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Student Perceptions of School and Teachers In the Classroom

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STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL AND TEACHERS IN THE CLASSROOM

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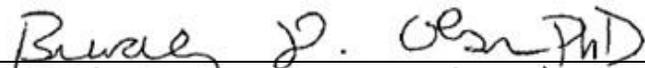
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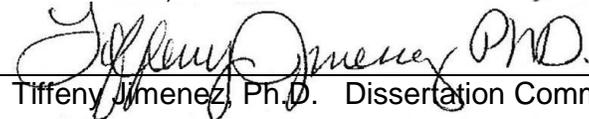
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Abstract

Much of the existing education research on student outcomes has focused on gaining a better understanding of student cognition and behavior, considering affect primarily as the role of a mediator or moderator to cognitive or behavioral outcomes. Student satisfaction with school is an affective outcome that is shaped by their relationships with their teachers. Though research on affect as an outcome has increased, it has not been well-understood and often ignored in models of understanding student outcomes. This qualitative study adds to the body of research on student affect as an outcome by collecting data from current high school students and recent high school graduates shared during reflective interviews, and assessing that data to determine how they perceived teachers' actions in the classroom, their high school experience, and which learning outcomes they most value. Twelve current and former high school students from a large urban school district were interviewed in pursuit of answers to the following research questions: 1) what attributes or types of teacher actions were most influential on how the student felt about their school experience, and 2) which learning outcome is most important to the student – academic (cognitive), behavioral, or satisfaction with school experience (affective)?

"the most significant reality or set of realities is found in the subjective realities of human perception. People believe what they perceive, and they act on what they believe"

--David M. Fetterman, 1988

Student Perceptions of School and Teachers in the Classroom

From 1956-1972 a group of researchers led by Benjamin Bloom developed categories of learning objectives commonly referred to as Bloom's taxonomies ("Affective Domain - Bloom's Taxonomy", 2020; Bloom, 1956; Hoque, 2016). From these educational taxonomies (Menix, 1996) three separate, yet interdependent domains were derived relating to cognitive, behavioral, and affective learning outcomes. The domains are frequently used by educators to inform essential planning, implementation, and evaluation of teaching-learning processes and student learning outcomes (Hoque, 2016). The cognitive domain focuses on content knowledge and the students' development of intellectual skills. The behavioral domain focuses on observable application of, or response to, the knowledge acquired during the teaching-learning process. The affective domain is related to students' emotional responses to their learning experience (Bloom, 1956; Hogue, 2016). Much of the existing education research on student learning outcomes has focused on gaining a better understanding of student cognition and behavior, considering affect primarily as the role of a mediator or moderator to cognitive or behavioral outcomes (Baker, 1998; Borgonovi and Pal, 2016; King et al, 2007; Pintrich, 2003). This literature review and subsequent qualitative study hopes to add to the existing body of research by focusing on student affect in older high school students and recent high school graduates. The study will use information collected from reflective interviews with recent high school graduates from a large public urban school district to explore connections between the students' perception of their teachers' actions in the classroom and their perception of their school experience.

As with cognition and behavior, affect is a central part of the teaching-learning process (Fortus, 2014; Pintrich, 2003). It characterizes the emotions reflected by a students' beliefs, values, and interests (Menix, 1996). Throughout this study the phrase "student perception" will

be used to refer to affect as the student's emotional perspective of the teaching-learning process. This study defines affect as a student's emotional perspective, particular attitude towards, or way of regarding an experience (Alsop and Watts, 2003), in this case their school experience and the teaching-learning process. The concept of affect addressed in this study extends beyond the teaching-learning process to include the student's interest, motivation to engage, self-efficacy, and attitudes and beliefs towards their general experience in school. Throughout this study the phrase "satisfaction with school experience" will be used to refer to students' affect towards their general school experience.

Student Affect Matters as an Outcome

In much of the existing research affect is considered only in its role as mediator or moderator to the other two domains of learning – cognition and behavior (Baker, 1998; Borgonovi and Pal, 2016; Frymier, 2016; King et al, 2007; Pintrich, 2003; Zhang and Witt, 2016). The mediating or moderating role of affect to cognition and behavior is an illustration of how the three learning domains are interrelated. For example, one study demonstrated how affect mediates between conditions in the learning environment, such as students' perceptions of teachers acting in a generally supportive manner, and student behaviors such as aggression or drug abuse (King et al, 2007). Another study showed how affect influences cognitive processing (Baker, 1998). But what might be the possibilities or implications for the educational system if more research was designed to focus on student affect as an outcome by deepening our understanding of students' perceptions of various aspects of their educational experience – not just of their grades or test scores (cognition), or how they respond or react to their classes or school (behavior)?

Understanding more about student affect provides a lens through which to reimagine the role of the student in the ecology of the educational system, methods of training teachers, the structure of schools, and delivery of the educational experience. When students are positioned throughout the educational ecology as contributors whose perspectives matter beyond how they motivate them to achieve prescribed cognitive or behavioral milestones, students will be situated to become active collaborators within the system, not simply objectified products of the system. When focus on the student is skewed towards their cognitive and behavioral outcomes, the primary interest in the student becomes their development as human and social capital at a future time. This skewed interest lends to students becoming objectified within the educational system (Borgonovi and Pal, 2016; Grant, 2016). The student experience is more valuable than what can be quantified by their grades, test scores, attendance, and behavior records. Knowing the student experience through their perspective has potential to lead to an increased understanding of what this researcher hope is the beginning of a revolutionized lens through which to view the value of student affect (Grant, 2016). Focusing on affect as an outcome requires more attention be paid to student perspective and provides an opportunity for the adults in the system to obtain student input on what's important to them, as well as demonstrate to students that what's important to them matters. Around the world students are arguing for a greater voice in the educational ecology and to be considered as more than human capital (Grant, 2016).   This researcher believes that a key step on the pathway to reimagining the role of the student in the educational ecological system is to develop a better understanding of how the current structure of the system impacts student affect (Baker, 1999; Haertel, Herbert, & Haertel, 1981). Usually when there is a desire to learn something about a topic an expert is sought out. Students are more than the center

of the educational ecological system; they are the experts in what they desire to get out of their experience with the system.

A note on culture, race, ethnicity, and affect. Learning more about affect as an outcome becomes especially salient in urban school settings. For this study, the term "urban school setting" refers to size, location, and student population of the district to which the school belongs. Urban school settings are located in large, densely populated cities; and have student populations that are 50% or more students of color (non-white students). The insider perspectives that students of color in urban school settings provide is needed to bring about real change in those schools (Irizarry and Welton, 2013). Until the perspectives of students of color are better understood, we can never truly know about their school experience or how to appropriately respond to their needs (Irizarry and Welton, 2013). Culture, race, and ethnicity are undeniable aspects of humanity and society, and matter profoundly in the teaching-learning process, which is itself a socio-cultural process (Gay, 2014). The interconnectivity of culture, race, and ethnicity in the teaching-learning process carries even more significance when considered in the context of urban educational settings which are typically characterized by a disproportionate number of white, middle-class teachers teaching poorer students of color. Student affect cannot be considered without acknowledging the role of culture, race, and ethnicity in influencing how both students and teachers believe, think and behave (Gay, 2014). School reform efforts typically ignore the perspectives of the communities of color they serve (Irizarry and Welton, 2013). The interconnectivity between culture, race, and ethnicity – and humanity – makes it critical for any humanistic or relational approach to education research or reform to acknowledge and incorporate the role of culture, race, and ethnicity in all aspects of the educational ecological system (Erickson, 2010).

Value of The Student-Teacher Relationship.

Students spend most of their school day in a classroom, where their interactions with teachers primarily occur (Rogers, 2005), yet there are gaps in our understanding of the role of interpersonal aspects of the classroom (Davis. 2003). The quality of teacher actions (e.g. their support of students; friendliness towards students; and facilitation of a cooperative, academically engaging, and task-oriented classroom environment) impacts the way students identify with school, the schooling process, and their relationships with teachers (Baker, 1999; Davis. 2003; Wubbles, Brekelman, & Hooymayer, 1991; Williams, Schneider, & Wornell, 2018; Yoon, 2002). The literature and research show that interactions between students and teachers are a major determinant of learning quality, and that teacher interpersonal behavior with students plays an important role in student affect, including improved affective outcomes and student satisfaction with school (Baker, 1999; Gay, 2014; Gregory et. Al, 2016; Rey, 2007; Wilkins, 2006; Wubbles, Brekelman, & Hooymayer, 1991). Students have identified teachers as one of the best aspects of school (DeFur. & Korinek, 2010).

The student-teacher relationships can also have a negative influence on students. In 1990, students reported an inability to get along with teachers as one of the three most frequent reasons for dropping out (National Center for Education Statistics, 1990; Roger, 2005). In one study focusing on at-risk students, Baker (1998) showed that behavioral interactions between students and teachers could be a mechanism by which students become alienated from school. A qualitative study of urban high school students by McHugh et al, (2013) indicated that negative perceptions of teachers stemmed from teacher failure to adequately attend to the student's actions or communicated thoughts (inattention), stereotyping of students by teachers, lack of care demonstrated by teachers, and superficial behavior by teachers. These teacher actions created

barriers to the development of supportive student-teacher relationships and contributed to

resistant student behaviors such as avoidance (e.g. a student who skips the class of a teacher

perceived as stereotyping them).

Understanding the Student-Teacher Relationship

There have been three primary lenses used to understand the student-teacher relationship:

attachment theory, motivation theory, and a social-cultural perspective (Davis, 2003). Next is a

brief description of each lens and how they align with this study.

Using attachment theory to understand the student-teacher relationship. In an

article synthesizing research on the nature and influence of the student-teacher relationship,

Davis (2003) provides a clear explanation of attachment theory and its limitations when applied

to this relationship. What follows is a summary of Davis' (2003) explication. Attachment

theory considers the student-teacher relationship as an extension of the parent-child relationship.

This theory uses adjustment indicators, such as cognitive development, social competence with

peers and adults, and dimensions of the parent-child relationship (emotional closeness, conflict,

and dependency) to evaluate the student-teacher relationship. Traditional dimensions of the

parent-child relationship used in attachment theory are important to predicting social-emotional

and cognitive outcomes in early student-teacher relationships, but it is questionable that these

dimensions are sufficient to predict outcomes throughout the development continuum. Within

attachment theory remains a lingering question: do the indicators of relationship quality drawn

from the theory and used to evaluate the parent-child relationship have the same impact when

evaluating student-teacher relationships in older students? This is one limitation to using the lens

of attachment theory to understand student-teacher relationships in this study, which collected

data from older students. There is also controversy around the extent to which the parent-child

relationship can be generalized to the student-teacher relationship (Davis, 2003).

Using motivation theory to understand the student-teacher relationship. The lens of

motivation theory broadens our understanding of how classroom contexts and students' social

motivational beliefs shape the quality of student-teacher relationships, how the student-teacher

relationship impacts student motivation and learning, and how teachers' beliefs impact the

quality of their instruction and relationships with students (Davis, 2003). Motivation theory has

proven very useful when examining cognitive outcomes, as motivation theorists focus on

answering the question of what energizes an individual to be willing to expend effort towards an

activity or task (Davis, 2003; Frymier, 2016; Pintrich, 2003;). In educational settings affect and

motivation can be reciprocal (Frymier, 2016), i.e., the more a student likes content, the more

effort they'll expend towards learning it and vice versa. However, the theory's limited focus on

cognition and the individual misaligns with this study's focus on affect and emphasis on the

value and impact of the interpersonal student-teacher relationship on student affect. Affective

factors have not been well understood using motivation theory, though motivational theorists

acknowledge that affect can serve a significant mediating role in the relationship between

cognitive outcomes and motivation (Frymier, 2016; Pintrich, 2003).

