally outside of class and at times placing students'

needs above their own.

It appears that secondary low track teachers implemented strategies suggested by Deiro (1996) to develop caring relationships with students and included one-on-one time with students and a combination of academic and personal discussions outside of class time. These results provide insight to secondary teachers attempting to improve their students' perceptions of care. Teachers who took time before or after class to help students with academic work or build personal relationships with students seemed to foster greater levels of motivational displacement and engrossment. Also, compared to elementary students, secondary students from both tracks perceived lower levels of motivational displacement and engrossment overall.

Table 23

Secondary Student Survey Questions Related to Motivational Displacement/ Engrossment

Survey Item	*p*
During class, how motivating are the activities that this teacher has you do?	.22
How interesting does this teacher make what you are learning in class?	.00*
How often does has this teacher taught you things that you didn't know before taking this class?	.56
How often does this teacher take time to make sure you understand the material?	.01*
How often does this teacher encourage you to do your best?	.04*
When you teacher asks how you are doing, how often do you feel that your teacher is really interested your answer?	.56
If you had something on your mind, how carefully would this teacher listen to you?	.02*
How interested is this teacher in what you do outside of class?	.07
How interested is this teacher in your career after you finish school?	.96
If you walked into class upset, how concerned would your teacher be?	.19
How much do you agree with the following: At my school, teachers pay attention to all students, not just top students.	.03*
How much do you agree with the following: At my school, teachers work hard to make sure that students stay in school.	.03*
Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?	.03*

*$p < .05$

Sense of Belonging. The literature suggests that a student's sense of belonging is related to a psychological need and is characterized by teacher care (Wehlage, 1989). Lower tracked students have been found to have a lower sense of belonging in school (Houtte & Maele, 2012). Our findings are at odds with this research because we found that lower track students at the secondary level had a higher sense of belonging. It is interesting that, although secondary high track teachers were perceived by secondary students to have more rigorous instruction, to work harder, and to have higher expectations, General Education students felt that they had a greater sense of belonging. This is supported by a secondary general education teacher in our study who emphasized the importance of creating a safe and welcoming environment in their classrooms by greeting every student and really trying to get to know them. It appears again, that the focus on relationships by secondary low track teachers created this sense of belonging.

We believe our findings on motivational displacement and engrossment at the secondary level reveal the importance of relationships and sense of belonging at the secondary level. Steinberg (2002) suggested that relationships during adolescence are salient and are an important element of belonging at a time when students are exploring their identity outside of family support. Developing personal relationships with trusted adults such as teachers at the secondary level, may fulfill students' needs for belonging and have a more substantial impact on students' perceptions of care than academic focuses.

College Awareness

Scholars researching track placement have also suggested that higher tracked students have more exposure to the idea of college and have more opportunities to attend college after high school (Mayer, 2008). Given that the literature generally mentions that higher tracked classrooms are more associated with a college-going culture, we were surprised to find that not to be the case in our study. Our survey data suggested that students in high and low tracks were very college oriented. Overall students from both tracks indicated that they had equal levels of college exposure and preparedness. Also, it was interesting that this district as well as many others in this area had college preparedness initiatives embedded in their strategic goals and district plans. Yet, none of the high or low tracked teachers discussed college or caring for students through preparing them for life after school. It appears that a college-going culture fostered school wide, supported by district college initiatives, may have contributed to students of both tracks feeling exposed to the idea of college equally. This is confirmed by the work of McDonough (1998) who identified that a college going culture can be fostered by a leadership approach to college preparedness as supported by college initiatives. The district we conducted our study in had embedded district goals and visions that supported college preparedness. It appears that although teachers did not discuss college, a college going culture supported by district initiatives may have contributed to students feeling overall equally college oriented in our study.

An explanation for the absence of teachers discussing college may be because teachers do not associate care with college (Welton &Williams, 2015). Teachers were

very focused on explaining care in the present, and rarely spoke of how to care for students by preparing them for the future. Few teachers mentioned getting students ready for life after high school, but none mentioned college. Relating care with preparing or exposing students to college was a challenge for teachers. It appears that teachers in our study did not associate care with preparing students for college as evidenced by their understanding of care as more relational. Care in the classroom was seen by the teachers in our study as more of how they treat students during the school day and not as moving students towards their collegiate goals. Teachers seem to dissociate college from care as if they are separate, suggesting the need for increased support for teachers in understanding the link between the two. Research on this topic suggests that individual teaches have an important role in supporting students' college goals (Welton & Williams, 2015). Our study points to a need for continued development of this idea of care in the classroom and its potential impact to improve student outcomes.

Positive Culture

One more thing we think is important to explore is that the literature suggests that when teachers build an inclusive environment that has elements of care, students feel more positive about their experiences in school (Beck & Cassidy, 2009). Although we found some differences in students' perceptions based on track, overall students perceived their educational experiences mostly positive. When looking at survey results, students in both high and low tracks and from both levels in school answered favorably about their educational experiences. Most teachers in our study discussed fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion and a positive culture within

their classroom. This positive culture was a common theme among all teachers. Our findings indicate that even when teachers have an incomplete conceptualization of care based on the literature, if they foster a positive culture in their classrooms students will perceive a more positive experience overall.

This confirms the research on classroom culture (Patrick, Ryan, & Kaplan, 2007) that suggests that when students feel supported by their teacher in an environment that fosters their academic needs and encourages them to be themselves, they report higher levels of self-efficacy and more positive perceptions about their own education. These findings align with our own, and it appears that our research findings further confirm the literature on classroom environment and student perceptions.

Teacher Perceptions of Care

Caring Through Confirmation

The literature (Noddings, 1994; Tarlow, 1996) claims that caring teaching is composed of confirmation, dialogue, and engrossment. Our findings supported this notion in the ways teachers described care and how students received care. We found that care in the classroom included teachers dialoguing with their students, encouraging them, and spending their personal time with students to become engrossed in their lives.

Caring student-teacher relationships include the teacher encouraging students through confirmation (Nodding, 1988). Noddings (2005) described confirmation as affirming and encouraging students to be the best versions of themselves and knowing them well enough to know what to encourage. Our interview data suggested

that teachers at the elementary level demonstrated an understanding of confirmation congruent to the literature. Interviewed elementary teachers consistently cited getting to know students personally and encouraging them in the directions of their goals and interests.

Elementary teachers were mindful that expectations in a caring relationship included an intimate knowledge of the student and a continual advancement of reciprocal goals to help the student achieve a better self. Many elementary teachers in our study knew the students' interests and moved their energy towards improving their student's abilities by not accepting mediocre work. They noticed the potential in all their students and advanced their joint goals towards improvement. Their expectations did not decrease; rather they were adapted, at the same rigorous level, recognizing students' aspirations and hopes. Interview data suggested they would first gather a deep understanding of each very different set of students, and then mutually develop goals and expectations based on their knowledge of the students through conversations. In order for these teachers to co-create expectations with students, communication was key.

These were exemplary behaviors because the literature states that for a teacher to engage in care, carers must first understand the image a person has for him or herself so that they may help them to achieve their full potential (Noddings, 2013). In an educational setting, a teacher has to then combine a student's image of himself or herself with the more experienced image a teacher has for a student in order to assist the student in becoming the best possible version of themselves.

We believe teachers by virtue of life experiences, in many cases, have more

wisdom than students. Therefore, teachers are able to combine their own knowledge with their understanding of the student to help move students toward a more improved self. For a teacher to encourage or confirm a student as described in the literature and supported by our findings they must first deeply know the students interests, strengths, goals, and background. After a teacher has knowledge of that student, they must then add their experience to create a new direction jointly with the student. It was practices such as these that elementary teachers did for their students.