There are some views within motivation theory that widen beyond the individual to

consider culture and context; however, they still focus on cognitive outcomes and individual

internal psychological processes. For example, situated views of motivation suggest that cultural

and contextual factors play a paramount role in the way cognition and motivation operate within

the individual, and that cognition and motivation must be first examined from the outside in

(Pintrich, 2003). The situated view of motivation theory is more popular in educational settings

because it minimizes focus on individual internal psychological processes and stresses the

importance of the influence of context on cognition and motivation, giving teachers hope that

what they do in the classroom makes a difference (Pintrich, 2003). Yet the situated view of

motivation theory is not a sufficient lens through which to approach this study due to its focus on

cognitive outcomes and not affective outcomes.

Using a social-cultural lens to understand the student-teacher relationship. The

teaching-learning process is a socio-cultural process (Gay, 2014). The social-cultural

perspective provides a lens to look for dynamic processes and patterns within the classroom,

school, and educational systems (Pintrich, 2003). It examines the student-teacher relationship

beyond the isolation of the structural impact of the school or classroom context, as well as looks

beyond the reciprocity of the student-teacher relationship (Davis, 2003). The social-cultural

perspective acknowledges that different classrooms and schools can be considered as different

cultures (Pintrich, 2003), considering the interpersonal culture between students and teachers as a

reflection of the culture of the classroom and school (Davis, 2003). Using a social-cultural lens

to examine student affect provides an opportunity to take a humanistic, instead of developmental,

approach to understanding students' needs and what is important to them and their well-being at

the present moment in order to amplify their voices within the educational ecological system.

This lens more closely aligns with this study's focus on student affect and the student-teacher

relationship within the classroom context.

Attachment and motivation theory focus on how the student-teacher relationship is driven

by the student or teacher respectively. In attachment theory a good student-teacher relationship

is defined by a student's ability to form healthy attachments with their teacher which will result

in improved cognitive development or social competence (Davis, 2003). In motivation theory a

good relationship is defined by a teacher's ability to motivate a student towards improved cognitive outcomes (Davis, 2003). Through the social-cultural lens the student-teacher relationship is negotiated between the student and the teacher (Davis, 2003), not driven by any one member in the relationship. A good relationship is defined as one where students and teachers seek to understand each other and create meaning together, which is necessary for conceptual change and reexamination of the role of standards and norms within the relationship (Davis, 2003).

It is through the social-cultural lens that the student-teacher relationship becomes one of several constructs that define the classroom culture and environment (Pintrich, 2003), and students are validated in the classroom and school spaces. Furman's (2002) "postmodern community" is an example of a classroom environment using a social-cultural approach. In a postmodern community, students are validated as unique and worthy members of the community. Members are included in the community with respect, peace, justice, and appreciation. Feelings of belonging, trust, and safety are promoted by accepting the differences among the members of the community, not by attempting to create a homogenous community (Rogers, 2005) through conformity to pre-existing standards and norms not created by all members of the community.

Significance of Student-Teacher Relationships in Urban Schools

The role of the student-teacher relationship is paramount in urban schools for both the student and teacher. The most important knowledge teachers can construct is through their relationships with students (Donnell, 2007). However, schools in urban settings are designed to place a higher value on the objectification of students (Grant, 2016) as human capital, than as

humans. Urban educational systems, processes, and practices demonstrate a greater interest in

what students' individual motivation, learning interests, and abilities can offer society at some

future time (Borgonovi and Pal, 2016; Gay, 2014) than in their well-being through the lens of

what is important to them in the present moment, which relies on their direct input (Borgonovi

and Pal, 2016). This objectification of students can pose a challenge to the establishment of the

type of student-teacher relationships in which students and teachers reciprocate teaching and

learning throughout the teaching-learning process (Borgonovi and Pal, 2016; Brown, 2004;

Donnell, 2007; Grant, 2016; Nieto, 2014). This reciprocation is a critical component for

development of successful teaching practice in urban schools (Donnell, 2007).

The challenge of culture in student-teacher relationships in urban schools. Research

shows that culture plays a critical role in the teaching-learning process (Gay, 2014). There is a

congruent relationship between cultural experiences of teachers and students, and affect and

behaviors in the classroom (Gay, 2014). Schools in urban settings are typically characterized by

a disproportionate number of white, middle-class teachers teaching poorer students of color.

These schools are structured as social-political spaces which, through curriculum, pedagogy,

daily interaction with students, policy, and discipline of students reinforce the hegemony of

white culture (Howard and Milner, 2014). In these settings white teachers commonly default to

asserting their euro-centric identities, rooted in their whiteness, as school norms (Izarry and

Welton, 2013).

Teachers' cultural frame of reference influence their teaching techniques and assumptions

about student capability and how students learn (Gay, 2014). Students' cultural experiences

influence their affect and how they respond to curriculum and instruction (Gay, 2014). The

cultural differences between the majority white, female, monolinguistic, middle-class teaching

force and the majority poor, urban, multi-lingual students of color whom they are responsible for educating, creates a cultural divide (Brown, 2004; Gay, 2014; Howard and Milner, 2014). In any educational setting teachers are faced with the challenge of establishing positive student-teacher relationships. In urban schools this challenge is exacerbated by the cultural divide between students and teachers, which creates a context in which students and teachers must develop a rapport while feeling the strong cultural influences on the relationship (Witt, et al, 2016). These cultural influences include how students and teachers perceive different races, cultures, ethnicities, genders, age groups, social classes, and sexual orientations (Witt, et.al, 2016).

The challenge culture poses to the establishment of positive student-teacher relationships in urban schools leads to a need to examine how teachers are prepared to meet this challenge (Howard and Milner, 2014). Literature on teacher preparation and urban education is not well developed (Gay, 2014; Howard and Milner, 2014), and the topic of cultural diversity in urban schools is complex. However, it has long been argued that in order for successful teaching and learning to take place in urban schools, teachers need racial and cultural knowledge in addition to subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge (Dubois, 1903; Howard and Milner, 2014; Windsor, 1933).

In the past decade, there has been a significant increase in the attention given to the role of culture in urban teaching practice across all levels of education – from pre-school to college – and across all subject matters (Gay, 2014). Teacher education programs offer instruction to equip teacher candidates with knowledge about culture, race, and ethnicity, and encourages them to develop student-centered and culturally responsive practices. However, these programs are limited in training and discussions that teach candidates to be culturally responsive and employ race conscious approaches (Howard and Milner, 2014). Teacher education programs have

rarely, if ever, been informed by urban communities (Izarry and Welton, 2013), and do not offer teachers support in how to socially construct an approach to learning from and with their students through respect, value, and incorporation of students' individual histories and perspectives (Donnell, 2003). Programs should prepare teacher candidates to address culture through a holistic approach that goes beyond historical and theoretical knowledge to specifically emphasize the importance of building student-teacher relationships by relating to students as persons and learners, while incorporating their rich experiences into the teaching-learning process (Gay, 2014). Programs that fail to address the challenge of culture by ignoring the role of students' histories and perspectives promote inequality of opportunities for urban students (Brown, 2004).

Donnell (2007) proposes a dynamic of cultivating mutual learning in the classroom, "getting to we", as a way for teachers to engage in relational knowing which involves placing a high value on knowing about their students' interests, backgrounds, aptitudes, fears, and personal lives. To engage in this type of relational knowing teachers must acknowledge and understand the culture gap between them and their students and be willing and able to leverage cultural capital as an asset in the teaching-learning process, viewing the culture gap as a pathway to student growth (Brown, 2004; Gay, 2014; King et. Al., 2007; Nieto, 2014). Practices such as Donnell's (2007) relational knowing can confront the objectifying, white cultural hegemonic structure of urban schools, which perpetuates the cultural divide and the challenges of establishing positive student-teacher relationships, while creating opportunities for teachers to reflect on and demonstrate respect for students' cultures, perspectives, and experiences (Borgonovi and Pal, 2016; Gay, 2014).

Teacher Action

For this study, the term "teacher action" refers to physical, verbal, or nonverbal actions made by teachers while interacting with individual or groups of students both in and out of the instructional setting of the classroom. Teacher actions can be interpreted by students as positive or negative (McHugh, et al., 2013). The communication studies lens provides an adequate filter through which to understand teacher actions in the instructional setting. Because this study examines students' perceptions of teacher actions in the classroom, this section of the literature review briefly considers research from the field of communication studies which has closely examined the role of interpersonal communication in the teaching-learning process, identified various teacher actions that impact the way students and teachers communicate with and perceive each other, and identified desired outcomes of the teaching-learning process (Witt, 2016). The communication studies lens is closely aligned with the socio-cultural lens preferred by this study, in that it considers the message, source, receiver, process, and context of interpersonal communication and includes the attitudes and characteristics of the receiver and source (Kerssen-Griep and Terry, 2016; Witt; 2016). In this study teachers are the source of communication, students are the receivers, teacher actions are the message, the teaching-learning process is the process, and the context is the classroom.

The teaching-learning process is interpersonal in nature; therefore, all teacher actions, regardless of the type of school environment, impact the process (Cayanus and Martin, 2016; Frymier and Houser, 2000). Given the extensive impact of teacher actions on the teaching-learning process, this section will focus on the following teacher actions that research indicates seem to have significant impact on affective outcomes of the teaching-learning process – clarity, immediacy, confirmation, credibility, self-disclosure, and caring.

Teacher clarity and student affect. Clarity has not been easy to define in research. According to Titsworth and Mazer (2016) it is a multi-dimensional construct that can be both a behavior and an impression, and is dependent on contextual factors that include the culture of both the student and teacher. Clarifying actions can range from low inference behaviors which are clear and objective, to high inference behaviors which are vague and subjective. The authors define clarity as the students' perceptions of teachers' communication-related behaviors that assist them with selecting, understanding, and remembering information. Research has generally shown that teacher clarity actions have a greater impact on student affective learning, than on their cognitive learning, and that students benefit in the student-teacher relationship and the teaching-learning process when teachers are clear (Titsworth and Mazer, 2016).

Teacher immediacy and student affect. Immediacy has a significant influence in the instructional setting and is therefore one of the most researched constructs in instructional communication (Witt, Schrodt, & Turman, 2010; Zhang and Witt, 2016). Immediacy refers to the verbal and non-verbal expressions of teachers which lead students to perceive interpersonal closeness between them and the teacher (Zhang and Witt, 2016). Non-verbal cues include proximity, touch, vocal expression, body movement and posture, eye contact, chronemics (time-related behaviors such as willingness to wait or being punctual); and often carry the affective context of the overall message when they accompany the verbal message (Zhang and Witt, 2016). Research on immediacy has found positive correlation between non-verbal immediacy and affective and cognitive learning (Rodriguez et al., 1996; Witt and Wheeless, 2001; Zhang and Witt, 2016).

Teacher confirmation and student affect. Teacher confirmation refers to verbal and non-verbal actions that lead students to feel the teacher recognizes, acknowledges, and endorses them

(Frymier, 2016; Cissna and Sieburg, 1981). These actions communicate that the teacher believes the student is worth their time and attention, and are predictive of desirable affective and cognitive learning outcomes, and student motivation (Frymier, 2016; Ellis, 2004). Confirmation actions contribute to students' feelings of competence and their sense of autonomy (Frymier, 2016).

Teacher self-disclosure and student affect. Due to the interpersonal nature of the student-teacher relationship, self-disclosure enhances the relationship and plays an important role in its development (Cayanus and Martin, 2016; Frymier and Houser, 2000). According to Cayanus and Martin (2016), teacher self-disclosure is described as teachers' sharing of their own life experiences to promote clarity and understanding while interacting with students. Students report liking their teacher more when they self-disclose in the classroom because it makes the teachers seem more human (Cayanus and Martin, 2016).