Another important behavioral exemplar of the literature's (Alder, 2002) definition of confirmation was when one secondary teacher explicitly showed care by encouraging students to do whatever they wanted to do. Rather than push the idea of college, a tactic admittedly used by a few of their colleagues, they admitted that students sometimes desire something other than college. In other words, rather than just pushing all of their students toward a uniform path, they used their experiential knowledge and combined that with knowledge of the students' strengths and interests in order to guide them toward a more improved version of themselves. Other examples found in our study were tailoring assignments to better match the interest of a student and allowing for some latitude in the direction a student chooses to complete projects.

It is important to note that this element of care does not include the teacher influencing a student to participate in activities the teacher perceives as important or accepting anything less than the best work from a student. Also, we note that this type of care includes the teacher using their experience when determining how to encourage involvement in a student's area of interest. This caring can involve

influencing students to move in a certain direction. But in order to care according to the literature, teachers must get to know students through the relationships they build with them in the classroom and use their experience of what seems to contribute to the most effective development to guide students to better themselves (Noddings, 2013).

While teachers' perceptions of care at the elementary level were found to be aligned to the literature regarding confirmation, interview data suggested that secondary teachers did not have an understanding of confirmation congruent to the literature. Secondary teachers described confirmation in their interviews as holding their students to high expectations, mainly set by them. Students at the secondary level reported that although their teachers held them to high expectations, they believed that their teachers were not interested in what they do outside of class nor were they genuinely interested in them when they ask how they are doing. Although secondary teachers felt they set and expressed expectations for students that were based on care, our findings suggested students did not receive it as such. It seemed that secondary teachers did not demonstrate an awareness of the full nature of confirmation as described in the literature as including a consideration of students interests (Cummins, 2006). While secondary teachers all discussed setting high expectations and seeking only to accept high levels of work from students in their interviews, it seemed missing from their conceptualization of care is the element of confirmation that involves knowing students' goals and interests. Therefore, our findings suggested that secondary teachers did not demonstrate an understanding of confirmation congruent to the literature, due to what seemed like a lack of personal

knowledge of students.

This confirms Howard's (2001) findings that often schools do not consider students voices in determining what to encourage. Instead schools often do not gain student input and play the role of the expert when determining which direction to encourage students. In sum, our findings align with the literature on confirmation and our data suggests that elementary teachers engaged in confirmatory practices aligned to the literature, while secondary teachers did not.

Non-Confirmatory Practices

As discussed previously, our findings suggested that a few teachers at the elementary level and many at the secondary level in our study did not engage in confirmatory practices aligned to the literature. Research suggests that when teachers truly understand a student through a caring relationship characterized by confirmation, teachers know what to encourage (Noddings, 1988). Instead of guiding students towards a better self that included knowledge of students' strengths or interests as the literature suggests, our data suggested secondary teachers tended to promote predetermined expectations for students based on what *they* perceived to be important. In other words, the teachers had an understanding of care that was not aligned with the literature, as they preferred to not adapt their expectations to a student's aspirations, but rather to what they believed to be important. This approach displays a lack of knowing the cared-for, and without it caring, according to Noddings (2013), is unable to form. These teachers pursued their own preconceived goals and attempted to push students to fit that image.

Other behaviors not suggested by research as being care (Deiro,1994)

included many secondary teachers simply verbalizing their expectations by stating that a specific set of behavioral, social, and academic expectations were necessary for all students to be successful in life without the knowledge of the students or an understanding of what the students want to be. Again, this type of care is not congruent with the literature that says teachers should know students well enough to assist them in attaining a better self (Nelson & Bauch, 1997). After all, those with an understanding of care congruent to the literature explained first becoming aware of who students were as people and then accepting only their best effort towards a better self. As the literature suggests, providing care through expectations involves much more than providing students with guidelines on how to behave and interact appropriately. On the whole, our data suggests that elementary teachers more so than their secondary counterparts, appear to have placed greater emphasis on teaching the whole child and ensuring all their students' needs were met.

Explanation for Findings on Confirmation

Research suggests that the structure of elementary schools affords teachers more time toward developing personal and emotional understanding (Hargreaves, 2000). We believe that the structure of K-6 schools may have contributed to the findings regarding confirmation in our study. We found that literature-aligned confirmatory practices were more prevalent at the elementary level. The literature shows that elementary classrooms are emotionally intense environments characterized by personal and physical closeness (Hargreaves, 2000). This may be the consequence of elementary teachers having the same small number of students in their classrooms for an entire year as opposed to their secondary counterparts who have multiple

different groups of students throughout the day. The deep knowing aspect of confirmation is able to form as a result of a more personal setting in elementary classrooms, allowing students to feel as though teachers get to know them and take their interests into account when setting expectations and creating projects. For, as we stated before, an important element of confirmation according to the literature involves teachers getting to know students well enough to set goals that are mutually created in order to see the student develop a better version of themselves (Noddings, 2013).

Moreover, the literature suggests that the unique structure of secondary schools may also be responsible for students not perceiving that teachers are caring through their expectations as well. As the literature points out, secondary schooling is comprised of subject specialists, which divides students up among many teachers leading to fragmented interactions between teachers and students (Hargreaves, 2000). In addition, Darling-Hammond (2010) pointed out that secondary schools in the United States are designed to be overpopulated and impersonal. As a result, secondary teachers have less of an opportunity to get to know their students compared to elementary teachers. Therefore, since they have such little time to get to know each student individually, we suggest that secondary teachers most likely rely more on their interpretation of what expectations are important and apply them to all their students as opposed to co-creating them with their students.

However, one secondary teacher in our study did discuss how she achieved this type of care by spending several hours connecting with a student who was not meeting her expectations and was misbehaving in class. It was only through meeting

with him after school that she found out he was the primary caretaker of his grandmother and as a result, did not have much time to make friends or enjoy school-related activities in which he could spend time with other students. After learning this about him, she worked with him on getting him connected with certain clubs on campus so that he might begin to make friends. In this situation, when a student was not meeting a secondary teacher's expectations and misbehaving, the teacher had to use only a small amount of her personal time in order to get to know the student and his interests. Only then could she really provide the care that he needed. As one can imagine, this is a challenging prospect for secondary teachers who, as we previously stated, work in a school structure which divides the students among many different teachers throughout the day (Hargreaves, 2000).

Literature suggests that at the elementary level interactions between teachers and students are more personal (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Therefore, we believe that an elementary teacher's job may include more instances of helping students tie their shoes, comforting them when they get frustrated, or modeling appropriate peer interaction. These actions are very personal and can lead to a relational connection between a teacher and a student more so than if the teacher just taught academics, which is what is more likely to happen in the subject-centered organization of a school (Hargreaves, 2000). Even at the upper elementary level there are field trips, performances, and character assemblies, all of which foster connections in a manner that academics alone cannot. Interactions like these are avenues to build trust, deepen understanding, and develop key elements of care between teachers and students—all of which deepen the level of personal closeness between teacher and student, which is

vital in building knowledge that can be used toward more confirmatory practices. Secondary teachers, due to structure, do not as often experience these situations with their students and, as a result, do not benefit from the personal closeness and knowledge of their students that might strengthen confirmatory practices of care.

This personal and emotional understanding is also likely the result of the age and development level of the students who attend elementary schools. The literature states that elementary students require help getting primary needs met before launching into more complex academics. It states to the age of the students during the elementary years, teachers at this level must work more on basics such as being responsible, sharing, and working together (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Consequently, elementary teachers spend more time with students on non-academic activities and cannot simply focus solely on academics. It is this dynamic which we believe provides elementary teachers more opportunities to engage in behaviors that are more caring and received as caring by students.

Due to this, our data suggests that secondary teachers have to make decisions on how to use the limited time they have with their students. Secondary teachers in our study indicated that they decide to place greater effort on teaching students content and skills focusing on academics. They see their role as teaching students subjects and focusing on curriculum. For secondary teachers anything outside of teaching their specific subject required somebody else's expertise and did not require their attention.