Teacher credibility and student affect. Teven and Katt (2016) define credibility as the student's perceptions of a teacher's character, level of care, and competence that affects learning outcomes and student-teacher interactions. They describe three primary dimensions of credibility. The intelligence, or competence, dimension is reflected in students' perception of a teacher's level of authoritativeness, knowledge or expertise of subject matter, and qualification. The dimension of trustworthiness is fundamental to credibility (Giffin, 1967; Teven and Katt, 2016). It is determined by students' perception of the teacher as being honest, having good moral character and sound judgement, and feeling safe with the teacher. The last dimension, goodwill, is the students' perception that the teacher has demonstrated they have the students' best interest at heart (Teven and Katt, 2016).

Teacher caring and student affect. Caring is defined as how students perceive a teacher based on that teacher's verbal and non-verbal actions (Teven and Katt, 2016). This action manifests in a multifaceted manner (Wilkins, 2006) and is characterized by displays of warmth and affection (Brown, 2004). There are three factors students typically use to evaluate teacher demonstrations of care (McCroskey, 1992; Teven and Katts, 2016). One is empathy, the teacher's ability to identify with a student's situation or feeling. The second factor is understanding, the teacher's ability to comprehend the student's feeling, idea, or need. The third factor is responsiveness, the teacher's ability to demonstrate sensitivity towards the student. Care has been found to have an impact on student affect towards the student-teacher relationship. In a study that examined the behavioral components of good student-teacher relationships from the perception of secondary students and teachers, Wilkins (2006) found that teacher actions perceived positively by students were characterized by care which emerged as an underlying theme of how students perceived teacher actions in general.

Teacher actions are interrelated. As mentioned earlier there are many possible teacher actions. This study has not addressed all of them, but has focused on the teacher actions which seem to have significant impact on affective outcomes of the teaching-learning process. Though the teacher actions covered in this section (clarity, immediacy, confirmation, credibility, self-disclosure, and caring) were individually addressed, they are interrelated in many ways, some of which are yet to be understood by the research community (Witt, 2016). These actions may show up in concert within student-teacher interactions. For example, when combined, immediacy, caring and confirmation can create supportive, encouraging environments that increase the likelihood of student success and help build positive student-teacher relationships (Frymier, 2016). Teacher self-disclosure can be used to promote clarity (Cayanus and Martin,

2016). Caring influences students' perceptions of teacher credibility and promotes trust (Teven and Katt, 2016).

Teacher actions can have either a positive or negative impact on students. The actuality of the teacher actions discussed in this section, whether they are positive or negative, is both determined and assessed by the student (Titsworth and Mazer, 2016; Teven and Katt, 2016). During student-teacher interactions the teacher is clear, caring, credible, immediate, or confirming only if the student perceives them to be so (Titsworth and Mazer, 2016; Teven and Katt, 2016; Witt, 2016). The student's perception on a teacher's actions can impact that student in either a positive or negative manner (Arnold, 2016; Donnell, 2007; Frymier, 2016; McHugh et al., 2013; Teven and Katt, 2016). When perceived positively, teacher actions can lead to positive affective outcomes for students (Titsworth and Mazer, 2016), such as a positive relationship with their teacher (Cayunus and Martin, 2016) and improved affective and cognitive learning outcomes (Rodriguez et al., 1996; Witt and Wheeless, 2001; Zhang and Witt, 2016). For example, positive perceptions of teacher credibility are associated with a positive regard for the teacher and the material taught (Teven and Katt, 2016). Confirmation actions by teachers can help students feel competent and autonomous, while immediacy plays a significant role in the students' behavior and their desire to persist in college (Frymier, 2016).

When teacher actions are perceived negatively by a student, they can negatively impact the student's evaluation of the teacher.   For example, demonstrations of incompetence, apathy, or offensiveness have a negative impact on student perceptions of teacher credibility (Teven and Katt, 2016). Being superficial, or failing to make meaningful connections with students, can be evaluated as a lack of caring (McHugh et al., 2013). Negatively perceived teacher actions can elicit resistant behavioral responses from students, such as avoidance (McHugh et al., 2013).

Students mostly desire demonstrations of understanding, interest, and caring from teachers.
(Wilkins, 2006).

  Teacher actions oriented in relational knowing and transformative practice are ideal in urban schools. The socio-economic and cultural gap between students and teachers, and persistent low achievement present challenges in urban schools that require a different approach to teaching students in these settings (Brown, 2004; Gay, 2014; Howard and Milner, 2014; Witt, 2014;). Teacher actions oriented in relational knowing and transformative practice may be the different approach to urban teaching practice that is needed to address these challenges (Donnell, 2007; Gay, 2014). According to Donnell (2007), relational knowing is the most important knowledge teachers can construct. What a teacher knows, or should know, about content, pedagogy, and even the race and culture of their students is only a portion of the complexities of successful teaching in urban settings (Howard and Milner, 2014). Relational knowing is the ability to "know-in-relationship" (Hollingsworth et al., 1993; Donnell, 2007) and to have a caring attitude that prioritizes developing relationships with students as a path to their growth (Brown, 2004). Hollingsworth et al. (1993) describes knowing-in-relationship as a method by which students and teachers come to know each other in a continual hermeneutic circle of conversations rather than through an articulated rigid epistemological framework to reach goals. Relational knowing helps in the development of transformative teaching practices (Donnell, 2007) which are characterized by teacher actions that demonstrate they relate to students as both persons and learners (Gay, 2014).

  Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is an example of a holistic transformative teaching practice grounded in relational knowledge of students and involves some of the teacher actions discussed earlier in this section. In a culturally responsive classroom environment

teachers work with students to co-create a learning environment in which both of their values

and perspectives are respected, welcomed, accepted, and student feedback is tolerated (Donnell,

2007; Gay, 2014). Transformative approaches like CRT are particularly salient in urban schools

where the cultural gap between students and teachers amplify the collision between the life

experiences, values, and intellectual expertise of teachers with the life experience, values,

intellectual curiosities, and cognitive abilities of students (Brown, 2004; Gay, 2014; Howard and

Milner, 2014; Witt, 2016). When the transformative-oriented teacher actions discussed in this

section (clarity, immediacy, confirmation, credibility, self-disclosure, and caring) are

incorporated with a holistic approach of developing relational knowing and utilizing practices

such as CRT, new teaching techniques can be generated (Gay, 2014).

Relational knowing and transformative teaching practices are perceived positively by

students when they communicate an attitude of care from teachers (Donnell, 2007; Gay, 2014).

While relational knowing and transformative teaching practices like CRT can lead to positive

affective student outcomes in urban schools, transmission-oriented teacher actions and teacher

misbehaviors can lead to negative affective outcomes in urban schools (Donnell, 2007;

Haberman, 1991; Nieto, 2014; Weiner, 2003). Transmission-oriented actions are those that

objectify students as recipients of teacher knowledge who need to be monitored and controlled,

and stem from belief by teachers that such actions are what urban students need (Donnell, 2007;

Freire, 1972). Teacher misbehaviors include actions such as apathy, incompetence,

offensiveness, inappropriate self-disclosure, stereotyping, superficiality, failure to make

meaningful connections, lack of support, inattention, disengagement; as well as actions that lead

to student perceptions of low expectations from teachers, and assignment of classroom tasks

perceived to be mindless or not conducive to the development of significant life skills or genuine

learning, (Cayanus and Martin, 2016; McHugh et al., 2013; Nieto, 2014; Teven and Katt, 2016; Weiner, 2003; Wilkins, 2006). These types of misbehaviors and transmission-oriented actions result in the disempowerment and demoralization of students, student resistance behaviors such as avoidance and disengagement, and the development of "unthinking" routines in the classroom (Donnell, 2007; McHugh et al., 2013; Wilkins, 2006). Teacher misbehaviors and transmission-oriented actions are reflective of a pedagogy of poverty (Haberman, 1991; Nieto 2014) and deficit paradigms that are deeply embedded in urban schools (Weiner, 2003). These actions can lead to students not feeling confirmed by the teacher, and can work against the development of clarity, immediacy, credibility and positive student-teacher relationships and classroom environment (Cayanus and Martin, 2016; Frymier, 2016; Teven and Katt, 2016; Zhang and Witt, 2016). Students who experience meaningful relationships with teachers are more interested in and feel more connected to school (Rey et al., 2007).

Understanding Student Satisfaction with School Experience

Throughout this study the phrase "satisfaction with school experience" will be used to refer to students' affect towards their general school experience. The terms "student satisfaction" and "student affect" are used interchangeably. School is the one place, besides family, where students spend a significant portion of their time (Epstein and McPartland, 1975). Just as adults spend a significant portion of their time at work, making it important for their well-being to experience positive affect at work, it should be important to the well-being of students to have positive affective outcomes at school (Epstein and McPartland, 1975). Education research has evolved in its consideration of student affect as an outcome. In earlier research student satisfaction in general was considered important only in relation to its role as mediator or

moderator to academic outcomes, and it was believed that the primary purpose of developing a deeper understanding of student satisfaction was to directly improve their academic outcomes (Epstein and McPartland, 1975; Williams and Roey, 1996). This limited position on the value and utility of student affect was beneficial to schools because student academic outcomes were paramount, and positive student attitudes would yield better academic outcomes (Epstein and McPartland, 1975; Williams and Roey, 1996). Over time, research began to shift to from focusing on how affect influenced academic outcomes, to consideration of student affect towards school as an outcome that was responsive to environmental changes (Epstein and McPartland, 1975; Kong, 2008). Positive correlations were found between the way students perceived their learning environments and their overall satisfaction with that environment. (Baker, 1998; Haertel, Walberg, & Haertel, 1981). Research acknowledged that student affect can be considered both as an outcome, and an enabling condition of cognitive and behavioral outcomes (Borgonovi, 2016). Student affect towards school emerged in research as an important focus of study in school contexts (David, Sherer, and Goldsmith, 2003; Pintrich, 2003) with positive student affect identified as a necessary condition for learning (Fortus, D, 2014). The importance of student affect acknowledged by researchers suggests the need for what Pintrich (2003) refers to as a revolution in affective research on students, teaching, and learning to complement the revolution in cognitive research of the 1980's on students, teaching, and learning.

School-based Influences on Student Satisfaction with School

A students' sense of connectedness with school and the student-teacher relationship are important social contextual variables that influence student affect towards school (Davis, 2003; Baker, 1998; McHugh et al, 2013; Wilkins, 2006). Sense of connectedness with school is also

described as, sense of affiliation, "belongingness", school membership, and school identification (Davis, 2003; Baker, 1998).

Connection between connectedness and student satisfaction with school. Students' perception of school as a personally supportive environment is critical to their satisfaction with school (Davis, 2003; Epstein and McPartland, 1975). Feelings of belonging and support that students build from the classroom environment can predict social outcomes such as social competence, empathy, and help seeking (Davis, 2003; Battistch et al., 1997; Ryan & Pintrich, 2003). In one study, belonging was one of the students' favorite parts of school and emerged as a powerful factor that influenced how they perceived and experienced school (DeFur, & Korinek, 2010). Among Latino/a youth who attend school in urban settings - a population with the highest high school dropout rate of any ethnic group - uncaring school culture resulted in feelings of alienation and contributed to students' decisions to dropout (Irizarry and Welton, 2013).

Connection between student-teacher relationship and satisfaction with school experience. The student-teacher relationship is important because teachers are uniquely positioned to influence student affect (Baker, 1999; Borgonovi, 2016; Haertel, Walberg, & Haertel, 1981; Hoque, 2016; Menix, 1996). Good relationships between students and teachers are associated with student affect towards school (Wilkins, 2006). As mentioned earlier, satisfaction with the school experience for youth is analogous to job satisfaction for adults, since school and places of work represent the single out-of-family environment where a significant portion of time is spent (Epstein and McPartland; 1975; Williams and Roey, 1996). As with adults, relationships with authority figures in the school setting are important for student outcomes, motivation and daily mental health (Epstein and McPartland, 1975). Teacher actions

related to teachers' support, friendliness, and facilitation of a cooperative, academically

engaging, and task-oriented ethos in the classroom are associated with improved student affect

(Baker, 1999; Wubbles, Brekelman, & Hooymayer,1991).