Caring Through Dialogue

Another element of care that teachers described in their interviews was dialogue. The literature suggests that teachers demonstrate care when they engage in repeated and authentic communication with students (Noddings, 2004; Greene, 1990). Furthermore, a student and a teacher engaging in dialogue do not abandon their own core values or beliefs or omit their own experiences. Rather, they provide their perspectives to each other for possible opposing viewpoints while avoiding seeking assimilation to one another's ideologies (Mayeroff, 1971). Our findings suggested that teachers at the elementary level engaged in dialogue aligned to the literature. Elementary teachers shared that they cared for students by talking with them and getting to know them through open communication.

Some teacher behaviors that were congruent to the literature's definition of dialogue were seen when elementary teachers in our study discussed talking with students either privately or in groups in an effort to gain knowledge of students. As the research suggests, caring dialogue requires teachers to be genuinely interested in getting to know students on a personal level (Marshall, 2001; Jerome, Hamre, & Pianta, 2009). Another exemplary behavior of dialogue was when a teacher asked open ended non-threatening questions to their students to "better understand their situations." This teacher demonstrated an understanding of dialogue aligned to the literature (Noddings, 2012 as they genuinely listened and developed an understanding of students through repeated conversations. Their gentle approach and non-defensive demeanor seem to foster trust and encouraged students to speak to her. The genuineness of their questioning seems to break down the barrier students have that

sometimes may inhibit dialogue from initiating. Important to teachers' understanding of dialogue is their ability to sense when dialogue is appropriate and the urgency with which they desired to engage in open communication. First, they create trusting relationships through warmth and non-judgmental encounters. Then caring attempts are received by students as they open up and share personal information about their lives. This recognition is an important element of care and these reciprocal acts of dialogue demonstrate that these teachers' conceptualization of care is congruent to the literature.

Caring dialogue as described in the literature was also illustrated in our findings when one elementary teacher discussed her caring and open communications through her class journal entries. On this, the teacher stated that students will sometimes write to her about issues that they are dealing with at home. In one particular example that she spoke of, one student wrote that her mother was crying a lot and in response her teacher was able to write back little tips on how she may support her mom. In a similar vein, another teacher-initiated dialogue with students by strategically arranging school-based activities with students, even sometimes as a consequence of a student's negative behaviors. She would have students come to her room after school, but once there they would engage in dialogue that was meant to simply build understanding between them. Whether it be through writing class letters, arranging school-based activities, or through a disciplinary practice, the dialogue these teachers fostered fit with the literature as they were part of a genuine quest to understand (Noddings, 2013).

One final literature-aligned dialogue practice was when teachers connected

with students by using their knowledge of the student and asking general, non-threatening questions. This approach is aligned with the research on care (Noddings, 1988) in that they do not enter in dialogue with students to discuss an action of theirs they perceive as wrong. Rather, they engage in dialogue with students with the aim of understanding their opposing positions and sharing their experience and the possible consequences of certain actions they engage in. This is an important aspect of dialogue and includes approaching students in a non-offensive manner only after trust is established through multiple lower-level communication opportunities.

It seemed elementary teachers understood that dialogue involves patient, positive, and non-coercive interaction with students (Marshall, 2001). Our findings suggested that the elementary teachers in our study are engaging in open and caring communication with students congruent to the literature. Many of our research participants described care in those terms and our findings agreed with Noddings' interpretation of this communication as dialogue.

Our data also suggested that in contrast to elementary teachers, secondary teachers did not engage in dialogue aligned to the literature (Allen, Gregory, Mikami, Lun, Hamre, & Pianta, 2013). Our interviews indicate that most secondary teachers described dialogue as reporting information to students and making sure that students received that information, which is different from the literature, which states that dialogue is mutual and not one-sided (Noddings, 2004). Therefore, it seems that teachers at the secondary level were not engaging in caring dialogue with students because they tended to talk *at* students and not *with* them. Even though they might have believed they were attempting to dialogue with students, they demonstrated that

they were not conscious of the flexible and open-minded nature of dialogue (Noddings, 2005). In sum, research suggests (Freire, 1998) caring dialogue includes a mutual exchange of ideas, which our findings confirmed at the elementary level.

Non-Dialogue Practices

Many secondary teachers and a few elementary teachers displayed a conceptualization of care misaligned to the literature when it came to dialogue (Cothran and Ennis, 2000). While some initiated caring dialogue through similar means as those teachers outlined in the previous section, after the trust was established they would refer students to other individuals for help. These teachers appeared to not be comfortable with a close and sometimes personal relationship with students and would suggest students seek help from other professionals on campus who may be better trained to support them. For example, one secondary higher track teacher felt comfortable with giving kids a break to walk to the restroom, if needed, to clear their head. But when it came to having a dialogue, he did not feel comfortable and instead referred them to a counselor. Instead of listening and using his knowledge of the student to help understand, support, and develop this student, he suggested that they talk with a counselor. This lack of a desire to understand the student better does not align with the literature as it states that caring dialogue involves open and objective communication between a student and a teacher with the goal of relational understanding (Noddings, 2013). For this teacher to understand and support the student, they may have to open themselves up to hearing troubling things from a students. This was a concern for the teacher as they stated explicitly that they do not want to know the details most times for fear of having to report something if the

situation were severe. In this situation, the student may have benefited from some encouragement and guidance from the teacher in this instance. Instead, due to the teacher not wanting to get too involved personally, what resulted was a missed opportunity of care aligned with the literature (Noddings, 2013).

Another teacher practice that did not align with the literature was when teachers focused their conversations solely on just repeating expectations, without any input from the students (Rojas & Liou, 2017). This approach differs from the literature that states that caring dialogue is open-ended, with both parties not knowing what the outcome will be (Noddings, 2013). For example, one teacher spoke of instances in which they spoke to students outside of the classroom if they were misbehaving. From there the teacher said she explicitly tells the student that they will not be engaging in a conversation, but rather informs the student simply about what she is seeing as negative behavior and what consequences may need to take place due to said behavior. She then ends the exchange with making the student apologize and a vow to not do it again. As you can see from this example, this teacher is not seeking understanding nor engaging in a conversation that is open-ended. In fact, when the student speaks it is only to repeat an apology given to him or her by the teacher. From the onset, this teacher knows what the outcome will be and it will be not be a truly open-ended back and forth. As a result, this approach cannot foster any type of understanding and therefore is not similar to the type of care described in the literature (Noddings, 2013).

Explanation for Findings on Dialogue

Once again, we suggest that the structure of elementary schools may be an explanation as to why the elementary level was found to have more literature-aligned instances of dialogue. As was stated before, unlike secondary schools, the elementary level is characterized by personal and physical closeness. As previously mentioned, elementary teachers benefit from having less fragmented interactions with students and as a result, benefit from stronger emotional bonds with their students (Hargreaves, 2000). Moreover, the literature suggests that these structural issues at the secondary level, compounded by emotional issues that emerge as a result of being older, often leaves secondary students dealing with much more complex issues compared to their elementary counterparts. We suggest that this may result in elementary teachers feeling more comfortable with engaging in an open and caring dialogue.

After all, Loukas, Cance, and Batanova (2016) write that the transition to the secondary level does not often match the needs of the students developmentally. As early adolescents transition from elementary to secondary school, they are developmentally more in need of mutual decision-making and close interpersonal relationships with non-parent adults. However, it is during this time that they are thrust into a more departmentalized and less personal middle school structure. This leads to students feeling more disconnected from their schools—feeling as though they don't belong or are close with anyone else at the school—especially with those students already suffering from depressive symptoms. Comparatively, students at the elementary level are neither dealing with the emotional needs of their older peers nor

in a structure that may exacerbate feelings of disconnectedness. As a result, elementary teachers might feel much more able to have an open dialogue with their students since their concerns are likely to be less complex. For example, we previously talked about a teacher who wrote notes back and forth to her class in an effort to have a dialogue. In an example that came to her mind, she recalled one student talking about how her mother was sad. Due to this, the teacher felt comfortable with sharing some support and tips on how to help her mother feel less sad.