Student perceptions of the quality of the student-teacher relationship is a component of

school connectedness, and has been found to act as a mediator for it (Mchugh et al., 2013; Rey,

2007; Wilkins, 2006)). Those who perceive caring, emotionally supportive, and meaningful

relationships with teachers are more interested in, and feel more connected to, school (Rey,

2007). Self-determination theorists hold that when students experience relatedness, defined as

interpersonal connections with teachers within an environment they perceive as satisfying and

secure, it can lead to positive student-teacher relationships. On the contrary, poor student-teacher

relationships can influence a student's decision to drop-out of school (Wilkins, 2006). When

students do not experience relatedness with teachers it could lead to resistance behaviors such as

avoidance (McHugh et al., 2013). In their article, Irizarry and Welton (2013) also discussed how

feeling invisible to teachers and teachers' inattentiveness to students' academic needs

contributed to the decisions of Latino/a youth to drop-out of high school.

It is important to note that the student-teacher relationship does not occur in a vacuum.

Factors such as the social context of the classroom, teachers' ability to develop close

relationships with each other, class size, and scheduling impact the student-teacher relationship

(Stipek, 2006), and therefore may also indirectly impact students' perception of their school

experience. There might also be times when the student-teacher relationship itself plays a

mediating role, impacting students' relationships at home or their other relationships within

school. For example, with regards to at-risk students, some theorists suggest that positive

relationships with teachers may act as a bridge between the home and school cultures, helping

students understand and affiliate with the school setting, allowing them to gain access to school culture and develop the competencies to support school success.   (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994; Baker, 1999). Contextual environmental factors such as stressful experiences at school with teachers or peers, or quality of family life may also impact students' perceptions of school satisfaction (Baker, 1999).

In most cities in America the laws mandate that students attend elementary and high school. This researcher holds that since most students are required to engage in the educational system and spend one-fifth of their lives at school (Williams and Roey, 1996) it is important to understand the relationship between how students perceive their experiences in school and the factors that impact their perceptions, such as teachers' actions in the classroom. Though research considering the role of affect has increased, affect has not been well-understood and often ignored in models of understanding student learning and achievement. (Pang, 1999; Pintrich, 2003).   It is also this researcher's position that to develop a deeper understanding of student affect towards, and resulting from, the school experience is as important for the evolution of the educational system as it is to deepening understanding of student cognitive and behavioral outcomes, upon which so much of educational research is based.

There are several possible implications for expanding understanding of student affect as an outcome beyond its role as a mediator or moderator to cognitive and behavioral outcomes. One is the implication for school improvement. School improvement plans typically focus on five areas (school culture and climate, professional development, family and community engagement, assessment, and leadership capacity) in which there are two desired outcomes, 1) improvement of student achievement outcomes or 2) improvement of the effectiveness and equity of the delivery of service (Hanover Research, 2014). Understanding student affect more

deeply could support the improvement of effective and equitable delivery of educational services in each of the five focus areas.

Another implication of expanding understanding of student affect is the opportunity the process of expansion may provide to enhance student voice and how it is incorporated into the ecology of the educational system. (Baker, 1999). Student voice can prove to be critical for creating meaningful, liberating, and engaging school experiences (Nieto, 1999; Rogers, 2005). Students and teachers perceive the classroom experience differently (Rogers, 2005). Older high school students have longer school experience and may present more astute insights of the classroom learning environment than younger students (Haertel, Walberg, & Haertel, 1981). Though it appears as a micro aspect within the school culture, enhancing student voice can provide a view of the "real" functioning of the system, and recommendations of actions with regards to improving school quality (Jules, & Kutnick, 1997; Rogers, 2005) and teacher preparation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine current high school students' and recent high school graduates' perceptions of their high school teachers' actions in the classroom, and their perceptions of their school experience.

Research Questions

1.What attributes or types of teacher actions were most influential on how the student felt about their school experience?

2. Which learning outcome is most important to the student – academic (cognitive), behavioral, or satisfaction with school experience (affective)?

Method

Semi-structured reflective interviews were conducted virtually with young adults who were current students in a Chicago Public School (CPS) high school, or have graduated from a CPS high school no more than three years from the year of this study.   The interview questions were designed to elicit the young adults' perceptions of their teachers' positive and negative actions in the classroom, how those actions impacted them, and which type of outcomes (cognitive, behavioral, or affective) they felt were most important to the high school experience.

Participants

The participants were young adults who were at least 18 years of age and were currently attending a traditional, non-traditional, or charter Chicago Public School (CPS) high school, or had graduated from a traditional, non-traditional, or charter CPS high school within three years from the year of this study. Participants were recruited through an online request posted to Facebook via a link to a Google Form for referrals; outreach to professional educators, youth service providers, youth ministry worker, and parents within the researcher's network for referrals to eligible participants; and snowball sampling of participants. The researcher did not conduct in-person recruitment at local colleges and universities due to those institutions closing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participation was voluntary and participants were offered a $10 Amazon gift card as an incentive to complete the interview.

Instruments/Materials

An electronic informational flyer (Appendix A) with information about the purpose of the study, the incentive for participation, and how to sign up was used for recruitment outreach to education professionals, youth service providers, youth ministry workers, parents and snowball sampling. The Facebook post consisted of a message with information from the informational flyer and a shareable link that participants could use to sign up for the study via a Google Form that also included the informational flyer. The Google Form collected the email address, first and last name, and phone number from interested participants who completed the form. It also provided an optional option for interested participants to ask the researcher questions about the study and the interview. All recruitment materials stated that participation was voluntary and there would be no consequences by the researcher, the institution, or referring individual if a young adult decided to refrain from participating in the study.

Each participant received an informed letter of consent (Appendix B) after the initial conversation with the researcher. The researcher developed the interview protocol (Appendix C). The interview protocol was open-ended and began with questions to ascertain the participants gender, age, ethnicity, educational status (current high school student or graduate), and number of and names of high schools attended. These questions were also used to assist with establishing rapport at the beginning of the interview. The second part of the interview protocol contained a schedule of six questions with discussion prompts. The interview was designed to take up to one hour. The questions asked participants to reflect on their entire high school experience, to share how they felt about their overall school experience both inside and outside of the classroom and what they believed is the most valuable outcome any student should get out of their high school experience, to reflect on their high school teachers who made a

positive or negative impact on them and how those teacher actions made them feel, and to share

an outcome that they did not receive from their high school experience but wish they had. The

interview concluded by asking participants to share what they felt would have made their high

school experience more enjoyable. The interviews were confidential so participants can answer

openly without concern.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through an online request posted to Facebook via a link to a

Google Form for referrals; outreach to professional educators, youth service providers, youth

ministry worker, and parents within the researcher's network for referrals to eligible participants;

and snowball sampling of participants. The public Facebook post included the following brief

message from the researcher that accompanied the link to the Google Form participants used to

sign up.

> I'm popping onto to Facebook to ask for your help.
>
> I'm seeking referrals to young adults who are eligible to participate in my research study on the high school experience. Young adults (ages 18-22) who graduated from, or currently attend, a CPS high school can sign up below to earn a $10 gift card for completing a 1-hour interview with me about their high school experience.
>
> To help, you only need to share this link and encourage the young adult to interview. I will follow up with them directly 1-2 days after they sign up.
>
> Thank you Facebook family. Please feel free to share this post within your network.

Individuals solicited for referrals were asked to share the link to Google sign-up form with young

adults in their network who met the eligibility requirements for the study. The Google sign-up

form included the informational flyer and collected the email address, first and last name, and

phone number from interested participants who completed the form. It also provided an optional

option for interested participants to ask the researcher questions about the study and the interview.   Within one to two days after the young adult completed the Google sign-up form the researchers reached out to them via phone, text, or email. During initial and early contact with the young adult, the researcher reviewed the purpose of the study, detailed the interview process, answered any questions the young adult had about the study and interview, and scheduled the virtual interview with the young adult.

Due to shelter-in-place orders resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom. Within 24 hours of the scheduled interview participants received an email with the link to the Zoom room and a copy of the letter of informed consent for their review. The researcher began each interview with a review of the purpose of the study and by reading through the informed consent form with the participant, which included information about how their responses were confidential and would be anonymously reported. After the informed consent form was read the participant was provided an opportunity to ask any questions about the study and the researcher ensured email receipt of the signed letter of informed consent from the participant's email used for initial contact. After receipt of the signed letter of informed consent was confirmed by the researcher the interview began.

The interview times ranged between 28 minutes and 1-hour and 12 minutes and were audio recorded using Zoom's audio record feature. The interview schedule was designed to have students begin the interview by reflecting on their overall high school experience, including their relationship with teachers, before reflecting on specific types of teacher actions and outcomes of the school experience. Beginning the interview with the statement "Tell me about your high school experience" provided participants with the opportunity to begin their recollection process more broadly, which was especially helpful for the participants who were older graduates and

had been out of high school for several years. The participants appeared open and comfortable with sharing their personal experience during the interview. Rapport was easily established with each participant.

The researcher took handwritten notes during the interview. The interview protocol was submitted as a component of the Internal Review Board process and was reviewed and approved by the Internal Review Board that approved this study. The protocol was semi-structured and administered using simple phrasing with low variation of phrasing between participants. At the conclusion of the interview the participant was asked if they had any questions or wanted to add anything to the responses they had already provided, and were informed about how they would receive their electronic $10 Amazon gift card. A thank you email and the gift card were sent to participants on the same day of the interview after the interview was concluded. The audio recordings of the interviews were saved to a secure cloud server and backed up on an external hard drive accessible only by the researcher.

The approach to data analysis. The Zoom audio recordings of the interviews were uploaded into the Otter transcription program. The researcher reviewed the recordings in Otter alongside the written transcriptions produced by Otter to ensure accuracy of the transcription. The transcriptions were uploaded onto a secure cloud server and backed up on an external hard drive accessible only by the researcher.

A grounded theory approach was used to analyze the interview data (Orcher, 2005). The researcher sorted the interview responses by each of the six questions. A document was created for each the six questions and contained the responses from the 12 participants to that question. Responses to each question were reviewed and open coding was used to tally and create preliminary categories of mentions of distinct ideas or experiences that emerged. Examples of

preliminary categories include "description of teachers" or "most valuable outcome from high school experience". Next, distinct mentions in the preliminary categories were reviewed within each question to remove redundant ideas and experiences shared by a single participant. Axial coding was then used to identify codes that could be derived from categories that had three or more mentions of distinct ideas or experiences. Questions one through three of the interview schedule were designed to elicit responses for Research Question #1. Codes from these questions were reviewed together to identify themes related to Research Question #1. The same process was completed for questions four through six of the interview schedule which were designed to elicit responses for Research Question #2. Each set of themes were reviewed and core categories were created for each research question. The categories were combined to create an explanatory schema for each research question which will be reviewed in the results section of this study.

RESULTS

This phenomenological study used qualitative data obtained through reflective interviews to analyze the perception of young adults, ages, 18-21, of their high school teachers' actions in the classroom, and their perceptions of their school experience. The goal of this analysis is to describe and interpret the experiences of young adults who participated in this study in order to answer the following research questions that prompted this study:

1.What attributes or types of teacher actions were most influential on how the student felt about their school experience?
2. Which learning outcome is most important to the student – academic (cognitive), behavioral, or satisfaction with school experience (affective)?

Of the 12 participants (N=12), 10 (83%) were referred directly from the researchers' personal

and professional network. The researcher had a personal relationship with 5 (42% of N) of the

10 participants referred directly from the researchers' personal network. The qualitative data

may be enhanced by the credibility of the researcher's ability to establish a comfortable rapport

with participants as a result of these referral relationships and the researcher's seventeen years of

experience working directly with high school students and recent high school graduates from

public, private, and charter schools in the city where the research was conducted.

To be eligible for the study, participants had to either be currently enrolled in any type of

(traditional, charter, or alternative) Chicago Public School (CPS) high school, or have graduated

from a CPS high school within the past three years from the year of this study. The participants'

perspectives represent a variety of school experiences within the CPS system. Several of the

participants attended multiple schools throughout their high school career. Mobility was

quantified to account for this aspect of the school experience represented in this study since

participants were asked to reflect on the entirety of their experience regardless of which types of

school they attended. For this study a participant is classified as mobile if they spent at least one

year at a high school other than the one they attended at the time of the study, or the one they

graduated from. More than one-third, (N=5, 41.6% mobility rate) of the participants were

mobile during their high school experience. Table 1 shows the details of the types of schools

represented by the mobile students, which include traditional schools, non-traditional schools

(these are specialty schools such as an arts school), private, boarding, catholic, and virtual (non-

COVID-19 related) schools.

Table 1.

Types of Schools Attended by Mobile Students

Student	Type of school currently attending or graduate of	Number of years at school	Type of school previously attended	Number of years at school
1	Traditional public, highly selective	2	Catholic	2
2	Traditional public, highly selective	2	Private	1
			Boarding	1
3	Non-traditional public, moderately selective	2	Traditional Public	1
4	Non-traditional public, non-selective	2	Traditional public, highly selective	1
			Virtual	1
5	Traditional public, neighborhood	2	Traditional public, nonselective	1
			Charter	1

The sample size (N=12) for this study is small, therefore caution should be used when attempting to make generalizations from the data outcomes of this research. The participants ages ranged from 18-21 years. The oldest participant completed high school in 2016, the youngest participants were enrolled in their senior year of high school. Of the participants, 5 (42%) were female, 7 (58%) were male, 10 (83%) were Black, and 2 (16%) were Hispanic. Both Hispanic participants were male. Six participants (50%) were still enrolled in high school, and the other half completed high school. The following list provides the breakdown of the types of CPS schools represented by the entire study sample. Participants who experienced mobility during their high school experience were counted according to the type of school in which they were currently enrolled, or graduated from: traditional public neighborhood, 2 (16.6%); traditional public highly-selective, 6 (50%); charter non-selective, 2 (16.6%); specialty public

moderately-selective, 1 (8%); and specialty public non-selective, 1 (8%). Six (50%) participants attended schools located in neighborhoods on the south side of city, 3 (25%) participants attended schools located in neighborhoods on the north side of the city, and the remaining 3 (25%) attended schools located on the city's West Side.

The interview protocol was open-ended and semi-structured to allow for consistent questioning across participants, while allowing opportunity for digression. Each participant was asked to commit 1-hour for the interview. The interview times ranged from 28 minutes to 1 hour and 12 minutes. The average interview time was 47.53 minutes.

Grounded theory was the selected approach to data analysis because there is not a significant amount of research that focuses on student affect as an outcome (Pang, 1999; Pintrich, 2003). As a result, the researcher wanted to allow the data to guide the interpretation of the participant experiences. After using a grounded theory approach to code the data and develop themes, an explanatory schema was developed as an answer to the research questions. What follows are narratives of each explanatory schema.

Explanatory Schema for Research Question #1: What attributes or types of teacher actions were most influential on how the student felt about their school experience?

The interview schedule consisted of six questions. As stated in the previous section, Question 1 asked participants to reflect on their entire high school experience. Responses to Question 1 provided the following insights to the general school experience of the participants. Seven (58%) of the participants stated that they liked high school, while 4 (33%) stated they did not. One participant said she was neutral and did not like or dislike high school. Though 4 (33%) participants expressed challenges to adapting to the high school environment, 8 (67%)

participants expressed a general overall positive affect towards their school experience; the top responses were that they "enjoyed it" (2), it was "great" (2) and "amazing" (1). It is interesting to note that though perceptions of the academic environment were shared the responses were scattered and no categories emerged around positive or negative descriptions of the academic environment.

A strong majority of the participants, 10 (83%), perceived the social environment of the school as caring and had the feel of family, and the same number of participants believed their teachers had overall positive character providing general descriptions of teachers as "outgoing" (2), "nice" (2), and having an "overall positive attitude" (1). Seven (58%) of participants shared that their teachers influenced their affect by being "inspiring" (2), "encouraging" (2), "welcoming" (2), and "empowering" (1). The quality of the student-teacher relationship was described as being close by 7 (58%) participants. Three (25%) participants described teachers and administrators as "pushing" or encouraging them to improve either personally or academically. Though there were some negative responses about the interpersonal relationships between students and teachers and among students, there were not enough to form a category.

Questions one through three were designed to elicit responses related to Research Question #1. Themes developed from questions 1 and 2 of the interview schedule were identified to develop the explanatory schema in Figure 1.

Question 1: Tell me the story of your high school experience.

Question 2: Describe the actions of teachers who made a positive impact on you in high school, and how their behavior made you feel about your school experience.

Question three was the inverse of Question two and asked participants to reflect on negative

teacher actions. Results of responses from question three and how they relate to the explanatory

schema for Research Question #1 will be discussed in the next section.

      The responses to questions one and two coalesced around five core categories of teacher

actions that were most influential on participants' affect towards their school experience:

Teaching Style, Teachers' Attitude Towards Students, Teachers' Attitude and Behavior Towards

Teaching, Teachers' Character, and Teachers' Behavior Towards Students. Under each category

primary themes emerged. The themes for each of the five categories are provided next and are

listed in order of themes with the highest number of distinct mentions to the least number of

distinct mentions across both questions. The number of distinct mentions is provided in

parenthesis. The core category of Teachers'-Behaviors-Towards-Student is the only one of the

five that had sub-categories of actions.

Figure 1

Explanatory Schema for Research Question #1

EXPLANATORY SCHEMA: TEACHER ACTIONS MOST INFLUENTIAL ON STUDENT AFFECT TOWARDS SCHOOL EXPERIENCE				
TEACHERS' BEHAVIOR TOWARDS STUDENTS	**TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS STUDENTS**	**TEACHERS' CHARACTER**	**TEACHING STYLE**	**TEACHERS' ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS TOWARDS TEACHING**
A. Engaging with students outside of class content (42) 1. Getting to know students personally (21) 2. Showing support for students' interests outside of class content (9) 3. Being involved in school activities (5) 4. Being in relationship with students (4) 5. Sharing advice with students on adulting (3) **B. Demonstrations of goodwill (dimension of teacher credibility) (16)** 1. Holding students accountable for their success (9) 2. Generally supportive behaviors (7) **C. Demonstrations of confirmation (recognizing, acknowledging, endorsing student, communicating that student is worth teacher's time and attention) (12)** 1. Encouraging students to push (9) 2. Showing their faith in student's academic ability by giving them challenging work (3)	**A. Caring (17)**	**A. Overall positive (12)**	**A. Connect content to real world (11)** **B. Attentive (8)** **C. Expands students' thinking (5)** **D. Accessible for support outside of class (3)**	**A. Caring (7)**

Under the category of Teaching-Style four themes of actions emerged: a) connecting content to the real world (11), b) attentive (8), c) expands student thinking, and d) accessible for support outside of class (3). When asked about positive teacher actions that influenced how he felt about his school experience, Howard, a senior at a highly selective traditional public school explained how his teacher helped the information stick with him:

> …making the content that would seem boring with like, you know, just an average teacher who wouldn't really like go out of their way and try to make sure everyone understands the content…relating it to like their own life in some sort of way. I think every teacher I've come across that have like, the passion to teach like, what they really love - teaching and tying it in with real world examples - I feel like that's the main thing that helps on the idea sticks in my mind

During the interview participants were also asked about the impact of teacher actions. A significant number of distinct mentions emerged under the theme of attentiveness. Participants felt that attentive teachers led to feelings of an enhanced student-teacher relationship. Gary, a senior at a highly-selective public school shares the impact being attentive to students needs had on his bonds with teachers.

> …certain conversations we have, we may come in with one agenda and we get into conversation about whatever. One person may be concerned about it or one more person may be feeling some type of way about whatever and we can sit and have that discussion just because we have that type of relationship with each other and with our teacher. Like, she's okay with doing that because it's like she realizes there's something we need sometimes. It just is what it is. We're not okay all the time and she knows that. A lot of teachers know that. So, to be able to have that type of experience and in a classroom setting is really amazing. And it enhances the bond that you have already.

Caring is the singular theme that emerged under both teachers'-attitudes-towards-students and Teachers'-Attitude-and-Behavior-Towards-Teaching. There were 17 distinct mentions across questions 1 and 2 related to caring under Teachers'-Attitudes-Towards-Students. During the interview participants were asked to reflect on teacher actions that made them feel like they belonged at the school and were supported. A significant number of distinct mentions indicated

that when teachers demonstrated a caring attitude towards students, they felt a sense of belonging

and supported at school. Nyla, a senior at a neighborhood public school had a troubling

experience at her first high school and experienced mobility, attending three different high

schools. She talks about how the care a teacher showed her at her first school made her feel

supported during her freshman year, though she transferred from the school:

> She knew what it was like for me because I would sit in her office and cry because I felt
> like I wasn't where I needed to be. She was like, "You okay, I'm just saying I get it, you
> Okay".

There were seven distinct mentions across questions 1 and 2 related to caring under Teachers'-

Attitude-and-Behavior-Towards-Teaching. No significant number of distinct mentions were

indicated for this theme.

Having an overall positive character (12) was the singular theme that emerged under the

core category Teachers'-Character. A significant number of distinct mentions indicated that

when teachers had an overall positive character, students felt a sense of belonging and supported

at school. Becky was the oldest participant in the study. She graduated from a non-selective

specialty high school in 2016. Below she shares the influence of the positive attitude of her

teachers:

> Just their positive attitude and, I guess, influence really wanted to make me like…okay.
> Even though at that time I still hated school, hated getting up at whatever time it was, I was
> just like, okay, it'll be fine because I'll get to see my favorite teachers and we could talk
> and goof off and learn.

The core category of Teachers'-Behavior-Towards-Students had significantly more

distinct mentions than any of the other core categories. Three themes emerged under Teachers'-

Behavior-Towards-Students, each with subcategories to explicate the theme. The first theme

was "engaging with students outside of the class content". This theme had 42 distinct mentions

that are represented by the following subcategories: a) getting to know students personally (21),

b) showing support for students' interests outside of class content (9), c) being involved in school

activities (5), d) being in relationship with students (4), and e) sharing advice with students on

adulting (3). A significant number of distinct mentions indicated that when teachers supported

students' interests outside of class content, and when they were involved in school activities,

students felt supported and a sense of belonging at school. Below are a few quotes to

demonstrate what is meant by "being in relationship with students".

> **Angel** (2019 graduate of highly-selective traditional public school): They're very patient, understanding. They were willing to, like, learn or got along with people.

> **Robert** (senior at a non-selective charter school): So yeah, that first teacher he was honest with me. He saw my potential but he told me what I was doing wrong and that's something that hit deeply. That's something that really, really changed my perspective in a way.

> **Asha** (2019 graduate of highly-selective traditional public school): Even if they didn't have a good day, they would maybe tell the class why they were down in the beginning of the class so it wouldn't seem as though the students did something to them to make them seem that way. Which really helps also, and helped us to be like, okay, they obviously have a life too outside of school.

The second theme that emerged under the core category of Teachers'-Behavior-Towards-

Students was "demonstrations of goodwill", which is a dimension of teacher credibility (Teven

and Katt, 2016). This theme had 16 distinct mentions represented by two subcategories: a)

holding students accountable for their success (9), and b) generally supportive behaviors (7).

Generally supportive behaviors include showing an interest and effort in student growth,

investing in students, vouching for them, and looking out for their best interest. A significant

number of distinct mentions indicated that when teachers demonstrated generally supportive

behaviors students felt a sense of belonging and supported at school. Nyla provides an example

of how one teacher at her current school demonstrated his general support for her:

> Mr. Boogie. He moved me, like from the opposite side of the classroom. But he was like, "what are you doing over there you don't usually sit over there, naw, come on over here. You right in the front". Plus, I couldn't see, I didn't have glasses and nothing, so it was like,

you kind of caught me. So that was like, I felt supported because it was like he had my best interest in mind. Whether I liked it or not he was looking out for me in some type of way.