On the whole, there was not a terribly complex issue involving concerns over self-identity, self-presentation, or fear of rejection or victimization. In fact, the literature says that these concerns usually begin to crop up around the age of twelve and beyond, the age of a student in secondary, and can lead to student distress (Vélez, Krause, McKinnon, Brunwasser, Freres, Abenavoli, & Gillham, 2016). The elementary student's concern was more basic, albeit none-the-less important, and the teacher as a result might have felt more comfortable with offering her insight and support. This stands in contrast with the aforementioned secondary teachers who felt that he did not want to deal his students concerns in case they were so severe that he might have to report them.

Overall, we contend that students entering secondary are developmentally more in need of closeness and mutual-decision making, an aspect that Noddings' considers caring dialogue, but instead are met with a structure that leaves them feeling more disconnected while at the same time dealing with issues of self-identity and the like. These are very complex issues when compared to the elementary level

and we suggest that since elementary students aren't dealing with as complex situations, elementary teachers may feel more comfortable with engaging in the type of literature aligned open-ended dialogue that Noddings considers an act of care (Noddings, 2013).

On top of concerns over the complexity of issues found at the secondary level compared to their elementary counterparts, we suggest that these concerns may be compounded by educator's feelings as though they don't often know how to deal with such serious concerns. For example, Westefeld, Kettmann, Lovmo, & Hey (2007) wrote that suicide is the third leading cause of death for youths, hitting those of high school age particularly hard. In their study of faculty from five high schools, they found that while much of the participants felt that suicide was a major issue for high school students, a significant percentage felt un-informed about the matter and what actions to take when a student is at risk. In other words, while students at the secondary level are dealing with more complex issues than their elementary counterparts, teachers may not feel as though they have the tools to properly address them. We suggest this as a reason why teachers at the secondary level may feel more uncomfortable with engaging in an open dialogue and instead put up barriers.

Another explanation we suggest may be due to the fact that the teachers we interviewed at the secondary level expressed concern over getting too close to students and how that might be negatively perceived by others. One middle school teacher illustrated this when he explained that he keeps students at a distance regarding relationships because he "has seen what can happen with social media and communication" between teachers and students. The issue is further compounded

when you take into account that some of the teachers who expressed these types of concerns were male, which we mentioned before increases concerns over whether a teacher is acting appropriately with his or her students (Kemp & Reupert, 2012). Male or not, the previously mentioned complexity of issues at the secondary level coupled with teacher's concerns over getting too close in this age of social media, we believe may inhibits the depth of the dialogue between teachers and students at the secondary level.

Consequently, secondary teachers put up barriers to communication that might prevent teachers from engaging in the open-ended type of conversation needed to communicate care. After all, Noddings (2013) wrote that for caring dialogue to take place, one must receive the other fully and openly. Based on our findings, it appears that the complexities of secondary students and concerns over perception made the teachers we interviewed feel as though they weren't comfortable enough with receiving students in this manner.

Caring Through Motivational Displacement/Engrossment

The literature suggests that for teachers to engage in caring interactions with students, they must spend the time to do so (Tarlow, 1996). Teachers must show non-biased attention and be in the complete presence of students until the caring interaction is complete (Noddings, 1988). This requires teachers to place their concerns aside and replace them with the concerns of the student. Noddings (2005) refers to this mindset of complete selflessness as motivational displacement and engrossment. Although the time of the encounter may be brief, the teacher must be fully immersed in the life and goals of those they are caring for (Noddings, 1984).

In our study, we found that motivational displacement and engrossment, referred to teachers as time, was a necessary component to developing caring relationships with students. In our opinion, for teachers to be engrossed in the lives of their students and displace their own needs, time must be given over to those endeavors. When teachers devote their time to students they demonstrate engrossment towards them and their "motive energy flows" towards the needs of the student (Noddings, 1988, p. 220). These student needs can only be met if teachers are willing to immerse themselves in the lives of students by devoting their time.

Our findings demonstrated that many elementary teachers demonstrated a conceptualization of using their time to be immersed in the lives of students congruent to the literature (Fedderson, 2003). These teachers demonstrated care because they were so committed to the development of their students that they placed the needs and desires of the students over their own desire, a vital component to engrossment and motivational displacement (Noddings, 2013). In our findings, this included teachers finding time during the school day, finding time outside of the school day, or attending extracurricular activities in support of students. This indicated that elementary teachers both demonstrated care for students consistent to the literature on engrossment and motivational displacement and had that care reciprocated.

Some teacher behaviors exemplary of the literature's definition of motivational displacement and engrossment were when teachers provided their personal time to students outside of regular school hours in an effort to show that they showed care. Our findings confirm Fedderson's (2003) findings, that teachers care for

students when they spend additional time with them. In this way they displaced their own motivations and utilized their energy on behalf of the projects of the students. For them, spending time with their families or pursuing personal interests and hobbies was temporarily suspended to ensure they were completely present for students, which is what the literature says is a caring approach (Noddings, 2013). This meant setting aside more intimate times to meet with students individually or in smaller groups during lunch or before or after school. This care was accepted as such and reciprocated by students when they continued to seek support outside of regular school times.

Another behavior exemplary of the literature's definition of engrossment was one a teacher's devotion to caring for students both during and after the school day. First, he would find times during class to pull students aside either outside of the classroom or in a private area inside of the classroom to ensure students are supported and cared for. He provided an example of taking a few minutes to meet with a student outside of the classroom door briefly when he sensed that a student was acting out in unusual ways. After becoming engrossed in that student's needs, he shared that the student excelled and that they had a better relationship from that incident forward.

Another example was when teachers spent time seeing students be successful outside of the classroom context. One teacher in particular made it a point to attend extracurricular activities and ensure that students noticed that he was there. Although he may only have a brief interaction with the student or none at all, the students often accepted his presence. The students reciprocated this care when the teacher explained that students would comment excitedly that they saw him at their event the next day

at school. Although this teacher had other obligations and a family of his own, he moved his energy from himself towards the students, which included attending activities outside of the classroom (Noddings, 1988).

Non-Motivational Displacement and Non-Engrossment Practices

On the contrary, we found that some secondary teachers did not consistently demonstrate caring behaviors through motivational displacement and engrossment aligned to the literature (Hackenberg, 2010). These teachers often during their interviews displayed a reluctance toward fluctuating their schedules in order to accommodate time for students. Moreover, they were much more rigid with their curriculum and the devotion of time towards academic content. To use one example, one secondary teacher stated she "had no time" to devote to anything outside of whole group math instruction due to the amount of material she has to cover. Another teacher stated that the sheer number of students she had prevented her from really getting involved in the lives of her students. In these instances, these secondary teachers perceived that they had less flexibility with their time, had too many students, and as a result were not able to fully immerse themselves in the needs of their students. This approach does not align with the literature due to the fact that motivational displacement and engrossment require teachers to not be concerned solely with their own projects, such as getting through the material, but more so with the desires and needs of the student (Noddings, 2013).

Explanation for Findings on Motivational Displacement/Engrossment

Once again, we suggest that the structural differences between elementary and secondary may be a reason as to why there is a disparity when it comes to

motivational displacement and engrossment. As stated before, time is an essential element for these aspects to take place and students at the elementary level are more available to receive extra help during the school day. This is because the teachers at this level do not suffer from the departmentalized and more fragmented nature of secondary schools (Hargreaves, 2000; Van de Pol, Brindley, & Higham, 2017). Our interviews suggested to us that what works best for elementary teachers finding in-class time to ensure they are meeting the needs of students and becoming completely committed to their interests and goals. A luxury that secondary teachers do not have.