The final theme that emerged under the core category of Teachers'-Behavior-Towards-Students was "demonstrations of confirmation". Teacher confirmation refers to actions that lead students to feel the teacher recognizes, acknowledges, and endorses them (Frymier, 2016; Cissna and Sieburg, 1981), and communicate that the teacher believes the student is worth their time and attention (Frymier, 2016; Ellis, 2004). This theme had 12 distinct mentions represented by two subcategories: a) encouraging students to push (9), and b) showing faith in students' academic ability by giving them challenging work (3). A significant number of distinct mentions indicated that when teachers encouraged students to push, students felt supported and a sense of belonging and at school. Below are a few quotes from participants sharing how their teachers encouraged them to push and its impact.

> **Gary**: For me, I think if they push you a lot, especially if they know you have a certain skill or certain whatever. Like if they see it in you, they're going to push you until it comes out of you, right? Because they, they know you have it and they're not gonna let or allow you to like, waste your potential to be whatever or to do whatever. To them, they just want to see it come out of you.

> **Robert:** But luckily, I had a lot of people guiding me and (my school) has really pushed me to the person I am today, and I'm really glad I got to experience being in those classes with all those teachers…

> **Becky**: Like, okay, let's be blunt like…No, I'm still your teacher, we can be cool, but you still got to get your work done and do your best and I'll push you to do so.

Findings from Question 3: describe the actions of teachers who made a negative impact on you in high school, and how their behavior made you feel about your school experience.
Question three of the interview schedule was the inverse of Question two and focused on negative teacher actions perceived by participants. This section will consider three notable findings from responses to question three – inverse perspectives of themes in the explanatory

schema for Research Question #1, positive and negative impacts of negative teacher actions, and a pattern of hesitation and disclaiming displayed by some participants when answering this question. The responses to question three were scattered and no themes emerged from them. However, it is worth noting the responses that yielded a number of mentions significant enough to indicate inverse perspectives of themes in two of the five core categories in explanatory schema for Research Question #1. The responses related to themes in the core categories of Teaching-Style and Teachers'-Attitudes-Towards-Students were scattered and no significant categories emerged. Having an overall negative character had six distinct mentions and emerged as an inverse to the theme of having an overall positive character in the core category Teachers'-Character. When asked about the impact of overall negative teacher character a significant number of distinct mentions indicated that it led students to disengage from that teacher's class. "Uncaring" had five distinct mentions and emerged as an inverse to the theme of caring in the core category Teachers'-Attitude-and-Behavior-Towards Teaching. "Not engaging with students" had a significant number of mentions (4), but it is not listed as an inverse to the theme of "engaging with students outside of class content" in the core category of Teachers'-Behaviors-Towards-Students because the mentions included teachers not engaging with students both in and out of class, however it is worth noting its emergence.

When asked about the impact of the negative teacher actions, participants shared both positive and negative responses. Most unexpected was the responses provided for the impact of negative teacher actions on the school experience. Nine (75%) participants stated that they did not allow negative teacher actions to negatively impact their overall feelings towards school. Five (42%) participants stated that they responded to the negative actions by relying on other sources of motivation. Below are examples of these unexpected responses.

Mark (senior at a non-selective charter school): I honestly didn't let that experience affect me. Because, um honestly, I was always seeking other resources like the assistant teacher, like going home finding videos or either getting help from a teacher, like an elementary teacher that stays like a block from me and doing tutoring sessions with her. Um, I was always seeking other resources.

Gary: It didn't really change how I felt about school. It just made me feel like man, how slow is time going right now? … But yeah, my school perception was pretty much the same. I don't want it to like taint everything…

Robert: Um didn't really impact that because if there was a class that I didn't really like I had other classes.

Paul: It didn't bother me at all. At the end of the day, okay, we both have a job to do. You're here today, and you're unable to effectively do yours because of whatever personal things are consuming you. But I still have people that believe in me, and I still believe in myself. So, becoming lazy, or putting off my goals at the expense of somebody else's energy is not something that I can afford. Because when you become lazy you become disrespectful to the people that believe in you. That's personally how I feel.

There were a significant number of distinct mentions to explicate the impact on other aspects of the school experience: having an attitude of not wanting to attend the class (7) and not wanting to engage with the teacher (4), perceiving the teacher as being difficult (4), feeling that the content was difficult to learn (4), a lower grade or grade point average (3), actively disengaging from the classroom environment (3), and a general feeling of being upset or bothered (3).

Question three was the one question in the interview where a pattern of hesitating or providing a disclaimer about their own personal character emerged before participants shared their perceptions. When first asked the question, Gary responded, "Negative. I wouldn't necessarily say negative impact on me because, like I said, I'm a pretty positive person, so I don't really like to see bad, but it is just a me thing.". After sharing one example of negative teacher actions Robert quickly pivoted to rationalize teacher actions he described as "rough".

But people tend to, I guess, help the students grow in different ways, you know, either being nice or toughening them up in a way. So, at the moment, I felt like it was kind of negative, but at the same time I try to be considerate. I try to put myself in their shoes and I guess it was negative but over time, towards the end, they were just trying to, you know, make you better.

Robert went on to say that he still felt like the teacher was doing something "kind of rude".

Before sharing his perspective of teacher negative actions, Paul, a 2018 graduate of a highly-

selective traditional public school, stated:

> So, I would definitely say that it's been a few teachers who I've been terribly upset with at different times. But one thing I've learned is that school is not a democracy. So, no matter how upset you get with that teacher you're still there to learn and they're still there to do their jobs.

Howard's initial response was, "I wouldn't really say I had a teacher that had like a negative

impact." Kerry shared a similar initial reaction, "Kind of hard I didn't have that many negative."

Before answering, Rose asked, "Do I have to give a name of the teacher?" Despite the

hesitancies and disclaimers, none of the participants required additional prompting before

sharing their perceptions of negative teacher actions.

Summary of Explanatory Schema for Research Question #1. The explanatory schema

outlines five core categories of teacher actions that emerged as the most influential on the

participant's school experience. These five core categories outline 10 types of teacher actions.

The most influential type of teacher actions for participants was observable actions that

demonstrated a teacher's desire to enter into relational knowing with them. As mentioned in the

literature review, relational knowing involves placing a high value on knowing about students'

interests, backgrounds, aptitudes, fears, and personal lives (Donnell, 2007). In the explanatory

schema these actions fall under the theme labeled "engaging with students outside of class

content" in the core category Teachers'-Behaviors-Towards-Students. This theme had 42

mentions, more than twice as many as the other nine themes in the schema. Having a caring

attitude and demonstrating goodwill towards students emerged as the second most influential

types of teacher actions with 17 and 16 mentions respectively.

The next types of influential actions were confirming behaviors (12); having an overall positive character (12); and a teaching style that connects content to the real world (11), is attentive (8), expands students' thinking (5), and makes the teacher accessible for support outside of class (3). Teachers actions that demonstrate an attitude and behavior of care towards their craft (7) is also one of the ten most influential types of actions outlined in the schema.

Explanatory Schema for Research Question #2: Which learning outcome is most important to the student – academic (cognitive), behavioral, or satisfaction with school experience (affective)?

Questions four through six of the interview schedule were designed to elicit responses related to Research Question #2. Themes developed from these questions were identified to develop the explanatory schema in Figure 2.

Question 4: What do you think is the most valuable thing every student should get from their high school experience? (examples of cognitive, behavioral, affective outcomes were provided)

Question 5: What is something that you feel you didn't get from your high school experience, but you wish you had?

Question 6: What could have been different at school that would have made you enjoy your high school experience more?

The responses to questions four through six coalesced around two core categories of important outcomes of the high school experience: Personal Growth and High-Quality Experience. Under each category primary themes emerged. The themes for each of the categories are provided next and are listed in order of themes with the highest number of distinct mentions to the least number of distinct mentions across all three questions. The number of

distinct mentions is provided in parenthesis. The core category of Personal-Growth is the only

one with subcategories of outcomes.

Figure 2

Explanatory Schema for Research Question #2

EXPLANATORY SCHEMA: OUTCOMES MOST IMPORTANT TO STUDENTS	
PERSONAL GROWTH	**HIGH QUALITY EXPERIENCE**
A. Affective (14) 1. Personal development – building positive affect towards self (9) 2. Personal development – building positive affect towards others (5) **B. Behavioral (10)** 1. Acquiring life skills through courses or learned behavior (10) **C. Development of life goals (6)** 1. Opportunities to develop life goals through courses and access to resources and information (6)	**A. Better services and facilities (4)** **B. More enjoyable events – reasons were related to behavioral personal growth (3)**

Research Question #2 focused on the three domains of learning outcomes (cognitive,

behavioral, and affective) that are frequently used by educators to inform essential planning,

implementation, and evaluation of teaching-learning processes and student learning outcomes

(Hoque, 2016), yet of the core categories that emerged from the study, only Personal-Growth

was directly related to learning outcomes. The core category of High-Quality-Experience had

two themes: a) better services and facilities (4), and b) more enjoyable events (3). Though this

core category is not directly related to one of the three domains of learning outcomes, it is worth

noting that a significant number of distinct mentions of the reasons for desiring more enjoyable

events were related to Personal Growth. Sam and Nyla explain.

Nyla: I would say the events, our events, be dry… I feel like the events could have been better… they should have stepped their cookies up because they surely did crumble.

Sonji: Do you think all high school students should get to experience an increase (in social events) or just fun social events?

Nyla: Yes, it takes people out of their comfort zone.

Sam (2019 graduate of a moderately-selective specialty school): So, it's like certain stuff just kinda was like, I wouldn't have never tried this thing if y'all didn't, you know, expose me to this. As a kid, really, you don't know what you like and kind of afraid of everything.

Sonji: Do you think your peers would agree with you, that those two things every high school student should experience, social events and community exposure?

Sam: Um, my friends personally would agree with me because that's how I met them. It's like, those little events was like…wow, you paint, you make art? Wow, I make art too! All right. So, let's work from here. And we just got closer that way. That one event sparked the whole tree of things. Like, now I know this guy because of you, you know this guy because of me, now it's bigger, it just branch out and branch out. Like, so much off this one day of randomness. Like, I didn't know this is gonna happen.

There were three themes of the core category Personal-Growth, affective outcomes, behavioral outcomes, and development of life goals. Responses related to cognitive outcomes were scattered and no theme emerged around this learning outcome. The affective theme had 14 distinct mentions represented by two dimensions of personal development: a) building positive affect towards self (9), and b) building positive affect towards others (5). Building positive affect towards self refers to developing the ability to control, stabilize, and understand your emotions; self-efficacy; wanting to be better; knowing that you have value; and being passionate about the things you do. When asked which of the three outcomes they believed was most valuable, participants provided the responses below. These are a few examples of building positive affect towards self as an outcome.

Robert: So, I feel like, um, when high school helped me with my emotional issues and stuff, that's what helped me with my academics and with my other issues, you know.

Angel: But I think you need to have emotional, like you need to learn how to take on those challenges in order to like, stay in college…because one of my biggest challenges was like, I knew the content but, like to know that I could do it myself. I think that was one of the things that I was struggling with. And to know that like, I can make it…

Rose: Yeah, you just need to control your emotions for the most part.

Paul: I guess I would say you should gain from your high school experience the willingness to grow. That's what it's all about at the end of the day, growth…um, if anything you should leave kind of with a sponge in your head, you know, always like grab out unto new experiences constantly, always want to network, want to become better, even if you feel that you are lacking in certain areas…

Building positive affect towards others refers to understanding that others have perspectives that different from your own, feeling gratitude towards the adults who were supportive, developing judgments skills. Below are examples of building positive affect towards others that emerged from participant responses when asked which outcome they believed was the most valuable.

Gary: …certain people's perspectives…like, my perspective on one thing and my classmates perspective on a thing can be two completely different things, and I've seen it be two completely different things just simply because of the different situations that people have been…like, you have to be cognizant of everything else that is around you. You can't stay in a bubble when you're outside, you have to be aware of just more than your side of it.

Sam: I feel like high school really helped me with my judgment, like, on certain situations and, like, who to be around and what kind of people to really put in my circle because, like, that's real, like that goes into life. If you can't pick the right people to be around, you know, who knows what's gonna happen?

The behavioral theme of the core category Personal-Growth had 10 distinct mentions and is described as "acquiring life skills through courses or learned behavior". When asked about an experience they wish they had in high school, or one that would have made high school more enjoyable, participants expressed a desire for courses that would have taught life skills such as,

financial management, cooking, time-management; or to have learned how to access resources to learn about all of their options. Angel shares the difference she felt knowing about all of her options might have made in her life today:

> I probably wouldn't have gone to the college that I'm at right now. It was like, different decisions that made me go to the college that I'm at. But I don't know, I may have changed my decision. I feel like students don't know that much about like ROTC, and like, military. I feel like students should know about, like, all of their options…um, just so that they can make the best decision for themselves.

The third theme, "development of life goals", had six distinct mentions. Participants expressed a desire for courses, experiences such as traveling, and access to resources and information designed to help them shape and develop their life plans.   Paul felt it would have been helpful to have more guests to inspire the students.

> I would say more of outside guests. Like, my school, personally I know I remember at South Shore we had a man there who was responsible for, like, entertainment things so to speak, where he would, like, get people like a, you know, JaQuise on FaceTime to FaceTime us and things like that, or other big artists or famous people in general…which is fine. But also, being able to see people in person is an entirely different thing and I'm not even just talking about artists, or people with fame or things of that nature, just inspirational people in general…bring in other people who we could look up to more and see. Those tangible things in front of us would have been a bigger help.

Becky shared her feelings about having experiences in high school designed to help shape and develop life plans.

> I would have enjoyed, like, some challenges that would inspire my creativity…it could have, like, helped a student build a business right out of high school…like, that would have been really cool to have someone learn how to do something important like that early. Not only, like, a business but, I don't know, something. Just a nice foundation to start you off with the rest of your life regardless of whether you went to college or not.

Summary for Explanatory Schema for Research Question #2. The explanatory schema outlines two core categories of learning outcomes most important to participants. These two core categories outline five types of outcomes. Personal growth is the most important outcome of the high school experience for this group of participants. Affective personal growth

(14) was the most important type of personal growth for participants. For this study affect is defined as a student's emotional perspective, particular attitude towards, or way of regarding (Alsop and Watts, 2003) and includes their interest in, motivation to engage in, self-efficacy, and beliefs towards their general school experience. Learning behaviors that support their personal growth (10) was the second most important outcome, followed by developing life goals (6).

Cognitive learning outcomes, which focus on content knowledge and the development of intellectual skills (Bloom, 1956; Hogue, 2016), did not emerge as a theme or category in this study. It is worth noting that though cognitive outcomes did not emerge as most important in this study the vehicles by which cognitive content is typically delivered – courses, trips, speakers – emerged as recommendations as methods to support personal growth. The quality of the school experience emerged as a more important outcome than cognitive learning outcomes. Of the two themes under this core category, better services and facilities (4) and more enjoyable events (3), reasons provided for desiring events that were more enjoyable tied back to desires for personal growth.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to expand understanding of student affect by examining the perspectives of older high school students and recent high school graduates through reflective interviews about their high school experience. Though research on education has acknowledged that student affect can be considered both as an outcome, and an enabling condition of cognitive and behavioral outcomes (Borgonovi, 2016), in much of the existing education research affect is considered only in its role as mediator or moderator to cognition and behavior (Baker, 1998; Bainbridge-Frymier, 2016, Borgonovi and Pal, 2016; King et al, 2007; Pintrich, 2003; Zhang and

Witt, 2016). This researcher was led by one driving question to conduct this study: what might be the possibilities or implications for the educational system if more research was designed to focus on student affect as an outcome, deepening our understanding of students' perceptions of various aspects of their educational experience? Community Psychology seeks to enhance the quality of life for individuals, communities, and societies by defining problems and developing interventions using a perspective that considers the link between people and the structured systems within which they operate (Kloos et al., 2012). Community Psychologists understand that people and the structured systems they operate in are in relationship with and influence each other (Kloos et al., 2012), and that people at every level of the system play a key role in the evolution of that system when they are activated and empowered to do so. Students are at the center of the educational ecological system. From a community psychology approach students are key collaborators and contributors to policy, structure, and practice within this system. Unfortunately, the current role of the student in the educational system is more of an objectified product of the system. Student affect is important because it characterizes the emotions reflected by a students' beliefs, values, and interests (Menix, 1996). Understanding more about student affect through empirical research will provide more opportunities to obtain student input on what's important to them, a revolutionized lens through which to reimagine the role of the student as that of contributors whose perspectives matter beyond how their perspectives motivate them to achieve prescribed cognitive or behavioral milestones, and will demonstrate to students that what's important to them matters.

The sample size for this study was small and caution should be used when generalizing the results to a larger population. There were two major findings of this study. The data from this study answered Research Question #1 through an outline of 10 types of teacher actions,

grouped into five core categories, that are most influential on students' affect towards their

school experience, with the most influential type of teacher actions being observable actions that

demonstrated a teacher's desire to enter into relational knowing with them. The second finding

comes from the data which provided an answer for Research Question #2 – affective outcomes

are the most important learning outcomes for the current and former high school students in this

study. Mentions of cognition were scattered throughout participant responses and no themes

coalesces around cognitive outcomes. This finding was interesting given that 7 (58%) of the

participants attended or graduated from moderately to highly selective public schools with merit-

based admissions criteria. Though no significant themes emerged related to cognitive outcomes,

when participants mentioned the development of their intellect, they related it as a tool for use

towards their personal growth and development of their life plans, not as an outcome in and of

itself.

> **Gary: …**as, like, a student, we all make the statement, like - when will I ever use this outside of this classroom. Like, we've all said it. But to have something like that, something you can take outside with you and use…it just makes that experience even more and better than it would have been without that.

> **Paul: …**at the end of the day, the people that are getting educated, they're taking education to use as tools to help them in their everyday lives.

> **Becky**: …who wouldn't want to be interested in learning business…I feel like it's something essential that we needed…they were having budget cuts and he (the business teacher) was let go. And that, really, I couldn't understand it. Like, you know, I understand that the main thing that you need to teach English, social studies, science, math, whatever, but I felt like that was also very essential. And it sucked that they had to get rid of business.

The two explanatory schemas developed for this study demonstrate that participants

believe that high school should be a space where they experience personal growth in their affect

towards themselves and others, and are supported in developing life goals. They believe the high

school experience should be guided by teachers who are positive, accessible, and care about their

craft. They believe teachers should be willing to enter into relational knowing with students, confirm them, and demonstrate goodwill towards them while facilitating a teaching-learning process that expands their thinking, is attentive to their needs and the learning environment, and has content that is grounded in the real world. They believe that this experience should be administered through quality service in quality facilities.

All of the participants in this study were persons of color who matriculated through high school in a district where 50.2% of the teachers are white, and only 10.8% (Chicago Public School, 2020) of the students are white. Though race and culture did not emerge as themes in this study, it is important to note that engaging in the relational knowing expressed by the participants requires teachers to acknowledge and understand the culture gap between them and their students and be willing and able to leverage cultural capital as an asset in the teaching-learning process, viewing the culture gap as a pathway to student growth (Brown, 2004; Gay, 2014; King et. Al., 2007; Nieto, 2014).

Interpretation of Findings

The two major findings of this study are consistent with the literature. Affect emerged as a central part of the teaching-learning process (Fortus, 2014; Pintrich, 2003), and teacher actions were influential on participants' perception of their school experience and their relationships with teachers (Baker, 1999; Davis. 2003; Wubbles, Brekelman, & Hooymayer, 1991; Williams, Schneider, & Wornell, 2018; Yoon, 2002). The emergence of Teachers'-Behavior-Towards-Students as the most influential core category in the explanatory schema for Research Question #1 aligns with existing literature and research that shows that teacher interpersonal behavior with students play an important role in student affect, including improved

affective outcomes and student satisfaction with school (Baker, 1999; Gay, 2014; Gregory et. Al, 2016; Rey, 2007; Wilkins, 2006; Wubbles, Brekelman, & Hooymayer, 1991). It is also important to note that of the ten themes of teacher actions outlined in the explanatory schema for Research Question #1, six led students to feel supported and a sense of belonging at school. This finding is supported by literature which explicates that students' perception of school as a personally supportive environment is critical to their satisfaction with their school experience (Davis, 2003; Epstein and McPartland, 1975). Four of those six themes were under the core category of Teachers'-Behaviors-Towards-Students which aligns with Rey et. al.'s (2007) finding that students who experience meaningful relationships with teachers are more interested in and feel more connected to school.

The literature review explored six types of teacher actions that communication studies research and literature found to have a significant impact on student affect. Three of these six teacher actions emerged as influential to student affect towards school, with one occurring across multiple core categories. Teacher confirmation refers to verbal and non-verbal actions that lead students to feel the teacher recognizes, acknowledges, endorses them, and believes that they are worth their time and attention (Frymier, 2016; Cissna and Sieburg, 1981; Ellis, 2004). Teacher credibility has three dimensions and is defined the student's perceptions of a teacher's character, level of care, and competence that affects learning outcomes and student-teacher interactions (Teven and Katt, 2016). Confirmation and the goodwill dimension of credibility both emerged as themes in the most influential core category of teacher actions – Teachers'-Behaviors-Towards-Students. The credibility dimension of goodwill is the students' perception that the teacher has demonstrated they have the students' best interest at heart (Teven and Katt, 2016). Caring emerged as a theme in two core categories, Teachers'-Attitude-Towards-Students and

Teachers'-Attitude-and-Behavior-Towards-Teaching. Caring is defined as how students perceive a teacher based on that teacher's verbal and non-verbal actions (Teven and Katt, 2016). It is not surprising that caring emerged across multiple core categories. Literature explains that this action manifests in a multifaceted manner (Wilkins, 2006). The literature also found that care has an impact on student affect towards the student-teacher relationship. This study did not examine the impact of care on the student-teacher relationship, but it was found that care influenced participants' affect towards school.

Question three of the interview schedule asked participants to share their perceptions of negative teacher actions. Though the responses to question three were scattered and no themes emerged from them, responses yielded a number of significant mentions supported by the literature. A qualitative study of urban high school students by McHugh et al. (2013) indicated that negative perceptions of teachers stemmed from teacher inattention, stereotyping of students, lack of care, and superficial behavior. These teacher actions created barriers to the development of supportive student-teacher relationships and contributed to resistant student behaviors such as avoidance. In this study an uncaring attitude towards their craft (5) and an overall negative character (6) emerged with significant mentions. In general, the negative perceptions shared by participants led to negative perceptions about the teachers, feelings of being bothered and upset, avoidance, and disengagement.

There was one finding related to perspective of negative teacher actions in this study that was contrary to one of the studies cited in the literature review. In her research on at-risk students, Baker (1998) found that behavioral interactions between students and teachers could be a mechanism by which students become alienated from school. An unexpected finding in this study resulted from the responses of 9 (75%) participants who stated that they did not allow

negative teacher actions to negatively impact their overall feelings towards school. This was a strong majority of the participants; however, this researcher cautions against interpreting this finding to mean that teacher actions had no effect on participants. The scope of this study was limited to perceptions of the school experience. Research and literature about the student-teacher relationship have already demonstrated the effect of teacher actions on student cognitive and behavioral outcomes, as well as aspects of other affective outcomes such as feelings of competency, self-efficacy and their interest in learning (Baker, 1998; Baker, 1999; Davis, 2003; Gregory et. Al, 2016; Rey, 2007). It is possible that resiliency contributed to this finding when it is considered that 5 (42%) participants stated that they responded to negative teacher actions by relying on other sources of motivation and resources, which include family, other teachers in their network, and self-motivation. However, this idea about resilience is completely speculative as it was not a construct measured in either study. The differences in the responses could also be attributed the participant population. It is possible that the participants in this study were at lower risk than the ones in the Baker study since all had either graduated from high school or were on track to graduate.