Teachers' Understanding of Care

Our findings confirmed the literature that asserts, although teachers do perceive themselves to be caring towards students (Rooney, 2003) they do not have a clear understanding of exactly what actions can be characterized as the type of care explained in the literature (Noddings, 2013). In many cases we found a lack of symbiosis between what teachers perceive as caring behaviors and what students perceive as care. For instance, secondary interviewed teachers explained that they cared for students by clearing telling them their behavioral and academic expectations. However, secondary students survey results indicated that students did not feel cared for when teachers used this type of one-way dialogue towards them. This example illustrates that although teachers believed they were caring for students in our study using this mode of communication, they did not have a clear understanding that dialogue involves allowing the student to provide valuable input, strengthening the relationship (Noddings, 1988).

Teachers' Understanding of Reciprocity

According to literature, reciprocity is a necessary element of care and without it students do not recognize they are being cared for (Muller, 2001). Our study seemed to confirm this research. While all teachers believed they cared, many were not aware of the reciprocal nature of care as described by the literature (Noddings, 1988; Muller, 2001). Reciprocity, according to Noddings (1988), is a mutual exchange involving a responsibility by both parties. In some cases, this reciprocity can take the form of returned affection through a smile by a student as recognition of the care from a teacher. In other cases, signs that care has been reciprocated may include a student developing as a result of the efforts of the teacher. This response from a student is crucial because if a student does not perceive that they are being cared for they are not actually experiencing care. Most of the teachers we interviewed never discussed being aware of the physical signs that their care was received by students. While they believed they were caring for students, they did not demonstrate an awareness of the importance of reciprocity to ensure students received their care.

Rickey's understanding of reciprocity was congruent with care as described in the literature in that he was mindful to look for signs that students accepted his caring attempts. In his interview he indicated that he believed that students accepted his caring attempts when they opened up to him about their lives and would sometimes become emotional. Rickey first engaged in open dialogue with his students giving them an opportunity to provide their input. Then, he recognized that students received his caring dialogue when they shared personal information and had a physical response.

Equity Consciousness in Elementary and Secondary Education

The literature suggests that for teachers to provide students with an excellent education they must possess high quality skills and an equity consciousness (McKenzie & Skrla, 2011). They claim that equity consciousness is a person's awareness of how their behaviors present more or less equitable outcomes, how well they understand equity, and how willing they are to change systems or their behavior to contribute to fairness. Our study suggested that elementary teachers were more mindful compared to secondary teachers of how their behaviors contributed to more equitable outcomes for students. We found that care, an important element to teacher-students relationships and student achievement (Hattie, 2009), was demonstrated more aligned to literature in elementary classrooms. In our opinion, this is a result of secondary teachers being more "accepting of the inequality built into traditional practices and routines" (pg. 15) in secondary schools (McKenzie & Skrla, 2011) and elementary teachers being more equity conscious.

Research suggests that holding high expectations of students is an important element of teacher practices that convey care and includes getting to know students and encouraging them to be the best version on themselves (Noddings, 1998). We found that secondary teachers believed they held high expectation of students aligned to the literature, but the survey results indicated they were not getting to know students first. The secondary teachers we interviewed did not articulate an equity conscious awareness of the importance of getting to know students personally. They understood that expecting only the best from students was important regarding care, yet they did not demonstrate a mindfulness of the value of knowing students more

deeply.

We have also shared that research suggests that caring includes dialogue and engrossment and motivational displacement (Noddings, 1998). Elementary teachers' understanding of confirmation, dialogue, and engrossment and motivational displacement were congruent with equity consciousness in that they were mindful that students felt cared for when they generally were interested in them and were willing to adapt their practices to ensure students perceived care.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Our study has attempted to understand how elementary teachers define care and show how our findings relate to the literature. We also aimed to demonstrate how our findings diverged from the literature and suggest that students in high and low tracks can experience similar levels of care. Now we provide some recommendations for teachers, educational leaders, and counselors. Having explored the perceptions of students from the classrooms of the teachers we interviewed, some suggestions can be made.

Research

Our findings contribute to the literature in a few different ways. First, this study appears to be one of a very limited body of research suggesting that regarding care, students in both high and low tracked classrooms have similar experiences. Students in higher tracked classrooms were not found to have teachers that cared more for them when compared to lower tracked students. Secondly, this study appears to support the research that care is not clearly understood by teachers, but that elementary teachers, due to the nature of elementary school structure, child

development, and other factors, more consistently display actions that are congruent with the literature on care (Noddings, 1984, 1998; Wentzel, 1997; Rolón-Dow, 2005).

Future research is needed to provide more insight to the findings discussed in our study. For example, research correlating teachers' understanding of care in the classroom with student academic achievement, behavior, socialization, and emotional health data would be beneficial to the field of education. In addition, the field would benefit from evaluating programs aimed at supporting teachers' abilities to develop relationships with students that contribute to student growth. Furthermore, future research contributing the voices of students through interviews may also provide valuable input on care in the classroom and was beyond the scope of this study.

Lastly, continued research on care in the classroom could provide important solutions to improve equity in schools. It appears that care is consistent in high and low tracks and elements of those findings could be applied to other areas that have been found to be inequitable based on track. The programs, initiatives, and other strategies that support equity and contributed to these findings that the district provided are important to understand.

Teachers

In our study, teachers indicate that time is a barrier to developing more caring relationships with students due to the focus on instruction and covering all the required standards. As stated before, Paek, Ponte, Sigel, Braun, Powers, and College (2005) study found that AP placed unrealistic expectations and workloads on teachers. Furthermore, the structures inherent to secondary schools provide challenges to developing caring relationships. With such demands and attention being

placed on covering a massive amount of curriculum, less time can be dedicated to creating more caring relationships with students. We suggest that if things are to change, teachers need to be freed up to spend more time on matters of care, but not at the expense of academics.

We recommend that teachers use their Professional Learning Community (PLC) time or paid collaboration time if the district has such time in place, establishing power standards (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010) so that they will be freed to teach what is necessary and focus more on student relationships. The sheer number of standards has led to teachers feeling overwhelmed and, in an attempt to hit all of the standards, provide students with a lack of in-depth instruction (Ainsworth, 2013). Overall, teachers who are not establishing power standards are spending the lion's share of their time trying to hit all standards, which may vary depending on the teacher and does not allow time for in-depth coverage or consistency across grade levels. This, coupled with high expectations and an abbreviated amount of time, may be one reason as to why secondary teachers feel unable to provide a more caring relationship for students. We suggest that it is imperative teachers find strategies to save time, such as determining essential learning outcomes during district provided collaboration time, in order to be freed up to not only teach the content with more depth, but also to do so in a manner that facilitates relationship-building as well.

Another recommendation would be that teachers also consider using feedback forms to see how their students perceive their classroom. More consistent caring behaviors may be implemented if teachers are able to reflect and modify their

approaches to students based on student feedback. Instead of teachers guessing or assuming their caring attempts are being received by students they can improve their awareness through questionnaires or surveys. Eliciting student input into how well they are developing caring relationships with students can provide teachers valuable information leading to professional growth and improved student outcomes.

If educators can improve their relationships with students by effectively displaying acts of care, and improved student teacher relationships can positively affect outcomes for students, then it is imperative that educators understand care and have strategies to foster care in the classroom. District and school-level administrators must provide a systematic and sustained effort to support teachers' care for students by ensuring resources are allocated to provide that support.

School Leaders

Our findings point to the need for a reallocation of energy and resources in districts to support teachers in caring for students. This renewed effort focusing on care and relationships at the classroom level starts with effective leadership. One strategy initiated by school leaders can be connecting with local resources to ensure caring is supported in schools. Strategic partnerships are under-utilized and can provide schools with the support necessary to ensure teachers are able to build caring relationships with students. Therefore, school leaders can help develop partnerships with colleges, agencies, and other organizations to provide social, emotional, and relational support to teachers and students. For example, a community schools model which allows schools to serve as community centers for various civic activities and community care coordinators, has been recently implemented in cities such as

Chicago, Los Angeles, and Cincinnati. This model has helped to build stronger social ties between the community and school personnel which has improved student behaviors (Young, 2015). This is just one of the many ways in which school leaders can develop community partnerships in order to ensure more aspects of care are supported in schools.

Teachers may implement more caring behaviors if leaders supported caring by implementing elements of relationships into their local LCAPs, site goals, mission statements, or strategic plans. In an era of high accountability there is a tension between caring for students and teaching students as contributed by a continual focus on achievement being purely academic. While academic achievement is important, research from Hamre and Pianta (2001) has demonstrated the impact positive relationships can have on overall student growth. Too often district and site goals omit care and relationships from their focus and by including care in plans moving forwards, leaders can facilitate improvement.

We recommend that leaders provide teachers with training regarding what types of support can be handled by teachers as opposed to what types of support might be better suited for a professional or counselor at the site. As was seen in our findings, some teachers simply feel unsuited for providing more personalized care to students. It was either seen as not part of their job description, or just simply, there was an unwillingness to get to know students' issues on a personal level for fear of becoming too involved. Clearly there is an emphasis on compassion in the district, as evidenced by the aforementioned Nurtured Hearts program that trains teachers in energizing positive behaviors as opposed to negative behaviors. However, this

program emphasizes strategies for encouraging positive behaviors and may not provide secondary educators the skills needed to provide care for students experiencing more nuanced and complex problems. With stronger training, teachers may feel better suited for providing more personalized care to secondary students.

With training, teachers could be shown the data regarding the impact of student-teacher relationships on academic achievement. Unless they are in a professional development course themselves, teachers may simply be unaware of the immense impact of relationships on student outcomes. With that knowledge now in their heads, teachers should be trained in how to tell if a situation can be handled by a teacher or should be handled by someone else. For example, if a student brings up something distressing happening in their personal lives, teachers should know whether they are able to provide support or not. If this remains unclear, then teachers may purposefully avoid building relationships with their students for fear that they might do something wrong or provide the wrong type of support or advice. By crafting more clear-cut delineations between what a teacher can handle and what should be handled by someone with training in that situation, teachers may feel more empowered to ask questions and seek out what is happening in the lives of their students. No longer would they feel as though they are operating in a grey area in which they are unsure of whether they can, or should, try to help.

Counselors

Counselors can also play an important role in supporting care in the classroom. At both the elementary and secondary levels, counselors serve as a support system for teachers and students. A counselor's role is to provide services, programs,

and interventions that cannot take place within the classroom curriculum due to time and resource constraints. Although meeting the educational needs of students should always be at the center of what schools do, there is no denying that caring for a student encompasses more than just academia. In the pursuit of caring for the whole student, the social emotional needs of students must also be addressed. Counselors are key in this pursuit. Throughout our research, we have found that teachers have good intentions. These intentions lead them to act in ways that they perceive exhibit care for students. However, their actions may, at times, not fully address the social emotional needs of students but rather the material and educational needs. As sources of support for both students and teachers, counselors have the duty of addressing these gaps. A recommendation is that counselors work more closely with teachers to make social emotional needs of students more of a focus. Counselors can contribute to student growth by joining teachers in PLC meetings to determine students in need of support due to issues going on beyond the classroom walls and can provide teachers suggestions on how to talk with students about personal issues. Through these collaboration sessions, counselors and teachers build relationships that share the responsibility of caring for the emotional needs of students. The goal would be to achieve a situation where care is exhibited appropriately without regard of whose professional responsibility this act of care is.

Another recommendation is to set up care centers at school sites to provide resources and support programs for all students in need. Counselors could be key in facilitating and managing care centers to provide services and support to students and teachers. Care centers could provide teachers and students a safe place to go for

advice, resources, or strategies to ensure students are cared for in the classroom with regards to their social emotional needs.

Counselors can also reinforce care in the classroom by providing teachers with information regarding resources available and processes to ensure students receive the appropriate support they need. So many times, the disconnect between teachers and support staff, such as counselors, arises from a lack of awareness. Teachers should be made aware of the referral processes available at a school and the types of supports that are available for students in specific situations.

Through our research, we found that communicating with students, providing them with material resources, and setting behavioral expectations was key in how elementary teachers showcased their care for students. It seemed that spending the entire day with the same group of students, made elementary teachers feel as though they must care for students in any way they possibly can. This creates a situation where the care students receive comes from one person on campus rather than having a shared responsibility of care for students. Secondary teachers had mixed responses on how they perceive their care for students. Spending time at extracurricular events with students was important to how teachers showed their care. However, many times, teachers indicated that they felt some level of discomfort with helping students with more personal issues. For them, sending students to counselors and school psychologists was a way through which they helped students and cared for them. Through personal social communication training for teachers, they can strengthen their skills and abilities to help students with personal matters. Moreover, a strong referral process would only solidify the steps these teachers take to help students and

ensure that they are properly supported.

Given the large amount of time that students spend with their teachers on a daily basis, it makes sense that teachers have the potential to impact students' personal lives if they are equipped with the right tools. With a better understanding will come a stronger partnership between teachers and counselors that will result in increased levels of care in the classroom.

The last recommendation for counselors is to coordinate homerooms within the master schedules of secondary schools used as scheduled time to provide curriculum that supports the emotional needs of students. These homerooms can provide lessons including topics such as goal setting, stress management, emotion identification, mindset, and educational motivation. Counselors can provide these lessons making it easy for teachers to support students in their personal and social emotional needs. Anyone involved in building a master schedule for a secondary school of any size knows that the building process carries with it a lot of demands from staff, students, and school site facilities. However, when caring for the whole student, social emotional needs must be a focal point. With the right priorities in mind, homeroom periods serve as excellent sources of support while the rest of the master schedule can focus on academic needs.

Policy

Within the educational system, policies and rules guide specific actions that are taken on school campuses. These policies and rules have the potential to determine what decisions are made with regards to discipline, placement practices, or other school-wide initiatives. Depending on the policies and how they are developed,

they also impact students' educational experiences. The following are suggestions for the development of policies that can positively impact the efforts of teachers in the classroom in their pursuit of caring for their teachers.

At a policy level, we recommend that districts scrutinize their current disciplinary routines for practices that might undermine the mission to provide care for all students. In fact, Lewis and Diamond (2015) write that disciplinary practices often focus on blame and punishment which can weaken a student's sense of belonging in the school and jeopardize student outcomes in the process, which can have a detrimental effect on a student's sense of feeling cared for. We recommend that districts look into possibly altering disciplinary practices away from strict disciplinary policies and move toward approaches such as restorative justice disciplinary practices. These practices focus on identifying the reasons for the conflict, repairing the harm done, and agreeing on next steps, and have been shown improve school culture, reduce suspension rates, and perhaps most importantly, improve student staff relationships (Lustick, 2017). In all, by scrutinizing disciplinary practices and moving toward care-centered disciplinary approaches, districts may ensure that the message of care in being reinforced both inside and outside of the classroom.

Another recommendation that we have is that, along with concerns over curriculum, accountability measures, and testing processes, districts should seriously focus on developing programs that help teachers and students build closer emotional bonds. As stated before, the current structure of secondary schooling creates environments that stifle emotional understanding between teachers and students

(Hargreaves, 2000). We suggest that districts could combat this by providing time for teachers during their workday to build relationships with students. This can take the form of providing substitute teachers for release time for teachers to have one-on-one goal setting and coaching sessions with students during the school day. Another example could be using support staff, prep times, and schedules creatively to provide teachers the opportunity to spend time with students outside of normal classroom times. This could take the form of a brief check-in period or time built into daily schedules lasting roughly 10 to 15 minutes in which teachers could check in with students in a more intimate manner and provide support, whether it be academic or emotional. Whatever the case, districts would be wise to build in structures at the secondary level that could help bring about more emotional understanding among teachers and students.