The findings of this study align with Donnell's (2007) assertion that relational knowing is the most important knowledge teachers can construct since teacher actions related to relational knowing were the most influential in student affect towards school. The literature makes the case that relational knowing is necessary to developing transformative teacher practices in urban settings where the socio-economic and cultural gap between students and teachers, and persistent low achievement present challenges (Brown, 2004; Donnell, 2007; Gay, 2014; Howard and Milner, 2014; Witt, 2014;). Participants in this study did not identify socio-economic or cultural gaps between them and their teachers as an issue. Considering that 8 (67%) participants attended

schools that are high performing in the district (one of the non-selective charter schools is ranked as a high performing school in the district), and there were no indicators to lead the researcher to perceive that students saw themselves or their schools as low achieving, this may mean that persistent low achievement may not have been an issue either. Yet relational knowing still emerged as the most influential teacher action. This may imply that relational knowing is not only necessary in urban schools with specific challenges, but that it is of high importance to students who attend urban schools. But further research would be needed to substantiate this claim.

Limitations, Strengths, and Implications

There were several limitations of this study. The small sample size limits the ability to make confident generalizations of the findings of this study to any population. There is also the issue of bias that might result from the demographic of the participant populations. The participants consisted mostly of young adults who attended moderately- to highly-selective high schools with merit-based admissions practices. The data did not have sufficient representation from students who attended lower performing non-selective schools or alternative schools. Another issue of bias was created by the eligibility requirements which omitted participants who dropped out of school. A primary strength of the study was that it adds much needed empirical data to the body of affective research in education.

This study has implications for teacher preparation, how we understand the purpose of education, and inclusion of student voice in school reform. The findings that teacher actions related to relational knowing were the most influential in student affect towards school and that personal growth is the most important outcome of the high school experience, leads to considerations of how schools are structured, curriculum delivered, and teachers are prepared to

teach. Are the accepted standards and norms of the student-teacher relationship conducive to establishing relational knowing between students and teachers? Are student voices informing curriculum design? Do teacher training programs adequately equip teachers to enter into relational knowing with students or incorporate relevant real-world content and experiences into the teaching-learning process? These are few of the questions that arise from the findings of this study.

Supporting students in their personal growth and development of life goals means more encounters with the material and social world (Biesta, 2020), but that exposure should incorporate the racial, ethnic, and culture lens and experiences of the students. Teacher education programs have rarely, if ever, been informed by urban communities (Izarry and Welton, 2013), and rarely offer teachers support in how to socially construct an approach to learning from and with their students through respect, value, and incorporation of students' individual histories and perspectives (Donnell, 2003). This deficit in teacher preparation will need to be addressed to equip teachers with the ability to truly enter into relational knowing with students and support them in their personal growth. This includes consideration of the professionals who prepare the teachers. Programs should prepare teacher candidates to address the culture gap through a holistic approach that goes beyond historical and theoretical knowledge to specifically emphasize the importance of building student-teacher relationships by relating to students as persons and learners while incorporating their rich experiences into the teaching-learning process (Gay, 2014). When the transformative-oriented teacher actions discussed in the literature review (clarity, immediacy, confirmation, credibility, self-disclosure, and caring) are incorporated with a holistic approach of developing relational knowing and utilizing transformative practices such as CRT, new teaching techniques can be generated (Gay, 2014).

Another implication is the value of amplifying student voice and including it in the expansion of our understanding of the purpose of education, and in school reform efforts. The educational community has longed discussed and debated the purpose of education (Camins, 2015). Is the purpose to prepare students for work or citizenship, develop their intellect, or some combination of each? The findings from this study imply that helping students know what to do with their identity and how they will lead their life is the purpose of education for the student. The process of learning more about student affect provides the opportunity to enhance student voice and how it is incorporated into the ecology of the educational system. (Baker, 1999). School reform efforts typically ignore the perspectives of the communities of color they serve, and the insider perspectives of students of color in urban school settings is needed to bring about real change in those schools (Irizarry and Welton, 2013). Student voice can prove to be critical for creating meaningful, liberating, and engaging school experiences (Nieto, 1999; Rogers, 2005). Understanding student affect more deeply could support the improvement of effective and equitable delivery of educational services.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study leaves topics to be further explored in future research. This study could be expanded to include more participants, including young adults in the same age range who dropped out of high school. This expansion would address the issue of demographic bias mentioned in the previous section on limitations of the study. A quantitative study could be developed using the core categories and themes found in this study to determine if there were any relationships among the findings. It would be interesting to find out how the findings of this study compare to similar studies with participants of different races, socio-economic statuses, and who attend schools in non-urban settings. Contextual environmental factors such as stressful

experiences at school with teachers or peers, or quality of family life may also impact students' perceptions of school satisfaction (Baker, 1999). Future research could explore the impact of other interpersonal relationships on perceptions of teacher actions or the school experience. It would also be beneficial to use a social-constructivist lens to learn more about how relational knowing is cultivated between students and teachers from the perspective of the student and the teacher; and how each define, recognize, and interpret the teacher actions found to influence student affect towards school.

The acknowledged importance of student affect by researchers suggests the need for what Pintrich (2003) refers to as a revolution of affective research to complement the revolution in cognitive research of the 1980's on students, teaching, and learning. It is this researcher's position that to develop a deeper understanding of student affect towards, and resulting from, the school experience is as important for the evolution of the educational system as it is to deepening understanding of student cognitive and behavioral outcomes, which so much of educational research is centered upon. It is my hope that this study contributes to that revolution.

"Education must enable a man to become more efficient, to achieve with increasing facility the legitimate goals of his life"

—Martin Luther King Jr., speech at Morehouse College, 1948

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Appendix A – Information About Purpose of Study

RESEARCHER: SONJI JONES-MANSON

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL AND TEACHERS IN THE CLASSROOM

PURPOSE of study: to examine recent high school graduates' perceptions of their high school teachers' actions in the classroom, and their perceptions of their school experience.

ELIGIBILITY:

1)Young adult between the ages of 18 and 22.
2)Current or former Chicago Public School student (traditional, alternative, or charter school).

PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ASKED TO ANSWER 6 QUESTIONS DURING AN INTERVIEW ABOUT THIER HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE AND TEACHERS' ACTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

CONTACT: Sonji Jones-Manson, 630.631.4593, sjones85@nl.edu

Participants who complete an interview will receive a $10 gift card

Appendix B – Informed Consent Form (18 and older)
Informed Consent (18 and older)

My name is Sonji Jones-Manson, and I am a student at National Louis University. I am asking you to participate in this study, "Student Perceptions of School and Teachers in the Classroom", occurring from March 2020 – June 2020. The purpose of this study is to examine recent high school graduates' perceptions of their high school teachers' actions in the classroom, and their perceptions of their school experience. This study will help the researcher develop a deeper understanding of the relationship of student-teacher interactions with student's perceptions their school experience. This form outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

By signing below, you are providing consent for you to participate in a research project conducted by Sonji Jones-Manson, student, at National Louis University, Chicago.
Please understand that the purpose of the study is to examine recent high school graduates' perceptions of their high school teachers' actions in the classroom, and their perceptions of their school experience. Participation in this study will include:

Voluntary completion of a 1-hour interview (name of organization) between the dates of (March 23, 2020 and April 23, 2020)

The interview will be conducted in-person or virtually and take approximately 1-hour.

The interview will include approximately 6 questions to understand how participants perceive their school experience and teacher classroom actions.

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without penalty or bias. The results of this study may be published or otherwise reported at conferences, and employed to inform the education industry but participants' identities will in no way be revealed (data will be reported anonymously and bear no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants). There are no anticipated risks or benefits, no greater than that encountered in daily life. Further, the information gained from this study could be useful to the (name of organization where data is collected) and other schools and school districts looking to better understand the relationship between teachers' actions in the classroom and students' perceptions of their school experience. Upon request you may receive summary results from this study and copies of any publications that may occur. Please email the researcher, sjones85@my.nl.edu to request results from this study.

In the event that you have questions or require additional information, please contact the researcher, sjones85@my.nl.edu. If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that has not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact Ray Legler, my primary advisor, email: rlegler@my.nl.edu ; phone: (312) 261-3019, National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

Thank you for your consideration.

Consent: I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the study (Student Perceptions of School and Teachers in the Classroom). My participation will consist of the activities below during *XX time period*:

Voluntary completion of one 1-hour interview.

_____   _____   _____

Participant's Signature   Participant's Name (printed)   Date

_____   _____   _____

Researcher's Signature   Researcher's Name (printed)   Date

Appendix C – Interview Protocol

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. The information you share today will be used to help the research community gain a better understanding of what older high school students and recent high school graduates think is the most valuable outcome of the high school experience, and how they perceive their teachers' actions in the classroom. The interview will take approximately 1 hour. Your responses to questions are completely confidential and the audio recording of this interview will be securely stored and erased after the interview is transcribed. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may stop the interview at any time without any penalty or bias.

I will first ask a few brief questions about where you attended school, when and if you graduated, and how you identify by race and gender. Then I will ask you about to reflect on and share about your high school experience. I will close by asking you to share your thoughts about what might have made your high school experience more enjoyable. After the interview you may request a copy of the audio recording which I will be happy to share upon completion of this study.

Part I: General Questions
Name:
Age:
Did you attend high school in the city of Chicago?
Did you complete high school?:
Year of High School graduation:
Name of high where you received your diploma:
How many years at that school?:
Did you attend other high schools?:
Names of other high schools attended?
Years of attendance at other high schools?
As what gender do you identify?
As what ethnicity do you identify?

Part II: Reflections on Teacher Actions and School Experience
1. Think back on your entire high school experience, both in the classroom and more generally within the school. Tell me the story of your high school experience. R1
    – How did you enjoy or feel about the overall school experience?
    – What three words would you use to describe your teachers in general?
    – How would you describe your relationship with your teachers? Would you give an example?
    – What did your teachers do to make you feel like you belonged at the school?
    – What did you teachers do to make you feel supported?

2. Think about a few teachers who made a positive impact on you in high school. What was it about these teachers that made you select them as having a positive impact on you? What type of things did they do or say? Describe the positive impact. How did their behavior make you feel about your school experience? - R1

3. Now, think about a few teachers that made a negative impact on you in high school. What was it about these teachers that made you select them as having a negative impact on you? What type of things did they do or say? Describe the negative impact. How did their behavior make you feel about your school experience? - R1

4. What do you think is the most valuable thing every student should get from their high school experience? It can be something tangible like a diploma or awards, it can be certain skills, or it can be certain emotions or perspectives. - R2
    – For example, some believe that a high school graduates ability to get a paying job or further their education so they can contribute to society and the economy as an adult is most important, while others believe it is their ability to build confidence in themselves and learn more about who they are as a person while in high school.
    – Why do you think this is the most valuable thing a high school student should get from their high school experience?

5. What is something that you feel you didn't get from your high school experience, but you wish you had? – R2
    – Why do you wish you had gotten that?
    – What difference do you think it would have made in your life today if you had gotten that? Do you think you would be better or worse off with it? How so?

Part III: Closing Question
6. What could have been different at school that would have made you enjoy your high school experience more? – R2
    – This could be anything from the subjects you learned, to your relationships with teachers or peers, or the lunch you were served – think broadly about your total experience.
    – How would these things would have made your experience more enjoyable?
    – Do you think all high school students should experience these things?
    – Why do you feel those things are important to experience?
    – Do you think your peer would agree with you? Why or why not?