In sum, student-teacher relationships have a large impact on students' overall academic achievement (Hattie, 2009). The need for students to feel cared for by their teachers and other educators and the results of that care have been examined (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Scholars have demonstrated the importance of care in student-teacher relationships (Garza, 2009; Martin & Dowson, 2009; Schussler & Collins, 2006) and have found that when care is fostered in classrooms, students are more successful. Our research supports those findings and we have provided school leaders with practical examples to aid in district planning and supporting teachers. Also discussed in this section were strategies and actions teachers, administrators, and counselors can take to ensure that their practice reflects care by prioritizing their time and beliefs. The work of Noddings (2005) concluded that by fostering caring

relationships with students, teachers can facilitate the development of ethical, effective, and healthy people. We agree and add that if teachers from high and low tracks are supported with the training and resources to provide students the care that has been found to improve educational outcomes and guide students into more moral beings, then that will contribute to a more just society.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

STUDENT SURVEY CONSENT FORM

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, STANISLAUS

Project Title: **Losing track: Teacher care, responsibility, and student experiences in high and low classes.**

PI: Reid Volk, Karla Ceballos-Lopez, Alyssa Souza, and Justin Woodbridge

INFORMED CONSENT (on first screen of survey)

A Survey Measuring Students Experiences in Elementary School through High School

You are invited to participate in this survey about your experiences in school. Some of the questions ask you about your interest level in the class and how much help you receive in class.

Your participation in this study involves completing an online questionnaire. This should take no more than 20 minutes of your time. Your participation is anonymous and only these researchers will have access to the information collected. We provided a link to ensure that only students who we invite actually complete the survey. The reason we ask for you to identify your school is so we can calculate the percent of students who participated.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. We are happy to answer any questions you might have. We can also respond to any research-related problems that may arise. You can contact any of the four researchers involved in this study,, Karla Ceballos-Lopez, Alyssa Souza, Justin Woodbridge, or Reid Volk via email at kceballoslopez@csustan.edu, asouza4@csustan.edu, jwoodbridge@csustan.edu, or rvolk@csustan.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the California State University, Stanislaus Institutional Review Board UIRM Administrator by phone (209) 667-3784 or email IRBADMIN@csustan.edu. The UIRB is a group or people who review research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

Thank you

Please indicate your willingness to participate in this survey by clicking on one selection. mm I AGREE to participate in this study. mm I DO NOT AGREE to participate in this study If "I AGREE to participate is selected" then continue to survey

If I DO NOT AGREE Skip to Block:

APPENDIX B

PARENT ASSENT FORM FOR STUDENT SURVEYS

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, STANISLAUS

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your student will have the opportunity to participate in a research project that is being sponsored California State University, Stanislaus Educational Leadership Doctoral Program. In this study, we want to understand the academic experiences of students at Modesto High School as well as their classroom experiences and aspirations for the future. Your student will participate in a short survey that will ask them questions about their experiences in class.

There are no known risks to your student for his or her participation in this study. Your student's participation and the results of this study could help school leadership identify best practices for serving students academically. The information collected will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure under the law. All data will be kept in a secure location. Only the researcher will have access to any data collected through this research. Your student's responses to the survey will be kept confidential. No one at your student's school will know how he or she answered the questions.

If you do not agree to have your student participate in this survey, please indicate this decision by signing below and returning the signed section to your student's English teacher.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Anysia Mayer at 209-664- 6564 or apmayer@csustan.edu.

Sincerely, Anysia Mayer, Ph.D.

My student does NOT have permission to participate in a survey regarding student classroom experiences.

Name of Student (Printed)

_____Date:_____

_____

Parent/Guardian Signature:

_____Date:_____

APPENDIX C

TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

General demographic information gathered prior to the beginning of the interview.

What is your age?

23-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69

What is your gender?

Male	Female	Decline to state

What is your ethnicity?

American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races or Ethnicities	Other

How many years have you been teaching at this school?

0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	More than 25

How many years have you been teaching in total?

0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	More than 25

What grade(s) do you currently teach?

4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th

What subject do you currently teach?

_____

What subjects have you taught in the past?

_____

What type of credential do you possess?

Multiple Subject	Single Subject	Education Specialist

If you possess a single subject teaching credential, in what subject is your

credential in?

_____

What is your highest level of education?

Bachelors	Reading Specialist	Masters	Doctorate

Dimension of Care	Interview Questions
I. Personal Information	1. (Brief handout completed by teacher)- Age, gender, ethnicity, years of teaching, current teaching assignment, and educational history.
	2. Why did you go into teaching?
	3. How would you describe your main teaching goals

and objectives?

4. What would you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses.

II. Teacher Care   5. In what ways do you consider yourself to be a caring teacher?

6. How do you show your care for your students through:

    a. your attitudes and beliefs about students

    b. interpersonal relationships with students

    c. accessibility

    d. communication style

    e. Instructional methods

    f. discipline

    g. grading

7. What do you think are some of the largest barriers or obstacles teachers face in trying to care for students?

III. Interpersonal   8. How do you get to know your students well enough to feel

Caring Practices   close? Their parents and families?

9. How do you handle students who are experiencing:

   a. Discipline Challenges

   b. Academic Challenges

   c. Other Personal Challenges

10. What do you consider are the most important factors in

maintaining positive relationships with students?

APPENDIX D

TEACHER INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, STANISLAUS
Informed Consent

Dear Participant:

You are being invited to participate in a research project. This study is being done to fulfill requirements for a Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at CSU Stanislaus. We hope to learn about the experiences of students as they pertain to teacher care in the classroom. We also seek to gain an understanding about your perceived level of care for your students in class. If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to participate in an interview with one or more of the researchers conducting this study. The interview will take approximately one hour. Also, you may be asked to answer further questions at a later time for the purposes or clarification and member checks.

The potential risks, discomforts and adverse effects that a student may encounter with participating in this survey are minimal. Your choice to participate in the survey will not affect your current or future relations with your employer or California State University, Stanislaus.

Information collected will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure under the law. All data will be kept in a secure location. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential, and digital data will be stored in secure computer files. Any report of this research that is made available to the public will not include your name or any other individual information by which you could be identified.

There is no cost to you beyond the time and effort required to complete the interview described above. Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

If you agree to participate, please indicate this decision by signing below. If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Karla Ceballos-Lopez, at (559) 250-7343, Alyssa Souza (209) 581-3520, Reid Volk (626) 807-0637, Justin Woodbridge (209) 872-1321 or our faculty sponsor, Dr. Anysia Mayer, at (209) 664-6788. If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator by phone (209) 667-3493 or email IRBAdmin@csustan.edu.

Sincerely,

Karla Ceballos-Lopez
Alyssa Souza
Reid Volk
Justin Woodbridge
Doctoral Candidates

I have read and understand the information provided above. All of my questions, if any, have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to take part in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Signature _____ Date _____

Name (printed) _____

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview audiotape-recorded.

Signature _____ Date _____

Name (printed) _____

Signature of person obtaining consent _____ Date _____

Printed name of person obtaining consent _____

APPENDIX E

STUDENT SURVEYS

Grades 7-12

Section 1: Thoughts on Pedagogical Effectiveness.

Directions: Indicate your <u>level of agreement</u> with each of the following statements by

choosing the appropriate response below.

Questions	Response Choices				
1. Overall, how much have you learned from your teachers?	Almost nothing	A little bit	Some	Quite a bit	A tremendous amount
2. During class, how motivating are the activities that this teacher has you do?	Not at all motivating	Slightly motivating	Somewhat motivating	Quite motivating	Extremely motivating
3. For this class, how clearly does this teacher present the information that you need to learn?	Not at all clearly	Slightly clearly	Somewhat clearly	Quite clearly	Extremely clearly
4. How interesting does this teacher make what you are learning in class?	Not at all interesting	Slightly interesting	Somewhat interesting	Quite interesting	Extremely interesting
5. How often does this teacher give you feedback that helps you learn?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Often	All the time
6. When you need extra help, how good is this teacher at giving you that help?	Not at all good	Slightly good	Somewhat good	Quite good	Extremely good

7. How comfortable are you asking this teacher questions about what you are learning in his or her class?	Not at all comfortable	Slightly comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Quite comfortable	Extremely comfortable
8. How often has this teacher taught you things that you didn't know before taking this class?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Often	All the time

Questions	Response Choices				
9. How much does this teacher encourage you to do your best?	Does not encourage me at all	Encourages me a little	Encourages me some	Encourages me quite a bit	Encourages me a tremendous amount
10. When you feel like giving up on a difficult task, how likely is it that this teacher will make you keep trying?	Not at all likely	Slightly likely	Somewhat likely	Quite likely	Extremely likely
11. Overall, how high are this teacher's expectations of you?	Not high at all	Slightly high	Somewhat high	Quite high	Extremely high
12. How often does this teacher make you explain your answers?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
13. How often does this teacher take time to make sure you understand the material?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Often	Almost always

Section 2: Expectations and Rigor

Questions	Response Choices				
14. When your teacher asks how you are doing, how often do you feel that your teacher is really interested in your answer?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
15. How interested is this teacher in what you do outside of class?	Not at all interested	A little bit interested	Somewhat interested	Quite interested	Extremely interested
16. How interested is this teacher in your career after you finish school?	Not at all interested	A little bit interested	Somewhat interested	Quite interested	Extremely interested
17. If you walked into class upset, how concerned would your teacher be?	Not at all concerned	Slightly concerned	Somewhat concerned	Quite concerned	Extremely concerned
18. If you came back to visit class three years from now, how excited would this teacher be to see you?	Not at all excited	A little bit excited	Somewhat excited	Quite excited	Extremely excited
19. If you had something on your mind, how carefully would this teacher listen to you?	Not at all carefully	A little bit carefully	Somewhat carefully	Quite a bit carefully	Extremely carefully

Section 3: Supportive Relationships

Questions	Response Choices				
20. Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?	Do not belong	Belong a little bit	Belong somewhat	Belong quite a bit	Completely belong
21. At your school, how accepted do you feel by the other students?	Not accepted	A little accepted	Somewhat accepted	Quite accepted	Extremely accepted

Section 4: Sense of Belonging

22. How well do people at your school understand you?	Don't understand at all	Understand a little	Understand somewhat	Understand quite a bit	Completely understand
23. How much respect do students in your school show you?	No respect at all	A little bit of respect	Some respect	Quite a bit of respect	A great deal of respect
24. How connected do you feel to the adults at your school?	Not at all connected	Slightly connected	Somewhat connected	Quite connected	Extremely connected
25. How much do you matter to others at this school?	Do not matter at all	Matter a little bit	Matter somewhat	Matter quite a bit	Matter a great deal

Section 5: College Going Culture

How much do you agree with the following: At my school...

Questions	Response Choices			
26. ...teachers work hard to make sure that all students are learning.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
27. ...all students are encouraged to go to college.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
28. ...teachers pay attention to all students, not just the top students.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
29. ...teachers work hard to make sure that students stay in school.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

30. ...my friends in school will attend college after high school.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
31. ...the students in my school will attend college after high school.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Directions: For the next few questions, please provide the information about yourself.

Your responses and identity will be held completely confidential.

What is your gender?

◯ Female ◯ Male

What is your grade level?

◯ 7 ◯ 8 ◯ 9 ◯ 10 ◯ 11 ◯ 12

What is your race or ethnicity?

◯ American Indian or Alaska Native ◯ Asian ◯ Black or African American ◯ Hispanic or Latino

◯ Native Hawaiian or ◯ White ◯ Two or More ◯ Other

Other Pacific Islander   Races/Ethnicities

If you selected "Two or More Races/Ethnicities" of "other" and would like to provide

more of a description, please use the space below.

_____

___

Were you in GATE before entering high school?

○ No   ○ Yes

Please indicate how many years of GATE you were in.

○ 0   ○ 1   ○ 2-3

Which of the following best describes you?

I am taking more

I am taking at least   I am taking two   than two

○ one honors/AP class   ○ honors/AP classes   ○ honors/AP

classes

○ I am in regular classes, but I took honors/AP classes in the past

○ I am in regular classes and have never taken honors/AP classes

Please indicate how many years you have taken honors/AP classes.

○ 0   ○ 1-2   ○ 3-4

What school do you attend?

○ Junior High School

○ High School

Grades 4-6

Section 1: Thoughts on Pedagogical Effectiveness

Questions	Response Choices				
1. How much have you learned from this teacher?	Almost nothing	A little bit	Some	Quite a bit	A tremendous amount
2. When you need extra help, how good is this teacher at giving you that help?	Not at all good	Slightly good	Somewhat good	Quite good	Extremely good
3. How good is this teacher at teaching in the way that you learn best?	Not good at all	A little bit good	Somewhat good	Quite good	Extremely good
4. How clearly does this teacher present the information that you need to learn?	Not at all clearly	Slightly clearly	Somewhat clearly	Quite clearly	Extremely clearly
5. How interesting does this teacher make what you are learning in class?	Not at all interesting	Slightly interesting	Somewhat interesting	Quite interesting	Extremely interesting

6. How good is this teacher at helping you learn?	Not good at all	A little bit good	Somewhat good	Quite good	Extremely good
7. How much did you learn from this teacher that you didn't know before taking his or her class?	Almost nothing	A little bit	Some	Quite a bit	A tremendous amount

Section 2: Expectations and Rigor

Questions	Response Choices				
8. How much does this teacher encourage you to do your best?	Does not encourage me at all	Encourages me a little	Encourages me some	Encourages me quite a bit	Encourages me a tremendous amount
9. When you feel like giving up, how likely is it that this teacher will make you keep trying?	Not at all likely	Slightly likely	Somewhat likely	Quite likely	Extremely likely
10. Overall, how high are this teacher's expectations of you?	Not high at all	Slightly high	Somewhat high	Quite high	Extremely high
11. How often does this teacher make you explain your answers?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
12. How often does this teacher take time to make sure you understand the material?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Often	Almost always

Section 3: Supportive Relationships

Questions	Response Choices

13. When your teacher asks, "how are you," how often do you feel that your teacher really wants to know your answer?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
14. How much does this teacher want to learn about what you do when you are not in school?	Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat	Quite	Extremely
15. How interested is this teacher in what you want to be when you grow up?	Not at all interested	A little bit interested	Somewhat interested	Quite interested	Extremely interested
16. If you had something on your mind, how carefully would this teacher listen to you?	Not at all carefully	A little bit carefully	Somewhat carefully	Quite a bit carefully	Extremely carefully

Section 4: Sense of Belonging

Questions	Response Choices				
17. Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?	Do not belong	Belong a little bit	Belong somewhat	Belong quite a bit	Completely belong
18. How accepted do you feel by other people?	Not at all accepted	A little bit accepted	Somewhat accepted	Quite accepted	Completely accepted
19. How well do people at your school understand you as a person?	Don't understand at all	Understand a little	Understand somewhat	Understand quite a bit	Completely understand
20. How much support do the adults at your school give you?	No support at all	A little bit of support	Some support	Quite a bit of support	A great deal of support

21. How much respect do students at your school show you?	No respect at all	A little bit of respect	Some respect	Quite a bit of respect	A great deal of respect

Directions: For the next few questions, please provide the information about yourself. Your responses and identity will be held completely confidential.

What is your gender?

○ Female   ○ Male

What is your grade level?

○ 4   ○ 5   ○ 6

What is your race or ethnicity?

○ American Indian or Alaska Native   ○ Asian   ○ Black or African American   ○ Hispanic or Latino

○ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander   ○ White   ○ Two or More Races/Ethnicities   ○ Other

If you selected "Two or More Races/Ethnicities" of "other" and would like to provide more of a description, please use the space below.

_____

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Which of the following best describes you?

○ I am currently in GATE   ○ I am not in GATE but I used to be in GATE   ○ I am not currently in GATE and I have never been in GATE

Please indicate how many years you have been in GATE...

○ 0   ○ 1   ○ 2   ○ 3

Who is your teacher?

_____